The Revolution Will Be Framed:

How Organizers and Participants Used Communication Media

During the Arab Spring Revolution in Tunisia

by

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ABSTRACT

The Arab Spring revolutions of 2010-11 raised important questions about how social-movement actors use new communication technologies, such as social media, for communication and organizing during episodes of contentious politics. This dissertation examines how organizers of and participants in Tunisia's Arab Spring revolution used communication technologies such as Facebook, blogs, news websites, email, television, radio, newspapers, telephones, and interpersonal communication. The dissertation approaches the topic through the communication paradigm of framing, which the author uses to tie together theories of social movements, neo-patrimonialism, and revolution. The author traveled to Tunisia and conducted 44 interviews with organizers and participants about their uses of communication media, the frames they constructed and deployed, their framing strategies, their organizing activities, and their experiences of the revolution. The most common frames were those of the regime's corruption, economic issues, and the security forces' brutality. Interviewees deployed a hybrid network of media to disseminate these frames; Facebook represented a single node in the network, though many interviewees used it more than any other node. To explain the framing process and the resonance of the frames deployed by revolutionaries, the dissertation creates the concept of the alternative narrative, which describes how revolutionaries used a hybrid network to successfully construct an alternative to the narrative constructed by the regime. The dissertation also creates the concept of authoritarian weakening, to explain how citizens can potentially weaken neo-patrimonial regimes under conditions concerning corruption, poverty, and the introduction of civil society and of new communication technologies.

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CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL CONTEXT, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will introduce the events of the Arab Spring, the media coverage of the Arab Spring, my research into the Arab Spring revolution in Tunisia, and the methodology of my research. In the following section, I present the historical context of the Middle East and North Africa, in order to situate the specific events of the Arab Spring revolution in Tunisia, which comprise the broader object of my research.

1.2 Context of the Arab Spring

At the turn of the millennium, the United Nations, through the U.N. Development Program (UNDP), convened a group of 45 Arab scholars to produce the Arab Human Development Report, an analysis of the political, economic, and social conditions of the Arab world. The first of the three reports (2002) noted that revolutions and transitions in the 1980s and 1990s in Europe, Asia, and South America had brought more democratic regimes and greater freedoms and human rights to millions, but this phenomenon had left the Middle East and North Africa untouched. The Arab world ranked last among seven world regions in indicators ranking freedom, the power of the citizens' voices, and the accountability of the state (UNDP, 2002). Though many Arab states had formally enshrined democracy and human rights in their constitutions and legal codes, implementation was sometimes deliberately disregarded (UNDP, 2002). The report's authors labeled this a freedom deficit, and they wrote that this deficit was undermining

human development (UNDP, 2002). The third and last Arab Human Development Report (2009) provided a detailed description of the ongoing deficits of freedom and human rights, as well as the abuses of state power that prevailed in much of the Arab world at the time:

> Such fears [of random, violent death and destruction] also permeate more fortunate Arab societies which, although free from armed conflicts or occupying forces, suffer under the dead hand of authoritarian power. In many Arab countries, the ordinary person enters a police station at his or her peril, knowing he or she is liable to be hauled away on the merest suspicion of crime or public agitation. Dissenting citizens risk being thrown in prison for exercising their civic duty to speak out against state repression. Gripped by dread of actual or potential harm from fellow Arabs and foreign powers alike, torn by conflicts and hobbled by unjust laws, too many Arabs live out an existential nightmare of insecurity that numbs hope, shrivels initiative and drains the public sphere of the motivation for co-operative and peaceful change. (UNDP, 2009, p. 36)

The following year, a man who sold fruit from a cart in a rural town in inland Tunisia immolated himself front of a local government building to protest his treatment by local officials of the state. The suicide of Mohammed Bouazizi ignited nationwide demonstrations that in less than a month led to the fall of the 23-year regime of President Zine Abedine Ben Ali and sparked revolutions and popular uprisings throughout the Arab world.

1.2.2 The Arab Spring in Tunisia

The portrait of deprivation and oppression in the previous section introduces the long-standing grievances that laid the foundations for millions of citizens in the Middle East and North Africa to rise against their authoritarian rulers in 2010 and 2011. This section recounts the events of the Arab Spring revolution in Tunisia, to orient readers who might not be familiar with the details of these events, and this section introduces some of the important places, people, and themes that will be prominent throughout this dissertation.

The revolution in Tunisia—and the Arab Spring—began on December 17, 2010, when Bouazizi, 26, immolated himself in Sidi Bouzid, a town of roughly 40,000 in Tunisia's rural interior (Ahmed, 2016; Angrist, 2013; Brooks, 2013; Lim, 2013; interviews during dissertation research). Local officials had confiscated his scales that morning, on the pretext that he did not possess the necessary permits, and then they had not been willing to meet with him about the situation (Ryan, 2011a). A few dozen locals protested that day in Sidi Bouzid, but demonstrations remained almost entirely confined to Sidi Bouzid and towns in the county for the following week (Ayeb, 2011). On December 24, police killed two protesters in the small town of Menzel Bouziane, about 30 miles from Sidi Bouzid, and the protests began to swell in the interior towns of Thala and Kasserine (Lim, 2013).

Shortly thereafter, the first demonstrations were also held in the coastal cities of Sfax, Tunisia's second-largest city, and Sousse (Ayeb, 2011). Trade unions also became involved then, organizing the first demonstration in Tunis, which was attended by roughly 1,000 people expressing solidarity with Sidi Bouzid and calling for jobs (Lim,

2013). Ben Ali gave a televised speech on December 28, in which he railed against the protesters as extremists and promised a crackdown, but demonstrations continued to grow (Randeree, 2011). On January 4, the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) declared its support for the demonstrations, and the National Order of Lawyers called for its members to go on strike (Lim, 2013).

Protests turned violent in the interior towns of Thala and Kasserine in early January (Appendix A). Police assaulted several demonstrators in Thala on January 3, and on January 8 police killed at least 10 demonstrators in Thala and Kasserine (Ayeb, 2011; Lim, 2013). The following evening Ben Ali gave his second televised speech during the crisis, in which he vowed that he would extinguish the uprising by any means necessary (Ayeb, 2011). Protests grew in various areas of Tunis (Ryan, 2011b). On January 12, tens of thousands participated in a demonstration in downtown Tunis; Ben Ali deployed the army in Tunis and issued an order to suppress the demonstrations (Brooks, 2013). The army chief of staff refused to carry out the order, however, and the army withdrew from the streets the following day, a decisive factor in the revolution's success (Bellin, 2012; Brooks, 2013). On the evening of January 13, Ben Ali made his third and final speech; he was conciliatory, promising not to run for re-election and offering reforms (Lim, 2013). His supporters staged their own rally in downtown Tunis after the speech, an interview subject said. The next day, January 14, saw the largest demonstration yet, as protesters filled the main square in downtown Tunis, demanding the fall of the regime in front of the Interior Ministry (Ryan, 2011a). Ben Ali fled the country that evening.

In the months following Ben Ali's fall, dozens more protests occurred; there were protests against members of Ben Ali's party remaining in the provisional government, but

there were also demonstrations by Islamists supporting the adoption of Islamic law, against the film *Persepolis*, and against the banning of the veil in universities, as well as protests by secularists against the Islamists (Shadid, 2012). However, Ben Ali's ouster on January 14, 2011, effectively marks the revolution, because even though various demonstrations have been held in the years since that date, they have not shared a common goal, nor have any large demonstrations demanded the fall of the regime. In the following section, I will describe the uprisings in other Middle Eastern and North African countries; even though my research concerns only Tunisia, the events in these countries will bring into sharper focus the key factors that caused these rebellions and affected their outcomes, and this data adds meaningful context to the events in Tunisia.

1.2.3 The Arab Spring Outside Tunisia

Egypt. After the revolution in Tunisia, protests spread to nearly all Arab states. The next ruler to fall was Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, who had been in power since 1981. The popular uprising began on January 25, 2011, on National Police Day. Police brutality had for decades galvanized opposition groups; the Facebook page "We Are All Khaled Said" was started in 2010 after the Alexandria resident died on June 6 from what witnesses said was a beating by police (Levinson, Coker, & Solomon, 2011). Political parties from across the spectrum, including the Muslim Brotherhood, announced they would participate in the January 25 demonstrations (Afify, 2011), and the revolutionaries included significant numbers of Islamists, secularists, nationalists, and feminists (Korotayev, 2011). As citizens continued to demonstrate in Cairo's Tahrir Square and throughout the country, Mubarak repeatedly offered concessions in televised

speeches (Nepstad, 2011). Violent clashes erupted between his supporters and the rebels in Cairo's Tahrir Square and elsewhere, but the military refused Mubarak's order to put down the rebellion (Nepstad, 2011). Since the fall of the British-supported monarchy in 1952, the military had been a central pillar of the state structure—Mubarak and the three previous presidents in Egypt's postcolonial history had served in the armed forces—and, without the military's support, Mubarak resigned on February 11, 2011, after 17 days of protests (Nepstad, 2011).

Y**emen.** On January 15, 2011, the day after Ben Ali fled Tunisia, Yemeni activist Tawakkol Karman organized a small demonstration in Yemen's capital, Sanaa, to express support for the Tunisian revolution (Filkins, 2011). The next evening, she and more demonstrators marched to the Tunisian Embassy and called for the resignation of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had held power since 1978 (Filkins, 2011). Saleh's decades in power had been marked by rampant corruption, suppression of human rights, and unrelenting economic hardship—half of Yemen's children were malnourished at that time of the uprising (Filkins, 2011). In early March Saleh promised concessions, but the demonstrations continued. The turning point came when security forces killed 52 protesters on March 18 (Barany, 2011). The killings galvanized the opposition and split the armed forces (Barany, 2011). Yemeni society is largely tribal, and the armed forces disintegrated along tribal lines (Barany, 2011). Saleh had installed many members of his family and extended tribe in positions of military leadership, and these units largely remained loyal to him, though one crucial defector was a general from Saleh's tribe who had previously been a staunch ally (Barany, 2011). Unlike in Tunisia, where the military sided with the demonstrators, the leaders of the Yemeni armed forces depended on the

Saleh regime for power and not the state, so they were willing to continue to fight against the protesters to support the regime (Ahmed, 2016). However, other units defected to the opposition, some did not take sides, and many simply deserted (Gause, 2011). The association of the group of states in the Arabian Peninsula, the Gulf Cooperation Council, worked for months to ease Saleh from power. Saleh fled to Saudi Arabia in June after an assassination attempt badly injured his leg, but he did not formally cede power until November 23 (Barany, 2011). Karman, along with Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Liberian activist Leymah Gbowee, was awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize. Despite the formal transfer of power, the deep cleavages among Yemen's many tribes plunged the country into anarchy and civil war. The U.N. estimates that some 9,000 people have died since the fighting worsened in March 2015 (Youssef & Al-Batati, 2016).

Libya. On February 17, 2011, protesters in the city of Benghazi in eastern Libya rebelled against the regime of Muammar Gaddafi, who had ruled the oil-rich country since 1969 (Sawani, 2012). As in many Arab nations, Libya under Gaddafi was an authoritarian regime marked by a stunted civil society and weak and thoroughly corrupt state institutions (Bhardwaj, 2012). The course of Libya's revolution was significantly shaped by the external factor of NATO intervention. On March 17, the U.N. Security Council approved a NATO-led mission, which comprised 1) a campaign of missile strikes to destroy the regime's air force and air defenses, 2) bombing of regime ground troops who were massing outside cities in eastern Libya in order to put down the uprising, and 3) weapons and training for rebels (Bhardwaj, 2012; Bumiller & Kirkpatrick, 2011). As in Yemen, tribal and regional identity remained central in Libyan

society, and the military splintered along these lines (Barany, 2011). Gaddafi had named his relatives the commanders of elite and paramilitary forces, which he relied on during the civil war of 2011 (Barany, 2011). Military units in the east of the country defected almost in their entirety to the rebels; many units in other regions simply deserted (Barany, 2011). After months of civil war through the spring and summer of 2011, Gaddafi was ousted from Tripoli in August and killed in the street in his hometown of Sirte on October 20 (Fahim, Shadid, & Gladstone, 2011). Tribal and religious cleavages have continued to plague Libya. Civil war erupted again in 2014, with combatants including a government in the country's eastern province, an Islamist-led rival government in Tripoli and its foreign patrons, an Islamic State franchise, and tribal militias in other regions (Wehrey & Lacher, 2014). President Obama has called the "worst mistake" of his presidency the failure to plan for what would come after the fall of Gaddafi (Dowd, 2016).

Bahrain. Protests began on February 14, 2011 in Bahrain, a tiny island monarchy tucked between Saudi Arabia and Qatar just off the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia (Nepstad, 2013). The country's ruler, King Hamad bin Issa al-Khalifa, soon quashed the rebellion with the aid of foreign troops, but Bahrain deserves mention here because of the course of its unrest. In Tunisia and Egypt, the military sided with the protesters, while in Yemen and Libya, the armed forces largely split along tribal lines. In Bahrain, however, the military fully backed the regime and suppressed the protesters (Barany, 2011). The island's citizens are roughly 70-percent Shiite, but the ruling family and much of the country's elite are Sunnis (Nepstad, 2013). As such, the regime has kept the military largely Sunni, recruiting Sunnis from abroad to fill out perhaps as much as 50 percent of its ranks and using the military as a force to protect the privileges of the Sunni elites (al-

Shehabi, 2011). On February 17, three days after the protests began, Khalifa ordered the military to attack the demonstrators, and the military obeyed, killing four protesters (Nepstad, 2013). This sparked larger protests, with perhaps up to 200,000 Bahrainis participating, or roughly 25 percent of the country's adult population (Humphreys, 2011). The crackdown also led the protesters to change their demands from political reform and sectarian issues to a call for the end of the regime (Gelvin, 2012). To quell the uprising, the regime requested the assistance of foreign troops, and 1,000 troops from Saudi Arabia and 500 police officers from the United Arab Emirates arrived in Bahrain on March 14 to snuff out the protests (Barany, 2011). Some activists have continued to call for reforms and for regime change, but they have yet to find support among the armed forces or the ruling family (Gelvin, 2012). As possible evidence of the influence of external state actors in shaping the events of the Arab Spring, it bears mention that the U.S. Fifth Fleet is based in Bahrain, and U.S. officials did not express backing for the protesters—as officials had in Tunisia Egypt, and Libya—but rather urged demonstrators and the government to engage in dialogue (Bronner, 2011).

Syria. Much the same as in the other states where protests followed the revolution in Tunisia, citizens in Syria took to the streets in the early months of 2011. The unrest in Syria began when families in the small town of Deraa demonstrated in March 2011 for the release of a few teenagers who had been arrested and tortured after anti-regime graffiti was written on a school wall, but security forces opened fire on the protesters (Fahim & Saad, 2013). The regime promised concessions, but the regime cracked down hard on the protests. The military deployed tanks and shelled some cities where protests took place (Ghattas, 2011), and more than 500 civilians were killed in March and April

(Shadid, 2011). The top ranks of the armed forces largely remained loyal to the regime, because Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his father, who had preceded him in office, had stocked up to 90 percent of the ranks of the military's officers with their co-religionists from the Alawite sect of Islam (McLauchlin, 2010), an offshoot of the Shiite branch, even though Alawites make up only about 10 to 15 percent of Syria's population (Barany, 2011; Nepstad, 2013). Roughly 75 percent of the country's population—and a majority of the military's conscripts—are Sunnis, and many of those troops defected to the rebels or deserted (Nepstad, 2013; Van Dam, 2011). Foreign actors have also significantly shaped the ongoing violent stalemate, which has claimed some 400,000 lives (Fisher, 2016). Wood, Kathman, and Gent (2012) argue that the flow of money, arms, and fighters from foreign actors backing various groups in a multi-sided conflict explains the seemingly intractable nature of the Syrian civil war: Powerful foreign backers—whether the United States, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Iran, or Hezbollah—can match any escalation or gains made by a rival faction, their resources will not be exhausted by this conflict, and they have little incentive to end such a war.

Other states. In addition to the six countries above, protests of varying size in the wake of Tunisia's revolution were recorded in another dozen majority-Arab countries (Algeria, Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan) and among the Arab inhabitants of Iran's Khuzestan province (Ajbaili, 2011; Blight, Pulham, & Torpey, 2012; *Dekhnstan,* 2011; Nepstad, 2013). Popular unrest in these countries, however, has not led to regime change, civil war, or foreign intervention.

1.3 Media Coverage of the Arab Spring

In this section, I shift the focus from the events of the Arab Spring to the relationship between these events and communication media. I examine the media conditions in Tunisia before the Arab Spring, followed by an account of how news media covered the Arab Spring. I then discuss internet usage in Tunisia before the Arab Spring, followed by a discussion of the popular media heuristic about the significance of social media during the Arab Spring. These broad categories—communication media, the internet in particular, and the uses of social media—are the topics of my research, which I introduce in the fourth part of this chapter.

1.3.1 Media Landscape in Tunisia Before the Arab Spring

As was typical in authoritarian Arab states before 2010, traditional media outlets in Tunisia were almost entirely under the strict control of the regime (el- Issawi, 2012; Kuebler, 2011). At the outset of the revolution, nearly all print media were either owned by the state, the ruling Democratic Constitutional Rally party, or private owners who were part of the regime's coterie of patronage (El-Issawi, 2012). Editors of print media were given directives from the Information Ministry dictating political coverage (El-Issawi, 2012). The state operated two broadcast television networks, and the two nationwide private networks—also close to the regime—were prohibited from broadcasting political news (El-Issawi, 2012). In radio, the conditions were identical: two state-owned broadcast stations and private stations forbidden from reporting political news (El-Issawi, 2012).

Four opposition weekly newsmagazines did exist, but they faced even greater political and economic pressures from the state (El-Issawi, 2012; Freedom House, 2011). The editor of one opposition weekly said that government pressure on the weekly's printer led to production delays on a September 2010 issue that was particularly critical of the regime (Freedom House, 2011). The government could revoke the professional license of any journalist to punish critical coverage, and the state determined the distribution of advertising revenue as a way to control the economic viability of print publications (El-Issawi, 2012). Freedom House (2011) reported that the regime often persecuted Tunisian journalists through harassment, assault, surveillance, arrest, and forced exile. The government regularly detained and interrogated journalists (Freedom House, 2011). In January 2010, a television journalist was sentenced to four years in prison for merely reporting on protests led by miners in the rural, interior town of Gafsa in 2008 (Freedom House, 2011). Given these conditions, domestic coverage of the uprising in traditional media effectively reproduced the regime's framing of events, repeating Ben Ali's defining of protesters as extremists and terrorists, and the protests as riots (Lim, 2013).

1.3.2 Arab Spring Coverage by Al-Jazeera and Other Satellite Television Networks

In chapters 3, 4, and 5, I explore how interview subjects used Al-Jazeera and other television networks. In this section, I explain why Al-Jazeera was the first and most influential traditional-media outlet to cover the uprisings in Tunisia and elsewhere, and this communication medium was a central node in the hybrid network of communication technologies constructed by the interview subjects in this dissertation (Alterman, 2011;

Howard & Hussain, 2011; Lynch, 2015; Ryan, 2011a; Wulf, Misaki, Atam, Randall, & Rohde, 2013; Zayed, 2011). Ironically, the Tunisian government had expelled the Qatar-based satellite channel's journalists from Tunisia before the Arab Spring, because Al-Jazeera had aired reports critical of the regime, so Al-Jazeera did not have any correspondents in the country when the revolution began (Zayed, 2011). On Dec. 17, when Mohammed Bouazazi killed himself in Sidi Bouzid, Al-Jazeera's new-media staff found the video of the ensuing protest that Bouazizi's cousin Ali Bouazizi had uploaded to Facebook (Ryan, 2011a). Ali Bouazizi had long been an opposition activist with connections among opposition journalists; he conducted an interview that evening with Al-Jazeera, in which he gave his version of the day's events, he and his cousin Lassad said in their interview with me. His framing of his cousin's suicide was an important moment, which I will examine in chapter 3.

Al-Jazeera continued to cover the unrest in Tunisia from that first day; before any other traditional media outlet, it included footage from Tunisia in its news bulletins and gave updates on the uprising on its website, blogs, and social media (Zayed, 2011). A Tunisian born-anchor working at the studio in Qatar arranged for Tunisian freelance journalist Lotfi Hajji to work for the network without any attribution, because of the domestic ban (Worth & Kirkpatrick, 2011). His local contacts sent progressively more videos to his Facebook page, which he would curate and pass on to the network (Worth & Kirkpatrick, 2011). In January 2011 the channel abandoned its program schedule and followed the uprisings 24 hours per day (Lim, 2013). To be sure, other satellite networks, including Western networks such as BBC and CNN, also covered the protests before the fall of Ben Ali, but these channels—even Al-Jazeera's main Arabic-language competitor,

Al-Arabiya—were lagging behind the scope of Al-Jazeera's coverage (Ryan, 2011a; Worth & Kirkpatrick, 2011; Zayed, 2011).

Equally significant was Al-Jazeera's framing of the protests in Tunisia as a revolution (Alterman, 2011). Though the station did not label the uprising a revolution until January 11, it framed the protests as a revolutionary uprising, legitimizing the protesters' grievances as justified rebellion against a despotic regime (Alterman, 2011; Ryan, 2011a). Since its inception in 1996, Al-Jazeera has worked to construct a pan-Arab public sphere; after decades of the state-controlled propaganda in the region's television news, Al-Jazeera was ground-breaking in its willingness to discuss controversial topics and criticize long-ruling tyrants who had been portrayed in national media as nearly infallible (Lynch, 2011a; Lynch, 2011b; Lynch, 2015). A linchpin of Al-Jazeera's agenda was to recast Arab identity into a unified, pan-Arab citizenry possessed of abundant, legitimate grievances against the region's similarly authoritarian regimes (Lynch, 2011b). For years, the channel had fueled protest movements, broadcasting their messages—which would have been suppressed in local media—and protecting protesters from a measure of repression (Lynch, 2011a). Early in Tunisia's uprising, for example, Al-Jazeera broadcast reports comparing Tunisia's economic woes to those plaguing the broader region, framing the reports to emphasize pan-Arab problems of unemployment and high prices, as well as authoritarian mismanagement of the economy (Zayed, 2011). These reports framed a region-wide narrative of oppressed nations on the verge of revolt (Lynch, 2015). It should be added here that media coverage of the region's ensuing turmoil generally hewed to this paradigm: Domestic media, controlled by or close to the state, remained silent about local unrest, but Al-Jazeera and foreign media provided

significant coverage, with Al-Jazeera the most influential source (Alterman, 2011; Howard & Hussain, 2011; Lynch, 2015).

Al-Jazeera's uses of digital and social media also merit mention. Partly because its journalists had been expelled from many Arab countries, the station relied extensively on phone videos and social-media feeds of citizen journalists for material from the uprisings in Tunisia and elsewhere (Bossio, 2013; Howard & Hussain, 2011; Zayed, 2011). Zayed (2011) found that Al-Jazeera used mobile footage for 60 percent of its material from Tunisia. Bossio (2013) found that Al-Jazeera used twice as many social-media sources as BBC or CNN in covering the revolution in Egypt. This consistent usage of content provided by protesters and locals also led many viewers—both supporters and opponents of the protesters—to perceive Al-Jazeera as firmly on the side of the protesters (Zayed, 2011). Al-Jazeera was also able to use this content again to fatten its own internet and social-media coverage of the rebellions (Howard & Hussain, 2011).

1.3.3 Internet Usage in Tunisia Before and During the Arab Spring

In 1991, Tunisia became the first Arab country to connect to the internet, but by the time the revolution erupted in December 2010, the Tunisian government was practicing thorough censorship of internet content, surveillance of internet users, and harassment of bloggers and internet activists (Ben Gharbia, 2010; Freedom House, 2011; El-Issawi, 2012; Kuebler, 2011; Lim, 2013). Despite pervasive censorship and surveillance, Tunisian political activists used the internet extensively in the years preceding the revolution (Kuebler, 2011; Lim, 2013). Activists established the online think tank Takriz in 1998, and other activists founded websites in the next few years

(Lim, 2013). In 2004 a group of activists established the independent blog Nawaat, which provided a forum for the activist community and remained an important news source throughout the revolution (Lim, 2013). The case of activist and journalist Siham Bensedrine is emblematic of the relationship between the regime and activists: The government rejected his application to publish a newspaper, so he started an online news site; the government blocked the site and opened a criminal investigation of his work (Freedom House, 2011; Kuebler, 2011). As with opposition journalists in traditional media, online journalists and activists were subject to police surveillance, intimidation, arrest, and prison sentences (Freedom House, 2011; Kuebler, 2011; Lim, 2013). The development of the online public sphere in Tunisia mirrored the divide in the country's geographical development: The internet in Tunisia remained an elite space, in that digital activists worked almost exclusively in urban areas and focused on abstract questions of human rights, democracy, and censorship (Kuebler, 2011; Lim, 2013).

By 2010 the government's internet agency was blocking at least 30 websites pertaining to politics, news, and human rights (Freedom House, 2011). The agency blocked the website of the opposition communist party—which operated legally—as well as the sites of its online weekly and an affiliated blog (Kuebler, 2011). Internet cafés were under police surveillance, and customers had to provide their names and personal information before going online (Freedom House, 2011). Given these conditions, websites that offered discussion fora typically demanded that users not discuss domestic politics; bloggers deleted others' comments that might arouse the censors' wrath (Kuebler, 2011). In sum, many internet users feared government reprisal for their actions online—these forms of censorship and self-censorship were symptomatic of the country's

shriveled public sphere (Kuebler, 2011). To evade regime surveillance, many internet users became skilled with the use of proxies, and they would take advantage of these capabilities once the revolution erupted (Kuebler, 2011).

In the months preceding the revolution, internet censorship worsened: The government blocked an online forum for democratic debates before it had been officially launched; in October the government also blocked the website of the Tunisian Observatory for Union Rights just hours after it launched (Freedom House, 2011). Government censors moved beyond blocking political websites to regularly blocking social-media sites such as Facebook and YouTube, as well as photo-sharing and music-sharing sites, arts and culture sites, and even cooking websites (Ben Gharbia, 2011; Freedom House, 2011; Kuebler, 2011). Internet users bristled at the increased censorship; they started online petitions and founded Facebook groups to protest the new restrictions, and activists called for a demonstration on May 22, 2010 against internet censorship—the first attempt to move online protest to the streets (Ben Gharbia, 2011). The abortive demonstration exemplified the limited reach and power of online activism in Tunisia: While hundreds of sympathizers marched in front of Tunisia's embassies and consulates in Paris, Brussels, Bonn, New York, and Montreal, the two main organizers of the demonstration were detained on May 21 and coerced by security forces into recording video messages calling off the rally (Ben Gharbia, 2010). A few dozen protesters showed up on the main square in Tunis (Ben Gharbia, 2010). Activist Sami Ben Gharbia (2010) wrote the following week that while the presence of even those few protesters should be an inspiration, online activism had yet to reach the offline mass of Tunisians.

When the revolution began in December 2010, about 37 percent of Tunisians used the internet (Freedom House, 2011). Roughly 20 percent used Facebook, while Twitter was used by less than 1 percent (Pollock, 2011; Wulf et al., 2013). An urban-rural divide existed in internet access, as well: The 13 coastal provinces had 232 public internet access points, while the 11 interior provinces had only 27 such access points (Brisson & Kontinis, 2012). In this dissertation, I frequently examine how individuals used the internet during the revolution, so the following lines provide only a summary of internet-related events during the revolution that had a nationwide or international reach. One internet event from November 2010 merits mention: On November 28, the activist blog Nawaat launched TuniLeaks, pages concerning Tunisia from the WikiLeaks release of U.S. diplomatic cables (Ben Mhenni, 2010). Diplomats described in the cables the pervasive corruption of the regime, particularly how Ben Ali's wife Leila and her extended family gorged at the state's trough (Wulf et al., 2013).

Analogously to the protests simmering in the interior regions for the first two weeks after Bouazizi's suicide before spreading nationwide, the cyber-conflict between activists and the government grew significantly with the beginning of 2011. On January 1, the authorities disabled the secure https protocol nationwide and began phishing for the passwords of leading activists (Lewis, 2011; Ryan, 2011b). The regime then deleted the Facebook pages and email accounts of several activists (Lewis, 2011; Ryan, 2011b). On January 2, the hacktivist group Anonymous declared the start of Operation Tunisia, launching distributed denial of service attacks on at least eight government websites and helping develop software for activists to evade government detection (Howard & Hussain, 2011; Ryan, 2011b). The government responded on January 6 by arresting at

least six prominent bloggers and internet activists, including the rapper Hamada Ben Amor, known as El General, who had a week earlier released a widely shared protest song denouncing the president (Lewis, 2011; Ryan, 2011c).

The urban-rural divide persisted in the ways that activists used the internet: Security forces attempted to brutally quash growing protests in the interior towns of Kasserine and Thala, also blocking the roads surrounding the towns, which had spotty internet service; protesters recorded videos on their cellphones of the clashes and of the dead and wounded, and they smuggled the data over the nearby border with Algeria, from which activists either uploaded the videos or delivered them to activists in Tunis for uploading (Lim, 2013; Pollock, 2011). The foregoing section introduces the dynamics of internet access and use in Tunisia, and in chapters 3 and 4, I examine in greater detail the interplay of regime censorship and social-movement actors' uses of specific internet sites as part of a hybrid network for a variety of tasks related to the revolution.

1.3.4 Narratives About Social Media and the Arab Spring

In this section, I discuss how many news media reduced the Arab Spring to a Facebook event; this sloppy heuristic gave rise to my first interest in questions of how revolutionaries used communication technologies during the Arab Spring, an interest that grew into this dissertation. As news coverage spread of the revolution and its prominent and dramatic online component, news outlets and other observers began to frame the narrative of the uprising as a Facebook revolution or social-media revolution. On the day that Ben Ali fled Tunisia, *Wired* magazine's website published a story with the headline "Tweeting Tyrants Out of Tunisia: Global Internet at Its Best" and the lede: "Even

yesterday, it would have been too much to say that blogger, tweeters, Facebook users, Anonymous and Wikileaks had 'brought down' the Tunisian government, but with today's news that the country's president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali has fled the country, it becomes a more plausible claim to make" (Anderson, 2011). To Anderson's credit, he avoids such hyperbole in the rest of the article and discusses how revolutionaries used social media for organizing and to disseminate information (Anderson, 2011), but the intimate conflation of revolution and social media became a regular trope in the mass media. This narrative of social media as a synonym for the Arab Spring uprisings gained such currency that when *The New York Times* covered the nascent civil war in Syria in late 2012, they framed the conflict with the heuristic, "If the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt were Twitter Revolutions, then Syria is becoming the Skype Rebellion" (Chozick, 2012). Even this year, *Wired* is still framing a story that analyzes politically the years following the Arab Spring under the headline, "Social Media Made the Arab Spring, But Couldn't Save It" (Hempel, 2016). The article approaches the relationship between social media and the Arab Spring much more subtly than the headline indicates, but that headline heuristic abides. On the opposing side, so many rushed to debunk the claim that social media either caused or determined the outcomes of the revolutions that prolific journalism professor Jay Rosen (2011) published a blog post in February 2011, just after the fall of Mubarak in Egypt, defining these debunking articles as an established genre with set of standard practices. Moving beyond anecdotes, Bossio (2013) found that CNN and BBC repeatedly mentioned the use of social media during the uprisings—these networks mentioned social-media use twice as much as Al-Jazeera English, which was relying markedly on social media as sources for its reporting.

In short, news media reports constructed a narrative that closely linked social media to the Arab Spring revolutions. This dissertation is not intended to debunk claims that social media caused or determined the revolutions; that can be done in a paragraph. Stepanova (2011), for example, points out that no correlation exists between internet and/or social-media penetration or usage rates and the countries that experienced revolts: For instance, Gulf states have by far the highest internet penetration rates among Arab countries, yet only Bahrain's citizens rose in sustained protest—and their demonstrations were quickly snuffed out. At the other extreme, the majority of the adult population of Yemen is illiterate, and internet infrastructure is scarce, but Yemenis rebelled and ousted their longtime dictator. As for determining the outcome of the Arab Spring uprisings, Barany (2011) writes that the military's response to demonstrations is the most reliable predictor of a revolution's outcome during the Arab Spring, along with factors such as foreign intervention, the strength of the opposition forces, and the old regime's resolve to persevere. Moreover, many scholars have argued compellingly for the central role of traditional media, especially Al-Jazeera, in communicating protesters' grievances and actions to their fellow Arabs (see, e.g., Cottle, 2011; Khondker, 2011; Lynch, 2011b; Rinke & Röder, 2011; Russell, 2011).

However important were the multiple uses of communication technologies such as social media, scholars have presented compelling arguments to explain the causes of the revolutions (e.g., decades of authoritarian misrule) and the factors that largely determined the revolutions' outcomes (e.g., the reactions of the armed forces and the actions of external actors). Indeed, the citations I included at the beginning of this chapter from the UNDP reports condemning the miserable political and social conditions of many

Arab nations, as well as the preceding accounts of events, were intended to present a preponderance of evidence that social media—or any communication technology alone—did not cause or determine the revolutions. This dissertation, then, does not pursue any misleading question about the relationship between media use and the causes of the revolution. On the contrary, this dissertation provides a rich, full account of the many ways that social-movement actors in Tunisia used a range of communication media during the revolution. In the following section, I will lay out the foundations and research questions of the dissertation.

1.4 Research Questions

This dissertation contributes new, important knowledge about how the organizers of and participants in Tunisia's Arab Spring revolution used communication media during the revolution. This dissertation provides a unique account of how these social-movement actors used communication technologies, and it builds theory in multiple disciplines. I have rooted this dissertation in framing theory, for several reasons. The act of framing is inherently an act of communication, an act of making meaning. Yet, as Entman (1993) describes, framing is an area of scholarly research that bears on multiple disciplines; by calling on framing theory, I am helping to fulfill Entman's (1993) call for communication to serve as a master theory or a locus where crucial theories, such as framing, can be brought together from various disciplines that might not otherwise know about or build on one another's concepts. I am not aware of any research that conducted as many interviews with revolutionaries in Tunisia about how they used communication technologies, so this dissertation breaks new ground in exploring and explaining the

relationships among framing processes, new technologies such as social media, social movements, and revolution.

The new knowledge created by this dissertation is significant also because the Arab Spring is one of the most important geopolitical events since the fall of communism almost 30 years ago. The importance of the data and findings here are enhanced by their provenance from the country where the Arab Spring began. Unlike other Arab Spring uprisings, the organizers and participants in Tunisia could not base their frames or framing strategies on any other rebellion, nor could they draw inspiration from any previous success. Instead, these individuals constructed the first frames of the Arab Spring, and this dissertation provides a unique account of how organizers and participants constructed and deployed these frames, as well as an account of the collective-action frames. In chapter 3, I will present and discuss the data and findings about how the social-movement actors constructed collective-action frames, about their techniques and strategies for constructing frames, and about the how they used communication technologies to disseminate these frames. In chapter 3, I will also present and discuss the data on whether and why mediated frames resonated with the interview subjects. In chapters 4 and 5, I will discuss how the interview data on neo-patrimonialism and revolution theory, respectively, overlap with framing processes and communication more broadly.

The overarching research question of this dissertation is: How did organizers of and participants in the Arab Spring revolution in Tunisia use social media and various websites, al Jazeera and other television stations, and telephones to construct and deploy mediated frames for collective action? This overarching research question, along with

overlapping elements from theories of neo-patrimonialism and revolution, suggest the following research sub-questions:

R1: How did organizers of and participants in the Arab Spring revolution in Tunisia use media, particularly social media, Al-Jazeera and other television stations, and telephones?

R2: How did organizers of and participants in the Arab Spring revolution in Tunisia construct a shared protest identity and revolutionary ideology, and in what ways did they use these communication media in this process?

R3: How did organizers of and participants in the Arab Spring revolution in Tunisia construct a collective action frames, and in what ways did they use these communication media in this process?

R4: How did organizers of and participants in the Arab Spring revolution in Tunisia use these communication media—and what kinds of strategies did they employ—for framing processes such as frame alignment?

R5: Were there any relationships between frame resonance and specific communication media?

R6: In what ways did organizers of and participants in the Arab Spring revolution in Tunisia exemplify the active roles of users in the social construction of technology?

R7: What kinds of grievances did organizers of and participants in the Arab Spring revolution in Tunisia hold against the Ben Ali regime?

I will answer these questions in chapters 3, 4, and 5, as well as in the conclusion to the dissertation, chapter 6. In the following sections, I will describe the research methods that I employed to derive answers to these questions.

1.5 Methodology

In these sections on my research methods, I discuss the theoretical foundations of my methodological approach, and then I explain how I constructed the interview questionnaire, and I conclude with a discussion of data collection and analysis.

1.5.1 The Social Construction of Technology

In this section, I will describe the theoretical underpinning of my qualitative and quantitative methods. I will also discuss this theory in chapter 2 as part of my discussion of how social-movement actors in Tunisia used communication technologies, but my focus in this section is how this theory informed my approach to developing the interview questionnaire. The major theoretical approach I employ draws on an abundance of previous studies in the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS), which is based on the theory of the social construction of technology. The social construction of technology posits that a technology does not arrive with fixed traits or predetermined effects or uses (Oudshoorn & Pinch, 2003). In social practice, the social construction of technology

means that social groups make decisions about which technologies to pursue; they then make design decisions and decisions about the production, distribution, and deployment of technologies. Users then construct new sets of traits of technologies (Bijker & Pinch, 2012). The field of STS has moved in recent years toward building more theory and methods allowing for the analysis of technology from the perspective of the user, in an approach called user studies. For example, *How Users Matter* (2003), by Oudshoorn and Pinch, details the application of this approach in a variety of areas of science and technology. They describe user studies as a shift in the field from considering users as passive recipients to active participants in the social construction of technology, noting that one way to study users is within the context of a social movement, as was done in this dissertation (Oudshoorn & Pinch, 2003).

One crucial element of this methodology is the concept of interpretive flexibility, which means that a technological artifact (e.g., a telephone, the television, the internet) does not have only one interpretation, reading, or meaning; instead, its traits are wholly dependent on how various social groups construct its uses and development (Bijker & Pinch, 2012). As such, this research followed methodological symmetry (Bijker & Pinch, 2012), which is the principle that no single account of a technology's use or uses is privileged as being truer than another account. In other words, there was no presupposition about the correct uses of communication media. To accomplish this, questions were largely open-ended, so as to allow interview subjects to construct the "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) necessary to provide an accurate, situated, and complete account of their uses of communication media (see Appendix B for the questionnaire).

It should be noted that STS and user studies have been applied to the Arab Spring, though not in the way I do here, because the researchers did not interview the technology users. Comunello and Anzera (2012) lend support to my approach by criticizing some Arab Spring scholars for failing to appreciate the importance of the users of media technologies, who helped shape the technologies' meanings and significance. The scholars critique those who frame the narrative as social media affecting the course of the revolutions, because this claim is based on an assumption of media impact or media effects in which a communication technology is an autonomous actor. These concepts of impact and effects derive from the theory of technological determinism, which assumes that technology, as an exogenous and autonomous actor, produces one-way effects on society (see, e.g., Heilbroner, 1967). This view fails to consider the ways in which technological and social factors interact, such as how a single technology can be used for many different purposes—even by one user—or how users can deploy many different technologies to accomplish the same process (Comunello & Anzera, 2012, 458). In developing the interview questionnaire, I approached interview subjects as co-constructors of the communication technologies that they used. When I asked interviewees about each medium of communication, I asked whether they used the medium for a specific range of uses, and I asked them open-ended questions to elicit, as fully as possible, all the ways that they used these communication media. This section explained the theoretical assumptions of the interview questionnaire, and I will explain in the next section the purposes of the individual questions on the questionnaire.

1.5.2 The Interview Questionnaire

In creating the interview questionnaire, my goal was to develop questions that would interrogate the framing practices of the interviewees and interrogate the areas where framing practices overlap with the theoretical terrain of neo-patrimonialism and revolution theory. In the following chapter, I will explain this overlap in detail, but, in brief, the overlap with the former relates largely to the interview subjects' grievances against the regime, while the latter broadly relates to the construction of a shared identity among all participants in the revolution as a mass of protesters with shared grievances. Considering that scholars have robustly built the field of framing in social movements since the 1980s (for a review of the field's first 25 years, see Snow & Benford, 2005), I imagined that many sets of standardized questions would exist for interviews with social-movement actors, but this was not the case. I contacted nearly a dozen scholars by email—including Robert Benford, who helped create the field—and they all replied that no such standardized questionnaire (or even standard questions) existed, nor had they themselves developed a questionnaire that they had used repeatedly. Ryan (2005) laments the field's lack of research among social-movement actors, which might provide an explanation for the absence of such an interview questionnaire. In response to my emails, I received two questionnaires, and, using the scholarly literature in the field and these two sample questionnaires, I constructed a questionnaire that could serve as a standard for future interviews with social-movement actors. The central strength of this questionnaire is that it interrogates the framing process both from the perspective of the social-movement actors who construct and deploy frames, as well as from the perspective of

these actors as the recipients of mediated frames who constructed meaning from the frames they encountered.

The interview questionnaire consisted of five sections. The first section included questions about specific communication media and how interviewees used these media during the revolution; I asked whether and how frequently interviewees used each medium. I asked about social media, blogs, news websites, other websites related to the revolution, and email. As I did for all communication technologies, I followed up with specific questions about usage for any positive response, which allowed me to collect individual data about the uses of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and of various individual blogs and news websites. I asked about interviewees' usages of television, radio, newspaper, telephone, and interpersonal communication related to the revolution, with follow-up questions for specific media outlets such as Al-Jazeera, France 24, etc. For social media, telephones, email, and face-to-face communication, I asked follow-up, open-ended questions about what the interviewees used these media for. From the initial answers, a set of categories emerged, and in later interviews I then asked closed-ended questions about these specific usages, if an interviewee used a particular technology. These usages included exchanging news, persuasion, encouragement, analysis, organizing tasks, and others. In the following chapter, I will explain how I called on theoretical frameworks from framing, neo-patrimonialism, and revolution theory, to formulate questions that would both deepen understanding of the revolutionaries' work and the revolution itself, as well as allow me to build theory in each of these fields.

The second section of the interview questionnaire included separate question for organizers and for participants. Organizers are defined as individuals who worked to set

dates, times, or places of protests; engaged in the systematic recruiting of other participants and/or organizing those other participants' participation in protest events, whether online or in person; or held official positions in organizations that engaged in pro-revolution activities. Participants are defined as those who were physically present at public shows of support for the revolution, including demonstrations, marches, and sit-ins, but who did not engage in the above activities, even if these individuals did use communication media to express their support for the revolution and encourage others' participation. This delineation allowed for an examination both of how interviewees constructed frames and how participants constructed the meaning of frames, as well as how participants constructed and deployed their own frames. I asked both populations to describe all the frames that they constructed, their techniques for constructing frames, their framing strategies, as well as whether they varied their strategies for different audiences or different media. I asked participants how they found out about the protests that they attended, as well as whether and how their participation was influenced by what they had seen in various media.

The third and fourth sections of the interview questionnaire included questions rooted in revolution theory and neo-patrimonialism, and I will explain in the following chapter how these questions are connected to framing and to communication more generally. The fifth, final section of the interview questionnaire included demographic questions about age, sex, education, class, and political affiliation and level of interest.

I want to emphasize that these interviews were semi-structured, rather than following only the prescribed questions, and the uses of open-ended and follow-up questions is central to the contribution to research methods that this questionnaire

represents. By employing a semi-structured method, I could guide interview subjects into discussion of the research questions while allowing them the space to present their accounts of the ways in which they used various media technologies. The open space in the semi-structured interview provided the opportunity for a full accounting of media use, rather than collecting data only from a narrow and restricted set of queries. For example, in response to the closed-ended questions about framing, interviewees provided rich data about the range of frames and framing strategies that they deployed—and in response to my open-ended, follow-up questions on framing, the interviewees' answers revealed that they were, in a larger sense, constructing their own narrative of the revolution, as an alternative to the narratives constructed and deployed by the regime-controlled news media and social media, as well as by other traditional news media. The concept of the alternative narrative is perhaps the most important theory that I build in this dissertation, and I would not have arrived at this insight without using a semi-structured, open-ended approach.

1.5.3 Data Collection and Analysis

I conducted the interviews in Tunisia from January 18 to February 17, 2016. I conducted interviews with 44 organizers and participants from throughout the country, including interview subjects who spent the revolution in Tunis, Sidi Bouzid, Kasserine, Gafsa, Sousse, and elsewhere. Of the 44 interviewees, 11 were women, nine were from the country's poorer, rural interior, and they spanned a wide range of education levels and class backgrounds. Many had been political activists for years—and some for decades—before the revolution, and others had been uninterested in politics until the revolution.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in English, French, and Arabic, and a professional translator was employed for the interviews in Arabic and for some of the interviews in French. I translated some of the interviews in French. Three interviews were conducted by Skype; the rest were conducted in person. Interviews were recorded, though in rare instances some words were inaudible, or the recorder failed to record brief segments. I employed a transcription service to transcribe the interviews.

The interviewee population was a snowball sample. To find the interviewees, I called on some people whom I knew who had been active in Tunisia during the revolution. These contacts gave interviews and then put me in touch with other organizers and participants, and through this process I got in touch with all interviewees. During my time in Tunisia, demonstrations and unrest led the government to declare an evening curfew for about a week of my research. Despite the turmoil, I was able to travel to the interior of the country, where the revolution began. In Sidi Bouzid, I was able to find Ali and Lassad Bouazizi, who are cousins of Mohammed Bouazizi, longtime opposition activists, and organizers of the first protests of the revolution. After some haggling with my translator, also a longtime opposition activist and organizer during the revolution (and interview subject), the two Bouazizis agreed to an interview, which was the first interview that they had given in two years. They told me that they had been unhappy with the inaccurate representations of what they had said in previous interviews, and their accounts do upend many of the existing narratives of the revolution, as I recount largely in chapter 3. Throughout the dissertation, I use the names of these two organizers, as well as the names of other revolutionaries whose names have already been used by scholars, so that this dissertation can contribute to the historical record of this epochal event. These

individuals were typically prominent online activists, but some were public figures, such as the publisher Karim Ben Said and Sadok Ben Mhenni, who had been a political prisoner decades before the revolution and remained a prominent opposition activist. All but two interviewees gave consent to the use of their names in this dissertation. When referring to interviewees, I typically indicate whether the individual was an organizer or a participant, and I usually indicate where the interviewee resides, as a way to put these accounts into perspective. Using unfamiliar names in every instance of citing an interview would, in my opinion, potentially distract from the content of their interviews. I also use the first person throughout this dissertation—rather than referring to myself as "the researcher" or writing around my presence—as a way to maintain the consistency of the constructivist approach pervading this work. I am acknowledging that this interview sample, as well as the content of the interviews, and, most importantly, my conclusions from the data, are contingent upon my unique interventions and constrained by the limits of my perception and understanding. To be clear, I believe that other researchers would obtain similar data from an entirely different sample of organizers and participants, but it would be dishonest to the foundations of this dissertation, if I did not show readers my individual determinations about this data—and the content of this dissertation.

I undertook both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the interview data. For the quantitative analysis, I coded the interview transcripts according to a coding schema that I developed with Dr. Michael J. Rohrbaugh, a professor of clinical psychiatry and behavioral sciences at George Washington University and professor emeritus of psychology at the University of Arizona. I will present the interview data in chapters 3, 4, and 5, but here I want to briefly explain the coding methodology. Where possible, I

created simple binary categories that could be coded as a zero or a one and entered into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis by the SPSS software.

For example, I used binary categories to code whether interviewees used a particular technology (telephone, email, etc.) or specific medium (Facebook, Twitter, Al-Jazeera); whether they used a medium for a specific purpose (to exchange news, to persuade, to analyze, etc.); whether what they saw in the medium resonated with them (I'll explain in greater detail in the following chapter); whether they constructed and deployed specific frames (corruption, economic issues, the crackdown on protesters, etc.); whether they identified with fellow protesters; whether they blamed the Ben Ali regime for the problems that led to the revolution; and for other questions, as well. For certain communication media, such as Facebook, telephones, Al-Jazeera, France 24, Al-Arabiya, and Tunisian state television, I also created entries for the number of minutes for which each interviewee used that medium. For certain questions, I created a unipolar Likert scale ranging from one to five, with five indicating a relatively higher value. I used this scale to code answers to the question about the degree to which participants' choice to join the protests was influenced by what they had seen in the media; the question about whether participating in the protests gave interviewees a feeling of agency; how interviewees viewed the revolution's chances for success; and to code interviewees' perceptions of the strength of the regime before the revolution.

I then used SPSS to determine means and standard deviations, and I examined correlations between variables by calculating two-tailed significance and p values. Where relevant, I cite the results in chapters 3, 4, and 5. It bears mention that I alone coded all interview data, so the question of intercoder reliability remains open. However, my

findings rely as much on my qualitative analysis of the interviews, and the respective findings from the qualitative and quantitative data do not diverge. I must also acknowledge the years that had elapsed between the revolution of 2010-11 and my interviews in January and February of 2016. During the interviews, I cautioned interviewees about potentially faulty memories, so most interviewees freely admitted when they could not recall the information that would allow them to answer interview questions. However, most interviewees were able to provide detailed accounts of their relevant experiences during the revolution—many of them talked about how the revolution was a seminal moment in their lives, so many elements of their experiences remained in their memories.

1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the events of the Arab Spring and the media coverage of those events, and I introduced my research and research methods. This introduction to the broad outlines of this dissertation lays the groundwork to present the relevant scholarly literature, which I will discuss in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is split into five sections, each one focused on a different field offering theories that this dissertation will call upon. The sections are presented in an order roughly corresponding to how often that field's theories will be used to interrogate the collected interview data. The exception to this is the field of communication theory, which is presented last because this home field of the dissertation provides the site that ties together the concepts and the theories from the foregoing sections.

2.1 Social Movements, Social Media

2.1.1 Social-Movement Theory

The primary theoretical pillar of this work is the study of framing in social movements, which derives from Goffman's work on frame analysis and the construction of meaning (1974). Snow and Benford (1992), who adapted Goffman's theory to the field of social movements, define a frame as an "interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment" (p. 137). Individuals or groups construct frames for the experiences in their lives in order to identify and locate events within the contexts of their lives and of the social world around them (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). Put another way, the framing process is a process of constructing the meanings of words and events. Goffman's work—and the study of framing in social movements—is rooted in the concept of the social construction of meaning; that is, "meanings do not automatically or naturally attach themselves to the

objects, events, or experiences I encounter, but often arise, instead, through interactively based interpretive processes" (Snow, 2004, p. 384). The concept of the social construction of meaning is central to this dissertation, because it underlies the relevant literature in the fields of communication media and of science and technology studies, which follow below. The social construction of meaning also undergirds the methodology of this research, so it is important to point out at the outset the significant overlap and fit in the foundations of this dissertation. This concept was also the basis for the interviews that I conducted in Tunisia; I asked organizers and participants in the Arab Spring revolution in Tunisia multiple questions about the meanings—the frames—that they both imputed to and derived from the events of the revolution, such as the frames that they constructed and deployed through various communication media, as well as the frames that they encountered in communication media. I also asked them about the meanings that they attached to the regime and to their own participation in the revolution. In this section, I will define framing, discuss collective action frames, master frames, resonance, and the process of framing—the construction of meaning in the building and in the decoding of mediated frames.

To continue defining terms, I shall adopt Tilly's (2004) definition of a social movement as a series of contentious performances, displays, and campaigns by which ordinary people make collective claims on others. Social movements, such as the demonstrations and protests in Tunisia in 2010-11, can also be understood as networks of individuals connected through a shared interest or goal (Tilly, 2004). The network concept allows us to perceive a social movement as a core or cores of thickly connected nodes among movement leaders and organizers linked through thinner connections, or

weak ties, to potential participants (Granovetter, 1973). This schema provides a visual, partial account of the process of how grievances, shared among connected individuals, erupt into a mass movement (McAdam, 1986; Tarrow, 1998). A mass movement arises when individuals connected by the weak ties[1] of association, such as work colleagues, neighbors, or members of a group such as a union or civic association, coalesce around a shared goal or shared identity based on a political belief (Granovetter, 1973). These linkages among the members and potential members of a social movement will be important for understanding both the framing process and how individuals use communication media in social movements, as I will discuss shortly.

Framing is one of the three major traditions in social-movement theory (Dolata & Schrape, 2016); the other two are resource-mobilization theory, which examines how the availability of new organizational resources shapes the rise of new social movements (e.g., McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Oberschall, 1973), and political-opportunity theory, which explores how movements bring about social change by exploiting new political opportunities (e.g., Jenkins, 1985; McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 1994). Snow and Benford developed the framing approach (e.g., Snow & Benford, 1988, 1992; Snow, Rochford, Jr., Worden, & Benford, 1986) based on the premise that organizers of and participants in social movements are agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning (Snow & Benford, 1988). They define framing as the signifying activity or meaning construction in social movements intended to mobilize adherents and potential adherents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 198; Snow, Benford, McCammon, Hewitt, & Fitzgerald, 2014, p. 27). Coe

[1] As opposed to the strong ties of family and friendship.

(2011) adds that the framing process does not occur only in such typical and traditional social-movement discourses, but also in the practices of interaction, communication, and negotiation between social movement actors and other individuals or groups (p. 508). This observation underlines a point vital to this dissertation: Social-movement actors in Tunisia's revolution engaged in the production and deconstruction of frames not only while using social media or the internet more broadly, but also during any interpersonal communication—mediated or unmediated—related to these contentious political events. In other words, Coe is providing a definition of hybridity, using various communication technologies and face-to-face communication for the same ends. Hybridity will be a key concept in our discussion of social media and communication technologies in the following section, because of the hybrid network constructed and deployed by social-movement actors in Tunisia.

The specific frames produced by this active, interactive, and contentious process of reality construction are called collective-action frames (Snow & Benford, 1988). The literature defines collective-action frames as emergent, action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate social-movement activities and campaigns (Benford & Snow, 2000, pp. 614-18; Snow & Benford, 1988, pp. 199-204; Snow & Benford 1992, p. 137). To be more concrete, these sets of meanings can provide motivation for individuals to act, diagnose the causes of grievances, attribute blame for grievances, and propose remedies and solutions for grievances (Benford & Snow, 2000). I will discuss motivation and mobilization in greater detail below, but here I should note that when the framing paradigm was first articulated, Gamson developed a somewhat different approach that focused primarily on frames of injustice as a necessary condition of

collective action (e.g., Gamson, 1995; Gamson, Fireman, & Rytina, 1982). Scholars, including Gamson, write today of injustice frames as one of the types of collective-action frames that social movements can offer to adherents and potential adherents (Gamson, 1995); other types of frames include inequality frames, collective-identity frames, and agency frames (for reviews of types of collective-action frames, see Morrison & Isaac, 2012, and Coley, 2015). In the paragraphs below on the framing process, I will discuss in greater detail the questions on the interview questionnaire that interrogate the construction and decoding of frames, but here I should note that organizers were asked to describe the frames that they worked to construct, as well as how those frames potentially differed for different audiences and in different media. Interview subjects were also asked, in the semi-structured discussion of their interactions with media during the revolution, to discuss the mediated frames they encountered.

Another analytical tool to examine collective-action frames is the concept of the master frame. As the name suggests, a master frame appeals to diverse social groups and enables them to coalesce around a central explanation or problem-solving schema (Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 140). Howard et al. (2011) analyzed the Arab Spring revolution in Tunisia and conclude that social-movement leaders had used digital technologies to create a "freedom meme" that mobilized masses of citizens around ideas of liberty and revolution (p. 3). Working in greater detail, Lim (2013) argues that Tunisian activists transformed the suicide of Mohammed Bouazizi into a master frame; when his cousin Ali lied that Mohammed had been a college graduate who could not find appropriate employment, Mohammed's suicide was rendered a symbol of the fight for justice, freedom, and dignity. In other words, this was a paradigmatic injustice frame, but the

revolutionaries expanded the frame beyond the basic economic grievances of the rural, interior poor to produce a frame including freedom and dignity, as well. I might debate whether these three ideals constitute a single frame; in any case, Lim did not travel to Tunisia, and she conducted only two phone interviews with Tunisian activists, so this dissertation will provide far more empirical evidence about the collective-action frames or potential master frames that organizers and participants constructed.

Before discussing frame traits, I should briefly address other types of framing somewhat prominent in the literature, even though this dissertation will not use this typology. Benford and Snow (2000) created categories of diagnostic, motivational, and prognostic framing; they refer to these categories as framing tasks that, as their labels suggest, offer diagnoses of social problems, motivation for collective action, or prognosis for how to resolve grievances. However, these categories are not mutually exclusive; a call to mobilize in protest, for example, can be both an example of motivational framing and prognostic framing. Moreover, the term collective-action frame carries an implication of a call to action or mobilization. Because of the conceptual fuzziness of these frame types, this area of framing "tasks" does not seem as fruitful an avenue of inquiry to examine Tunisia's Arab Spring as does looking at the processes of framing by organizers and participants, as well as the qualities of the frames that organizers sought to construct and that resonated with participants.

Resonance is the term used in framing to describe the variable that measures how effective or potent a collective-action frame is for mobilization (Snow & Benford, 1988; Valocchi, 2005). Ferree (2003) goes so far as to conclude that "the cultural resonance of such framing strategies is often seen as a sine qua non of movement success" (p. 305).

The field is not unanimous in naming or firmly defining the attributes of a frame that allow it to resonate with those who encounter it. Surveying the state of the framing approach, Noakes and Johnston (2005) critique the fuzziness of Snow and Benford's (1988) early attempts to tease out the components of resonance. Noakes and Johnston offer their own terminology intended to simplify and make more precise these attributes, and for the purposes of this dissertation I can usefully apply two major, overlapping concepts from the theories of Noakes and Johnston (2005) and of Snow and Benford (1988): credibility, or the fit an individual sees between a frame and the events addressed by the frame; and narrative fidelity (Snow and Benford call this cultural compatibility), or the fit an individual sees between the frame and the individual's understanding of the individual's culture, immediate environment, or larger worldview. This latter attribute is also discussed by scholars as the fit between frame and the dominant culture or a society's prevailing values and principles, which brings us to an important point about the field of discourses in Tunisia in 2010. McCammon, Muse, Newman, and Terrell (2007) observe that within a single society it is highly likely that more than one hegemonic discourse holds sway (p. 733). As the later section on neo-patrimonialism will explain, the dominant discourse in Tunisia, advanced relentlessly and mercilessly by the Ben Ali regime, was regarded as illegitimate—and simply false—by many in the country on the eve of the revolution. Assuming, then, that there was more than one narrative of or discourse on the Tunisian situation at this time, it follows that multiple frames could resonate across different individuals and groups, depending on how they understood their environment. Because more than one discourse was available, there did not need to be one master frame. Without a preponderance of preliminary evidence, I should not assume

that there was one or necessarily hypothesize that one obtained. Similarly, while one hypothesis of this dissertation is that collective-action frames did resonate with the revolution's participants, I cannot assume that frames resonated simply because people went into the streets. I will not claim that the framing done by organizers was the sole or even primary cause for more than a million Tunisians to occupy their streets and demand the fall of the regime. The interview questionnaire probed frame resonance by asking specifically whether and how the frames that subjects encountered in various media fit with either their understanding of events or their beliefs and values. Participants were also asked why they decided to take part in protests and how that decision was affected by what they had encountered in various media.

The concept of resonance, moreover, is especially important in this research because it connects framing theory to the revolution-theory concept of protest identity, in that both concepts describe the frames that motivate revolutionary thought and action through a resonance with prominent cultural narratives. I will address revolution theory in a separate section below, but here I should note that Noakes and Johnston (2005) discuss how the grammar of a resonant frame typically draws on the cultural stock of phenomena that can be presented in a way that appeals to some form of shared identity. The interview questionnaire addressed this aspect of resonance by asking participants to expound on whatever shared identity they might have perceived with their fellow revolutionaries.

Understanding frames and frame traits is only part of the necessary conceptual framework. More central to this dissertation are the processes of constructing and decoding frames. Snow et al. (1986) coined the term frame alignment to describe the

process of the strategic production of frames by organizers and activists to align their movement with what they perceive to be the values and goals of allies and potential adherents (p. 468). Frame alignment, then, is the process of trying to construct a frame with resonance. The process of frame alignment, as Coe (2011) notes, is always situated and contingent; social-movement actors tailor their framing to the political and cultural conditions emergent in their environment. Moreover, social-movement actors adjust their framing for different intended audiences—organizers can work to construct different frames that they think will align best with the worldviews of their presumed recipients (Coe, 2011). Similarly, actors from the same social movement can construct different frames for the same audience (Coe, 2011). However, as Ferree (2003) observes, social-movement actors can also construct and diffuse frames without the strategic intent of mobilizing or winning over adherents, though such a framing process would not be frame alignment but just frame construction. The interview questionnaire dedicated several questions to asking organizers about how they constructed frames. Organizers were asked about their intent in framing, as well as what types of frames they wanted to construct, and whether they used different frames for different audiences or in using different communication technologies. It is important to note that participants also engaged in frame production when they communicated about the revolution and/or attempted to convince others to join; participants were asked about their processes of frame alignment, as well as whether they used different frames for different audiences or in different communication media.

The interrogation of frame alignment reflects this dissertation's roots in the social construction of meaning, because frame alignment is a process of meaning construction.

It is important to underscore the processes of encoding and decoding frames as central to this research. Writing some two decades after introducing the framing approach, Snow and Benford (2005) lamented the scholarly focus on frames (and framing contests between rival framings of issues) and revealed that they had wanted from the beginning to concentrate on the production of meaning, the signifying work—the processes of framing. As a process, they continue, framing is an interactional, situated process in which frames are socially constructed. Ellingson (1995) adds that the framing process is dialectical, in that social-movement actors can and do alter their framings in response to events as an issue or social movement develops. As illustrated in the interview questions cited above, this dissertation makes a meaningful contribution to the field of framing by investigating in detail the signifying work and meaning construction by social-movement actors and by those who encountered frames of the revolution. I do need to briefly address the challenge that the framing literature offers no term for the process of meaning construction by the latter group; to be sure, the concept of resonance is based on the reactions of those who encounter frames, but resonance refers as much to the quality or qualities of a frame as to the process of making meaning by individuals. I will simply refer to this process as meaning construction, signifying work, or decoding by frame recipients.

To expand on the significance of this research for framing in social movements, I should point out Ryan's (2005) condemnation that framing theory has long examined frames at the expense of the framing process (p. 118). Ryan writes that scholars "rarely" interact with the social-movement actors who create frames, the processes the actors employ, or the audiences who mobilize in contentious politics (p. 118). This dissertation

accomplishes all three of these much-needed tasks, and I should point out that Ryan echoes the urging of Snow and Benford to train our attention on the signifying process of framing. Ellingson (1995) argues that the field needs more research that examines how the framing process emerges within a contingent, situated environment—in other words, how framing strategies reflect the context of where and when they emerge, and how they change or remain constant during the course of collective action (p. 107), and this dissertation answers that call. Perhaps more importantly, this dissertation uses framing as a bridge to other disciplines and as a way to add to knowledge of other social phenomena, as Oliver and Johnston (2005) implored framing scholars to do. I use concepts from framing to contribute to theories of neo-patrimonialism and revolution, as I will discuss in the respective sections of the literature review. Moreover, Snow et al. (2014), in assessing the state of framing studies some 25 years after their landmark articles establishing the field, note how framing has been used in a variety of scholarly disciplines and suggest that researchers need to integrate work on social-movement framing with framing research from other fields (p. 38). This dissertation answers the call of Snow et al. by melding social-movement framing with the study of framing in communication, where framing has long been a core field of inquiry, as I will show in the section on communication literature below.

2.1.2 Social Movements and Social Media

As I discussed in the introduction, much media coverage of the Arab Spring emphasized the use of social media by revolutionaries. The use of social media—and of many other digital technologies—by social-movement actors has become a focus of

inquiry throughout the three major paradigms of social-movement theory (Tudoroiu, 2014). To put it simply, social media—the same as any other communication media—are sites where framing takes place. Communication technologies are sites for constructing and negotiating meaning, sites where framing contests are waged by actors in contentious politics. This begs questions about whether and how social media might differ from other media as framing sites; Tudoriou (2014) puts it charitably when he writes that the literature remains "fragmented" in its findings (p. 347). Many scholars limit their work to niches related to social media, leaving the field scattered in its analysis of this technology, and debate continues about the impacts of social media, the mechanisms through which social media have impact, and whether these impacts tend to be positive, negative, or somewhere in between (Tudoriou, 2014). One crucial conceptual tool that has been developed by multiple scholars (e.g., Aday, Farrell, Lynch, Sides, & Freelon, 2012; Bellin, 2012; Fuchs, 2017; Lim, 2013; Lynch, 2011a; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012) is the hybrid network. A preponderance of evidence shows that media users are not encountering news about—and frames of—social movements solely on social media; traditional news media continue to play a significant role in the coverage of social movements. The term hybrid network encompasses offline as well as online encounters related to a social movement, such as when media users discuss a contentious issue, speak in person with social-movement actors, or when social-movement actors meet. The concept of the hybrid network reinforces the point that individuals encounter frames of social movements in a variety of environments. The work of framing, whether the construction of frames or the decoding of meaning, also takes place in a variety of environments. Later in this section, I will review research that examines the specific

hybrid networks at play during the Tunisian revolution. However, I first need to discuss the uses of social media and hybrid networks for constructing collective identity, nurturing information cascades by overcoming fear, fostering weak ties, reducing the costs of organizing, raising the costs of repression.

One common finding in the literature is that social-movement actors use social media to create a collective identity among adherents and potential adherents (Breuer, Landman, & Farquhar, 2014; Brym, 2014; Garrett, 2006; Tufekci, 2017). Brym (2014), for example, concludes that in Egypt during the Arab Spring revolution, new communication technologies promoted the construction of collective through emphasis on the people's shared grievances against the feckless regime. Writing about Tunisia's Arab Spring revolution, Breuer et al. (2014) found that social-movement actors used social media to direct attention toward the regime's atrocities in reacting to the protests, in an effort to form a national, collective identity that would support the uprising of a legitimately aggrieved population. Garrett (2006) explains that the promotion of a collective identity is crucial in social movements because organizers can more easily tap into a shared identity to mobilize adherents. It is important here to draw out further the connection between framing theory and the use of social media to craft a collective identity: The construction of collective identity is a perfect example of frame resonance. As Noakes and Johnston (2005) observe, social-movement actors draw from a shared cultural repertoire in working to fashion a frame that will resonate—in other words, one major way that a frame can resonate is by tapping into elements that will communicate a message about a collective identity. The process of frame alignment, then, can also at times be the process of constructing frames of a collective identity. If recipients report

that they felt a sense of shared identity when encountering mediated frames, then I can reasonably conclude that a frame has resonated. The interview questionnaire directly asks participants whether they felt a sense of shared identity with fellow protesters, and it also gives them the opportunity to discuss whether their understandings of mediated frames made them feel a sense of collective identity. One might well ask why social media should be any different than any other media platform in presenting frames that might construct collective identity; to be sure, images on satellite channels such as Al-Jazeera or on online news websites could also foster a sense of collective identity, a point that reinforces the hybrid nature of the media networks through which frames are disseminated and decoded. I should also note here the overlap between the construction of a collective identity of aggrieved citizens with authoritarian political theory and with revolution theory, both of which I discuss below.

As social media can help with constructing collective identity, they also can help nurture the kind of information cascades that allow individuals to overcome fear and mobilize in protest. Granovetter (1978) decades ago laid out the dynamics of this kind of information cascade: An activist core signals a political position to sympathetic individuals who share the same position; realizing that such a view is commonly held, more individuals decide to publicly express that position, which leads to a greater likelihood of mobilization in protest. Social-movement research refers to a state of pluralistic ignorance (Tufekci, 2017, p. 26), when individuals in a society do not know that their opinion is widely shared. Social media help overcome pluralistic ignorance by allowing people to reveal their preferences in a semi-public setting and discover shared views speedily but without (yet) going into the street (Tufekci, 2017). Seeing a

previously taboo position expressed and supported on social media—or through any digital communication technology—might make others feel safer to declare their own support for such a position (Aday et al., 2010). Aday et al. (2010) and Bennett, Breunig, and Givens (2008) also find that social media amplify the speed of disseminating and receiving the kinds of information that can lead to mobilization. To be sure, this trait of amplified speed holds true for many of the ways in which individuals use social media, but it holds particular relevance for nurturing information cascades in this sense. The important, contingent circumstance in many Arab countries before the revolution was a commonly held fear of the regime as an omniscient, omnipotent force for repression; two months before Bouazizi's suicide, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mohammed ElBaradei, an Egyptian, said that an uprising in Egypt was inevitable and that its timing "only depends on when people will be able to throw off this culture of fear that the regime has created" ("Political Change Will Come in Egypt," 2010). Writing after the revolution, Lynch (2011a) reports that revolution participants in Tunisia and Egypt spoke of breaking a wall of fear (p. 304). As I hypothesize later in this dissertation, organizers in Tunisia used social media and other communication technologies to urge recipients to overcome their fears of the regime—and of protesting against the regime—by creating frames of the regime as weak and of the rebels as strong and successful. I also argue that interview subjects felt empowered by their participation in the revolution; such a state would not only support the hypothesis that they overcame existing fears but would also support aspects of revolution theory that I discuss below. The revolutionaries' experience of fear is also another aspect of a collective identity constructed and decoded through mediated frames, whether the identity of an aggrieved people oppressed by a superficially robust

regime or the identity of a populace suddenly realizing its power to overthrow an unjust regime.

Scholars have long identified the formation of weak ties among individuals from different ages, classes, and geographic locations as crucial to mobilization and to social-movement success, and the literature strongly suggests that social media and other new digital tools are effective at forming and nurturing weak ties. Granovetter (1973) influentially argues that weak ties among individuals (as opposed to the strong ties among family members and friends) are necessary for the wide exchange of information important in social movements, such as spreading event details for protests. Social-movement theorists (see Dalton, 1996, and Hinnebusch, 2015a, for example) contend that building coalitions among individuals connected only by weak ties (i.e., coalitions that bring together individuals varying in age, class, and geographic location) is a necessary condition for mobilization and for the success of a social movement. McAdam and Paulsen (1993) find that as social networks among potential participants and activists become denser, the likelihood of mobilization increases. Tufekci (2017) explains one hybrid process through which users of new, digital communication technologies put their weak ties to use for the work of social movements; in her words, this is how social media "alters the architecture of connectivity across an entire society even when much of it is not yet connected" (p. 18). Users of social media, some of whom are linked only by weak ties, can communicate information relevant to a social movement in person or by telephone to other people, with whom these users might have strong or weak ties (Tufekci, 2017). Specifically, social-media users can provide information to weakly linked acquaintances to mobilize for social movements, Polletta et al. (2013) write.

During the Arab Spring, this bridging of social milieus, such as the linking of core activists to mass publics, might have been the "key role" played by social media, Aday et al. (2012, p. 5) surmise. Writing about evidence from Egypt's revolution, Lim (2012) concludes that Facebook afforded the growth of the opposition movement by expanding connections beyond strong ties to individuals with weaker ties to the movement and to each other, as well as connecting members of various opposition groups. Breuer et al. (2014) used resource-mobilization theory to analyze the use of social media during Tunisia's Arab Spring revolution, and their hypothesis is that social media enabled collaboration that bridged differing social groups and so helped a large cycle of protest to emerge.

To be sure, a project mapping the social-media connections among individuals in Tunisia (or elsewhere) during the Arab Spring would constitute fascinating research that I would look to follow up on after this dissertation. The bridging of weak ties is inherent in the construction of collective identity and in an information cascade to overcome fear of the regime—both of which involve the framing process. For an identity to be considered collective in social movements, it must be shared across individuals beyond those with strong ties. In regard to information cascades, social media and other communication technologies can provide the underlying architecture for the public presentation of previously taboo views among weakly linked individuals. In other words, diverse, weakly linked social groups in Tunisia experienced both fear of the regime and the overcoming of that fear. To sum up this point, these uses of social media overlap: to create collective identity, to nurture information cascades to overcome fear, and to connect weakly tied individuals.

In analyzing the significance of social media for social movements, scholars frequently frame the use of social media as lowering the costs for social movements. Most pertinent to my investigation of framing, social media enable users to construct and disseminate frames largely for free. Aday et al. (2010) aver that social movements might find it more difficult to fashion a coherent message because so many actors are able to take part in constructing and disseminating frames. This dissertation will provide data about the unity—or lack thereof—of the frames constructed and deployed by social-movement actors in Tunisia. The interview questionnaire gave interview subjects the opportunity to describe all the frames that they constructed and deployed. Another way that social media lower costs is by making it easier for social-movement actors to conduct some organizing tasks, such as deliberating about strategy. During Egypt's Arab Spring, for example, Egyptian bloggers and activists used the blogosphere to deliberate among themselves (Lim, 2012), and I pursued similar data in the interviews for this dissertation. I queried subjects about whether they used social media to deliberate about the framing that they wished to create, as well as which other media they might have used to construct strategy. Many scholars have probed how social media can lower the costs of social movements' logistics: Tufekci (2017) discusses how social media lower the costs of publishing and finding information on social movements; Lynch (2011a) finds that leaders of Tunisian and Egyptian opposition movements, in the months before the Arab Spring, used social media to consult with each other about how to organize protests; Bellin (2012) writes that Arab Spring revolutionaries used social media to coordinate and synchronize large-scale protests.

We could accept all these findings as true, and yet that would still not tell us whether any Tunisian decided to go into the streets because of what she or he had encountered on social media, nor would it tell us whether social media were the primary tools for organizing protests during the Arab Spring. Tunisians—and other Arabs—could also encounter frames on television, in newspapers, on news websites, and so on. As for the use of social media for organizing tasks, activists could also meet in person, and they could spread word of demonstrations in face-to-face conversations, phone calls, and text messages. In other words, social media are part of a hybrid network of communication technologies. Much current literature on the use of digital media in social movements has developed this theory of hybrid networks. In their analysis of Egypt's Arab Spring, Tufekci and Wilson (2012) define the hybrid network as the complex intertwining of multiple online and offline spheres (p. 376). Specifically, they cite the interrelated use of the internet, satellite television stations, and cellphones, especially for taking photos and recording video (p. 377). Social media, they write, are "superimposed" on existing social ties among friends, families, and neighbors (p. 376). In terms of social-movement theory, to be clear, this dissertation is seeking new knowledge about how organizers and participants used communication technologies for framing—but this dissertation is also rooted in theory from science and technology studies, which I discuss in a later section and which is concerned with how users construct the uses of technologies. Here I discuss the social-movement literature on hybrid networks, inasmuch as these networks were used for framing and for other tasks of social movements within the remit of this research.

Writing about Tunisia's Arab Spring, Lim (2013) hypothesizes that the hybrid network underlay the collective action of the revolution. To return to Tufekci and Wilson's (2012) example from Egypt, revolutionaries there used their phones to take photos and record video that they would later share on online media. Framing, then, depended on raw material from one communication technology subsequently disseminated on another technology. Moreover, satellite television networks such as Al-Jazeera broadcast these same frames, as the stations shared images and video from social media (Bellin, 2012); the television channels and social media referred to one another as sources (Aday et al., 2012). When the Egyptian government tried to block the internet, Al-Jazeera gave information about the times and places of demonstrations (Bellin, 2012). Organizers in Egypt also used hybrid networks for logistics: They used cellphones to coordinate protest logistics, blogs to deliberate strategy, and word of mouth to spread notice of planned demonstrations (Lim, 2012). About half of Tufekci and Wilson's (2012) Egyptian survey respondents said they had first heard of the protests in face-to-face conversations. In interviews, I asked after the use of the hybrid network. Subjects were asked about whether, how often, and how they used social media, blogs, news websites, phones, television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. Organizers were asked how they constructed frames for different media, and participants were asked how they heard of the first protest that they attended and how they found out about protests in general. The semi-structured interview also allowed them the opportunity to compare the mediated frames that they encountered in various media, as well as the subjects' reactions to these frames.

Importantly, hybrid networks can also increase costs in one important respect: When security forces violently repressed demonstrations during the Arab Spring, videos of regime brutality recorded by cellphones and by traditional broadcast media were disseminated on television and on social media, which led to wider mobilization against regimes, international sanctions and support for the protesters, and defections in the security forces (Bellin, 2012; Hinnebusch, 2015a). In other words, the use of the hybrid network to document regime brutality increased the costs of state repression. My questionnaire explored this dynamic by asking subjects their impressions of the mediated frames they encountered, as well as asking why they decided to participate or organize, and asking for their views of the regime.

This uncovering of the regime's tactics was afforded by another trait of social media and of the hybrid network: They evaded the control of the states roiled by the Arab Spring, despite these states' long history of authoritarianism (Garrett, 2006). Morozov (2011) has examined in detail how states are using new digital technologies to increase or otherwise augment surveillance, control, and repression, but during the Arab Spring communication technologies largely escaped the control of the authoritarian Arab state (Bellin, 2012). Satellite television networks broadcast from abroad, whether Al-Jazeera in Qatar or Western channels, and social-media users were usually anonymous (Bellin, 2012). As I show in the following section, these authoritarian states had for years worked assiduously to stamp out dissent in communication media, so the semi-structured interviews pursued discussion about any uses of media by subjects to evade state surveillance and repression.

In conclusion, Aday et al.'s (2010) analysis of how social-movement actors in Iran's 2009 Green Revolution used social media and other communication media is worth noting, because the scholars call for future qualitative research to collect data on the use of these technologies in social movements and during protests, especially data on how these media are used in practice. This goal of this dissertation is in part to help address that question.

2.2 Neo-Patrimonialism

In the decade preceding the Arab Spring, one of the central questions asked by scholars of politics in the Middle East was how to explain the apparently imperishable persistence of the region's similarly authoritarian regimes (Valbjorn & Bank, 2010; for examples, see Bellin, 2004; Brownlee, 2002; Brumberg, 2003; Carothers, 2002; Cavatorta, 2010; Heydemann, 2007; Hinnebusch, 2006). This focus on Arab regimes with continually robust authoritarianism, nearly impervious to democratizing trends, represented a reaction to the pro-democracy obsessions of many political scientists in the 1990s following the so-called third wave of democratization, symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 amid the collapse of Soviet satellite regimes in Europe. Fukuyama's (1992) seminal *The End of History* outlined the case that, with communism vanquished in the Cold War, all contemporary nation-states must bend toward liberal democracy at some point in the not-too-distant future. Many Middle East researchers busied themselves in the 1990s seeking out the buds and shoots of the allegedly inevitable transitions to liberal democracy (Valbjorn, 2015; Valbjorn & Bank, 2010; Valbjorn & Volpi, 2014). By the turn of the century, however, it had become clear that

the region's autocracies had only marginally, if at all, moved toward more democratic institutions in the political, economic, or social spheres.

In 2002, Carothers called for an end to the ceaseless attempts to fit the ill-suited transition paradigm onto the apparently unperturbed despots of the developing world. He dismantled a half-dozen assumptions of the transition paradigm, illustrating how empirical data refuted notions of an abrupt flood of democratizing developments. Many scholars of the Middle East then turned to elucidating a model of contemporary Arab authoritarianism and the mechanisms by which it continued to flourish. The field did not produce a unified theory with a name and standard definition; scholars put forward models that differed slightly, sometimes only in which elements they accorded greater or lesser importance in keeping oppression strong, but the various models did cohere in basic ways, so that a clear theory can be teased out. I use the term neo-patrimonialism to denote this political framework. The term cropped up in the works of many of the most cited scholars of the region; Brownlee (2002, 2007, 2009) explicitly used the term throughout his writing to depict the Middle Eastern authoritarian state, and Hinnebusch, who (2006) rejected Brownlee's arguments in other areas, agreed that neo-patrimonialism is more useful than other models to understand the region's political landscape (2015a, p. 213).

This theory was built on the foundations of Max Weber's (1978) account of patrimonialism in relation to authority and domination. In contrast to the bureaucracies that he saw becoming entrenched in the West, Weber used the term patrimonialism to describe an alternative system of governance that orbits around the ruler, who controls nearly all of the loci of political and economic power. Weber's model was reshaped in the

1960s to explain the political, economic, and social structures of many post-colonial nations; Roth (1968) defines this system as "personal rulership on the basis of loyalties that do not require any belief in the ruler's unique personal qualification, but are inextricably linked to material incentives and reward" dispensed by the potentate (p. 196). The neo-patrimonial state is not constituted upon any specific ideology, but rather its main goal is maintaining the power of the ruler (Brownlee, 2002). The economy of the neo-patrimonial state is based on the looting of resources and institutions for the personal gain of the ruler and those close and loyal to him (Kamrava, 2010). As for social structures, the vast majority of the public in such a country is depoliticized and unorganized (Comunello & Anzera, 2012).

To define neo-patrimonialism as it obtained in Tunisia on the eve of the revolution, I will first call upon the theory of authoritarian persistence presented by Bellin (2004). After noting the "patrimonial logic" (p. 143) of the relationship between the state and the military, Bellin identified a robust and effective coercive apparatus—encompassing the military and various security forces—as the primary trait of the political structure and the key to the success of the region's autocrats. Brownlee (2002) also describes the use of unrestrained violence against political opponents by Arab dictators, but Bellin's account importantly provides a bridge to the revolution theory of Skocpol (1979), which I examine in next part of this chapter. In other words, Bellin (2004) emphasized the role of the coercive forces in preventing the embers of mass disaffection from bursting into revolutionary flame—preventing a transition to democracy, to be sure, but also ensuring the continuing dominance of the authoritarian state.

Brumberg (2002) labeled a number of contemporary Middle Eastern states as liberalized autocracies, with liberalization referring to the opening by the state to allow for a small measure of political contestation. Brumberg lumped Tunisia into the alternative category of total autocracy, where the state brooks no political contestation, but his model is helpful for understanding Tunisia in that it brings out one aspect of the newness of this form of patrimonialism: Arab states were not closed off from the world, but rather were enmeshed in globalized trends of economic liberalization and civil-society movements. Brumberg (2011) later applied a model of (and the term) protection rackets to the neo-patrimonial states, in order to explain the mechanism by which regimes nurtured the allegiances of various social groups (ethnic, sectarian, etc.) and their cooperation in oppressing competing groups. In this account he blamed growingly pervasive security forces and the corruption of the elites for the uprisings of the Arab Spring, but he posited these factors as exogenous to his model of liberalized autocracy. Here is where neo-patrimonialism provides a fuller theory of political structure than liberalized autocracy: Robust security forces and elites corruptly gorging themselves on the fruits of the state are integral traits of neo-patrimonialism. These traits were not recent, exogenous developments but rather hallmarks of the system, as Bellin (2004) demonstrated with coercive forces. One could argue that neo-patrimonialism thus inevitably contains the seeds of its own destruction, but such philosophical meanderings are outside the scope of this work. Instead, I will build theory that elucidates how the attributes of neo-patrimonialism in Tunisia also created potential revolutionary energy.

Heydemann (2007) provided the most complete and detailed account of neo-patrimonialism in his description of "authoritarian upgrading" (p. 1). He listed five major

traits that encompass the novelty of neo-patrimonialism and its contours before the Arab Spring: appropriating and containing civil societies; managing political contestation; capturing the benefits of selective economic reforms; controlling new communications technologies; and diversifying international linkages. Heydemann described these regimes as reconfiguring authoritarian governance to accommodate and manage changing political, economic, and social conditions. The impetus for these five upgrades was external pressure from Western allies and international institutions such as the IMF. Yet Arab autocrats were adapting the mechanisms of democracy, such as regular elections and free markets, to maintain and sometimes enhance their power. Heydemann elaborated a process of authoritarian learning, as tyrants throughout the developing world adopted tactics for upgrading that had succeeded in other authoritarian states. Heydemann's model explained how these countries made superficial structural moves that corresponded to the symptoms of democratization even as the domination of the ruler over the political, economic, and social interstices of power remained seemingly undiminished.

To sum up, my model of neo-patrimonialism will include all of the traits in the foregoing paragraphs. This term fits better than authoritarian upgrading or liberalized autocracy because it recognizes the foundational dynamic of a personalized autocracy in which the ruler controls the doling out of parcels of political, economic, and social power. It is important to point out that choosing this term also means rejecting an approach that would label this political form a purely Arab authoritarianism, as well as rejecting Weber's term sultanism (1978) or the contemporary term neo-sultanism (Chehabi & Linz, 2008; Stepan & Linz, 2013), inasmuch as these terms imply an Arab

exceptionalism or even a whiff of Orientalism (Said, 1978). The traits and techniques of authoritarian rule are not limited to the Arab world, but rather are easily applicable to states worldwide: Repressive coercive forces, as well as a kleptocracy founded on resource-extraction rentierism, bedevil many nations outside the Middle East and North Africa. Moreover, approaching the political framework through the lens of a more generally applicable neo-patrimonialism will also allow me to generalize my findings for a wider range of analogous conditions.

One possible objection to the use of neo-patrimonialism is that the revolutions and uprisings of the Arab Spring betray the inadequacy of the model, which was elucidated to explain the persistence and stability of such regimes. This criticism, however, incorrectly assumes that neo-patrimonialism, in accounting for the continuing strength of Arab autocrats such as Ben Ali, implies that they are impervious to change or challenge. On the contrary, scholars have repeatedly emphasized that neo-patrimonial states can develop serious weaknesses, typically through the worsening economic conditions brought on by kleptocratic rule, high levels of corruption, fecklessness of the ruling elite, and overdependence on security forces (see, e.g., Lust-Okar, 2005; Ulfelder, 2005). Further, Heydemann (2007) and Brumberg (2002) based their models on the changing nature of the neo-patrimonial political structure in the face of globalization and the end of the Cold War. The model of neo-patrimonialism, in the end, provides a parsimonious explanation of the causes of the Arab Spring: Grievances of pervasive repression and economic exclusion were left to fester as a small but growing number of citizens gained experience in a marginal civil society that allowed them to mobilize (partly through the use of new technologies) cross-class coalitions; when the military did not protect the

regime—either because it had splintered along sectarian lines or chosen to abandon the ruler because the military had achieved enough institutionalization independent of the ruler—it created the political opportunity for the people to overthrow their despots, regardless of how long the autocrat had ruled (Hinnebusch, 2015a).

In the chapters that follow, I will look to employ the concept of neo-patrimonialism in analyzing the interview subjects' discussions of their grievances against the regime, and specifically in their discourses on the security forces, the economy, the relative level of politicization of the citizenry, and their uses of communication technologies. Because the interview subjects were organizers of and participants in the revolution, I will not approach neo-patrimonialism through an investigation of governance practices and behaviors, but rather through the lens of the individual perceptions and frames of the interview subjects. In other words, this dissertation will not examine structural features such as diversifying international linkages or IMF involvement as an impulse to changing practices of governance. The interview questionnaire sought evidence partly through the two questions that explicitly asked interview subjects how they viewed the regime and whom they blamed for Tunisia's problems at the time of the revolution. More data was collected through the question asking interview subjects which impressions of the regime and of the opposition they tried to convey through various forms of communication. Subjects also expressed their perceptions of the regime in their answers to the question about why they decided to participate in the revolution or join civil-society groups. Interview subjects also described the contours of their grievances in the open, semi-structured parts of the interviews. I should note that citizen grievances against a government or regime are certainly not

unique to neo-patrimonial states; grievances are a necessary condition to demonstrate the presence of a neo-patrimonial regime, but it is the specifics of the grievances and the dynamics of civil society that support or refute the model.

For example, the theory of neo-patrimonialism explores in detail the military and security forces in such a regime, but I will not seek evidence concerning the level of institutionalization of the military or the mechanisms of patrimonial allegiance in the dyad of the autocrat and the Tunisian security forces[2]. Instead, I will look for evidence among the interview subjects' perceptions of the robustness of the coercive forces (Bellin, 2004). Beyond Bellin's focus on this trait, an active and occasionally excessive coercive apparatus is also part of Brumberg's liberalized autocracy (2002) and Heydemann's authoritarian upgrading (2007), in that the security apparatus was a main tool for managing the extremely modest degree of political contestation allowed in the neo-patrimonial framework. One marker of the activity of the coercive forces is citizens' fear; evidence of a robust security apparatus would be fear of repression in a variety of forms, such as fears of surveillance of internet use, telephone communication, interpersonal communication, and public or private gatherings. In such a political structure, citizens would also fear being active in civil society or expressing opposition to the regime, or perhaps even in discussing political issues. Moreover, citizens would also likely have experienced repression at the hands of the state, whether in their encounters with the coercive forces or in the encounters of their families, friends, or acquaintances.

[2] Hinnebusch (2015b) argued that Tunisian military's relatively high level of institutionalization and relatively secondary status to security forces in terms of domestic repression made the military less patrimonial and more susceptible to abandoning the ruler in a revolt, an argument that supports the model of neo-patrimonialism, but that debate falls outside the scope of this dissertation.

Brumberg's (2002) insight on the state's tolerance of some political contestation would mean that I would expect to find some interview subjects who were able to participate in such tolerated forms—in Tunisia, concretely, unions and professional organizations—while encountering oppression when engaging in disfavored forms of political contestation. To interrogate this aspect of neo-patrimonialism, interview subjects were asked why they became involved in the opposition, whether as organizers or participants; they were also explicitly asked whether they used communication technologies to express fear.

The political economy of the neo-patrimonial state is based on an absolute ruler maintaining a loyal ruling clique by opening largely for them alone the spigots of the state's economic resources. A rentier political economy is the "special feature" of Middle Eastern countries, wrote Hinnebusch (2006, p. 379), though he primarily meant the rents from oil revenues. Tunisia has relatively little oil, but it fit the dynamic of a state-controlled economy, haltingly liberalizing in the post-Cold War era, in which the ruler focused foremost on state economic resources and foreign benefactors while ignoring public opinion and accountability to the citizenry (Ghalioun, 2004). Hallmarks of such a neo-patrimonial state are the corruption and cronyism of the ruling caste in the practices of governance, economic liberalization, and privatization, as well as the concomitant economic exclusion of broad swaths of the citizenry, manifested in high unemployment rates, frequent underemployment, and a felt dearth of economic prospects. In Tunisia, Ben Ali's wife Leila Traboulsi and her extended family were particularly gluttonous in their appetite for the state's bounties (Wulf et al., 2013). The major political attribute of this model is extremely limited political contestation, put into practice partly through

transparently sham elections, which undercuts perceptions of the legitimacy of the autocrat's lengthy tenure. In answers to the interview questions about how subjects viewed the regime, how they attempted to frame it for others, and why they decided to get involved in the rebellion, support for this dynamic of the neo-patrimonial model would be grievances about corruption, the nepotistic kleptocracy of the Traboulsi clan, and wealth concentration among the ruling clique more generally. I would also expect to hear grievances about elections and Ben Ali's legitimacy, and I expect that interviewees would have faced problems finding a job and would voice grievances about their economic prospects and exclusion from the country's economic gains.

Civil societies in neo-patrimonial states are typically emaciated. Bellin (2004) explained this as a result of fear of active coercive forces. Brumberg (2011) posited it as a result of the regime co-opting certain groups, which then become dependent on the state for their wellbeing and thus unlikely to partake in potentially oppositional civil-society initiatives. Heydemann (2007) described the feeble civil society as an intentional outcome of the state's careful, if heavy-handed, management of a low level of political contestation to adapt to the circumstances of a globalizing world in which the model of liberal-democracy was at a zenith. In other words, civil-society institutions exist through a paucity of formal structures such as unions, professional associations, even political parties and NGOs, but activists are likely to have as much experience in being persecuted as in activism. If this model were accurate, I would expect to find that many interview subjects in the category of participants had not had any civil-society experience before the uprising. However, the population of organizers was never intended to be representative; if many of the organizers had experience as activists, this would not

necessarily refute neo-patrimonialism as a theory. The theory would predict that activists would have had experience in a narrow range of civil-society practices sanctioned by the regime, and it would predict that activists from outside the approved bounds would probably have suffered repression. The generally depoliticized nature of neo-patrimonial society should mean that interview subjects with little civil-society experience would respond to the questions about their ideology by largely not having an articulated political worldview, beyond a set of grievances against the regime, however detailed that might be. I would also expect interview subjects to discuss a fear of being politically active, in response to the question about why they got involved in the demonstrations.

Heydemann's (2007) elaboration of the neo-patrimonial model postulated that such regimes would, at the beginning of the 21st century, expend significant effort to control new communication technologies. As I noted in the Introduction, the Ben Ali regime had for years asphyxiated the internet in Tunisia, conducting surveillance, persecuting, and hacking the websites of journalists, activists, and opponents. However, during the rebellion Tunisia's revolutionaries continually used communication technologies such as the internet and cell phones. For the model of neo-patrimonialism, the key point is whether the state tried to control these technologies; that it failed in this one field does not mean that the model loses its power to explain or predict. It predicts that neo-patrimonial regimes would move aggressively to stamp out unbridled use of communication technologies, and success in doing so partly explains the longevity of such regimes. At the same time, this dissertation is not arguing that Ben Ali's failure to control communication technologies brought about the fall of the regime or was even one of the causes of his regime's demise; apportioning the relative importance of various

causal factors is not the goal here, but rather casting light on how revolutionaries used communication technologies. What I would expect, to find support for the theory, is that interview subjects more active in the revolution would report incidents of surveillance, harassment, and hacking of their use of communication technologies. Interview subjects might express fear of using communication technologies because of pervasive state control. I do know that the revolutionaries did almost fully control their uses of communication technologies, but I might also expect that they would report having to take measures to elude state control, such as masking their identities or using proxy servers to hide their locations.

2.3 Revolution Theory

Revolutions like those of the Arab Spring have long been an item of scholarly interest. Tracing its beginnings to the early 20th century, the field of revolution theory is considered to have gone through four generations of scholarship (Beck, 2017). This dissertation will contribute to theory-building in the fourth generation of revolution theory by adding to the scholarship on the field's concept of protest identity; the interview questionnaire interrogates this concept by asking subjects how they deployed and understood mediated frames during Tunisia's Arab Spring revolution. This section begins with a review of the field's evolution, then defines key terms used in today's scholarly literature, and concludes with an examination of the variable of protest identity, which is central to this research and serves as a bridge among this field, neo-patrimonialism, and social-movement studies.

Scholars in the early 20th century worked to establish revolution studies as an academic discipline that would allow for the study of revolutions across all cases (Beck, 2017). These first researchers, however, largely confined their analyses to European revolutions embodying the fall of an *ancien regime* (Beck, 2017), and their work was descriptive, lacking a theoretical structure that could explain the phenomenon of revolution (Goldstone, 1993). This approach also focused primarily on the dynamics of the state in revolution. The second generation of revolution theory grew out of research in the 1960s that investigated the revolutionary populace (Beck, 2017). Huntington (1968), Gurr (1970), Smelser (1963), and Johnson (1966) explored topics ranging from mass grievances to individual decisions to participate in revolution, delving into psychology and the discontents of modernization. The third generation, epitomized in the work of Skocpol (1979), was given the label of social-structural theory (Goldstone, 1993, 2001). The state again was the primary unit of analysis, this time approached as an autonomous actor and arena for revolutionary action (Skocpol, 1979). The state was studied as a structure that could suffer strains from outside states, from autonomous political elites who could become disenchanted with the state and battle it, and from other structural weaknesses that would allow the peasantry space to organize and to construct a collective framework for mobilization. Tilly (1976, 1978) and Moore (1966) were among the first to study revolutionary populaces as social movements, though their work analyzed mobilization mostly through questions of organization and tactics. This state-centered theory would dominate the field for roughly two decades, but its flaws were revealed by the 1979 revolution in Iran, as well as the wave of revolutions in 1989 in Soviet satellite states—these uprisings did not include a peasantry up in arms or an autonomous elite that

had broken its allegiance to the state (Beck, 2017; Goldstone, 1993, 2001). The structural theory of the third generation lost currency amid the cultural turn in the social sciences, as it lacked the tools to address questions of agency (Goldstone, 1993). To be sure, the fourth—and current—generation of revolution theory still analyzes the state, elites, and broad swathes of national populations, but the field now focuses on the processes of revolution with presumptions that revolutions are contingent and emergent, and that individual revolutionary actors possess agency (Goldstone, 2001; Gurr, 1970, 2000). These assumptions also undergird this dissertation, and I will return shortly to this critical idea of revolution as process.

Beck (2017) describes the field today as "vibrant, but disjointed" (p. 168), and he laments that too often scholars limit their explorations of new events to niche sub-topics rather than as instantiations of a broad, generalizable paradigm. Though debates remain unresolved on questions such as predicting outcomes and judging regime stability, there is a strong consensus that robust sets of factors consistently occur across the universe of revolutions: State structures are under external strain; regimes are brittle, even if in relative terms; certain types of regimes are more brittle and at risk of revolutions; and successful revolutions involve large coalitions of social groups and elites as challengers (Beck, 2017). In the article that laid out the tenets of the fourth generation, Goldstone (2001) defined revolution as "an effort to transform the political institutions and the justifications for political authority in a society, accompanied by formal or informal mass mobilization" (p. 142).

One of the main innovations of fourth-generation revolution theory is its emphasis on the process of revolution, an approach that leads back to the concept of the

construction of collective identity, which unites revolution theory with social-movement theory and the theory of neo-patrimonialism. Tilly (1995) critiques third-generation revolution theory for its efforts to organize the field around invariant models of revolution, in which uniform phenomena would be invariably repeated. Instead, he argues for an ontology of revolution in which processes and outcomes depend on time, place, and path. For instance, a consistent feature of revolutions is that mass mobilizations of cross-class coalitions coalesce around a shared identity of protest—but the traits of that shared identity, as well as the mechanisms through which diverse social groups coalesce, are contingent and emergent. Reflecting Tilly's concerns, Goldstone (2001) acknowledges that scholars are paying far more attention to the processes of revolution and that structural conditions may prepare the ground for revolution, but the shape of the contestation is often determined only during the course of events (p. 152). It is significant for this dissertation that Goldstone (2001), in laying out the tenets of the fourth generation, recognizes the overlap between revolution theory and social-movement theory in the importance of emergent, contingent processes. Goldstone explicitly praises analysts of social movement for their studies of mobilization and ideology, and he extols the usefulness of these analysts' work (p. 142).

One process that represents a crucial condition for a revolution is a coalition among opposition groups that bridges class and other divides to mobilize against a regime (Beck, 2017; Goldstone, 2001, 2011a, 2011b). Scholars in the third generation already included cross-class coalitions as a primary mechanism of revolution success (see, e.g., Dix, 1984; Goodwin & Skocpol, 1989). In fourth-generation revolution theory, Goldstone (2011a) writes that virtually all successful revolutions were forged by cross-

class coalitions (p. 457). The chances for success rise with a cross-class coalition because states have fewer potential allies and usually see their legitimacy weakened when taking action against a broad coalition of social groups. Moreover, elites are more likely to desert a state if protesters represent a wide spectrum of society (Goldstone, 2011a). Such a broad-based coalition is difficult to achieve because it requires bridging the disparate interests of groups otherwise separated by ethnicity, religion, geography, or socio-economic status (Goldstone, 2011b). Countless uprisings have failed because they remained the revolt of one group, rather than of a coalition (Goldstone, 2011b). Goldstone (2011a) has analyzed Tunisia's Arab Spring revolution, and he finds that cross-class coalitions indeed coalesced there (and in Egypt and Libya); specifically, he writes that workers, students, lawyers, Islamists, labor unions, and residents of both rural towns and major cities mobilized together (p. 458).

The foregoing begs the question, how do would-be revolutionaries form cross-class coalitions, when various social groups have different political interests? One answer put forth by scholars in the field is the construction of protest identities, a concept that this dissertation uses to tie this field to theories of neo-patrimonialism and of social movements. Goldstone (2001) defines revolutionary protest identity as "a sense of being part of a group with shared and justified grievances, with the ability to remedy those grievances by collective action" (p. 153). He writes that the construction of protest identities is "critical" (p. 153) and social-movement actors' adoption of a shared protest identity is "the common denominator for successful activism" (p. 153). Protest identities, Goldstone (2001) continues, have three sources: The identity of the protest group helps to justify and validate the individual's grievances; adopting the identity gives a sense of

empowerment, autonomy, and efficacy to members; and the regime can also help construct protest identity, if the regime labels protesters as state enemies or acts against protesters. I should note that the first two sources reflect the move away from the state-centered structural theory of the third generation and toward a belief in agency; put another way, social-movement actors can work to construct mediated frames to form these two types of identities, and they can also emphasize their standing as an out-group, should the state label them as enemies or move against them. The interview questionnaire investigates all three sources of protest identity, and the questionnaire interrogates whether protesters felt any such sense of protest identity. Subjects were asked whether and why they joined any formal opposition groups, as well as how they felt as a member. They were asked how well they identified with fellow protesters and opposition groups. Subjects were also asked whether they felt a sense of empowerment or agency, whether they thought the regime had labeled them as enemies, and, if so, how such a label made them feel.

A clear overlap exists between protest identity and framing in social-movement studies. Not only is collective protest identity a frame that social-movement actors can attempt to construct, but the frame trait of resonance is a clear measurement of frame alignment and the success of forming protest identity in the context of a revolution. In his work on fourth-generation revolution theory, Goldstone (2001, 2014) uses the terminology of framing and cites the work of the progenitors of the field. He (2014) refers to protest identity as a "persuasive shared narrative of resistance" (p. 18) and argues that effective narratives—and revolutionary mobilization— are built on grievances against the injustices of the regime (p. 18). Goldstone (2001) cites multiple

works by Gamson, who first articulated the concept of injustice frames, to recognize that structural conditions are not enough to create this perception of injustice. Referring to multiple works by Snow and Benford, who began the study of framing in social movements, Goldstone (2001) appears to accept fully the position that protest identities are largely constructed strategically by social-movement actors, when he acknowledges that "creating protest identities … is a considerable project" (p. 153). This congruity with framing theory is also apparent in Goldstone's discussion of revolutionary ideology (2001, 2014).

Revolutionary ideology is a broad concept that encompasses revolutionary ideologies ranging from religion to Marxism to anti-colonial nationalism and beyond (Beck, 2017; Goldstone, 1980, 2001, 2014). The dissertation does not explicitly engage with ideologies on this abstract level, but it is useful to review the topic because it is in some ways indistinguishable from protest identity, especially in that fourth-generation revolution theory approaches revolutionary ideology as a thing constructed with conscious attention and with difficulty by social-movement actors to mobilize adherents (Goldstone, 2001). Goldstone (2001) writes pointedly that social-movement actors will successfully construct an ideology if it mobilizes by "resonating with existing cultural guideposts" (p. 156), a criterion that is identical with the criterion of narrative fidelity as I defined it in the earlier discussion of frame resonance. Goldstone (2001) adds that a successful ideology also provides a sense of inevitability about the revolution's success and persuades people that the regime is unjust and weak. In probing frame resonance, the interview questionnaire also asks subjects about the fit between the frames they encountered and their values and ideologies; subjects were also asked about their

perceptions of their chances for success and of the Ben Ali regime. Subjects were asked specifically whether they viewed the regime as unjust or weak, and why they felt as they did.

The approach of this dissertation toward revolution theory is also based on the findings of revolution scholars who have examined Tunisia's Arab Spring revolution. Goldstone (2011a) concludes that cross-class coalitions did coalesce in Tunisia around a protest identity based on a shared enmity toward Ben Ali and shared grievances, which included grievances against his regime's corruption, the regime's lack of political accountability, and repression by regime security forces. This analysis demonstrates the overlap between revolution theory and neo-patrimonialism, as the latter predicts that these specific grievances would arise. The interview questionnaire investigates these claims with open-ended questions about how subjects viewed the regime and whom they blamed for the issues that led to the revolution. Hale (2012) also finds evidence of a shared protest identity among the Arab states that experienced revolutions in 2010-11, and he attributes some credit for the construction of this transnational identity to Al-Jazeera, in addition to the work done by activists in national contexts. This conclusion also supports the concept of hybrid network discussed in the earlier section on communication technologies, even though the present research on Tunisia is not concerned with these transnational aspects. Finally, Hinnebusch (2015) concludes that one reason why the revolution erupted in 2010 and not before was that only in 2010 did social-movement actors in Tunisia possess the necessary experience and skills to succeed in the tasks necessary for revolution, such as the construction of a shared protest identity that would resonate among their fellow citizens. By interrogating the strategic intentions

and the specific approaches of social-movement actors in Tunisia, the interviews conducted for this dissertation will provide support for such a contention.

2.4 Science and Technology Studies

The field of science and technology studies (STS) provides theoretical and methodological scaffolding for this dissertation. The field was born at a conference in 1986 around the thinking of Wiebe Bijker, Trevor Pinch, Michel Callon, Gerard de Vries, and Bruno Latour; Thomas Hughes also attended this conference, but his earlier work in the philosophy of technology places him as more of a bridge between the ontological position of the field and that of technological determinism, the theory against which these thinkers rebelled (Bijker & Pinch, 2012). To briefly sketch out the gulf between the two ideas, technological determinism posits that technology determines or drives social change and thus the course of history; it casts technology as an autonomous, exogenous agent, developing and driving social change independently of human control (Bimber, 1990). Or, as McLuhan (1964) colorfully puts it, in technological determinism, humans are but "the sex organs of the machine world" (p. 46). This section of the literature review will define the opposing position—the social construction of technology—and then discuss how technology is socially constructed, the technological frame, how users co-construct technology, how scholars have analyzed the Arab Spring from this perspective, and how this approach fits with social-movement theory and with communication theory.

Bijker and Pinch (2012) wrote that even in 1986 they viewed their theory as a reaction to and rebuttal of technological determinism. Bijker was an engineer, and those

in the field often came from backgrounds in the physical sciences. They adopted a methodology derived from the sociology of knowledge, or sociology of science of knowledge, which was typified by Geertz's (1973) method of thick description. Crucially, they chose to approach technology using the tools of the social sciences—they wanted to focus on the technological artefact as the unit of analysis but in so doing approach it as an object of sociological inquiry, in terms of its social relations with all of the various actors and groups who came into contact with it (Bijker & Pinch, 2012). They wanted to eliminate the border between the social and the technical (Bijker & Pinch, 2012). Nye (1997) defined the theory thusly: "Technologies are social constructions. Machines are not like meteors that come unbidden from outside and have an 'impact'" (p. 1067). Social groups or individuals make decisions about which technologies to pursue; they then make crucial design decisions and decisions about the production and distribution or deployment of the technology (Bimber, 1990). In other words, nontechnical factors shape technology—technology does not shape social relations. Technology can be shaped by economic concerns (e.g., what a corporation decides to emphasize), political concerns (e.g., struggles between various groups, such as private individuals or public regulators, over the development or deployment of a technology), or environmental concerns (e.g., protests or research about environmental concerns). On a macro level, this theory posits that technology does not drive social change—human actors do. Technology, though the object of inquiry, does not have agency (Bimber, 1990). Though the connection might be clear, I should note that the assumptions of constructivism underlying this theory are the same ontological and epistemological

positions that underlie the theories of social movements and revolution reviewed in the foregoing sections.

As a side note, the social construction of technology, in its earliest and strictest form, came under criticism for ignoring the political aspects of technology and the possibility that a technological artefact could, as an actor or actant, also in some way shape social relations (see, e.g., Hughes, 1993; Kranzberg, 1986; Latour, 1995). Bijker and Pinch (2012) admit that their theory had been forced to broaden its approaches because of the evidence presented in this critique. Bijker and Pinch (2012) advocate adopting a more political approach, not in the sense of evaluating technologies as good or bad, but rather in terms of discussing the relationship between technologies and power. The evidence presented in this dissertation could potentially be wielded in these ongoing debates about the relative degrees of agency and autonomy among users and artefacts, but this debate is not my focus in calling on this theory.

One central proposition in this theory is that a technology does not arrive with fixed traits or predetermined impact or uses (Oudshoorn & Pinch, 2003). This concept is called interpretive flexibility, which means that a technological artifact (e.g., telephone, television) does not have only one interpretation, reading, meaning, or use; instead, its traits are wholly dependent on how various social groups construct its uses and development (Bijker & Pinch, 2012). In more abstract terms, the ontology of this theory is that history and social change are entirely contingent and do not follow any generalizable script (Misa, 1994). Every technology is situated in a contingent "context of use," which encompasses not only social groups but also the web of other artefacts within which technologies are always embedded (Oudshoorn & Pinch, 2003, p. 2). For this

dissertation, this point is reflected in the context of Tunisia at the time of the revolution: This context allows me to hypothesize that the context of neo-patrimonialism was important for how digital communication technologies were deployed. Moreover, this concept of a web of technological artefacts mirrors the concept of hybrid networks posited in accounts of the use of communication technologies in social-movement theory.

The theory of framing is also important for social construction of technology: Bijker (1995) uses the theory to describe how designers and users typically share a frame associated with a particular technology. Zuckerman (2013) and Tufekci (2017) analyze social media in terms of how the technology is commonly framed. Zuckerman (2013) analyzes the uses of social media by social movements in light of the technology's framing as a platform for sharing cat photos and videos. Tufekci (2017) discusses the frame of social media more generally as a platform for people to connect based on shared interests and viewpoints. The adoption of framing by scholars in this field amounts largely to a curiosity offering a further measure of validation for framing theory.

Though technologies may arrive with certain frames, it is users who co-construct the meanings and uses of technologies, and this idea is the most significant aspect of this theory for this dissertation. Oudshoorn and Pinch (2003) edited a volume, *How Users Matter*, comprised of articles analyzing how users co-construct technologies and laying out a research program for user studies as a sub-field in science and technology studies. In their introduction to the volume, Oudshoorn and Pinch (2003) describe a shift in the field from considering users as passive recipients to active participants in the social construction of technology. In this approach, users are active, socially situated subjects who co-construct the meanings of technologies. Users do not merely submit to the

dictates of technology or even to the conscious intentions of designers, but rather groups of users can construct uses of technology radically different than the uses intended by those who developed or produced an artefact (Mackay & Gillespie, 1992). As an example, Mackay and Gillespie (1992) note that Chinese inventors developed gunpowder to be used in fireworks (p. 701). Users can also modify the uses of technologies that have been in use for much time and seem to have stable, fixed sets of traits (Oudshoorn & Pinch, 2003). In the same way that an artefact does not have only one single, predetermined use, artefacts also do not have limitless uses—users of a technology are constrained by the contingent circumstances of their social situations (Mackay & Gillespie, 1992). In one of the earliest applications of user studies to digital communication technologies, Mackay and Gillespie (1992) conclude that computers are a technology relatively more open to having its meanings defined by the users, because the computer enables a diversity of uses (p. 707). This conception of users provides the theoretical underpinning for this dissertation's position that communication technologies can be used, in addition to any other uses, for the framing processes (construction of collective action frame, frame alignment, decoding) and the construction of revolutionary identity discussed in earlier sections. In asking interview subjects how they used various communication technologies to deploy or decode mediated frames, I am depending on an assumption that these technologies can be used for to accomplish these tasks in social movements and revolution theory. This view of users as co-constructing the uses and meanings of technologies provides the theoretical justification for asking such questions and for framing the questions in this way. I can find support for this position in Oudshoorn and Pinch (2003), who mention social movements as one way to define a

social group of users and emphasize that questions about how users co-construct technologies is important for social movements (pp. 2, 6).

Conceptions of users underlie much of the scholarship on the Arab Spring cited in the above sections on social movements and revolution, even if scholars do not address these theoretical foundations for their approaches. In one of the few articles to use these terms to discuss scholarship on the use of social media during the Arab Spring, Comunello and Anzera (2012) roundly criticize researchers for approaching the topic from the perspective of technological determinism. They critique how approaching the Arab Spring with questions about how the impact of social media presumes that the technology was an autonomous actor, rather than understanding that individuals throughout the Arab world deployed a variety of communication technologies for diverse uses (p. 458). Comunello and Anzera (2012) also repeatedly point out the importance of understanding social media as part of a hybrid network of various media environments and of online and offline social practices.

As a bridge to the following section on communication theory, I will conclude this section by reviewing the literature discussing the congruent fit between the social construction of technology and media studies. Badouard et al. (2016) find that media studies overlap with science and technology studies conceptually and empirically, and they aver that both fields benefit from this cross-fertilization. Wajcman and Jones (2012) write that "the most interesting work" is being done by scholars at the intersections of media/communications studies and science and technology studies (p. 674; for examples of work they promote, see Boczkowski and Lievrouw, 2008; Haraway, 1997; Lerman, Oldenziel, & Mohun, 2003; Plant, 1998). This fertile theoretical ground for such valuable

interplay emerges from the shared roots of the two disciplines in the cultural turn in the social sciences; communication and technology can both be read as texts, and both are polysemic (Mackay & Gillespie, 1992). There are multiple possible readings of a text or technology, though both are usually given a preferred reading, or technological frame, by their producers, and the realm of possible readings is constrained by the social situation of the recipient or user of the text (Mackay & Gillespie, 1992). Users produce meaning in both paradigms, and by using both theories this dissertation will interrogate how Tunisian users constructed meanings on two levels: How the users of social media, cellphones, satellite-television networks, etc., co-constructed the meanings of these communication technologies; and how these users constructed (and decoded) mediated frames through their production (and consumption) of content in these media.

2.5 Communication Theory

In this final section, I shall examine the history of framing theory in communication, fissures within the field, the contemporary definitions of framing, review the literature, show how framing theory in communication overlaps with framing theory in the other fields, and show how communication theory provides a disciplinary home for the theories of framing discussed in previous sections.

Framing theory in communication descends from Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974), in which he defines frames as "schemata of interpretation" that enable individuals "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" phenomena in their lived experience and in the outside world (p. 21). Snow and Benford (1988, 1992) base the study of framing in social movements on this foundation, as I discussed in the first section of this chapter. I should

note that Goffman cites Bateson (1954) several times while articulating this definition; Bateson also used the term frame: "… definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events—at least social ones—and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word … to refer to such of these basic elements" (pp. 10–11). These origins of the term frame do not yet denote frames in communication texts but rather frames in thought. This process of framing Bateson and Goffman describe also describes the process of constructing meaning—in other words, the epistemological foundation of framing theory in communication is the same as that of constructivism, which underlies this entire dissertation.

Before turning to contemporary definitions of framing, I must address the notion carried by framing theory as being a "fractured" field (Entman, 1993). Entman (1993) hurled the accusation in a landmark article that he titled "Framing: Towards Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm"—as of February 2018, ProQuest reports that the article has been cited more than 3,000 times. Entman writes that, "[d]espite its omnipresence across the social sciences and humanities, nowhere is there a general statement of framing theory that shows exactly how frames become embedded within and make themselves manifest in a text, or how framing influences thinking" (p. 51). His complaint echoes throughout the literature: Scheufele (1999) charges that research on framing has been characterized by theoretical and empirical vagueness. To unpack this claim, framing theory, even some 20 years ago, was in widespread use, as Entman's mention of its omnipresence implies. Writing 16 years later, Entman, Matthes, and Pellicano (2009) call framing theory "a victim of its own success" (p. 175), because the sheer volume of research rooted in framing has deprived the field of a single, accepted definition of frame.

In regard to a general statement of how frames influence thinking, this conception reveals a philosophy of mind that is not shared within the communication discipline, much less within the broader social sciences. Entman seems to be lamenting that social science is not at a point in its understanding of thought to sketch out a definitive account of the human thought process that would be valid across all times and places. Conceiving of "how frames influence thinking" in terms of a unified paradigm ignores the constructivist epistemology that an individual's thoughts and opinions are inevitably determined by the contingent circumstances of every individual. To be specific, constructivism holds that an individual will construct the meaning of a frame in a communication text based largely on that individual's sex, race, ethnicity, class, education, family background, location, etc. Constructivism, in McQuail's (1994) account of the history of communication research, became in the 1980s the leading characteristic of the fourth stage of media studies, and McQuail mentions framing as an integral part of the field's research agenda (p. 331). In other words, Entman's desire for such an account can also be read as an admission that he is working in another paradigm than that of constructivism.

In that 2009 article (Entman, Matthes, & Pellicaro, 2009) and in his own later work (e.g., Entman, 2010), Entman has sketched out an account of the framing process in political communication, a process that he terms hierarchical cascading network activation. Working in the paradigm of media effects, the account is a five-level schema of how framing in political communication interacts over time with—or cascades through—culture, media and elite framing, communication texts, and, finally, public opinion. In a section titled "Clarifying Frames and Framing," Entman et al. (2009) decry

the lack of consensus on the definition of frame, and then the scholars state that the framing literature generally follows one of two definitions of frames and framing. One definition is Entman's, which I shall examine below; the other is from Gamson and Modigliani (1987), cited in the earlier section on framing theory in social movements as pioneers in the field of framing, and is identical to the definitions of frames in thought by Goffman and Bateson cited above. The authors then present definitions of framing in the context of social movements and of journalism, as well as a typology of various branches of literature of frame analysis. Given these clear demarcations, one might compellingly argue that framing theory seems to have grown out of its phase of conceptual fracture or vagueness—if such a phase existed—into an age of standardized definitions and of a diversity of paradigms with a robust research agenda.

Indeed, other scholars of framing theory in communication disagree with Entman's premise of fracture. Reese (2001) argues that the usefulness of the research program of framing theory lies in its theoretical diversity. In a passage that merits being quoted in full, Reese (2007) writes that framing in the communication field is a rich, diverse research program that benefits the field through the confrontation of paradigms that it enables:

> Framing's value, however, does not hinge on its potential as a unified research domain but, as I have suggested before, as a provocative model that bridges parts of the field that need to be in touch with each other: quantitative and qualitative, empirical and interpretive, psychological and sociological, and academic and professional. If the most interesting happens at the edges of disciplines—and in

> the center of policy debates—then framing certainly has the potential to bring disciplinary perspectives together in interesting ways. (p. 148)

D'Angelo (2002) and Carragee and Roefs (2004) conclude that the field is comprised of three paradigms—cognitive, constructionist, and critical—and D'Angelo (2002) writes that this diversity of approaches has led to a comprehensive understanding of framing. Carragee and Roefs (2004) describe the intersections of the paradigms as valuable cross-fertilization. D'Angelo (2002) asserts that there cannot be a single, unified paradigm of framing theory, nor should there be, in light of the benefits from the cross-pollination of different methodologies and theories.

Returning to the question of defining frames and framing, Gitlin (1980) builds on Goffman's work on frames of thought to offer an early definition of media framing, calling frames in communication texts "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize the discourse, whether verbal or visual" (p. 7). In his critique of framing's alleged fracture, Entman (1993) puts forward a definition of framing in communication texts: framing

> "is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and /or treatment recommendation* for the item described." (p. 52, italics in original).

Entman's (1993) definition is often cited in framing studies as a standard, though debates continue about the specific traits of a frame (for reviews of the literature, see Borah, 2011; de Vreese, 2012; Scheufele, 2004). Here I should clarify the different

emphases in definitions of frame and framing among the cognitive, constructivist, and critical paradigms. Entman is defining framing in mediated texts, while the cognitive paradigm frequently focuses more on framing in interpersonal communication, or what I have been referring to as frames in thought (e.g., Kahneman & Twersky, 1984). Reese (2001) provides a contemporary definition of frames in thought that also captures constructivist notions of meaning-making: frames are "organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (p. 11). To be sure, work in all three paradigms—with this dissertation serving as an example of the constructivist paradigm—can make use of both frames in thought and frames in communication texts. Even in his partly quantitative work on media effects, Entman (2007, 2010) calls upon both types of frames with the definitions that I will use here.

The ubiquity of studies using frame analysis renders any comprehensive literature review nearly impossible, but this dissertation will make use of some of the commonly used categories of frames. In his review of an issue of *American Behavioral Scientist* devoted to studies of frames, de Vreese (2012) uses the typologies of substantive/procedural frames and generic/issue-specific frames. Regarding the former pair, procedural frames focus on strategy, particularly the strategy of parties or politicians. Substantive frames emphasize issues, principles, concepts, and advocacy, among others. The questions in the interview questionnaire probe substantive frames; for example, I will examine the data for frames of the regime (e.g., corruption strength/weakness, just/unjust), repression by the security forces, economic deprivation, or shared protest identity, which would be examples of substantive frames and of

injustice frames that would also provide evidence for theories of social-movement theory, neo-patrimonialism, and revolution elucidated in earlier section. Scholars also make important distinctions between issue-specific and generic frames (see also de Vreese, 2002). Issue-specific frames are frames that can only be used for specific topics or events, whereas generic frames transcend thematic limitations and can be identified in relation to different topics, as well as at various times and in different cultural contexts. The examples of frames mentioned above of potential frames in these data are also generic frames, and this category underlines their importance as frames that would provide evidence for theories concerning social movements, authoritarian regimes, and revolutions beyond the specific case of Tunisia's Arab Spring. Providing further justification for this dissertation, Borah (2011) observes that a propensity among scholars to identify unique, issue-specific frames in their research is hindering the development of framing theory, so he advocates for the continued development of generic frames appearing across multiple studies. The data collected here will be able to help build theory by contributing evidence to the existence of generic frames.

Framing theory in communication shares more with framing theory in social-movement theory. I should preface this point, however, by noting Scheufele's (2004) critique that framing theory in the discipline of communication often reduces the study of framing to framing in the news media and ignores valuable insights on framing from the field of social movements. To their credit, Entman, Matthes, and Pellicano (2009), in reviewing significant framing literature, discuss the work of Snow and Benford, who introduced the use of framing theory in social-movement studies. As further evidence for the argument for overlap, Benford and Snow (2000) call the study of framing in media

texts perhaps “the most well-studied topic” (p. 626) in the field of framing theory in social-movement studies. One important conceptual overlap is resonance, discussed at length in the earlier section on social-movement theory. Entman (2010) writes that two elements differentiate framing from other communication: “its diachronic nature and its cultural resonance” (p. 393). In my discussion of resonance in framing theory in social movements, I noted that Ferree (2003) calls the cultural resonance of framing a sine qua non of movement success (p. 305). In expressing the same idea, Entman (2010) writes that to gain success, frames must call to the mind of the recipient congruent phenomena in that individual’s prior knowledge, understanding, and feelings about the world (p. 393). This definition of resonance is identical to the criteria of narrative fidelity and credibility that I will use to assess that resonance of frames in the data collected. By diachronic nature, Entman (2010) means that the meaning of a frame encountered at one time will be constructed in light of meanings constructed prior to encountering the frame (p. 393). Moreover, Entman, Matthes, and Pellicano (2009) discuss the “cultural stock” (p. 176), commonly found in the minds of a society’s individuals, with which frames must successfully fit in order to resonate. This conception of appealing to a shared cultural stock through framing marks the terrain common to framing theory in communication, framing theory in social-movement studies, and the construction of a shared protest identity in revolution theory.

The literature on framing in communication theory resounds with laments about the significant lack of research in the process of framing (e.g., Borah, 2011; Carragee & Roefs, 2004; de Vreese, 2012). In a review of 347 articles on framing, Borah (2011) finds that only 2.3 percent of the articles studied the process of frame construction, whether by

journalists or by other social actors (p. 255). Borah (2011) and Carragee and Roefs (2004) advocate for scholars to expand their methodological approaches to include interviews with social-movements actors, in addition to the typical experimental settings with varied groups exposed to competing frames. This dissertation will contribute to scholarship in communication and media studies through the interrogation of frame construction and through a unique dataset of 44 interviews with actors in a social movement of some importance.

I conclude this literature review with communication theory not only because that is my home discipline, but also because framing theory in communication serves as a locus where theories of framing and concepts in framing from other disciplines can come together. As I noted earlier in this section, Reese (2007) extols the value of framing as such a bridge between approaches and methods that should be in useful truck with one another. Moreover, Entman (1993), in the article that established him as one of the leaders in the field, called on scholars to pursue research in framing that brings together the disparate uses of the theory, as part of a larger project of building the field of communication as a master discipline that builds coherent theory from among related concepts:

> We should identify our mission as bringing together insights and theories that would otherwise remain scattered in other disciplines. … By bringing ideas together in one location, communication can aspire to become a master discipline that synthesizes related concepts and theories and exposes them to the most rigorous, comprehensive statement and exploration. … such an enterprise would enhance the theoretical rigor of communication scholarship proper. … The idea of

> "framing" offers a case study of just the kind of scattered conceptualization I have identified. … Analysis of this concept suggests how the discipline of communication might contribute something unique: synthesizing a key concept's disparate uses, showing how they invariably involve communication, and constructing a coherent theory from them. (p. 51)

In other words, in interrogating and revealing new connections among the varied uses of concepts in framing theory, this dissertation contributes both to building theory in communication and to helping fulfill what might be one of the most vital missions of the discipline.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

3.1 Introduction

Following the same division as in the preceding chapter, I will separate the findings and discussion on the framing process from the findings and discussion on the uses of social media and other communication technologies. The first part of this chapter begins with the findings on the collective-action frames constructed and deployed by social-movement actors, followed by several sections on the processes of constructing frames and constructing framing strategies, and this first part concludes with a discussion of frame resonance, or the process of making meaning from frames. The second part of the chapter begins with the delineation of the hybrid network of various communication technologies, the reception of Al-Jazeera, the uses of the hybrid network for information cascades and solving the problem of fear, and this part concludes with findings and discussion on how organizers and participants used the hybrid network for the organizing work of social movements.

3.2.1 Collective-Action Frames

The most salient types of frames deployed by social-movement actors are collective-action frames; these frames are emergent, action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate social-movement activities and campaigns (Benford & Snow, 2000, pp. 614-18; Snow & Benford, 1988, pp. 199-204; Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 137). Not all frames deployed by social-movement actors are collective-action frames, but the frames deployed by the interview subjects of this dissertation were collective-

action frames. Even though nearly all the interviewees said that the frames they constructed and deployed were intended to inspire and/or legitimate the uprising in Tunisia, it is impossible to show that all interviewees consciously intended to do so with every frame they created and shared. In much the same way, however, it is impossible to show that the frames that these social-movement actors deployed did not, in fact, inspire and legitimate the revolution among the individuals who encountered these frames. On the contrary, the frames and narratives deployed by social-movement actors during a brief period of mass rebellion that topples a longstanding dictator are, on their face, a clear and rich example of collective-action frames.

The quantitative and qualitative data show that organizers and participants typically deployed several different frames. Nearly three-quarters of organizers deployed a frame of the Ben Ali regime as corrupt, with 18 of 25 organizers (72 percent) saying they constructed and shared frames that portrayed the regime as corrupt. Five other frames were deployed by at least 40 percent of the organizers: 13 of 25 (52 percent) constructed frames about economic issues; 13 also constructed frames about dignity; 12 (48 percent) deployed frames about the regime's violent crackdown against the demonstrators; 11 (44 percent) framed Ben Ali as a dictator; and 10 (40 percent) constructed frames intended to inspire Tunisians to overcome their fear of the regime and revolt. In addition, seven (28 percent) organizers said that they constructed frames about the general repression by the regime's security forces, and five (20 percent) deployed frames with the message that the citizens would succeed in the revolution if they persisted. These answers were given largely to the interview questionnaire's question for organizers asking which impressions they were trying to convey. In addition to this direct

question, I always followed up mentions of other frames that the interviewees had encountered by asking them whether they, too, had deployed such frames. The interview questionnaire also included questions about how interview subjects viewed the regime, and I also followed up this question by asking whether and how the interviewees deployed frames to depict their views. After the first interviewees gave their answers, I then asked in all later interviews whether those subsequent interviewees had also deployed the frames mentioned by the initial interview subjects. As examples, the categories of the crackdown and Ben Ali as dictator emerged as the interviews progressed; frames of corruption, economic issues, dignity, and overcoming fear were present from the first interviews, and interviewees usually volunteered these topics without prompting.

These answers offer one clear conclusion: Almost all organizers used multiple frames. Of the 25 organizers who answered this question[3], 20 organizers reported constructing multiple frames. Only three organizers said that they used only one frame; two organizers indicated that they did not deploy any specific frames. This quantitative data also points to the conclusion that there was no single "master frame" (Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 140) for Tunisia's Arab Spring revolution, though such a finding would contradict the arguments of Howard et al. (2011) and Lim (2013). I will return in a separate section below to the problem of the master frame, but I will present in this section qualitative data supporting this finding of multiple frames.

[3] Among the 44 interview subjects, there were 28 organizers and 16 participants. The number of responses to many of the questions is lower than the total number of organizers or participants, because either not all interviewees answered the question, or their answers were too ambiguous to code.

I also asked organizers how they tried to attract new participants to the demonstrations, and their answers conform to the finding that organizers tended to construct and deploy multiple frames. Twenty-four organizers answered this question, but four said that they did not try to lure new adherents, and one organizer indicated that he did not deploy any specific frames. Of the 19 organizers who reported using frames to lure potential adherents, 10 said they deployed multiple frames, and nine mentioned only one category of frame. Of the frames used by those nine who used only one frame, there was not a single type of frame that predominated. Of the 24 organizers who responded to the question, nine organizers used a corruption frame, nine deployed frames about the crackdown, five framed economic issues, five constructed frames about overcoming fear, and three framed Ben Ali as a dictator. Unlike the answers to the first, general question about frames, organizers did not mention a dignity frame in their responses to this question about attracting newcomers.

Participants were also asked how they attempted to construct and deploy frames of the revolution. Of the 14 participants who answered this question, two said that they did not deploy any specific frames. Seven participants said that they deployed multiple frames, and five mentioned using only a single frame. As with frames used by organizers, there was not a single type of frame that predominated among those five participants who used only a single frame; two participants said that they deployed frames of the crackdown, but the other three participants reported constructing three different frames. Of the 14 participants who responded to the question, seven said that they deployed frames of the crackdown, five framed the Ben Ali regime as corrupt, five constructed

frames about the security forces, three deployed frames about dignity, and three constructed frames about economic issues.

The economic divide between the poorer, rural interior of Tunisia and the wealthier coastal towns has long been an important feature in the country (Angrist, 2013; Brisson & Kontinis, 2012; Brooks, 2013), and the quantitative data offer some potentially interesting associations between the organizers and participants from these two regions and the frames that they used. Of the 19 organizers from the coastal region, 15 said that they constructed and deployed frames of the regime's corruption, while only three of six organizers from the interior used this frame ($p = .183$). However, the data on the frames that organizers used to attract new participants somewhat belie any hypothesis that social-movement actors in the coastal region were more attuned to the regime's corruption or devised a framing strategy to accentuate it. Before presenting the data, I want to underline that this second question, about luring new participants to the uprising, inherently reflects a strategic choice about framing; if organizers from the coast had perceived the corruption of the regime as a more salient and/or more powerful issue for other Tunisians, then they should have constructed and deployed frames about corruption to attract new participants. In answering the question about frames to attract newcomers, however, three of five organizers from the interior said they used frames of the regime's corruption, while only six of 19 organizers from the coast said they used a corruption framing. Of the 39 interview subjects who answered the question about whether they felt the regime was corrupt, all 39 said yes. Considering the entirety of the data, I conclude that the greater use of a corruption frame by organizers from the coast is merely statistical noise from the relatively small size of the sample.

The qualitative data shed greater light on the differences between the framing processes in the rural and coastal regions. Interviewees from the interior and the coast often discussed the long-standing economic divide between the regions, and their discourses often revealed unambiguous differences of opinion on the relative importance of the country's various ills and on the needed reforms. For example, when one organizer from Sidi Bouzid posted on Facebook excerpts from a video interview with another Tunisian activist, he chose the parts of the interview that addressed the poverty of the interior region and the regime's brutal crackdown on demonstrators in the interior towns where the rebellion had begun. He said that he and his fellow activists focused on constructing frames of three main topic areas: poverty and joblessness, the crackdown, and the corruption of the Traboulsi family. Another organizer, also from Sidi Bouzid, said that he had a similar strategy for framing, and he clearly differentiated his views on Tunisia's most critical issues from what he perceived as the views of the coastal elites. During the revolution, he wrote a blog on which he discussed economic issues such as poverty. He said that the origin of the revolution lay in socioeconomic issues, not in personal freedoms. He said that he strongly disliked Lina Ben Mhenni, a Tunis native who covered the revolution from throughout the country on her well-known Facebook page. He appreciated the information that she provided, but he detested her politics, and he called her "bourgeois" for always talking about freedom. The cleavage between the regions and their frames was not always determined by place of residence. An organizer from Tunis who was an activist member of the Lawyers' Syndicate laid out the heuristics for the dominant concerns of each of the two regions, and he deployed frames exclusively about the dynamics of the interior. He said that the basis of the revolt was the lack of

economic development and the marginalization of the people of the interior. He traveled to Sidi Bouzid multiple times during the revolution, and he constructed frames primarily about how the people of Sidi Bouzid and Kasserine were oppressed and persecuted by the regime. He did not write about political rights, he said, because that was not the problem of the day. Freedom of expression was a cause of the elite, of cultivated people, he added. To draw out the distinction further, a participant from Tunis said that his framing strategy was to make the economic elites—people such as him and his friends—aware of the situation and to get them to participate. I find it extremely difficult to imagine a similar account from a participant in the interior. As another example of framing unique to Tunis, an organizer from Tunis said that she constructed frames urging for human rights, new elections, a new constitution, and solidarity with the people of the rural interior. "It wasn't only about poverty," she said of the revolution. I find interesting the conception of supporting the interior as a show of "solidarity," because the mere use of term others rural Tunisians by underlining their dissimilar experiences. In any case, these examples show some stark differences of opinions on the primary sources of the revolution, even though these Tunisians were linked by their shared contempt for the regime and by their shared belief in the regime's corruption. Although the differences are clear between some of the framing processes of revolutionaries in the interior and on the coast, most interview subjects said that they thought strategically about constructing frames in order to appeal to various groups of citizens—both in the interior and on the coast—so the quantitative data on framing do not reveal crisply elucidated frames unique either to social-movement actors in Tunis or in Sidi Bouzid. I will discuss strategic framing at length in a section below, but, as supporting evidence for this finding, I want to briefly

cite the strategies discussed by Ali and Lassad Bouazizi, cousins of Mohammed Bouazizi and longtime opposition activists in Sidi Bouzid. Ali Bouazizi went on Al-Jazeera on the evening of December 17, 2010, the day that Mohammed immolated himself, and he lied that Mohammed was selling fruit because he was a college graduate who could not find appropriate work. Ali told me that he lied because many college graduates in Sidi Bouzid could not find work and were frustrated and angry at the regime, so he thought that framing Mohammed's suicide in this way might inspire them to demonstrate against the regime. Lassad said that his activist experiences had taught him that he needed to create a picture that could get into foreign media, specifically onto Al-Jazeera and France 24, and could influence the regime and influence foreign countries to put pressure on the regime. In the parlance of social-movement theory, he was looking from the first day of the uprising to construct frames that would have resonance far beyond Sidi Bouzid.

Before digging further into the types of frames that social-movement actors deployed, I want to note briefly that the quantitative data on the types of collective-action frames correspond perfectly with the predictions of neo-patrimonial theory and revolution theory. A neo-patrimonial regime is built upon the kleptocratic expropriation of the nation's economic assets by the ruling coterie, and opposition is ruthlessly extinguished by robust coercive forces of the military and various security forces. Organizers and participants most frequently constructed frames depicting corruption, economic issues, and the security forces and their crackdown on the protesters. The consistent salience of these frames in the work of organizers and participants forges a coherent protest identity of a mass of citizens bound together by their economic deprivation at the hands of a corrupt regime that perpetuates its injustices through repression by uniformed henchmen.

Such a shared protest identity is a necessary condition for the formation of a revolutionary population from various social groups, just as fourth-generation revolution theory would predict (Goldstone, 2001). Noting this overlap is not a mere detour to confirm the hypotheses of various theories; the significance lies in framing as the locus where these theories meet. In other words, framing is not just a process that social-movement actors engage in, but rather this meaning-making from their experiences is where grievances are made tangible from the roster of social fields in which an authoritarian government operates, and this meaning-making is also where the weak ties among citizens become engorged by feelings of unity—a shared identity of protest. This hypothesis of the construction of meaning as the site of the overlap of theories from disparate social-science disciplines is one of the major contributions of this dissertation to building theory, and I will enlarge upon this point in each subsequent chapter and in the conclusion.

In this part of this section, I want to dig more deeply into two specific types of frames. The first is the frequently deployed framing that aimed to help the citizens overcome their fears of opposing the regime. Forty percent of organizers said that they deployed frames to encourage Tunisians to overcome their fears of the regime. I will examine the citizens' fears of the regime in greater depth in the section in this chapter regarding information cascades and pluralistic ignorance, but here I want to point out how this frame differs from the other frequently deployed frames. The frames more frequently deployed by organizers were frames of political and economic issues, but fear was a shared emotion—or an emotion believed to be shared—among the citizenry. To be sure, the deployment of a frame encouraging citizens to overcome their fears could

represent the result of strategic calculations among social-movement actors about how to increase the movement's chances for success, and later in this chapter I will present qualitative data showing that this was sometimes a strategic choice. But the qualitative data also reveal that organizers and participants believed that fear of the regime was widespread and deeply ingrained—if fear was not, then such framing would have precious little chance of resonating, after all. The salience of this frame offers a meaningful contribution to scholarship on authoritarian regimes, which typically analyzes the acts and practices of the state and its institutions. The overwhelming presence of fear among Tunisians before the revolution and the importance that these interviewees accorded to it in maintaining the longevity of the regime constitute a potentially substantial phenomenon in the dynamics of authoritarian regimes, and a phenomenon deserving of further study and a more serious consideration as one of the most prominent and significant variables in the study of authoritarian regimes.

The crackdown frame is interesting for a different reason: Organizers expressed diametrically opposing views about their perceived efficacy of this frame. On one side, the organizer who was the coordinator in the coastal city of Sousse for the union of students, commonly known by its French acronym UGET, said that a frame depicting the coercive forces' violence "is the best material … for pushing people to go the street." His reasoning was that Tunisian notions of masculinity would drive other young men into the streets to prove that they were tougher, more fearless, and more willing to sacrifice than those victims of regime violence in crackdown frames. An organizer from Tunis said that he and his fellow activists wanted to use the crackdown as one of their primary frames, because political arguments would likely fail to rouse a population that had been

depoliticized for decades under the asphyxiating rule of Ben Ali. On the other hand, an organizer who was one of the leaders of an activist group in Paris said that their strategy was to avoid talking about the crackdown and instead to ridicule the regime. They, too, wanted to get Tunisians to overcome their fears of the regime, so their strategy was to make the regime seem less fearsome, by avoiding portrayals of its brutality and instead framing the regime as ridiculous and out of touch. These accounts display the depth of the strategic thinking by the revolution's organizers, the absence of a unified, dominant strategy or master frame, as well as a certain lack of coordination or hierarchy among the revolutionaries. The crackdown frame serves as a potent data point to introduce these findings, each of which I will discuss in sections below.

I conclude this section by presenting some important caveats to the data and to the consideration of these frames. A crucial point is that we do not accept all these frames of corruption, economic deprivation, regime brutality, and so on, to be accurate representations of events. On the contrary, several organizers said that one key strategy in frame construction was to lie. For instance, the UGET official from Sousse said that he and his fellow activists inflated the numbers of those who had died in various crackdowns; they transformed some of the injured into the dead. They lied about Ben Ali or his family fleeing to escape justice. After Ben Ali's speech on January 13, in which he attempted to calm the protests by saying that he would not run in the next presidential election, these organizers then lied that the government would arrest all of those who had been demonstrating, if the protests were to cease. As further evidence of the significance of the revolutionaries' lies, Lim (2013) argues that the revolution was in some ways based on the foundational lie that Mohammed Bouazizi was a college graduate who could

not find a suitable job. Ali and Lassad Bouazizi told me that the lie was originally Lassad's idea. He first told the activist Mohammed Ghazlani to use the lie, before Ghazlani gave an interview on France 24 on the afternoon of December 17. Lassad also told Ali that Ali should repeat the lie on Al-Jazeera that evening. Lassad said that he constructed this frame because there were many college graduates in Sidi Bouzid who could not find work and were frustrated and angry at the regime, and he thought that framing Mohammed's suicide in this way might lead them to demonstrate against the regime. The common thread between these two lies—and the strategic lies and exaggerations of other organizers—is the goal of the inaccurate framing. They lied in an attempt to inspire Tunisian citizens to join the protests, which is the definition of a collective-action frame (Benford & Snow, 2000). Phrased another way, they lied in an attempt to construct a shared protest identity, as revolution theory would predict (Goldstone, 2001). I am not presenting these findings only as supporting evidence for these theories, but rather because this dissertation can contribute to building these theories by demonstrating that the category of the false or exaggerated frame (fake frames?) needs to be incorporated into these theories.

Another caveat is that these frames are not mutually exclusive. For example, many frames of corruption also involve economic issues; one could argue that most corruption frames, which typically revolved around the gluttonous appetite for the state's resources and finances among the family of Ben Ali's wife, Leila Traboulsi, also involved economic issues. In the coding, I coded examples such as those above in the category of corruption, while I coded as economic frames those of joblessness, poverty, or the relative economic deprivation of the interior. Similarly, the frame category of

dignity is somewhat elastic. Interviewees used this term to describe their frames, so I coded their frames as such, but I cannot be sure that all those who constructed dignity frames and encountered this word understood this abstract concept in the same way. For example, dignity might have meant quite different things to residents of the interior and to residents of Tunis.

One last caveat is that social-movement actors changed their framing during the course of the revolution, as relatively brief as it was. Some of the most violent and deadly crackdowns by the coercive forces took place in January, so the relative usages of different types of frames probably varied over time, and I was not able to code for these changes. Building on the work of Ellingson (1995) and others, I will discuss in the section on frame alignment the implication of this contingent, emergent framing for the study of social movements. This section of the dissertation introduced the types of frames that organizers and participants constructed, as well as the relative frequencies of the frames' deployment and some caveats about the frames. The next sections will delve into the substantial questions of how and why the interview subjects constructed these frames.

3.2.2 Frame Construction and Framing Strategies

In the following sections, I will present and discuss my findings on how organizers and participants constructed collective frames, in the literal sense of that question and in more figurative senses. These sections will answer research questions R3 and R4, about how these individuals constructed frames and how they engaged in the process of frame alignment, which is the strategic production of frames to align a social movement with what social-movement actors believe to be potential adherents'

understanding of the situation and the potential adherents' values and ideology (Snow et al., 1986, p. 468). The first section will address the techniques and media that organizers and participants used to construct frames. The second section will explore how these individuals constructed frames as an alternative narrative. The third section will interrogate how the interviewees constructed framing strategies, and the fourth will examine how social-movement actors concocted different framing strategies for different media and for different audiences. The fifth section will investigate how the framing processes of those interview subjects changed during the revolution.

3.2.2.1 Frame Construction

This section will begin to answer research question R3, which asks how organizers and participants constructed collective-action frames and asks in what ways they used various communication media in the framing process. This section will address both parts of the question in the literal sense, by presenting the quantitative data on the usage of various communication technologies, but also by presenting findings from the qualitative data on the interview subjects' techniques for frame construction.

As for the use of social media, here I will only present quantitative data on Facebook, because it was the most widely used type of social media. I will examine the differences between various social media in the section below on hybridity. The data show that organizers and participants used Facebook more than any other communication technology for frame construction and deployment, though they used other media, as well. Of the 44 interview subjects, 42 said that they used Facebook during the revolution. About 86 percent (32 of 37 interviewees who answered the question) said they published

posts during the revolution. About 77 percent (24 of 31 who answered) said they used Facebook to chat. The percentages were slightly lower for those who said that they used Facebook for specific framing tasks. Sixty percent (21 of 35) said that they used Facebook to give encouragement to the protesters. About 58 percent (21 of 36) said that they used Facebook to try to persuade potential adherents to join the protests. About 52 percent (15 of 29) said they used Facebook to post about or discuss fear. In addition to social media, seven interviewees had their own blogs during the revolution (five were organizers, and two were participants).

Facebook and other social media were not, however, the only communication technology used by social-movement actors to construct and deploy mediated frames. Eighty percent (33 of 41) of interview subjects used telephones to discuss the revolution. Of those 33, 12 (or 36 percent) said that they used the phone to give encouragement; nine (about 27 percent) said that they used the phone to try to persuade potential adherents; and seven (21 percent) said that they used the phone to talk about fear. I asked interviewees whether they met with others in person to discuss the revolution; 34 interviewees responded to this question, and 30 (88 percent) said that they did. Of these 30, seven (about 23 percent) said that they used face-to-face meetings to try to persuade potential adherents, and three additional interviewees (10 percent) said that they gave encouragement in face-to-face meetings. Roughly half of the interview subjects (17 of 35) said that they used email during the revolution, and 10 of them (29 percent) said they used it for various framing tasks, though none specifically said that they used it for encouraging or persuading. These categories merit a bit of clarification: The meanings of categories such as persuade and encourage are clear. I also asked interview subjects

whether they used these technologies to exchange news or for analysis (and for non-framing uses such as organizing tasks, etc.). Although I will present their answers in these other categories to discuss other areas of this dissertation, one could make a strong argument that, in *any* discussion of the revolution, these organizers and participants were engaged in the construction of meaning in the broadest sense of the concept, at least as it relates to imbuing the events of the revolution—and its causes and possible resolutions—with meaning by expressing them in verbal or written form. In other words, the percentages of the interview subjects who used these communication technologies to construct and deploy frames of Tunisia's revolution are likely somewhat higher than the percentages reported. In this section, I do not wish to burden the reader with any more quantitative data; the full range of questions and answers are available in the respective appendices. These likely higher percentages, however, do not change the conclusion that I draw from this data: Organizers and participants used a range of communication technologies, from interpersonal conversations to social media posts, to construct and deploy frames of the revolution. Among these communication technologies, Facebook was the most commonly used medium, with telephones and face-to-face communication used at slightly lower rates. Email and blogs were used relatively less, but they were still used at nontrivial rates.

Regarding framing on Facebook, interviewees most frequently discussed the technique of constructing frames through visual imagery, whether photos or videos. Of 25 interview subjects who said whether they uploaded videos to Facebook, 12 (or 48 percent) said that they had. Even though I did not ask organizers a specific question about whether they strategically used visual imagery to construct frames, six volunteered that

they had. Lina Ben Mhenni, one of the best-known Facebook activists during the revolution, explained the predominance of this technique: “Of course, photos and videos are more effective. People don't take the time to read, here in Tunisia. They prefer to have video and photos. It’s easier,” she said. The UGET leader in Sousse said that he worked to post videos showing how tough the protesters were, because he thought that the most effective way to get young men in other towns and cities to join the protests was to prod them to prove their own toughness by outdoing the exploits of protesters elsewhere. Ali Bouazizi said that he focused so intently on constructing frames through video that he did not share any photos during the revolution. Interestingly, one organizer said that he did not post any content from the protests or any events related to the revolution; he wanted to construct frames depicting poverty and the country’s other economic and social ills—and he did so exclusively through sharing photos and videos that had nothing to do with the events of the revolution.

Even though it was not mentioned with significant frequency, I want to point out that some organizers said that they strategically chose to use humor as a framing technique. One organizer said he used humor because people were more likely to read it than to read dense political texts; moreover, he wanted to make the regime look foolish, to turn enemies into caricatures. Another organizer, whom I mentioned above while introducing the crackdown frame, said that she and her fellow activists used humor to make the regime seem ridiculous instead of fearsome. The participant Karim Ben Said, a book publisher in Tunis, described an episode involving the anonymous, well-known political cartoonist known as Z that Ben Said said was a “defining moment” of the

revolution[4]. The regime announced that it had arrested a woman who had on her computer some originals of Z's cartoons. Then Z posted a drawing of a pink flamingo—the symbol of Lake Tunis—raising its middle finger to Ben Ali and saying, "I am Z." Thousands of people began posting selfies on Facebook with a piece of paper saying, "I am Z." Though the humor value of a vulgar flamingo might not be especially lofty, this story illustrates both the uses of humor and visual imagery in the framing process and how Tunisians used Facebook to construct a counter-narrative to the framing deployed by the regime. The former point helps answer the research question about how organizers and participants constructed mediated frames and how they used communication media to do so, which this section has addressed with quantitative and qualitative data. The latter point leads into the next section, which will help answer research question R3 in a more figurative sense and will offer rich evidence for building theory.

3.2.2.2 Constructing an Alternative Narrative: The Framing Contest

In this section, I will offer a partial answer to research question R3 about how organizers and participants constructed collective-action frames. I will present quantitative and qualitative data to support my argument, and then I will explain how this finding contributes to building theories of social movements and of social media. I found that organizers and participants constructed and deployed mediated frames to offer an alternative narrative to the narratives put forward by the regime and by other actors in traditional and new media. The scholarship on framing in social movements has developed the concept of a frame contest (see Snow & Benford, 2005, for a review of

[4] Said later published a book of Z's cartoons.

pertinent research), but this concept is built on a dynamic of factions competing for their framings to become the dominant frame in coverage by traditional media. Although I will examine how my findings add to this concept, as well, my main argument is that these findings break new ground for the study of framing in social movements as a whole.

One basis for my finding is that the regime's framing had lost its legitimacy even before the revolution. I present more evidence to support this claim in the chapter on neo-patrimonialism, in the section on regime control of the media. In short, the regime's suffocating censorship of news media and of new communication technologies, together with the regime's persecution of those who expressed opposing or dissenting views, had undercut the credibility of the content in nearly all of the country's traditional news media, whether state-controlled or privately owned. The quantitative data on Tunisian state television add another layer of evidence to the data presented in chapter 4, as not a single interviewee said that what she or he saw on Tunisian state television fit with her or his understanding of the situation or with her or his values, beliefs, and ideology. On the contrary, nine interview subjects said that what they saw did not fit with their understandings of the situation, and eight of those nine said that what they saw did not fit with their values (the ninth did not respond to the question about values). I will return to this data in the section on frame resonance, but it is already apparent that no one perceived the regime's framing of events as accurate or legitimate.

The qualitative data are particularly rich on this topic, because many organizers and participants clearly saw that this was what their framing represented. Ali and Lassad Bouazizi, for example, said that they had been using Facebook before the revolution to read opposition websites, but they realized that they could use it to create their own news

source. A participant from Tunis captured the idea that Facebook allowed social-movement actors to break free from regime censorship: “Facebook had become, like, everybody’s TV station, because we didn’t have TV, so Facebook was our way of voicing our anger, expressing ourselves freely, without being censored. It was very powerful as a tool for us.” An organizer from Tunis discussed this same approach, though she included not only the contrast to regime media, but also described social-movement actors’ framing on Facebook as a news medium and argued for its resonance among Tunisian citizens:

> I always thought that people overstated the role of social media in a way, but we shouldn’t also think that social media didn’t play a role. It played a role. What role? It’s a medium of broadcasting, in a way. And it’s first-hand narratives, most of the time. People were hungry for information, so they would trust each other more than trust the newspapers. The trust with the media in general in the country was totally broken.

Well-known online activist Lina Ben Mhenni summed up her own approach to framing as a counter-narrative to the lies in the media controlled by the regime:

> I was trying to help break … the media blackout the regime was trying to impose. When I was watching the Tunisian TV, it was mainly lies. … It was very important for me to show the reality, to give voice to people who didn't have a voice at the time and showing the reality of what’s happening—because the image constructed by our media wasn’t the real image.

Many other interviewees also described as alternative, contrasting narratives the frames they encountered on regime-controlled media and the frames they encountered on

Facebook, on other social media, and through other communication with citizens in Tunisia.

I now turn to exploring the content of that alternative narrative, and in preface I want to note that I am presenting data that interviewees gave from their work decoding frames and not as organizers and participants crafting frames for an imagined audience. Interview subjects often described this alternative narrative as pure information, unfiltered by any agenda. One organizer called these frames "raw material," and he added that it lacked debate or critical thinking. Karim Ben Said referred to it as "information that was clean." A participant from Tunis said that Facebook was the "only place you can get honest news." These descriptions can only be understood in opposition to the frames deployed by other actors such as the regime—content on Facebook can be clean, honest, or raw, as opposed to the dirty, dishonest, processed content that had been disseminated for decades by the regime. Several interviewees discussed this cleaner flow of information as coming largely from the country's poorer interior. One interview subject said that the most important things on Facebook were the pages of those in interior towns such as Sidi Bouzid and Kasserine. The central topics of the raw information from the interior were the massacres of protesters by the coercive forces, many interviewees said. In sum, social-movement actors were able to construct this alternative narrative largely by providing evidence—often uncut video evidence—about the crackdown in the interior by the security forces. I want to separate this narrative from many of the other frames discussed here. To be sure, social-movements actors constructed and deployed an abundance of other frames, such as the prominent framing of regime corruption and of

the economic hardships of the interior, but these frames are contexts and causes of the revolution, not a narrative of the events of the revolution.

Two items, however, problematize this description of clean information on Facebook. Although interviewees held up the frames on Facebook as clean and honest, I presented in the section on collective-action frames much evidence that social-movement actors—including those from the interior—strategically constructed frames of the events in the interior that were intentionally inaccurate and dishonest, specifically with inflated accounts of killings by the security forces. One could see this contradiction as ironic, in that Facebook and other technologies offered social-movement actors a chance to show a much more accurate framing of their lived experiences, but they decided to lie just as the regime did. However, one could also interpret the dishonesty of the organizers' framing as a justifiable approach, whether as an account of events or as a strategy to win over and mobilize potential adherents, to combat the wholly dishonest propaganda of the regime, which also had many more sites through which to disseminate its framing of the situation. One could also argue that the revolutionaries were constructing and deploying propaganda, in much the same way that regimes have used new communication technologies in this century (for an overview, see Morozov, 2011). The second complicating factor is that the construction of this alternative narrative was not confined to Facebook. Social-movement actors deployed this alternative narrative in person and on the phone, interviewees said. Multiple interview subjects said that Facebook was the most important site for constructing an alternative narrative, but interpersonal and phone communications were also important. In addition, satellite television networks such as Al-Jazeera and France 24 were broadcasting frames that had been posted to social media

or given directly to the networks by Tunisian protesters, and several interviewees said that they either provided their content to these networks or saw their social-media content broadcast on the networks. Sadok Ben Mhenni, the father of Lina and a journalist and former political prisoner, summed up this dynamic by saying that, thanks to the coordination of social networks and television, the people could all immediately see what was happening in Sidi Bouzid. I will interrogate the phenomenon of Al-Jazeera in separate section in the second part of the chapter, but here I need to mention that many interviewees said that they thought the network's coverage was inaccurate and/or biased—in other words, yet another narrative. Because frames of the revolution were not a simple binary of regime frames and protesters' frames, but rather a range of framings, the term alternative narrative represents a more precise designation than counter-narrative, though I will use the latter term to emphasize, when necessary, the framing contest between the regime and social-movement actors.

This finding of framing as alternative narrative represents a contribution to theories of social media and social movements. In the literature on social movements, I have only found one mention of social-media use as the construction of an alternative narrative, and that was in a work by Al-Ani, Mark, Chung, and Jones (2012) that examined the Arab Spring in Egypt. In Tufekci's (2017) book on social media and social movements, she mentions only once that content on social media can provide a counter-narrative to the framing constructed by a state actor (p. 112). I will build more theory about social media in the second part of this chapter, but here I want to present an argument that social media, together with other communication technologies, offer a potentially rich terrain for social-movement actors to construct a coherent set of frames

that represent an alternative narrative or a counter-narrative to the frames deployed by actors with disproportionately more resources, such as a nation-state and media outlets under its control, particularly if those encountering the narrative already question the legitimacy of that more-powerful actor. The evidence to support my claim is not only the preceding data but also the data that I will present in the section on resonance, because the finding of successful resonance supports my claim for the potential fruitfulness of the opportunity offered by social media and similar communication technologies. Furthermore, I believe that scholars could find a wealth of evidence to support my argument throughout the years that social-media use has been widespread. For example, an organizer from Tunis said that his opposition to the regime was sparked by the framing of Ben Ali, Leila Traboulsi, and the government that he saw on YouTube in 2008 in videos created by a man in Canada.

To put this contribution in context, I want to make clear that I am not only building theory in the field of framing in social movements; instead, this theory helped guide the findings that allow me to build theory in multiple disciplines. My argument about the alternative narrative, for example, contributes to theories of social movements and theories of social media in disciplines such as communication and sociology. Perhaps it might sound banal and obvious to say, as I essentially do, that social-movement actors can use social media and other communication technologies to construct a counter-narrative to that of a state actor such as an authoritarian regime. To be sure, countless studies have researched how social-movements actors used social media during the Arab Spring; Breuer et al. (2014) and Lim (2013) specifically interrogate social media usage during Tunisia's Arab Spring revolution, and Castells (2012), Gerbaudo (2012), Fuchs

(2017), Salem (2015), and Tufekci (2017) all examine at length the uses of social media during the Arab Spring. But nearly all these scholars have been concerned foremost either with the relationship between social media use and mobilization (e.g., Castells, 2012; Salem, 2015) or with the relationship between social media use and the horizontal or vertical hierarchies of social-movement organizing (e.g., Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Gerbaudo, 2012; Wolfson, 2014). Scholars tend to identify what social-movement actors do on social media through the prism of their objects of inquiry, so, as of today, the scholarship has not yet articulated this fundamental conceptualization that I provide here.

This finding lays the foundation for a second contribution to theory, although this point represents a practical, universal directive for social-movement actors as much as it does a new element of theory. The finding for social media providing a site for resonant, alternative framing is also an argument that, to increase chances for success in constructing resonant framing, any social-movement actors engaged in a framing contest—particularly in a contest against an opponent with greater resources, and particularly against an authoritarian state—should seek out communication technologies, such as social media, that enable social-movement actors to construct and deploy to large audiences an alternative narrative of events. Certainly, social-movement actors can and do use telephones, email, and other media to construct and deploy alternative narratives, but the crucial element here is the affordance of the technology to directly disseminate the content to a larger audience, a process that some literature refers to as disintermediation (e.g., Garon, 2012). In the parlance of the communications field, social-movement actors would have greater chances for success using media that are not one-to-one but rather one-to-many and many-to-many. In this dissertation, the primary medium

is Facebook, but we should not limit our thinking even to the technology of social media—the key trait of the communication technology is that it affords dissemination to a wide audience. After all, before the invention of social media, dissidents in the former Soviet satellite states used samizdat to construct an alternate frame of the era's lived experiences, though I would defer to that field's experts as to whether or which samizdat works constituted an alternative narrative of events. The practical aspect of this contribution to theory answers the call of Etling, Faris, and Palfrey (2010) for research into how new technologies and social media can be proficiently used to struggle against dictatorships and authoritarian governments.

I conclude this section with a narrow discussion of the qualitative data on the framing contest between social-movement actors and the regime, because the data here also help build new theory on framing contests. The data presented in this section make plain that such a contest existed, but I want to add a few salient examples to fill out the contours of that contest. The framing contest began on the day of Mohammed Bouazizi's self-immolation, said Ali and Lassad Bouazizi. On December 17, they said, the national news agency reported that opposition figures were trying to make the demonstration in Sidi Bouzid seem bigger than it was, and the agency reported that the opposition's claims of mistreatment of the interior were untrue. In other words, the regime was contesting the framing that the Bouazizi cousins and others had constructed that day on Al-Jazeera and elsewhere. Another organizer said that his framing strategy was solely to counter the narrative deployed by the government that the opposition was an uneducated band of lawbreakers, the situation was calm, and Ben Ali was beloved. This organizer's approach corresponds perfectly with the definition of the term framing contest. Sofiane Ben Haj

M’Hamed, the internet activist known online as Hamadi Kaloutcha, added an important element to the discussion of the framing contest, and I present his testimony at length in chapter 4. In short, he said that more of his time was spent on cyberwar, as he captured and shared content from blogs and websites that the regime had blocked, while the regime struggled to block his page on Facebook. The first two examples here follow the traditional schema of a framing contest, but Kaloutcha’s account, buttressed by many other interviewees, presents a meaningful addition to the scholarship on framing contests: Framing contests are not only about whose frame is legitimated by adoption in traditional media discourse, but social movements now wage framing contests also by means of cyberwar. Social-movement actors attempt to suppress competing frames by deleting, blocking access to, or otherwise hacking the websites and internet pages of their opponents, as well as by defending their sites and pages from attack, restoring deleted or blocked content, and establishing new sites to deploy frames. Scholars of framing contests should consider cyberwar as part of the contest. A second contribution to theory is what I call dichotomous legitimacy. My data show clearly that the frames of one side—the regime and regime-controlled media, in this case—were treated as a priori false by the intended audience of the frames. One interview subject said that he chose to watch the news on state television only to monitor the regime’s framing, but he did not believe any of it as an accurate account. To add context to the study of framing contests, scholars should interrogate perceptions of the sides in a framing contest anterior to the contest as a meaningful indicator of the dynamic of the framing contest and its outcome. To conclude, the above data reveals the specific dynamics of the framing contest in Tunisia, a finding that also helps answer research question R3 about how organizers and participants

constructed collective-action frames and used various communication technologies to do so.

3.2.2.3 Framing Strategies and Frame Alignment

In this section, I will present the data on and discuss the revolutionaries' framing strategies and their methods for constructing framing strategies. The literature on framing in social movements uses the term frame alignment to refer to the process of the strategic production of frames by organizers and activists to align their movement with what they perceive to be the values and goals of allies and potential adherents (Snow et al., 1986, p. 468). Rooting this concept in the link between framing strategies and the intended audience will help untangle the problem of the interviewees who said they did not have a strategy, a topic I cover at the end of the section. This section will answer research question R4, which asks how organizers and participants used communication media for frame alignment.

Because the organizers and participants discussed many framing strategies at length, I will first list the strategies. Interviewees said that they made conscious decisions to construct and deploy frames of corruption, economic issues, the crackdown, overcoming fear, freedom, dignity, unity, humor, and lies and exaggeration. There was no predominant strategy; nearly all these strategies were mentioned multiple times, yet no framing was mentioned as a strategy more than five times. Some interviewees said that they deployed multiple framing strategies, such as the economy and the crackdown, or dignity and corruption. The multiplicity of strategies—and the variety of frames they

generated—comprise a compelling argument against the hypothesis that a master frame prevailed in the revolution; I return to this point in a section below.

Similarly, interviewees reported multiple methods for constructing their framing strategies. The most common method was face-to-face communication, with eight interviewees saying they concocted strategies this way. Two interviewees said they constructed their strategies through email discussions among activists. No interviewees reported discussing on Facebook what a framing strategy for Facebook should be; I return to this point in the section's conclusion. A few interview subjects pointed out that they engaged in prolonged debates about what the best strategy would be. One organizer said that she and a group of five or six fellow activists were together constantly in January, constructing framing strategy and giving interviews to foreign media. One organizer from Sidi Bouzid said that he and his fellow activists met for about an hour every evening to discuss framing strategy. In a rather empirical approach, a pair of friends from Tunis said that they were part of a group of about five or six who would go out every day and try to convince people to join the protests; in the evenings, the friends would meet and discuss which framing strategies had been most effective, and then they would deploy those frames while continually honing their message. As a result of their research, they chose to deploy frames about economic issues, corruption, and police brutality. In the sample's sole example of hierarchical strategy construction, the leader of the UGET branch in Sousse said that he received regular emails from the UGET national leadership instructing members to deploy specific framing strategies; some strategies were to emphasize unemployment, corruption, or a specific site in Tunis where protests were tumultuous. In an extreme contrast to this, Skander Ben Hamda, known online as

Bullet Skan and a co-founder of the online activist collective Takriz, said that the members of Takriz had a clear strategy (a prominent part of which was profanely taunting Ben Ali and the regime), but they had never debated or even articulated it. When he was nearly tortured to death at the Interior Ministry near the end of the revolution, he said, he was only tortured more when he told his inquisitors the truth: He could not give them the names of other Takriz leaders, because he had never even met some of them. They were mostly a band of young men who met online and shared a hacking ethos and an insouciant, youthful disdain for the regime. To sum up the methods of constructing strategy, the qualitative data show clearly that most interviewees constructed their framing strategies during face-to-face meetings, though some interview subjects used email, and the revolutionaries took a variety of approaches to constructing strategy.

In responding to questions about their framing strategies, several interview subjects responded that they did not have a strategy. Most of these interviewees said that they chose to deploy frames that would show just the facts. To be precise, six of 25 organizers said that they tried to follow such an approach; three of 24 organizers said that this was their strategy to attract potential adherents to the opposition. four of 14 participants said that they chose to deploy frames that would show just the facts. A participant from Tunis said that there was not much time for analysis or strategy, so she was just acting and reacting, when she chose which frames to deploy. An organizer in Kasserine said that he posted all his photos and videos without any editing. At the same time, he said that, in his status updates on Facebook, he wrote about the persistence of the demonstrators, to give them support and encouragement. A participant in Kasserine said that he was not thinking about strategy, nor did he discuss it with anyone. His social

network was already full of antipathy toward the regime and did not need to be persuaded. He uploaded lengthy videos made by a person from Kasserine whom he never met, and he only edited them to take out blank shots, such as of a wall or of the ground.

This begs the question: Is no strategy a strategy? Framing theory in social movements offers fruitful ways to consider this question. As mentioned in the discussion of collective-action frames, social-movement actors construct and deploy frames to inspire followers and potential adherents and to legitimize the movement. One category of inspiration is mobilization (Snow et al., 1986), so if social-movement actors deploy frames in an effort to mobilize adherents and potential adherents, then such an approach qualifies as a framing strategy. In analyzing the goals of social-movement actors in frame alignment, scholars posit that frame alignment is the process of trying to construct a frame with resonance (Coe, 2011; Ferree, 2003; Noakes & Johnston, 2005; Snow & Benford, 1988). This means that, in frame alignment, social-movement actors want their frames to fit with the recipients' understandings of events addressed by the frames. If these organizers and participants were deploying these unalloyed frames just to construct a narrative that would fit with Tunisians' understandings of the situation—a counter-narrative to the one promulgated by the regime, for instance—then this, too, would be a framing strategy. To restate the larger point, even if these interviewees said that they did not have a strategy in constructing frames, this does not mean that their frames were not examples of collective-action frames or frame alignment. If these social-movement actors wanted their frames to mobilize the citizenry, legitimize the uprising, or construct a narrative that they believed would fit with their perception of the citizens' beliefs, then these actors had a framing strategy, even if they say that they did not consciously

consider the construction of the content of their frames. As an example, an organizer from Tunis said that he gave an interview to a journalist from the French television station TF1, in which the organizer was reporting that the security forces were shooting citizens in the streets of Tunis. He was screaming, he said, declaring that this regime cannot go on. And yet, he said he was not saying these words from any strategic calculation, rather simply out of conviction. But if he said that the regime cannot go on, is there any way not to see this as a call to mobilize against the regime? In the view of framing theory, this is strategic framing.

This seeming contradiction between the words of social-movement actors and the theory of social movements presents a ripe opportunity to build new theory. Ferree (2003) criticizes a certain reductionism in considering the framing process as merely a search for resonance, because this reduces the framing process to a marketing technique (p. 305). In light of the data, I find the definition of the term frame alignment to be constricting in a way that obscures the framing process. Frame alignment demands that social-movements actors try to fit their frames with their intended audience's understandings and cultural repertoires. In my data, as I explained in my discussion on the alternative narrative, the social-movement actors in Tunisia's revolution were not trying to fit their frames into anyone's understanding of events—on the contrary, they were working to construct that understanding of events. Tunisia's state-controlled media were constructing a narrative that nearly everyone in the national audience believed was false, but the only alternative sources that this audience had for its understanding of the events were the frames that they encountered on social media, on blogs, in emails, in telephone conversations, and in face-to-face conversations—and eventually in traditional

media such as Al-Jazeera and France 24. On the other hand, one could argue that, once these reports of persistent protests had been established, and audiences had created their own meanings for and understanding of events, then the frames constructed and deployed by organizers and participants were indeed examples of frame alignment. However, I would argue that social-movement actors continued the initial construction of understanding, because events such as the later, brutal crackdowns on protesters first came to light only through the mediated frames deployed by social-movement actors, regardless of medium.

In other words, the term frame alignment seems to obscure important elements of the process of frame construction, if the term requires such a limited definition of strategy. To look at the field more holistically, we should distinguish between the frame and the framing process. The concept of collective-action frames focuses on the frames themselves—the type of frames—even though it does consider the intent of social-movement actors. Resonance is a frame trait, though scholars often judge resonance by a movement's success or by the wider adoption of a specific frame. If one wanted to scrutinize only frames, then scraping Facebook and/or Twitter data, along with some footage from satellite networks, and running various statistical regressions would suffice—and many scholars have taken this approach. But I want to bring the scholarly focus back to the process of frame construction, as Snow and Benford (2005) called on scholars to do (a call also made by Ryan, 2005). I conducted interviews in Tunisia to collect data on the framing process, as well as on specific frames. The construction of meaning is a process, as is the construction of frames. By making this process the unit of analysis, my dissertation sheds new light on how and why Tunisia's revolutionaries

constructed and deployed mediated frames. They intended to mobilize, they intended to legitimize their movement, to delegitimize their opponent (i.e., the regime), to construct an initial narrative of the revolution (or first draft of history), and to construct an alternative narrative to the one in the discredited state-controlled media, in some cases without any regard for what that regime narrative might be. These findings represent an answer to research question R4, and they also represent a coherent and rich set of categories that scholars can use when analyzing the framing process in any episode of contentious politics. In addition, these findings lay the groundwork for future research, in that these categories easily translate into specific questions that scholars can ask social-movement actors about the actors' strategies and intentions. Although shared protest identity is a topic that I will discuss in chapter 5, I want to note here that, when social-movement actors worked to construct frames that they believed would align with a shared belief that the regime was illegitimate, corrupt, oppressive, or otherwise against the people, they were also working to construct a shared protest identity, which is a crucial trait in forging the broad coalition of citizens necessary for a successful revolution.

To conclude this section on framing strategies, I want to reiterate that social-movements actors did not deploy a single, monolithic approach to framing, but instead they deployed several different strategies. I listed the strategies in the preceding paragraph; at one step remove from the strategies per se, it also seems clear that nearly all the organizers and participants indeed had a strategy for constructing frames, whether they articulated it as a strategy or in terms of intent. I would like to spend a bit more time discussing their methods for constructing their framing strategies. They did not use social media much for this task, but rather they preferred face-to-face communication, with

some use of email and phones. Another answer to research question R4 is that organizers and participants deployed a bifurcated use of communication for framing strategy: They tended to construct strategy using one communication technology, in order to deploy their strategies in other media. As was the case with framing strategies, social-movement actors did not follow a uniform approach to constructing their strategies, but rather they followed a range of methods, from using a decentralized, group dynamic, to the empirical approach of the friends in Tunis, to the centralized, hierarchical approach of UGET.

Even though the interviewees reported a range of approaches, the centralized, hierarchical approach of UGET was unique. In a similar case, an activist from the Lawyers' Syndicate said that a group of 20 young lawyers had also worked to create a messaging strategy for the syndicate, and then many lawyers followed this strategy. Still, the strategy was not issued by the syndicate's leadership, so this does not represent an example of top-down, hierarchical framing strategy, but rather another example of the horizontality that is both celebrated and critiqued by scholars (e.g., Castells, 2012; Fuchs, 2017; Gerbaudo, 2012; Wolfson, 2014). This debate about the relationship between organizational structure and social-movement success is not my primary (or even secondary) focus, and while I will present more data on this topic in the section on social media and the costs of organizing, I want to use the topic of framing strategy to open my discussion of this topic. My data show that the revolutionaries in my sample did not adhere to a centralized organizational structure in their movement, nor to a vertical hierarchy. There was no single group that led the revolution. I am not a historian, but even though history provides examples of communist revolutions in Russia, China, Cuba, etc., led by a single, hierarchical organization, one can find a wealth of counter-examples,

such as the French Revolution, the American Revolution, and, perhaps most relevant to our contemporary time, the wave of revolutions in 1989 in the Soviet satellite states, in which revolutions were not led by a hierarchical organization (with all immense respect due to the Polish labor union Solidarity).

In Tunisia, revolutionaries constructed multiple framing strategies, and they followed multiple approaches for constructing those strategies. The paradigm of these approaches, which I will elaborate in the second half of this chapter, was hybridity—a variety and multiplicity of strategies, approaches, and communication technologies. Regarding framing strategies, the example of Ali and Lassad Bouazizi illustrates the point of hybridity well. Their strategy was to lie and exaggerate, and they first heard this strategy from officials in Tunisia's Communist Party in 1994. Because the regime so tightly controlled the nation's media, and because the majority of Tunisians had become politically apathetic, lying and exaggerating was the only way that the Bouazizi cousins believed they could construct a story substantial enough to garner attention from foreign media such as Al-Jazeera. Let me bring together many levels of the hybrid network in their approach: In terms of organizational structures, the two cousins appropriated their strategy from the epitome of a centralized, hierarchical organization, but they deployed it as part of a horizontal network of activists in Tunisia's interior—and no other activists in Sidi Bouzid, Kasserine, or Gafsa told me that they had communicated with anyone about this strategy. In terms of technologies, social-movement actors had developed this strategy before the internet was widespread in Tunisia, and long before social media were invented, and the strategy was designed for traditional media such as television and

newspapers—and then the template was simply applied to a new communication technology that had arrived in the intervening years.

3.2.2.4 Frame Variation by Medium and by Audience

Coe (2011) observed that some social-movement actors construct different frames for the same audience. I pursued this question among organizers and participants, but I asked the question in a slightly altered form: I asked whether they used different frames for different media and/or for different audiences. Ten of 23 organizers said that they had, and six of 16 participants said that they had. Altogether, that works out to 16 of 39 interviewees, or just more than 41 percent. Their responses help answer research questions R3 and R4, about how revolutionaries constructed collective-action frames and used communication technology to do so, as well as which framing strategies they employed in the framing process. The variety of dependent framing strategies supplies further evidence against the existence of a single, master frame, which I will examine in a section below. Their strategies show how they perceived the affordances of various technologies, especially Facebook. Their strategies also reveal the bases on which they differentiated various audiences. Despite varying perceptions of different communication media and audiences, the interview subjects' goal in constructing different frames was largely uniform: to convince the recipient of the frame to join the protests or at least agree with the protesters' position.

Nearly all the variations stemmed from different strategies for Facebook and other communication technologies, whether Twitter, YouTube, blogs, email, or interpersonal communication. Even within Facebook, two interviewees said that they deployed

different framing strategies for different pages that they maintained on the site. Both said that they used different strategies because they believed that the audiences of the various pages were more likely to be convinced by different frames. However, many variations sprang from interviewees' perceptions of the uses of different communication technologies. For example, interviewees perceived various social-media sites differently. One participant said that Facebook was more about relaying news, whereas Twitter was more concise, direct, and to the point. On the other hand, an organizer from Tunis said that, on both Facebook and Twitter, he deployed frames to convince Tunisians to go into the streets, whereas he used YouTube to disseminate frames to show events in Tunisia to the world. In other words, he thought that different social media had different audiences. Another organizer from Tunis had the same belief, but he perceived that audiences differed intellectually rather than geographically. He said that the Twitter audience was more politically aware, so his posts there were more analytical, structured, and related to ideas; on Facebook, his strategy was to play on emotions, for example by posting information about the numbers of people who had died in the protests. Three interviewees said that they deployed different framing strategies on Facebook and on their blogs; one of the three said the sites' audiences differed, and two said that the technologies of social media and blogs were different. One said that he wrote Facebook posts with an audience of "all the people" in mind, but his blog was intended for other activists, so he wrote more conceptual posts there about ideas and sociology. Another organizer said that he did not think about the different audiences for his blog and his Facebook page, but he similarly used his blog for analysis, opinion, and ideas, such as ideas on how to increase the number of protesters. On Facebook, he said, he just posted status updates and words

of encouragement. An organizer from Sidi Bouzid said that his framing strategy for Facebook was to construct frames of a shared identity as Tunisian citizens, whereas on his blog he wanted to provide an explanation for the uprising, making political arguments about how the regime had marginalized the interior region. To repeat an account mentioned earlier, one organizer said that his framing strategy on Facebook was to lie and exaggerate, but he gave only accurate information to foreign news outlets, partly because he felt that he could not exaggerate to these media. Four interviewees said that they deployed different framing strategies on Facebook and when they spoke to others in person. The interviews subjects did not present their different strategies as related to the technology of Facebook, but rather because they had different strategies that they believed more fitting for the individuals to whom they spoke in person. All these accounts present a picture, perhaps not altogether coherent, of Facebook. The picture that emerges from these interviews is that social-movement actors in Tunisia saw Facebook as a technology for delivering brief, newsy status updates to a broad, representative audience of Tunisians, though framing on Facebook could also be emotional and untrue. Organizers and participants did not see Facebook as a technology for analysis, opinions, or ideas. Another salient trait is that three interviewees said they felt freer on Facebook to take more risks, because they feared regime surveillance or retribution for what they might say in person, in a domestic newspaper, or to foreign media. In other words, even though they used their real names on their Facebook pages, they felt a sense of freedom, if not anonymity.

Interview subjects said that they also frequently followed different strategies—whether in different communication technologies or when using the same technology—

based on the audience. Some of the varying audiences given by interviewees include Islamists and communists, domestic and foreign audiences, and even soccer fans and "normal people," as an organizer from Tunis differentiated his target audiences. In considering the differences between these pairs and among other audiences for whom social-movement actors constructed different frames, I found consistent traits that divided these groups: The audiences differed either in their levels of opposition to the regime, their levels of political knowledge, or their socio-economic statuses.

The differing frames did not follow a discernible pattern. The differences were not between salient types of collective-action frames such as corruption versus economic issues, but the differences instead related to elements such as tone (e.g., gradations of humor and emotion) or arguments about why individuals should side with the opposition. The goals of the interviewees in deploying varying framing strategies, however, were almost entirely uniform: Interview subjects deployed these framing strategies to legitimize the opposition, to convince potential adherents to join the opposition, and to convince potential adherents to mobilize and participate in the protests. In the end, these social-movement actors followed different strategies because they believed those strategies would be the most effective ones for a specific medium and/or audience. In conclusion, the interviewees' rationales for constructing varying framing strategies represents an answer to research question R4 about which framing strategies the organizers and participants deployed.

3.2.2.5 Strategy as Emergent and Contingent

Another strategy that social-movement actors deployed was to change their framing in response to events and conditions during the revolution, a finding in line with Ellingson's (1995) argument that the framing process is dialectical, in that social-movement actors adjust their framings in response to events in contentious politics. Ellingson argues that the framing process is situated, contingent, and emergent, and in Tunisia this dynamic played out in ways beyond the simple dialectic of the framing contest. For example, social-movement actors altered their framing strategies to fit the conditions at the time of the revolution. The UGET leader from Sousse said that the organization decided to change its framing strategy at a meeting of the national leadership on December 20 in Tunis. Their slogan before the revolution was "bread, liberty, and dignity," but the leaders thought that unemployment had become such a significant problem that they adjusted their slogan to "jobs, liberty, and dignity," he said. One fascinating question raised by this change is how their decision was shaped by the lie of the Bouazizi cousins that Mohammed Bouazizi had been a college graduate unable to find appropriate employment, though that lie, of course, was shaped by the lived experience of many Tunisians, college-educated and otherwise, who could not find appropriate employment. In an earlier section, I presented the account of the two friends in Tunis who honed their framing strategy to fit what they found to be the most effective frames. This episode does not reflect a reaction to the events of the revolution, but their framing strategy was evidently emergent, in the sense that it emerged from their empirical inquiry into the relative effectiveness of various strategies. As a reaction to the events of the revolution, two organizers reported that they changed their framing during the revolution, once they sensed that the protesters were gaining strength and that the

regime was wobbling. An organizer from Sidi Bouzid said that his framing shifted from writing posts about Sidi Bouzid and poverty to writing about the regime. An organizer from Tunis, whom I mentioned earlier as pursuing a strategy of making the regime seem ridiculous, in order to make the regime seem less threatening, said that she and her fellow activists changed their strategy once they sensed that the protesters had a certain momentum. Their new strategy was to say that the regime's days were numbered, and the people had broken with the regime, overcome their fear, and would not go away. The regime also changed its framing in response to events, multiple interviewees said. It is worth pointing out that these changes, as reported by the interview subjects, were not simply part of a framing contest, because the regime was altering its framing to respond to the events of the revolution and not solely to counter any opposition narrative deployed through mediated frames. As an organizer from Tunis said, "We were seeing that they were responding somehow to the fact that it's gaining momentum." The change, as reported by interviewees, was that the regime began to acknowledge that the demonstrations were not abating, and opposition figures were even allowed to criticize the regime on state television, even though the regime never abandoned its framing that the regime was in control and working to improve conditions in the country.

The qualitative data lead me to suspect that social-movement actors shifted their framing during the revolution to give greater prominence to frames of the crackdown, whether of the coercive forces' brutality or of the crackdown's victims, but I recommend that scholars pursue this hypothesis in further research. The interview questionnaire did not include a question about whether or how interviewees changed their framing during the revolution, and I would recommend that social-movement scholars in the future

include this question, tailored to the specifics of whichever episode of contentious politics they examine. I quoted in an earlier section the leader of the UGET branch in Sousse, who said that images of regime killings were the best framing to mobilize protesters. An organizer from Tunis said that he believed that the videos of the crackdown in Kasserine changed the minds of many citizens to side with the protesters. He said that he noticed a "big shift" in opinion on Facebook after videos of the episode were disseminated. Considering the interview data that I cite throughout this chapter, I find it highly likely that many social-movement activists noticed the potency of these frames for persuasion and mobilization and then adjusted their framing strategies to make these frames more salient. I do not have evidence to support this argument, but the data I presented in this section do provide compelling evidence that the revolutionaries and the regime did alter their framing strategies during the revolution in response to emergent, contingent events. This finding answers Ellingson's (1995) call for more research to explore how the framing process emerges and potentially changes during the events of contentious politics (p. 107), and the finding also answers research question R4 about which strategies organizers and participants followed to deploy mediated frames. These altered frames constructed by organizers and participants, moreover, were not uniform, which adds further evidence to for the hypothesis that there was no master frame for the revolution, a topic I shall address in the following section.

3.2.3 A Master Frame?

Throughout this chapter, I mention the concept of the master frame, which is a central explanation or problem-solving schema around which diverse social groups

coalesce (Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 140). The quantitative and qualitative data point clearly toward the conclusion that there was no master frame in Tunisia's revolution. To bring together the evidence cited so far in this chapter, a robust majority of interviewees used multiple frames; interviewees also said that they consciously constructed widely differing framing strategies; about 40 percent of interviewees said that they used different frames for different media and for different audiences; and interviewees said that they changed their frames and/or framing strategies in response to the events of the revolution. To repeat another point I made above, the data also do not support the existence of dichotomous master frames for social-movement actors in Tunis and in the interior. Whatever different views they might have had of the regime or of the country's economic situation, social-movement actors made strategic choices about the frames that they thought would be most effective for persuading and mobilizing potential adherents, and these strategic choices were not uniform. The UGET leader from Sousse provided one explanation for the absence of a master frame. The long-time opposition was splintered into three rough groupings in their analyses of the situation and in their demands, he said. One group focused on reform, demanding changes in human rights, civil rights, and political freedoms; a second group focused on the corruption of the Traboulsi clan and wanted the exit of Leila Traboulsi and her relatives from all political and economic positions; the third group wanted Ben Ali to go, period. To be sure, many social-movement actors constructed framing strategies based on beliefs about effectiveness, but it also seems likely that some adherents of these three groups among the long-standing opposition would have also favored differing frames that reflected these diverse issues.

This finding against the existence of a master frame contradicts arguments made by other scholars. Howard et al. (2011) argued that social-movement leaders in Tunisia had constructed a "freedom meme" that mobilized masses of citizens around the ideas of liberty and revolution (p. 3). Their finding was based on searches of keywords in Tunisian blogs during the revolution, and this seems to be the root of their questionable conclusion. In the second part of this chapter, I will present a wealth of quantitative data on media use, but by this point it is likely clear that more people used Facebook and watched television—and for longer periods—than the number of people who read blogs. Moreover, my data on the types of collective-action frames show that freedom was not a common frame; some interviewees mentioned it, but not enough did to merit inclusion among the frequently used frames. Howard et al. (2011) do not discuss the concept of a master frame, but I wanted to confront their claim about a dominant "meme" with empirical research about the frames that the revolutionaries in Tunisia constructed and deployed.

Lim, however, claims that a master frame did indeed obtain:

> The Bouazizi story, crafted by a combination of the burning body images and Ali Bouazizi's mythical twist, had become a master frame that guided interpretation of not only the Sidi Bouzid protests, but also the Tunisian revolt, and the Arab revolts in general. (p. 928)

By "mythical twist," Lim writes that she means Ali's lies that Mohammed Bouazizi had been a college graduate unable to find appropriate employment and had been humiliated by a local inspector who had slapped him in public and confiscated the scale that he had used to weigh fruit and vegetables. Together, these elements created a master frame of

justice, freedom, and dignity, Lim writes. Before considering the data about this argument, there are two problems to consider with the formulation of the argument. First, the lie about Mohammed Bouazizi's education and employment would seem to indicate a frame including a strong economic component, but Lim ignores this. Instead, she talks about how this mythical twist transformed Bouazizi's suicide from yet another critique about poverty from the interior into a frame that all Tunisians could identify with, a frame of citizens "whose rights and freedom were denied" (p. 927). I cannot see how this lie does more than turn the suicide into a frame explicitly and directly related to economic concerns. The second problem is whether justice, freedom, and dignity can constitute one master frame. I think they cannot, because the verbal and visual content that social-movement actors use to construct frames cannot be so easily abstracted, and because this assumes that specific collective-action frames will be decoded by those who encountered them in a way that leads to these abstract extrapolations. My quantitative and qualitative data, summarized at the beginning of this section, add abundant evidence to my critique. On the most basic level, no one mentioned using Bouazizi's suicide as a frame. The data show a preponderance of frames about the regime's corruption, economic issues such as unemployment, and the coercive forces' crackdown on protesters. None of these fit Lim's master frame. To be sure, one could argue that all three of these phenomena represent injustices against the Tunisian people by the regime, but such an argument represents, in my view, the foundational problem with the concept of an injustice frame as put forward by Gamson (1995): Almost any frame that criticizes can, on an abstract level, be called an injustice frame. Simply put, social-movement actors constructed and deployed richly varied frames during the revolution, with no single frame predominating. As mentioned

in chapter 2, Lim did not travel to Tunisia and conducted only two interviews, both by phone.

I want to end this section with one final note about the frame of Mohammed Bouazizi's suicide, from the interview with Ali and Lassad Bouazizi: There are no images of Mohammed's self-immolation. The fire was extinguished before Ali arrived and before anyone else began filming, Ali said. The only video of an ambulance that day was for another family member who collapsed upon hearing that it was Mohammed who had immolated himself. Ali said that many videos and images of self-immolation were disseminated throughout Tunisia at the time, but this content had been appropriated from other self-immolations. In other words, perhaps many Tunisians saw images of a self-immolation that they thought was Mohammed's, and maybe they were angered, felt a sense of injustice, or were inspired to act. However, my interviews did not find any empirical evidence of Tunisians saying they had watched videos of the suicide and were moved by it. I am not saying that the *act* of self-immolation was not important, regardless of whether any video record exists. My point is that any argument about framing during Tunisia's revolution is significantly weakened if it focuses or relies on claims about the framing of Mohammed Bouazizi's suicide.

3.2.4 Frame Resonance

This section will provide an answer to research question R5, which examines the relationship between frame resonance and specific communication technologies. This question approaches interviewees not as actors who constructed frames to deploy, but as actors who constructed the meanings of the frames they encountered in various

communication technologies. Framing theory addresses the reception and decoding of frames through the variable of resonance, which is the measure of how effective a collective-action frame is for mobilization (Snow & Benford, 1988; Valocchi, 2005). As mentioned in chapter 2, the relationship between mediated frames and mobilization can involve several confounding factors, to which I return in the conclusion of this section. To interrogate how interviewees constructed the meanings of the frames they encountered, I created two measures of resonance: credibility, or the fit an individual sees between a frame and the events addressed by the frame (in this case, the events of the revolution); and narrative fidelity, or the fit an individual sees between the frame and the individual's values, beliefs, and ideology (Noakes & Johnston, 2005; Snow & Benford, 1988). To measure credibility, I asked interviewees whether the frames they encountered in a given communication technology fit with their understanding of the situation. To measure narrative fidelity, I asked interviewees whether the frames they encountered in a given communication technology fit with their values, beliefs, and ideologies. I asked interviewees these two questions regarding the frames that they encountered on Facebook, blogs, and news websites, as well as on television, the radio, and in newspapers. To connect these measures to mobilization, I asked participants about the degree to which their decision to join the uprising was influenced by what they had seen in the media. One potential shortcoming of this approach is that I did not ask interviewees whether specific frames had resonated with them. Asking interviewees such a question from the outset would not have been practical, because I first had to ascertain what the most frequent frames were. Moreover, it could be redundant to ask those who made strategic choices about constructing frames to judge the resonance of various frames,

because their strategic choices largely reveal their answers. In other words, the data throughout this chapter on the specific collective-action frames that interviewees constructed can also be read as strong indications about beliefs in the likely resonance of those frames. For future research on framing in social movements, I do think that researchers interviewing participants should strive to ask them about the resonance of specific frames, by preparing an initial set of frames and adjusting that list as data emerge.

Interviewees' answers reflected the dichotomy of legitimacy that I introduced earlier in this chapter—in other words, interview subjects frequently answered that the frames constructed by protesters fit with the interviewees' understandings of events and with the interviewees' values, but the frames constructed by the regime and by some other actors did not. To account for these divergent responses, I coded answers to both measures in each technology for positive fit and negative fit. This approach allowed me to capture the fact that some interviewees expressed both a positive and negative fit for the frames they encountered in a given technology. The quantitative and qualitative data do not indicate that the frames on any single communication technology or related group of technologies, such as all internet pages, were more likely to resonate with interviewees. The data also add further evidence to my argument that organizers and participants constructed an alternative narrative that contradicted the regime's narrative and contrasted with the narratives in some traditional media.

Regarding Facebook, 18 interviewees said only that the frames they encountered fit with their understanding of events; four interviewees said only that the frames they encountered did not fit with their understanding of events; and two interviewees said both

that they saw frames that did and that did not fit with their understanding of events. Regarding narrative fidelity, 12 interviewees said only that the frames they encountered fit with their values, beliefs, and ideology; one interviewee said only that the frames he encountered did not fit; and four interviewees said both that they saw frames that did and that did not fit. The cases of positive fit strongly outweigh the cases of negative fit. To explain some of the cases of negative fit, an organizer from Kasserine said that he saw many fake, pro-regime profiles on Facebook. Other interviewees said that they had also seen pro-regime sentiment on Facebook. From these accounts, it seems clear that Facebook was another site where a framing contest took place, and it was a key site where social-movement actors constructed narratives of events.

As for blogs, 11 interviewees said only that the frames they encountered fit with their understanding of events; four interviewees said only that the frames they encountered did not fit with their understanding of events; and one interviewee said both that she saw frames that did and that did not fit with her understanding of events. Regarding narrative fidelity, eight interviewees said only that the frames they encountered fit with their values, beliefs, and ideology; four interviewees said only that the frames they encountered did not fit; and one interviewees said both that she saw frames that did and that did not fit. Again, the cases of positive fit strongly outweigh the cases of negative fit. Strikingly, all five interviewees who gave negative answers to both questions (one gave positive and negative answers), also read the blog of opposition activist Lina Ben Mhenni[5]. Two of these four also said that they read the opposition blog

[5] Lina Ben Mhenni did not have a blog during the revolution, but rather she only had a Facebook page, she said in her interview with me. Because other interviewees called her work a blog and gave answers regarding blog resonance based on this view, I coded their answers in the blog category.

Nawaat, but this might not be predictive, because none of the 14 others who read Nawaat answered the questions negatively. In addition to these five who read Ben Mhenni's blog, another nine interviewees said that they read her blog but did not answer these questions negatively. As a result, I hesitate to attribute the lack of fit solely to her blog, but one organizer from Sidi Bouzid said that he hated her blog—as I mentioned above in this chapter, he liked the information on her blog, but he detested her politics, which he called "bourgeois," because she was constantly writing about freedom. I see this critique as pointing up some of the different narratives of the revolution in the interior and in Tunis. In other words, the negative fit was not caused by regime framing but largely because social-movement actors had differing understandings—and I think it would be accurate to label these understandings as frames—of the events of the revolution. Moreover, the blogs of opposition activists, such as Nawaat, Tunizine, and Lina Ben Mhenni, tended to be associated with positive answers to the questions on resonance.

Regarding news websites such as the websites for France 24, Al-Jazeera, CNN, and BBC, 20 interviewees said only that the frames they encountered fit with their understanding of events; one interviewee said only that the frames he encountered did not fit with his understanding of events; and three interviewees said that they saw frames that both did and did not fit with their understanding of events. Regarding narrative fidelity, 12 interviewees said only that the frames they encountered fit with their values, beliefs, and ideology; three interviewees said only that the frames they encountered did not fit; and two interviewees said that they saw frames that both did and did not fit. Cases of positive fit strongly outweigh the cases of negative fit. Of the negative responses, all but

one of these interviewees said that they went to the Al-Jazeera website, and I will explain in the paragraph below on television the relationship between Al-Jazeera and negative fit.

As for television, 16 interviewees said only that the frames they encountered fit with their understanding of events; one interviewee said only that the frames he encountered did not fit with his understanding of events; and six interviewees said that they saw frames that both did and did not fit with their understanding of events. Regarding narrative fidelity, 14 interviewees said that the frames they encountered fit with their values, beliefs, and ideology; six interviewees said that the frames they encountered did not fit; and four interviewees said that they saw frames that both did and did not fit. Cases of positive fit prevailed, but there was a higher percentage of negative responses to these question in regard to television than for any other medium. The negative answers can be explained by two factors: All interviewees who gave negative responses watched Tunisian state television and/or Al-Jazeera. Although these two networks explain the cases of negative fit, interviewees also gave negative answers about the fit of some French networks. I coded answers for the same two questions solely for Tunisian state television and for Al-Jazeera, and the answers are telling. For Tunisian state television, all nine interviewees who answered said that the frames they encountered did not fit with their understanding of events, and all eight who answered said that these frames did not fit with their values, beliefs, and ideology. The numbers for Al-Jazeera are mixed. There were no responses of both positive and negative fit—an interview subject said that Al-Jazeera's frames either fit or did not fit. Seven interviewees said that the network's frames fit with their understanding of events, while two interviewees said the frames did not fit. The results for the question on values are more telling: Four

interviewees said that the network's frames fit with the interviewees' values, beliefs, and ideology, while three interviewees said the frames did not fit. In other words, interviewees apparently saw a marked ideological component to the frames on Al-Jazeera. I provide qualitative data on Al-Jazeera in the second part of this chapter, to add understanding to this finding for mixed resonance because of ideological factors. To conclude this examination of the resonance of frames on television frames, I would like to present one qualitative account, to add some richness to the finding for the mixed resonance of frames televised on networks not controlled by the regime. Lassad Bouazizi said that the frames that he saw on television did not fit with his understanding of events, because television networks were largely repeating the lies and exaggerations that he had helped to disseminate through a variety of technologies. Other interviewees also said that they saw frames on television that they thought were exaggerated and so did not fit with their understandings of events.

Regarding radio, five interviewees said only that the frames they encountered fit with their understanding of events, and four interviewees said only that the frames they encountered did not fit with their understanding of events. Regarding narrative fidelity, five interviewees said only that the frames they encountered fit with their values, beliefs, and ideology, and three interviewees said only that the frames they encountered did not fit. The cases of positive fit and negative fit are roughly equal, but the explanation is simple: Those who answered negatively listened to regime-controlled radio stations, while those who answered positively did not.

As for newspapers, four interviewees said only that the frames they encountered fit with their understanding of events; four interviewees said only that the frames they

encountered did not fit with their understanding of events; and one interviewee said both that he saw frames that did and that did not fit with his understanding of events. Regarding narrative fidelity, four interviewees said only that the frames they encountered fit with their values, beliefs, and ideology; three interviewees said only that the frames they encountered did not fit; and one interviewee said both that he saw frames that did and that did not fit. The cases of positive fit and negative fit are roughly equal, but, as with frames on the radio, the responses were determined solely by whether the interviewee read newspapers controlled by the regime or newspapers that sided with the protesters, such as Al Mawqif and Al Tariq al Jadeed.

These data give rise to a parsimonious finding that a negative fit, whether with an interviewee's understanding of events or values, beliefs, and ideologies, is largely explained by whether that interviewee encountered frames that had been constructed by the regime or by Al-Jazeera, though there are a handful of specific exceptions, such as the blog posts of Lina Ben Mhenni. This finding represents further evidence supporting my argument for the construction of an alternative narrative, as I mentioned in the introduction to this section, and I will develop this argument in the conclusion of this section. Another finding is that these data support an argument for a hybrid network, meaning that media users encounter frames of contentious politics across numerous communication technologies. That is, no single communication technology stands out as offering a unique framing or unique frames that are not deployed through other communication technologies.

Participants' answers were mixed on the question about how their decision to participate was shaped by what they had seen in the media. I coded their answers on a

scale of 1 to 5, with higher numbers representing reports of greater media influence. Of 15 responses, the mean was 3.2, and the standard deviation was 1.74. In other words, the answers varied greatly. There were five 1s but also five 5s, along with three 4s and two 3s. In response to the question, one participant from Tunis said that his decision to participate was largely shaped by what he had seen on Facebook. However, the abundance of answers downplaying the significance of mediated frames could be interpreted as support for an argument that, while Tunisians might have followed the events of the revolution through various communication technologies, their decisions to participate were shaped mostly by factors exogenous to media coverage, such as their grievances against the regime, their grievances about their economic conditions, or their anger at the regime's brutal treatment of their fellow citizens. It is important to note here the difficulty of untangling the relationship between media content and mobilization. As I stated in the previous chapter, the fact of a popular uprising is not evidence that any mediated frames resonated. I am not arguing that the frames constructed by social-movement actors were the sole or primary cause for more than a million Tunisians to occupy their streets and demand the fall of the regime—but I do think the data in this section support the hypothesis that the frames constructed by organizers and participants did resonate.

The preponderance of positive responses to the questions on resonance supports my hypothesis that the frames constructed by organizers and participants resonated. The degree to which mediated frames shaped participants' decisions to join the protests, however, remains an open question. I explain above the negative responses to the questions about resonance, so I would like to conclude this section by briefly considering

why the protesters' framing resonated. To be sure, much of these social-movement actors' framing was an accurate representation of events and did accord with the values, beliefs, and ideologies of many Tunisian citizens, so the finding for resonance is hardly surprising. Still, as many interviewees said, they lied and exaggerated in their framing, and some activists had strongly different views of conditions in Tunisia than did other members of the opposition. Still, what is striking about these organizers' and participants' frames is their novelty. Until 2010, the regime had so thoroughly controlled communication technologies in Tunisia that it was nearly impossible for opposition activists to share their views of the regime or their accounts of anti-regime activity. To be sure, Al-Jazeera and some French satellite networks had given voice to grievances against the regime, but these networks did not always find a welcoming audience in Tunisia, even among longtime members of the opposition. What happened in December and January was the construction of an alternative narrative of protests against the Ben Ali regime and an alternative narrative of Tunisia, one filled with grievances against the injustices of the regime, whether its marginalization of the interior, its corruption, its economic malaise, or its thuggish security forces. This alternative narrative was constructed mostly by social-movement actors, and it was mediated to Tunisians through Facebook, blogs, news websites, television, radio, and newspapers—and also in person by one Tunisian to another. As a final thought, I want to mention the connection between frame resonance and the construction of a collective protest identity, a connection that I will examine in chapter 5. In short, a revolution requires that a broad, cross-class coalition of citizens rebels against a regime, and one necessary condition for a revolutionary mass to coalesce is the construction of a shared protest identity (Goldstone,

2001), and social-movement actors work to construct a collective identity as an effective way to mobilize adherents (Garrett, 2006)—and to construct this collective identity, social-movement actors need to construct and repeatedly disseminate frames that resonate.

3.3 Social Media and Social Movements

In this second part of the chapter, I present findings and discussion on how organizers and participants used social media and a hybrid network of communication technologies for framing (and examine the place of Al-Jazeera in that hybrid network), for nurturing information cascades to overcome fear, for fostering weak ties, and for reducing the costs of organizing and raising the costs of repression. The first part of the chapter focused on the processes through which social-movement actors constructed frames, whereas this second part of the chapter will examine how these actors used a hybrid network of communication technologies for a variety of specific actions, among which framing is just one action. The sections in this part of the chapter will provide answers to research questions R1, about how interviewees used media, and to research question R6, about how interviewees exemplified the active roles of users in the social construction of technology.

3.3.1 The Hybrid Network and Framing

In this section, I will present findings and discussion on how organizers and participants used a hybrid network of communication technologies during the revolution,

and I will show how they used this hybrid network for the framing processes interrogated in the first part of the chapter. Tufekci and Wilson (2012) describe this network as the complex intertwining of multiple online and offline spheres, especially the interrelated uses of the internet, satellite television stations, and cellphones (pp. 376-77). Social media, they write, are "superimposed" on existing social ties among friends, families, and neighbors (p. 376). This nuanced conception not only helps debunk any exaggerated claims for the uniquely powerful influence of social media during the Arab Spring, but it also allows for a richer approach to interrogating how social-movement actors use these various communication technologies during contentious politics. To explore whether and how interviewees used a hybrid network for framing and other social-movement tasks, I asked interview subjects whether, how often, and how they used social media, blogs, news websites, phones, television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. In addition, I asked participants how they heard of the first protest that they attended and how they found out about protests in general.

The quantitative and qualitative data on media use show that interviewees used a hybrid network, with nearly universal use of Facebook, television, phones, and face-to-face meetings related to the revolution. It seems impossible to escape the conclusion that organizers and participants in Tunisia's revolution used Facebook as much as, if not more than, more than any other communication technology. Of the 44 interview subjects, only two said that they did not use Facebook. In my opinion, one of the more interesting quantitative data points in my research is that the mean daily use of during the revolution was 373 minutes—about six hours and 15 minutes. Four respondents said that they used Facebook on average for more than 16 hours each day. Of the 42 interviewees who used

Facebook, only 11 said that they used it for less than four hours per day on average. Interviewees reported using other social media much less frequently. Only 13 interview subjects said that they used Twitter, and, among those users, the mean usage per day was just less than 79 minutes. Regarding YouTube, 14 interview subjects said that they used YouTube, and, among those users, the means usage per day was about 49 minutes. It is important to note that the regime had blocked YouTube in Tunisia, so internet users could typically only get to YouTube by hiding the IP addresses of their computers in some way; I explore this dynamic in greater depth in the following chapter. In other internet usage, 32 interviewees said that they read blogs related to the revolution, and 31 said that they used news websites to read about Tunisia. Regarding email, 17 interviewees said that they used email for communication related to the revolution, while 18 said that they did not.

Usage of phones and face-to-face meetings did not lag too far behind Facebook. As for phone use, 39 of 41 interviewees said that they used their phones for communication related to the revolution, and, among those who made phone calls, the mean usage per day was just less than 80 minutes. The interview questionnaire did not include a question about whether interview subjects met in person to communicate about the revolution, but it emerged during the interviews that such meetings were common and important. I began to ask whether interview subjects met face-to-face, and, of the 34 who gave an answer to the question, 30 said that they did. This works out to slightly more than 88 percent, which is not too much lower than the percentages for Facebook or phone usage, both of which were slightly more than 95 percent.

In regard to television use, 40 of 44 interviewees said that they watched television for news of the revolution. The most frequently watched channel was Al-Jazeera; 35 interviewees said that they watched it, and five said that they did not. For those who watched, the mean usage per day was about 47 minutes. The data show, however, that nearly all of those who watched Al-Jazeera also watched other channels. Only four of the 35 interviewees who said they watched Al-Jazeera said that they watched only Al-Jazeera; of those four, one watched Al-Jazeera for five minutes per day on average, and another two watched for about 30 minutes per day, they said. As for other channels, 27 interviewees said that they watched France 24, and, among those who watched, the mean usage per day was slightly less than 27 minutes. Al-Arabiya was watched by 15 interviewees for a mean of just more than 19 minutes per day, while 16 interviewees said that they watched one of the regime-controlled Tunisian networks, with a mean usage of a bit more than 15 minutes per day. In the following section, I add more quantitative and qualitative data on Al-Jazeera. As for other traditional news media, interviewees used them markedly less frequently: Only 13 of 41 interviewees said that they read a newspaper during the revolution, and 13 of 42 said that they listened to the radio for news of the revolution.

The data show that interviewees used Facebook more than any other communication medium, though they did not use it in isolation. Throughout this part of the chapter, I examine the ways in which interviewees used Facebook and other communication media in a hybrid network, and here I want to begin that discussion by exploring the ways in which interviewees used Facebook and other social media. One significant finding is that several interviewees said that they used different social media

for different purposes. For example, two interviewees said that Twitter was typically used by people with greater political knowledge, such as activists. One of these two said that he, who had a graduate degree and described himself as a member of the upper middle class, associated more with Twitter and was encouraged by what he saw there, because of the sophistication of the discourse. Another difference between Facebook and Twitter during the revolution, he added, was that he found very little news on Twitter, and even less news that he had not already seen on Facebook. An organizer from Tunis reported that he, too, primarily used Facebook for gathering news from around the country about the revolution, but he used Twitter in January to exchange details about the locations of snipers throughout Tunis, so that he could avoid being in their vicinity. YouTube, he said was like Facebook in that he used to collect and spread arguments in favor of the protesters. Bullet Skan, the co-founder of the online collective Takriz, said that he approached YouTube as a place to inform foreigners about events in Tunisia, because the site was blocked domestically by the regime. The varying ways that organizers and participants used different social media leads to an important conclusion: There is no single, correct use for a communication technology. This might sound obvious, but it is a significant argument for the social construction of technology. According to this theory, when Mark Zuckerberg and his college friends created Facebook for students at Harvard to communicate, it was not determined by any exogenous, nonhuman factors that users of this new technology would use it either to share cat videos or to topple a dictator. Instead, the users determined the spectrum of its uses. My interviews show the ways that these social-movement actors used it, and even among these revolutionaries, there was no single, prescribed way to use it. All interviewees shared frames of the uprising through

their shared visual and verbal content, indeed, but some used it for organizing tasks, and some did not. Some used Facebook one way and used Twitter another. For instance, the usage of YouTube to focus on a foreign audience was determined by the regime's blocking the site, not by any inherent traits of the technology. As support for my argument for the usage of a hybrid network, the data show that Facebook was never the only technology used for a given action; social-movement actors made choices about how to calibrate their uses of different social media, telephones, email, and face-to-face discussions.

The use of different social media does not constitute a hybrid network, to be sure. Perhaps the most salient manifestation of the hybrid network was the cross-pollination between social media and television. As I mentioned in this chapter, many interviewees reported that they saw satellite networks broadcasting frames that they had posted to social media or that they had seen first on social media sites. By broadcasting frames of the alternative narrative that social-movement actors were constructing in Tunisia, the television networks reproduced the narrative and amplified it to a larger audience. As former political prisoner Sadok Ben Mhenni said, the protesters' narrative from Tunisia's interior was disseminated through the mutually reinforcing hybrid network of social media and television. The cross-pollination ran in both directions: One participant said that he would take anti-regime arguments that he had heard on television and write them on his Facebook page. Frames that Tunisians (or anyone else) encountered on television and on Facebook were not treated equally, however. As I discussed in the section on resonance, interviewees said that they attributed a variety of biases to Al-Jazeera and France 24, which influenced their opinions of the resonance of the frames these networks

broadcast. At the same time, an organizer from Tunis said that he lied and exaggerated on his Facebook page, but he provided only accurate information to foreign news outlets, because he thought that traditional news media were a site for "truth." When speaking with journalists from these media, he said, "You can't exaggerate." I found another contour in the hybrid network of television and social media in the way that interviewees encountered the frames on each one. An organizer from Tunis said that he and his friends would watch television together—and they did this daily during the last days of the revolution—and use the frames they encountered on television as topics for analysis.

In the foregoing paragraph, I described the relationship between social media and television in the hybrid network. I discuss below how interviewees constructed a hybrid network for other uses, but here I want to analyze in greater detail how interview subjects constructed this hybrid network of multiple communication technologies for framing. In the first part of the chapter, I interrogated how interviewees constructed different frames for different audiences, and though I briefly discussed there how interviewees constructed different frames for different media, here I want to focus on the technologies rather than on the frames. Of the 42 interview subjects who used Facebook, all used it for some sort of framing activity, whether exchanging news and information, persuading, encouraging, or overcoming fear. But interview subjects frequently used other media, as well. Of the 17 interview subjects who used email, all said they used it for some sort of framing activity. Of the 39 interview subjects who used their phones for communication related to the revolution, 31 said they used their phones for some sort of framing activity. Of the 30 who met in person with other people to discuss the revolution, 26 said they used it for some sort of framing activity. Clearly, then, most interviewees were using multiple

communication technologies, or a hybrid network, for framing. One participant from Tunis said that she used email for framing more than she used Facebook. Several interview subjects said that they used face-to-face meetings for framing more than they used Facebook, and some said they used these differently than they used Facebook. For example, a participant from Tunis said that he preferred using in-person meetings as a method of persuasion to join the protests: "I think the face-to-face contact is the best way to convince and not only to convince, but also to see how people think and how people react," he said. Some interviewees said that they used identical content in multiple technologies. For instance, when one participant from Tunis would try in person to persuade potential adherents to join the protests, he would sometimes use his phone to show video from Facebook to those people who seemed more willing to listen to his perspective. An organizer from Tunis said that he would print out blog posts that he had written, so that he could show them in person to potential adherents. The UGET leader in Sousse presented an interesting approach to using different frames in different technologies: He and his fellow UGET leaders would announce on Facebook that they were coming to local education institutions to give speeches with important information for students, but the officials would not include in these Facebook messages any mention of opposition or demonstrations, because the police would then be waiting for them at the sites of the speeches. Once the UGET officials arrived to give speeches, their frame was to speak about how Tunisians in specific interior towns were suffering from the brutal crackdown by the coercive forces, because the UGET officials expected that there would be students from those areas mentioned who would react with displays of outrage. Then, the officials believed, other students from other, similarly affected areas would try to

outdo one another with displays of outrage and defiance of the regime, in performances of one-upmanship and/or masculinity, and the crowd of assembled students would thus be compelled to join the protests. This, the officials believed, was the most effective way to take advantage of the dynamic of in-person meetings to win over potential adherents to the protests. Analogous to the data on frames, the data on media usage show that there was no dominant technology used for framing, nor was there a single technology that was clearly most effective or that interviewees believed to be always most effective. Instead, social-movement actors deployed a hybrid network of communication technologies for framing, and they made strategic choices to use various communication technologies for distinct and clearly delineated reasons.

The above paragraph illustrates that social-movement actors would perform the same action—constructing and deploying frames—through multiple nodes of the hybrid network, and another distinguishing feature of the network is that social-movement actors would limit certain actions to certain nodes of the network. Some simple examples would be the myriad interviewees who were cited in the earlier section on framing strategy and who said that they had used one technology to construct a framing strategy and then used a different technology or technologies to deploy the strategy. In that discussion, I mentioned many interviewees who constructed framing strategy in face-to-face meetings and then constructed frames online; another example is a participant from Tunis who used email with fellow protesters to discuss strategy and to construct petitions and texts that they would then share on their Facebook pages. Similarly, an organizer from Tunis said that he viewed Facebook as a medium of persuasion, but he used email as a communication tool among fellow activists, where they could exchange news, photos,

and videos, and to communicate with foreign journalists. Another organizer from Tunis said that he used open chat forums for persuading, encouraging, and exchanging news, as well as for letting people know about demonstrations, but he used secret groups on Facebook to construct strategies for organizing and other tasks—and he also used his phone to spread information about demonstrations. An organizer from Kasserine said that he used Skype daily to exchange information among a core group of activists from interior towns such as Sidi Bouzid, Gafsa, and Thala, as well as to speak with foreign journalists after Ben Ali fled. He used face-to-face meetings for his organizing tasks, but I discuss social-movement organization in a section below. He also would chat on Facebook or in person with trusted activists to verify information that he had seen on websites of traditional news media such as *Le Monde* or *The New York Times*. Several interviewees said that they, too, used one node in the network to verify information from another node. An organizer from Sidi Bouzid said that he, too, used the chat function on Facebook to verify video content that he had seen on television or elsewhere on the internet. In his hybrid network of communication, he used in-person meetings to construct his framing strategy for Facebook. A participant from Tunis said that she used her phone to verify content that she had seen on Facebook. I cited above an organizer from Tunis who used Twitter to exchange details about the locations of snipers throughout Tunis; in addition to Facebook and Twitter, he also used Facebook and his phone to verify content that he had seen on the internet, and he used YouTube, along with Facebook, to disseminate arguments against the regime, and he met with groups of friends and with groups of activists to analyze the situation, and to give encouragement. Although this might seem to be a dizzying array of examples with little in common, the

varying contours of these social-movement actors' uses of communication technologies epitomize the richness of the hybrid network that they constructed during the four weeks of the revolution. They exchanged information, they verified information, they persuaded, they constructed strategy, and they organized demonstrations—and they made distinct choices to use all available communication technologies to do so. This data sketches out how they constituted a hybrid network, and it also enriches the account of how Tunisian revolutionaries used Facebook and other social media. Moreover, it builds theory about how social-movement actors construct a hybrid network, and it builds theory about what they use that network to do. This contribution to knowledge builds theory in the fields of social-movement studies and communication, as I will explain at the end of this section.

To add to this rich account of the hybrid network, I want to discuss how participants found out about demonstrations, because the quantitative data show that interviewees found information on attending protests in many ways. Six participants said they found out from social media alone, while four found out from friends. Another three participants said that they found out from both social media and friends, while one said that she found out from social media, friends, and a family member. One participant found out from a colleague at work, one from an acquaintance, and one by email. This data reinforces the finding that social-movement actors used a hybrid network in differing and unpredictable ways.

As final data about the elements of the hybrid network, I want to present some qualitative data that might complicate assumptions about how social-movement organizers used and did not use social media. At one extreme is Sofiane Ben Haj

M’Hamed, the internet activist known online as Hamadi Kaloutcha, who used only Facebook. He did not use the phone or even speak in person about his opposition activities, because he wanted to avoid detection and persecution by the regime. Because of his online pseudonym, his fellow activists did not know his name, nor had he ever met them in person. And yet he was perceived as such a potent opposition activist that he was one of the several prominent online activists arrested on January 6. At the opposite extreme, the organizers of the first mass demonstration in Tunis, which took place on January 11 in the area known in French as *Passage*, prepared the demonstration completely offline and then let people know about it in person, by text message, and by some chat messages online, multiple organizers reported. They never mentioned the demonstration on a public Facebook page. The Lawyers’ Syndicate followed a similar strategy, one syndicate official said. About 20 lawyers met in person to organize their January 14 demonstration, and they sent out text messages and made phone calls to let other lawyers know about the demonstration. They did post a video to YouTube advocating for other lawyers to join. The official said that more than 1,000 lawyers attended the demonstration. Finally, Lassad Bouazizi said that he did not have a Facebook profile and did not use the site during the revolution. He conducted all his organizing and persuading work on the phone and in person, he said. These examples, however exceptional, bring out a critical point for the theory of a hybrid network: There is no formula for its usage, no standardized user, no average or typical user—individuals can use the hybrid network in a range from one extreme to another, from only using a specific node to never using that node.

In this section, I defined the hybrid network of communication technologies used by organizers and participants during the revolution. I described the nodes of the network, as well as the rich variety of ways that actors used these nodes for framing and for other acts of communication and coordination. Many interviewees well understood that they were using technologies in this networked fashion; one organizer from Tunis said that all communication technologies—or nodes in the network—were important and were "complementary." The data allow me to build theory about the hybrid network and about the uses of communication technologies during contentious politics. First, scholars (and everyone else) should always hesitate to attribute to any one medium a decisive or determining influence on the events of contentious politics, such as protests or a revolution. Second, even if some social-movement actors rely on a specific technology, other actors can meaningfully participate in—and even lead—episodes of contentious politics without using that technology, as the examples of the Passage demonstration and Lassad Bouazizi show. Finally, the actors determine how to use the nodes of the network; each episode is contingent not only on where the users of the network are situated temporally and spatially, but also on individually contingent factors such as technical skills, perceptions of efficacy, and credibility or trust.

3.3.2 Al-Jazeera

Within the hybrid network, Al-Jazeera was a special node meriting individual consideration. I discussed Al-Jazeera briefly in the section above on resonance, but I believe the best place to discuss Al-Jazeera at length is within the framework of the entire constellation of communication technologies used during the revolution, rather than

trying to disentangle it from this dense, interrelated network of technologies. As Aday et al. (2012) write, it is increasingly difficult to separate traditional media from new media such as Facebook (p. 21). To be sure, social-movement actors in other nations in the MENA region might have used Al-Jazeera somewhat differently than the revolutionaries used it in Tunisia, because other populations rebelled after the widespread coverage of Tunisia's revolution (see, e.g., Bellin, 2012; Hinnebusch, 2015a; Lynch, 2011a), but perhaps my data can contribute to others' future research on this topic. Examining the data on Al-Jazeera will add meaningful nuance to my accounts of the hybrid network and of the use of social media during Tunisia's revolution.

To restate the finding from the quantitative data on Al-Jazeera, interviewees reported mixed responses to the questions about whether the content they saw on Al-Jazeera fit with either their understandings of events or their values, beliefs, and ideologies. The qualitative data support the quantitative data and reveal some sources of the mixed responses. Interviewees expressed contradictory accounts of the importance and accuracy of Al-Jazeera, and they explained the specific biases that they saw in its content. A participant from Gafsa said that she thought Al-Jazeera was the most important satellite network, but she also said that the content that she saw on France 24 was more authentic and realistic. Al-Jazeera, she added, was using the content from Tunisia to promote the network's Islamist ideology. An organizer from Sidi Bouzid also said that French news media were more accurate, and he contradicted as a "stereotype" the claim that all Arabs were glued to Al-Jazeera. The quantitative data show that Al-Jazeera was the most-watched satellite network, but France 24 did not lag far behind in the number of interviewees who watched it (35 for Al-Jazeera, 27 for France 24) or in the

mean number of minutes they spent watching (about 47 for Al-Jazeera, about 27 for France 24); in addition, interviewees reported watching more than a dozen other television networks, in Arabic, French, and English. In sum, Al-Jazeera was widely watched by the interview subjects, but, overall, they spent more time watching other stations. Regarding Al-Jazeera's ideology, a participant from Tunis said that Al-Jazeera only infused its content with ideology after Tunisia's revolution, but many other interviewees provided contradictory views about the ideology and accuracy of its coverage during the revolution. An organizer from Tunis said that Al-Jazeera was exaggerating its coverage in the beginning of the revolution with claims that large and violent demonstrations were occurring throughout the country, when the protests in the first days of the revolution were largely confined to the interior and were not being violently repressed. An organizer from the interior town of Kasserine supported this view, saying of Al-Jazeera, "There was something smelly about them. … They were exaggerating." Another organizer from Tunis said that he sensed a bias in favor of the protesters on Al-Jazeera and on France 24. Several interviewees said that they perceived an Islamist bias in Al-Jazeera's coverage. An organizer from Tunis said that France 24 was searching for truth, but Al-Jazeera's content was propaganda. To repeat a point that I raised in an earlier section, many interviewees said that they saw content on Al-Jazeera that the network had taken from the interviewees' social media accounts. In a unique example, online activist Hamadi Kaloutcha said that Al-Jazeera had taken from his Facebook page a video that he had filmed inside a mosque, but the network broadcast it with a completely different narrative than the narrative of the event that he had given on Facebook.

Lynch (2006) credits Al-Jazeera with constructing a new public sphere in the Arab world, but the data show a more nuanced picture of how Tunisian social-movement actors used Al-Jazeera during the revolution. Al-Jazeera was the most watched satellite network, but it did not dominate watching habits. Some interviewees acknowledged the importance of Al-Jazeera broadcasting information about the protests in Tunisia from the first day of the uprising, while others downplayed the network's relative importance. More importantly, just less than half of the interview subjects who commented on Al-Jazeera expressed some sort of reservation with the accuracy and/or bias of the revolution-related content broadcast by the network. The data show that Al-Jazeera was one of the more significant nodes in the hybrid network, because it relayed and amplified content from social media, while social-movement actors appropriated content from Al-Jazeera and reproduced it on social media. However, because many social-movement actors perceived the frames on Al-Jazeera as inaccurate and/or biased, Al-Jazeera's framing of Tunisia's revolution represented for many Tunisians yet another narrative of events in the country, a narrative that did not always resonate with them or accord with the narratives that they encountered through other nodes in the hybrid network, such as social media, or with the regime's narrative of events. Interviewees reported perceptions of inaccuracy and/or bias in Al-Jazeera's content—and in the content of other satellite networks—and this multiplicity of narratives further supports my use of the term alternative narrative to define the social-movement actors' frames on Facebook. In other words, their framing was not merely a counter-narrative to the a priori discredited narrative of a regime viewed as illegitimate, but the revolutionaries' framing was an alternative to the narratives of the regime and of problematical traditional media. These

conclusions answer the part of research question R1 that asks how organizers and participants used Al-Jazeera.

3.3.3 Pluralistic Ignorance, Information Cascades, and Fear

In the next chapter, I will discuss the topic of fear in terms of the relationship between citizens and the regime, but here I want to delve into the topic of fear as a problem for social-movement actors. In the previous two sections, I defined the hybrid network and described its contours and nuances, and in this section and the following one, I want to show how revolutionaries used the hybrid network. To be sure, they used nodes of the network, such as various social media, email, phones, and in-person meetings, to construct and deploy mediated frames to win over and mobilize potential adherents, as I discussed in the first part of the chapter. Here I want to explore the details of how organizers and participants also used all the nodes of the network at their disposal to help citizens overcome their fears of the regime and join or support the rebels. To use precise terminology from social-movement studies, the organizers and participants used the hybrid network to create an information cascade to solve the problem of pluralistic ignorance. Pluralistic ignorance is the condition when individuals in a society do not know that their opinion is widely shared (Tufekci, 2017, p. 26). Tufekci (2017) writes that social media can help overcome pluralistic ignorance by allowing people to reveal their preferences in a semi-public setting and quickly discover that their opinion, such as grievance against a regime, is widely shared. However, my quantitative and qualitative data show that Tunisian social-movement actors did not rely solely on social media to deploy the frame that citizens should not fear the regime. As I explained in the previous

chapter, Granovetter (1978) calls this process an information cascade, when activists signal a political position to sympathetic individuals who share the same position, which leads to more individuals publicly expressing that position, which leads to a greater likelihood of mobilization.

In the previous chapter, I quoted Mohamed ElBaradei speaking about the pervasive fear of authoritarian regimes that prevailed throughout the Middle East and North Africa before the Arab Spring. In the following chapter, I present abundant qualitative data in which interviewees speak about their long-standing fears of the regime, as well as about the persistence of fear during the revolution. In short, interviewees said that most Tunisians were afraid even to speak about politics before the revolution, because of fears of regime surveillance and of harsh punishments for dissent. To provide one example, the publisher Karim Ben Said said that he and his friends would be afraid to talk about politics even behind the closed doors of their homes; when they met, they would remove the SIM cards from their telephones, because they were afraid of regime surveillance—and these people were not even involved in the opposition. Many organizers said they thought that the widespread fear of the regime and its coercive forces was a key problem for them to solve. The journalist and opposition activist Aymen Rezgui said, “Our mission was just to stop their fear.” Fears of the regime persisted during the revolution, as well. To reduce any redundancy with the data in the following chapter, I will present the data concisely: Interviewees said that they were afraid to criticize the regime on Facebook during the revolution; to express criticism on their own blogs; to go to Facebook pages or blogs that supported the opposition; to use their own names on Facebook, which led them to create fake profiles; to join the protests; to let

people know about demonstrations by word of mouth; to speak loudly in meetings to organize protests; or to speak online or on the phone about their opposition activities, which led them to create systems of code words.

Before presenting the quantitative data, I want to note that the interview questionnaire did not include any questions about fear. The topic of fear emerged during the interviews, and I began to ask in follow-up questions whether interviewees constructed frames to help citizens overcome fear. In the section above on collective-action frames, I presented detailed findings on the frames that organizers constructed, so I will not repeat all that data here. In short, 10 of 25 organizers said that they constructed and deployed frames to help citizens overcome fear, which is just less than the numbers of organizers who constructed and deployed frames of the crackdown, economic issues, and dignity. Regarding frames to attract potential adherents to the opposition, five of 22 organizers said that they constructed and deployed frames to help citizens overcome fear. That total of five matches the number of organizers who constructed and deployed frames of economic issues. These data make clear the prominence of the framing to overcome fear. Regarding Facebook usage, 15 interviewees said that, whether through their posts or through messages, they used Facebook to urge others to overcome their fear. That total is only slightly less than the numbers of interview subjects who said that they used Facebook to persuade and to encourage, and it is about the same as the number of those who used Facebook for organizing tasks. Regarding phone usage, seven interviewees said that they used it to urge others to overcome their fear, a total that is just slightly less than the numbers of those who used it to persuade and to encourage. The importance of those

numbers is that they show that the work to push Tunisians to overcome their fears of the regime took place in an analogous manner throughout the hybrid network.

Organizers and participants deployed several varied frames and strategies to help their fellow Tunisians overcome their fears of the government. An organizer from Tunis said that he and his fellow activists constructed a strategy to emphasize all Tunisians' shared identity as aggrieved victims of regime, and they added that it was possible to do something about the situation, if only they can overcome their fear. A participant from Tunis said that he used empathy, by asking people to see themselves as just like those who had been killed in the crackdown. An organizer from Tunis said that he and his fellow organizers told prospective protesters that they should not be afraid of joining demonstrations, because the leaders of the opposition would be at the front of the demonstration and be the only ones arrested, while participants in the back could escape persecution. The UGET official from Sousse said that UGET published an analysis on Facebook to say that victory over the regime was possible, as a strategy to get people to overcome their fears of joining the opposition. As I mentioned in earlier sections, an organizer from Paris said that she and her fellow activists followed a strategy of framing the regime as ridiculous and out of touch, as way to get citizens not to fear the regime. She and her group, known as BIRSA, also deployed strategies on Facebook and on the streets to help citizens overcome their fears. On Facebook, they would tag protesters by name in videos from demonstrations, and many of those tagged would de-tag themselves out of fear of regime persecution, and then the activists would tag them again. If a protester took her or his name off repeatedly, the activists would try to speak with the person on chat to convince the person to leave her or his name on the video, by saying

that the regime was not persecuting anyone because of Facebook videos. She and her fellow activists chatted with more than 100 people about these tags, she said. Their strategy on the street was to hold events, such as concerts or conferences, that were not protests but had an opposition message, so that attendees could see that they were not alone in their opposition to the regime. The activists' hope was that attendees, realizing that they could oppose the regime with impunity, would return for another event and bring new attendees with them, repeating the process of overcoming fear. In addition, the activists would conduct interviews with people on the streets, and the interviews would include criticism of the regime, so that these interviewees would see that it was possible to speak out against the regime in public without repercussions. I listed these strategies partly out of completeness, so that social-movement scholars could benefit from my data, but I also want to point out that these data reveal that the interviewees constructed different strategies for different technologies, and they pursued their strategies in multiple nodes of the hybrid network.

Multiple interviewees described moments when they saw fear dissipate among citizens, but I think the fact that millions of Tunisians expressed their opposition to the regime and went into the streets to demand its fall, constitutes compelling evidence that many Tunisians overcame their fears of the regime. Some interview subjects gave credit to Facebook for affording an information cascade that helped social-movement actors solve the problem of pluralistic ignorance. Online activist Hamadi Kaloutcha said that many people inside Tunisia felt as though they were the only ones with grievances against the regime, so they kept silent. Because of Facebook and WikiLeaks, Tunisians could see how many people opposed the regime and how few supported it, he said.

Tunisians felt freer on Facebook, less fearful that the regime was surveilling them there than on their phones or in public places, he added. Karim Ben Said, the publisher, described the information cascade on Facebook this way:

> But what Facebook brought us was the fact that when you are three, you feel like five; when you are five, you feel like 15; and when you are 20, you feel like invincible. That's probably the most important thing. It was not the content; it was the fact that you didn't feel alone.

The data in this section lead to a fine distinction in the working of the hybrid network: The revolutionaries constructed and deployed strategies throughout various nodes of the hybrid network to overcome fears of the regime, but the affordances of Facebook enabled all Tunisians on the site to use it as the primary technology to produce an information cascade to overcome pluralistic ignorance. Throughout this dissertation, I take pains to dismantle any notions that Facebook somehow caused the revolution or determined its outcome, and in this part of the chapter I define in detail a hybrid network of multiple, interrelated, overlapping communication technologies. But to dig deeply into exactly what social-movement actors did on Facebook and other social media during the Arab Spring, as some scholars have called for (see, e.g., Comunello & Anzera, 2012), this section offers one specific answer: They used Facebook to discover others' opinions about the regime, they found out that grievances against the regime were widely shared, they revealed their own opinions about the regime, through which they created an information cascade, and these actions were instrumental in overcoming the problem of pluralistic ignorance, a problem that many actors were working hard to solve through a variety of communication technologies.

3.3.4 Organizing in a Hybrid Network

Many social-movement scholars have focused on how social media and other new communication technologies reconfigure the architecture of organizing by lowering the costs of communication (see Tufekci [2017] for a discussion of this topic in terms of the Arab Spring). Because this dissertation primarily examines communication, I did not include interview questions about hierarchies and centralization of social-movement organizations, but I did uncover information that contributes to the knowledge of how social-movement actors use communication technologies for organizing. The interview questionnaire did not include any question about organizing methods, but I followed up on questions about uses of individual technologies with queries about organizing. Not all interviewees gave answers about their organizing techniques, so these answers are partial, but the quantitative data show that organizers used in-person meetings and phones about 10 percent more than they used Facebook. The qualitative data support the point that in-person meetings were crucial for organizing, and the data also show that many interviewees used multiple nodes of the hybrid network to accomplish various organizing tasks.

Regarding Facebook, 13 of 26 interviewees (50 percent) said that they used Facebook for organizing tasks, such as planning protests and coordinating plans with other activists. More interviewees—24 of 42 (about 57 percent)—said that they used the phone for organizing tasks, and the highest percentage of interviewees—20 of 33 (about 61 percent)—said that they used in-person meetings for organizing purposes. Only three interviewees said that they used email for organizing tasks. A key finding in this

quantitative data is that, among those who gave positive answers in one technology, a large majority also used another communication technology for organizing tasks. Of the 13 interviewees who said they used Facebook, all 13 used at least one other technology. The qualitative data tell a similar story: Interviewees described how they used combinations of Facebook and in-person meetings; Facebook and phones; and chat forums, secret Facebook groups, and phones, to give some examples. Two interviewees combined Skype and face-to-face meetings. Others combined in-person meetings and phone usage.

A few accounts of face-to-face organizing techniques underscore the importance of this organizing method. For example, an organizer from Kasserine said that he and a group of more than six other activists from nearby towns would meet every day to plan that evening's demonstrations, and sometimes their meetings ran for six or seven hours. One member of a banned political party said that party members only ever met face-to-face with one other party member, to reduce the damage that a regime spy could do to the party. During the revolution, they conducted their organizing work exclusively in person and in written messages passed by hand. As an illustration of the party's disciplined communication and organizing, he said he knew two party members who had been housemates for years, but neither knew that the other was in the party until after the revolution. Aymen Rezgui, who was a journalist at the newspaper Al Tariq al Jadeed, said that the newspaper allowed him and fellow journalist Sofiene Chourabi to start a cinema club. The two used the club as a cover for a group of opposition activists, and they met four or five times during the revolution for planning and strategy sessions. They were among the lead organizers of the first demonstration in Tunis, at Passage, which

was never mentioned on Facebook. An organizer from Sidi Bouzid said that he and his fellow activists met every day in a local café to do organizing work; in Arabic, the café has since been renamed Revolution Café.

Facebook and other social media nearly eliminate the cost of notifying large groups of people about social-movement events such as protests and demonstrations, and the data show that about half of the participants found out on Facebook about the first protest that they attended during the revolution. The data show that organizers are using the affordances of Facebook and other social media to conduct organizing activities through these technologies, but the data also support two other conclusions. Organizers mostly used Facebook as only one node in a hybrid network of communication technologies for organizing, and some organizers relied on face-to-face meetings for all or much of their organizing work.

In addition to these conclusions, I also want to explore the relationship between this horizontal organizing structure and framing. One could perhaps argue convincingly that the lack of a unified framing strategy, or the lack of a master frame, will be a likely trait of social movements that lack vertical, hierarchical, or centralized organization. That might be the case, but I think a more interesting question is, so what? Even if this more horizontal, less hierarchical organizational structure that typifies many recent social movements usually corresponds with disparate framing strategies, how does that matter? An interesting avenue for future inquiry might be to focus more intently on whether frames in such episodes tend to be any more or less resonant, or whether and how this affects mobilization. Considering the relatively brief length of the revolution in Tunisia, it seems unlikely that a lack of hierarchy or centralization slowed the coalescing of a cross-

class, nationwide revolt against the regime—and that conclusion leads to important questions about the dynamics of the regime, many of which I will address in the following chapter.

3.3.5 Other Work in the Hybrid Network

In this section, I want to address two concepts that are topics of much research in social-movement studies and for which my data can perhaps contribute some illumination. The first concept is weak ties, or the connections among individuals from different ages, classes, and geographic locations. Scholars (e.g., Granovetter, 1973; McAdam & Paulsen, 1993) have long argued that the formation of weak ties are crucial to social-movement mobilization, and scholars of social media (e.g., Crossley, 2015; Polletta et al., 2013) argue that social media afford the capability for weakly linked individuals to easily communicate information about contentious politics. Aday et al. (2012) write that this bridging of social groups, such as the linking of core activists to mass publics, might have been the "key role" played by social media during the Arab Spring (p. 5). My data problematize this argument. As I write throughout this part of the chapter, social-movement actors used social media as one node in a hybrid network; absent compelling data, of which I am unaware, it seems difficult to argue that any single node in the network played a key role on its own. As for the specific point of linking core activists and mass publics, my data provide some contrary evidence. The Passage demonstration was never announced on Facebook. The Lawyers' Syndicate did not use

Facebook to invite its members to its demonstration, thought it did post a video invitation on YouTube, which was blocked in Tunisia. Many interviewees reported that they spread word of demonstrations by text message, phone call, in-person meetings, and mass meetings at schools. In sum, many organizers announced future demonstrations on social media, and many participants found out about future demonstrations on social media, but both groups also used other communication technologies for these activities. To be sure, it remains an interesting thought experiment to imagine how these events would have unfolded without the existence of social media, but we will never know the answer to this question. Many interviewees expressed the opinion that the reason that events in Sidi Bouzid sparked a revolution, while the protests in Gafsa in 2008 did not, was the existence of Facebook. Even if we grant that to be entirely true, it seems to me that the difference is not in how Facebook allowed leading activists to connect to mass publics, but rather that it afforded all social-movement actors the capability to construct and disseminate their own narratives of events, largely beyond the reach of the regime's censors. After all, one organizer from Kasserine said that he did not need to connect with the town's citizens to tell them where to go for a demonstration, because they all knew that anti-regime protests were held in the main square in front of the local government offices. That said, I will argue in chapter 5 that social-movement actors used all the nodes of the hybrid network to construct a collective protest identity, a process that might help provide a more parsimonious explanation of how weakly linked individuals throughout Tunisia were about to forge a cross-class coalition of protesters who successfully overthrew an authoritarian regime.

The second concept is how the hybrid network can raise the costs of repression by an actor in contentious politics, in this case repression by the Ben Ali regime. I am not sure whether my data represent evidence in support of this argument, because I did not collect data about the framing of the crackdown by traditional media or about how coverage of the crackdown affected the regime's relationships with other state and international actors, nor can I divine the relative degrees to which revulsion at the crackdown and the accumulated grievances against the regime drove Tunisians into the streets. My data do show, however, the salience of the crackdown as a frame deployed by social-movement actors, and the qualitative data also offer evidence that the crackdown was viewed as a crucial moment by many interviewees. Moreover, many interviewees also said that Al-Jazeera reported extensively on the regime's attempts to violently suppress the protests, including regular exaggeration of the extent of the regime's brutality, as well as the appropriation of frames of the crackdown from the social-media accounts of some of the interviewees. In sum, the hybrid network affords a robust opportunity for the construction and deployment of frames of repression that can be shared reciprocally throughout the network as part of a strategy to mobilize opposition against the source of that repression.

3.4 Conclusion

In this conclusion, I bring together the key findings from the two parts of the chapter and explain how they help answer most of the research questions posed in chapter 1. The first section of the first part chapter helps answer research question R3, which asks how organizers and participants constructed collective-action frames and asks how they

used communication media to do so. Almost all organizers used multiple frames, but they did not use any single frame in a dominant fashion. The most common frames were those portraying the regime's corruption, economic issues, dignity, the violent crackdown on the protests, the regime as dictatorship, and encouraging citizens to overcome their fears of the regime. Despite differences of opinion between organizers from the interior towns and organizers from the coastal cities on the country's problems and their solutions, the quantitative data did not display different framing tendencies for interviewees from the two regions. The reason is that most organizers said that they were thinking strategically about the process of frame construction on terms of the best ways to win over differing target audiences.

The section on frame construction provides further answers to research question R3. Interviewees constructed frames by using a range of communication media, including social media, blogs, email, telephones, and in-person conversation. Interview subjects most frequently used Facebook for constructing frames, and they used telephones and face-to-face communication at slightly lower rates, while they used email and blogs less frequently. On Facebook, interview subjects tended to construct frames through visual imagery, whether photos or videos.

In the section on the alternative narrative, I developed the answer to research question R3 with my finding that interview subjects constructed and deployed mediated frames to offer an alternative narrative to the framings put forward by the regime in traditional and new media and to the framings deployed by other communication media. Interviewees described this alternative narrative as clean, honest, or raw, and social-movement actors based much of this narrative on frames of the regime's efforts to quash

the protests in the interior. The revolutionaries' frames of the crackdown, it should be added were not always accurate, because these social-movement actors sometimes exaggerated or lied, because they thought the inaccurate frames would be more effective in winning over and mobilizing potential adherents. Social-movement actors deployed this narrative through multiple communication media, including social media, blogs, email, phones, and in face-to-face discussion. In this section, I introduced the concept of dichotomous legitimacy, as a way to describe the a priori stance of most Tunisians toward the frames they encountered: They inherently distrusted any account from the regime, which they viewed as illegitimate, and they tended to trust frames from social-movement actors. I also found that the revolutionaries and the regime were engaged in a framing contest and that one means of waging this contestation was cyberwar.

In the section on framing strategies, I began answering research question R4, which asks how organizers and participants used communication media for frame alignment and other framing strategies. Nearly all interviewees reported that they intentionally constructed and deployed frames according to some sort of strategy, but interviewees constructed several different strategies to win over and mobilize potential adherents. Interview subjects did not follow a single, dominant strategy, and some interviewees reported deploying multiple strategies. The revolutionaries' intentions were to mobilize potential adherents, to legitimize the opposition, to delegitimize the regime, to construct a narrative of the revolution, and to construct an alternative narrative to the one in the distrusted regime-controlled media, in some cases without regard for what that regime narrative might be. The interviewees' methods for constructing strategy were mostly bifurcated: Typically, they constructed their strategies using one communication

technology, in order to deploy their strategies in other media. Specifically, organizers and participants tended to use face-to-face communication to construct strategy, though they also used social media, email, and phones less frequently. In other words, interviewees engaged in multiple methods of constructing strategy. This interrogation of framing strategies showed that the definition of the term frame alignment is too narrow to encompass the full range of approaches to constructing strategy. While interviewees were working to construct frames that would fit with the beliefs about the regime of the individuals who would encounter these frames, as the definition dictates, these social-movement actors were also trying to construct resonant frames through the approaches mentioned above, and scholars should broaden the definition of frame alignment to include these approaches.

The following section, on frame variation by medium and by audience, added to the answers to research questions R3 and R4 through the finding that roughly 40 percent of the interviewees deployed different strategies for different audiences and for different communication technologies. The interviewees varied their frames by audience according to the interviewees' beliefs about the audiences' levels of opposition to the regime, levels of political knowledge, or socio-economic status. In terms of communication technologies, the interviewees typically varied their strategies between Facebook and other technologies such as Twitter, YouTube, blogs, email, or interpersonal communication. In deciding to vary their framing strategies, the interview subjects' goal in nearly all cases was to win over and/or mobilize those who encountered the frames.

In the section on emergent and contingent strategy, I found that interviewees changed their frames and framing strategies in response to the crackdown and to the

protests gaining momentum. Throughout all these sections on frame construction and frame strategy, I approached framing as a process of making meaning, rather than examining frames as units of analysis. This approach answers the calls of multiple scholars, including Snow and Benford (2005), who first laid out the theory of framing in social movements in the 1980s. Reflecting on how the field had developed, they wrote (2005) that scholars were focusing too much on frames instead of on the interactional and situated social construction of the frames. Ryan (2005) similarly laments that scholars seldom interrogate the processes of frame construction, because scholars rarely interact with the social-movement actors who construct frames or the audiences who mobilize. Ellingson (1995) calls for more research exploring how framing processes emerge within a contingent, situated environment. This dissertation fulfills these demands both by interviewing the revolutionaries and by taking the processes of the construction of meaning (and, in addition, the uses of technology to deploy the products of those processes) as the unit of analysis.

In the brief section on the concept of the master frame, I presented a wealth of evidence rebutting the notion that a master frame obtained during the revolution, largely because of the multiplicity of frames and framing strategies, such as strategies to deploy different frames through different communication technologies, for different audiences, and at different points of the revolution.

The section on frame resonance answered research question R5, which explores the relationship between frame resonance and individual communication technologies. The data showed resonance for the frames that were constructed by organizers and participants, though the relationship between resonance and mobilization remains a

question for future research. The data showed that a lack of resonance was almost always associated with frames constructed by the regime in any medium, the frames constructed by Al-Jazeera on television, and by online activist Lina Ben Mhenni. The unanimous finding for the negative fit of the regime's frames offers further evidence for my concept of dichotomous legitimacy, which scholars can apply to similar cases of contestation of frames constructed by multiple actors. Another finding is that these data support an argument for a hybrid network, meaning that media users encounter frames of contentious politics across numerous communication technologies. That is, no single communication technology stands out as offering a unique framing or unique frames that are not deployed through other communication technologies.

The second part of the chapter, which shifted the focus from framing to communication technologies, addressed research question R1, which asks how organizers and participants used communication media, and research question R6, which asks how organizers and participants exemplified the roles of active users of technology. This second part began with a section on the hybrid network, in which I found that interviewees used almost universally the communication technologies of Facebook, television, phones, and face-to-face meetings related to the revolution, and they used Facebook as much as, if not more than, more than any other technology. Some of the distinguishing features of the hybrid network used by social-movement actors in Tunisia were that social-movement actors used different nodes of the network for different purposes; some actors chose to limit specific actions to specific nodes of the network. One of the most prominent features of this hybrid network was the cross-pollination of framing content between social media and television. Social-movement actors used

multiple nodes of the hybrid network for framing, but there was no single technology in which framing activity predominated. Interviewees did not express a consistent belief that any one technology was the most effective, but rather they made strategic choices to use specific nodes of the network for specific reasons. In other words, the social-movement actors determined both the uses of the communication technologies that comprised the network and the contours of the network—the technologies did not determine how the interviewees would use them. Moreover, they use the technologies in the network in ways that are situated and contingent on their location, technical skills, beliefs about the efficacy of frames and technologies, and beliefs about the actors who constructed the content in a specific node.

In the section on Al-Jazeera, I found that the satellite broadcaster, as the most-watched television network during the revolution, was a significant node in the hybrid network, but many interviewees perceived its content as inaccurate and/or biased. Its framing, then, represented yet another alternative narrative of the revolution to the narratives constructed by the regime and the protesters.

In the section on information cascades and pluralistic ignorance, I moved to discuss how social-movement actors used this hybrid network. They used it—and Facebook foremost—to reveal their grievances against the regime and to discover the grievances of others, a process that allowed them to overcome the problem of pluralistic ignorance. Overcoming the pluralistic ignorance of their shared grievances against the regime appears to have been a key step for citizens to overcome their enduring fears of the regime and fears of expressing opposition to the regime.

The section on organizing explained how social-movement actors used the affordances of Facebook and other social media to conduct organizing activities, though they tended to use multiple nodes in the hybrid network for organizing. Even with new technological affordances, some organizers chose to use face-to-face meetings for all or much of their organizing work. The revolution was also marked by a lack of organizing coordinated on a national scale, yet, even without such centralization, hierarchy, or coordination, the disparate organizers of the various protests were able to construct and deploy frames that resonated, helped overcome pluralistic ignorance, and may have mobilized citizens in revolution. In the closing section, I briefly discussed the relationships between the hybrid network and weak ties, as well as between the hybrid network and raising the costs of repression.

The second half of the chapter built much of the answer to research question R1, about how organizers and participants used communication media during the revolution. In doing so, this dissertation answers the calls of Aday et. al (2010) and Comunello & Anzera (2012) for qualitative research to interrogate how social-movement actors use recent technologies, especially social media, during episodes of contentious politics. The second half of the chapter also helped answer research question R6, about how organizers and participants exemplified the active roles of users in the social construction of technology, and I will explore this topic at length in the conclusion of the dissertation.

Beyond the confines of this dissertation, the findings presented and the theories built in this chapter can potentially be generalized to other organizers of and participants in social movements and popular revolts. These findings and theories can also make important contributions to the practices of social movements, in that this dissertation lays

out the details of how the organizers of a successful social movement used communication media to help accomplish their goals.

CHAPTER 4

NEO-PATRIMONIALISM

4.1 Introduction

Brownlee (2002) writes that Tunisia, from 1956 until the time of his writing, fit the neo-patrimonial model of authoritarian regimes, and this theory helps make sense of the Arab Spring revolution in Tunisia. In this chapter, I will call on this theory to help understand the interview data, and I will use the interview data to build new theory for the neo-patrimonial model. To restate the theory in brief, neo-patrimonialism posits an authoritarian regime of "personal rulership on the basis of loyalties that do not require any belief in the ruler's unique personal qualification, but are inextricably linked to material incentives and reward" dispensed by the ruler (Roth, 1968, p. 196). The theory explains this dynamic largely as the result of the kleptocratic actions of the ruling elites and the asphyxiating repression of the citizenry by the regime's coercive forces. The ruling coterie arrogates to itself the country's economic resources through systems of cronyism and nepotism, creating endemic corruption and wealth concentration, which give rise to broadly shared grievances among the public about regime corruption and ordinary citizens' dim prospects for prosperity or even for simple employment (Brumberg, 2011; Heydemann, 2007; Hinnebusch, 2015). Security forces are the key instrument for repressing dissent, and their omnipresence and brutality foster among the people fears of expressing criticism, of participating in civil society, or even of voicing any political or ideological positions (Bellin, 2004). Heydemann (2007), in a process that he terms authoritarian upgrading, observes that neo-patrimonial regimes in the new millennium did allow for some political contestation and for the establishment of civil

society, though the regimes nevertheless carefully controlled and strictly limited both phenomena. In the main, however, populations under neo-patrimonial rule remain depoliticized (Comunello & Anzera, 2012). Neo-patrimonial regimes also strive to control the introduction and spread of new technologies, particularly digital communication technologies (Heydemann, 2007).

Neo-patrimonial theory predicts that populations under such regimes will hold certain types of grievances. The theory predicts that the interview data should show entrenched grievances against the regime, specifically discourses about the general populace's economic exclusion and the regime's corruption, nepotism, and cronyism. Interview subjects should describe the security forces as pervasive and repressive, and some subjects should have personal experience or anecdotal knowledge of persecution by the coercive forces. Interview subjects should express fears of the security forces and should describe an atmosphere of fear among their compatriots. These grievances against the regime's corruption and the coercive forces' relentless brutality provide an important bridge to revolution theory, as I will discuss in the conclusion of this chapter. In regard to political participation, interview subjects should describe a lack of experience in civil society or political contestation, as well as a fear of participation. However, because organizers of the revolution comprised a majority of the interview subjects, such a sample might well have some experience in civil society, even though the model would predict such participation to be constrained or punished by the security forces. Finally, interview subjects should provide evidence that their uses of new communication technologies were surveilled, blocked, or otherwise impeded by the regime.

The scholars who developed the neo-patrimonial model (Bellin, 2004; Brownlee, 2007; Brumberg, 2002; Heydemann, 2007) elaborated it as a way to explain the seeming imperviousness of these Middle Eastern and North African regimes to the wave of revolutions that swept away autocratic regimes near the end of the 20th century, typified by the fall of totalitarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989. And yet, as described in chapter 2, these regimes did change in regular, predictable ways in the years before the Arab Spring. Heydemann (2007) calls this the process of "authoritarian upgrading" (p. 1), and I will use the term authoritarian weakening for the new concepts that I attempt to contribute here. As I build theory throughout this chapter, all my contributions emanate from the same approach to amending the model: Explaining how the established traits of a neo-patrimonial regime simultaneously created the combustive potential for the Arab Spring revolution. This chapter will consist of sections presenting and discussing findings on the economy, the security forces, depoliticization and civil society, and government control of communication technologies. In the next section, I provide an overview of my findings, as a guide to the remainder of the chapter.

4.2 General Findings

The evidence supporting the neo-patrimonial model is overwhelming. All 44 interview subjects said the regime was unjust. Of the 39 interview subjects who answered the question whether the regime was corrupt, all 39 said the regime was corrupt. In response to the question about whom the interview subjects blamed for the issues that led to the revolution, 41 of the 43 interview subjects who responded to the question blamed the Ben Ali regime. In response to the open-ended question about how they viewed the

regime, nine interview subjects used the words dictator or dictatorship. Two other interview subjects described the regime as authoritarian. No one would expect these interviewees to cite or even to know an academic model such as neo-patrimonialism, but it seems clear that they found the regime to represent a particularly corrupt and unjust form of one-man rule. In sum, hatred of the regime and grievances against it were pervasive among all interview subjects. Many respondents said that nearly the entire Tunisian population detested the regime and knew that the regime was corrupt and authoritarian. For example, one interview subject said that "everyone" knew that Ben Ali was a dictator and that the family of his wife, Leila Traboulsi, was gorging itself at the public trough. To connect these grievances to the revolution, another respondent said that he and his fellow organizers felt that there was latent hostility toward the regime and that citizens just needed encouragement to go out and demand change. Another respondent said that he and his fellow organizers did not need to spend much time convincing Tunisians to participate in the uprising, because so many of them had firsthand experiences of poverty, joblessness, or the repression and brutality of the security forces. In the following section, I will explore how this connection between grievances and the revolution can help build theory.

Before delving into the specifics of the grievances, it's important to note the overlap here among theories of social movements, neo-patrimonialism, and revolution, as part of the central goal of this dissertation to reveal the terrain shared by these fields through the processes of communication. Widespread grievances among the public are typical of neo-patrimonial regimes (e.g., Lust-Okar, 2005; Ulfelder, 2005), and these grievances are a crucial source of revolutionary protest identity, which Goldstone (2001)

defines as “a sense of being part of a group with shared and justified grievances, with the ability to remedy those grievances by collective action” (p. 153). The previous chapter explained the link between these grievances and social-movement theory, in the chapter’s presentation of evidence of how interviewees identified with their fellow protesters. This shared identity was partly constructed through the work of social-movement actors deploying frames of shared grievances and shared protest.

Before presenting my findings, I want to point out that interview subjects discussed these areas—the economy, the security forces, depoliticization, and regime control of communication technologies—even though the interview questionnaire did not contain any questions that mentioned any of these topics. Interview subjects were asked about whether they thought the regime was corrupt and whether they thought it was just or unjust, but all the responses cited below were given as part of answers to open-ended questions or during the semi-structured parts of the interviews that interrogated subjects’ responses to the questions on the interview questionnaire. These unprompted discourses seem further evidence of how deep-seated these grievances were, in that the interview subjects volunteered disquisitions on these problems. There are two other minor points to consider before exploring the findings: One, the attributes of neo-patrimonialism overlap in many ways, so some concepts will be mentioned in multiple sections of this chapter. As an example, the coercive forces, as part of their leading role in repression, enforced the strict limits on civil society and opposition to the regime, and the security forces also surveilled and blocked citizens’ uses of communication technologies, and interview subjects expressed fears of the security forces’ actions in all these fields. The second point is the relationship between these grievances and framing. I consider the data on

framing to be weaker evidence than interviewees' testimonies as support for the neo-patrimonial model, because many of these frames were strategically constructed. That is, the frames did not always reflect a reasoned critique of the regime on the part of the interview subjects, but instead many frames were constructed as the result of an actor's decision about what would most likely mobilize or win over potential adherents. To be sure, actors' framing choices reflect beliefs that such specific grievances were festering among much of the population, and these choices reflect the framers' lived experiences, but on one level these frames simply represent evidence for social-movement actors' beliefs that others held these grievances. As discussed in the previous chapter, some organizers strove to present "just the facts," as they said, so some frames can be read as representations of the respective organizers' perceptions of the country's issues at the time, but not all frames should be read this way.

4.3 Findings and Discussion: Economic Issues

Heydemann (2007) writes that the authoritarian upgrading that took place in neo-patrimonial regimes during the years preceding the Arab Spring revolutions was marked by a lack of shared economic gains; whatever economic growth may have occurred was systematically appropriated by the ruler, his family, and the tiny clique surrounding him. Wulf et al. (2013) find that, in Tunisia, it was largely Ben Ali's wife, Leila Traboulsi, and her extended family who zealously scooped up the country's wealth and owned and controlled key economic assets. As mentioned in the opening of this chapter, the model of neo-patrimonialism predicts that interview subjects would confirm the regime's corruption, nepotism, and cronyism, as well as confirm the economic exclusion of the

vast majority of the population, for example through their poverty or dim employment prospects.

Interview subjects stated unanimously that they thought the regime was corrupt. As mentioned above, of the 39 interview subjects who answered the question whether the regime was corrupt, all 39 said the regime was corrupt. In addition to the 41 of 43 respondents who blamed Ben Ali for the problems that led to the revolution, 17 interview subjects, or roughly 40 percent, said they blamed the Traboulsi clan. The Traboulsi clan represents a nearly perfect heuristic for corruption and nepotism, because Leila Traboulsi and her family were largely invisible in the political or security fields, but they were active and known nationwide in the economic sphere. Some interview subjects provided strong support for this aspect of the neo-patrimonial model through their descriptions of the regime as infected with nepotism, cronyism, and kleptocracy. Five interviewees used the word mafia to describe the regime. One used the term clientelism, and another explicitly mentioned nepotism. Two other interview subjects labeled the regime a kleptocracy. One interviewee said that corruption was "the core issue" of the broader public's discontent. Sadok Ben Mhenni, an activist, journalist, and former political prisoner under Ben Ali's predecessor, former President Habib Bourguiba, said that corruption of all types had taken on enormous dimensions in Tunisia before the Arab Spring revolution. Ben Mhenni added that even members of Ben Ali's political party were beginning to clash with Ben Ali, because the intractable corruption was preventing development in so many fields. Here he brought up the crucial connection between the endemic corruption and the wider Tunisian economy: Because corruption had resulted in many individuals being blocked from participating in the economy as entrepreneurs, and

because the existing economic institutions had been so thoroughly hollowed out by the gluttonous appetite of the Traboulsi clan and its tentacles, employment had become increasingly difficult to find, a problem felt more acutely by young people beginning their work lives.

In Tunisia, this economic cleavage, characteristic of neo-patrimonialism, was divided largely along geographic lines, with the ruling coterie and its economic assets concentrated in coastal cities such as Tunis, Sousse, and Sfax, while the interior of the country was plagued by endemic poverty, most evident in the continuous dearth of employment opportunities. Interview data underscore the connection between corruption and the dismal economic situation in Tunisia's rural interior, as a clear association exists in the interview data between where an interviewee resides and whether the interviewee blames the Traboulsi clan—that is, corruption—for the problems that plagued Tunisia. Of the 44 interview subjects, nine resided in the in the country's interior region (Sidi Bouzid, Kasserine, and Gafsa), and six of these nine, or two-thirds, said that they blamed the Traboulsi clan for the issues that led to the revolution. Of the 33 interview subjects from the coastal regions who gave an answer regarding blaming the Traboulsis, 11 respondents, or one-third, said that they blamed the Traboulsis. Still, interview subjects in Tunis and other coastal cities were well aware of the economic problems of the country's interior. One interview subject from Tunis called poverty the biggest problem in Tunisia before the revolution. An interview subject from Kasserine recounted a litany of grievances that one would expect to hear from a local resident: poverty, joblessness, and oppression. Another interviewee from Kasserine said the interior region had been economically neglected by the nation's rulers since the founding of modern Tunisia in

1956: “We believe it’s a catastrophic situation for people living here,” he said. An interview subject from Sidi Bouzid said that he believed that the origin of the revolution lay in socioeconomic issues and not in questions of individual freedoms. Another interview subject from Tunis echoed this same sentiment; the speaker was a leading member of the Lawyers’ Syndicate who helped craft several of the syndicate’s communiques during the revolution. He said that the revolution was founded on the lack of economic development in the interior. People there had been marginalized, he said, while freedom of expression was a concern for those of higher socioeconomic status—not for the people of Sidi Bouzid. Sadok Ben Mhenni added that the economic and social neglect of the interior foretold an uprising. Throughout Tunisia’s history—in the eras of the Corsairs and the fight for independence, for example—political upheaval has always ignited in the interior regions, he said. Such unrest is typically repressed by the authority of the time, he added, but sometimes rebellions reach Tunis, which greatly increases a rebellion’s chances for success.

The interview subjects spoke in a unanimous voice: They found the Ben Ali regime profoundly corrupt, and they located the source of much of the corruption in the family of Leila Traboulsi. Interview data confirms neo-patrimonial theory’s prediction of a kleptocracy based on nepotism and cronyism. Interview subjects from the rural interior of Tunisia, which has traditionally been poorer than the coast, testified to experiencing economic exclusion and an economy so bad that it was perceived as a just cause for revolution. In quantitative terms, those with greater experience of this poverty, from the interior, also assessed greater blame for the revolution to the Traboulsi clan and, ipso facto, to corruption. The dynamics of Tunisia’s economy in the years before the

revolution clearly conform to the neo-patrimonial model, but they also suggest a revision to the theory. I would add to the theory a postulate that the revolutionary potential of the populace in a neo-patrimonial regime rises in tandem with the sum of the level of corruption (or perceived level of corruption) and either the presence of poverty, perhaps as measured by GDP per capita, or by measures of economic inequality such as the Gini coefficient.

4.4 Findings and Discussion: Security Forces

Bellin (2004) labels the state's coercive forces the foremost guarantor of a neo-patrimonial regime. Security forces and the military are able and willing to crush any opposition to the regime (Bellin, 2004, p. 144). As mentioned in chapter 2, the coercive forces' constant repression of the citizenry leads to widespread fear of the coercive apparatus. If the model's predictions are accurate, the interview data should reveal extensive fears of the security forces, such as fear of surveillance, fear of expressing political views in person or online, fear of meeting for political purposes, or fear of taking public action to oppose the regime. Moreover, I would argue that the data on the use of frames related to the security forces and to the crackdown can be interpreted as evidence of the salience of this grievance, albeit with the foregoing caveat about the reliability of frames as an indicator of public sentiment. On a more basic level, however, the first place to look for evidence of the security forces' repression is in the experiences of the organizers and participants, both before and during the revolution. Their experiences of repression should represent an accurate indicator of the robustness of the coercive forces.

Because the coercive forces are a factor in the system of criminal justice or part of perceptions of justice generally, it's worth repeating that all 44 interview subjects said that the regime was unjust. To be sure, the coercive forces are not the only factor influencing perceptions of justice, but the coercive forces' activities certainly affect perceptions of the relative justness of a regime. One interview subject provided a pithy heuristic for the position of the coercive forces: "The regime is the police." The interview data show that the coercive forces had long punished opposition to the regime. Of the 28 interview subjects who were organizers during the revolution, six said that they had become active in the opposition because their family members had been imprisoned by the regime for political activities. While such limited data cannot provide a thorough account of the relationship between persecution by the regime and the future political activity of the victim or the victim's family or acquaintances, the data do hint at a potential explanation for the weakness of neo-patrimonial regimes: The continual, cruel, and unjust repression of the population engenders deep and abiding grievances, which can provide a basis for subsequent anti-regime action, which I would also submit as an addition to the neo-patrimonial model. Brumberg (2011) partly blames the excesses of the security forces for the revolutions of the Arab Spring, and I'll return to this point later in the section. In a pertinent anecdote, one interviewee said that she had felt like a slave under the Ben Ali regime because her sister, an activist, had been followed even in France by the Tunisian security forces, who made no effort to hide their identities as security officers even in a foreign country.

As evidence of the active and repressive work of the coercive forces, 14 of 44 interview subjects (32 percent) reported that they had experienced persecution at the

hands of the security forces, whether arrest, harassment, beatings in public, or torture in detainment—and other interview subjects might also have had these experiences but not shared them during the interviews. As an example of the extent of the reach of the coercive forces, one organizer said that she had hosted meetings of activists in her apartment, so, in order to surveille her and her fellow activists, the Tunisian coercive forces rented out the apartment across the street from hers—in Paris. Another interviewee was stopped by police for serving as an interpreter for American researchers interviewing a Tunisian opposition leader. The blogger Lina Ben Mhenni and her father, Sadok, said that the coercive forces had broken into their family home in the summer of 2010 and stolen her computer, camera, and some jewelry. One interview subject reported that, shortly after he had interacted with Tunisian activists in his role as an information officer for the International Red Cross in Geneva, the coercive forces had bulldozed some shops belonging to his family in Menzah, an area of Tunis. Radhia Nasraoui, a human-rights lawyer and the spouse of former presidential candidate of the Workers' Party Hamma Hammami, said that she bears a permanent scar on her forehead from a beating by police during a demonstration at the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Tunis in 2005. Another interviewee said that he was arrested and beaten by the security forces, but he felt that he was spared worse persecution because he was a member of the one legal opposition party, the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP). This framing—that he could feel relatively protected from the wrath of the coercive forces while they beat him after arresting him—underscores the widely held beliefs about the horrors that the coercive forces were capable of inflicting if unrestrained. As further evidence of this belief, Lassad Bouazizi, Mohammed's cousin, said that he, too, had joined the PDP to have protection

against regime retribution for his political activism. Even as a member of the PDP, he was still arrested repeatedly, he said.

Here I will present findings on persecution during the revolution, but it is important to understand that the actions of the coercive forces during the revolution did not constitute a separate episode of repression. Instead, the crackdown on the protests in 2010-11 was just another instance of a practice that had persisted for decades. Uncompromising repression of dissent is a central feature of neo-patrimonial regimes (Bellin, 2004), and the violent crackdown on the demonstrations of 2010-11 is powerful evidence of the robustness of the coercive forces of the Ben Ali regime. On January 6, 2011, the coercive forces targeted online activists by hacking into the activists' emails and Facebook accounts and by arresting some of the most prominent online activists. Six interview subjects were arrested during the revolution, and a seventh barely escaped an attempt to arrest him. One interview subject was arrested on January 2, and he said that he was tortured by the coercive forces during his detention. Two interview subjects were arrested on January 6, as part of the wave of arrests of online activists. Skander Ben Hamda, known online as Bullet Skan, said that he was nearly tortured to death in the Interior Ministry. Sofiane Ben Haj M'Hamed, known online as Hamadi Kaloutcha, was also arrested on January 6, as was the leader of the Sousse branch of the student union UGET. The student leader said that he, too, was tortured. Members of the security forces arrived at the Tunis home of journalist Aymen Rezgui on January 6 to arrest him, but he escaped through a back door that the police did not know about, he said. Another activist reported that the police had wanted to arrest her on January 6, but she did not provide any evidence for her claim, so she is not counted among these seven. In addition, Mohammed

Bouazizi's cousins Ali and Lassad Bouazizi said they were arrested on January 10 and beaten while in detention.

As discussed in the previous chapter, many interview subjects deployed frames of the security forces and of the crackdown on protesters during the revolution. The previous chapter also discussed the costs of repression. Here I do not want to discuss the uses of those frames or the correlations between frames and interviewees, but rather how the uses of these frames reveal the relationship between the coercive forces and the regime. In all journalistic accounts and scholarly research on Tunisia's Arab Spring revolution of which I am aware, there is a curious absence. To be sure, there is much evidence that many Tunisians were motivated at least partly to participate in demonstrations in response to the brutality of the coercive forces' crackdown on the protests, but I have not seen any record of protesters making demands for reforms of the coercive forces. Instead, protesters in Tunisia coined and entrenched the phrase that became a slogan throughout the ensuing protests in other Middle Eastern and North African countries: The people want the fall of the regime. In other words, protesters understood the coercive forces and these forces' repressive tactics as an embodiment of the regime itself. The actions of the coercive forces were not taken as a signal to demand reform or punishment of the coercive forces, but rather as a signal to make demands on the regime as a singular entity. The fact that the coercive forces appear to have been an equivalent substitute for the regime—whether as an object for framing by social-movement actors or in the minds of citizens—builds a compelling case that the coercive forces were a central feature of the regime, as posited in neo-patrimonial theory.

One salient topic that emerged during data collection was fear of the coercive forces, as I discussed in the preceding chapter and will also address in the following chapter. Later in this section, I will discuss fear in examining the lack of political participation and in examining how the regime attempted to control new communication technologies, as further examples of the reach of fear. In this section, and in this chapter more broadly, the focus is the citizens' fears of the regime's coercive forces, which partly underlay both the framing and social-movement work discussed in the previous chapter, as well as the collective identity to be discussed in the following chapter. Interview subjects expressed not only fears of being surveilled by the coercive forces through personal email addresses, Facebook accounts, and cellphones, but they expressed fears of the coercive forces in nearly all areas of social interaction. Interviewees expressed fears that the coercive forces would monitor and punish speaking about politics on the phone, conversing about politics online, meeting in person for political reasons, or taking any form of political action. Not only were these fears of the coercive forces expressed, but interview subjects also said that fear of the security forces was a fundamental attribute of Tunisian society before the revolution. Hamadi Kaloutcha said that the regime had created a "virtual police in the head of every Tunisian." Another interviewee called the dynamic a "cycle of fear":

> I couldn't express my opposition to the regime on Facebook during the revolution. Only towards the end that I was able, when I saw that my friends broke this cycle of fear. It's all about fear. We lived with a regime that mastered so well social media that, if you wrote something against the regime, the next day you will have policemen coming to your door.

One interview subject, the publisher Karim Ben Said, said that he was scared to talk politics even at home with friends before the revolution. He added that he and his friends so feared surveillance by the coercive forces that they would remove the SIM cards from their cellphones while meeting socially—even when none of them were members of the opposition. Interviewees also reported that they were afraid that the coercive forces were watching them online. One interview subject said that many Tunisians had created fake Facebook profiles in order to hide their identities. This interview subject said that this type of fear, which he described as a form of self-censorship, was the biggest problem before the revolution. Interview subjects also reported that they were afraid to meet for political purposes. One interview subject said that he and his fellow activists used to whisper during their meetings, even in private homes, because they were so scared of being caught by the security forces. Many Tunisians were scared to participate in politics, because they feared the harsh punishment to be doled out by the coercive forces for such temerity, interview subjects said. Ali and Lassad Bouazizi said that even during the revolution, other activists were telling them to be careful, because their actions were inviting grave retribution by the coercive forces. The two said that they did not tell any journalists that they were helping lead the demonstrations in Sidi Bouzid, because they were so afraid of what would happen to them if they were arrested as leaders of such large-scale unrest.

In the preceding chapter, I discussed the topic of fear as a problem for social-movement actors to solve. I will not repeat the data concerning fear and recount how the protesters overcame fear, but it is important to restate very briefly in this chapter the dynamic of fear during the revolution, in order to present complete findings about the

scope of Tunisians' fears of the coercive forces. Organizers said that fear of retribution by the coercive forces inhibited citizens' participation in the protests. One interview subject estimated that 80 percent of the population was simply too afraid to join the protests. One organizer said that he and his fellow activists believed that the coercive forces had attempted to infiltrate the demonstrations in Sidi Bouzid, so they lied to some individuals whom they did not trust and told them that the activists were not planning any protests. Organizers said they considered fear a problem to solve, in that fears of punishment by the coercive forces for political participation were deeply ingrained among citizens. One organizer said that fear was "the biggest enemy." Without reiterating the data on the uses of the crackdown or the security forces for framing, I want to argue here that the use of the crackdown for framing does not represent a discrete phenomenon, related only to the events of December 2010 and January 2011, but rather that the uses of both the crackdown and the security forces as frames to motivate participation and attract newcomers serve as evidence that the grievances against the harsh and unjust repression practiced by the coercive forces were a long-standing feature of the Ben Ali regime. In other words, citizens' anger and revulsion at the brutality of the coercive forces was not a spontaneous element of the revolution. Instead, the preceding decades of excessive punishment of dissent and even of mere political engagement—along with the other enduring grievances against the regime presented in this chapter—provide a parsimonious explanation for the outbreak of rebellion, as well as compelling evidence that the Ben Ali regime provides empirical support for the neo-patrimonial model. These findings also provide compelling evidence on which to create new praxis for social-movement actors. As I mention in the following chapter, social-movement actors should

direct a substantial part of their framing practices toward overcoming fears of the coercive forces, along with constructing the other necessary elements of a shared protest identity. This is not a blanket recipe for revolution—as the examples of Bahrain and Syria demonstrate, even having a significant mass of anti-regime protesters is not enough to dislodge a neo-patrimonial regime, if the rebels are unable to overcome social cleavages, especially those of sectarian and/or clan affiliation in the Middle East and North Africa. Throughout this chapter, I move toward creating an addendum to the neo-patrimonial model that I call authoritarian weakening, but I am reluctant to include any mention of the coercive forces in this theoretical scaffolding. Simply put, there are too many examples of authoritarian regimes in which robust and ruthless coercive forces appear able to kill, imprison, or exile enough opposition activists so that the only threat to these regimes' stability has thus far come from either the death of the ruler (e.g., Franco in Spain) or the loss of the military's loyalty (e.g., Mugabe in Zimbabwe).

There is overwhelming data supporting the hypothesis that a robust coercive apparatus was a prominent feature of the Ben Ali regime, as the theory of neo-patrimonialism predicts. Bellin (2004) writes that one role for the coercive forces in a neo-patrimonial regime is to thwart any uprising, though the failures of regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria to prevent mass uprisings could serve as evidence that the coercive forces of neo-patrimonial regimes are not always successful in extinguishing outbursts of discontent. However, the regimes in Bahrain and Syria remain in place, offering wholly mixed evidence on the efficacy of regime repression. The next section, on civil society and depoliticization, will also reveal a similar dynamic: Even though the success of a popular revolution upends some of the assumptions of the

neo-patrimonial model, a successful revolution does not mean either that neo-patrimonial theory is somehow invalidated or that the regimes lately overthrown did not accord to the model. Neo-patrimonial theory was developed largely to explain why and how these Middle Eastern regimes remained immune to the third wave of democratization, embodied in the collapse in 1989 of totalitarian regimes in Soviet satellite states. Brownlee, who did much to elaborate neo-patrimonial theory, gave his 2007 book a title that epitomizes this framing: *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*. However, the theory never claims that these regimes would plod on interminably or that they were frozen in a sort of apolitical amber, impervious to any change whatsoever. Heydemann (2007) builds his concept of authoritarian upgrading on the important changes that took place in neo-patrimonial regimes in the years preceding the Arab Spring, and my concept of authoritarian weakening also acknowledges the shifting dynamics of neo-patrimonial regimes. In the following section, I will explore and build theory regarding one of these significant changes, the modest opening given by the regime to civil society.

4.5 Findings and Discussion: Depoliticization and Civil Society

In delineating the model of neo-patrimonialism, Brumberg (2002) and Heydemann (2007) describe how authoritarian regimes adapted to external political and economic pressures by allowing a degree of political contestation, albeit one tightly circumscribed and fiercely policed by the coercive forces. For many decades preceding this minimal opening at the outset of the 21st century, a large majority of citizens under the rule of Arab despots had been depoliticized (Brumberg, 2002; Heydemann, 2007). The model of neo-patrimonialism predicts that the data should show some limited

participation in nascent civil society alongside broad depoliticization, with swift and severe punishment for overstepping the narrow boundaries of political engagement—and a concomitant fear of transgressing these limits. Specifically, my hypothesis is that interview subjects would have a modest degree of involvement with formal structures such as unions, professional associations, the legal opposition party, and NGOs, but activists would be likely to have nearly as much experience in being persecuted by the coercive forces for their activism as they would have in activism. The population of the revolution's organizers is not representative of Tunisian society as a whole, but even a greater degree of political activism among this population would not be dispositive of neo-patrimonialism, as long as they confirm the depoliticization of the general populace, have experience of repression, and recount an atmosphere of fear of political participation. In regard to fear and the role of the coercive forces, I would point the reader to the preponderance of evidence in the previous section that most Tunisians were afraid of engaging in political activities because of the potential retribution of the coercive forces. In this section, I will briefly discuss fear again, but only to explain its relationship to the depoliticization of Tunisian society before the Arab Spring revolution. Before examining the findings, I want to reiterate that the data below were collected without the help of any questions on the interview questionnaire that directly probed their experiences as activists before the revolution. One question asked why that individual had become an organizer, but the questionnaire did not ask for any evaluations of civil society or of relative levels of politicization among the citizenry. Interviewees volunteered this information during follow-up questions or during the semi-structured parts of the interviews.

The previous section established the dominant role of the coercive forces in constricting political participation of any sort, as well as the climate of fear that prevailed. One participant clearly expressed the relationship that this dynamic had to the emaciation of civil society in Tunisia. He said that neither he nor most people whom he knew had any interest in politics, largely because of the fear of retribution for political expression: "Before the revolution, we never spoke of politics. We never spoke of them. You cannot. We don't have the right. You are afraid to say anything." One organizer said that the revolution was a political awakening for many Tunisians, because so many young people had been afraid of involvement in politics. Interviewees frequently said that the mass of Tunisian citizens, including those who participated in the revolution, lacked an articulated set of political beliefs. In discussing whether what they saw on Facebook fit with their values, beliefs, and ideology, many interview subjects said that they did not see on Facebook any ideology per se; they saw no mentions of political parties or any systems of political beliefs, whether democracy, Islamism, or communism. To fill out this picture of a depoliticized society in Tunisia, the two interview subjects who were members of Tunisia's leading Islamist party, En-Nehda, said that the domestic population was depoliticized, but there were many Tunisians who had been politically active but were at the time of the revolution living in exile outside the country. In much the same way as fear was perceived by social-movement actors, the depoliticization of society was also considered by social-movement actors as a given and as a problem that they needed to solve. Bullet Skan said that, to raise awareness of the problem, he and his fellow activists in Takriz made a series of videos to call out citizens for their apathy and inaction. Another organizer said that he and his fellow organizers made a strategic choice

to use the coercive forces' crackdown as a frame, because the activists believed that the population had been so depoliticized for decades that activists could not use political arguments. The quantitative data on interview subjects' levels of political interest adds evidence for the depoliticization of the population before the revolution, in terms of interviewees' low levels of participation in civic organizations. On a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 5 stood for high interest in politics, the mean for the 43 subjects who answered this question was 4.75, and 38 of the 43 respondents rated their interest as a 5. The sample of organizers, as stated previously, was not representative, and most organizers had years of experience as activists. Many of the participants joined civil society after the revolution; for example, three participants became journalists. And yet, despite these high levels of political interest, only four interview subjects belonged to groups that were operating legally within civil society. Three more were members of banned political parties, two others were members of Takriz, the online activist collective, and one interviewee was a member of a football fan club. In other words, among a sample of individuals with exceptionally high levels of political interest, including 18 individuals who helped organize protests during the revolution, fewer than 25 percent of this sample had had any pre-revolution experience in political engagement, and roughly only 10 percent had had formal participation in the institutions of civil society.

Another finding about political experience emerged from the interview data, and this finding enables the crafting of new theory: Despite the depoliticization of the majority of Tunisian society, the space granted to civil society provided years of training for activists in social-movement skills and in using new communication technologies. Even something as apparently banal as the use of code words during conversations

between activists represents a form of training. When the revolution came, various groups of activists had already developed sets of code words that they could deploy to subvert potential surveillance by the coercive forces. In addition, at least a dozen organizers recounted the events of the miners' strike in the Gafsa region in 2008 as a seminal moment for the opposition. Miners, their families, and unemployed graduates conducted a series of sit-ins and protests beginning in January 2008 in the town of Redeyef in the Gafsa region; after the protests turned violent in April, the coercive forces brutally cracked down on the protests, and intermittent clashes lasted until July, when the regime extinguished the unrest (Gobe, 2010). Crucially, the conflict remained confined to the Gafsa region, as the protests did not take root in the coastal cities (Gobe, 2010). As an illustration of the significance of this episode, one participant said, "The real revolution started in 2008 in Gafsa." An organizer said that he had established his Facebook account solely because of the Gafsa protests, and those protests were the only topic of his posts at the time. An organizer from Tunis offered a connection between Gafsa and the accumulation of protest know-how: She said that her first experience in demonstrations had been in 2008, and she had been learning the techniques of political activism since that time. Regarding new communication technologies, another organizer said that she had organized many demonstrations before the revolution erupted, so she and her fellow activists already had created a practice for sharing event information on Facebook. All these elements are tied together by the organizer who was the leader in Sousse of the student union, UGET, which was one of the few civil society organizations tolerated by the regime. He said that the government blocked his Facebook page during the protests in Gafsa in 2008, and he said that it was the first Facebook page ever blocked by the

government in Tunisia. After his page was blocked, he called the Tunis-based activist Azyz Amami, who put him in touch with the international hacktivist collective Anonymous, and Anonymous was able to restore his access to and the public's access to his Facebook page. In other words, he gained experience during the Gafsa protests, and he had also learned the skills to deploy new communication technologies for the tasks of social movements. His experiences during the Gafsa protests shed light on how activists learned from these early forays into civil society. For example, UGET held a meeting after the Gafsa protests ended, in order to examine why the protests had failed to spread nationwide and to consider how UGET members could have helped the movement spread, he said. From December 17, 2010, the day of the first protest in Sidi Bouzid, he said, he and many other activists worked to help the demonstrations expand to other locations. Once protests had begun in 2010, UGET held a strategy meeting for its leadership that lasted six hours, because there was disagreement among the activists about whether the protests would remain confined locally, as in Gafsa in 2008, or whether the protests had the potential to grow. This history demonstrates the importance of Gafsa as a pivotal learning experience for many of the future leaders of the revolution. Specifically, this history exemplifies how Gafsa and similar events taught activists how to deploy digital communication technologies and how to develop and pursue strategies to turn isolated outbursts of anti-regime hostility into sustained, nationwide protest, despite the continuous threat of retribution by the regime. Ali and Lassad Bouazizi recounted a similar history of how they cultivated their knowledge of social-movement practices in the years before they deployed this know-how after their cousin's suicide. They mentioned repeatedly their earlier membership in the PDP, the only legal

opposition party, as well as their activism in the years before the revolution. They presented their shared activist history as evidence of their hard-won credibility among the people of Sidi Bouzid. To restate a point made above in this chapter, they were also arrested repeatedly in the years before the revolution, and they were detained and beaten during the revolution. When they began fomenting protest after their cousin's self-immolation, they already had a wealth of experience in organizing techniques.

The interview data firmly support the theory of neo-patrimonialism's predictions about the political engagement of the Tunisian population. Even though Brumberg (2002) provides a compelling account of the narrow remit given to civil society by neo-patrimonial regimes, he seems to have made an error in assigning Tunisia to his category of total autocracy, in which a regime brooks no political contestation whatsoever. In his potential defense, he was writing in 2002, before the Gafsa protests of 2008 and before the beginnings of political involvement among nearly all of these interview subjects. Many scholars of the region seem to have made the mistake before the Arab Spring of focusing their analyses too narrowly on the practices of the regimes and their inner circles of elites and coercive forces, as Valbjorn (2014) later concludes. Such scholars accurately assessed the bulk of the populations under neo-patrimonial regimes as depoliticized, but the data in this dissertation show that scholars perhaps viewed these populations as static and that scholars did not find or accord enough importance to the worsening grievances of the people, or to the increasing skills of the small population of political activists, such as their adoption of new communication technologies. Valbjorn (2014) writes that there were some scholars, generally those without extensive influence, who at least focused on the growing discord between state and society, though even these scholars did not express

any expectation of regional upheaval. In assessing the Arab Spring revolutions with the benefit of hindsight, Hinnebusch (2015a) succinctly anticipates the findings of my interview data concerning Tunisian civil society at the outset of the revolution: "But civil society was much more advanced in Egypt and Tunisia because the early onset of neoliberalism had both necessitated greater tolerance for it and had also led to years of protest experience by activists that generated organizational skills and networks that would be crucial in the uprisings" (p. 211). I would add that these Tunisian activists earned their know-how while under the constant surveillance and persecution of the coercive forces, and for years their efforts had come to naught, partly because of the political apathy and fears of the vast majority of their compatriots. Despite this proviso, this social-movement know-how constitutes the basis for another element of my theory of authoritarian weakening. Even though neo-patrimonial regimes can tightly restrict the range of operations for civil society, the experiences and skills that individuals can develop in the institutions of civil society—whether political parties, unions and other professional associations, NGOs, and other civic associations—present a potential source of regime weakness regardless of the repressive work of the coercive forces, because the practices of civil society institutions are identical in most respects with the practices of political organizing and social movements. As a corollary, the larger the institutions of civil society grow, and the longer that the actors in civil society work—and thus develop their skills—the greater the revolutionary potential in a neo-patrimonial state. An analogous dynamic exists in the field of communication technologies, which I will discuss next.

4.6 Findings and Discussion: Regime Control of New Communication Technologies

Heydemann (2007) outlines how neo-patrimonial regimes worked to control new communication technologies in the years before the Arab Spring revolutions: As these authoritarian regimes opened ever so slightly to the outside world, they allowed the introduction and spread of various digital communication technologies, but the regimes sought to maintain firm control over the citizens' uses of the technologies. As shown in the preceding chapter, organizers and participants in the revolution used these new technologies effectively to deploy mediated frames, but this does not disprove the validity of the neo-patrimonial model. The model postulates that these regimes would strive to exert control over the technologies, not that the regimes would always and forever succeed. The interview data show conclusively that the Ben Ali regime had for years clamped down on the use of new communication technologies for the purposes of political dissent. The regime surveilled and hacked the communication tools of activists, and it persecuted the individuals who pursued political activism through new communication technologies. The data also show that interview subjects were afraid to use new communication technologies (and some older ones) and that many interviewees avoided using communication technologies because of pervasive state control, but the data also show that, during the years leading up to the revolution, citizens also gained experiences in successfully eluding the state's panopticon. Before exploring the data, I want to note that the interview questionnaire did not ask any questions regarding state control of communication technologies, so there is no quantitative data in this area that would cover all 44 interview subjects. All information in this section was given either as part of answers to other questions or during the semi-structured parts of the interviews.

Because these findings concern new communication technologies, they will not include instances of regime surveillance of telephones. It bears noting, however, that several interviewees said that their telephones were monitored by the government. For instance, Aymen Rezgui, a journalist at the newsmagazine Tariq al-Jdid, said that when he used his phone to arrange a meeting, the police would frequently arrive at the meeting location before he did. As for digital communication technologies, he reported that the regime blocked both his blog and his Facebook page. Many respondents said that the regime had blocked their Facebook pages; in the previous section, I presented the finding that the UGET leader in Sousse said that the government had blocked his Facebook page in the spring of 2008, which he said made it the first Facebook page blocked in Tunisia. This history demonstrates that the state was working to control the use of Facebook relatively soon after its introduction in Tunisia. Interview subjects also reported that the regime had blocked their blogs and their organizations' websites, had hacked their email accounts, and cut off their internet connections. As mentioned in the section on the coercive forces, Lina Ben Mhenni and her father, Sadok, said that the coercive forces had broken into their home and stolen her computer and camera around the time of the May 2010 demonstrations against censorship. One organizer's relationship to regime control over communication technologies is perhaps instructive: She said that she used to read the blog of a well-known cyber-dissident, Fatima Arabbica, but the regime blocked the blog and arrested Arabbica. The organizer said that she helped campaign for the blogger's release, after which Arabbica's subsequent blog was also blocked. As a result, the organizer said, she started her own blog.

During the revolution, these regime practices continued. On the day that Mohammed Bouazizi immolated himself, his cousin Lassad spoke on the telephone with the Tunis-based journalist Zouhair Makhlouf to tell the journalist about the demonstration in Sidi Bouzid. Makhlouf was arrested at his home shortly after he got off the phone with Lassad Bouazizi. This story involves an older communication technology, but it serves well to tie together the ceaseless repression by the coercive forces, the regime's continual surveillance of communication technologies new and old, and the regime's work to severely limit the space for political contestation, all of which supply abundant evidence to fill out the contours of the neo-patrimonial model. During the revolution, the regime blocked YouTube, as a majority of the interview subjects confirmed. Lina Ben Mhenni said that the regime shut down her Facebook and Twitter accounts. Other organizers reported similar regime interventions, and Hamadi Kaloutcha's experiences during the revolution provide rich data about the regime's attempts to control new communication technologies. Kaloutcha explained that, before the revolution, many opposition activists had set up blogs on BlogSpot, but the regime was easily able to block or disable a single, unique URL. Facebook represented a greater challenge for the regime's censors, because the site or even individual pages were not as easy to block, even though the regime did occasionally manage it. He shared on Facebook some content from blogs, such as Nawaat, that had been blocked by the regime during the revolution. Once Nawaat was back online, Nawaat published his original content from Facebook, such as analyses that he had written about material that had been on Nawaat before Nawaat was blocked. To be sure, this is complicated and somewhat circular, but it supports one of Kaloutcha's contentions: He said that much of his time was spent on cyberwar with the regime. In my

view, when Tunisians were using Facebook and other new communication technologies to deploy mediated frames about the Arab Spring uprising, they were also counteracting the regime's attempts to censor, limit, and control the digital space for communication. As support for this view, Kaloutcha also added that government censorship had contributed greatly to the development of online dissent. In the preceding chapter, I wrote about the costs of repression, and Kaloutcha is expressing this idea in terms of communication technologies: The regime clearly believed that it was acting in its interests by suppressing the use of new communication technologies for political dissent, but, in doing so, the regime incurred the cost of drawing greater attention to—and potentially making more alluring—these same technologies. This is one of the elements of authoritarian weakening, on which I will expand at the end of this section.

Kaloutcha's digital dexterity also invites discussion of how activists refined techniques for evading government control, a learning process analogous to the development of social-movement skills by activists during the first years that they were able to engage in the practices of civil society. Before examining the findings in this area, I want to mention two other reactions to the regime's relentless attempts to control the use of new communication technologies. One is the fear of using new technologies, such as the fear of using email or even the fear of using the internet, both of which were expressed by multiple interviewees. This chapter has extensively interrogated the topic of fear, so this fear of using new communication technologies aligns perfectly with the findings of fear of the coercive forces in general, fear of expressing political views, and fear of engaging in political activity. The second reaction is avoidance. Even though interview subjects were not directly asked about fear of using email, many said they had

avoided using email for fear of regime surveillance: Of the 35 interviewees who gave an answer about whether they had used email, only 17 said that they had used email during the revolution for activities related to the revolution. One could argue that this relative lack of email use can be explained by the primacy of Facebook, but it could just as compellingly be argued that the greater use of Facebook can be partly explained by the fear of using email. In any case, the fact that many interview subjects reported fears of using email and other internet sites also demonstrates the existence of citizens' beliefs that the government surveilled and punished the use of new communication technologies for political contestation. This is a powerful example of state control, in the sense that the regime determined the actions of citizens through instances of repression and through beliefs about regime surveillance and control.

Because the regime so vigilantly controlled the uses of new communication technologies, activists created several methods to evade the regime's capabilities to surveille them. It's worth noting here the frequent use of code words in telephone conversations, because this tactic for stymieing surveillance is not only analogous to tactics online, but also because this long-standing pattern of evasive techniques provides stronger evidence for the neo-patrimonial model as a system of omnipresent repression, including tight limits on civil society, on the uses of new communication technologies, and on any potential means for opposition. At least five organizers said that they and their fellow activists had constructed systems of code words to allow them to discuss organizing tasks without using any terms that might divulge important information to any members of the coercive forces who might be monitoring the conversations. Regarding the online milieu, organizers said that they learned to create their own websites to evade

regime detection. They learned to use hotspots to upload videos from the protests during the revolution, and they used virtual private networks, or VPNs, and proxies to get access to the internet and to content blocked in Tunisia. Many interview subjects recounted using proxies to keep their internet use anonymous. Two participants gave an unexpected account of how they and their friends had learned to use proxies before the revolution: porn sites. Tunisia had long blocked access to pornography websites, so many citizens learned to use proxies—these two participants emphasized the thorough dissemination of such knowledge among young Tunisian men—and they then deployed this know-how during the revolution for political purposes. Bullet Skan, one of the leaders of the Takriz online collective, also presented detailed evidence of the widespread tactics to evade regime detection online. He said that members of Takriz and the Tunisian Pirate Party purchased thousands of USB sticks and downloaded the anonymizing Tor browser onto them, along with directions written in the Tunisian dialect of Arabic. They then gave away the USB sticks for free in public places and in schools, to allow citizens uninhibited access to the internet. "That was an amazing experience. You touch freedom," he said.

In the years before the revolution, the Ben Ali regime had an extensive history of aggressive intervention to control new communication technologies, including hacking email addresses and blocking blogs, Facebook pages, and organizational websites, as the neo-patrimonial model would predict. During the revolution, the regime continued to try to maintain control over these new technologies, for example by blocking YouTube, but the citizens were generally able to use the internet freely. One major explanation for this freedom was the know-how developed by political activists and non-activists to evade regime control during the preceding years. In other words, the regime conformed to the

neo-patrimonial model, but the model did not account for the agency of the citizenry in subverting the state's intentions, even if the citizens' actions were not primarily concerned with politics (i.e., many citizens were primarily concerned with pornography). As one interviewee summed up Ben Ali's efforts to control Facebook during the revolution, "He couldn't control it. He did everything to control it, and it went out of control." To connect this attribute of the neo-patrimonial model with the findings from the previous chapter, I see the state's failure to control new communication technologies as a crucial reason why the state also lost the ability to control the construction of the meaning of events during the revolution. I'll address this topic again in the concluding chapter, but this section demonstrates, in any case, that the actions of the Ben Ali regime accord precisely with the neo-patrimonial model. Even though the citizens succeeded in gaining largely unfettered access to the internet and gaining control over the creation of internet content during the Arab Spring, the regime never stopped trying to exert control over these technologies. These findings also offer compelling evidence for the creation of new theory. Much akin to the relationship between neo-patrimonial regimes and civil society, once regimes allow for the entry—however minimal—of new communication technologies, citizens can gain experiences and skills that represent increased potential for opposition and rebellion, and thus the weakening of such a regime. Moreover, new communication technologies also represent revolutionary potential, in that social-movement actors can learn to use these technologies to construct and deploy an alternative narrative of the lived experiences in that nation.

4.7 Conclusion

The interview data provide compelling support for the validity of neo-patrimonial theory and for the hypothesis that the Ben Ali regime was an example of a neo-patrimonial regime. The data also provide rich answers to the research question about the kinds of grievances that the revolution's organizers and participants held against the Ben Ali regime. Grievances against the state were long-standing and deep-seated. More importantly, interview data show that these grievances focused on the regime as profoundly corrupt and unjust, based on a kleptocratic dynamic that enriched Ben Ali's wife and her family while keeping much of the Tunisian citizenry trapped in grinding poverty. The data also provide a preponderance of evidence of widespread fear and hatred of the coercive forces, along with a wide variety of firsthand experiences with several categories of repressive actions by the coercive forces, including surveillance, harassment, harassment of family members, arrest, and torture. The data also offer a confirmation of the neo-patrimonial model in terms of the lack of political engagement of Tunisian society: Interviewees attested that the vast majority of Tunisians were depoliticized, frequently because of fear of the coercive forces' retribution for dissent, while some activists were able to engage in the practices of civil society in a thoroughly circumscribed manner. The interview data resolutely confirm that the regime worked to control access to new communication technologies, particularly through hacking email addresses and websites, blocking access to various content, and persecution of those using new communication technologies for political purposes. To sum up, I found that the model of neo-patrimonialism, as articulated by Brownlee (2002), Brumberg (2002, 2011), Bellin, (2004), and Heydemann (2007), accurately explained, described, and

predicted the actions of the Ben Ali regime, as well as citizens' beliefs about and feelings toward the regime.

Not only do the data align precisely with the attributes and predictions of the neo-patrimonial model, but the data and the model provide a parsimonious explanation why the Tunisian populace rebelled against the regime in late 2010. Grievances festered and metastasized at elite corruption and at the concomitant economic hardship of the people. The data show that some organizers began actively opposing the regime because the coercive forces had persecuted their families. On the topic of the coercive forces, I would also argue that the needlessly murderous response of the coercive forces to the outbreak of protests in December 2010 both accords with what the neo-patrimonial model would predict and partly explains why the protests turned into a mass, nationwide uprising. As a sliver of the population was allowed by the regime to participate in minimal political contestation and civil society, these individuals—many of them organizers in this dissertation's sample—learned the techniques for social-movement success: organizing, protesting, and framing, for example. Despite vigorous efforts by the regime to control new communication technologies, the data show that many Tunisians learned numerous techniques to evade state attempts at control. The model elaborates a compelling recipe for revolution, so one might find some irony in the fact that the neo-patrimonial model was largely articulated to explain the seemingly unthreatened persistence of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa after the wave of democratization that began in 1989[6].

[6] See Bellin (2004) for an example of this approach; see Valbjorn (2014) for an account and a critique of the development of this approach.

Writing after the Arab Spring revolutions, Valbjorn (2014) argues that the work before the Arab Spring to elucidate the neo-patrimonial model focused too narrowly on the persistence of the regimes, whereas this scholarship could have presented the model's traits as areas of potential future weakness, instead of framing them as the guarantors of unshakable stability. Throughout this chapter, I have helped to fill this gap in the theory with my concept of authoritarian weakening, which I will summarize in the following paragraph. My interview data point toward some reasons for the revolution in the terms of political science, and these data clearly support Valbjorn's critique that the neo-patrimonial model was flawed in attributing too much persistence, stability, and strength to such regimes. The data also support a second critique of the field articulated by Valbjorn (2014): While many scholars of the region were contributing important work on the mechanisms of governance and repression, the scholars paid relatively less attention to the actions of individual citizens. Perhaps this was an overcorrection to the previous phase of scholarship, during which much research in the years following 1989 examined the shoots and buds of would-be democracy, which were sparse and never seemed to bear fruit. Whatever the explanation, there was clearly a blind spot in the scholarship on the region—the neo-patrimonial model describes these regimes perfectly, but my data show that scholars were not paying enough attention to the beliefs held by and the skills being developed by the citizens of these regimes, in particular the work being done by political activists. The actions and the fundamental agency of citizens are the foundations that underlie much of my concept of authoritarian weakening. In general, scholars of the region and of political science should be wary of state-centered theories and of models that do not devote consideration to the agency and actions of the citizenry.

Heydemann (2007) contributed, in my view, an accurate and important update to the model with his concept of authoritarian upgrading, which I have used as a template for my concept of authoritarian weakening. Heydemann attributed five practices to neo-patrimonial regimes in the 21st century; one of the five relates to foreign policy, so my data are silent in this field, but I have built new theory in the other four areas that he identified: capturing the benefits of selective economic reforms, managing political contestation, appropriating and containing civil societies, and controlling new communications technologies. Regarding economic reforms, I have shown that the kleptocratic nature of the Ben Ali regime, based on the nepotism, cronyism, and rampant corruption typical for the neo-patrimonial model, destroyed support for the regime among much of the population. Public support for a neo-patrimonial regime tends to weaken in direct proportion to the level of corruption and to the presence of poverty, income inequality, or the perceived economic hardship of the mass of the citizenry. As for political contestation, the success of the coercive forces in managing political contestation and in suppressing opposition—and the continued loyalty of the coercive forces to the ruler—appear to the be the key determinants of regime survival. Nepstad (2013) outlines this dynamic well, and my data add that public support for a neo-patrimonial regime weakens when citizens overcome their fears of the coercive forces. Political contestation also encompasses the operations of civil society, and my data show that the experiences and skills gained by civil-society actors can potentially weaken a neo-patrimonial regime, because these individuals represent a competing power center in contentious politics. Analogously, the experiences and skills gained by citizens in deploying new communication technologies for political purposes can potentially weaken

a neo-patrimonial regime, because these individuals have the capability to construct and deploy alternative narratives that can help coalitions of citizens to coalesce in opposition to the regime. The principles of authoritarian weakening are predictive only in the sense that they predict the weakening of a regime, not its imminent or inevitable demise. I was careful to describe the weakening of the regime as potential, in the sense of energy potential that can be unleashed under the proper conditions. This is potential energy, potential weakness, and that potential may go untapped—simply introducing some civil society institutions or new communication technologies does not automatically weaken a neo-patrimonial regime. On the contrary, many authoritarian regimes have expended tremendous energy to use the introduction of new communication technologies in order to strengthen the regime and weaken its perceived enemies (for a review, see Morozov, 2011). Still, neo-patrimonial regimes can be toppled by citizen-led revolutions, as happened during the Arab Spring, and in the following chapter I will present my data on the process of revolution in Tunisia.

CHAPTER 5

REVOLUTION THEORY

5.1 Introduction

The Arab Spring brought about the downfall of regimes in five countries, and protests shook most other Arab-majority states, so scholars of revolution have taken a keen interest in these uprisings. The ambit of revolution theory is far broader than the confines of this dissertation, but the theory's concepts of protest identity and revolutionary ideology are closely linked to the construction and deployment of mediated frames, and in this chapter I build theory in both fields by interrogating this connection. As stated in the literature review, Goldstone (2001) defines protest identity as "a sense of being part of a group with shared and justified grievances, with the ability to remedy those grievances by collective action" (p. 153). In fourth-generation revolution theory, a participant in collective action develops a protest identity from three sources: participation in a formal or informal group that validates the individual's grievances; a sense of empowerment and agency from participation; and a feeling that the regime considers the individual's protest group as an enemy of the regime. The interview questionnaire included questions that examined each of these three sources. Goldstone (2001) also postulates that most participants in a revolution adhere to a revolutionary ideology, a system of beliefs about the uprising that should accomplish three goals: "(a) inspire a broad range of followers by resonating with existing cultural guideposts, (b) provide a sense of inevitability and destiny about its followers' success, and (c) persuade people that the existing authorities are unjust and weak" (p. 156). The interview questionnaire also included questions to collect data on each of these three points. To

clarify the difference between these two similar concepts, protest identity largely relates to individuals' feelings: feelings of identification with fellow protesters, feelings of agency, and feelings of enemy standing vis a vis a regime. Revolutionary ideology largely relates to individuals' beliefs: beliefs in resonance with a cultural framework, beliefs in success, and beliefs about the regime. This chapter will present and discuss the data on these six important points of revolution theory, and the chapter is split into two parts, the first covering protest identity, and the second covering revolutionary ideology. The data thoroughly accord with the predictions of the fourth generation of revolution theory, and I build new theory in the field by redefining the attributes of revolutionary ideology and by bringing together concepts from the field and from framing theory.

5.2 Findings and Discussion: Protest Identity

To begin the discussion of the three sources of protest identity, I want to examine the data that might superficially present contradictory evidence. Of the three sources of protest identity, the problem of group participation and validation of grievances represents the most nuanced phenomenon, because of the historical background of Tunisia's revolution. Of the 43 interviewees who responded to the question whether they were members of a group that played a role in the revolution, 12 responded affirmatively. A 28-percent rate of participation might seem to be weak evidence for the presence of protest identity, given that one of the three sources of protest identity is a feeling of validation through group participation. However, as I discussed in the previous chapter, civil society was enfeebled by the Ben Ali regime, as is typical in neo-patrimonial states (Heydemann, 2007). There was one legal opposition party, the PDP, and a smattering of

unions and professional organizations. Under conditions in which citizens faced considerable difficulties even finding a political group to join, a 28-percent participation rate might appear more substantial. Moreover, the 12 affirmative responses represent 11 separate groups, ranging from a soccer fan club[7] to the Lawyers' Syndicate. Even if one accepts that 28 percent signifies a low rate of participation in formal groups, I would argue that this finding does not contradict the formation of protest identity. Goldstone (2001) carefully defines this first source of protest identity as participation in a protest group that helps to justify and validate the individual's grievances (p. 153). The protest group in Tunisia's Arab Spring was not any formal civic association, but rather the group of citizens who took to the streets in 2010-11 to protest against the Ben Ali regime.

To explore interview subjects' feelings about their participation in the protest group, the interview questionnaire asked interview subjects to what extent they identified with the people present at the demonstrations that the subjects attended. Of the 40 interviewees who responded to this question, 38 said they identified with the other people present at the protests. This is robust evidence that these individuals possessed a protest identity in the sense of Goldstone's definition. Interviewees described a feeling of unity among the protesters. One interview subject described the atmosphere as "more of a hope thing that you feel spreading among the Tunisian nation that was divided, and now it's coming together." An interviewee from Sidi Bouzid said, "We were united. We had a force. We were strong." Two interview subjects told anecdotes from separate demonstrations in Tunis, during each of which an individual expressed Islamist views

[7] Many soccer fan clubs were early and enthusiastic participants in the revolution; they participated in and organized protests throughout the country. See, e.g., Lim, 2013.

and was forced by fellow demonstrators to stop. How one interviewee presented his anecdote is telling:

> There is one guy who just screamed 'Allahu akbar!' Everybody turned to him and say to him, like, 'No, this is not … our case. If you want to go scream that, you go scream it away. We are here against the regime, so your ideology—you can do it at home.' It was like a spontaneous reaction, and everyone approved that reaction.

In other words, the demonstrators were not atheists or even opponents of political Islam, but rather they possessed a coherent, shared identity of protest: "'We are here against the regime.'" This position perfectly captures a protest identity as validation of grievance, because the unifying identity of these protests was the expression of shared grievances against the regime by a group of citizens.

Regarding the second source of protest identity—a feeling of agency of empowerment—interviewees gave a near-unanimous confirmation of feelings of agency. Interview subjects were asked whether their participation in the protests gave them a feeling of empowerment or agency, and their answers were coded on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 5 representing the strongest feeling of agency. Of the 34 responses to this question, 28 responses (82.4 percent) were coded as a 5[8]. The mean response was 4.4, and only five interviewees (14.7 percent) gave answers that were coded as a 1 or a 2. The data show that a predominant majority of interviewees felt a powerful sense of agency. This sense of agency is that much more striking in light of the decades

[8] There was a strong association between reporting a feeling of agency and having voted in the last election. Of the six interviewees whose answers to the question about agency were not coded as a 5, only two voted in the last election. Of the 28 interviewees whose answers were coded as a 5, 25 voted in the last election ($p = .001$). This correlation could provide interesting hypotheses for researchers in civic engagement about the relationships between feelings of agency in political participation and subsequent voting behavior.

of fear that had permeated Tunisian society before the revolution. Since the Bourguiba era began in 1956, the regime had surveilled, jailed, and otherwise persecuted citizens for any expressions of dissent, and the preceding two chapters have discussed how profoundly citizens feared the regime before and even during the revolution—and yet interviewees resolutely reported feeling a sense of empowerment and agency. To be sure, an individual can feel both empowered by protesting and afraid of the authorities' potential retribution for that protest, but the conditions of a neo-patrimonial regime would predict that, before the revolution, citizens would have expressed feeling extremely low levels of civic agency, so this data is that much more convincing as evidence of protest identity.

As for the third source of protest identity, interview subjects responded nearly unanimously to the question whether the regime labeled them its enemies during the revolution. Of the 42 interviewees who responded to the question, 39 (92.9 percent) said yes. The data speak clearly on this question. The data are less clear, however, in the answers to the follow-up question about how interviewees felt about the regime considering them enemies. These answers were coded on a bipolar Likert scale ranging from -2 to 2, with 2 representing the most positive response and -2 the most negative. The answers varied considerably: The mean was 0.59, and the standard deviation was 1.404. Overall, the answers to the three main questions concerning protest identity—whether interview subjects identified with other protesters, whether they felt a sense of agency, and whether they felt that the regime considered them its enemies—offer compelling support for the hypothesis that the interview subjects had formed a protest identity, but the answers to this follow-up question do not adhere to this pattern. One possible

explanation is that the status of enmity is indicative of protest identity, but one's feelings about that status are less indicative. A second possible explanation is that the question was poorly written or asked, for the purposes of determining protest identity. A third possible explanation—and, in my view, a quite likely explanation—is that interview subjects did feel that the regime had labeled them its enemies, but their feelings about being its enemy were still affected by their fears of possible regime retribution. In support of this explanation, the preceding two chapters present copious evidence that even experienced activists continued to feel acute fear of the regime and of the coercive forces during the revolution. After all, many interview subjects were arrested and tortured (and saw their friends killed) during the revolution, so it would be more remarkable, in my opinion, if these revolutionaries had reported not having any fear of the regime or of being its enemy.

The data provide compelling evidence that these interview subjects had formed a protest identity as defined by the fourth generation of revolution theory. To conclude this section, I want to use this finding to build revolution theory and to contribute to praxis for social-movement actors, by bringing together this concept with my framing concepts of the alternative narrative and dichotomous legitimacy. The concept of dichotomous legitimacy, which I introduced in chapter 3, can build the concept of protest identity. Incorporating dichotomous legitimacy allows for new prediction for the revolution theory: Other variables being equal, actors in contentious politics will be likelier to form a shared protest identity when the legitimacy of regime discourse is low. My reasoning is that a relatively lower level of legitimacy creates a correspondingly greater opportunity for the construction of alternative narratives, especially a narrative of a protest identity of

shared grievances. When the level of legitimacy of regime discourse is low, the greater are the chances for an instance of dichotomous legitimacy to arise. Goldstone is clearly aware of the overlap between these disciplines; he (2001) cites Benford and Snow, who pioneered the study of framing, in a passage where he writes that the creation of protest identities is a "considerable project" (p. 153), and it seems that he is intimating that the construction of protest identity is a substantial project for social-movement actors. Writing more recently, Goldstone (2014) describes protest identity as a "persuasive shared narrative of resistance" (p. 18), and the mention of the concept of a narrative explicitly links protest identity to the framing process. To be sure, I am not arguing that the frames deployed by organizers of the revolution were the sole or even primary source of the creation of protest identity in Tunisia's Arab Spring revolution, but it would be ludicrous on its face to suggest that the framing work of social-movement actors did not or could not contribute to the formation of protest identity. This leads to my contribution to the practice of protest: social-movement actors should use communication technologies to construct frames that nurture a shared protest identity, as defined by the three sources articulated in this part of the chapter, and these actors should take advantage of the compromised legitimacy of regime discourse to construct an alternative narrative of contentious politics. In other words, social-movement actors should strive to construct and deploy frames of shared grievances, frames of the status of protesters as enemies of a regime or other subject of protest, and frames of the protesters' agency. From this perspective, the frames that criticized the regime's corruption and the security forces' brutality, the frames that portrayed Ben Ali as a dictator, and the frames that focused on empowering Tunisians by encouraging them to overcome fear, together

comprise a potent recipe for nourishing a shared protest identity. In the conclusion of this chapter, I will further discuss the connection between protest identity and specific frames; the next part of the chapter will take up the topic of revolutionary ideology.

5.3 Findings and Discussion: Revolutionary Ideology

To restate, the three markers of the presence of revolutionary ideology are resonance with cultural frameworks, a belief in the success of the revolution, and beliefs that the authorities are unjust and weak (Goldstone, 2001). The term ideology here does not necessarily equate to an ideology that one might recognize as partisan or even as belonging to the political left or right. As I discussed in chapter 4, Tunisians were largely depoliticized during the Ben Ali era, and the regime barely tolerated the existence of a smattering of civil-society institutions. That said, the data on resonance from chapter 3 present compelling evidence that the mediated frames encountered by interview subjects did resonate with them. This finding of frame resonance also represents a marker for the presence of revolutionary ideology. This overlap between framing in social-movement theory and in revolutionary ideology from revolution theory is significant for this dissertation. I will discuss the overlap in greater detail in the conclusion of this section and in the conclusion of the dissertation, but here I want to reiterate the definitions of the concepts of resonance and revolutionary ideology, to illustrate how these terms refer to the same idea. Frame resonance is the sine qua non of success for framing in social movements (Ferree, 2003, p. 305); if mediated frames resonate with relevant audiences, it dramatically increases the chances that audience members will side with the social movements that deploy these resonant frames. In revolution theory, a revolutionary

ideology needs to resonate with the cultural frameworks of the revolution's potential participants and sympathizers (Goldstone, 2001, p. 156). The term "cultural framework" implies that the values, myths, and symbols in various cultures (here typically a nation-state) are an assemblage of frames and narratives. The frames of a successful revolutionary ideology must resonate with individuals' frames of their history and their current circumstances. To be sure, potential participants and sympathizers can encounter frames of an uprising through a wide variety of communication technologies, from social media to interpersonal conversation. But social-movement actors in revolutions strategically construct and deploy mediated frames, just as social-movement actors do during any other social movement. As I discussed in chapter 3, social-movement actors in Tunisia's revolution strategically deployed mediated frames to encourage participation and persuade potential sympathizers; that mediated frames resonated is evidence both for frame resonance in social-movement theory and for revolutionary ideology in revolution theory. In other words, these frames resonated with Tunisians' existing cultural guideposts and so represented a revolutionary ideology.

Most interview subjects expressed a strong belief that the revolution would succeed. Interviewees were asked about their beliefs in the revolution's chances for success, and their answers were coded on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 5 representing the highest level of belief in success. The mean of the 43 responses to this question was 4.02. Only five interview subjects gave a response negative enough to be coded as a 1 or 2. During the interviews, it emerged from interviewees' responses that many interviewees experienced increasing levels of belief in success during the roughly four weeks of the revolution. In the 43 responses to this question, 14 interview subjects (32.6 percent)

mentioned an increasing belief in success. The data reveal a clear association between being an organizer and having both a belief in success and an increasing belief in success ($p = .001$ and $p = .007$, respectively). One possible explanation could be some sort of optimism common to social-movement organizers more generally, but such psychological profiling falls far outside the scope of this dissertation. The features of neo-patrimonialism offer another possible explanation: The correspondingly lower beliefs in success among participants could reflect their depoliticization. That is, they did not have strong beliefs in the success of the protests because they did not have any or only minimal personal experience of civic engagement. Interview subjects from the rural interior were more likely than interviewees from the coastal cities to say that they had an increasing belief in success ($p = .013$). I see two complementary explanations for this finding. One is the lingering disappointment of the experience of the 2008 protests in the rural town of Gafsa that failed to spread to the coastal cities and that were brutally quashed by the regime. It stands to reason that residents of the rural interior would have initially viewed the outbreak of new protests in 2010 with a measure of skepticism left over from the events of 2008, so they would have been less likely to believe in success at the outset of the protests. The second, complementary explanation lies in the restive history of the rural interior, which has regularly rebelled, protested, and otherwise voiced displeasure at being ruled by coastal elites such as those in Tunis—without any resulting change in the interior's conditions—as described by interviewee Sadok Ben Mhenni. Because of their knowledge of the region's history of rebelliousness ignored or quashed, residents of the interior might be less likely to view any new protest with a belief in its success.

Even though interviewees generally answered that they believed in the revolutions' chances for success, the interview subjects gave a wide variety of responses. For example, a participant from Tunis said that, on the day that Mohammed Bouazizi killed himself and the first demonstration followed, she told a friend that she thought Ben Ali would have to step down, and she said that she and her friend were excited by the promising potential of the circumstances. An organizer from Kasserine, on the other hand, said that he had no idea early on that the revolution would succeed. He said that he was scared in the early days of the protests, and he witnessed the security forces' massacres of his fellow protesters in Kasserine. It was not until January 12 or January 13, after the police had left the streets of Kasserine, that he thought that the revolution would succeed.

The third attribute of revolutionary ideology is the belief that a regime is unjust and weak. In the previous chapter, I discussed the unanimous finding that all interview subjects who responded to this question said that they viewed the regime as unjust. This unequivocal finding is quite important, because the data are mixed regarding beliefs about the regime's strength. Interviewees' responses were coded on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with higher scores signifying greater strength. The mean response of the 42 responses was 3.55, which would mean a belief in the regime being slightly strong. However, the standard deviation was 1.549, which shows the extreme variance in the responses. Two factors can explain the variance in the responses to this question, in my view. First, the question might have been vaguely worded. Interview subjects were asked whether they thought the regime was strong or weak, but clearly a regime or government can simultaneously be strong in many areas and weak in many areas. I believe that

interviewees would have given opposite answers, had they been asked whether the regime was strong in the repressive capabilities of the coercive forces, or strong in its support among the people. The second factor that could explain the variance in responses is interviewees' long-standing fear of the regime's capabilities to discipline and punish dissent through the coercive forces. Throughout this dissertation, I have exhaustively examined the ways that Tunisians feared the coercive forces and the ways that organizers and participants thought about fear and deployed frames about overcoming fears. There is an abundance of evidence that interview subjects viewed the repressive capabilities of the regime as robust. After all, most interview subjects were either arrested, beaten, tortured, or saw their family members and friends arrested, beaten, and tortured, so this seems a parsimonious explanation why many expressed a belief in the strength of the regime.

In the article that established the fourth generation of revolution theory, Goldstone (2001) does not give any definition of the term weak, although the article does in other sections discuss fiscal weakness, weakness from battlefield losses, or poorly handled crackdowns on protests. In later work, Goldstone (2014) discusses at length how injustice can fuel revolutionary mobilization, as he writes that citizens tend to take the risk of joining revolts when they feel they are losing their proper place in society for reasons that are not inevitable and not their fault (p. 17). He does not elucidate the attribute of weakness in similar detail. Not to exaggerate the findings from a sample size barely larger than 40, but my data appear to rebuke this aspect of revolution theory. My findings suggest that revolution theory needs either to refine its definition of regime weakness or to abandon the term and base this aspect of revolutionary ideology solely on feelings of injustice, which seem more firmly rooted in empirical data. To build revolution theory, I

propose a new definition of this third attribute of revolutionary ideology, such that revolutionary ideology is marked by a belief that a regime is unjust, in the ways that Goldstone (2014) describes, and weak, which can be understood and operationalized as a belief that the regime is failing in its governing responsibilities to provide conditions in which its citizens have opportunities to thrive and succeed.

Correlations with other data add important context to the data on beliefs in regime weakness. There were associations between beliefs in the strength of the regime and lower age ($p = .095$), being a student ($p = .100$), and being unemployed ($p = .035$); the populations of students and the unemployed were largely identical. One possible explanation is that younger people had been socialized into believing that the Ben Ali regime was a strong one, capable of crushing its opponents, whereas Tunisians with more age and experience interacting with the regime had observed some of its weaknesses. A belief that the regime was weak also correlated with a belief in the success of the revolution ($p = .008$) and somewhat correlated with an increasing belief in the success of the revolution ($p = .139$). The relationship among these beliefs seems clear, in that one who sees the regime as weaker would logically have a greater belief that the revolution would succeed in deposing that feeble regime.

To conclude this section, the evidence clearly indicates that these interview subjects held the beliefs that comprise a revolutionary ideology. The events of the uprising resonated with their cultural frameworks, they largely believed that the revolution would succeed, and they believed that the regime was unjust. Some believed that the regime was strong, and some believed that it was weak. If we grant that they possessed a revolutionary ideology, then this begs the question: What kind of ideology

was it? It was not one of the familiar ideologies that have sparked revolution, such as freedom from occupation, democracy, or communism—or even a coherent ideology of policies that one could term leftist or rightist. Their shared belief system was that of a rebellious mass of aggrieved citizens, victims of an unjust, corrupt regime. They believed that they would succeed in their uprising, but many still feared the amply demonstrated capabilities of the regime to punish dissent. Even with their fears, they were a united group of individuals who had committed to opposition and resistance. The finding that their revolutionary ideology rested upon their shared status as a group of protesters against an unjust regime, rather than as adherents of a political philosophy, matches perfectly with the finding that their protest identity was rooted in their participation in groups of similarly aggrieved protesters, rather than as members of formal groups that organized or supported the protests. In a sense, then, their revolutionary ideology was their shared protest identity, with the specific dynamic of their protest against the regime of a nation-state. My conclusions about the types of protest identity and revolutionary ideology also help build revolution theory, in that the theory should include specifically these types of protest identity and revolutionary ideology among the roster of possible identities and ideologies.

5.4 Conclusion

In this conclusion, I will discuss the significance of these findings for revolution theory, for some of the processes that comprise revolution theory, and for the common ground among theories of revolution, social movements, and neo-patrimonialism. The data provide compelling evidence that these interview subjects developed a protest

identity and a revolutionary ideology. For fourth-generation revolutionary theory, this finding helps explain how cross-class coalitions formed during Tunisia's Arab Spring revolution. The formation of cross-class coalitions is a necessary condition of revolution, according to both the third and fourth generations of revolution theory (Beck, 2017; Dix, 1984; Goldstone, 2001, 2011a, 2011b; Goodwin & Skocpol, 1989). My findings also support contemporary revolution theory's ontological approach to revolution as a contingent, emergent process, rather than as a lawlike formula of always-identical conditions producing inevitable outcomes (Tilly, 1995). The data lay out an account of the construction of protest identity and revolutionary ideology, an account with contours and nuances unique to the circumstances of Tunisia in 2010-11, and these details of the actions, thoughts, and beliefs of these individuals offer support for revolution theory's assumption that individual revolutionary actors possess agency (Goldstone, 2001; Gurr, 2000, 2015). My findings build theory for the concepts of protest identity and revolutionary ideology. For the former, I show how concepts from framing theory allow for the creation of a new prediction flowing from the concept. For the latter, I reveal a shortcoming in the definition of revolutionary ideology in terms of beliefs about the weakness of a regime. The theory needs to more precisely define the term weakness, and I suggest a possible redefinition of weakness that can also be readily deployed in research.

This dissertation also contributes to understanding the processes of the construction of protest identity and revolutionary ideology. This might seem obvious, in light of the focus of this dissertation on framing, but the data show that mediated frames, deployed and encountered by the organizers and participants in Tunisia's revolution,

played a role in the construction of protest identity and revolutionary ideology. The data on resonance support this conclusion, as do the various frames that portrayed the regime as unjust, corrupt, brutal, and responsible for the country's economic problems. To be sure, Lynch (2012) argues that Al-Jazeera also strategically deployed mediated frames of Arab citizens as aggrieved populations, and many interview subjects reported that the frames they encountered on Al-Jazeera, France 24, and elsewhere resonated with them. Moreover, legitimate grievances against the unjust, corrupt, and brutal practices of the regime predated and existed independently of any mediated framing of these phenomena, as interviewees reported in the data. However, it seems implausible on its face that the mass of Tunisian citizens could have constructed a protest identity and/or revolutionary ideology without incorporating any of the mediated frames that they encountered through social media, blogs, email, telephone communication, or interpersonal communication. Organizers also reported that they constructed frames that correspond perfectly with the attributes of protest identity and revolutionary ideology. For example, five of 25 organizers said that they deployed frames telling protesters that the revolution would succeed if they persisted in the protests; a belief in success is one the three central markers of revolutionary ideology. As I discussed in chapter 3, organizers deployed frames of the regime as corrupt or a dictatorship, as well as frames of the security forces as brutal and/or engaged in a brutal crackdown against protesters, all of which framed the regime as unjust. By calling attention to the relationship between framing processes and the construction of protest identity and revolutionary ideology, this dissertation suggests broad, important areas of further research to build revolution theory. A potentially rich research question for scholars is apparent from the previous sentence: What is the

relationship between the construction of protest identity and revolutionary ideology and the deployment of mediated frames by social-movement actors and by mass media? This research question offers several possible sub-questions, for example regarding the deployment of mediated frames on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, as well as on transnational satellite networks such as Al-Jazeera, France 24, BBC, and CNN. To be sure, disentangling the relative importance of various media and various mediated frames represents a thorny problem, and there are obstacles to the collection of fresh data during a revolution, but this avenue of scholarship offers rich, largely unexplored terrain for interrogating these processes. Indeed, the growing focus of the field on the processes of revolution only makes these questions more important.

Using mediated frames as units of analysis also points to the research interests common to revolution theory and social-movement theory, and this overlap comprises my final point. In the conclusion, I will build theory based on this overlap, but here I just want to point out where the processes of the construction of protest identity and revolutionary ideology share important theoretical ground with theories of social movements and neo-patrimonialism. As I argued in the preceding paragraph, the framing process of social-movement theory is an integral part of the processes of construction of protest identity and revolutionary ideology, which are central to revolution theory. These latter two constructs are based on beliefs that a regime is unjust, which is a perception common among citizens living under a neo-patrimonial regime. The specifics of the frames deployed by social-movement actors in Tunisia to construct this unique type of injustice—corruption, dictatorship, the brutality of the coercive forces—fit perfectly with the theory of neo-patrimonialism. This explanation clarifies the theoretical terrain

common to these three fields, and in the conclusion, I will take up the implications of this overlap for future scholarship.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: THE CROSS-DISCIPLINARY PARADIGM OF FRAMING

6.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I will offer an answer to the dissertation's central research question, then I will discuss what my findings on the social construction of technology mean for the discipline of science and technology studies, and I will end the dissertation with a discussion of how this dissertation contributes to knowledge in multiple disciplines through a concept—framing—rooted in the discipline of communication.

6.2 An Answer to the Research Question

Throughout the three chapters of findings and discussion, I addressed the seven research questions from chapter 1, and, in this section, I will provide an answer to this dissertation's overarching research question: How did organizers of and participants in the Arab Spring revolution in Tunisia use media, particularly social media, Al-Jazeera and other television stations, telephones, and interpersonal communication? Rather than cobble together an agglomeration from the partial answers that I have given to the numbered research questions, I want to present a holistic answer as concisely as possible. Organizers of and participants in the Arab Spring revolution in Tunisia used communication media to construct and deploy a wide variety of frames critical of the regime, with particular emphasis on the regime's corruption, the country's economic problems, and the brutality of the regime's security forces. There was no master frame of the revolution, nor did these social-movement actors employ a dominant technique for

the construction of their frames or a dominant framing strategy, though many interviewees did focus on using visual elements during the framing process. To deploy these frames, the revolutionaries used a hybrid network of communication technologies, encompassing social media, blogs, telephones, email, and interpersonal communication, though they used Facebook somewhat more than any other medium. Through the framing process, the revolutionaries were able to construct an alternative narrative of the events of the revolution, a narrative almost entirely free from the regime's customary censorship of communication media. These frames resonated with the interview subjects, partly because the interviewees viewed the narratives of the regime as illegitimate, and they did not always trust the narratives that they encountered in other traditional media. These social-movement actors followed multiple framing strategies, frequently varying their framing for different audiences and media, and the actors changed their strategies and their framing throughout the revolution. Through their frames, the revolutionaries quickly and cheaply spread awareness of citizens' shared grievances against the regime, an information cascade that overcame the problem of pluralistic ignorance of these common grievances. Through these frames, these social-movement actors also continually encouraged their fellow citizens to overcome their fears of the regime and the regime's coercive forces, which had brutally suppressed and punished dissent for decades. Through these frames, the revolutionaries helped weakly linked citizens forge a shared protest identity based on the citizens' deeply seated, shared grievances against the regime, and the revolutionaries helped construct a revolutionary ideology based on their shared protest against a regime perceived as unjust and illegitimate. Some social-movement actors used Facebook more than any other medium, but they actively used all

the nodes of the hybrid network for the tasks mentioned above, though some interviewees reported doubts about the accuracy and/or bias of Al Jazeera. They also used the hybrid network of communication technologies for the work of organizing, and they used interpersonal communication with a significant frequency. Throughout the previous three chapters, I have supported these conclusion with evidence and used these conclusions to build theory in the fields of framing, social movements, neo-patrimonialism, and revolution. In particular, I have crafted in chapter 3 the new concepts of alternative narrative and dichotomous legitimacy, which explain and predict the framing process in episodes of contentious politics in certain neo-patrimonial regimes. In chapter 5, I used these concepts to build new revolution theory. In chapter 4, I constructed the new apparatus of authoritarian weakening, which describes how capabilities and beliefs among the citizens of neo-patrimonial regimes weaken those regimes. In the final two sections of the dissertation, I will bring these various fields together to build theory in the discipline of science and technology studies and in the discipline of communication.

6.3 The Social Construction of Technology

My interest in technology usage during the Arab Spring was partly spurred by misguided journalism claiming that social media had brought down dictators. I will return briefly in the following section to the debate about social media and the Arab Spring, but here I want to blend the various disciplines within which I have worked throughout this dissertation, in order to build theory and praxis about communication technology within the discipline of STS.

To consider theory, I want to begin with an interrogation of the premise of much thinking about social media and the Arab Spring, or about social media or even Facebook more generally. Some scholars make a basic error of anthropomorphism, an error that attributes active, autonomous capabilities to inanimate objects; in other words, it is a category error to pose a question about what Facebook did during the revolution in Tunisia (or during any similar event). Facebook did not do anything. Facebook did not cause the revolution, nor did it bring people into the streets, nor did it bring down a dictator, etc. I am not demolishing a straw man here; for example, Howard et al. (2011) write that "the Arab Spring had many causes. One of these sources was social media and its power to put a human face on political oppression" (p. 2). In this dissertation, I have called on the theory of neo-patrimonialism to provide a parsimonious, compelling explanation of the causes of the revolution: The Ben Ali regime was a kleptocracy, a corrupt ruling coterie that arrogated to itself the nation's wealth as the majority of the population experienced harsh economic conditions and dim future prospects; political power emanated solely from allegiance to the potentate, rather than from any popular mandate; to extinguish any opposition or dissent, the regime's coercive forces harshly punished criticism of the regime, and the regime fiercely surveilled society—and especially communication technologies—to quash any rumblings of discontent; the regime tightly controlled the minimal institutions of civil society, which constricted opportunities to build weak ties of association among the populace; and all of these regime practices generated and fed broad and deep grievances against the regime. I have called on revolution theory to provide a parsimonious, compelling explanation of the course of the revolution and the reasons for its success: Once grievances exist, a spark

can turn shared grievances into a shared protest identity and a revolutionary ideology, under which a cross-class coalition of citizens can coalesce. To be sure, other factors, especially relations between the military and the regime (Nepstad, 2013), also have a potentially determining influence on the course and outcome of revolutions.

I have debunked any notion that Facebook might have caused the revolution or determined its outcome, but I want to return to the ontological position of Facebook. The scholarship in the preceding paragraph should not lead scholars to formulate questions about what, then, Facebook did during the Arab Spring, but rather it should upend the position that Facebook did or could do anything in any episode of contentious politics. Human actors in Tunisia did things on Facebook, just as they did things on their phones or in person—or in the streets. The crucial shift in position is that people use technologies to take actions. The usage of a technology can clearly cause effects in the material world, but it is not the technology that causes changes, but rather what people do with the technology, as scholars in science and technology studies have long argued (see Bijker & Pinch, 2012, for an overview). This dissertation builds theory in the concept of interpretive flexibility, which posits that a technology or an artifact does not arrive with predetermined uses, but rather its uses depend on how various social groups construct them (Oudshoorn & Pinch, 2003). My research shows that social-movement actors in Tunisia used Facebook as part of a hybrid network of technologies including television, telephones, and interpersonal communication, and these actors used this hybrid network to construct an alternative narrative of the events of Tunisia's Arab Spring revolution, to construct a shared protest identity, and to construct a revolutionary ideology. As such, the revolutionaries actively constructed the meaning of Facebook and other social media,

perhaps in a radically different way than the inventors of Facebook intended (Mackay & Gillespie, 1992). I should add that Facebook, just as any other communication technology, is not constructed solely by its users, but also by the actions of groups such as programmers, developers, advertisers, and corporate executives. To improve scholarship on technology, scholars should be extremely careful in how they describe technologies. Scholars should avoid giving anthropomorphic capabilities to technologies, such as saying that a technology caused, determined, or otherwise acted in some social field. I do not wish to limit any scholar's sesquipedalian munitions, but I do suggest keeping in mind that technologies can enable, allow, or afford certain uses. In the end, this approach of positioning users and other actors as constructing the meanings of a technology reflects the constructivist approach that underpins this entire dissertation—not only did social-movement actors construct meaning through the framing process by posting content to Facebook and communicating through other nodes of the hybrid network, but they were also simultaneously constructing the meanings of the technologies that they used.

On a practical level, this conclusion and this ontological position offer some direction for those who work with and those who use these technologies. For those who produce communication technologies, such as inventors, engineers, and developers, some lessons from the Arab Spring are flexibility, awareness of uses for repression, and a certain modesty about the projected uses of a technology. Users will co-construct these technologies, and they can use these technologies in perhaps entirely unexpected ways. Users might even deploy the technology to fight repressive regimes and to gain greater independence in their own lives, and in so doing they could use a technology to help

increase the autonomy of all the citizens in an entire nation-state. This dissertation shows that Tunisian revolutionaries did exactly this through uploading visual imagery, chatting, and organizing protests, among other activities, on Facebook and on other social media. Other research on the Arab Spring (e.g., Bellin, 2012) shows that oppressive regimes use this technology for surveillance, stifling dissent, and spreading disinformation, propaganda, and lies, so those who develop these platforms should pay careful attention to the capabilities they create for various actors to construct such uses on these communication platforms. For social-movement actors, these same findings offer practical directives. To increase the chances of success for social movements, these actors should seek out communication technologies that allow them to construct their own narratives of events, to share visual imagery, to make shared grievances known among a population of weakly linked individuals—as a way to overcome pluralistic ignorance—and to organize events and communicate on a one-to-one and one-to-many basis. Moreover, social-movement actors today need high-level technical skills; they should be aware of any communication technology's capabilities for surveillance or vulnerabilities to cyberattack, in order to avoid unwanted tracking and defend or preempt any cyberattack. Social-movement actors need fellow activists who are skilled in cyberwar.

One could argue that, in an even larger sense, social-movement actors could draw from this dissertation—and from the Arab Spring—the hope that they have the technology to overthrow the rule of a seemingly impervious despot. But I'm not so sure; as I worked painstakingly to show in the chapters rooted in theories of neo-patrimonialism and revolution, just using a technology will not conjure an uprising. As Bellin (2012) writes, social media's contribution was "permissive, not deterministic" (p.

139). To put this question in historical perspective, some stories of Martin Luther define the printing press as revolutionary (see Eisenstein, 1979, for an overview); but, like the Church of the Dark Ages selling indulgences, the corrupt Ben Ali regime had for two decades stoked grievances in Tunisia. Before Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to a wall in Wittenberg, John Huss and John Wycliffe had protested the same corrupt practices and demanded reforms. They were killed for their agitation, just as Ben Ali had killed, imprisoned, and tortured countless of his critics. Was it the printing press that made Luther's protest into a Reformation? Was it Facebook that made Mohammed Bouazizi's suicide into the Arab Spring? In such stories, Gutenberg and Zuckerberg are cast as revolutionaries. No—they were engineers, inventors, techies. Martin Luther was a revolutionary. Ali and Lassad Bouazizi are revolutionaries. As does any revolutionary, they just needed a technology to communicate their ideas to a wider audience to help their revolutions take root.

6.4 Facebook, Framing, and Revolution: Building Communication Theory

In this closing section of the dissertation, I want to bring the discussion back to the discipline of communication, through a final look at framing and the uses of Facebook and other technologies during Tunisia's Arab Spring. To begin, I want to return to the flawed notion of Facebook or any online technology as the cause or even as a central element of the revolution, as a way to lead into discussion about the place of framing in the discipline of communication. Wael Ghonim, the former engineer at Google who helped lead online organizing work during Egypt's Arab Spring revolution, said, "This is not an internet revolution. It would have happened anyway" (Aday et al.,

2012, p. 7). His unique position as one of the leading online activists of an Arab Spring revolution gives exceptional weight to the potency of his rejection of this inaccurate heuristic of an internet revolution. When he says that the revolution would have happened anyway, I read this as an allusion to the critical mass of explosive grievances against the region's authoritarian regimes and as an allusion to the existing network, however tenuous, of opposition and civil-society actors who were ready to handle the organizing responsibilities of large-scale protests. On the topic of organizational capabilities, I want to cite my interview with Lina Ben Mhenni, who was one of the best-known online activists during Tunisia's revolution. Despite her established place in the firmament of online personalities, she said:

> Let me say that I can't talk about a Facebook or internet revolution. Internet or Facebook is just a tool. It depends on how we use it. We saw what happened in Syria or in Iran even before, in 2009. … The outcome of an internet revolution can't really lead to the departure of a dictator. We need the work on the ground.

In scholarly terms, Salvatore's (2013) research on the years of collective organizing work by formal and informal civil-society groups in the region "contributes to dissolving the myth" that the revolution began or depended on social media (p. 225). He writes:

> … the networks that mattered most in the revolutionary events were not social networks like Facebook or Twitter. They were rather universities, mosques, trade unions, and, not least, football ultras, which had been active on the street since after the first eruptions and fought valiantly and effectively with security forces (p. 224).

In this dissertation, I have presented a preponderance of evidence about both the depth of the entrenched grievances against the Ben Ali regime and the years of organizing practiced by the interviewees and their networks of fellow activists. I chose to dedicate a significant part of the dissertation to the political conditions in Tunisia in the decades before the revolution, in order to emphasize the importance of these factors as explanations of the causes and course of the revolution.

As I move in this section to discuss communication, I am bringing up considerations of politics and history as a crucial part of improving scholarship on

communication. In this dissertation, I am working to demonstrate how framing is always situated in a specific place with its own unique context. Scholars will damage the validity of their work—and the credibility of the discipline—if they approach framing solely from a communication perspective and if they ignore the history and politics of the episode that they examine. When scholars do not know the history and context of the circumstances they analyze, they can too easily fall into inaccurate conclusions about causes or determinants. To be sure, scholars cannot write only about places where they have lived or about places where they speak a local language. But when scholars write about places where they do not have lived experience or cannot speak the language, they could instead write articles with multiple authors, to let an area specialist, historian, or political scientist vet the assumptions and assertions of the scholarship. At the very least, communication scholars should cross disciplinary boundaries and let their work be confronted by scholars in the above disciplines for critical vetting. This is a polite way of saying, without singling out any specific work, that I saw much work on the Arab Spring by communication scholars who did not have lived experience of the region and/or knowledge of the region's languages, and their work was often easily refuted by scholars who specialized in the region. I believe that this lack of knowledge explains much of the overheated rhetoric about Facebook and social media. That rhetoric not only harms scholarship, but it also ignores the lived experiences of the people whose lives are being examined. Bullet Skan, the co-founder of the online collective Takriz, poignantly expressed the danger of such a myopic focus on communication technology:

> What I mean by saying Facebook was a tool is [that] people—and especially foreign people, and not, not interested in Tunisian politics from long ago—they

> tend to call the revolution or what happened as a Facebook revolution, or digital revolution, or something like that. And I think that that's the worst thing that we could say, because, if we say this, we are not grateful to the people who gave their lives and who suffered and who died in the streets, and people shot with real bullets, et cetera. We can maybe say that the contribution of Facebook was more important than other sites or ways or tools, but we cannot say it was only about Facebook.

Having explained the importance of political and historical factors in Tunisia's revolution, I want to discuss how my work contributes to the study of framing. My interrogation of framing not only builds theory in the field of framing, but my focus on process and on framing itself contribute to the field. In chapter 3, I built framing theory through defining the concept of the alternative narrative. Though I built theory in other areas of framing, the concept of the alternative narrative, in my view, marks a significant contribution to understanding how social-movement actors used communication technologies during the Arab Spring, because many accounts of technology usage fail to encapsulate this important process. For example, Castells (2012) writes that internet-enabled, wireless communication networks represented "decisive tools for mobilizing, for organizing, for deliberating, for coordinating, and for deciding" (p. 229). Regardless of the debates about how decisive these tools were or about the importance of various organizing methods, it is striking that even such a renowned scholar as Castells, who has studied these technologies since their usage became widespread, does not have any terminology to encompass the framing processes for which the revolutionaries clearly used these technologies. The concept of alternative narrative fills this gap in the

scholarship. In my discussion of social-movement theory, I noted how this dissertation answers the calls of Snow and Benford (2005) and Ryan (2005) to interrogate the framing process instead of individual frames. In the discipline of communication, Borah (2011) and Carragee and Roefs (2004) have also called for scholars to conduct interviews with social-movement actors, in order to add to the relative paucity of knowledge in the discipline about the framing process. My focus on the framing process not only helps fill this knowledge gap across disciplines, but my elucidation of the alternative narrative represents a conceptual category on which scholars from multiple disciplines can base further study of the framing processes and build new theory about framing and communication more broadly.

I mentioned that my dissertation answers identical calls from scholars across disciplines, because I want to emphasize how framing offers a research program that brings multiple disciplines together, as Entman (1993) and Reese (2007) have noted. Reese (2007) writes, "If the most interesting happens at the edges of disciplines—and in the center of policy debates—then framing certainly has the potential to bring disciplinary perspectives together in interesting ways" (p. 148). The opening paragraph of this concluding chapter articulates not only an answer to the research question animating this dissertation, but it also constructs the parameters for a space where the disciplines of communication, political science, revolution studies, and science and technology studies overlap during the framing process. Throughout the previous three chapters, I have repeatedly articulated where the framing process marks out the terrain common across disciplines. This overlap creates opportunities for building theory useful across disciplines and for opening new communication among scholars from these disciplines,

whose scholarship could benefit from cross-pollination with relevant knowledge from other disciplines. In addition, my dissertation answers Reese's (2007) call to bring together quantitative and qualitative methodologies and to bring together academic theory-building with recommendations for praxis in the material world. By using framing as the thread around which to weave new theory that binds together scattered theories from multiple disciplines, my dissertation helps cement the standing of communication as a "master discipline" that synthesizes related concepts from across academe, as Entman (1993) calls for. By constructing coherent theory from the disparate uses of framing in multiple disciplines, this dissertation demonstrates how foundational elements of these disciplines are all rooted in the processes of communication.

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APPENDIX A

TIMELINE OF THE ARAB SPRING REVOLUTION IN TUNISIA

2010

December 17: Mohammed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old fruit vendor, sets fire to himself in front of the local government building in Sidi Bouzid, after an official confiscates his scales and government representatives refuse to meet with him to resolve the situation. Bouazizi dies from his injuries on January 4, 2011.

Locals protest throughout the day in Sidi Bouzid. Bouazizi's cousin Ali gives an interview on Al-Jazeera, and that evening he posts to Facebook an edited, 10-minute video of the day's events.

December 24: Police shoot at protesters in the small town of Menzel Bouziane, killing two, as protests begin to spread from the Sidi Bouzid area to other interior towns.

December 25: Demonstrations break out in Kairouan, a holy city in the interior of the country, as well as in Sfax, Tunisia's second-largest city.

December 27: First protest in Tunis takes place, with about 1,000 demonstrators expressing solidarity with Sidi Bouzid and calling for jobs.

December 28: Ben Ali visits Bouazizi in the hospital. Bouazizi is covered entirely in bandages. That evening, Ben Ali makes his first televised speech since the crisis began; he promises firm punishment for demonstrators.

Some 300 lawyers stage a protest near government offices in Tunis; some are arrested.

December 31: Demonstrations are held throughout the country. Lawyers in many major cities respond to a call to join demonstrations in solidarity with Sidi Bouzid and to protest the arrest of their fellow lawyers.

2011

January 3: Protests turn violent in Thala, as police use rubber bullets and tear gas against demonstrators.

January 4: Tunisian Bar Association calls for a general strike of lawyers. The Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) declares its support for the demonstrations.

Bouazizi dies.

January 8: Police violently crack down on demonstrations, using live bullets in Thala and Kasserine and killing at least 10 protesters. In the ensuing days, there are reports of snipers killing more during funerals and during other demonstrations.

January 9: Ben Ali gives his second speech, declaring that he will bring the unrest to an end by any means necessary.

January 10: Protests begin in poorer, outlying areas of Tunis.

January 11: Protests in Tunis spread.

January 12: Ben Ali deploys the army into the streets of Tunis and elsewhere; he orders soldiers to use force to put down the protests. Army Chief of Staff Rachid Ammar refuses to comply with the order.

Demonstrators and police clash in downtown Tunis.

January 13: Ben Ali fires Ammar and places him under house arrest.

Ben Ali gives his third and final speech during the rebellion. He promises reforms, such as opening all Internet connections and refusing to run for another term. Ben Ali supporters demonstrate in downtown Tunis.

January 14: Massive demonstrations take place in the center of Tunis, in front of the Interior Ministry. There are clashes between protesters and police, and Ben Ali declares a state of emergency and sacks the government.

Ben Ali flees Tunisia. He remains in Saudi Arabia to this day.

(Sources: Ayeb, 2011; Brooks, 2013; Lim, 2013; dissertation interviews)

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1: Media Use

A. Internet

1. Did you use any social media sites? If so, which ones, and how much time did you spend with them?

2. Did you use any blogs? If so, which ones, and how much time did you spend with them?

3. Did you use any news websites? If so, which ones, and how much time did you spend with them?

4. Did you use any other websites relevant to the revolution? If so, which ones, and how much time did you spend with them?

5. Did what you saw in this medium fit with your understanding of the situation?
If yes, how so? If not, why not?

6. Did it fit your beliefs, values, interests, ideology?

B. TV

7. Which channels did you watch? How much time did you spend with each?

8. Did what you saw in this medium fit with your understanding of the situation?
If yes, how so? If not, why not?

9. Did it fit your beliefs, values, interests, ideology?

C. Phone

10. How did you use your phone during the revolution? How much calling, how much texting?

11. What did you use it for, and how much did you use it for these purposes? To exchange news? To persuade? To encourage? To receive encouragement? To communicate fears?

12. Did what you encountered in this medium fit with your understanding of the situation?
If yes, how so? If not, why not?

13. Did it fit your beliefs, values, interests, ideology?

D. Other media (radio, newspapers)

14. Which radio stations/newspapers/magazines did you use? How much time did you spend with them?

15. Did what you saw in this medium fit with your understanding of the situation? If yes, how so? If not, why not?

16. Did it fit your beliefs, values, interests, ideology?

Section 2: Organizer/Participant

For organizers:

17. In your uses of media, what impressions were you trying to convey? About the regime? About the opposition?

18. How did you try to create those impressions?

19. Did you use different approaches for different media? If so, what were they? Why did you vary them for different media?

20. How did you try to attract newcomers to your group or to the revolution?

21. Why did you become an organizer? Follow-up: What were the influences that led you to become an organizer? Why did you decide when you did?

For participants:

17. How did you find out about the first demonstration that you attended during the revolution? Was it through (check as many as apply):

___ Radio or television
___ Newspapers (print or online)
___ Other online media
___ Online social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)
___ Advertisement, flyers, and/or posters
___ Partner and/or family member
___ Friends and/or acquaintances
___ People at your school or work
___ (Fellow) members of an organization or association
___ Other (please describe: _____)

How did you find out about later demonstrations or events to attend during the revolution? With whom did you attend demonstrations and similar events?

18. Why did you choose to actively participate in the revolution? Follow-up: When did you decide? Why did you decide when you did?

19. Was that at all shaped by what you saw in the media? If yes, how so?

20. How did you attempt to construct through (individual medium) a frame for others, a way for others to see the situation?

21. Did you use different approaches for different media or different people? If so, what were the approaches? Why did you vary them?

Section 3: Revolutionary identity

22. Were you a member of any groups that played a role in the revolution? If so, why did you join? (How did it relate to your grievances?)

23. To what extent did you identify with the people present at the demonstrations you attended? With the groups organizing the demonstrations?

24. How did it make you feel to be a member of that group? (Did it give you any feeling of empowerment or agency?) Did the regime label you as an enemy during the revolution? If so, how did that make you feel?

Section 4: Revolutionary ideology/cultural framework/resonance

25. What did you think about your chances for success?

26. Whom did you blame for the issues that led to the revolution? What did you think should be done to address this issue?

27. How did you view the Ben Ali regime? Unjust? Weak? Why?

Section 5: Demographic Information

Are you male or female?

How old are you?

What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

Would you describe yourself as belonging to the upper class, upper-middle class, middle class, working class, lower class, or none of the above?

What is your employment situation?

What is your occupation?

Do you supervise the work of others? If so, how many?

Did you vote in the last election?

For which party did you vote?

Generally speaking, how interested are you in politics?