Analyzing ethnographic interviews: Three studies on terrorism and nonviolent resistance.

This article describes three analyses of ethnographic interviews conducted with violent and nonviolent political activists. The findings show that the deliberations of violent and nonviolent activists focus on state violence and rational choice calculations (Studies I and II), while nonviolent activists moreover consider other factors, including state negligence and self-sacrifice (Study II), and choose individual over collective resistance in a highly repressive setting (Study III). By revealing how violent and nonviolent activists reason about their behavior, the findings complement statistical analyses of datasets on external factors, such as economic conditions, political institutions, social networks, or political events. Such datasets are typically readily available or can be constructed from publicly available data, while interview transcripts are more time consuming to assemble. Furthermore, replicable quantitative methods are not straightforwardly applied to qualitative interviews. This article instead applies Spradley's ethnographic analysis (Study I) and Corbin's and Strauss's grounded theory (Studies II and III) to examine interview transcripts. Besides the substantive findings, the analyses make a methodological contribution to qualitative studies of interviews by systematically identifying each factor addressed by an interview.

Introduction

This article uses ethnographic interviews to extend our understanding of the psychology underlying terrorism and nonviolent resistance. It describes three studies of ethnographic interviews with violent and nonviolent political activists. The article also makes a

methodological contribution by providing a detailed description of qualitative coding procedures to examine ethnographic interview transcripts in a systematic and transparent manner.

Since Spradley's famous publication *The Ethnographic Interview* (cited more than 15,000 times), few analyses by political scientists have worked with ethnographic interviews. One issue is the difficulty of conducting ethnographic interviews: Organizing ethnographic interviews typically requires field research, knowledge of foreign languages and cultures, and access to interviewees, all of which can be difficult and time-consuming to establish. Even after ethnographic interviews have been conducted successfully, the difficulty of analyzing them remains: Interview transcripts are complex, and there is no particular method that is usually applied to analyze them in an organized manner.

Another issue is that ethnographic interviews rarely appear in studies of political behavior due to problems of generalizability. In contrast to quantitative datasets and survey research, ethnographic interviews are obtained from a comparatively small number of people. Therefore, one cannot determine whether behavioral patterns are idiosyncratic to the sample or apply in different settings or over longer periods of time. Consequently, ethnographic interviews should not be seen as a substitute for other datasets (see Weeden, 2010), but rather as a complement to existing datasets with information that is not available otherwise.

Ethnographic interviews are speech events resembling friendly conversations (Spradley, 1979: 55). They contribute micro-level knowledge about the psychology underlying political behavior, adding to external factors, such as economic conditions, political institutions, social networks, or political events. Ethnographic interviews also contribute to survey questions, which prime the respondents for particular factors and

provide limited space to elaborate. They are unobtrusive and deliberately avoid priming, allowing interviewees to discuss any factor they consider relevant to their behavior (ibid.).

The following interview studies help to understand how individuals respond to external conditions, which have typically been studied quantitatively. Examples include economic conditions (Krueger and Maleckova, 2003; Li and Schaub, 2004), political institutions (Gupta, Singh and Sprague 1993; Eubank and Weinberg 2001), network ties (Klausen 2015; Reynolds and Hafez, 2017), or political events (Schrodt and Gerner, 2004; Davenport and Zeitzoff, 2011). The three studies presented here add to this literature by conducting a qualitative analysis of ethnographic interviews with violent (Study I) and nonviolent political activists (Study II), as well as individuals who do not participate in collective action, despite their grievances (Study III).

Study I shows that violent activists reason about their behavior by focusing on state violence as well as rational choice calculations (strength of the state versus resistance, priority of political over private goals, necessity for violence, and public support for violence). Study II shows that nonviolent activists also consider state violence and rational choice calculations (strength of the people versus capability of head of state), as well as other factors including state negligence and self-sacrifice. Study III shows that non-participants in violent and nonviolent activism living in a highly repressive setting choose individual effort over organized forms of resistance. By contrast, quantitative studies based on survey data (e.g., Fajmonová, Moskalenko, and McCauley, 2017; Mironova, Mrie and Whitt, 2014) are not able to identify the types of reasoning identified in the studies reported here.

The following interview studies also add to qualitative analyses, which have applied 'in-depth interviews,' 'semi-structured interviews' or simply 'interviews' (e.g. Stern, 2003;

Gunning, 2004; Drevon 2015; Atran, 2010). Most of these analyses do not specify a qualitative method to systematically examine interview transcripts and emphasize particular themes (such as pragmatism, social environment, or religious beliefs) without specifying how these themes were identified from interview transcripts. This creates a lack of transparency, which also prevents systematic comparisons across interview studies. The studies carried out by the author and described here apply well-known qualitative methods – Spradley's ethnographic analysis (1979) and Corbin's and Strauss's grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) – to systematically examine interview transcripts, line by line. Each sentence contained in an interview is coded for the factors considered by the interviewees when talking about their behavior. The resulting coding schemes provide systematic overviews of the individuals' deliberations, which specify the existing literature. To isolate key factors contained by the coding schemes, the studies apply comparative research designs (Studies I and II), and a modification of Corbin's and Strauss's coding procedures (Study III).

The following section describes the findings and methods of existing qualitative studies of interviews on terrorism. The subsequent sections introduce the ethnographic interview and discuss the three aforementioned studies.

Studies of interviews on terrorism

Findings: Religion, rational choice, and social bonds

Various studies have applied interviews to study terrorism (see Appendix 1 for ten example studies, outlining their scale, methodology, and main conclusions). One of the most well-known works is Juergensmeyer's *Terror in the Mind of God*, which applies 'interviews' to

conduct 'case studies of religious activists who have used violence or justify its use' (2003: 13). Juergensmeyer's major conclusion is that 'at least in some cases, religion does make a difference' (13). Specifically: 'in many of these cases, religion has supplied not only the ideology but also the motivation and the organizational structure of the perpetrators' (7). A related conclusion is reached by Stern's *Terror in the Name of God* (2003). Based on interviews with terrorists from different religions, Stern examines the question 'why religious militants kill.' Her findings identify ways of 'using religion as both motivation and justification' (book cover).

Stern's and Juergensmeyer's interviews complement quantitative analyses that examine the relationship between religion and terrorism based on aggregate datasets about Islamic societies and civilizations. On the one hand, the insight from their interviews complements findings at the societal level, which suggest that Islamic societies are not more violent prone than others (Fish, Jensenius and Michel, 2010). Stern and Juergensmeyer add that, at the level of the individual, religion can be perceived as an important motivator of violence, and specify how individuals justify terrorism through religion. On the other hand, their findings confirm results from studies at the global level that suggest that 'the proportion of civilizational conflicts involving Western groups that are with Islamic groups increased dramatically' (Fox, 2001, see Toft, 2007 for a related argument). Stern's and Juergensmeyer's interviews enhance understanding about how religion can contribute to civilizational conflicts played out by individuals.

Other studies of interviews highlight the role of rational choice considerations. In a study of Hamas, Gunning analyzes 'eight years of research including a nine-month period of fieldwork in Gaza' (2004: 236). He writes: 'Hamas's decision-making … encourages

pragmatism' and displays 'increasing reliance on consequentialist, even utilitarian, logic' (245). Similar conclusions are reached from interviews with Egyptians who participated in violent groups (see Ashour, 2007, Drevon, 2015, and Ibrahim, 1988). Gunning's work provides an important counter-perspective to Stern and Juergensmeyer by showing that religious actors may follow logic and rational considerations that are more accurately characterized as pragmatism than religious zeal. This finding confirms expectations from the quantitative literature on rational choice (Berman and Laitin, 2008; also see Pape, 2006). Countering criticism that theoretical models applied by this literature often fail to capture how real world actors think (Kahneman, 2011), Gunning shows that real actors indeed follow rules of rational choice when reasoning about political violence.

Other researchers emphasize the role of the social environment. Atran, who has also spoken with individuals affiliated with Hamas, as well as al-Qaeda, and the Taliban, concludes that terrorists 'are social beings, influenced by social connections and values familiar to us all, as members of school clubs, sports teams, or community organizations' (2010). Similarly, Post, Sprinzak and Denny (2003), who conducted 35 semi-structured interviews with imprisoned terrorists from Islamic groups including Hamas, Islamic jihad, Hezbollah, and secular groups, conclude that the social environment is key to understand the individuals' involvement in violence. Related findings are obtained from studies of Northern Ireland. Ferguson, Burgess, and Hollywood (2008) conducted face-to-face interviews with paramilitaries and former paramilitaries and conclude that 'living in a community supportive of the use of political violence and having access to armed groups that welcomed their membership' was key (2008: 136). Todd et al. apply in-depth interviews with individuals from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to examine group identities (2006). Their

study concludes that 'significant identity change is possible but uncommon, it requires incentives and resources, and it is more likely to occur in conflict generating than conflict resolving directions' (2006: 323).

Studies of interviews revealing the importance of individuals' social environment are consistent with a large body of quantitative analyses on network ties (Klausen, 2015; Reynolds and Hafez, 2017). They add invaluable knowledge about how individuals may develop social bonds with violent groups and networks. Such knowledge is typically not available from aggregate datasets obtained from Twitter, Facebook or other networks. Interviews also add important information about why individuals may choose violent groups over other groups, and vice versa. This sheds light on the question of why so many individuals who are in touch with radical groups never engage in violence.

Methods

The interviews within the broader mentioned literature offer rich insight about terrorism. However, most of these studies do not explicitly adopt or state a method to examine interview transcripts; and some appear to imply that interviews are a method by themselves. Moreover, their conclusions vary widely, and due to the absence of a standard method, it is difficult to compare them.

Juergensmeyer's analysis, for instance, proceeds by providing detailed biographies (e.g. 20-24) followed by descriptions of what he calls theological justification (e.g. 24-30). This analysis takes a deductive approach by focusing *a priori* on religious cues, rather than adopting a method to systematically explore the individuals' direct speech for alternative themes. Similarly, Stern develops a handful of broader categories of 'grievances that give

rise to holy war,' which are presented chapter by chapter. In these chapters, she describes biographies of particular individuals or groups, accompanied by selected quotes that introduce her categories, specifically alienation, humiliation, demographics, history, and territory.

Gunning applies theoretical frameworks and models provided by other researchers – particularly Ross and Gurr, Crenshaw, and Zahar –, and then uses his interviews to underline key arguments that are in line with these models (236-240). Like Juergensmeyer and Stern, this deductive approach runs the risk of omitting relevant excerpts from the interviews that could have suggested alternative explanations, or even contradicted these existing theories.

Post, Denny and Sprinzak (2003) focus their interview analysis on broad categories, including 'background,' such as individuals' role models and education, family activism and involvement in individuals' groups, and social environment of the youth (2003: 172-173). Occasionally, they state what percentage of the interviewees fall into certain categories. Excerpts from interviews are used to illustrate major conclusions: 'But it was clear that the major influence was the social environment of the youth. As one terrorist remarked: 'Everyone was joining.'' (2003: 173) It is not explained by what procedure the categories were created from the interview analysis.

Ferguson, Burgess, and Hollywood provide an analysis that explicitly adopts a method – interpretive phenomenological analysis –, described as 'attempt[ing] to gain an insider's perspective' (2008: 133). Their analysis developed a coding scheme and identified 'themes that were repeated across individuals' as opposed to 'specific to individuals.' They proceed by presenting quotes from 'a subset of themes that most directly address participants' interpretation of how they became involved in paramilitary violence' (ibid.). As

above, the exact procedure by which they determined that this subset was more important than other themes is not specified.

Todd et al. (2006) also explicitly describe their analysis. They state that they focus on 'types of [identity] changes' and then proceed by introducing broad categories, such as 'situational variation and hybridity', 'fluidity' and 'content change', which are discussed at length and illustrated by interview excerpts, before moving to an analysis of narratives, including 'moral-political' versus 'personal' narratives. Nevertheless, it is unclear how their categories are derived from the textual analysis of their interview transcripts.

All of the above studies have made a significant contribution to our understanding of terrorism and nonviolent resistance. The in-depth nature of the interviews provides insights that cruder statistical measures cannot obtain. In spite of their contribution, however, there is a lack of clarity about the specific methods applied to analyze interview transcripts. This misses an opportunity to make the study of interviews more transparent. In the following section, I present methods developed by Spradley (1979), and Corbin and Strauss (1990) to systematically examine interview transcripts.

Before turning to a detailed description of the three studies, I briefly outline the data collection strategy common to all three studies, namely the ethnographic interview.

Ethnographic interviews

Spradley defines ethnographic interviews as 'a particular kind of *speech event*' (1979: 55, italics in original) resembling 'casual, friendly conversations' (Spradley, 1979: Appendix B). Ethnographic interviews are based on a 'rapport' between the interviewer and interviewee (ibid.). Interviewers take a passive role, expressing interest in their interviewee's insights and

listening to the interviewee rather than asking a large number of questions (1979: 58). Ethnographic interviews are non-intrusive, involve little distortion, and encourage the interviewee to use the same language they would use in their daily interactions (ibid.).

There are three major types of questions that constitute ethnographic interviews (60) – descriptive questions, cultural questions, and contrast questions. Descriptive questions enable the researcher to elicit accounts of behavior that follow the interviewees' own understanding, for example 'Could you tell me what you do in your office?' (ibid.). Structural questions allow the ethnographer to collect information about how interviewees think about certain subject, for example 'What are the different kinds of fish you have caught on vacation?' (ibid.). Contrast questions enable the interviewer to elicit meaning from the respondents' answers, unpacking different 'dimensions of meaning,' such as 'What's the difference between a bass and a northern pike?' (ibid., italics in original).

The following three studies applied various introductory questions. Study I investigated motivations related to terrorism and involved interviews with violent political activists. In this context, interviews often began with the question: 'Could you tell me about yourself?' Study II focused on motivations related to nonviolent activism and involved interviews with nonviolent activists instead. Interviews often began by asking: 'Could you tell me how you got involved in political activism?' Study III focused on individuals in a highly repressive setting who refrained from participating in political activism. They often began with the question: 'Could you describe what a typical day in your life looks like?' (Study III). In contrast, survey questions are much narrower and prime respondents. An item included by a Pew Research Center survey about Boko Haram, for example, asked respondents whether laws should 'strictly follow the Quran,' 'follow the values and

principles of the Quran,' or 'not be influenced by the Quran' (Pew Research Centre, 2013). Semi-structured or in-depth interviews are typically more open, but still prime interviewees for particular factors. A semi-structured interview with a violent activist, for example, could contain an introductory question asking 'What role did religion play as you were growing up?'

Ethnographic questions give interviewees the opportunity to describe their behavior in their own terms, addressing any factors they consider to be relevant, rather than factors considered relevant by the researcher. Depending on the interviewees' answer, the ethnographer then poses additional descriptive questions, as well as structural and contrast questions to collect further information. For example, if individuals respond to an introductory question by talking about the neighborhood they grew up in, a follow up question could be 'Could you tell me more about this neighborhood?' (descriptive question) or 'What kind of people lived in this neighborhood?' (structural question). Nevertheless, large parts of ethnographic interviews do not focus on ethnographic questions. Often ethnographers simply nod, or repeat certain words, encouraging the interviewee to further elaborate on their thoughts.

Three studies of ethnographic interview transcripts

Over the past ten years, I conducted three research projects that applied ethnographic interviews to construct data about terrorism and nonviolent resistance. The first project investigated why some individuals take up arms as opposed to others that engage in nonviolent activism (Study I). The second project investigated why some individuals participated in the Arab Spring protests, whereas others stayed at home (Study II). The third

project investigated how individuals living under conditions that are known to be related to political activism – specifically economic grievances and political oppression – cope with their grievances without engaging in collective resistance (Study III). In total, I conducted more than 200 ethnographic interviews in Germany (Study I), Egypt (Studies I and II), Morocco (Study II), and Palestine (Study III). Interviews were conducted in the native language of the interviewees, that is, Arabic, German, and French. Appendix 2 provides a list of all interviewees.

To analyze the interviews, I applied qualitative methods - ethnographic analysis (project on terrorism) and grounded theory (projects on the Arab Spring and political resistance in Palestine). Both methods enable researchers to analyze interview transcripts in a way that uncovers answers to the research puzzle 'as conceptualized by informants' (Spradley: 95). This adds in-depth knowledge that cannot be obtained from concepts imposed by the researcher. Both methods outline specific procedures for a systematic analysis of interview transcripts. This establishes analytical rigor by providing explicit standards for the analysis, which makes it transparent and more easily comparable with other analyses.[1]

Study I. Ethnographic analysis: themes, domains, taxonomies, and contrasts

To analyze ethnographic interviews, Spradley introduces various types of analyses, including theme analysis, domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, and componential analysis. Domain analysis relates to a search for larger units of the interviewee's knowledge (107-120). Theme

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[1] The interview transcripts for Studies I and III were coded by a single individual. A random sample of the interview transcripts for Study II, translated into English, was also coded by a second individual. Out of 86 categories (approximately one half of all categories), 73 categories (85%) were coded the same by both. To reduce biases, all studies applied 'in vivo' codes that preserve the direct speech of the interviewee (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 69).

analysis addresses a search for the larger themes addressed by domains (185-204). Taxonomic analysis searches the internal structure of domains by identifying similarities (132-155). Componential analysis identifies contrasts inside certain domains (173-185).

The first study applied these methods to analyze approximately 80 ethnographic interviews with 27 individuals who had engaged in violent versus nonviolent activism in Egypt and Germany. It created a coding scheme consisting of six themes, fifteen domains, and more than one hundred categories specifying contrasts and similarities between quotes. Table 1 provides an overview of themes and domains. The following paragraphs describe the construction of the coding scheme.

Table 1.

In the first step of the analysis, each sentence was broken down into components addressing particular factors mentioned by interviewees when talking about their behavior. The following quote was broken into five components:

C1 Violence is generally prohibited

C2 But in our times it sometimes becomes necessary

C3 This is the fault of the United States of America

C4 They have lied to us

C5 This encourages al-Qaeda

The first component addresses a rejection of violence. The second component introduces an exception to this rejection. The third component provides a reason for the exception. The fourth component specifies the reason. The final component addresses support for a particular violent group.

In the second part of the analysis, components were compared and grouped into categories. Following rules of taxonomic and componential analysis, categories were created based on similarities (taxonomic analysis) and differences (componential analysis). For example, C6 'Sadat arrested the brother of Khalid Islambouli' was grouped together with C7 'The police arrested thousands of political activists.' By contrast, the quote 'Sadat arrested the brother of Khalid Islambouli' was contrasted with C8 'Sadat had given us freedom.'

In this part of the analysis, components that were grouped together were also assigned names. Similar components were assigned the same name, for example C6 and C7 were given the name 'aggression by home state', whereas contrasting components were assigned opposing names, for example C8 was grouped in a category 'absence of aggression of home state.' To preserve the individuals' descriptions, names reflect the individuals' direct speech as closely as possible. Strauss and Corbin, whose methods were applied in Study II, call these 'in vivo' names (1990: 69). Appendix 3 provides examples for each component identified in the analysis.

In the third part of the analysis, domains were compared with each other and grouped according to similarities, following the logic of theme analysis. For example, the domains 'home state environment' and 'system of states' were grouped together as a larger theme entitled 'state environment.' In total, the analysis identified six themes and fifteen related domains (see Table 1).

The coding identifies numerous categories that speak to research findings on terrorism discussed above. Table 2 provides an overview. In line with other findings from interview analyses, the scheme also identifies numerous categories related to pragmatic decision-making. Specifically, it contains four themes that indicate pragmatic reasoning about terrorism: means, goals, consequences and state environment. As mentioned, interviewees were not primed for particular factors and interview transcripts represent their reasoning about terrorism in response to open questions. Consequently, categories that indicate pragmatic thought about engagement in terrorism offer an especially convincing confirmation of related research findings.

Nevertheless, the coding scheme identifies numerous categories addressing other factors. Five categories address the role of religion, particularly a belief that God is almighty and humans must obey him, as well as two beliefs about whether the state is run by a religious authority, and a belief that Muslims around the world are disunited. This shows that even when being asked open questions without religious references, individuals considered religion when thinking about engaging in terrorism. This supports research findings on religion discussed above.

In addition, several categories address interactions with individuals who belong to violent groups. These categories confirm findings from interview analyses that conclude that the social environment is key to terrorism. Finally, there are two themes that are not explicitly addressed by the interview findings presented above: state environment and private life. According to the categories identified from the ethnographic analysis, individuals considered state behavior as well as personal issues when deliberating about engaging in terrorism.

Overall, the coding scheme contains a very large numbers of categories. These show that interviews address a large number of factors far beyond a particular research focus on religion, pragmatic decision-making, or social connections. This underlines the importance of analyzing interview transcripts in a systematic way.

Table 2.

Problems arising from Study I

The coding scheme provides important confirmation of findings obtained from other interviews, as well as the quantitative literature. Nevertheless, since it contains so many categories, domains, and themes, it is unclear which factors are crucial to engagement in terrorism. In order to gain insight, a final step of the analysis was introduced, which identified categories that were unique to violent as opposed to nonviolent interviewees.

This step was made possible by the research design of the study, rather than the method adopted to study interview transcripts. The research design compared violent with nonviolent individuals. The purpose of this design was to add insight about differences of behavior that occur in the same environment, which cannot be captured by studies of external factors, but which can be explored in depth by ethnographic interviews.

The comparison revealed that about one third of all categories were unique to violent versus nonviolent individuals. Contrasting categories were used to identify the most striking differences between the two groups (see Table 3). In contrast to what is expected from findings that religion plays a major role in terrorism, the comparison shows that all categories about religion are shared by violent and nonviolent individuals, with the exception of

'disunity of Muslims' and 'God's Might' – categories which are unique to nonviolent, not violent individuals. This raises doubts about the importance of religion when explaining terrorism.

Violent individuals can also be differentiated from nonviolent individuals by lack of acceptance of state aggression, a belief that the state lacks strength, whereas international resistance against states is strong, and that their political goals have absolute priority in their lives. Moreover, only violent individuals believe that violence is necessary and that there is public support for it. Only violent individuals believe that they can achieve their goals by violence and accept its negative consequences. Table 3 provides an overview. Appendix 4 lists the related categories.

Table 3.

Study II. Grounded theory: open and axial coding

Like Spradley's ethnographic analysis, Corbin's and Strauss's grounded theory can be applied to systematically analyze transcripts of ethnographic interviews (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Strauss and Corbin 1990). Although not specifically designed for this purpose, grounded theory provides coding procedures for systematic text analysis: Open coding and axial coding. Study II applied these procedures to analyze ethnographic interviews with 93 participants and non-participants in the Arab Spring in Egypt and Morocco.

Open coding is 'the interpretive process by which data are broken down analytically' (Corbin and Strauss 1990: 423; also see Strauss and Corbin 1990: 61-75). Accordingly, interview transcripts can be broken down into components that are 'compared against others

for similarities and differences.' Excerpts that are 'conceptually similar … are grouped together' (ibid.). They are assigned in vivo codes that reflect the words and phrases used by informants themselves (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 69). Axial coding adds a layer of abstraction similar to Spradley's domains or themes (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 97-115). In axial coding, 'we note patterns in our data in terms of dimensional location of events' and link categories with sub-categories to 'systematically seek the full range of variation of the phenomena under scrutiny' (Corbin and Strauss, 1990: 423; Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 116-143). This allows the researcher to observe that '[u]nder these conditions, actions take this form, whereas under these other conditions, it takes another' (ibid.).

Open coding was applied to break down interview transcripts into components that address factors the interviewees considered related to their behavior. These components consisted of sentences, main clauses, sub-clauses, or words. Components were then grouped according to similar and different factors addressed by their propositional contents. In total, more than 100 factors were identified from hundreds of sentences.

The following is an excerpt from a direct quote by a taxi driver in Egypt: 'Living conditions are very difficult (S1),' he said. 'Petrol prices are rising (S2).' Sentence 1 contains a noun 'living conditions,' which are described as 'difficult.' Sentence 2 specifies 'difficult' by referring to money, specifically rising petrol prices. Based on this, both sentences were coded as 'poor living conditions.' Another example of a direct quote coded as 'poor living conditions' was obtained from an interview with a Moroccan who works in a tourist shop in Marrakech. She said: 'We have very low salaries in Morocco (S1). Last year, my whole district had no electricity (S2).' In this example, sentence 1 describes a condition of poverty

('very low salaries in Morocco'), and sentence 2 describes a condition where districts are cut off from the electricity.

In the next step of the analysis, axial coding was applied to create a typology of factors. The types generalized what was addressed by particular factors, so that broader themes related to mobilization for the Arab Spring became visible. For example, the category 'poor living conditions' was assigned a type 'external conditions.' This type also included other categories called 'freedom,' 'safety,' or 'job availability.' In total, this analysis created fifteen types: state behavior, external conditions, events, actions (by the protestors, the people, and the self), emotions, needs, capabilities of the opposition (protestors and the people), state capabilities, personality of state actors, personality of the people, non-state actors, religion, attitudes toward the state, attitude towards the protestors, and preferences.

As in the previous analysis, a large number of factors were identified from the interviews. To isolate the most important factors, the analysis applied a comparative research design focusing on contrasting categories that were unique to participants and non-participants. Table 4 illustrates the major differences. It shows that participants can be differentiated from non-participants by state violence, state negligence, rational choice calculations where the strength of the people is contrasted to aging rulers, negative personality of the ruler, self-sacrifice, interest in politics, religion, and positive emotions. Appendices 5a and b provide tables listing all of the related categories as well as examples of quotes from which each of these categories was identified. Appendix 3 shows quotes for each factor type created by the analysis.

Table 4.

Study III. Focused open and axial coding

Studies I and II systematically explored any factors addressed by the interviews. While this ensured that no factor was overlooked, it also identified an extraordinarily large numbers of factors. Following a comparative research design, crucial factors were identified based on behavioral differences between interviewees (violent versus nonviolent activism [study I] and participation versus non-participation in protest [study II]). Study III did not apply a comparative research design. Instead, it modified Corbin's and Strauss's coding procedures to identify factors related to the research puzzle. The puzzle explored how people living under conditions known to motivate political resistance - poverty and political oppression (Gurr, 2015) – cope with their grievances without engaging in violent or nonviolent activism. Insight was obtained from 32 ethnographic interviews with Palestinians living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The interview analysis focused on three main themes, which arose from the research puzzle: 1) economic hardship, 2) political oppression, and 3) behavior conducted in response to economic hardship or political oppression. It first explored whether interviewees indeed experienced economic hardship or political oppression in their daily lives; and, if so, what particular experiences they were having. It also investigated if interviewees were in fact not engaging in any collective resistance to confront these experiences; and if not, why and how they were coping with their economic and political grievances instead. This focus differs from typical open coding procedures, where categories are developed in a bottom-up process without imposing major themes that guide the analysis.

The analysis systematically examined interview transcripts, line by line. First, interviews were broken down into sentences. Then each sentence was examined by focusing on its propositional contents, investigating if it addressed economic hardship or political oppression. This analysis identified various quotes referring to particular experiences of economic hardship and political oppression. These were coded as a type of 'grievance.' The names of grievances that emerged are based on direct translation from the interviews, such as 'occupation tax' or 'restricted movement.' Table 5 gives an overview.

Table 5.

The next part of the analysis focused on sentences coded as grievances. It examined if the sentences following directly after addressed behavior related to a particular experience of economic hardship or political oppression. Each sentence following an experience was examined until a sentence introduced a different experience. From this analysis, four types of behavior were identified (Table 6, Appendix 6 provides quotes for each type).

The typology shows that individuals engage in daily resistance, even when they are not mobilizing collectively – specifically, by raising awareness in interactions with other Palestinians or international actors, remaining in Palestine instead of emigrating, protecting their daily conduct of life by avoiding confrontation with the Israelis, and coping with the psychological consequences of their grievances, e.g. by sports. Scott calls this form of resistance, which can be very effective if adopted by a large number of individuals, 'weapons of the weak'(1985).

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Table 6

Conclusion

What motivates individuals to engage in terrorism or nonviolent resistance? Analyzing three sets of ethnographic interviews, this article sheds light on the psychology of violent and nonviolent activists. The interview analysis shows that the deliberations of violent and nonviolent activists focus on state violence and rational choice calculations (Studies I and II), while nonviolent activists consider other factors, including state negligence and self-sacrifice (Study II), and choose individual over collective resistance in a highly repressive setting (Study III).

While an extensive repertoire of approaches to the qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews exists, the precise application of these methods typically remains implicit. The studies presented in this article have applied qualitative methods developed by Spradley (1979), and Corbin and Strauss (1990) to systematically analyze interviews. Applying the methods presented in this article can increase analytical rigor and transparency through its systematic analysis of each sentence in the transcript and the clear explication of the coding strategy. This increases both the comparability and replicability of the analysis. Beyond the substantive findings, these analyses therefore make a methodological contribution to the literature on qualitative interviewing.

The studies contribute new insight into the psychology underlying political behavior, such as terrorism and nonviolent resistance. Studies I and II indicate that data on state violence and rational choice modeling can help to better understand when individuals decide to engage in terrorism or nonviolent resistance. Study III identifies behavior that is not

observable by existing macro-level analyses of nonviolent resistance, underlining the value

of applying ethnographic interviews to better understand differences in collective versus

individual forms of resistance.

Acknowledgements

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Biography

Stephanie Dornschneider is Assistant Professor in the School of Politics and International Relations at University College Dublin. Previously, she was Junior Research Fellow at Durham University and visiting fellow at Stanford University and the University of Oxford. Her research explores political resistance in the Middle East by combining qualitative and computational methods. Her work has appeared with the University of Pennsylvania Press as well as in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, and *Cognitive Science*.

Table 1. Themes and domains identified by the analysis

Theme	Domain
State Environment	Home state environment
	System of states
State Perceptions	Value of state structure
	State power
	Power of state resistance
Goals	Private goals
	Political goals
Means	Availability of means
	Value of means
	Application of means
Consequences of means	Consequences of violence
	Consequences of peaceful means
Private life	Personality
	Private experiences
	Religious beliefs

Table 2. Similarities to other findings obtained from interviews

Key factor identified by existing interview analyses (presented in literature review)	Confirmation from interview transcripts	
Pragmatism	Four themes	Means Goals Consequences of means State perceptions
Religion	Five categories	God's might Obedience to God Unreligious government Religious government Disunity of Muslims
Social environment	Three categories	Support for violence in immediate environment Success of peaceful activity against state Flexible structure of violent group

Table 3. Contrasts between violent and nonviolent individuals

Theme	Contrast between violent and nonviolent individuals
State perception	Violent individuals do not accept state aggression, whereas nonviolent individuals accept state aggression Violent individuals believe states to lack in strength, whereas nonviolent individuals believe that states are strong Violent individuals believe the international resistance against states to be strong, whereas nonviolent individuals believe it is weak
Goals	Violent individuals believe that their political goals have absolute priority in their lives, whereas nonviolent individuals believe that their political goals do not have absolute priority
Means	Violent individuals believe that violence is necessary, whereas nonviolent individuals believe that it is not necessary Violent individuals believe that there is public support for violence, whereas nonviolent individuals believe that the people do not approve of violence
Consequences of means	Violent individuals accept the negative consequences of violence, whereas nonviolent individuals do not accept these consequences Violent individuals believe that violence can achieve their goals, whereas nonviolent individuals believe that nonviolent activism can achieve their goals
State environment, private life	Categories about religion are shared except for Disunity of Muslims (theme: state environment) and God's Might (theme: private life); both categories are unique to nonviolent individuals

Table 4. Contrasts between participants and non-participants in Arab Spring

Type	Contrast between participants and non-participants
State behavior	Participants believe their rulers to be violent or failing to make an effort for their citizens, whereas non-participants believe their rulers to provide protection
Actions by protestors	Participants believe that protestors are sacrificing themselves for the people, whereas non-participants believe that protestors are engaging in violence or crime
Needs	Participants believe there is a need to unite the people for protest, whereas non-participants believe there is no need to protest
Capabilities of the people	Participants believe the people to be strong, whereas non-participants do not believe the people to be strong
Capabilities of the state	Participants believe their rulers to be old, whereas non-participants believe their rulers to be skilled
Personality of state actor	Participants believe their rulers to have negative personality traits, whereas non-participant believe their rulers to have positive personality traits
Personality, self	Participants are interested in politics, whereas non-participants have no interest in politics
Preferences	Participants are willing to sacrifice themselves for the people, whereas non-participants prioritize themselves
Emotion	Participants experience positive emotions, such as courage or solidarity, whereas non-participants experience negative emotions of dissatisfaction
Religion	Participants believe that God is almighty and that there is religious extremism, whereas non-participants have no unique beliefs about religion

Table 5. Typology of Grievances

Grievance	Experience	Quote
Political oppression	Restricted movement	It's very normal to stay at home and feel like in a prison. In my opinion, Bethlehem is just a prison for us. You can't go anywhere.
	Violence in local environment	Israeli soldiers shot a young man yesterday.
	Hit by bullets	I was hit by bullets nine times.
	Loss of friend/relative through violence	My friend was shot into his heart by a rubber bullet. He died instantly.
	Imprisonment by soldiers	Israeli soldiers came to our house and took me to prison.
	Loss of private land	My family has twelve dunum of land, but the occupation took it away from us, and then a court ruled that it is their land.
	Limited freedom of thought	What I hate most is that I have to think about the occupation. It prevents my brain from thinking about something else.
Economic hardship	Occupation tax	The money they are collecting is not for representation or services. It is collected to make East Jerusalem poor. And because of this, many Palestinians are saying we are not paying taxes for water or electricity. We are paying the occupation tax.
	Economic dependency	We can only buy Israeli products in our shops.
	Unemployment	Unemployment is very high.
	Insufficient income	Life here is extremely difficult. I am trying to live off this salon, but life here is extremely expensive.

Table 6. Typology of every-day resistance

	Resistance
1	Raising awareness (international actors, other Palestinians, self)
2	Staying in Palestine instead of emigrating
3	Protecting daily conduct of life (e.g. avoiding confrontation with Israeli soldiers)
4	Coping with psychological consequences of grievances (e.g. yoga, gym, running)