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Learning Solidarity: Activist pedagogies and transnational knowledge production in Cuban and Iranian diasporic democracy movements

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McKibben, Susan Elizabeth

Publication Date
2014

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation
Learning Solidarity:
Activist pedagogies and transnational knowledge production
in Cuban and Iranian diasporic democracy movements

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Education

by

Susan Elizabeth McKibben

2014
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Learning Solidarity:
Activist pedagogies and transnational knowledge production
in Cuban and Iranian diasporic democracy movements

by

Susan Elizabeth McKibben
Doctor of Philosophy in Education
University of California, Los Angeles, 2014
Professor Carlos Alberto Torres, Chair

This study critically examines the digital knowledge production of one Iranian and one Cuban diasporic social movement organization in transnational solidarity with democracy movements in Iran and Cuba respectively, with an eye to the (geo)politics of transnational knowledge production. Each organization’s diagnostic and prognostic collective action frames are analyzed as sites of knowledge co-constructed by diasporic social movement actors with counterparts in the homeland country. I use qualitative content analysis of internet and social media texts (including websites, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter) to identify each organization’s diagnostic and prognostic frames, as well as whether and how knowledge produced by homeland activists is deployed to construct these frames. Interviews with organization members elicit these activists’ understanding of their role(s) as solidarity activists and their perceptions of the appropriate relationship between a solidarity movement in diaspora and the homeland movement(s) it endeavors
to support. The effects of geopolitical power relations between homeland (Iranian/Cuban) and U.S.-based diaspora activists on the frames were analyzed using Kaplan and Grewal’s Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies approach, which centers the (geo)politics of knowledge inherent in the relationship between homeland and diaspora activists.

Based on the knowledge production practices observed in the case study organizations, I reframe the structure of transnational technologically-connected social movement networks as learning networks in which social movement actors learn, produce knowledge, and teach. I offer the term “activist pedagogies” to describe how social movement actors engage in these processes based on their self-perceived role in the social movement network(s) in which they are embedded, a role derived from their goals, audience, geopolitical context, and relationship to the movement with which they are in solidarity. I then propose a typology of four activist pedagogies, including how such pedagogies may be used to enact (or not) truly liberatory and critical teaching, learning, and knowledge production in transnational social movements.
The dissertation of Susan Elizabeth McKibben is approved.

 Douglas M. Kellner

 Val D. Rust

 Nayereh E. Tohidi

 Carlos A. Torres, Committee Chair

 University of California, Los Angeles

 2014
DEDICATIONS

I am most grateful to my family—Sally McKibben (of blessed memory), John McKibben, and Emily McKibben—who have been my most stalwart and vocal encouragers throughout this process.

I am grateful to the activists whom I interviewed for this study, for their willingness to share their time, their work, and their trust with me.

I am grateful to the members of my committee—Carlos Torres, Doug Kellner, Val Rust, and Nayereh Tohidi—for nurturing me as a scholar, providing valuable guidance in the development of my project, and advising me throughout my research and writing.

I am grateful to many friends for their thoughtful feedback on my writing, especially Erin Brown, Ines Sachetti, Amy Pojar, Liz Redman, Christine Malsbury, Netta Avineri, Mollie Applegate, Adriana Arcia, Adriana Baranello, Imge Ackakaya, and Linzi Juliano.

I am deeply grateful to Tanya Brown and company for sage advice and much-needed cheerleading through the long process of completing a dissertation.

I am grateful to Sara Zare, Daniel Dominguez Vallas, Michael Sukop, and the Arcia family for vital logistical help (and Sunday dinners) during the research process.

Finally, I am tremendously grateful to everyone who took such good care of my daughter while I wrote: John McKibben, Marcia Fletcher, Emily McKibben, Greg Morgan, Janet Ogilby, and Renee and Aubrey. It is literally true that I could not have done this without you.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research for this dissertation, as well as my final year of writing, were funded, in part, by the Graduate Division of the University of California, Los Angeles.
VITA

1998
B.A., Literature
University of California, Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz, California

1999-2006
Willmore Urban Agency
Long Beach, CA.

2006–2007
Research Associate
Center for International and Development Education
University of California, Los Angeles

2007
M.A., Education
University of California, Los Angeles
Los Angeles, California

2007-2008
Kindergarten teacher
American International School System
Lahore, Pakistan

2009-2012
Research Assistant
Center for the Study of Women
University of California, Los Angeles

2011-2012
Graduate Research Mentorship Award
Graduate Division
University of California, Los Angeles

2012-2013
Dissertation Year Fellowship
Graduate Division
University of California, Los Angeles

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS


McKibben, S. (February 2010). “Face to face and street to street: An exploration of the benefits and perils of transnational feminist practices for Iran’s One Million Signatures Campaign.” Paper
presented at Thinking Gender, the UCLA Conference of Graduate Student Research on Gender, February 5, 2010 in Los Angeles, CA.

McKibben, S. (February, 2009). “Make your move: what we know and what we need to know about gender and group identity for adolescent girls’ gender activism.” Paper presented at Thinking Gender, the UCLA Conference of Graduate Student Research on Gender, February 6, 2009 in Los Angeles, CA.

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Transnational social movements now constitute a substantial area of focus for social movement theorists across the social sciences, including political science, women’s studies, and sociology. Much of this research, however, is focused on industrialized countries of the West and Global North (Poulson, 2006), and looks specifically at global concerns such as environmental degradation or neo-liberal economic globalization. Additionally, there is less material on the role of immigrant or diaspora populations in the social movements of their countries of origin. This may be the case because of a prior disciplinary emphasis within sociology on formal politics affecting immigrant political transnationalism, or because much of this research has been conducted in Latin America since the demise of dictatorships in the region. In any event, the relationship between diaspora activists in solidarity movements is understudied, as is the specific positioning of knowledge—and whose knowledge—in these movements. My study draws on Kaplan and Grewal’s theoretical framework of Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies to explore the power relationships in transnational social movement knowledge production. Specifically, I ask how members of political solidarity movements in diaspora incorporate, adapt, amplify, and perhaps subvert knowledge produced by their activist counterparts in their countries of origin.

In this study I draw on the theoretical study of transnational knowledge production in social movements by examining two cases of diasporic solidarity movements. I examine the ways in which

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1 I am defining transnational movements as those that span national borders, taking place simultaneously in two or more countries.

2 It should be noted that I do not conceive of either diaspora or homeland activists as homogenous groups, nor are these diverse populations mutually exclusive, as some activists from both locations are able to travel back and forth. I do distinguish between homeland activists and diaspora activists as such, however, in order to focus on the transnational relationships and processes between them.
geo-political and social power relations shape the relationship between diaspora activists’ own knowledge of the nature of their struggle, and that of the activists “back home” with whom they are in solidarity. This examination includes diaspora activists’ perceptions of the appropriate relationship between themselves and their homeland counterparts for defining the movement, and the actual amplification, adaptation, and/or subversion of homeland activists’ knowledge within these solidarity movements’ own knowledge production.

**Informal learning in social movements**

In the years since Griff Foley (1999) published his now-classic work on informal learning in social movements, studies of social movement learning have continued to accumulate, though they remain within the two sub-disciplines of social movement studies and adult education. Foley advanced the then-nascent field by pushing his investigation beyond other adult education scholars’ common focus on the development of instrumental learning, i.e. discrete skills and tactical knowledge. Instead he emphasized activists’ development of critical consciousness (along with instrumental knowledge) as the key goal of informal learning in social movements. Foley’s work is excessively focused on class analysis to the detriment of explorations of other structural issues (such as race, gender, and sexuality) and of relational or culturalist approaches to social movements. His work, however, has been deeply influential among scholars of informal social movement learning, many of whom have continued the effort to re-orient the field toward the object of critical consciousness development (e.g., Biazar, 2009; Kilgore, 1999).

Though they constitute a major advance in the study of informal social movement learning by pushing the field beyond instrumentalism, the studies Foley inspired were not without limitations. They remained focused on individual consciousness development without applying the insights of critical and structural analyses to other aspects of social movement learning or (with a few
exceptions, e.g., Kilgore, 1999) to collective learning. Additionally, the specific mechanisms and processes of learning in social movements remain under-studied. For example, Debbie Lunny (2006) described her own learning of “new language, priorities, and strategies” in transnational feminist organizations, as accomplished through osmosis (p. 85). Finally, studies of social movement learning generally do not examine how learning takes place transnationally, i.e., among activists within a movement who collaborate across national borders. Debbie Lunny (2006) cites this as a major gap in the literature, which my own study will address. I will explore the processes through which activists learn from each other transnationally by tracing the flow of knowledge production within a particular movement task, that of collective action frame production.

Knowledge Production in Social Movements

The study of knowledge production as such has thus far taken a back seat to other social movement learning issues, as outlined above. Though social movements are recognized as sites of knowledge production, knowledge production as a focus of research is most often embedded in the tension between academic and activist production of knowledge about social movements (Choudry, 2009; Cox & Flesher Fominaya, 2009; Foley, 1999; Maddison & Scalmer, 2006). Perhaps for this reason, social movement knowledge production has been under-theorized. In fact, as recently as 2009, Choudry called for more theorizing of informal activist learning and knowledge production (p. 8).

Sources of knowledge in social movements

Esteves (2008) identifies two main forms of socially legitimized knowledge in social movements: expert/technical and experiential. The former, typically produced by “experts,” tends

---

3 Also called tacit, local or phenomenological knowledge (Esteves, 2008, p. 1938)
to be systematized, abstract, and considered objective. It frequently has great social legitimacy within
the larger society of which the movement is a part. The latter type, experiential knowledge, is
frequently seen as subjective and may take the form of testimonial or storytelling. Of course, to fully
dichotomize these forms of knowledge is misleading, given that less socially privileged knowers can
systematize their experiential knowledge into abstract, expert knowledge, and experts within
movements also possess experiential knowledge of their own (Esteves, 2008, p. 1938). These two
forms of knowledge—or more precisely, these two epistemologies—correspond to the distinction
lamented by others between academic and activist knowledge about social movements (Choudry &
Kapoor, 2010; Maddison & Scalmer, 2006).4

Ziadah and Hanieh (2010) present another, related, epistemological mechanism in their study
of the global Palestine solidarity movement in Toronto. They relate the process whereby the
Toronto solidarity movement made an epistemological commitment to “keep the Palestinian
narrative central” (p. 91) while framing the nature of the injustice Palestinians face and the solution
to that injustice. By prioritizing Palestinian knowledge the movement countered the silencing of that
knowledge by the dominant (Canadian/Western/Zionist) frame of an “Israeli-Palestinian conflict”
maintained by a group of people (Palestinians) who had “never existed.”5 Ziadah and Hanieh (2010)
repeatedly emphasize Palestinians’ ongoing experience of displacement, marginalization, and suffering
as central to an accurate understanding of the problem when they write “[i]t is simply not possible to
speak of ‘knowledge’ of Palestine without beginning from the understanding that al-Nakba is an

4 Though Choudry and Kapoor also note that overlap exists between the two “categories” of activist and
expert/academic and the types of knowledge they produce.

5 The specific frame the movement developed will be discussed in greater detail below in the section on
collective action framing.
ongoing process—not a singular point in time” (p. 86).⁶

This emphasis appears to privilege experiential knowledge as the means to access truth. While foregrounding Palestinians’ experiential knowledge is part of the solidarity movement’s inversion of the power relations that de-privilege experiential knowledge, Ziadah and Hanieh (2010) are primarily making the case not for the privileging of experiential knowledge per se (indeed, some of the knowledge the Toronto movement learns from Palestinians is of the expert type), but rather for the foregrounding of knowledge created by those most affected by the issue the social movement seeks to address. They lament, “[t]oo often, knowledge production within North American solidarity movements tends to ignore the voices of those with whom we are supposed to be acting in solidarity” (p. 91).

In Ziadah and Hanieh’s study, those most likely to be marginalized by the movement, if perhaps unintentionally, were Palestinians. In my own study I position Iranian and Cuban “homeland” activists as the more easily marginalized. This is so not because they are passive victims requiring rescue, but because they work in repressive conditions, and because their solidarity partners in the United States are attempting to support them from within another, disproportionately powerful, state.

I do not mean to imply that homeland activists have unique access to a single, uncontested truth which must simply be received and echoed by solidarity activists in diaspora. What I am arguing is that the source of knowledge—whose knowledge it is and their socio-political location—is crucially important. This importance comes not from supposed unspoiled purity, but from the fact that knowledge about a social problem is constructed collectively, not only by the movement (speaking to the public), but within the movement itself through such processes as debates and

⁶ The Catastrophe, i.e. the expulsion of Palestinians from historic Palestine in 1948
deliberations (Esteves, 2008) that seek to establish whose knowledge about the movement and the reality it seeks transform counts as valuable and real.

*What is ‘homeland-produced’ or ‘diaspora’ knowledge?*

In this study I repeatedly distinguish between knowledge produced in the homeland country and knowledge produced in diaspora. Though the content is different based on the perspectives and experiences of those involved, I do not see homeland and diaspora activists as necessarily producing utterly different forms of knowledge. Knowledge in social movements can be produced in many particular forms, including narratives, testimonials, analyses, tactical directives, calls to action, event announcements, video recordings or eyewitness accounts of protests, and more. None of these is necessarily exclusive to activists in a given location since, as previously stated, both expert and experiential knowledge can exist or be created within any given group.

Rather it is the *relationship* knowers (activists) have to the object of their knowledge and to each other that I argue is of primary relevance to the study of knowledge production in solidarity movements. Therefore, when I ask whether and how diaspora activists are using homeland-produced knowledge, my interest is not in the precise format the knowledge takes or even its content, though of course these are important qualities to identify and explain. Instead, my purpose is to discover the relationship of activist knowers in diaspora to activist knowers in the homeland, including whether and through what processes they construct knowledge collectively.

*Identity and the status of the knower*

Because of immigrants’ frequently very complex identities (Glick-Schiller et al., 1992), solidarity movements created by activists in diaspora have the potential to create a particular tension between the identities of “insider” and “outsider,” and the moral authority to speak based on those identities.
Diaspora activists may feel themselves to be fully or partially insiders by virtue of cultural identity or strong emotional attachment to the homeland country, while homeland activists may perceive them to be outsiders, removed from the everyday realities of life in the country. The different social locations between diaspora and homeland activists—and among them!—open the door to potentially misunderstanding or subverting on another’s goals.

All of which is not to say that either diaspora or homeland activists should be considered homogenous groups with a consensus about how to proceed with their activism. On the contrary, activists in any given organization or geographical location will of course have a variety of opinions, political beliefs, experiences, and class, racial, gendered, or other social locations. My concern is not to erase these dynamics within a social movement organization, but rather to prioritize the analysis of relations of power as they play out in activists’ relationships to one another across national borders, i.e., *transnationally*.

Precisely because U.S.-based diaspora activists in my study seek to address a political issue in a country other than the one in which they currently live, the relationship between activists in the two countries is of central importance. In transnational movements the knowledge, goals, and experience of those the movement aims to support must be prioritized (Ziadah & Hanieh, 2010) in order for the movement to be one of solidarity rather than prescription and domination from the outside. Esteves’s question is a good one: “to which extent does [a movement’s collective action frame] correspond to the perspective that the people it aims to emancipate have of the cause it is promoting” (Esteves, 2008, p. 1936)?

Hannerz (1989) explains that images, information and objects are reinterpreted across cultures and borders (cited in Glick-Schiller et al., 1992, p. 10); similarly, knowledge produced in one socio-political location will not travel or translate exactly to a new context. Therefore, the meanings
created by homeland activists may be reinterpreted, understood, and shaped by diaspora activists in distinct ways. In this study I identify the forms of homeland-produced knowledge used by diaspora activists, and to trace the process by which they are interpreted and adapted in a new context, re-presented to a new public and, perhaps, subverted.

The politics of knowledge and the power dynamics of transnational solidarity

“Transnationalism” was initially proposed as a new framework for analyzing the experiences of immigrants by anthropologists Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton in a now classic paper in 1992. Glick-Schiller and colleagues emphasized the need for a new analytical framework that was global in scope, that situated migration within the global capitalist system, and that broke with the prior conception of migration as one of rupture with the home society (p. 1). Contemporary migrants, they claimed, maintained “multi-stranded” and sustained connections with their homelands (p. ix), turning home and host societies into “a single social field” (p. 1). Though the paper sparked an on-going debate among sociologists of immigration (e.g., Koslowski, 2005; Landolt, 2008; Waldinger, 2008, 2009; Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004) about the concept’s novelty and usefulness, transnationalism and transnationality became de-rigueur concepts across numerous fields over the next two decades.

Glick-Schiller and colleagues emphasized the complexity of migrants’ identities and experiences, and they recognized that markers of an individual migrant’s social identity (such as their class position) vis-à-vis those remaining in the homeland frequently shifted with migration, such as when a working-class person was able to become a philanthropist “back home” through remittance-sending (p. 12). As a seminal work, however, the paper did not fully flesh out the ways in which migrants and those remaining in the homeland might experience the differences in power that transnational migration produced, nor how they might negotiate those shifts in their physical,
financial, or cultural interactions. In particular, the notion that home and host societies comprised a “single social field” (p. 1) precluded thorough consideration of the geo-political dynamics between these societies, and the effects of larger socio-political forces on the power relationships among migrants and those that remained in the homeland. Finally, the paper focused mainly on cultural identity and philanthropy, rather than political activism. Subsequent scholars largely maintained these foci (e.g., Waldinger, 2008) adding work on formal political (i.e., electoral) participation but giving less attention to the topics of social movements and grassroots activism.

Scholars of feminist activism took the term “transnational” and applied it to gendered social movements, but many questioned the homogenizing tendencies of the term (Mendoza, 2002; Mohanty, 2004; Tohidi, 2005). Transnational feminism and its immediate conceptual predecessor, “global sisterhood,” thus often implied sameness of identity among women, assuming that if “woman” was a unitary identity, then women were natural allies by virtue of their identity as women (Mohanty, 2004). Other scholars (e.g., Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Mohanty, 2004; Tohidi, 2005) attempted to disrupt these assumptions and call for theorizing of the differences among women. Crucial to this project is the imperative to theorize solidarity across difference in a field of differential power relations.

Just as a unified identity cannot be assumed among women across culture, class, nation, religion, or other markers, neither can it be assumed among Iranians or Cubans, whether residing in Iran or Cuba, or in diaspora. In diaspora solidarity groups, therefore, a universal identity, shared with homeland activists and based on ‘Iranianness’ or ‘Cubanness’ cannot be assumed, but must rather be negotiated across class, gender, ethnicity, religion, and political outlook, as well as time of arrival in the United States, length of time outside of Iran or Cuba, and ability to travel back and forth between home and host society (as some migrants would face persecution if they were to return).
Each historical and geo-political location is embedded within distinct interests, and activists in each location find themselves with a particular level of access to power and to the tools of cultural production, including knowledge production.

Solidarity and coalition, therefore, must be forged on specific terms across difference, location, and experience (Mohanty, 2004), taking account not only of the diversity of activists in a given social movement organization or group, but their collective relationship to other activist organizations in a global hierarchy of power. Kaplan and Grewal (1999) address the theoretical conundrum of solidarity by calling for a new theoretical framework which they name Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies. They assert that this approach makes it possible to theorize multiple intersecting interests, to confront uneven power relations, and to link solidarities “across differences and conflicts within a context of imperialism and decolonization” (Kaplan & Grewal, 1999, p. 358). In this framework, knowledge and solidarity are not pre-figured entities which can be assumed to be shared based on a unitary identity, but rather, specific practices that travel across social, geographical, and geo-political lines. Their construction, travel, and reception must be mapped and explicat in context.

In this study I apply Kaplan and Grewal’s theoretical framework of Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies to the relationship between homeland and diaspora democracy activists because it admits the possibility that even progressive diaspora groups may reproduce relations of geo-political domination over homeland activists in and through their solidarity work. This possibility requires the explication of the ways in which diaspora activists reproduce this domination or consciously avoid doing so. The transnational practices (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994) of knowledge production used by Cuban and Iranian diaspora activists in the United States are thus be theorized in light of their geo-political locations vis-à-vis their homeland counterparts. Such considerations include the effects of
U.S. foreign policy on the Cuban and Iranian governments’ practices of labeling dissidents as spies; the sometimes negative opinions Iranians or Cubans may hold about those who emigrated and have not returned; and the risk diaspora activists run that their efforts to publicize the plight of their compatriots may be used to justify military or other intervention by the United States.

Research Questions

1. How do democracy activists in U.S. Cuban and Iranian diaspora populations use knowledge produced by homeland (Cuban/Iranian) activists to publicly frame the problem of lack of democracy, its causes, and its solution in their own diasporic transnational solidarity movement?
   a. Do diaspora activists in these communities use homeland activists’ knowledge to frame the movement in diaspora?
   b. If so, what kinds of knowledge produced by homeland activists about the problem of lack of democracy in Cuba/Iran and its solution are used by diaspora activists in these communities (such as testimonies of political prisoners, person-on-the-street videos, political analyses, movement manifestos, etc.)?
   c. What assumptions or assertions do diaspora activists promote through their use of this knowledge?
   d. Do diaspora groups change the message or promote their own political agenda while claiming to support that of homeland activists?

2. What do diaspora activists view as the appropriate relationship between homeland activists’ knowledge and their own for framing a transnational solidarity movement for democracy in the homeland?
Collective Action Framing

In this study I use two case study organizations’ collective action frames as objects of knowledge through which to examine each organization’s knowledge production and dissemination practices. Based upon my findings about how this object of knowledge is (co)constructed with each organization’s counterparts in their homeland country, I then theorize how the case study organizations function within their respective social movement networks as both learners and producers of knowledge. Thus the collective action frame, for purposes of this study, is a tool with which to explore social movement actors’ learning practices and teaching pedagogies within networked social movements. Before embarking on this project, however, I will clarify what I mean by collective action frames, and why I selected framing as the knowledge object of my study.

According to Benford and Snow (2000), “collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization” (p. 614). Though a frame, in general terms, can refer to an individual’s “schema” for understanding an issue, context or event, “[c]ollective action frames are not merely aggregations of individual attitudes and perceptions but also the outcome of negotiating shared meaning” (Gamson, 1992, p. 111). All representations of reality, whether biased or not, are framed (Kitzinger, 2007, p. 137) insofar as the person or group presenting the information selects which issues are relevant to include, which facts are salient, and how they should be presented. In social movements, the framing process includes identifying which issues or social problems to address, explaining why they are important, choosing facts and anecdotes with which to document the problem, and other interpretive tasks. As interpretive structures that attempt to explain issues and shape perceptions collective action frames, I argue, are inherently pedagogical. Over and above specific techniques of public education (demonstrations, campaigns, teach-ins, and the like), collective action frames themselves are the structures through which social movement actors teach their public(s) or
audience(s) which social issue needs attention, why, and how to address it.

Frame studies have become increasingly important in the social movement literature over the last 25 years (Benford & Snow, 2000; Kurzman, 2008). Prior to this period, Social Movement Theory focused on external political and social structures that enable movement development and progress, and the field tended to take a rationalist approach to explaining activists’ behavior. While this rationalism was an improvement over early 20th-century assumptions that social movements were simply irrational mobs, the field nevertheless neglected movements’ interpretive work. Beginning in the 1990s, theorists built upon the “cultural turn within the social sciences,” and began to focus on meaning-making in social movements, including such phenomena as moral vision, identity, and narrative (Kurzman, 2008, p. 8). Frames were an important object of study, eventually coming to be regarded as a “central dynamic” of social movements (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 612). After all, as Snow (2004) points out, a circumstance must be interpreted as a problem with a potential solution before mobilization can occur (p. 383).

David Snow (2004) locates frame studies within Constructionism, in contrast to earlier views that perceived social movements as “carriers of extant ideas and meanings” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 613). The constructionist perspective acknowledges that meanings are not inherent or automatic, but are constructed interactively through interpretive processes (Snow, 2004, p. 384). A movement names a problem and formulates a solution for the public via its meaning-making or interpretation—in other words, its framing—of events. Thus framing is “an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). This interactive process occurs not only between social movement actors and their opponents, but within and among movement organizations.

Collective action frames are not monolithic and may be identified according to their functional type. Diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames (Benford & Snow, 2000) are primary types,
though there is substantial overlap among frame types in any given movement. Diagnostic frames name a particular social reality as a problem, identifying its cause(s) and who or what is to blame (Benford, 1993). The blameworthy entity can be an individual or group, or it can be a system, process, or structure (Benford, 1993). Prognostic frames propose a solution to the named problem, envisioning an alternate, preferable reality (Benford, 1993). Prognostic frames also present or imply necessary strategies or tactics for manifesting the proposed solution. Motivational frames mobilize allies and members of the public to take particular action.

The present study focuses on diagnostic and prognostic frames articulated by two social movement organizations located within U.S. diaspora populations and working in solidarity with social movements in their homeland countries. I selected diagnostic and prognostic frames because they articulate the basic understanding of reality that the social movement organization wishes to advance in the perceptions of its audience. As such, diagnostic and prognostic frames serve as useful windows into each organization’s concept of the reality with which they are dealing. In the case of organizations wishing to support oppositional movements in Iran and Cuba, respectively, the nature of that reality is particularly contentious, especially given that these organizations operate in the United States, where the nature of reality in Iranian and Cuban politics is the subject of a charged political debate already, with potentially serious geo-political consequences.

Framing and the challenge of transnational solidarity

Diaspora solidarity movements located in the United States must contend with the fact that resonant frames in their countries of origin may have exactly the opposite effect in the United States, while resonant frames in the United States can backfire on their counterparts overseas. For example, a frame that draws upon Islamic symbols or values of equality may resonate with (and provide political cover for) Iranians in the Islamic Republic, but may be incomprehensible to a largely non-
Muslim U.S. audience, or even repel some potential supporters. A frame that resonates in the U.S., however, may be co-opted by other American political discourses and used to support military invasion, for example. Thus diaspora activists are in an especially delicate position. They must frame their criticism of a government the U.S. government already opposes, and do it in such a way that they support the challenges of their homeland counterparts without reproducing U.S. domination or encouraging inappropriate U.S. support of homeland activists, who may lose credibility with their own publics or be labeled as spies by their governments.

One method of navigating the delicacy of their political situation is for diaspora activists to consciously draw upon the knowledge of their homeland counterparts in the construction of the diaspora movement frame. Though they cannot adopt wholesale a frame that resonates in the homeland, diaspora activists can take care to prioritize the perspectives, insights, goals, and needs of those with whom they are in solidarity. Centering this knowledge can have a dramatic effect on the diaspora movement frame and the resultant course of action, including making the diaspora solidarity movement more genuinely useful to homeland activists.

Ziadah and Hanieh’s 2010 study illustrates the way centering homeland-produced knowledge reshapes both a movement’s frame and the subsequent actions taken by activists in diaspora. In that study, the Palestine solidarity movement in Toronto centered the experiences and knowledge of activists in Palestine in order to create a solidarity movement frame that was both more tactically successful than its predecessor and more supportive of the goals and lived realities of Palestinians. The prior movement frame diagnosed the problem as a “conflict” caused by hatred (p. 86) and proposed as a solution the creation of a Palestinian state through a U.S.-lead negotiation process, the Oslo peace process. This frame silenced the voices of Palestinians by ignoring their lived experience as refugees and exiles both historically and in the present, and by erasing the lives of Palestinian Israelis.
In 2005, Palestinian activists in Gaza and the West Bank called for a new strategy of boycott, divestment, and sanctions based on a new frame of Israel as an apartheid, settler-colonial state (Ziadah & Hanieh, 2010, p. 88). The Toronto solidarity movement heeded this call and, in consultation with activists in Palestine, organized its subsequent activity around the Palestinian experience of displacement and apartheid (p. 92). This new frame not only supported Palestinians on their own terms, but it resonated with Canadians as well. In centering homeland (Palestinian) activists’ knowledge in the construction of their frame, activists in Toronto not only prioritized the stated goals of the movement in Gaza and the West Bank, but revivified a solidarity movement that had languished in the years after Oslo.

Certainly the political contexts or Iranians and Cubans are different from those of Palestinians (and from each other). Yet I find useful Ziadah and Hanieh’s premise that frames are forms of knowledge produced by social movements, and centering the experiences of homeland activists in movement framing “produces a different type of knowledge about what needs to be done” (Ziadah & Hanieh, 2010, p. 92). Therefore I draw on their work to explore whether and how Iranian-American and Cuban-American diaspora activists use homeland activists’ knowledge in the development of diagnostic and prognostic movement frames in diaspora.

Why Iran and Cuba?

Both Cuba and Iran have exceptionally complex and challenging geo-political and historical relationships with the United States. They make interesting comparative cases because both have experienced revolutions in the latter part of the last century, and the subsequent state structures are guided by ideologies that have since formed the ideological enemy of choice of the United States: the Cold War nemesis of communism in the case of Cuba, and the current nemesis, Islamism, in the case of Iran. Both states have also managed to maintain their revolutionary structures despite U.S.
support for the prior regime and considerable opposition and sanctions from the U.S. throughout the decades since. The Cuban and Iranian diaspora populations in the United States have therefore faced additional obstacles (both formal/legal and cultural/ideological) in maintaining contact with their home countries and relatives in ways that go beyond the simple limits of distance, financial resources, and available technology. These relationships have a profound effect not only on the diaspora populations in this country, but they also make the exchange of information, ideas, and people quite difficult and, therefore, interesting cases when it comes to transnational learning and the production of knowledge.

Both diasporic populations in this study (Iranian and Cuban) contain substantially politically and ideologically fractured communities along lines of generation and migration that roughly parallel one another. The immediately post-revolutionary generation in each case is known for its hardline opposition to the current homeland government and for its support of the previous ruling elite, while more recent immigrants, though they often oppose the present government, may have a more nuanced view of their home country. These later generations also frequently have more contact with relatives in the sending country and are more likely to be involved in political or other issues there, whereas some earlier migrants have either strictly avoided contact with the homeland on ideological grounds, or have been unable safely to travel there. Moreover, recent significant political changes in Iran and Cuba that have inspired some in diaspora to look anew at opportunities for democratic change.

In Cuba the 2006 transition of power from Fidel to Raul Castro suggested a possibility for change, but dissident groups on the island generally waited to see what would happen next before taking action, while Raul Castro attempted to ameliorate dissent with economic reforms (Utset, 2008, p. 11). By 2007, however, dissident activity had undergone a resurgence with the development of several new dissident organizations and campaigns, such as the creation of the human rights
watchdog group Consejo de Relatores de Derechos Humanos (Utset, 2008, p. 3). Additionally, the internationally-known Damas de Blanco (Ladies in White), founded in 2005, have continued their street demonstrations in Havana to the present day, and have also inspired several solidarity protests by Cuban-Americans (Cotayo, 2010). More recently Pope Benedict XVI’s visit to Cuba in March, 2012 encouraged some Cubans inside and outside Cuba to think that concerns about human rights might receive a global airing.

In Iran the June, 2009 presidential election was widely criticized as stolen, resulting in mass protests. Though hardly the only Iranian activism for legal reforms and democratic change in recent decades (see, for example, Poulson, 2006), the enormous outpouring of protest suggested the possibility of a new era of activism with potentially wide-ranging results. Thus far, the so-called Green Movement has not lead to wholesale political change in Iran, and government repression has curtailed the kind of mass demonstrations seen in the immediate aftermath of the election. Activism continues both in Iran and in the diaspora under the “green” banner, however. It should be noted that the moniker “Green Movement” suggests more unity of ideology and goals than is actually the case, but this latest wave of activism seems to have increased the number of Iranians in diaspora in the United States who have engaged or re-engaged with political concerns regarding Iran. Since data was collection was completed the election of a new president, Hassan Rouhani, has lead to a change in tone in U.S.-Iran relations. It remains to be seen, however, if Rouhani will make—or will be able to make—any substantive changes to the political climate in Iran itself, or if repression of dissent will continue.

Challenges of researching activism

In addition to the kinds of challenges that qualitative social science fieldwork can present any researcher, researching activist organizations presents particular challenges. In this study, I
encountered setbacks related to the phenomenon of social movement abeyance and to access, a review of which may be instructive for future researchers of social movements.

Once I began my data collection I discovered that the Iranian American organization with which I had initially made plans to work had substantially dwindled in size and was much less active than it had been. At that point (fall, 2011), the Iranian Green Movement with which they were in solidarity was two years old, and the Iranian government had already cracked down substantially on protesters, journalists, activists, and human rights lawyers within Iran (Amnesty International 2010; 2013). My initial contact told me informally that activity in the group—and in much of the diaspora—tended to wax and wane based on what was going on in Iran. When massive protests were taking place in Iran in 2009 and 2010 and dissident activity was high, those in diaspora were correspondingly active and energized. The Iranian government’s harsh crackdown on the Green Movement had led to the imprisonment of many activists and their supporters, however, and my contact linked the current circumstances in Iran to the corresponding lull in his own group’s activity. Now, according to my contact, they were in a sense waiting for something in Iran to change, and they were doing what they could to educate themselves about the history of Iranian social change while they waited.

It seemed to me that this group was contending with the experience of being in solidarity with a movement that was then in abeyance in Iran. Verta Taylor (1989) defines abeyance as “[a] holding process by which movements sustain themselves in nonreceptive political environments and provide continuity from one stage of mobilization to another” (p. 761). In this case, a diaspora solidarity organization was attempting to sustain its support of a movement (the Green Movement) that was then experiencing a nonreceptive—indeed a repressive—environment in the target country of Iran. The group hoped to prepare itself for mobilization at some future date when they might better be able to support Iranian activists.
My contact offered to connect me to Azadeh, a leader in Doostaan-e Demokrasy (Friends of Democracy), saying that this organization remained among the most active of the various Green Movement solidarity organizations outside Iran. After perusing the group’s website I determined that Doostaan-e Demokrasy met my criteria for inclusion as a case study, and I called Azadeh, who agreed to be interviewed. I ultimately discovered that Doostaan-e Demokrasy was also facing the challenges of the abeyance of the Green Movement in Iran. Their efforts to communicate with Iranian counterparts still qualified them for inclusion in my study, but more and more Doostaan-e Demokrasy has had to focus on developing connections with other members of the Iranian diaspora in preparation, perhaps, for a time when Iranians inside the country will be able to effect changes.

In addition to abeyance, I also found that access was a significant challenge in conducting my study. In the case of Doostaan-e Demokrasy, access to potential interviewees may have been limited by their privacy or security concerns, and was almost certainly limited by the fact that I couldn’t meet with anyone in person. As Azadeh explained to me, Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s members are scattered throughout North America, and so the organization operates completely online. Given that Doostaan-e Demokrasy has no physical headquarters, there was nowhere for me to go and introduce myself. Relying on Azadeh to recruit participants for me meant that I couldn’t “pitch” the prospect of participation myself, and couldn’t concretize the opportunity or allay concerns about confidentiality or trustworthiness in person. Azadeh and I corresponded over email several times before and after her interview, and she stated that she had encouraged several members to contact me, but no one expressed interest. Thus, hers was the only interview I was able to conduct for Doostaan-e Demokrasy.

Access to interviews was also limited in my work with Adelante, where I was able to interview

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7 For more on my inclusion criteria and study design, see chapter two.
two people. As an established organization with a paid staff, *Adelante* was easier to access (I could visit in person), but I encountered what appeared to be substantial anxiety among members about security. While my two interviewees seemed happy enough to speak with me, things changed when I arrived at the organization’s office the day after Oswaldo Paya, a prominent Cuban (homeland) activist, died in a car crash in Cuba. While I cannot know whether their fears were justified or not, some at *Adelante* viewed Paya’s death as suspicious, and appeared to be concerned about their own security or those of their island counterparts. This anxiety, coupled with my presence as an outsider, likely fueled members’ decision to stop speaking with me at that point.

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8 See also chapter two.
CHAPTER TWO: Study Design and Research Methods

This chapter presents my choice to do an exploratory two-case study design, followed by an introduction to the two organizations selected for study. I then outline my research timeline and methods of data collection and analysis, situating them within a cultural studies approach.

Study Design

Due to the relative dearth of research on the use of homeland-produced knowledge in diasporic solidarity movement framing, an exploratory case study design promised the greatest opportunity to begin to understand how specific activist organizations engage in this practice. The case-study design lends itself to in-depth focus on the discursive practices of each organization in the study, and is particularly well-suited to the kind of exploratory, descriptive questions posed by this project (Bogdan & Beklin, 2007; Yin, 1989). I elected to design the project as a two-case study with cross-case analysis rather than a comparative case study because it enables me to choose cases that capture some of the diversity of goals and practices that exists among solidarity movements in diasporic communities, rather than selecting cases based on a particular hypothesis, or choosing a second case based on findings from the first. Again, doing so facilitates exploratory work in light of an under-theorized field. The concluding chapter of my dissertation presents a cross-case analysis of the two selected organizations, including comparison, contrast, and what these two cases suggest about transnational knowledge production among diasporic solidarity movements. My research questions, once again, are the following:

1. How do democracy activists in U.S. Cuban and Iranian diaspora populations use knowledge produced by homeland (Cuban/Iranian) activists to publicly frame the problem of lack of democracy, its causes, and its solution in their own diasporic transnational solidarity
movement?

a. Do diaspora activists in these communities use homeland activists’ knowledge to frame the movement in diaspora?

b. If so, what kinds of knowledge produced by homeland activists about the problem of lack of democracy in Cuba/Iran and its solution are used by diaspora activists in these communities (such as testimonies of political prisoners, person-on-the-street videos, political analyses, movement manifestos, etc.)?

c. What assumptions or assertions do diaspora activists promote through their use of this knowledge?

d. Do diaspora groups change the message or promote their own political agenda while claiming to support that of homeland activists?

2. What do diaspora activists view as the appropriate relationship between homeland activists’ knowledge and their own for framing a transnational solidarity movement for democracy in the homeland?

Operationalizing “homeland-produced” and “diaspora” knowledge

For purposes of this study I define knowledge broadly to include information, philosophies, and knowledge artifacts. Information, for my purposes, constitutes purported facts or opinions, such as reports that a given protest took place, or that a target of activism (such as a government) is repressive. In practice, this sort of knowledge may manifest in terms of sharing news (as in the former example) or asserting a perspective, as any social movement actor must (as in the latter example). Philosophies as knowledge would include approaches or intellectual and emotional motivations to activism, such as a philosophy of non-violence or commitment to the principles of a
religion. Such knowledge might manifest in terms of quotations from historical figures or scripture, admonitions to uphold the principle, or allusions to prominent proponents of the philosophy. Finally, knowledge artifacts include anything produced by activists to explain, document, or promote their cause, from essays to tweets to videos. Knowledge produced in the homeland is any of the above produced by those living in Iran or Cuba during the study period (see below for more detail); diaspora knowledge is that produced by those in the migrant/exile population during the study period, including members of the case study organizations.

Case Selection

Selection Criteria and Process

I chose the social movement organizations (SMOs) for this two-case study according to the following criteria:

- Intentional relationship with activists or SMOs in the homeland country
- Explicit central focus on democracy in the homeland country
- Interest in democratic structures and practices going forward, not a return to a prior (non-democratic) government

I developed these criteria in order ensure that the SMOs identified would be viable avenues through which to observe a relationship between democracy activists in diaspora and those in the homeland country (Iran and Cuba, respectively). I evaluated each potential SMO for adherence to these criteria according to their public documents and websites, as well as preliminary informal interviews with academics, community members, and SMO leaders familiar with the activism taking place in each diaspora community. I considered evidence of adherence to the criteria to include direct statements, as well as extensive use of homeland-produced knowledge such as testimonies, calls to action, emails, or other communications identified as coming from activists in the homeland country.
Given these criteria, it should be noted that well-known communities within each diaspora population were intentionally excluded from the study. Specifically, Iranian Americans who support the restoration of the monarchy were not studied. Also, Cuban exile groups known to have advocated violence against the Castro government, or who did not advocate violence but who fall into what Pedraza (2007) refers to as *los intransigentes* [the intransigents] were also not studied. I made this decision when seeking out a Cuban diaspora organization because these groups have tended to avoid contact with the island for ideological reasons, and to discourage such contact in others (Eckstein, 2009). As it turned out, one interviewee in *Adelante* stated that this attitude was changing among Cuban exiles, but that at the time of its founding *Adelante* was unusual in its explicit focus on support of the opposition on the island (Miguel interview, 2/8/12, p. 5, ln. 23-27). I felt that the long-standing and entrenched nature of this focus at *Adelante* made the organization a rich site at which to explore the relationship between diaspora and homeland activists, and distinguished this organization from other—in some cases older—exile groups.

In selecting the Iranian diaspora group I relied on local contacts familiar with the more recent manifestations of Iranian diasporic activism to suggest an organization that remained active on the issue of the disputed Iranian presidential election of 2009 (supporters of the so-called Green Movement). After getting their referral I reviewed the group’s website and spoke by phone to one of its leaders, determining that *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* met my criteria for inclusion in the study.

*Case study organizations*

The names of both organizations and all participants have been changed to protect their privacy.
Adelante [Forward]

Adelante was founded in Florida in the 1990s. Part of a new generation of Cuban American exile political organizations, it initially stood out from its forebears in its focus on supporting the opposition on the island, rather than assuming that change would come to Cuba from the exile community. At the time this attitude was unusual among activist Cuban exiles (Pedraza, 2007; Miguel interview, 2/8/12, p. 5, ln. 19-27), though in 2013 even old guard organizations are more amenable to this stance. Adelante also reaches out to young Cuban Americans to involve them in work on behalf of Cubans, and to support new organizations founded by or oriented toward Cuban American youth. Members of Adelante range in age from young adults to middle-aged adults, and has both paid employees and volunteers.

Adelante’s work falls into two primary categories: advocating human rights in Cuba at the international level, and supporting the Cuban opposition through media. Adelante’s international work includes such tasks as compiling reports documenting human rights abuses in Cuba; speaking about the violation of human rights in Cuba at UN human rights conferences; and lobbying Cuban representatives at such conferences to release those that Amnesty International and other human rights organizations have identified as prisoners of conscience (Miguel interview, 2/8/12). For purposes of my study, however, I focused on Adelante’s digital media production (discussed below) for three reasons. First, it is far more accessible. Second, it is the primary and most extensive context in which Adelante uses homeland-produced knowledge to frame its cause, which is the object of my study. Third, focusing on digital media renders Adelante more comparable to Doostaan-e Demokrasy, which conducts nearly all of its activism via online media.

Adelante uses a variety of platforms to present its messages about Cuba and those of their Cuban counterparts. Over the years the organization has also published hard copy texts, though none were being published during the period of my study (October, 2011-September, 2012). The
organization operates a short-wave radio program that is broadcast to Cuba and is also available online via YouTube and Twitter. In fact, *Adelante* has two YouTube channels and two Twitter feeds, one for the “main” organization and one for the radio programming. The group has an extensive website which is published in Spanish (the organization’s web address goes directly to the Spanish language site), but contains an English version that can be accessed through the main site. The English website is less extensive than the Spanish one, but still contains the same main sections and most of the same material, including historical information about the organization, articles about the Cuban opposition, and video clips of activist activity by both Cuban exiles and Cuban dissidents. *Adelante* briefly published a blog, though all entries were posted prior to the study period (October, 2011-September, 2012). The organization has no Facebook page.

*Doostaan-e Demokrasy* [Friends of Democracy]

*Doostaan-e Demokrasy* was founded in response to the disputed Iranian presidential election of June, 2009. It is a group of Iranian graduate students and young professionals living in the United States and Canada. Given its scattered membership, *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* conducts all of its activism online. According to Azadeh, a leader in the organization whom I interviewed, all its members are volunteers.

During the study period *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* primarily used two internet platforms: a website and a Facebook page. The website was unavailable for a few weeks in spring, 2013 (though was back online by June, 2013), and Azadeh suspected that the site may have been hacked. The Facebook page was last updated in February of 2013 (as of January 31, 2014). Previously, the organization had used other internet platforms, including a blog, a Twitter feed, and a YouTube channel. Each of these three platforms was only used for a short period of time, and was never updated during the study period (October, 2011-September, 2012). As a result, neither is included in the data collection. 
and analysis—only the website and Facebook page are included in the study.

During the period of my study, Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s primary vehicle for activism was its website, particularly its public statements on political matters and current events. Links to these statements were also posted on the Facebook page, and are frequently sent to other online opposition news sites of the diaspora for distribution. Since it was clear from their prominent and repeated distribution and from my interview with Azadeh that these statements are the most important means of activism for this group, I chose to concentrate my analysis most closely on them, within the parameters of the study period.

In addition to their primary work via online publications, Doostaan-e Demokrasy collaborates on occasion with other diaspora activist groups, particularly when they learn of an activist in Iran who has been arrested. In these cases they may add their organizational name to a petition or open letter, or directly contact the family of the detainee if their advocacy is welcome (Azadeh interview 6/14/12, p. 12, ln. 4-11). Individual members are also active in local Iranian diaspora activist organizations where they live, and they may participate in these groups’ work as individuals, or encourage local groups to add their endorsement to a statement published by Doostaan-e Demokrasy (Azadeh interview 6/14/12, p. 4). These activities were briefly described in my interview with Azadeh but were not a focus of my study, partly because Azadeh identified them as secondary to Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s main purpose, and partly because they occur out of my sight as a researcher, especially given Doostaan-e Demokrasy members’ geographic dispersion throughout North America.

Data Collection

Research timeline

All data in the study were collected according to the following timeline between October, 2011 and September, 2012.
Table 1

Data Collection Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time period</th>
<th>Data collection tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October, 2011-December, 2011</td>
<td>Search for U.S.-based Cuban and Iranian diaspora social movement organizations (SMOs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January, 2012-February, 2012</td>
<td>• Initial research trip to Florida to identify Cuban American SMO</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interview with Miguel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Non-participant observation of Cuban exile memorial event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March, 2012</td>
<td>Continued search for Iranian diaspora SMO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April, 2012</td>
<td>• Research trip to Florida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Permission secured to return in the summer to work with Adelante</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May, 2012</td>
<td>Initial contact with Doostaan-e Demokrasy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June, 2012</td>
<td>• Interview with Azadeh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Attempts to interview other members of Doostaan-e Demokrasy (unsuccessful)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July-August, 2012</td>
<td>• Research trip to Florida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Data collection of Adelante texts and media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Research on Cuban-American and Cuban exile politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interviews with Dr. Perez and Antonio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Non-participant observation of Cuban exile memorial event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Coding begun of text data and interview transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September, 2012</td>
<td>• Coding continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interviews with two members of another Cuban exile activist organization, for additional background information on the larger activist community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Return to Los Angeles; write-up begun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While seeking out an Iranian diaspora activist group to work with, I attempted to identify an appropriate Cuban American SMO through online searches, discussions with local Cuba scholars, and literature reviews. These methods proved insufficient to get a real picture of whether or not a
given SMO was invested in working with island activists (a primary criterion for inclusion in my study), so I made a six-week trip to Florida in January and February, 2012. It was on this trip that I identified *Adelante* and conducted an interview with Miguel, a leader in the organization. He agreed to speak with his boss, the executive director, about working with the organization for my project. I also interviewed Dr. Pérez, a Miami-based Cuban exile and scholar of the exile community, who provided additional background information on the history of activism within the community that informs my overall sense of the politico-historical background from which *Adelante* and other exile organizations emerged. Finally, I attended and observed an annual event co-sponsored by *Adelante* in memory of four exile activists killed by the Cuban government in the course of their activism in the 1990s. I used this event to get a sense of the activities *Adelante* was involved in, to begin to familiarize myself with the messages they used in community events, and to develop the fledgling relationship I had established with Miguel.

Upon returning to Los Angeles I sent repeated emails to Miguel again asking him to speak with his boss. When I had yet received permission by March, I scheduled another trip for the following month. In April I was able to meet with *Adelante’s* executive director, present my letter of introduction, and explain my project. The director agreed to allow me to return to conduct interviews in the summer. I also contacted Azadeh by phone and secured her permission for an interview, as well as her commitment to approach her colleagues at *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* on my behalf (since they do not meet in a physical location that I could visit). I conducted an interview with Azadeh via Skype in June, 2012.

In July I returned to Florida for the next two months, where I interviewed Antonio and assessed online text from *Adelante* in Spanish. I also sent the online texts from *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* to be translated from Persian into English. While still in Florida I was able to attend a memorial

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9 As with the names of those I interviewed in the case study organizations, this is a pseudonym.
service for slain Cuban opposition leader Oswaldo Paya, after which I wrote up my field notes of the event. When it became clear that I would have no more access to Adelante staff, I returned to Los Angeles to continue data analysis and writing.

Data collected

This study is primarily a study of knowledge production through digital media. Data collected consists of online materials created or presented by the two case study social movement organizations (SMOs), including websites, Twitter feeds, Facebook pages, and YouTube streams. Interviews are used to provide context for evidence found in media, and to explore interviewees’ understanding of the appropriate relationship between the diaspora solidarity movement and its homeland counterpart (Research Question 2). I asked each interviewee about the process by which they produced digital media, how they contacted counterparts in Iran and Cuba respectively, and what they viewed as the appropriate relationship between the homeland democracy movement and the diasporic solidarity movement. I interviewed Miguel and Antonio of Adelante (in person), and Azadeh of Doostaan-e Demokrasy (via Skype).

Conduct of interviews

Interviews were semi-structured (Blee & Taylor, 2002) and were conducted individually. I interviewed Azadeh, a leader in Doostaan-e Demokrasy, via Skype. Interviews with Miguel and Antonio, members of Adelante, were conducted in person at the organization’s headquarters. Miguel is a staff member and leader in the organization, and Antonio is a volunteer who works on digital and social media. Questions began broadly, asking about what drew the interviewee to participate in his/her work for the organization, about the organization’s goals, and other general questions that enabled me to develop a picture of each group and its work. I then addressed my research questions
more directly, asking about the development of each group’s texts and videos, methods of communication with homeland activists, preferred sources of information about the homeland country, and interviewees’ opinions about the appropriate relationship between homeland and diaspora activists. All interviews were conducted in English, as each interviewee is fully bilingual. I audio recorded each interview with the interviewee’s permission and transcribed it, sending a copy of the transcript to the interviewee if requested. (One person requested a copy.) I also conducted an unstructured interview with Dr. Perez, a Cuban exile and scholar of Cuban exile politics, in order to learn more about the socio-political context from which *Adelante* was born and in which it operates. This interview was not recorded, though I took notes throughout and wrote them up immediately afterward.

Selection of online texts and images

Each organization in the study relies primarily on online and social media to communicate with their homeland counterparts and to educate the public about their cause. *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* exclusively uses digital media to publish its public documents. *Adelante* has published paper documents in the past, in addition to its digital publications and messages, but none of the publications listed on its website have been published since 2008, nor did I find any additional, more recent hard copy publications upon visiting the office. *Adelante* also produces a short-wave radio program, which I was able to access via YouTube, so I have included it within my analysis of YouTube.

My data consisted of texts, images, audio and video from all four media platforms used by one or both of the social movement organizations: official websites, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Each SMO used some forms of online media more extensively than others. I limited the data collected to text, images, and video from the year of data collection—October, 2011 to September,
2012. Doing so had three purposes: 1) to render the total amount of material manageable for a single researcher, 2) to ensure that I got the most up-to-date information, and 3) to make Adelante, which is more than 15 years old, more comparable as a case study to Doostaan-e Demokrasy, which is only four years old.

Doostaan-e Demokrasy

Doostaan-e Demokrasy has a dedicated website, a Facebook page, a Twitter feed, and a YouTube channel. The Twitter and YouTube accounts are presently inactive (as of November 9, 2012), and do not contain any material from the study period. On the website I paid particular attention to the organization’s founding manifesto and to those official statements published during the study period, as interviewee Azadeh indicated that these were the group’s most important publications. I also reviewed all Facebook posts published during the study period. All of the sites for Doostaan-e Demokrasy are public. All online sites for this organization are written primarily in Persian, which I read at an intermediate level. Persian-language texts were professionally translated into English, and the translations of key terms that were repeated or ambiguous were checked with a Persian language instructor at my university.

Adelante

Adelante maintains a website in Spanish with a link to a version of the website in English, an extensive Twitter feed, a YouTube channel, and a shortwave radio program. I was only able to access the weekly update portion of the radio program, as it is available on YouTube. The organization has no active Facebook page, though a Facebook page exists containing a copy of the group’s description from Wikipedia. Only the portion of the website showing recent news from Cuba appears to be updated regularly, and many pages on the site have not been updated for two or
more years. I therefore read through the entire site to get a sense of its components and layout, but confined my analysis to the history and mission statements, and to texts, images and video added during the period of data collection, from October 2011 to September 2012. I also limited my analysis of the Twitter stream and YouTube channel to the same period, given the large number of entries for each. The Adelante also published a blog, but its few entries were all published prior to the study period. I am bilingual and biliterate in Spanish and English, so I was able to read and listen to all of Adelante's materials. All of the web and social media sites for Adelante are public.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the study is informed by Kaplan and Grewal’s Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies methodology. Kaplan and Grewal assert that this approach makes it possible to theorize multiple intersecting interests, to confront uneven power relations, and to link solidarities “across differences and conflicts within a context of imperialism and decolonization” (Kaplan & Grewal, 1999, p. 358). In this framework, knowledge and solidarity are not pre-figured entities which can be assumed to be shared based on a unitary identity, but rather, specific practices that travel across social, geographical, and geo-political lines. Their construction, travel, and reception must be mapped and explicated in context.

I applied Kaplan and Grewal’s Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies framework to the relationship between homeland and diaspora democracy activists because it admits the possibility that even progressive diaspora groups may reproduce relations of geo-political domination in and through their solidarity work. This possibility requires the explication of the ways in which diaspora activists reproduce this domination or consciously avoid doing so. The transnational practices (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994) of knowledge production used by Cuban and Iranian diaspora activists in the United States are thus theorized in light of their geo-political locations vis-à-vis their homeland
counterparts. Such considerations include the effects of U.S. foreign policy on the Cuban and Iranian governments’ practices of labeling dissidents as spies; the sometimes negative opinions Iranians or Cubans may hold about those who emigrated and have not returned; and the risk diaspora activists run that their efforts to publicize the plight of their compatriots may be used to justify military or other intervention by the United States.

In order to accomplish this analysis I applied cultural studies methods to the texts, images, and videos used by each social movement organization (SMO) in its online media platforms. In doing so I drew on Kellner’s understanding of texts as requiring multivalent readings, and a set of critical or textual strategies that will unfold their contradictions, contestatory marginal elements, and structured silences. These strategies include analyzing how, for example, the margins of texts might be as significant as the center in conveying ideological positions, or how the margins of a text might deconstruct ideological positions affirmed in the text by contradicting or undercutting them, or how what is left unsaid is as important as what is actually said. (Kellner, 1995, p. 112)

This reading enabled me to assess how the relationship between homeland and diaspora activists was enacted through each SMO’s online texts. In particular, textual analysis that reads texts as multivalent and potentially contradictory makes possible the identification of ways in which an activist organization—even if ideologically committed to collaboration with homeland activists—might subtly undermine its own efforts to privilege homeland voices.

I also drew on Roland Barthes’ work in my analysis of images and video, especially his notions of the relationship between image and text. Barthes posits two relationships between an image and
its accompanying text: anchorage and relay. An anchoring text (such as a caption or an accompanying article) fixes one or more select meanings from among various possible meanings the image may have (Barthes, 1999, p. 37). In analyzing images and video from the case study organizations, I used the concept of anchorage to understand which meanings each organization assigned to the images it presented, and to illuminate the goals or beliefs underlying that assignment of meaning. Relay, in contrast, is a phenomenon whereby the words are not redundant to the image but rather add information to it, as in a film. The meaning, then, is a combination of text or dialog and image. Relay was a key concept in my analysis of YouTube videos, which typically combined dialog with either video or a still photograph. As the vast majority of images and video I collected depicted homeland activists (and had been originally created by them), Barthes’ work played an important part in my efforts to understand how homeland activists and their knowledge were positioned within the diaspora SMO’s own knowledge production.

Analysis of interviews

In order to identify each organization’s collective action framing and its members’ perceptions of the appropriate relationship between diaspora and homeland social movements, interviews were coded for themes established from my research questions. These included “diaspora/homeland relationship,” “diaspora-produced knowledge,” “homeland-produced knowledge,” “contact” [between diaspora and homeland activists], “technology” [used to make contact or produce knowledge], “diagnostic framing,” and “prognostic framing.” Additional themes were then developed for coding based on themes emerging from the interviews themselves and from analysis of the relevant organization’s online texts, such as “human rights,” “access to information,” “non-violence,” and “state repression.”10 Finally, the interview transcripts were coded a third time for

10 See appendix for complete set of final codes.
terms referring to the homeland government or its ideology, including “Islam/ism,” “communism/socialism,” “regime,” and “autocracy.” These final codes enabled me to compare three things: 1) the rhetoric used to describe the homeland government; 2) interviewees’ critiques of that government, and 3) the evolution of social movement framing in each diaspora activist community over the study period within its geo-political context. In each transcript, lines containing multiple themes were coded separately for each theme.

Analysis of online media

Websites

All items on each organization’s website produced during the study period (October 2011-September, 2012) were sorted according to whether they were produced by homeland activists, the organization’s staff, or others (such as activists from elsewhere, wire stories, and the like). First I analyzed the topics and stated provenance of the articles, images, and videos falling within the selected time period in order to get a sense of how often media from homeland activists were used on the site.

As with the interview transcripts, the articles, position statements, and other texts were coded for themes generated from my research questions, as well as relevant content themes that emerged from interviews and the organization’s other online texts. In each text, lines containing multiple themes were coded separately for each theme. Finally, references to the government or other identified sources of the problem were identified and the language used noted, in order to further explicate how the group framed its cause and characterized the problem it seeks to address. The positioning of any media created by homeland activists was also analyzed, using the concepts of anchorage and relay described above.
Twitter

*Adelante* is the only one of the two case study organizations to have a Twitter feed active during the study period. As I read and analyzed the tweets I took note of whether or not it was in Spanish or English to get a sense of the potential audience for individual tweets and for the feed as a whole. I also paid particular attention to how many tweets were retweets and whether or not they came from Cuban activists (on the island) or from other sources. When retweets were posted, I used the original tweeter’s profile to determine his or her location (country and city, if available). The total number of retweets was than tabulated and broken down by location of origin: either in Cuba, in the U.S., or elsewhere.

As with interview transcripts and website documents, the text of each tweet was coded for themes generated from my research questions, as well as relevant content themes that emerged from interviews and the SMO’s various online texts. In the case of tweets, however, I coded for multiple themes until reaching a point of saturation, rather than coding all of the thousands of tweets by hand. Finally, references to the government or other identified sources of the problem were pulled out and the language used noted, in order to further explicate how the SMO framed its cause and characterized the problem it seeks to address. Many tweets contained links to other media, including videos, online articles, or photos, some produced by the organization itself and some produced by others. The source and location of links were noted in order to understand where information was coming from as each organization built its frame.

Facebook

*Adelante* does not have its own dedicated Facebook page, but rather a page that lists the Wikipedia description of the organization (as of November 9, 2012). I therefore used only *Doostaan-e* Doostaan-e

11 See appendix for a complete list of the final codes.
Demokrasy’s Facebook page in the study. Most entries are links to publications of Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s own official statements on Persian-language news sites, especially opposition news sites that include contributions from both inside and outside Iran, consistent with my interview with Azadeh (6/14/12, p. 8, ln. 24-26). Sometimes the links are introduced with text or—occasionally—they are accompanied by comments from other Facebook users. Text introducing linked articles or videos was coded for themes from my research questions and relevant content themes that emerged from the rest of the textual data and interviews. Comments posted by others were also coded in the same way, and the locations of the commenters (within or outside Iran) noted via their own Facebook information, if available. All texts were professionally translated into English for analysis, as described above.

YouTube

Adelante uses YouTube extensively, posting videos and embedding them on its website, or linking to videos through its Twitter feed. Since its total output of videos includes over 500 postings, I narrowed the range of videos that I examined in detail. Adelante also tweeted many of its YouTube videos, and I viewed each of these in full as I analyzed the Twitter feed, until reaching the point of saturation in my coding for tweets. I also reviewed the organization’s YouTube channels in a general sweep, noting topics and formats for the body of videos as a whole (how many were from the group’s shortwave radio program, how many were interviews versus live visual recordings, how many appeared to be testimonials versus demonstrations and the like). Finally, I analyzed a selection in more detail that fell within a cycle of knowledge production surrounding a particular event: Pope Benedict XVI’s visit to Cuba in March, 2012.12 Videos were analyzed for recurring visual themes and connoted messages (Barthes, 1999), such as items or locations included in the images (family homes,

12 See chapter three for why I selected this event as an in-depth example.
nationalist symbols, symbols of resistance); who was pictured (the speaker, family members, other activists); and how the persons and objects depicted were presented (such as whether they looked defiant, injured, etc.). In conjunction with Antonio’s interview, in which he described the process whereby he edited and posted videos from Cuban activists, I attempted to identify and analyze markers of editing, such as the effects of added text or background music, if present. These edits were analyzed for their anchoring (Barthes, 1999) of the visuals, which could suggest ways that the editors at Adelante may have shaped the videos of homeland activists to their own ends.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

I devote the next two chapters to detailed descriptions of each case study organization, its political and cultural context, and its collective action frame. I focus on how each frame is constructed discursively and how each organization uses homeland-produced knowledge in (co)constructing the frame (Research Question 1). Chapter three pertains to Adelante, while chapter four pertains to Doostaan-e Demokrasy. In chapter five I present a cross-case analysis of the two organizations’ frames, and discuss the relationship that each organization enacts with its homeland counterparts via its knowledge production practices (Research Question 2). Finally, I present my conclusions about how activists in technologically-connected social movement networks—such as those in which Adelante and Doostaan-e Demokrasy are embedded—learn, teach, and co-construct knowledge via activist pedagogies.
CHAPTER 3

Case Study Organization: ADELANTE

In this chapter I present the collective action frames Adelante [Forward] uses to articulate the organization’s perception of the political problem in Cuba (diagnostic framing) and the solution (prognostic framing), focusing on how Adelante uses homeland-produced knowledge from Cuba to (co)construct these frames. First I provide historical context for the organization and its work, which is part of a long line of exile support for political change of various kinds in Cuba. From there I focus in more detail on the U.S. exile community since the 1959 revolution, including its distinct generational variations and how differing experiences of migration affect the political relationship between Cuban exiles/migrants and their counterparts in Cuba. I then move on to an overview of how Adelante creates specific diagnostic and prognostic frames, followed by an in-depth example of the knowledge production surrounding Pope Benedict XVI’s visit to Cuba. I close the chapter with preliminary suggestions about Adelante’s pedagogical choices as an activist organization, which I will explore in greater detail in chapter five, and compare with those of Doostaan-e Demokrasy.

Dissidence in Cuba and the Cuban Community in the United States

The Early 20th Century

Dissident activity in Cuba has a long history, from uprisings against Spanish colonial rule through to the present-day opposition to the government of Raul Castro. In each iteration, specific goals and tactics have shifted over time, as has the rhetoric used to advance revolutionary and other oppositional causes. Beginning in the late 19th century and continuing into the present day, revolutionary and dissident movements have had to take into account the global power 90 miles to the north—the United States—as both potential ally and potential obstacle to Cuban aspirations.

13 The names of both case study organizations and all participants have been changed to protect their privacy.
The Cuban immigrant population in the United States has been an important part of these considerations, and has repeatedly served as support to various individuals and groups advancing dissident agendas in Cuba over time. In the first portion of this chapter, I place the present study within this historical context.

The first Cuban revolution occurred in the late 19th and early 20th century, when Cubans pursued political autonomy from Spain. These efforts were supported by the U.S. government, which used Cuban aspirations to advance its own geo-political interests in Latin America. Cubans living in the United States were also an important constituency for supporting this cause. The most famous Cuban champion of independence, Jose Marti, resided in the United States for a time before returning to Cuba and, as Cuban proponents of independence had done before him, Marti sought greater sovereignty for Cuba, openly worrying about U.S. interference in the quest for independence (Suchlicki, 2002). Indeed, the conclusion of the war with Spain did not resolve the conflict over Cuban sovereignty, but shifted its target from Spain to the United States, and its content from direct colonial rule to the Platt Amendment, which granted economic and territorial concessions to the U.S. These two trends—of U.S. government intervention in Cuban aspirations and of Cuban expatriot support for dissident movements, became a pattern in oppositional politics in Cuba.

The Platt Amendment ensured close U.S. supervision of economic and political circumstances in Cuba, a situation that some Cubans supported but which others, particularly student groups, opposed (Suchlicki, 2002). In part as a result of this interventive history, Cuban conflicts over the leadership and direction of the country have long involved internal conflicts over the appropriate relationship with the United States. These debates continued in the decades after Cuba’s war for independence, when the nature and closeness of political and economic ties to the U.S. were actively contested among varying sectors of Cuban society. The United States government, for its part, was willing to support repressive leaders in Cuba as long as they maintained policies that aligned with
Cubans living in the United States were also part of the debate about Cuba’s future during the first half of the 20th century, as a series of strongmen took charge of the government. University students formed a significantly active portion of opponents of Gerardo Machado’s government in the 1920s and 30s, and when Machado closed the universities and exiled many student activists, a number of them spent their exile in the United States. These leaders then returned to Cuba upon Machado’s ouster (which was mediated by U.S. ambassador to Cuba, Sumner Welles), where they formed a governing pentarchy with members of the military (Suchlicki, 2002).

The pentarchy eventually collapsed and a new constitution was written in 1940 that guaranteed civil liberties, granted autonomy to the University of Havana, and recognized workers’ rights, among other things, all of which made it amenable to many of the prior generation of revolutionaries (Suchlicki, 2002). Fulgencio Batista, then head of the military, was elected president under the new constitution; he formally stepped down when his term was up in 1944, but continued to exert strong control of Cuba as a military leader through his successors (Suchlicki, 2002). At the same time, Cuba continued to rely extensively on the U.S. as a trading partner and donor of aid, even after Batista overthrew his successor, Carlos Prio, in March, 1952 (Suchlicki, 2002). Thus the pattern of economic dependence on and political support by the United States continued, as did the pattern established by Martí, the student revolutionaries of 1933, and other, of exile support for dissident activity in Cuba.

The 1959 Revolution

Resistance—including rioting and urban violence—to Batista’s power grew during the 1950s, as did Cuban economic dependence on the U.S. (Suchlicki, 2002). The regime had various opponents with differing rationales and goals, but two major wings: university students, mainly
concentrated in Havana and other urban areas, and Fidel Castro’s 26th of July movement, which operated mainly in the rural east of the country (Pedraza, 2007). Responses to dependence upon—and later, retaliation by—the United States continued to shape Cuban politics and the course of the revolution. These pressures included the involvement of exile groups in the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary processes. As island dissidents had done before him, Castro traveled to the United States to solicit support (Suchlicki, 2002), though he and his colleague Ernest “Che” Guevara also feared that the U.S. would seek to undo the revolution, as had happened in Guatemala in 1954, and they eventually sought the protection of a Soviet alliance (Suchlicki, 2002, pp. 141-142). In the early 1960s after nationalization of industry, the United States sponsored some exiles to overthrow the revolution in the Bay of Pigs invasion, cementing an antagonistic relationship that also fueled a crackdown on internal opposition in Cuba. Thus once again, Cubans in the United States occupied a shifting geo-political and ideological terrain vis-a-vis Cuban politics that could be tapped for dissident support, only to be used as a reason to crack down on dissidents.

In order to understand the relationship of Adelante to its island counterparts in the contemporary Cuban (island) opposition I will next outline the evolution of the opposition after the 1959 revolution, followed by the simultaneous waves of migration that formed the exile community in the United States and its rise to political power, which in turn helped shape the relationship between the United States and Cuba.

Cuban dissidence after the 1959 revolution

Over the decades since the 1959 revolution, opposition to the Castro government has undergone a series of transformations in its composition, tactics, objectives, and in its relationship to Cubans outside the country. The Cuban exile community, particularly in South Florida, has long been involved in efforts to change the political situation in Cuba, but the relationship between
Cuban exiles in the U.S. and Cuban dissidents on the island has varied over the years.

Various authors have periodized the evolution of dissidence in post-revolutionary Cuba based on the capacity, relative size, tactics used, and relationship to the international community. A brief initial phase occurred in the handful of years succeeding the revolution, until about the mid-1960s (Fernandez, 2003; Pumar, 1999). In Cuba dissent broke out within the revolutionary ranks, while in the United States some Cubans who had left the country organized to return and overthrow the new system. This period was characterized by tactical subversion and violence (Pumar, 1999, p. 371). The U.S. government, and particularly the C.I.A., also worked to undermine the revolution using a variety of ideological, economic, and paramilitary tactics including shortwave radio programs, an economic embargo, and support of armed exile groups (Chao, 2005). Exiles also gave moral and financial support of counterrevolutionaries in Cuba, though most exiles did not participate directly (Pedraza, 2007, p. 111).

A second phase of island opposition began in the mid-1970s with the 1976 founding of the Consejo Cubano Pro-Derechos Humanos by Ricardo Bofill and others (Chao, 2005; Fernandez, 2003; Pumar, 1999) with strong revolutionary credentials (Pumar, 1999; Fernandez, 2003). In the second phase, the opposition in Cuba changed considerably, drawing inspiration from the example of Eastern European groups (Fernandez, 2003). This shift began with the founding of the Comite Cubano Pro Derechos Humanos (CCPDH), the country’s first human rights organization, in Havana in 1976 (Chao, 2005; Fernandez, 2003; Gershman & Gutierrez, 2009; Utset, 2008). The CCPDH had three goals, “(i) the release of political prisoners; (ii) establishment of democratic rules; and (iii) respect for human rights” (Chao, 2005 p. 120). This focus on human rights placed the

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15 Espinosa (1999) characterizes the mid-1970s as beginning the first phase of a defensive civil society in Cuba, citing Weigle and Butterfield’s typology of civil society emerging after communism.
organization within the currents of a persistent and growing discourse in the international community, and also marked an early internationalization of the human rights movement on the island, as CCPDH members reached out to international bodies such as the UN Human Rights Commission to plead their case.

In this period the island opposition embraced a non-violent approach to change based on the philosophy of Ghandi, Martin Luther King Jr., and the growing global human rights discourse (Pedraza, 2007). Dissidents advocated what Pumar (1999) calls a “negotiated transition” to democracy, rather than direct overthrow of the revolutionary system (p. 371), by appealing to rights enshrined within the post-revolutionary Cuban Constitution confirmed in 1976 (Fernandez, 2003). They also differed from their predecessors in their relationship to the international community, looking to the democratic movements of Eastern Europe for models (Fernandez, 2003) and garnering substantial international attention throughout the 1980s. The United States government also successfully lobbied the United Nations to approve an investigation of the human rights situation on the island (Fernandez, 2003), and islanders’ use of a human rights frame also likely resonated with the growing discourse of human rights at the international level. By bypassing explicitly ideological framing (Gershman & Gutierrez, 2009), the opposition also opened the possibility for reaching a wider audience.

The 1990s are seen as pivotal to the growth and evolution of Cuba’s opposition. Organizations proliferated in this period, due in part to the pressures on Cuba after the collapse of the Soviet Union and to an increase in popular discontent in the face of severe economic hardship (Otero & O’Bryan, 2002). The range of participants and their concerns expanded, including professional and religious organizations (Pumar, 1999; Chao, 2005; Espinosa, 1999). Finally, dissident organizations were no longer concentrated in the capital and urban centers, but emerged in the provinces (Chao, 2005). Relations with supporters outside the country—especially with Cubans in the United States—
also shifted considerably when direct phone lines between the U.S. and Cuba became a reality in 1996 (Espinosa, 1999). Radio Marti, a U.S.-government-sponsored radio station, various South-Florida stations, and the internet also increased the possibility of communication between dissidents and supporters outside Cuba (Espinosa, 1999).

A third phase of the Cuban opposition began in 1999 and extends into the current millennium (Chao, 2005). In the contemporary period the opposition is small, but includes a variety of voices from many sectors and from all over the island. Many dissidents active in recent years, such as Oswaldo Paya (1953-2012) and Jorge Luis Garcia Perez “Antunez” (aged 47, as of this writing), were born after the revolution or were children when it occurred and have never known another system. In fact, Fernandez (2003) points to Paya’s Proyecto Varela [Varela Project], begun in 2003, as the beginning of a possible new phase of the opposition, as it attempts to “normalize” Cuban politics by petitioning the existing government for rights currently guaranteed (but not necessarily enforced) under the current constitution (p. 599). Pedraza (2007) also cites the Varela Project as evincing a new political maturity in the opposition, which “seek[s] to provide an alternative vision of a new democratic society in Cuba” (p. 280), though Paya seems to have done so while relying not on a discourse of democracy per se, but on a discourse of both human and civil rights that appeals to (or takes political cover in) officially acceptable discourses of independence and national sovereignty. In his own words, “‘The Castro government insists on protecting Cuba’s sovereignty . . . . My point is, by defending Cubans’ civil rights, we are also defending Cuba’s sovereignty’” (Padgett, 2008, p. 108). The Varela Project—named after a 19th century Cuban priest who advocated independence from Spain—involved collecting over 10,000 signatures, per the 1976 Cuban constitution, in order to submit to the parliament the request for a plebiscite to call for a popular referendum for free expression, free press, free association, amnesty for political prisoners, “small, private enterprises, and a plebiscite—a new electoral law and general elections” (Pedraza, 2007, p. 281).
As the opposition in Cuba has changed over the last half-century and more, the exile community has also changed. In the next section I outline the successive waves of Cuban migration to the United States since the 1959 revolution and how these waves have oriented themselves toward the Cuban government and Cuban dissidents.

The Cuban Exile Community in the United States and U.S.-Cuba Relations

In order to understand Adelante’s discursive framing, it is necessary to understand the political context of Cuban exiles in South Florida since the 1959 revolution, particularly the demographic and political shifts that have slowly changed that political context during the period. Scholars have characterized Cuban migration to the United States as occurring in three (Eckstein, 2009; Portes, 2003) to four (Pedraza, 2007) waves, each propelled across the Florida straights by different combinations of reasons, and each possessing (broadly) distinct goals and attitudes that continue to affect their relationship to Cuba and to the political activity of the community in South Florida.

Eckstein (2009) and Portes (2003) divide Cuban immigrants to the United States into roughly three waves: early exiles (or Exiles, in Eckstein’s typology), Marielitos, and late migrants (what Eckstein calls the New Cubans). Eckstein, Portes, and Pedraza (2007) each highlight the importance of pre-migration experiences and interpretations of those experiences in shaping Cuban immigrants’ political attitudes and behavior upon arrival in South Florida, though other social and economic factors are interwoven with these. For convenience I will use Eckstein’s terminology to distinguish among these broad groupings, recognizing that the individuals in them are more varied than any set of terms implies.

The Exiles migrated in the 1960s, just after the 1959 revolution. On the whole, they were privileged in their lives on the island. Generally wealthy or middle class (Eckstein, 2009; Pedraza, 2007), they were formally educated and connected to networks of power, economic success, and
education (Eckstein, 2009). They suffered the loss of property that was confiscated by the new state without compensation, and some were persecuted and fled for their safety. The majority, however, left because the revolution threatened their status and way of life (Eckstein, 2009). When these migrants arrived in the United States (generally to South Florida, especially Miami), they carried their experiences with them, which shaped their views and their politics.

Though these Exiles were largely fleeing a loss of privilege and status, they viewed their migration as forced and political: they were exiles from their country, and many were committed to toppling the revolutionary government and effecting a swift return (Eckstein, 2009). For this generation, communications with Cuba were limited, partly due to technological barriers and the migration policies of the United States and Cuba (Blanco, 2011). Most exiles either brought their entire families with them or severed ties with those who stayed behind to support the revolution. As a result, their knowledge of post-Revolution Cuba was largely imagined (Eckstein, 2009), and their political relationship to the island remained conditioned by nostalgia for the life they had lost, and by animosity toward the man they blamed for that loss: Fidel Castro.

The so-called Marielitos migrated between 1980 and 1994, beginning with the departure of boats from the Cuban port of Mariel, for which the cohort is named. Portes (2003) and Eckstein (2009) describe this cohort’s experiences of Cuba and their motivations for leaving as substantially more varied than either the Exiles or the migrants who left in the late 1990s and after. Some had initially supported the revolution and become disillusioned; some had even turned against Fidel Castro and had been imprisoned for their opposition. According to Pedraza (2007), many were working class, and more were Afro-Cuban than had been true of the prior migrant wave.

The age range of this cohort was also substantial, which meant a significant variation in how they had experienced the revolution—some grew up in Batista-era Cuba and fought in the revolution, while others had been born years after its triumph and had been educated and raised
under the new system (Eckstein, 2009). Some were young dissident intellectuals fleeing persecution or leaving after being freed from prison (Pedraza, 2007). This wide variety of experiences lead to a range of opinions about the Cuban system, and a resultant range of relationships to the country left behind and to the politics in their new home.

The so-called New Cubans are those who migrated after 1994 up to the early part of the 21st century. They are, as a group, the most different politically from the Exiles, and this difference is also based on their experiences in Cuba (Eckstein, 2009; Pedraza, 2007). The New Cubans were born and raised after the 1959 revolution, and they experienced both positive and negative aspects of that system. Significantly, they are the only group of Cuban migrants to live through the Special Period, a time of great hardship after the end of the Cold War when the defunct Soviet Union no longer traded with Cuba or sent foreign aid.

New Cubans were not as strongly ideologically opposed to the Castro government as were the Exiles or some of the Marielitos (Eckstein, 2009). Moreover, they had suffered during the Special Period and knew the ongoing suffering of friends and relatives left behind. This wave of migrants therefore tended to want to stay in touch with those on the island—to visit and send money—and changes in technology and U.S. policy made this possible (Pedraza, 2007). Thus New Cubans had a very different relationship to Cuba than did the Exiles, and this relationship moderated their political views, particularly as compared to the Exiles.

The political context into which Cuban migrants arrived is also a key factor in each wave’s political participation and activism, and this evolving context shapes current political and activist efforts, including those of Adelante. The Exiles viewed their sojourn out of Cuba as temporary, and they shared a commitment to halting the revolution, though most did not participate directly in attempts to do so (Pedraza, 2007). Stauch anticommunists, they received a warm welcome from the U.S. government, which saw them as ideologically aligned and politically useful during the Cold War
In the 1970s some younger Cuban Americans, many of whom had been children in Cuba prior to the revolution, began to question the Exile generation’s ideology. These “moderados” (Pedraza, 2007) advocated engagement with Cuba, even traveling to the island to visit relatives and reconnect with the country of their childhoods. These young adults had been exposed to the social movements of the 1960s in the United States, and some supported aspects of the Cuban revolution—or at least did not categorically oppose it—and they sought to experience the island for themselves (Pedraza, 2007).

The U.S. Cuban community’s real political clout did not emerge until the early 1980s, however, when a substantial shift in tactics occurred toward lobbying U.S. policy (Pedraza, 2007, pp. 127-128). The Exile-founded Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), established in 1981, received financial backing at the highest levels of the U.S. government (Eckstein, 2009; Portes, 2003), ultimately becoming the most powerful Cuban American political organization in the United States through the early 21st century (Eckstein, 2009, p. 106). CANF’s efforts contributed to the passage of significant pieces of legislation even after the Cold War, including the Cuban Liberty and Democracy Solidarity (Helms-Burton) Act of 1996 (Eckstein, 2009, p. 110) and caps on travel to Cuba for family visits (Eckstein, 2009, p. 111).

Though their views were not initially well represented in U.S. politics (Eckstein, 2009, pp. 88-89), the attitudes of later migrants and second generation Cuban Americans have become more influential since the turn of the millennium. Leaders of the Exile generation such as CANF founder Jorge Mas Canosa began to die in larger numbers, and other demographic changes—from the influx into South Florida of non-Cuban Latin Americans to the coming of age of second generation Cuban Americans—also softened the community’s political stance regarding Cuba (Eckstein, 2009, p. 119). Today many Cuban Americans are open to a variety of changes in U.S. policy toward Cuba, from
“maintaining and expanding ties with relatives and friends in [their] country of origin” (Blanco, 2011, p. 44) to easing some elements of the U.S. embargo (Eckstein, 2009, p. 123).

Shifts also occurred in the stance of Cuban activist organizations toward dissidents on the island. In 2003 two polls, one by the Miami Herald and one by the Cuba Study Group, showed that “the majority of Cubans in South Florida believe that dissidents on the island are more important than exiles to Cuba’s political future” (Pedraza, 2007, p. 305). Pedraza continues, “Indeed, for some years now, the political lead for change has been within Cuba, in the dissident movement,” even according to Jorge Mas-Santos, son of Mas Canosa and his successor at the Cuban American National Foundation (Pedraza, 2007, p. 305). Adelante was founded as this more moderate climate emerged.

**Case study organization: Adelante**

In this section I present my findings based on online and interview data collected from Adelante. First I present an overall picture of how Adelante frames the problem it perceives in Cuba and the potential solution to that problem, and how Adelante members use knowledge produced by those in Cuba in their own online texts.¹⁶ (See chapter one for more information on collective action framing.) Next I analyze a typical example of Adelante’s framing and use of homeland-produced knowledge in a cycle of knowledge production surrounding Pope Benedict XVI’s March, 2012 visit to Cuba.

According to its website, Adelante

works for democracy in Cuba by way of a civic, nonviolent struggle that includes: 1) Humanitarian and material support for pro-democracy organizations in Cuba. 2) Exchange of information with the Cuban people.

¹⁶ I use 'texts' in the broad cultural studies sense, including images and videos.
3) International solidarity with the pro-democracy movement in Cuba.

[Adelante] is committed to a free Cuba where human rights are upheld and respected. (Adelante English website).

Adelante was founded in Florida in the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War and in the midst of changing attitudes among Cuban Americans toward contact with Cubans on the island, discussed above. At the time the organization was founded, interviewee Miguel told me, the idea that change in Cuba could come from within was relatively uncommon among Cuban exile activists (interview, 2/8/12, p. 5, ln. 19-27). At that time the organization stood out in adopting the view that its role was to support the opposition “morally, logistically, getting their message out” (Miguel interview, 2/8/12, p. 5, ln. 12); while Adelante continues in its original vein, today the idea is more common.

Adelante employs both paid staff and volunteers ranging in age from young adults to middle-aged adults. Its work falls into three categories: advocating human rights in Cuba at the international level, supporting the Cuban opposition through digital and other media, and supporting new U.S.-based organizations that reach out to Cuban American youth with a focus on Cuba. Adelante’s international work includes such tasks as compiling reports documenting human rights abuses in Cuba; speaking about the violation of human rights in Cuba at UN human rights conferences; and lobbying Cuban representatives at such conferences to release those that Amnesty International and other human rights organizations have identified as prisoners of conscience (Miguel interview, 2/8/12). On occasion Adelante has co-presented at UN conferences with Cuban dissidents who speak in person or via video feed. Adelante’s media work in solidarity with island activists publication of hard copy texts, maintenance of several digital media platforms, and a shortwave radio station.

17 In order to protect members’ anonymity, I must be a bit vague about these details.
Overview of digital media platforms

As discussed in more detail in chapter two, the present study focuses on Adelante’s media production in cyberspace. The organization operates a dedicated website, two Twitter feeds, and two YouTube channels. The website, which has a main homepage in Spanish with a link to an English-language version, contains historical information about the organization, articles about the Cuban opposition, updates about recent events in Cuba related to the opposition, and video clips of activist activity by both Cuban exiles and island dissidents. In past years Adelante has also published hard copy texts including reports of human rights violations in Cuba, and the website also contains links to information about these publications. With the exception of one section that includes regular news updates about the island, the website is updated infrequently, and Antonio confirmed that the website is not the primary platform for Adelante’s digital activism (interview). During the study period (October, 2011-September, 2012) there were 168 items posted in the more frequently updated section of the website in Spanish, with 27 posted in the English version, or 195 items total.

One Twitter feed and one YouTube channel serve as the main feeds for Adelante, with separate Twitter and YouTube sites for the organization’s shortwave radio station. The radio station posts audio segments including interviews with activists, weekly news segments about events relating to the Cuban opposition, and occasional features about current issues related to the opposition or exile supporters. These items are typically tweeted in addition to being posted on the radio station’s YouTube channel, and are regularly tweeted in the organization’s main feed as well. The main Twitter feed contained 1523 tweets during the study period, while the radio station Twitter feed contained 655 tweets (2178 total tweets). The main YouTube channel had 43 videos uploaded during the study period, while the radio station had 484 videos from the same period (527 total videos).
Adelante's framing and activism

Audience

In my conversation with Miguel (a staff person and leader at the organization) he described Adelante's audience as containing members of both the Cuban exile community and the international community who are receptive to the organization's mission to support the non-violent opposition in Cuba and to the focus on human rights. He described reaching out to lay persons and high-profile human rights figures (such as Vaclav Havel) around the world to enlist their help to demand that the Cuban government respect human rights in Cuba, or to exert pressure to release specific detainees and the like. This international audience includes both individuals and institutions, such as the UN High Commission for Human Rights. In addition, he described talking with members of the local Cuban community who travel to the island and would be receptive to Adelante's message about things they can do to help (Miguel interview 2/8/12).

Antonio (a volunteer working on Adelante's digital media production) saw the organization's audience somewhat similarly as Cuban exiles and the international community. He felt that many exiles were, or had until recent years been, unaware that a robust Cuban opposition exists. The international community, he felt, accepted what he described as the “propaganda of the dictatorship” that Cuba was a leftist utopia enjoying broad-based support from its people (interview, 7/23/12, p. 6, ln. 12).

As a result, this SMO positions itself as educating the public, including the Cuban diaspora and foreign governments, about dissident activists on the island and the Cuban state’s repressive actions against them, focusing more explicitly on a discourse of human rights than on democracy per se. Testimonies of arrests, announcements of demonstrations, and other social media messages from island activists are thus positioned to highlight the repression and suffering taking place on the island, center the work of Cuban activists, and emphasize the need for recognition of human rights
in Cuba.

Importantly, Spanish-speakers (whether bi- or monolingual are clearly perceived as the primary audience for Adelante’s digital media production. The primary and most extensive website is in Spanish, and most tweets and YouTube videos are also in Spanish, sometimes with English translation, but most often not. The papal visit (analyzed in more depth later in the chapter) contains substantially more English than was typical for Adelante during the study period, perhaps because as an event it had a high degree of international visibility. In general, however, Spanish was the primary language for articles, tweets and videos, both those posted by islanders, and material created exclusively by Adelante.

**Framing**

*Adelante* uses state repression of dissidents as its *diagnostic frame* of the problem in Cuban political life, identifying Fidel and Raul Castro specifically as the blameworthy parties. In conducting a qualitative content analysis of *Adelante*’s online texts I coded repression as including threats or acts of violence against activists or their families; destruction of activists’ property; activists’ arrests, ongoing detention, or restriction of movement or activity; health problems which were caused or aggravated by, or which are cause for concern in, detention; movement of detainees in an apparent effort to hide them, complicate their release, or separate them from their loved ones. State repression was, overwhelmingly, the most common theme I identified in *Adelante*’s framing of the problem it perceives in Cuba.

The organization constructs this frame primarily via reporting acts of state repression against activists, making extensive use of homeland-produced knowledge (see below) to document these acts. Homeland-produced knowledge advancing the frame of state repression includes testimony from island activists in the form of audio interviews or statements, written quotations, photo and
video imagery, and on occasion feature writing. *Adelante* deploys these testimonies to provide evidence in support of its frame.

The organization’s prognostic frame, or solution to the problem of state repression, is respect for human rights by the Cuban state. *Adelante* constructs this frame in much the same way as it does the diagnostic frame, documenting acts of repression and positioning them as human rights violations in need of redress. Again, homeland-produced knowledge serves as evidence of human rights abuses, and the articulation of these abuses in an internationally-recognized language of human rights positions *Adelante*’s work within existing frameworks for applying pressure to the Cuban government to make changes. Additionally, the use of activists’ testimonies promotes a sense of emotional urgency in the reader or viewer to address the situation.

**What is homeland-produced knowledge?**

Before I go on to analyze *Adelante*’s use of homeland-produced knowledge in constructing its diagnostic and prognostic frames, I will review what I mean by homeland-produced knowledge and describe how *Adelante* obtains and modifies this knowledge in its own media production online. At its broadest, what I am calling homeland-produced knowledge is any form of knowledge created by opposition activists living in Cuba. This knowledge may take verbal, visual, or written form, and it may include anything from factual reports of events to analyses and opinions about the Cuban political system, to exhortations to action or assistance. It may be apparently simple information sharing, or it may come in the form of a more complex artifact, such as a documentary, manifesto, or blog post. Since it was impossible to definitively verify the provenance and authorship of every item I classified as homeland-produced knowledge, I go into more detail below about how I made these classifications for texts within each media platform.

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18 The same applies, of course, to Iran in the case of *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* (see chapter four).
My definition of activists “living in Cuba” refers to a Cuban activist living within the country during the study period (October, 2011-September, 2012). I was able to verify—in a rudimentary way—the locations of various contributors to Adelante’s online platforms via their Twitter profiles and self-descriptions, though I cannot absolutely confirm whether any given individual is he s/he says s/he is or lives in the specified location. Of course, some posters did not list a location and I had to try to determine it based on their own feeds. It is important to note that some of the texts analyzed were created or contained contributions by very recently exiled Cubans, especially former political prisoners. Their involvement in the Cuban democracy/solidarity movement highlights the blurry line between “homeland” and “diaspora” activists and movements. For purposes of this study, however, they were counted as diaspora activists because they are likely to be more accessible to members of Adelante and vice-versa once they are living in a less restrictive environment than the one they faced in Cuba. As a result, members of Adelante presumably have an easier time sharing and creating knowledge with them about the situation in Cuba.

How does Adelante obtain this knowledge?

The homeland-produced knowledge in Adelante’s feeds comes primarily—though not exclusively—from leaders within the Cuban dissident movement, especially founders or spokespersons of various dissident organizations, such as the Frente Nacional de Resistencia Cívica y Desobediencia Civil Orlando Zapata Tamayo (Frente OZT), la Union Patriotica de Cuba (UNPACU), la Asociacion Democratica Oriental (ADO), la Organizacion Feminil Rosa Parks, and others. Over time one begins to recognize those activists whose words and writings routinely appear in Adelante’s online materials, such as Jorge Luis Garcia “Antunez” (Frente OZT), Yris Perez Aguilera (Rosa Parks), Jose Daniel Ferrer (UNPACU), and Sara Marta Fonseca (Frente OZT and Las Damas de Blanco). Other sources of homeland-produced knowledge are activists who have
been arrested or attacked by state security personnel, and these individuals may or may not be affiliated with specific organizations. For example, Andres Carrion Alvarez was not affiliated with a dissident organization when he was detained for shouting opposition slogans at the papal mass in March, 2012 (see section on papal visit, later in this chapter).

Miguel identified a variety of ways in which Adelante members stayed informed about happenings of interest in Cuba. He asserted the importance of acquiring accurate information, stating that the organization built relationships with island activists in which an individual source’s information was triangulated with others on the island, and as a particular activist was shown to have reliable information, “the stock of their credibility rises” (Miguel interview, 2/8/12, p. 15, ln. 30). It seems likely, then, that recurring “voices” in Adelante’s online materials belong to those who the organization has found to provide credible information over time, and dissident leaders in particular may have a clearer idea than others of what is happening to their members and close colleagues. Interestingly, Miguel claimed that members of Adelante often have a more global understanding of what is happening with the opposition throughout Cuba than do island activists themselves because of restrictions on dissidents’ mobility and communications with others in different regions of the country. Adelante, by contrast, can often contact activists across the island via telephone, or receive information sent out of the country by other means.

My understanding of how knowledge moves from Cuba to the United States is based on my interviews with Miguel and Antonio. According to these interviewees, there are three major ways that activists in Cuba are able to get information out of the country to a global audience. They can access the internet via computer or SMS to blog or tweet; they can get help from outside Cuba in the form of phone recharges or publication via someone else whom they have called or to whom they have sent a USB drive or CD of material; and they can be contacted directly via phone by persons outside Cuba. For security reasons, Adelante does not go into detail in published texts about
how they obtain knowledge or knowledge artifacts from Cuba. When such texts do make reference to how the knowledge was obtained, they merely say something like, ‘here are some tweets from the island,’ ‘unedited images of prison conditions from members of [homeland activist organization],’ or ‘[Cuban activist] told [Adelante shortwave radio program . . .].’

During our interview Miguel described being able to contact Cuban activists directly by phone in order to obtain or verify information (interview, 2/8/12). Antonio also said that calls to activists in Cuba are a common way for the organization to verify news reports or other information about the island (interview, 7/23/12). This method also appears to be the way that producers of Adelante’s shortwave radio programs are able to conduct interviews or obtain oral testimonies from island activists. I was not explicitly told that the radio interviews are conducted the way, but surmised as much from listening to audio recordings of the interviews and testimonies posted online. For example, during one such interview I heard someone accidentally push a button on the phone during the conversation.

While calling an activist enables Adelante staff and volunteers to get direct, immediate updates on events on the island, island activists’ phone conversations may be monitored by the Cuban state. Miguel and Antonio told me that it is not uncommon for a conversation to be cut off mid-way through, and activists’ phone lines are also sometimes disconnected completely. 19 The presence of state monitoring suggests that island activists may censor themselves in their telephone conversations or other communications, which may in turn shape—either subtly or to a significant degree—the knowledge they produce and share with exile activists. It is impossible to determine what activists in Cuba would have said without such monitoring, but it is important to bear in mind the possible effects of state pressure and censorship when considering the content of homeland-

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produced knowledge here. On the other hand, I was frequently surprised at what appeared to be island activists’ boldness in making their identities clear by stating their full names or showing pictures of themselves with their faces fully visible, sometimes standing next to signs with slogans such as “Abajo los Castro!” [Down with the Castros!]. It may be that these individuals are leaders or have frequently faced arrest in the past, making them well-known figures to the Cuban state and, therefore, unlikely to be able to hide their identities or activities.

Adelante volunteer Antonio identified blogs and Twitter as primary communications tools for island activists (interview, 7/23/12), but limited access and the challenges of state censorship and monitoring are drawbacks to these technologies. Although the Cuban state has invested in internet infrastructure, it has prioritized internet use "to encourage research, business, and tourism, and to improve communications, all within a 'national interest' model" (Venegas, 2010, p. 55). Individual and household use is not a priority in this scheme, and individual internet access is subject to content restrictions, usage monitoring, and significant surcharges.

Only 23 percent of Cubans used the internet in 2011, and many of these individuals accessed only a restricted, domestic intranet (Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, p. 14). The state allowed web access to foreigners and to certain Cuban citizens in 2013—government officials, as well as some academics, students, and others—but most Cubans must access the web from hotels, youth clubs, and other official centers, where their search history is reviewed and some websites blocked (Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor). Email is available only through a government-assigned email address (Blanco, 2011, p. 42). Some internet access is available via the black market (Blanco, 2011), but unauthorized internet technology may be confiscated by the state and its owner penalized (Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor). Finally, the hourly internet access rate at official centers is
more than one fifth the official average monthly income (Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor), making it out of reach for most Cubans.

Given these restrictions, and according to Antonio, it can take days or weeks before a Cuban activist has the opportunity to publish a blog post or video this way, and the risk of state monitoring is a constant concern. Tweets are preferred for relating immediate events, and they are also faster to compose. Importantly, they can also be sent via SMS on a cell phone, an easier platform to access\(^\text{20}\).

The limitation on using tweets, according to Antonio, typically comes from the cost, which can be prohibitive for many on the island. Activists may therefore rely on sympathetic individuals or businesses outside the country to send recharges to their cell phone accounts (Antonio interview, 7/23/12).

Due to the many restrictions and limitations, non-internet-based technologies, such as cell phones, USB drives, and CDs, are also important tools for activists to send longer form digital media artifacts out of Cuba. Bloggers and others may put a blog post or video onto a USB drive or CD and send it out of the country with a friend or relative traveling abroad (Antonio interview, 7/23/12). (This was also described to me as a way to share digital information with colleagues living elsewhere in Cuba.) Others phone friends and supporters outside Cuba and dictate material that is then recorded and transcribed into a blog. Antonio himself got started as a solidarity activist in this way, volunteering on his own (not as part of \textit{Adelante}) to transcribe and translate into English the testimonials of two Cuban political prisoners. He explained that these prisoners would, on occasion, use their SMS minutes to call a friend outside Cuba who would transcribe the material onto a blog, then send the material to Antonio for English translation (Antonio interview, 7/23/12). In fact,

\(^{20}\) Twitter users can update their feeds without a smart phone by simply texting a message to the shortcode for their mobile provider. Text messages are then posted to their accounts as tweets. While there is no fee for using Twitter, text messaging rates from the sender’s mobile carrier apply. (https://support.twitter.com/groups/54-mobile-apps/topics/225-sms/articles/14014-twitter-via-sms-faqs) Access date 4/08/13.
there are numerous volunteers around the world who translate Cuban blogs into a variety of languages. Miguel also told me that some of his information about happenings in Cuba comes from conversations with recently-arrived exiles and relatives of Cubans currently living in South Florida (Miguel interview, 2/8/12, p. 17).

How does Adelante modify this knowledge?

Adelante represents and distributes information from Cuba in several ways, some more mediated than others. Some knowledge artifacts produced by Cubans are reproduced directly, such as retweets of tweets posted by islanders. Here Adelante mediates the activist’s message by selecting which items to retweet, but does not actually change the content. The source is readily identifiable, and readers can easily click over to the activist’s own Twitter feed to learn more about his or her perspective. YouTube videos are another category of knowledge artifacts in which viewers can access content created by islanders that has been mediated by Adelante, though perhaps not extensively. Antonio felt it was especially important to publish as many videos from island activists as possible, since these images are rarely seen outside the country. He felt that some “cynical people” (Antonio interview, 7/23/12, p. 17, ln. 33-34) refused to believe stories of repression in Cuba, but that the videos created by islanders provided clear evidence of beatings and other brutality:

there’s always those cynical people that say oh, they’re lying, they’re lying, but when you see the video they’re not lying. They are being dragged, they’re being beat, they’re being threatened, they’re being surrounded, arrested. (Antonio interview, 7/23/12, p. 17, ln. 33-36)

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21 See, for example, the website http://hemosoido.com/
He described his process for editing these videos, saying that he prefers to have some recording of the activist's voice for narration, and to use background music to make the video appealing or catchy (though he emphasized that the music shouldn’t be too “epic”). When I asked him what makes such a video catchy he responded,

[G]ive it a perspective that will be like, oh wow, that’s crazy, I agree with that or that touches me. Don’t just say oh, he was an opposition person and he got killed because he was opposed to the regime. No . . . give details of who the person is: he’s a young person who has two kids and he didn’t have a job . . . give that human side of it. (Antonio interview, 7/23/12, p. 18, ln. 11-15)

Antonio makes an effort to retain the core of the original message, removing elements he thinks viewers will find boring or redundant, and adding elements (such as music) that will encourage viewers to relate to the people in the video and feel emotionally affected by the words and images. Ostensibly his goal is to cause viewers to care about repression in Cuba and the activists affected by it. Of course, in doing so he mediates the presentation of homeland-produced knowledge beyond simple selection, and even if he doesn’t radically change islanders’ messages, he attempts to direct the viewer’s response to them.

Some videos on the YouTube channel are recordings of interviews with islanders, in which case the conversation may be shortened in what is broadcast, but the dissident’s own words are accessible. Articles posted on the website (and in some cases also linked in tweets) contained the most heavily mediated homeland-produced knowledge in the form of quotations or non-quoted attributions of reports to activists. These quotations and attributions were generally part of reports about repression on the island or of demonstrations or other acts of dissent by opposition activists.
In these articles one is expected to trust Adelante that the attributions and quotations are truthful and accurate.

_How prevalent is homeland-produced knowledge in Adelante’s online presence?_

Adelante uses homeland-produced knowledge across its digital media platforms, but the frequency and type varies by platform. Analysis of Adelante’s online presence revealed the extensive and explicit use of homeland-produced knowledge across digital media platforms during the study period (October, 2011-September, 2012). For coding purposes, I counted evidence of homeland-produced knowledge as verbal or written statements, videos, and still images apparently created by homeland activists and their organizations, or verbal statements told to diaspora organizations, such as in interviews (see also Methods, Chapter 2). Adelante texts that included information directly attributed, without quotations, to homeland activists was also included. A YouTube video was considered to contain homeland-produced knowledge if it was identified as being produced by a homeland activist group (within the video or in the description by Adelante); if it depicted homeland activists demonstrating or conducting other activities inside Cuba; or if it was an interview or other verbal communication from a homeland activist recorded by either a homeland activist group or by members of Adelante.

In general, Adelante’s online knowledge production included extensive homeland-produced knowledge during the study period. This finding is compatible with the organization’s mission to support the Cuban opposition, and with the goals, shared with me by Miguel and Antonio, to demonstrate the existence of that opposition and to spread its message. Homeland-produced knowledge incorporated into Adelante’s online presence varies in its form, presentation, and the degree to which it appears to be mediated by members of Adelante. Its abundance also varies somewhat by digital platform, with YouTube and Twitter having by far the highest homeland-
produced content, most often in the form of retweets and video filmed in Cuba. It stands to reason that social media platforms, as opposed to the organization’s website, would contain the most homeland-produced knowledge, given that social media is not only most used by Adelante for online text production (per Antonio, above) but also that the nature of these Web 2.0 platforms lends itself to sharing content.

It should be noted that homeland-produced knowledge is probably under-reported in this study. Reports of events taking place inside Cuba were only counted as “homeland-produced” if their Cuban source was specifically mentioned. For example, phrases such as “[Name of activist] reported that” or “According to witnesses” marked a text as homeland-produced knowledge, whereas an article or tweet that simply stated “Protests are occurring in many parts of the island” or “[Name of activist] was detained last week” were not. In wanting to be as precise and verifiable as possible with the data, I only counted items attributed to islanders as homeland-produced, since members of Adelante have on occasion traveled to Cuba and could conceivably have witnessed some of the reported events themselves. Given that such travel is rare, however, it is highly likely that nearly all such reports do come directly from islanders and are simply reported without attribution for the sake of brevity or convenience.

Analysis of framing and homeland-produced knowledge during Pope Benedict XVI’s visit to Cuba

In this section I provide an analytical example of the way in which Adelante and its counterparts in Cuba co-construct knowledge about an event that significantly affected members of the opposition: Pope Benedict XVI’s visit to Cuba from Monday, March 26 to Wednesday, March 28, 2012. Various Cuban dissident groups hoped that the Pope would be willing to meet with them. The knowledge created by Adelante surrounding this event derives from these desires; the activities
of the opposition before, during, and after the papal visit; the Cuban state’s response to these activities, and the transnational reaction (in Cuba and in Florida) to Cuban state repression of island activists. As a result, this cycle of knowledge production and its artifacts (text, audio, and video) provide a good example of two things: 1) how Adelante frames its cause, and 2) how the organization uses knowledge from the Cuban opposition to create that frame. Texts (in which I include audio and video) connected to the papal visit covered the period from February 22, 2012 to Sept 20, 2012, encompassing the beginnings of state repression against Cuban activists in advance of the visit, through the time period of the visit itself, and continuing through an island-wide hunger strike to obtain the release from prison, in September, 2012, of an activist arrested on his way to the papal mass six months before. All translations from Spanish are mine unless otherwise noted.

The cycle of knowledge production surrounding the Pope’s visit to Cuba is typical of Adelante’s use of homeland-produced knowledge in framing its cause. As is true more generally, in this instance Adelante uses its online presence primarily to highlight the existence and activity of the Cuban opposition, and to expose the repressive actions of the Cuban state against activists. In so doing it motivates viewers and readers to take action. Specifically, Adelante uses homeland-produced knowledge largely to provide evidence of and emotional urgency to its claims. While typical in the ways just described, the case of the papal visit is atypical in the sense that, unlike numerous other instances in which Adelante produces knowledge about opposition activity or state repression, this round of activity and repression was occasioned by an externally organized, international event. The high-profile nature of this event, however, makes it easy to pull out of the ongoing stream of similar information within Adelante’s online presence, giving the event cycle a clear beginning and ending, and also enables greater triangulation of events and claims via national and international media, and non-governmental human rights organizations.
Overview of events

Pope Benedict XVI’s trip to Cuba was part of a two-country tour which included Mexico. On Monday, March 26, 2013, he arrived in Santiago de Cuba, where he celebrated mass in Revolution Square (Rainsford, 2012). The following day he made a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Virgin of Charity in El Cobre, the 400th anniversary of which was this ostensible reason behind Benedict’s visit (Carroll & Tuckman, 2012; Rainsford, 2012). Pope Benedict then traveled to Havana on Wednesday, March 28th to meet with president Raul Castro (Amanpour, 2012; Archibold & Donadio, 2012) and celebrate mass. He also met with former president Fidel Castro before returning to Rome on Wednesday evening (Ariosto, 2012).

Although dissidents such as the Damas de Blanco (Agencies, 2012) had urged his office to meet with them during his visit, Pope Benedict made no plans for meetings with members of the opposition (Carroll & Tuckman, 2012). The Vatican spokesman said only that their messages had been received (Archibold & Donadio, 2012). The Pope appeared to address the political situation on the island in comments prior to his trip when he said that “It is evident that Marxist ideology in the way it was conceived no longer corresponds to reality” (Carroll & Tuckman, 2012). Upon arriving on the island, however, he chose somewhat softer words, stating “I carry in my heart the just aspirations and legitimate desires of all Cubans, wherever they may be” (Amanpour, 2012), and that he prayed “for the needs of those who suffer, of those who are deprived of freedom, those who are separated from their loved ones or who are undergoing times of difficulty” (Archibold & Donadio, 2012). The Pope also appeared to criticize the U.S. embargo of the island when he commented that "restrictive economic measures, imposed from outside the country, unfairly burden its people" (Ariosto, 2012).

Although many Cubans, including president Castro, attended the papal masses, Amnesty International reported that numerous members of the opposition were prevented from attending,
and that “local organizations reported 1,137 arbitrary detentions before and after the visit” during the month of March (Amnesty International, 2013). One dissident who did attend the mass in Santiago de Cuba (Amanpour, 2012) was subsequently arrested for interrupting the proceedings with cries of “Freedom!” and “Down with Communism!” (Amnesty International, 2013a). He was later identified by Amnesty International as Andres Carrion Alvarez (Amnesty International, 2013a).

Texts generated or disseminated by Adelante during the papal visit focused intensively on Carrion Alvarez and on the restrictions on activists’ movements during the time period.

Overview of knowledge production and text use

Content

The overwhelming majority of texts (and again, by text I am referring to written text, audio, and video) about the papal visit are reports of the Cuban state’s repression of island activists, connected in some cases to reports of activist activity preceding or occasioning the repression. Use of homeland-produced knowledge in these texts takes the form of retweets by island activists, citizen journalism or testimony in the form of audio or video recordings about repression, or unattributed reports of repression likely coming from islanders, such as the Asamblea de la Resistencia’s running reports of activists’ arrests. From February 22nd to March 28th, 2012 (through the Pope’s departure), three-fourths of texts, including tweets, video testimonies, and Adelante web articles relating to the event, referenced specific acts of state repression against activists collectively or individually. Of the remainder, two were foreign news articles regarding the Pope’s comments about Cuban communism, and the others fell into three categories: texts related to activist demands to meet with the Pope; reports of activists’ actions without mentioning subsequent repression (even though the activists in question were ultimately arrested); and in a few cases, religious sentiments and expressions of feeling about the Cuban government.
For the remainder of March, 2012, texts across platforms continued to focus on detention of activists, efforts by the government to prevent activists from attending the papal mass, and on a general and growing climate of repression on the island. An important sub-conversation had to do with identifying an activist—Andres Carrion Alvarez—who had disrupted the papal mass and who was subsequently imprisoned. From March 30 through April 17, sixteen texts (fourteen of them tweets) identified him, asked for solidarity to support his release from prison and, after his April 13 release, presented video recordings and written transcripts of interviews with him about his experience.

Beginning on April 2, 2012 the content of texts related to the papal visit shifted to focus on the case of Jorge Vasquez Chaviano, another activist who had been arrested while attempting to attend the papal mass. By September 9th he had not been released, despite government assurances that he would be freed by that date (Amnesty International (2012, September 14), and Cuban activists across the island initiated a hunger strike for his release. Texts regarding this matter between April 2nd and September 18, 2012 were devoted to announcing who on the island had joined the strike, reporting repression by the state against participants and their supporters, and detailing the physical deterioration of those on hunger strike. Finally, on September 18, 2012, Adelante’s radio channel announced Vasquez Chaviano’s imminent release via Twitter, a development repeated the following day in a tweeted YouTube video of the channel’s news brief program.

Platforms

Twitter was the most commonly used platform for producing knowledge about the papal visit. Of the 401 texts coded as related to the papal visit, 357 were in the form of tweets. This number includes tweets that contained links to YouTube videos (154), as well as tweets containing links to web articles (30). The heavy reliance on Twitter during this period may be related to the fact
that the majority of texts in the period dealt with acts of state repression against activists, and the responses to or consequences of such repression (such as illness or injury). Since Twitter is the most immediate of the platforms used by Adelante, it makes sense that activists in both Cuba and Florida would prefer it to record or respond to unfolding or urgent events. There were also several reports on the organization’s main Twitter feed of activists’ cell and land-line phone access being cut off, suggesting that not only was it periodically difficult to send tweets via SMS, but that uploading video would likely have been even more challenging.

YouTube was the next most commonly used platform among texts coded as relating to the papal visit, with 157 videos. As noted above, 154 tweets relating to the papal visit contained links to videos, making Twitter an important vehicle for disseminating videos, in addition to the organizations two YouTube channels themselves (one for the main organization and one for the radio station). Video content ranged from the radio station’s weekly summary of news from Cuba (13) to live footage of island activists engaging in demonstrations or getting arrested, to recordings of telephone interviews with or speeches by island activists conducted by Adelante. Some were strictly audio, such as the weekly news summaries and some of the interviews, while others contained audio with a still photograph of the activist or activist group displayed. Others contained live video images apparently shot by Cubans on the island and uploaded or sent out of Cuba.

The vast majority of the videos contained some form of homeland-produced knowledge. The exception was Adelante’s weekly radio news summaries, which reported news from Cuba usually without attribution. Nevertheless, even these reports often reiterated information gained from island sources and previously shared via twitter or another YouTube video. Homeland produced knowledge in YouTube videos during the papal visit and subsequent period most often contained testimonies or citizen journalism about activist actions, government repression, or the results of either (such as injury, or deteriorating health while on hunger strike). YouTube videos thus provided
a relatively long-form vehicle (as opposed to tweets) whereby island activists could share
information about their experiences using their own words and images of themselves and their
compatriots, though of course mediated by the selection and perhaps the editing of Adelante. Some
of these videos included an introductory image of the logo of an island activist organization, such as
the Alianza Democratica Oriental (ADO), suggesting that these videos were created by those on the
island with an explicitly political goal. Using such videos in their own YouTube channel presents
Adelante as a partner with islanders, potentially lending credibility to its own statements about what is
happening in Cuba, as well as furthering their stated goal of highlighting the activities and existence
of island opposition to the Cuban government.

Articles posted on the Adelante website about the papal visit were less numerous than tweets
and videos, as was generally the case for Adelante’s digital media production during the study period.
A unique feature of the articles posted during the papal visit, however, was a running list of the
names of Cuban activists arrested during the period. Of the 28 unique web articles posted regarding
the visit, more than one-third (10) were lists of island activists detained by the Cuban government
during that time frame. These alerts were published under the byline of the Asamblea de la
Resistencia [Assembly of the Resistance], of which Adelante is a member, between March 26 and
March 29, 2012. The first such list announces that the Asamblea has established the “Information
and Support Center to monitor the repression in Cuba, which will be relaying information during
the visit of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Island [sic] of Cuba”. It further states that “[t]he
Information and Support Center will monitor the situation inside Cuba from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 pm.
during the 26, 27, and 28 of March, 2012”. Each list also contains information about the repressive
situation on the island, a statement made by an island activist, or other updates on the repression of
activists during the time period. The majority of each article, however, is composed of lists of
detained activists’ full names, sometimes including their location or updates on their transfer,
continued detention, or release. The longest list—a cumulative total—contains 269 names.

Cuban sources are not specifically acknowledged in the compilations of the lists of names themselves. Instead, the articles use language such as “we have been able to confirm,” [Mar 26] and “we have been able to ascertain that” [Mar 26]. One article states, “With great efforts, the [Information and Support] Center has been able to communicate with the different regions in the island in order to compile a partial list of those detained and receive information about the repressive situation within the country”. As with other unattributed reports of repression mentioned earlier in this chapter, one presumes that the reports come from islanders. In interviews Miguel explained that Adelante triangulates information through sources on the island who have a track record of reporting reliable information (Miguel interview, p. 15 ln. 26-32), and Antonio referred to getting news from various sources and then confirming with a phone call to island activists (Antonio interview, 7/23/12).

Homeland-produced knowledge is used more explicitly in the other 18 unique web articles. Each describes some form of action taken by homeland activists (such as a hunger strike), an act of state repression against activists (such as a beating or an arrest), or both. Each such article includes direct quotations from activists describing or confirming the event reported, or the article names an activist to whom a report is attributed. Sometimes the article mentions how the Asamblea or Adelante obtained the information, such as via a phone call from the source. In one instance the article is an editorial by Jose Daniel Ferrer Garcia, the leader of a Cuban dissident group, expressing his assessment of the climate of repression before and during the papal visit, and the need for human rights and democracy in Cuba. The editorial is published under his byline on the Adelante webpage.

Seven of the 28 unique web articles are in English. Six of the seven appear to be translations of Spanish-language articles, suggesting that a Spanish-literate audience remained the primary audience.
for these texts. Articles on the *Adelante* webpage included the highest proportion of English-language texts (one-fourth of the total) of all platforms used by *Adelante*. This discrepancy suggests that, while an English-dominant audience was not assumed to be following the rapid-fire updates of Twitter on a routine basis, this audience was viewed as interested in reading about repression in Cuba in a more summarized format. Moreover, given *Adelante*’s commitment to advocacy on the international level (such as at the UN), their use of English in the web articles suggests that they felt it especially important to communicate with a wider audience during the Pope’s visit, when a global audience might be able to exert pressure on the Pope to respond to activists’ circumstances.

**Framing and the use of homeland-produced knowledge during the papal visit**

The knowledge *Adelante* produced during the papal visit and its aftermath provides a typical example of the collective action frames *Adelante* developed via its online media presence, and the ways in which homeland-produced knowledge was used to develop those frames. The organization’s primary diagnostic frame was that of state repression, in which the repressive tactics of the Cuban government—and specifically Fidel and Raul Castro—were identified as the cause of the problem and the blameworthy parties. Interestingly, communism as a political ideology was not identified as part of the diagnostic frame. The prognostic frame, or solution to the problem, was identified as respect for international human rights on the part of the Cuban government.

As was the case more broadly during the study period, during the papal visit *Adelante* used homeland-produced knowledge to provide evidence of repression and human rights abuses in Cuba, as well as to lend emotional urgency to its frames and its calls for solidarity. Finally, *Adelante* uses homeland-produced knowledge to further the goals stated by Miguel and Antonio of highlighting the existence of island opposition to the government, and of supporting that opposition. The organization did this by highlighting island activists’ testimonies and reports of their own or other
activists’ acts of resistance, and of specific acts of violence against them.

Diagnostic Frame: State Repression

*Adelante* presented state repression of dissidents as a diagnostic frame during the papal visit by focusing intensively on acts of repression against Cuban activists, by using its media platforms to present evidence of repression, and by incorporating homeland-produced knowledge into this presentation in order to provide evidence and emotional urgency to the claim that repression was happening on the island. *Adelante* texts that present evidence of state repression against activists included tweets, YouTube videos, and articles on the group’s website. Repression includes arrests that were presented as arbitrary or in response to nonviolent activism; restrictions placed on a dissident’s movement (many were not allowed to attend the papal mass); physical violence attributed to state or quasi-state actors; reports of threats against activists or their families; and confiscation or destruction of activists’ property, including their homes.

While repression is a general frame used by *Adelante*, the period of the papal visit was characterized as occasioning an “ola represiva” [wave of repression] within an on-going repressive situation.²² This characterization emerged as early as February 22, 2012 in a retweet on *Adelante*’s feed from a Miami activist:

 Ла dictadura d #Cuba incrementa su violencia debido a q se acerca el aniversario de #OZT, el Día de la Resistencia y la visita del Papa

[The Cuban dictatorship is increasing its violence due to the fact that the anniversary of [Cuban activist Orlando Zapata Tamayo’s death], the Day of

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²² As stated earlier in the chapter, the Pope visited Cuba from March 26-28, 2012. The timeline of SMO texts coded as related to the visit extended from February 22 to September 19, 2012.
the Resistance, and the Pope’s visit are approaching].

Two of the three occasions mentioned—the death of Zapata Tamayo and the Dia de la Resistencia—are regular observances by both Cuban dissidents in Cuba and their supporters in Florida. Adelante texts from the study period referenced these occasions on a monthly basis on or about the 24th of each month during the study period. In the above retweet, however, the original poster and Adelante explicitly linked acts of repression by the Cuban state not only to the two anniversaries—which was common during the study period—but to preparations for the papal visit scheduled for the following month.

Subsequent texts by members of Adelante or by the Asamblea de la Resistencia, of which it is a member, continued to reference a repressive climate linked to the impending papal visit. For example, an article published by the Asamblea de la Resistencia on Adelante’s website on March 24, two days before the Pope’s arrival, stated:

Clima de represion y violencia crece en Cuba en los albores de la visita del Papa Benedicto XVI

[The climate of repression and violence grows in Cuba at the dawn of Pope Benedict XVI’s visit]

and went on to detail island activism, repressive responses by the state, and a list of activists placed under house arrest. Another article by the Asamblea and published on Adelante’s website on March 28 described a
fuerte operativo represivo desplegado por miembros de la seguridad

del Estado y de la policía política del régimen

[strong repressive operation deployed by members of [s]tate security and
the regime’s political police].

Island activists also used this language. For example, on March 24 Adelante retweeted a tweet by Cuban activist Rolando Lobaina, who characterized the period leading up to the Pope’s arrival as an “ola repressive” [wave of repression]:

#PapaCuba: El Vaticano debe condenar ola represiva de régimen cubano
vs mov opositor en la isla y denunciar la hipocresía de politic castrista

[#PopeCuba: The Vatican should condemn the wave of repression of the Cuban regime against the opposition movement on the island and denounce the hypocrisy of Castroite politics].

Here he also explicitly referenced the Castros and linked state repression with what he viewed as their hypocrisy. On March 26 Jose Daniel Ferrer, Cuban activist and leader of the opposition group Union Patriótica de Cuba, wrote a brief opinion piece published under his byline on Adelante’s website. He described the atmosphere in advance of the Pope’s arrival, stating,

Desde el pasado martes 20, las fuerzas represivas de la dictadura castrista
comenzaron a detener a activistas pro democracia, defensores de los derechos
humanos y Damas de Blanco con la intención de impedirles asistir a la misas del Sumo Pontífice. Sólo en la región oriental han ocurrido más de 140 arrestos arbitrarios y varias decenas de activistas se encuentran detenidos en sus respectivos hogares.

[Since last Tuesday the 20th, the repressive forces of the Castro dictatorship began to detain pro-democracy activists, defenders of human rights, and Ladies in White with the intension of impeding them from attending the mass of the High Pontiff. In the eastern region alone more than 140 arbitrary arrests have occurred and various dozens of activists find themselves detained in their respective homes].

As these examples illustrate, both island and exile activists characterized the period leading up to the Pope’s visit as occasioning state repression and, as Lobaina and Ferrer’s comments indicate, the repressive structure and behavior of the state is specifically attributed to Fidel and Raul Castro. These examples also highlight the language used both on the island and in Florida to describe the Cuban government as a “dictadura” [dictatorship] or “regimen” [regime], that deployed “fuerzas represivas” [repressive forces] to create an “ola represiva” [wave of repression]. This terminology was used frequently by activists in both Cuba and Florida to describe the Cuban government during the Papal visit and during the study period as a whole. Widespread use of such terms supports the idea that both Cuban and Florida-based activists saw the Cuban state and the Castros as repressive, and that this repressive characterization was part of Adelante’s framing of the problem it sought to address.

Uses of homeland-produced knowledge within a frame of repression

Homeland-produced knowledge as evidence
Adelante relied heavily on reports from Cuban activists to present information in the organization’s online texts throughout the study period, including the papal visit. Doing so was deployed as evidence legitimizing the authenticity of Adelante’s claims. In an interview Miguel confirmed the importance of having strong sources of information when doing his work (interview, 2/8/12, p. 15 ln. 17-20). He elaborated on the process of obtaining reliable information from activists in Cuba, saying,

you want to get as many credible sources as possible to confirm the information about an action that’s taking place. And over time, in developing relationships with different activists and seeing their patterns and their history of coming up with verifiable information, the stock of their credibility rises and you can rely on the information you’re getting from them . . . . So you trust but verify.” (Miguel interview, 2/8/12, p. 15 ln. 26-32)

Miguel’s comment suggests that Adelante members were concerned with the accuracy of the information they (co)created, and that they relied on homeland activists to provide this information. Indeed, Adelante used homeland-produced knowledge as evidence to construct the diagnostic frame of repression during the papal visit. Homeland-produced knowledge as evidence took four forms: testimony, direct quotations within texts created by exile activists, attributed reports, and unattributed reports.

Testimony in this context refers to the least mediated forms of island activists’ statements, narratives, or visual media. It includes retweets of island activists’ tweets, publication of YouTube videos created by island activists, written narratives or editorials published under an island activist’s own name on Adelante’s website, and interviews conducted by island activists with members of Adelante or its radio program. Of course, testimonies were mediated in that they were selected by
Adelante for retweet or publication on the website or, in the case of interviews, by the questions asked by the interviewer. They are, however, the most direct way that a reader/listener has of accessing Cuban activists’ words and thoughts via Adelante’s media presence. For example, island dissident Rolando Lobaina’s tweet was retweeted on March 24,

#PapaCuba; Arrestad [sic] ahora Francisco Manzanet, Roberto Pelegrin y Roneidi Salas en B[ara]coa, todos d mov Juan Pablo II para q no vayan a misa papal

[#PopeCuba; Now Francisco Manzanet, Roberto Pelegrin y Roneidi Salas have been arrested in B[ara]coa, all from the [dissident group] John Paul II Movement so that they don’t go to the papal mass].

The fact that this information comes from an island dissident and includes specific names and a location bolstered its legitimacy as evidence of Adelante’s frame of state repression in the form of arbitrary arrest and restriction of movement.

On April 16, 2012 Adelante published the transcript of an interview with Andres Carrion Alvarez that it had conducted for its shortwave radio program. A YouTube video containing audio of the interview was also embedded with the transcript. Carrion Alvarez, a dissident, had been arrested for disrupting the papal mass on March 26 by saying “Down with Communism!” and “Freedom!” (Amnesty International Annual Report, Cuba, 2013). After his outburst, Carrion Alvarez was accosted, removed from the location, and detained. The YouTube video begins with the logo of Adelante’s shortwave radio program and an introductory caption:

Declaraciones del Cubano, Andres Carrion, golpeado y arrestado el 26 de
marzo por gritar consignas durante la misa en Santiago de Cuba

[Declarations of the Cuban, Andres Carrion, beaten and arrested on the 26 of March for shouting slogans during the Mass in Santiago de Cuba].

The next visual image is a photograph of Carrion Alvarez apparently being accosted in the midst of an outburst. It is a close-up shot of him in the act of shouting, with his arms extended above and on either side of his head. Two men, seen from the back, are holding onto his wrists, and one of them has a hand on the side of the dissident’s torso. They appear to be attempting to push or steer him ahead of them; their backs are to the camera, while he is facing it. A second photo, perhaps taken just before the one in the video, is posted alongside the text of the transcription. In it Carrion Alvarez is shouting with his arms raised. Another person’s hand is visible on his left arm, and a man is visible behind his right arm, apparently reaching up to hold or grab it. From what little of the two other men is visible, they appear to be the same men from the other image. The photos are not credited, but based on interview descriptions of how Adelante obtains information from Cuba it may have been taken by an activist or independent journalist on the scene and sent out of the country. In the photos Carrion Alvarez is shouting with his arms raised. Another person’s hand is visible on his left arm, and a man is visible behind his right arm, apparently reaching up to hold or grab it. From what little of the two other men is visible, they appear to be the same men from the other image. The photos are not credited, but based on interview descriptions of how Adelante obtains information from Cuba it may have been taken by an activist or independent journalist on the scene and sent out of the country. In the photos Carrion Alvarez appears animated and determined to get his message out—a potentially heroic figure—and documentation of a detention-in-process provides a powerful illustration of state repression to the viewer.

Interestingly, Adelante used words more than images when deploying homeland-produced knowledge for evidence during the papal visit. It may be that activists’ words in the form of tweets or interviews were simply easier to obtain, but they also may in some ways be more readily perceived as authentic in an age of easily doctored images. Insofar as they appear to document Carrion Alvarez’s detention, these photos provide emotionally powerful evidence for Adelante’s reports of his
arrest and mistreatment, and of their overall claim of Cuban state repression during the papal visit. This documentation bolsters, and is bolstered by, the accompanying interview that Adelante conducted with Carrion Alvarez (presumably by telephone) after his release from prison.

In the interview, Carrion Alvarez stated that he was then under house arrest. The interviewer asked him what had happened to him after he was away from the cameras and alone with state security. The dissident explained that an official had told him,

si fuera por el, que el me mataria en ese momento. Era alguien que trabajaba para la Seguridad

if it was up to him, he would kill me right then. It was someone who worked for [state s]ecurity.

The interviewer followed up by asking if Carrion Alvarez had only been beaten at the moment of arrest. The dissident confirmed that that was the case, but went on to describe other hardships to which he was subjected, including being transferred to

una celda de muchas mas malas condiciones, oscura, sin agua

[a cell with much worse conditions, dark, without water].

He also detailed the restrictions placed on him after his release from formal detention, highlighting the limitations placed on his rights:
Tengo que pedir permiso . . . antes de salir del municipio de Santiago. No puedo salir sin antes comunicarselo a la Seguridad del Estado. Yo no puedo reunirme . . . Con personas de la oposición. Con personas que piensan como yo, que no podía participar en actos donde exprese mis formas de pensar, no podía hablar contra el gobierno, todo esto bajo las condiciones que si lo hacía podían detenerme de nuevo

[I have to ask permission . . . before leaving the city of Santiago. I can’t leave before telling the [s]tate [s]ecurity. I can’t meet with people in the opposition. With people who think as I do, that I couldn’t participate in acts in which I expressed my way of thinking, I couldn’t speak against the government, all this under the conditions that if I did they could detain me again].

Each of these examples contributed to the diagnostic frame of repression by providing a first-hand account of specific repressive acts taken against Carrion Alvarez by state officials.

Carrion Alvarez’s testimony was shaped by the interviewer, who asked him four questions that related to his treatment in detention out of six interview questions total. This focus of the questioning reveals the interviewer’s interest in presenting details of repression, and must have prompted Carrion Alvarez’s testimony on that topic, at least to some extent. His choice of topics was not strictly dictated by the interviewer, however. Carrion Alvarez also spoke at length about the efforts of activists with the Union Patriota de Cuba and the Damas de Blanco to free him, which he learned about after his release. In addition, some of his comments about repressive treatment were part of long answers to questions that the interviewer had posed to him about other topics. His focus on the actions of other activists and on his own experiences of repression render Carrion Alvarez’s interview consistent with other activist testimonies presented by Adelante during the papal
visit and the study period as a whole, which typically focused on one or both of these topics. Although mediated by activists in diaspora, testimonies such as that of Carrion Alvarez’s interview were the least mediated of Adelante’s presentations of homeland-produced knowledge as evidence for the frame of repression.

Other uses of homeland-produced knowledge were more heavily mediated by Adelante. The organization often interspersed a narrative of state repression with direct quotations from island activists describing acts of state repression against activists or their families, including arrests, physical violence, or restrictions on their movement or communication. On March 28 a report by the Asamblea de la Resistencia was published on Adelante’s website describing a series of acts of repression against activists in different parts of the island. Quotations from the affected activists were used to document restrictions placed on them by state or quasi-state actors. The following quotation was attributed to Dagoberto Valdes, described as a layperson [laico] of Pinar del Rio and the director of the magazine Convivencia:

Son cientos de personas las que no tienen telefonos; otras han sido detenidas, y otras que no pueden salir de su lugar para asistir a la Misa. Yo mismo tenia anoche un operativo de personas vestidas de civil en los alrededores de mi casa, visiblemente apostadas con intercomunicadores. Yo sali un momento . . . y me siguieron. Esto contrasta con lo que el Papa esta enseñando y esta diciendo en la Homilia de hoy

There are hundreds of people without telephones; others have been detained, and others can’t leave their places to go to the [m]ass. Last night I myself had an operative of people in civilian clothes in the area around my house, visibly stationed with walkie-talkies. I went out for a moment and they followed me. This is in contrast to what the Pope was
teaching and saying in today’s homily.

In the quotation above Valdes provided testimony about the circumstances facing “hundreds” of people. He does not indicate how he knows what has happened to hundreds of others, and the author(s) of the article do not provide additional context for his statement; the article simply opens with an introductory claim that repression is taking place across Cuba due to the government’s fear of activists’ efforts to reclaim their rights during the Pope’s visit. This opening statement is then followed by a series of quotations and attributed reports by individual activists. Valdes’ comment, however, may have added credibility for Adelante’s audience because he also recounted the details of a similar situation he himself had faced. Certainly the author(s) of the article have mediated Valdes’ story by selecting it for publication and by editing and framing it in the larger article. It is interesting, however, that he contrasts the behavior of state security with the Pope’s teaching. Based on the editing of his quote, he may have been asked a question by the author(s) that mentioned the papal homily, or he may have chosen to add that detail himself, perhaps to contrast the perfidy of the Cuban government with the teachings of the Catholic faith.

In other cases homeland-produced knowledge as evidence was provided in the form of an attributed report. I define an attributed report as a statement made by the exile/diaspora author of the text but attributed to information provided by those on the island. Sometimes the report was attributed to unnamed witnesses or others present, though the attributions were usually made to a named activist or to a family member or acquaintance of the activist whose fate was described. As with other forms of evidence based on homeland-produced knowledge, attributed reports have the effect of making the narrative more believable and legitimate as a factual report, as well as adding to its detail and vividness for the reader. A tweet by Adelante on March 26 reads:
Jose Daniel Ferrer denuncia mas d[e] 75 detenciones en Santiago de Cuba.

Damas d[e] Blanco sacadas d[e] una casa en Palma Soriano


Here Adelante provides details, including numbers of arrests and specific locations, as evidence of state repression. The attribution to a leader of the opposition likely lends credibility to the report for Adelante’s exile audience, as well as potentially giving strategic information to island activists who may be able to access it.

In some cases reports of repression were unattributed, though it is likely that they came from island activists since it would be difficult for Adelante to obtain the information otherwise. The best examples of this practice are the lists of detained activists compiled by the Asamblea de la Resistencia between March 26 and March 29, 2012. On March 27 the Asamblea wrote:

As of 10 pm of [sic] March 27th, 2012, we have been able to confirm that the following members of the Cuban Resistance have been detained, while others remain under house arrest.

The statement is followed by a numbered list of names. In this case the Asamblea did not indicate how they were able to confirm the names, and it is unlikely that the list was derived from Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch, given that the list was updated daily during the period in which arrests were taking place, probably before the international organizations would have had
time to confirm detainees’ identities. Furthermore, though Amnesty International was quoted in a previous such list as affirming detentions of activists in general terms, the international organization was not cited in this or any other list as the source of the names. For these reasons, I include such unattributed reports in Adelante’s use of homeland-produced knowledge as evidence for constructing the diagnostic frame of repression. Irrespective of the veracity or reliability of the information, which I cannot independently confirm, Adelante uses the language of factual reporting and confirmation to present information that most likely comes from island activists.

Interestingly, Adelante prioritized homeland-produced knowledge as evidence over reports from news media or international non-governmental organizations. For example, the detention of large numbers of activists and the blocking of their cell phones during the papal visit was documented by Amnesty International (AI) as early as March 28, 2012 (the day the Pope left the island) (Amnesty International, 2012, March 28), but links to AI articles do not appear in Adelante’s online presence during this period. In fact, only one text coded as related to the papal visit and relating to evidence of repression came from a non-Cuban source, and that was an Amnesty International article calling on the Cuban government to release Jorge Vasquez Chaviano from prison in September, 2012. Instead of these internationally recognized sources, Adelante instead used tweets, interviews, and videos by island activists, as well as the names of arrested activists compiled by the Asamblea de la Resistencia (which likely got the information from islanders).

The reasons behind this choice are not clear, but there may be several factors. First, island sources generally write in Spanish, making it easier for other island activists and monolingual exiled Cubans to understand the material. Second, as both Miguel and Antonio told me, Adelante works to support and highlight the work of the opposition, goals more effectively advanced by disseminating the texts of island activists than by quoting more “official” sources. Finally, Adelante seems to use its online presence in part to help island activists communicate with each other. As Miguel told me,
members of Adelante often find it easier to contact activists across the island than do fellow Cubans in different regions of the country. By retweeting and otherwise disseminating texts produced by Cuban dissidents, Adelante may not only be spreading their messages to a global audience, but helping other island activists by encouraging them, enabling them to stay up to date, and providing them with strategic information.

After the papal visit, activists in Cuba initiated a hunger strike for the release from prison of Jorge Vasquez Chaviano, a dissident arrested on March 27 while trying to attend the papal mass in Havana (Amnesty International Annual Report, 2013). During the period of the hunger strike, Adelante posted numerous texts announcing, describing, or containing recordings of island activists’ protests, their decisions to join the hunger strike, and their respective states of health upon doing so. The overwhelming majority of these texts were composed of retweets by dissidents, audio declarations or interviews, or video taken by island activists, thus directly making visible the presence, activity, and political opinions of the opposition.

Diagnostic frame: Who is to blame?

The texts created during the papal visit are representative of others generated or conveyed by Adelante in that they place blame for repression on the practices of the Cuban government and the Castros specifically. Thus their diagnostic framing of the problem of Cuban politics is one of repression enacted by specific people rather than as part of a particular ideology. This is consistent with early Cuban exile ideology about Cuba (see earlier in this chapter), but in contrast to the Cold War ideology that inspired much of the U.S. government’s support for the Cuban exile lobby. Thus while anticommunism structured much of U.S. policy toward Cuba even after the Cold War (such as the Helms-Burton act of 1996), Adelante generally does not use an ideological claim to oppose the Cuban government or advocate for change in Cuba, and did not use such a claim in the instance of
the papal visit. The words ‘communism’ or ‘communist’ came up only rarely in any texts during the study period.

Instead of communism, Adelante blames the Castros and their repressive practices. The organization uses words like “regime/regimen,” “dictadura,” “asesino,” “totalitarian,” and “authoritarian,” to describe the government, and focuses on acts of repression by the state and the need for human rights and freedom. This focus appears to be shared with the island opposition, who also rarely mentioned communism in texts during the study period with the occasional use of the slogan “Abajo el comunismo!” [Down with communism!] or, again occasionally, describing the government as a communist dictatorship. Instead they blamed the Castros or the dictatorship “la dictadura” directly. Videos of protests (as well as tweets reporting on protests) featured opposition activists shouting slogans (or holding up signs with slogans) such as “Abajo los Castro!” [Down with the Castros], “Castro asesino!” [Castro, assassin], and “Libertad!” [Freedom].

Prognostic Frame: Human Rights

Adelante’s prognostic frame, or solution to the problem of state repression in Cuba, is increased recognition and protection of international human rights. This prognostic frame is directly linked to the organization’s mission statement, quoted at the beginning of this section, which explicitly describes Adelante as committed to “a free Cuba where human rights are upheld and respected” (Adelante English website). Adelante’s most notable deployment of a human rights frame is of course in its work with international non-governmental organizations as described for me by Miguel, but the frame is also evident in its digital knowledge production.

Throughout the study period Adelante focused intensively on publicizing international human rights violations in Cuba. This focus continued during the papal visit, particularly when the organization documented specific abuses of activists’ human rights and appealed for their redress.
The papal visit was distinct, however, in that *Adelante* and its counterparts in Cuba appeared to view the Pope’s time on the island as an opportunity to show Cuban human rights violations to the world to an extent not previously possible. Not only could activists’ public knowledge production (via the internet) serve this function, but the Pope himself, if he agreed to meet with dissidents, could publicize their circumstances and goals. In the early part of March, 2012, just before the Pope’s visit, *Adelante* advanced a prognostic frame of respect for international human rights by disseminating calls by Cuban dissidents for increased protection of human rights on the island.

Pope Benedict XVI’s visit to Cuba inspired several Cuban activists and their international supporters to call on the Pope to meet with Cuban dissident groups, especially the Damas de Blanco [Ladies in White]. *Adelante* disseminated some of these calls by retweeting them in the organization’s Twitter feed. Island activists explicitly referenced human rights, or connected their appeals to a human rights project through hashtags such as #DDHH [Derechos Humanos] or #HHRR [Human Rights]. For example, in March of 2012 *Adelante* retweeted both English and Spanish versions of prominent dissident blogger Yoani Sanchez’s statement:

@DamasdBlanco ask Bendict XVI @PopeCuba one minute to meet and talk about the civil society and #HHRR [Human Rights]

Las @DamasdBlanco le piden a Bendicto XVI @PapaCuba un minuto para encontrarse y hablar de la sociedad civil y los #DDHH [Derechos Humanos].

*Adelante’s* use of YouTube also served to publicize slogans of the opposition, including the call for human rights. One such video, uploaded to YouTube in May, 2012, purportedly documents the arrest of dissident Jorge Vasquez Chaviano. The video appears to be a compilation of recordings
of various arrests and other actions taken against Vazquez Chaviano. The third segment begins with text that identifies it as depicting the activist’s arrest on March 27, 2012. As uniformed men drag Vasquez Chaviano into a waiting jeep, the activist shouts,

Viva la paz! Viva la libertad! Vivan los derechos humanos!


Although highlighting the slogan about human rights is not necessarily Adelante’s primary goal in disseminating this video—demonstrating state repression against activists or activist suffering are more likely objectives—the video nevertheless supports my assertion that Adelante constructed a prognostic frame of international human rights protection based in part on island activists’ demands and themes.

In addition to publicizing islanders’ own demands for increased human rights protection, Adelante also advanced its prognostic frame by documenting acts of state repression and framing these acts as human rights violations. I describe the documentation of state repression and the use of homeland-produced knowledge as evidence in the prior section of the chapter and won’t reiterate it here. I do want to spend a moment, though, on Adelante’s use of international human rights norms and discourse in its construction of the human rights frame. The organization accomplishes this framing of repression as human rights violation in two ways: by focusing on the types of repression that fall under the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and by using tactics similar to those used by internationally-known human rights organizations such as Amnesty International.

As stated above, one way Adelante frames the documentation of state repression as a case for human rights protection is by using established international norms of human rights in its rhetoric.
In some cases activists were referred to as human rights activists or political prisoners as opposed to dissidents, members of the opposition, or arrestees. Moreover, reports of repression overwhelmingly focused on the types of violations that fall under the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially Article 9 prohibiting arbitrary arrest, detention or exile; Article 13 asserting the right to freedom of movement; and Article 19 asserting the right to freedom of opinion and expression. For example,

#Cuba.@antunez. SOS por defensora de derechos humanos Yanisbel Valido Perez ingresada en Hosp de Santa Clara después de detención arbitraria

[SOS for human rights defender Yanisbel Valido Perez admitted to [the] Santa Clara Hosp[ital] after arbitrary detention].

In this tweet Adelante positions Valido Perez explicitly as a human rights defender and refers to her detention as “arbitrary,” language that clearly places it within the rhetoric of an international human rights violation. This focus on violations mentioned in the U.N. declaration (though Adelante did not identify them as such), places the texts, and Adelante’s work overall, into the global discourse of human rights and provides a widely-recognized framework for its thinking about Cuba and for advocating change.

Another way in which Adelante uses international human rights norms to construct its prognostic frame is by using some of the same tactics as larger, better-known organizations such as Amnesty International (AI). AI has long advanced its own mission by highlighting individual cases

(Keck & Sikkink, 1998, op. 88), a tactic which Adelante also employs. Importantly, Adelante makes particular use of homeland-produced knowledge in featuring these individual cases, which provide not only evidence (as with the diagnostic frame), but also emotional urgency.

**Homeland-produced knowledge and the prognostic frame**

As it did when developing a diagnostic frame of state repression, Adelante uses homeland-produced knowledge to provide evidence of the need for increased respect for human rights in Cuba. It also uses homeland-produced knowledge to provide a sense of emotional urgency in readers and viewers about the need to change the situation for dissidents in Cuba. This sense of urgency lends itself to the production of a prognostic frame because, if effective, it incites in the reader or viewer the desire to seek and act on a solution, a solution identified by Adelante as increased recognition of international human rights.

During the papal visit Adelante used homeland-produced knowledge to draw upon readers’ sympathy and, in some cases, their piety to cultivate emotional urgency about the human rights situation in Cuba. The organization published an opinion piece on its website by dissident leader Jose Daniel Ferrer, in which he contrasts the suffering Cuban people with what he sees as a hypocritical government that thwarts peaceful religious observance by restricting the ability of dissidents to attend the papal mass. The use of Cuban activists’ own words to create a striking emotional response in the reader is best exemplified by Ferrer’s closing words:

Muchos cubanos que creen en el Cristo crucificado y viven según sus enseñanzas se sentirán espiritualmente muy cerca del sucesor de San Pedro aún estando en inmundos calabozos.
[Many Cubans who believe in Christ crucified and live according to his teachings will feel spiritually very close to the successor of St. Peter even while being in filthy jail cells].

Here Ferrer (and Adelante, by publishing his piece) strikingly link jailed dissidents to the image of “Christ crucified” himself, leaving the reader with the stark image of imprisoned Cubans locked away from the “successor of St. Peter” and perhaps even evoking thoughts of New Testament references to Christ as the one who liberates the prisoner.

Another subset of texts recounted arrests, home detentions, and beatings. These tend to highlight the nefariousness of the government and to evoke sympathy for activists through shocking imagery or detailed descriptions of injuries; or to show activists as nobly and undeservedly suffering. On March 28 Adelante retweeted a tweet from island activist Ivan about the arrest of a

nino de 17 anos arrestado con revolver en la frente

[child of 17 years arrested with a revolver to his forehead].

As in the tweet above, arrests of or threats against minors during the study period often included their age, perhaps to emphasize the injustice of their treatment. The detail of a gun being held to the young man’s forehead also creates a strikingly threatening mental image.

Adelante used activist testimony and citizen journalism to provide a sense of emotional urgency to its frame during the papal visit itself, but these types of texts were a focal point in the six months after the Pope left the island. In this period an important line of social media text production turned to the arrests of two island activists, Andres Carion Alvarez and Jorge Vazquez Chaviano; the efforts
of others to secure their release; and the suffering of their fellow activists in those efforts. Video and audio recordings of testimony and citizen journalism were especially powerful ways to evoke a sense of emotional urgency in these cases. A particularly powerful video (also mentioned above) depicted the arrest of activist Jorge Vazquez Chaviano on his way to the papal mass. The imagery of his arrest and the subsequent destruction of part of his home provide powerful words and images of suffering.

Throughout the video, black screens are interspersed with the recorded images and contain text in Spanish explaining the setting, speakers, or action. At the end of the video, the two final black screens identify the original distributor as an island activist from Villa Clara, Cuba, and Adelante as the distributor outside of Cuba. It may be that Adelante edited the video for upload to YouTube, consistent with the statements of Antonio, who indicated that he sometimes does some editing of videos but seeks to give credit to the activists and opposition groups in Cuba who create them (interview 7/23/12). It is possible, however, that the distributor in Villa Clara did the editing and included the text, knowing that he was going to send the video to Adelante specifically. In this video, in addition to the credit given the original distributor, the logo of the Frente nacional de resistencia civica is superimposed over the bottom left corner of the images, suggesting that it was originally filmed by that island opposition group. I cannot confirm who added the logo.

This video was uploaded to Adelante’s YouTube channel and disseminated via its Twitter feed on May 14, 2012, accompanied by the tweet:

Vean aqui el video del arresto d[e] Jorge Vazquez Chaviano el 27 d[e] marzo.
Aun esta preso desde ese dia

[See here the video of the arrest of Jorge Vazquez Chaviano the 27th of March. He is still imprisoned since that day].
The video appears to be a compilation of recordings of various arrests and other actions taken against Vazquez Chaviano, one of which is identified as depicting his arrest on the way to the papal mass. Seconds after Vazquez Chaviano states that he is leaving for the mass and points to the state police (off camera), stating that they are coming to arrest him, a jeep pulls up and two uniformed men drag Vazquez Chaviano into the vehicle as he shouts slogans for peace, freedom, and human rights. By showing the arrest happening in real time, this video not only appears to document the reality of Vazquez Chaviano’s detention (homeland-produced knowledge as evidence), but makes it much more concrete and personal than would simple tweets or other text. The viewer hears Vazquez Chaviano’s voice and sees him being dragged away, providing a sense of emotional urgency to the report of his arrest.

On September 9, 2012 island activists commenced a hunger strike demanding Vazquez Chaviano’s release from prison. Texts produced and disseminated by Adelante during the hunger strike made extensive use of island activists’ own words to evoke a sense of emotional urgency about these activists’ health, as well as about the need to release Vazquez Chaviano. Tweets from loved ones detailing the health problems created by the hunger strike were an important part of the text production in this period, such as the following from Yris Perez Aguilera, activist and wife of striking activist Jorge Luis Garcia “Antunez”:

Recobra Antunez la conciencia luego del desmayo que le causo fuerte colico nefritico

[Antunez has recovered consciousness after the fainting caused by severe kidney stones].
Video was a particularly powerful medium for this purpose. YouTube videos were created by island activists or their loved ones and tweeted by Adelante or its radio program containing audio testimony about their conditions. For example, on September 14, 2012, Adelante retweeted a tweet from Antunez’s twitter feed (possibly posted by his wife, Yris Perez Aguilera), which contained a link to a YouTube video in which Perez Aguilera asserted that her husband was deteriorating. The video, uploaded by Perez Aguilera, contains a still photo of Antunez seated at a table in front of a painted image of the Cuban flag. In the audio Perez Aguilera identifies herself by name and as the wife of “preso politico” [political prisoner] Jorge Luis Garcia “Antunez.” She goes on to state that he has lost the ability to recognize people, and that she is very worried [muy preocupada] about his condition. By retweeting this 21-second video from Antunez’s feed, as well as others during the period of the hunger strike, Adelante uses homeland-produced knowledge to create a sense of emotional urgency about the conditions of an activist via emotional testimony from his wife who is worried about him.

Perhaps the most striking video from this period was a YouTube video showing footage of Antunez and another hunger striker, Arturo Conde Zamora in states of apparent ill health resulting from the hunger strike. The video begins with an image of the logo of the activist group Frente Nacional Orlando Zapata Tamayo overlayed by text identifying the video as depicting hunger strikers in Placetas, Villa Clara [Cuba] in September, 2012. First Antunez is shown lying on a bed, apparently in a private home (children can be heard in the background). Antunez looks to be asleep; he does not move throughout the video. The walls and floor of the room look worn and a bit dingy. The videographer—identified in text at the end of the video as Yris Perez Aguilera, his wife—identifies Antunez by name and opposition organization, stating that he is on hunger strike. She pans his body as she describes his condition. He is unconscious [inconciente] and can hardly urinate [apenas puede orinar]. She states,
Su organismo se vaya deteriorando cada . . . cada minuto que va pasando

[His body is deteriorating every . . . every minute that passes].

Thus Perez Aguilera’s words, accompanied by the image of her husband’s condition, provide a sense of urgency that his health is poor and that it is growing rapidly worse “every minute.”

The video continues with an image of Arturo Conde Zamora, lying on a pallet in another apparently private home. The same voice (Perez Aguilera) identifies him by name and pans his body with the camera. He appears to be sleeping and remains still throughout the video. Perez Aguilera describes him as being in a very poor condition [pesima condicion].

At the end of the video we see text stating the demands of the two hunger strikers:

Jorge Luis Garcia Perez (Antunez) y Arturo Conde Zamora demandan al gobierno cubano la libertad del prisionero politico Jorge Vasquez Chaviano, quien extinguio su condena el pasado 9 de septiembre

[Jorge Luis Garcia Perez (Antunez) and Arturo Conde Zamora demand of the Cuban government the liberty of political prisoner Jorge Vasquez Chaviano, who finished his sentence the past 9 of September].

The next two screens of text identify Yris Perez Aguilera as the videographer and narrator, and the distributor as Felix Reyes Gutierrez of Ranchuelo, Villa Clara, Cuba, the same person who was named as the distributor of the video of Jorge Vazquez Chaviano’s arrest. The images in this video depict men who are clearly suffering, along with the narration of the wife of one of the men, all of
which makes the video emotionally striking and, at times, difficult to watch. In addition to the power of the words and images, the context of a hunger strike heightens the sense of emotional urgency, as time is of the essence in that situation.

**Preliminary Conclusions**

*Adelante*, though not among the oldest Cuban exile political organizations, comes out of a long line of such groups that endeavor to advance a political project in Cuba. The organization in many ways reflects the changing ethos and tactical thinking of its founding era after the end of the Cold War, when communism as a threat waned in U.S. political discourse and the discourse of human rights was gaining strength globally. Moreover, Cubans in the United States are also experiencing and expressing changes in their thinking about the appropriate relationship between themselves and their relatives and compatriots in Cuba (see for example, Blanco, 2011), including Cuban dissidents. My interviewees’ comments, as well as *Adelante*’s overall tactics and collective action frames, also reflect some of these changes.

As I described in detail in this chapter, *Adelante* uses its online presence to frame the perceived problem in Cuba as one of state repression at the hands of the Castros (diagnostic frame), and to propose increased recognition and protection of international human rights as the solution (prognostic frame). The organization makes extensive use of homeland-produced knowledge in these frames, incorporating testimony and citizen journalism from island activists to provide evidence of its claims and to evoke a sense of emotional urgency in readers/viewers about the situation. Though it mediates these texts to varying degrees, *Adelante* centers homeland-produced knowledge in its own online knowledge production. Doing so advances its goals (as described to me by interviewees Miguel and Antonio) in relation both to the Cuban opposition itself and to *Adelante*’s audience of Cuban exiles and the international community: supporting the opposition and
demonstrating to others that such an opposition exists. In chapter five I will reflect on how Adelante’s knowledge production reflects its pedagogical choices as an actor in a social movement, and compare these choices with those of Doostaan-e Demokrasy, the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4:

Case Study Organization: *Doostaan-e Demokrasy*

*Doostaan-e Demokrasy* [Friends of Democracy] is one of a long line of Iranian and diaspora groups advocating for more political freedoms within Iran. Indeed, it explicitly situates itself within a century-long tradition of such advocacy, dating back approximately to the Constitutional Revolution at the turn of the last century. In this chapter I describe how *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* uses knowledge produced by fellow Iranians inside Iran to create knowledge about the problem the organization identifies in Iranian politics (its diagnostic collective action frame), and its proposed solution (its prognostic frame). In order to do so I first identify the collective action frames used by the organization. I begin by situating these frames within the larger context of historical Iranian social movement frames, then describe how, again historically, Iranians in diaspora have become involved with political change in their homeland.

With this background established, I focus on contemporary events and issues that more immediately shape *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* as an organization: the events following the disputed Iranian presidential election of June, 2009, which lead to *Doostaan-e Demokrasy*’s creation; and the use of internet communications technology in those events both by activists in Iran and their supporters in diaspora. I then detail the specific collective action framing articulated by *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* in its online texts in order to understand how the organization uses homeland-produced knowledge (knowledge created by Iranians in Iran) to develop these collective action frames.

*Collective action frames in historical Iranian social movements*

Before analyzing *Doostaan-e Demokrasy*’s relationship with Iranian homeland and diaspora

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24 The names of both case study organizations and all participants have been changed to protect their privacy.

25 For more on collective action framing, see chapter one.
activists and how the organization uses those relationships to enact its political project, it is
necessary to understand just how the organization frames the issue of democracy in Iran. In order to
do that, however, I must briefly outline the social movement frames that have animated Iranian
political life for over a century. In doing so I draw substantially from the work of Stephen Poulson
(2006) and his comprehensive work on Iranian collective action framing in the twentieth century.

In his study Poulson (2006) identifies *sovereignty* as the master frame animating all major political
movements during that era. A master frame, according to Poulson is “the primary problem that
many movement groups largely agree upon” (p. 13), even if they may differ on how to solve that
problem. Poulson characterizes the frame of sovereignty as encompassing both national and
individual sovereignty. National sovereignty, in his characterization, refers to how Iran should
achieve national autonomy vis-a-vis global powers, whereas individual sovereignty refers to notions
of the qualities an individual must possess in order to participate in governance (p. 14) and to which
rights individual Iranians should hold (p. 16).

While I agree with Poulson’s broad characterization of the master frame structuring Iranian
political action for democracy in the last century, his characterization of individual sovereignty is
insufficiently explicit about the relationship between the (collective) people and the state. Azimi
(2008), by contrast, identifies “popular sovereignty” as a key factor in Iranian efforts to achieve
democracy. He uses the term to refer to a structure of governance whereby the people are the
“bearers of sovereignty, collectively empowered to determine the country’s political destiny” (p. 3).
This term more clearly represents the collective population in relation to the state, but also
encompasses the notion that the government must safeguard individual rights in relation to the state.
Azimi’s characterization of popular sovereignty most closely reflects the notion of sovereignty put
forward by *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* which, as I will show, concerns itself primarily with the need for a
state governance structure that responds to the people and respects them as the source of
sovereignty. Before detailing my findings about *Doostaan-e Demokrasy*, I will outline the evolution of the collective action frame of sovereignty in the major Iranian democratic social movements that have shaped historical antecedents of the Green Movement that *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* endeavors to support.

The frame of sovereignty first entered Iranian political movements in the latter half of the 19th century, during the period prior to the Tobacco Revolt of 1890 (Poulson, 2006). In this period national sovereignty was articulated through a discourse of economic and religio-cultural anti-colonialism. At that time merchants and members of the upper classes perceived the Qajar king, Nasereddin Shah, as weak, granting substantial tax concessions to the great powers, Britain and Russia, and losing territory to them in a series of wars (Azimi, 2008). Matters came to a head when the king granted a 50-year monopoly on tobacco to a British Company, leading Iranian tobacco traders to spark a protest that spread around the country (Azimi, 2008). At the same time, upper-class Iranian students were traveling abroad for business or to study in Europe, and were bringing back ideas about modernity and constitutional government (Matin-asgari, 2002), which added to the social and political disquiet of the period.

Over time a relatively broad coalition—encompassing merchants, clergy, and upper-class women and men—came together to push the Qajars to become constitutional monarchs (Paidar, 1997). The Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911) marks a turning point in the concept of sovereignty as a political frame in Iranian political life, as bringing the Qajars to heel was perceived to forstall further imperialist inroads by Britain and Russia (increasing national sovereignty), and to enhance the relationship of the people to their government via the creation of an elected parliament and the granting of suffrage, though only to men (popular sovereignty) (Azimi, 1998). These last two elements in particular, a representative parliament and suffrage, also arguably introduced two basic elements of a discourse of democracy into political circulation in Iran, as did the rhetoric of
constitutionalism that articulated this movement. Thus discourses of popular sovereignty in particular laid a conceptual groundwork for democratic discourse in Iran over the course of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Thus the Constitutional Revolution marks a key moment in the Iranian quest for both sovereignty and democracy. Scholars and activists identify it as a pivotal event in Iranian political life (Azimi, 2008), and Doostaan-e Demokrasy in particular situates itself within a political genealogy that begins with that period (Doostaan-e Demokrasy Manifesto, p. 1, ln. 24).

Iranian concern with political and cultural anti-colonialism (and later, anti-imperialism) persisted throughout the twentieth century, even as other concerns also animated political actors. After Reza Khan and his British supporters ended the Qajar dynasty, the newly installed Reza Khan sought to position the state as an “agent of progress” (Paidar, 1996), embarking on a campaign of state-led secular, Western-influenced modernization. Doing so further alienated the clergy and traditionalist segments of society, while some secularist and modernist Iranians turned to Russian-style Marxism as an alternative way of building a just, sovereign state. A third “voice,” The National Front, was also active during this period, having been consolidated from several opposition groups in the 1920s (Matin-asgari, 2002).

The National Front extended the national sovereignty frame of the Constitutional Revolution by advocating non-alignment vis-à-vis the world powers (Poulson, 2006). The Front also promoted what I would call popular sovereignty by attempting to strengthen the authority of Parliament and limit the powers of the monarchy. 26 Such efforts included extending some rights to women and ethnic minorities (Poulson, 2006). Part of the approach, in this period, to national sovereignty and self-determination also included nationalizing Iran's foreign-controlled oil industry, a step which eventually resulted in a coup against the Front-affiliated Prime Minister, Mohammad

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Mossadeq, in 1953 (Poulson, 2006). The coup against Mossadeq—in which the British and American governments were significantly involved (Azimi, 2012; Milani, 2011; Poulson, 2006)—demonstrated how fragile Iranians’ pursuit of sovereignty and democratic governance could be.

During the 1960s and 70s, Mohammad Reza Shah consolidated his power and attempted to appease his critics by enacting a series of reforms in a so-called White Revolution, including granting women’s suffrage in 1963 (Hoodfar, 1999, p. 18). Despite these efforts, opposition to his authoritarian rule continued to mount, and was frequently articulated in terms of Iranian sovereignty. Many opposed his willingness to grant economic concessions to foreign powers and companies, which they viewed as undermining national sovereignty; many clergy and other cultural traditionalists saw the Shah’s embrace of “Western” practices and values—including some White Revolution reforms—as a threat to national sovereignty in cultural and religious terms (Keddie, 2006, pp. 167, 169). As opposition to the monarchy grew, eventually turning to revolution, both traditionalist and modernist segments of society made sovereignty claims to support their cause. Among young, religious Iranians (especially women), Ali Shariati and Jalal Al-e Ahmad made a case for a modern, politically engaged Islam as a way for Iranians to build a robust state with an authentically Iranian and Islamic character that was free from cultural and economic imperialism (Keddie, 2006).

Dissent was also articulated in terms of anti-despotism. Islamist opponents of the Shah (such as Ayatollah Khomeini) used a religious narrative, comparing him to Yazid (Poulson, 2006, p. 46), the caliph responsible for the death of the Prophet Mohammad’s grandsons; secularists deployed the slogan, “Reforms Yes, Dictatorship No” (Poulson, 2006, p. 186). This rhetoric would echo in the 2009 post-election protests that lead to Doostaan-e Democracy’s formation, when protestors chanted “Marg bar dictator!” [Down with the dictator!] (Worth, 2009), and in the organization’s own

27 Referring to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei
anti-autocratic discourse (see later in this chapter).

Dissident activism decreased in the post-revolutionary 1980s due to a variety of factors including the Iran-Iraq war and Ayatollah Khomeini’s suppression of his opponents. Elements of the women’s movement remained active, however, using a discourse of rights that enabled them to win some protections for women while (partially) warding off accusations of foreign influence and “Westoxification” [gharbzadeh]. Indeed, women were the first to protest the new revolutionary government when Khomeini first attempted to impose the hijab. Activists demonstrated in the streets on International Women’s Day, 1979, shouting “Freedom is neither Eastern nor Western, it is universal!” (Tohidi, 2002, p. 7). With this claim Iranian feminists engaged a discourse of individual and popular sovereignty by asserting their individual rights before the state in the face of compulsory veiling. Their claim to the universal also situated them within the evolving Iranian discourse of national sovereignty by eschewing both “West” (the U.S./Europe) and “East” (the Soviet Union).

Poulson (2006) identifies the reform movements of the 1990s and early 2000s as introducing the discourse of individual rights for the entire public into the existing frame of sovereignty thus, I would argue, making a close if not always entirely explicit link between (popular) sovereignty claims and an ethic of democracy. These movements—including the women’s, students’ and 2nd of Khordad [23 May] movements—continued to engage the frames of individual sovereignty via calls for respect for such democratic structures and norms as the constitution, the rule of law, and the development of civil society (Poulson, 2006). Thus they attempted to promote the sovereignty of individuals vis-a-vis the state by advancing the view that the constitution must apply equally to all citizens, and that civil society-building could enhance Iran’s political development (Nabavi, 2012). Then-president Mohammad Khatami, the most visible proponent of this perspective, also presented

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28 Named for the day reformist president Mohammad Khatami was elected in 1997
the need for a Dialogue of Civilizations as a way to re-establish relations with the United States that would maintain Iran’s national sovereignty.

At the same time a movement of religious intellectuals, such as Abdolkarim Soroush and Mohsen Kadivar, began to critique the place of religion in the Iranian political system and to advocate various means of making the Iranian state more democratic in relation to all its citizens (sometimes articulated in terms of “religious democracy”) (Bayat, 2007). Discourses of this period included calls by some for “Iran for all Iranians” (regardless of ideology or religion), “unconditional citizenship rights,” and “freedom of the opposition” (Bayat, 2007, pp. 96-97).

The reform movement(s) eventually foundered to a certain extent, but the women’s movement in particular has achieved a number of concrete successes by focusing on rights and legal equality, which affirmed this approach (Nabavi, 2012). A “rights” discourse was more concrete, could have broader public appeal, and had proved effective, since the women’s movement had long ago used the strategy to outmaneuver tactical repression and bridge ideological divides. Thus the “rights” discourse continues into the twenty-first century and is currently used by various movements and groups, including Doostaan-e Demokrasy.

In order to understand the context of Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s relationship to the Iranian Green Movement, it is necessary to understand how diaspora groups—in particular students—have related to political change in Iran historically. The trend of Iranians studying abroad and then attempting to affect Iranian political life, either from inside or outside the country, extends back more than a century.

*The Iranian diaspora and Iran’s politics*

The monarchs of the Qajar dynasty sent elite Iranian students to Europe—especially France beginning in the late 19th and early 20th century. Although never a tremendous number, there were
about 500 Iranian students in Europe by 1918 (Matin-ashari, 2002, p. 19). Upon their return to Iran, these graduates brought with them not only the technical educations they had received, but other ideas as well, including their experiences with modernism, secularism, and constitutional government. After the Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911), the clergy lost much of their power in favor of these modern- and European-educated elites (Matin-asgari, 2002, p. 18).

The political influence of Iranian students abroad continued throughout the twentieth century. In the 1920s Reza Khan sent students to Europe as part of his efforts to “modernize” the country, and some of these individuals subsequently assumed leadership in the Tudeh (Communist) Party and the National Front, in opposition to the monarch’s repression (Matin-asgari, 2002, p. 14). Though both of these organizations—and especially Tudeh—exerted a long-standing influence on Iranian political organizing in Iran and overseas during much of the twentieth century (Matin-asgari, 2002), student groups abroad would reach their peak as a major political opposition force in the latter half of the twentieth century. Before I discuss that development, however, I must outline the arrival of a substantial Iranian population in the United States.

Once again, international relations provided an impetus for the arrival of a heretofore tiny population in the United States. The first of two waves of Iranian migration to the U.S. began in the mid-1950s and lasted until the 1979 revolution. It totaled approximately 34,000 people, mostly those associated with the monarchy, and students (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006, para. 1). Though many students had arrived to pursue technical educations that might spur Iran’s development (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006, “Historical background,” para. 1), the fruits of an international experience were not long restricted to the technical over the political and cultural.

Iranian student opposition in the U.S. began its evolution as a major political force in the early 1960s, when a pro-government (indeed, a government-created) student group became independent and, eventually, radicalized. The Iranian Embassy and American Friends of the Middle
East (AFME) founded the Iranian Students Association in the U.S. (ISAUS) in 1952, ostensibly to help Iranian students study in the United States (Matin-asgari, 2002, p. 36). The AMFE was in fact a CIA front, however, created to compete with the Soviet Union for control of student and labor groups (Matin-asgari, 2002, p. 36). The organization had a minority of politically-minded members early on, but the ISAUS did not become expressly political or oppositional until several of these activists managed to take over the leadership in 1960, creating an independent organization (Matin-asgari, 2002, pp. 37-38).

Throughout the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, the ISAUS was in contact with Iranian student groups both inside and outside Iran, joining with the Organization of Tehran University Students (OTUS) in Iran and the Coalition of Iranian Students (CIS) in Europe to form the Coalition of Iranian Students National Union (CISNU), also known as the Confederation, in 1962. CISNU held frequent conferences—mostly in Europe, but also in the United States—throughout its duration. The reconstituted Iranian opposition group the National Front was also based outside the country (in Germany), and published a newsletter that was specifically intended for Iranians abroad (p. 47). Thus, via in-person contact and various publications, Iranian students in the U.S. were able to organize politically around issues related to Iran, and to maintain contact with their counterparts in Europe and in Iran itself.

Initially, the ISAUS’s demands and tactics were relatively moderate. For example, in 1961 the ISAUS urged President Kennedy not to support the Shah’s “unpopular regime” (Matin-asgari, 2002, p. 47). Along with its European counterpart, the group also supported a demonstration by the Organization of Tehran University Students for free elections in Iran (Matin-asgari, 2002, p. 48). Beginning in 1963, however, ISAUS and CISNU as a whole became increasingly Marxist in analysis and discourse, and increasingly militant. For example, when the Shah visited the U.S. in 1964, Iranian students protested his several stops around the country, and in some cases were met with
violence on the part of SAVAK agents accompanying him (Matin-asgari, 2002, pp. 75-76). By this time there were more Iranian students abroad than at home, allowing CISNU access to approximately half of Iranian students (Matin-asgari, 2002, p. 101). By the late 1960s, the U.S. had the largest number of Iranian Students abroad, and ISAUS continued to grow (Matin-asgari, 2002, p. 91), becoming increasingly leftist in its analysis (Matin-asgari, 2002, p. 91) and aggressive in its tactics (Matin-asgari, 2002, p. 98). In 1971 CISNU was banned in Iran and it eventually came apart in 1975, due to factional issues among other concerns (Matin-asgari, 2002, p. 143).

*Doostaan-e Demokrasy*, it must be noted, is not directly comparable to ISAUS or to CISNU for a variety of reasons. Among them: *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* does not share the leftist militancy of the later CISNU, nor has it ever advocated violence, nor the overthrow of the government (though it does directly criticize autocratic structures and figures within the Islamic Republic). It does not claim to be an organ for all Iranian students or graduates inside or outside of Iran though, according to Azadeh, it does see itself as a voice particular to and in some sense representative of thinkers of the post-revolutionary generation (Azadeh interview, p. 5, ln. 34- p. 6, ln. 2). Furthermore, and as I will explain later in the chapter, *Doostaan-e Demokrasy*’s goals and tactics are more discursive than the student opposition organization’s of the anti-Shah movement. All of them produced publications disseminating their views, but *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* as an organization seeks to encourage discussion, dialog, and critical thought more than to organize specific protests or other actions. In short, it has different goals and a different political outlook than did the student movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The history of the earlier movement is important in understanding *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* and, arguably, all subsequent diaspora political work related to Iran for several reasons.

First, Matin-asgari (2002) identifies this movement as “the leading social force of opposition to the monarchy in the two decades preceding the 1978-79 revolution” and the most important of the several international factors that contributed to that revolution (p. 163). Moreover, because it had to
balance competing factions, CISNU remained relatively pluralist, even at its most sectarian, enabling thousands of Iranian students abroad to experience (mostly) democratic and pluralist political organizing (p. 163). Finally, I would add, that the historical knowledge of diasporic and student organizing among Iranians in this, perhaps its most powerful form, may serve as inspiration to subsequent generations of Iranians in diaspora who wish to effect change in Iran.

After the massive changes in Iran brought about by the overthrow of the Shah and the subsequent Islamization of the 1978-79 revolution, the Iranian population in the United States changed yet again, as did its political activity. From a population of approximately 34,000 in the first wave, this second wave of migration (1978-early 2000s) ballooned to 330,000 (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006, para. 2). These individuals were in many cases asylees, refugees, and exiles, and a disproportionate number were members of ethnic and religious minorities, who were disadvantaged and even persecuted under the new regime. Many in the 1980s were also fleeing the war with Iraq (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006, para. 2).

During the first decade and a half of the second wave of Iranian migration to the United States, political activism was difficult and fractured, and not well-coordinated with activists in Iran. Diaspora activists tended to focus on regime change in Iran, and to maintain their earlier sectarian divisions from one another (Ghorashi & Boersma, 2009, p. 676), with monarchists, Marxists, liberals, feminists, and supporters of armed resistance, such as the Mojaheddin, each advancing their own concerns and approach. Furthermore, Iran was politically and technologically isolated in the early 1980s, in addition to the repressive climate within the country (Ghorashi & Boersma, 2009, p. 674), all of which inhibited transnational cooperation among activists. Moreover, even in the early 1990s, many Iranians in diaspora were suspicious of activism within Iran, while those in Iran may have felt those in diaspora were gone too long to be relied upon (Ghorashi & Boersma, 2009, p. 675). An exception to this situation was a segment of the (Iranian and diasporic) women’s
movement, particularly those women inside and outside Iran who were able to attend U.N. and other international conferences. At these events, such as the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985 and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing ten years later, women’s rights activists from Iran and the diaspora were able to meet and share ideas and experiences (Tohidi, 2002). Iranian women in diaspora also worked to support their feminist sisters in Iran with their organizing, research, and financial assistance (Tohidi, 2002).

Most recently, the 2009 presidential election and the so-called Green Movement that arose in response to it animated many Iranians in the United States. Tensions remain along long-established political divides (see for example Alexanian, 2011), but rallies held around the country in the wake of the election suggest at least a period of hopeful re-engagement with the subject of Iranian politics, even among those who had long decided to turn their attention elsewhere. Doostaan-e Demokrasy constitutes one such group that, as of this writing, continues its work. Before I describe the specific approaches of Doostaan-e Demokrasy, however, I must explain in more detail the events of the 2009 election and its aftermath, including how technology enabled “green” activists in Iran to communicate with each other and with the outside world.

The 2009 Iranian Presidential Elections and the Green Movement

The most recent of the challenges to the status quo in Iranian politics began in response to the presidential elections on June 12, 2009. Since it is this challenge that inspired the formation of my case study organization, Doostaan-e Demokrasy, a brief treatment of the events and their ramifications is necessary. President Mahmoud Ahmadinijad, first elected in 2005, was up for reelection in 2009, facing three challengers. One of the three was the conservative Mohsen Rezaei, and the other two, though necessarily possessed of strong establishment credentials, were reformists: Mir-Hussain Moussavi and Mehdi Karrubi (Shuster, 2009a). The campaign was unprecedented in some respects,
among them: the candidates addressed women’s rights within their respective platforms (Inskeep & Tahmasebi, 2009); the two frontrunners, Moussavi and Ahmadinijad, held a televised debate (Inskeep & Majd, 2009); and finally (as U.S. media were particularly eager to report), the wives of the candidates were much more visible and vocal than had been typical in the past, with Zahra Rahnavard, University chancellor and wife of candidate Moussavi famously accompanying her husband to political events and speaking at rallies (Inskeep & Tahmasebi, 2009).

Though Ahmadinijad did have substantial popular support, Moussavi’s supporters were numerous and vocal as well, leading to substantial speculation that he could unseat the incumbent Ahmadinijad (Shuster, 2009b). When the results were announced, however, Ahmadinijad was declared the winner. Members of the opposition leveled accusations of voting irregularities and cited polls that Moussavi had been ahead late in the campaign (Worth & Fathi, 2009a). The government responded that Moussavi’s concentrated support in the capital obscured his overall chances, as Ahmadinijad was more popular elsewhere in the country (Worth & Fathi, 2009a). The announcement of Ahmadinijad as the winner touched off massive demonstrations, particularly in Tehran and other cities. Reportedly, hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions (Milani, 2010)—of people marched peacefully and in near silence to Azadi [Freedom] Square in the capital on June 15th (Worth & Fathi, 2009b). As the days wore on and public discontent mounted, the Revolutionary Guards cracked down on protests (Milani, 2010); some people were killed, famously including the young woman Neda Agha-Soltan (DelViscio & Fisher, n.d.) and over 5,000 were detained (Amnesty International, 2010b). The government required all foreign journalists to leave the country on June 16 (DelViscio & Fisher, n.d.), which meant that it fell to laypeople to broadcast news of the events via cell phone videos, blog updates, text messages, and the much-touted Twitter29 (Yahyanedad & Gheytachi, 2012).

29 The use of Twitter during the uprising has been over-empahsized, possibly because foreign reporters and academics found it easy to access and search in English (Yahyanedad & Gheytachi, 2012).
Events in Iran during the summer of 2009—and their vivid depictions via social media—seemed to energize Iranians in diaspora, as well as non-Iranians, many of whom were made aware of Iranian reformist, student and women’s movements for the first time. Those in solidarity included “hacktivists” in far-flung countries who used their technical skill to confound Iranian government surveillance of Twitter (Castells, 2012), and Iranians in diaspora who created organizations such as United for Iran and Doostaan-e Demokrasy. Despite the early outpouring of interest and sympathy, the responses to the 2009 election both within and outside of Iran remain varied.

The Green Movement [jonbesb-e sabz] that grew out of the 2009 post-election protests suggests a greater level of unanimity and organization than is truly the case.\(^\mathbf{30}\) Within Iran numerous constituencies and their varying demands have rallied under the moniker despite having a variety of ideas about what the goals of the movement should be or what tactical steps it should take (see, for example, Milani, 2010). Moreover, there is no one leader or organization that can be clearly identified as coordinating a cohesive movement with clear, specific demands and a strategic program, though some consider Moussavi and Rahnavard to be at least the nominal leadership (Milani, 2010). Finally, the government crack-down after the early months post-election suppressed public protest activity. Many students, activists, and human rights defenders who might have continued other forms of dissent were jailed after the election protests (Amnesty International, 2010b), and dozens remained in detention for a long period (Amnesty International, 2013b). Though it may be too early to declare the death of the Green Movement, dissident activity appears to have been substantially hampered.

Political activity centered on the Green Movement in the U.S. Iranian diaspora has likewise been varied and, recently, subdued. In the months just after the election activists organized substantial demonstrations of solidarity, including the United for Iran coalition demonstrations

\(^{30}\) The movement gets its name from a green sash that the reformist former president Khatami gave to reformist candidate Moussavi (Milani, 2010).
throughout the country. Smaller demonstrations took place in various cities, including Los Angeles, where I noted substantial range in age, among other things. Iranian flags carried in these demonstrations were simply red, white, and green, carefully devoid of any central design—neither that of the Islamic Republic nor the lion and sun favored by monarchists. Despite this apparent coming together, however, political, generational, and factional differences did not disappear. Iranians, like other diverse populations, had a variety of views on the meaning of the “green” protests, what dissidents should do next, and what role, if any, the diaspora or the United States should have in the unfolding drama (see, for example, Alexanian, 2011). Additionally, activity was high when events in Iran were unfolding rapidly and it seemed like anything could happen. As dissent in Iran was suppressed, diaspora activity seems to have waned also.

Throughout the period of robust protest activity global technology played an important role in getting news out of Iran to a global audience. In our interview Azadeh specifically mentioned the many YouTube videos, filmed on cell phones in Iran, that showed government forces brutalizing protesters (Azadeh interview, 6/14/12, p. 2, ln. 9-11) as inspiring her and her colleagues to create Doostaan-e Demokrasy. In fact, the internet and social media are key to Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s structure and activities as an activist organization. Therefore, before I detail how this organization uses technology to conduct its solidarity work, I must describe in more detail the role that information communications technologies (ICTs) played in the post-election events and the connection between Iranian protesters in Iran with their counterparts in diaspora.

*Setting the stage for internet use after the 2009 election*

As Kellner and Kim (2010) have stated, information communications technologies, including the internet and recent social media innovations, provide space for individuals to “cultivate human agency and transformative activity” (p. 3), and to challenge the “uncontested monopoly of
knowledge” (p. 4) possessed by state and commercial institutions. The unprecedented outpouring of on-the-ground, first-person media images and messages from Iran after the 2009 presidential election certainly demonstrated this reality. Indeed, cyberspace has served this function in Iran since at least 2000, when many of the reformist print journals were forced to close due to government pressure (Yahyanejad & Gheytanchi, 2012, p. 143). Nevertheless, the internet in Iran, as elsewhere, is far from a panacea when it comes to enabling democratic deliberation or transformative politics. Access remains a challenge, as is true in many countries, and government restriction and surveillance are an especial challenge for activists in Iran. Finally, though the internet and other technologies have made it possible for Iranians to communicate with a global audience, including Iranians in diaspora, merely getting their messages out does not guarantee that these messages are received in “pure” and unmediated form, or that they are free from interpolation into the political agendas of others. In what follows I summarize how the internet and other information communications technologies (ICTs) were used in the post-2009 election uprisings, noting how events partially realized these technologies’ potential as tools for democratic practice, while still being vulnerable to their limitations.

The internet has operated in Iran since 1993, with usage increasing steadily from 2001 to 2009, as the government made efforts to improve internet infrastructure internet literacy through state-sponsored programs in schools and other organizations (Sohrabi-Haghighat, 2011). Iranians maintain tens of thousands of blogs and access a variety of media online (including blocked opposition and diasporic news sites) (Sohrabi-Haghighat, 2011). Despite this relatively robust activity, however, access and use are far from universal, with less than half of Iranians using the internet in 2010 (Sohrabi-Haghighat, 2011). Moreover, the Iranian government, while permitting some access, also surveilles or blocks sites (Sohrabi-Haghighat, 2011). Certainly this restriction hampers Iranians’ ability to use cyberspace for critical cultural or political interventions on political
and not only economic grounds; nevertheless, by the time of the election and its aftermath, a network of social and other alternative media did exist, due in part to the online activity of reformist and other dissident thinkers who had formerly deliberated in the reformist press, as mentioned above. In the period leading up the 2009 presidential election, Iranians inside the country were very active online via reform candidates’ campaign websites and other platforms (Yahyanejad & Gheytanchi, 2012, p. 145). During the crisis of legitimacy that followed the contested vote count, Green Movement activists and their global supporters conducted a variety of political tasks via information communications technologies (ICTs) that continue into the present, despite the constraints of government censorship, technological surveillance, and legal harassment.

Activist uses of ICTs after the election

As the June, 2009 protests evolved into what is now known as the Green Movement [jomhoreh-e sabz], Iranians both in Iran and in the diaspora used information communications technologies (ICTs) to engage with one another in various ways, from staging demonstrations to circulating information about events inside the country. I will first address the ways that Iranians in Iran have used ICTs in the Green Movement; then I will discuss the ways the Iranian diaspora has participated via ICTs, paying particular attention to how these technologies have facilitated relationships between these two broad and varied groups, before addressing the particular practices of Doostaan-e Demokrasy.

Activists inside Iran (what I refer to as homeland activists) used information communications technologies (ICTs) in two primary ways: to communicate with each other and to communicate with the outside world. Among themselves they used this technology to organize protests (Hashem & Najjar, 2010, p. 129), discuss issues and tactics (Hashem & Najjar, 2010; Yahyanejad & Gheytanchi, 2012), and share alternative, i.e., not state controlled, news (Yahyanejad & Gheytanchi, 2012). For
example, in December, 2009 a blogger suggested holding a demonstration by publicly mourning the recent death of reformist cleric Ayatollah Hussein-Ali Montazeri. This idea was publicized on the Persian-language news aggregation website Balatarin, and drew about three thousand people to a specified Tehran park in under nine hours (Yahyanejad & Gheytanchi, 2012, p. 149).

Homeland activists used a wide variety of ICTs to communicate with one another inside the country, including blogs, email groups, the aforementioned Balatarin, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, campaign websites, news websites (hosted outside Iran), and others. Non-internet-dependent technology such as SMS (texting) and MMS (Multi-Media Services) were also used (Yahyanejad & Gheytanchi, 2012, pp. 142-143). At times activists combined online and offline technologies to mount effective demonstrations of “Green” support. For example, in January, 2010 they posted the idea online to send in “Green” votes via SMS to a popular t.v. broadcast that invited the audience to text answers to questions. Each of the multiple choice answers was color coded, and Green Movement activists, spreading the word via SMS, convinced about 75 percent of the 1.8 million-member voting audience to always vote for the answer coded in green—even when it was an incorrect answer to the question asked (Yahyanejad & Gheytanchi, 2012, p. 149).

It is worth noting that although U.S. media eventually dubbed the 2009 uprising a “Twitter revolution,” Twitter was just one of many ICT platforms used, and not the most important. According to Yahyanejad and Gheytanchi (2012), Twitter was less popular among Iranians in general than other platforms, and the SMS system through which it operates was strategically shut down by the government during the protests (p. 150). Nevertheless, many journalists and academics in North America focused on Twitter, likely because many tweets were in English; the streams are easy to search; and the U.S. government at one point asked Twitter to delay its maintenance in order to keep the site operational for Iranian Twitter users (Yahyanejad & Gheytanchi, 2012, p. 141). In fact it was not Twitter, but aggregation sites like Balatarin, as well as BBC Persian and the (state
controlled) Fars News Agency that experienced peaks in activity on the day of the election and a few days after (Yahyanejad & Gheytanchi, 2012, p. 143). Western media’s excessive focus on Twitter—and on the messages conveyed on that platform, as opposed to others—exemplify another limitation of internet technologies as potentially liberatory spaces in social movements. Focusing on the lesser-used (and largely English-language) platform likely created a distorted, or at least a very partial, picture of what “Green” protesters were saying and doing, and may have contributed to an even greater focus on the novelty of this use of the platform than on the content and praxis of politics being played out in Iran itself.

The diaspora, the Green Movement, and ICTs

Despite these limitations, information communications technologies (ICTs) were crucial tools for communication between Iranian homeland activists and the outside world, particularly as conventional media were restricted in the country. In the days after the election the Iranian government swiftly expelled all foreign journalists (DelViscio & Fisher, n.d.; Yahyanejad & Gheytanchi, 2012). In the absence of the foreign press, citizen journalism became the best way to let the world know what was happening in Iran, and became a way to “mobilize protest, expose injustice, inform fellow citizens as well as the world at large of human-rights violations, and facilitate transnational ties within the Iranian diaspora” following the election crisis (Yahyanejad & Gheytanchi, 2012). Often citizen journalism took the form of publicizing attacks on protesters and other human rights violations (Yahyanejad & Gheytanchi, 2012, p. 141), epitomized by the viral video of the shooting death of Neda Agha-Soltan.

The Green Movement is in fact a loosely organized movement, not a formal political party or tightly organized movement with designated leaders and a formal organization or headquarters. As a result, diasporic support of this movement must be loose and networked, much the way activism is
inside Iran. Iranian government media censorship and repression of activists makes global solidarity even more challenging as supporters abroad try to get a sense of what is going on and what help is needed, all without putting their interlocutors in danger. Despite these challenges, Iranians in diaspora have actively supported the Green Movement by using ICTs to share information from inside Iran, and by creating their own forms of activism outside the country.

Given government repression within Iran and the absence of foreign journalists during the election crisis, those outside the country—including Iranians in diaspora—played an important role in helping homeland activists spread the artifacts of citizen journalism—such as photos, videos, and reports—to foreign or diaspora news sites, facebook, and other outlets (Yahyanejad & Gheytanchi, 2012). Hacktivists outside the country also aided Iranian protesters by interfering with the government’s attempts at surveillance (Castells, 2012). By circulating citizen journalism to global supporters and foreign media the Iranian diaspora helped publicize the situation world-wide, but they also made it possible for activists in Iran to access news about the protests happening around them or in other parts of the country—news that was not reported on state media. Again, questions of who in Iran could access such external contacts and the perspectives or agendas of such contacts (including foreign media, such as the BBC or Voice of America) must inform one’s understanding of how accurately or how broadly outsiders could understand the messages of Iranians inside the country. Nevertheless, this citizen journalism provided at least some way for media to circulate between activists in Iran and those outside the country.

The immediate post-election upsurge in protest activity is over, but the discussion of Iran’s future in light of this upheaval continues, including in cyberspace. In the next section of this chapter, I describe in detail the work of the case study organization Doostaan-e Demokrasy and how it uses information communications technologies—especially the internet—to enact solidarity in diaspora with the Iranian Green Movement.
**Doostaan-e Demokrasy and solidarity in cyberspace**

Initially, it was seeing acts of violence against protesters on social media that moved the members of what would become *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* from concerned interest to political action. As informant Azadeh, an Iranian attending graduate school in the United States, explained,

> [U]p to that point [the beginning of street protests], again, we were following [events] like regular interested and concerned followers until it got to the point that people started being attacked by militia in the street . . . . Things got worse and worse and then after the brutalities which were recorded . . . via cell phones and digital cameras and were circulated on online media, we decided that we need to do things (interview, 6/14/12, p. 2, ln. 5-11).

According to Azadeh, the students and young professionals who would go on to found *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* began by getting in touch with their personal contacts in Iran in order to develop a list of those who had been detained in the wake of the protests (Azadeh interview, p. 2). Since Iranian citizens outside the country can vote in presidential elections (Martin & Kaviani, 2009), Azadeh herself also contacted the BBC Farsi television program to report the election results of her (U.S.) city of residence. Finally, with news of continued protests and government crackdowns, Azadeh and her colleagues decided they had to form a political organization. They spent about six months developing their founding manifesto and most important values (Azadeh interview, p. 2, ln. 32-33), and made their work public eight or nine months after the election (Azadeh interview, p. 3, ln. 24-25).

As stated in chapter two, with members scattered all over North America and no official physical headquarters, *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* conducts all of its activism online. The organization’s
manifesto describes its membership as graduates and scholars outside Iran (Manifesto, p. 1, ln. 9); Azadeh described them as students and young professionals in the United States and Canada, some of whom are also active in other local organizations advocating democracy in Iran, and all of whom are volunteers (interview, 6/14/12). *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* sometimes collaborates with these other local groups, and individual members may bring *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* statements to their own local organizations for endorsement. Azadeh described the organization as “very grass roots” (interview, 6/14/12, p. 4, ln. 4).

Azadeh took care to point out in the interview that, while respecting human rights is an important value for the group and one of its official founding principles, *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* is a political, and not specifically a human rights, organization. She clarified by explaining that a human rights organization would concern itself with human rights violations on both sides of a conflict, including, in this case, those members of the Iranian militia that were attacked by protesters (Azadeh interview, p. 3, ln. 11-12). *Doostaan-e Demokrasy*, by contrast, advances a specific political agenda that opposes the current government structure and actions, though they do not advocate violence (Manifesto, p. 3, ln. 1-5).

The group’s political goals are not strictly limited to a governmental project, however, but evince a broader understanding of change, as stated in their manifesto, “[*Doostaan-e Demokrasy*] is a political front striving to reform the political, social, economic and cultural structures of the country” (p. 1, ln. 25-27). These reforms include explicitly political or governmental goals as well as social or cultural goals. The manifesto identifies three political goals: national sovereignty [حاضریت ملی] (Principle #1), described in terms of a government that responds to the people; pursuing democracy and fighting autocracy [استبداد ستیزی و دموکراسی خواهی] (Principle #2), and an independent judiciary [نظام قضایی مستقل] (Principle #6). Broader goals, which might be described as values pertaining to Iran’s socio-political culture, are the following: human rights [بشر حقوق]
According to its Manifesto, Doostaan-e Demokrasy seeks to support the Green Movement (Manifesto, p. 1 ln 20-21); to “reform the political, social, economic and cultural structures of the country” (Manifesto p. 1 ln 26-27), and to “[fight] against absolutism, putting in place strong mechanisms which render the rulers responsive to the people and a fair distribution of power. This movement sees democracy, meaning the rule of people over people, as the least harmful and most efficient regime to manage the society” (Manifesto, p. 2, ln. 23-26).

**Media Overview**

Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s online presence during the study period consists of a dedicated website and a Facebook page. A short-lived blog, YouTube channel, and Twitter feed were active only before the study period (which was October, 2011-September, 2012), so they were not incorporated into the study. The group’s primary organ is its website, which includes postings from the YouTube channel, a few news stories about Green Movement activists, and a series of analytical newsletters, which are digests of events in Iran of interest to Doostaan-e Demokrasy and its audience and which began as internal documents but were eventually made public (Azadeh interview, p. 3, ln. 33-35). The most extensive sections, however—which are also the most important, according to my source Azadeh—are the group’s founding manifesto and official statements. The manifesto articulates the organization of Doostaan-e Demokrasy, the reason for its formation, its relationship to the Iranian Green Movement, its goals, and its basic principles. It identifies Doostaan-e Demokrasy as an explicitly political (p. 1, ln. 25-26), diasporic organization (p. 1, ln. 8-9); devoted to the goals and principles of national sovereignty [ملی حاکمیت] (p. 2, ln. 6), democracy [دموکراتیک] (p. 2, ln. 21), human rights [حقوق بشر] (p. 2, ln. 36), social justice [عدالت اجتماعی] (p. 2, ln. 35), non-violence [پرهیز از خشونت] (p. 3, ln. 1), and an independent judiciary [نظام قضایی مستقل] (p. 3, ln. 7). It explicitly identifies Doostaan-e
Demokrasy as supportive of and acting in coordination with the Green Movement in Iran.

The five official statements published during the study period (October, 2011-September, 2012) articulate Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s positions on events or issues of concern to them, and are often co-signed by other local diasporic groups. These statements addressed the following topics during the study period: Iran’s development of nuclear technology; the government’s role in supporting Syria’s Bashar al Assad (one in Persian and an English translation); the anniversaries of protests in 2010; and the 2011 parliamentary and local elections. These official statements are also, in many cases, reposted on the group’s Facebook page, or on other opposition news websites (interview, 6/14/12, p. 8, ln. 24-26).

Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s Facebook page was begun on March 3, 2010, and was last active in February, 2013 (as of January 31, 2014). Most entries are links to Persian-language news sites, especially opposition news sites that include contributions from both inside and outside Iran, consistent with interview Azadeh (p. 8, ln. 24-26). All posts are in Persian except for the English-language statement about Iran’s support of Bashar al-Assad. Eighteen posts were made within the study period. Five of these posts were links to texts on the Doostaan-e Demokrasy website: an analytical newsletter, and the official statements on the Parliamentary elections, the nuclear issue, and Iran’s support of Bashar al Assad (both the English and Persian versions). Nine postings were links to opposition news sites, such as gooya.com, rahesabz.net, and emruznews.com, that had published these statements by Doostaan-e Demokrasy on their own websites. Two postings were links to other sites which contained news stories reporting lectures being held at universities in Houston and Los Angeles related to the Green Movement, though neither event appeared to be sponsored by or directly related to Doostaan-e Demokrasy. One posting was a link to a lecture posted on YouTube given by Dr. Kaveh Ehsani on Bahman 25, 1390 (February 14, 2012). The date suggests that it may have been about the protests on that date the year before, but I could not view the video, as it was
set to private and no other information was available on the site. Four photographs of signs related to voting were also posted in February, 2012, and are described as being taken in Tehran.

Finally, despite its interactive features, Facebook does not appear to be a forum for dialog for Doostaan-e Demokrasy and its readers or supporters. Twelve of the 18 postings had “likes,” and only two had comments. All of the likes appeared to come from people in diaspora, with one possible exception of someone who may have been living in Iran (though it was difficult to tell from the available Facebook profile information). In fact, seven of the posts were “liked” by Doostaan-e Demokrasy itself, including five whose only “likes” were by Doostaan-e Demokrasy. Of the two comments, one was simply “welcome back” (in English) after a few months without posting, and the other was another YouTube video of Dr. Abdolkarim Soroush entitled “33 Years of the Revolution without Theory” posted by Doostaan-e Demokrasy in the comment under the video by Dr. Ensani. Both videos were set to private in the YouTube link and I could not view them.

Audience

When I spoke to Azadeh about the group’s work she described Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s goals in terms of who they could reach with their message and how their audience affected the way they approached their goals. She stated,

Not everyone reads our stuff. We get publicized in important news websites of course, but we know that we--people in Iran, people in the streets or who, they are not in the streets anymore but who we wished to at some point energize enough to take another stand won’t necessarily read our stuff, so one of the things we kept in mind is that our goal should be bringing up new vocabulary and new discussions in the scene of political activists about Iran’s
situation (interview, 6/14/12, p. 4, ln. 28 - p. 5, ln. 2).

Here Azadeh indicated that Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s political tactics are discursive—introducing vocabulary, catalyzing discussion—rather than direct. Even generating international pressure on the government to change its behavior, a common tactic of international solidarity groups (see chapter 5), is at most secondary to Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s discursive approach.

When I asked her to elaborate on the goals and the role of Doostaan-e Demokrasy, Azadeh responded that Doostaan-e Demokrasy views itself as “speaking for the larger community of [the] young generation who don’t have necessarily any voice or . . . visible platform, and when I say our generation I’m talking about politicians in our generation” (Azadeh interview, p. 5, ln. 34- p. 6, ln. 2). (Earlier she had described her generation as the generation born “in a couple of years around the 1979 revolution” (p. 2, ln. 16)). Azadeh went on to say of the organization’s goal of fomenting discussion, “Our goal is definitely to get to the point that we see other political organizations forming with their own ideas and engaging in this dialog” (p. 6, ln. 9-11), advocating its Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s own “progressive” ideas (p. 6, ln. 14), and acting as “this other thinker, this other critic” (p. 6, ln. 15-16).

**Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s framing of its cause**

Homeland-produced knowledge is not apparent on Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s website. Iranians inside Iran are not quoted in the texts published during the study period, nor are specific knowledge artifacts (such as essays or videos) by Iranians in Iran present. Statements are not signed with specific bylines, but Azadeh indicated that publications on the website are the analysis of Doostaan-e Demokrasy as a group (Azadeh interview,6/14/12), not that of activists inside Iran. Knowledge produced in Iran is used mainly as a source of information on happenings in Iran that then provide
material for *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* members’ political analysis. This knowledge is generally not described, quoted, or attributed to specific persons or groups, however. Sometimes the Supreme Leader’s own speeches or website are quoted directly to illustrate a point made by *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* about his actions or policies. Specific sources, such as CNN, the BBC, or opposition news websites, are most often cited in the analytical newsletters. Opposition sites such as Gooya, Jaras, and Rooz Online have contributors both inside and outside Iran, making the line between homeland-produced knowledge and knowledge produced in diaspora less clear.

Azadeh did say, however, that each member of *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* has their own personal contacts within the country (p. 14, ln. 13), from whom they are able to obtain news of events taking place in Iran. One example is the occasion on which they used these discussions to develop a list of detained students after the 2009 election. Interaction with personal contacts in Iran generally takes place over telephone or Skype. Email is regarded as unsafe given the potential for Iranian government monitoring (Azadeh interview, p. 14, ln. 23). Information from individuals and from opposition sites, or purveyors such as the BBC or CNN, is then used by *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* in forming the group’s own analysis.

When asked about the audience for *Doostaan-e Demokrasy*’s work, Azadeh located it primarily within the Iranian diaspora, saying that activists, intellectuals, and political figures within the country are, at least theoretically, part of who she sees as the group’s audience (Azadeh interview, p. 6, ln. 18-21). In practice however, she noted that “most of the important activists inside Iran are in jail” (Azadeh interview, p. 9, ln. 25). Newer activists, as well as *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* members’ personal contacts, are under a great deal of pressure (Azadeh interview, p. 9, ln. 13), including surveillance of email. This means that communications are not secure and may be dangerous for anyone communicating with *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* (Azadeh interview, p. 14, ln. 18-19). Thus I surmise that interactions with these contacts may be infrequent, but that contact with them likely contributes to
the material produced on the website in the form of background knowledge.

Perhaps if the homeland movement in Iran were more able to act and to communicate with others outside the country, Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s approach to its digital knowledge production would include more homeland-produced knowledge. The period of data collection (October 2011-September, 2012) coincided with a period of heavy repression of dissent within Iran, however, and the substantial restrictions this placed on access to homeland activists may have influenced the group’s choices. Largely because of those restrictions, Doostaan-e Demokrasy speaks mainly to others in diaspora—especially academics and activists—and the formulation of goals and analysis happens on that discursive stage.

One important exception is that of individual human rights cases. While not a primary focus of Doostaan-e Demokrasy, the organization has co-signed petitions to release Iranian political prisoners, and has in some cases spearheaded a push for the release of specific persons. In these cases they contact the family of the detainee directly to see if their help would be welcome and to help them understand what to do in each case. If information conflicts, Azadeh said that they try to go with the information coming from the source closest to the detainee, such as family members.

Framing

Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s diagnostic framing identifies autocracy in Iran’s national government structure as the primary problem the group seeks to address. This frame locates the source of the problem in those Iranian government structures that are non-elected, especially the institution of Supreme Leader. Doostaan-e Demokrasy further cites as problematic the long history of authoritarian governments of varying types in Iran (Manifesto, p. 1 ln. 11-14). The Supreme Leader [رهبر] (both the position itself and the current Supreme Leader’s individual decisions or those of his supporters) is identified as the primary blameworthy party, since his unelected office and the nature of his
powers—which he can use to override those of elected bodies—undercut even those elements of the Iranian national government that are directly responsive to the electorate. Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s diagnostic frame of autocracy is developed via discourses of state repression against dissenting citizens, and of state interference with popular sovereignty, leading to a lack of government legitimacy. The organization’s prognostic frame, or proposed solution to autocracy, is democracy, articulated via individual rights, popular sovereignty, and collective action in order to change the present situation.

In coding the manifesto and official statements for themes, by far the most common themes were popular sovereignty and state repression, followed by elections, autocracy, and governance. Interestingly, Islam/Islamism was only coded three times. The following table lists the identified themes and their frequency in Doostaan-e Demokrasy texts:

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Popular sovereignty</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State repression</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocracy</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nuclear</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National sovereignty</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supreme Leader</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geopolitics</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab Spring</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy 31</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International community</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluralism</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-violence</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31 These were instances of the actual word “democracy” دموکراسی. Clearly, many of the themes I identified in these texts can be included in a broader category of democracy, leading to my identification of the concept “democracy” as central to the organization’s prognostic frame.
The diagnostic frame of *autocracy* was coded 23 times in *Doostaan*e *Demokrasy* texts, and included the terms such as “autocracy” [khodkaamegi], “absolutism” [estebdaad], and references to the suppression of dissent or the restriction of rights. I also coded “velayat-e faqih” or rule of the religious jurist, as part of autocracy, since it is linked in the texts in which it appears with dictatorship. Interestingly, the term “velayat-e faqih” appears only twice in the organization’s statements. In the statement urging a boycott of the 2011 elections the texts ends with a call to “establish the people’s will against the dictatorship of the velayat-e faqih,” and the statement on the anniversary of the 2010 protests describes the Iranian government’s support of Syrian leader Bashar Al-Asad as demonstrating the “shaky position of the despotic rule of velayat-e faqih.” These two repetitions comprise the only direct references to theocracy in *Doostaan*e *Democracy*s texts during the study period, suggesting a deliberate choice to frame the problem in Iran in terms of autocracy vs democracy, and not as one of theocracy vs. secularism.

*Doostaan*e *Demokrasy*s founding manifesto most clearly and fully articulates the organization’s framing of the Iranian government as autocratic. In the introductory paragraphs, *Doostaan*e *Demokrasy* states that the Iranian government—both in the present and in prior forms (presumably the monarchy)

impose[s] their autocracy and political and economic totalitarianism by

imposing grave consequences on modern thinkers, dissidents and opponents
to terrorize the people.

Here the manifesto directly characterizes the government as autocratic and totalitarian, linking these characteristics to practices of repression through terror and suppression of dissent. These attributes are further elaborated in the manifesto in the paragraphs describing principle 2: Promoting democracy and fighting autocracy [استبداد ستیزی و دموکراسی خواهی]. Here the manifesto explicitly states that

[Doostaan-e Demokrasy] sets its goal as fighting against absolutism [استبداد] [autocracy; despotism], putting in place strong mechanisms which renders the rulers responsive [پاسخگو کردن] to the people and a fair distribution of power (p. 2, ln. 23-25).

This statement links autocracy (or “absolutism” [استبداد]) with the interference with popular sovereignty, implying that the government is currently not responsive to the people and must be made so. This implication also links this frame directly with its solution, or prognostic frame: responsive government and the fair distribution of power.

Over the next several months of the study period, Doostaan-e Demokrasy repeated and elaborated upon the frame of autocracy in subsequent statements. The October, 2011 official statement on the then-upcoming Parliamentary elections links autocratic government with non-responsiveness to the electorate (interference with popular sovereignty) and with state repression in various ways. First, this statement begins with a picture of repressive governance, contextualizing the upcoming elections with the recent toppling of “dictators” in the Middle East [دیکتاتور های خاورمیانه], and describing a domestic situation in which dissidents remain under house arrest and the “crimes” [جنایا ت] against protesters have not been brought to trial (p. 1, ln. 9-10).
The statement then moves to perhaps the most concise of *Doostaan-e Demokray*’s articulations of their position that the basic structure of government in Iran is inimical to popular sovereignty and democracy, stating,

Surely the Iranian citizens have the right to free and fair elections in which candidates representing various groups and ideologies participate, even if a parliament came to power under such conditions, suspicions over the authenticity of elections and the effectiveness of representatives would undermine people’s inclination to participate in these elections as long as the interferences by non-elected bodies – especially the governmental decrees by the Supreme Leader – continue to deprive the parliament of its decision-making power. (p. 1, ln. 15-19)

Or as Azadeh put it,

Assume you have a free election. Look at the previous elections that were presumably free. And assume we elected someone who gets into the parliament. Our person, truly, gets elected, goes to the parliament. What can he do? Every time they wanted to impeach the president or anyone who is doing wrongdoing in the judiciary system in government there is the Supreme Leader . . . and he has the ultimate ruling over—he can basically ask the parliament to drop a case. And this statement basically elaborates on that, that when we have a system in which the Supreme Leader has the ultimate power . . . we call that in Farsi *abkam-e bokumati rabbari*, which is the rulings and the judgments and let’s say the demands, the Supreme Leader’s demands that are above everything else.
Doostaan-e Demokrasy calls for genuinely free and fair elections in which those elected respond to the needs and will of their constituents. Nevertheless, they assert in this statement that the organization of government in Iran, and especially the position of Supreme Leader, renders elections a necessary but not sufficient condition for the democratic governance they seek, so much so that they call for a boycott of these elections.

In their February 2012 statement Doostaan-e Demokrasy details the many problems with the presence of autocratic governance in Iran, including economic crisis, unemployment, international sanctions, deprivations in education through the jailing of certain teachers, brain drain, and the detention of journalists, rendering public discussion impossible. The organization connects each of these problems to the Supreme Leader or to “sycophants” (p. 1, ln. 29) who support him, and these issues are characterized as stemming from policies he has approved. Having identified the blameworthy party (the Supreme Leader) in the case of domestic problems, Doostaan-e Demokrasy goes on to identify the problems with autocratic rule in the realm of Iran’s foreign policy.

In its statement to the people of Syria in June, 2012, Doostaan-e Demokrasy decries the Iranian government’s support of Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, urging all Iranians and the international community to oppose this support. The text describes the Iranian government as repressive and links its repressive behavior in domestic governance with repression and crimes against Syrian dissidents, saying,

The similarities of the tracing methods, the suppression techniques, the identical operational tactics used against the civilian protesters by pro-government Shabiha militia in Syria and by Basij militia in Iran, and the online tracking of Syrian
activists are but a few of the numerous signs that warn us of the involvement of Iranian regime with the Assad regime [original English].

These tactics and measures are positioned as extensions of Iranian domestic governance, in which the Iranian government suppresses its shia and non-shia citizens by exploiting shias’ religious beliefs inside Iran. Outside of Iran, in the name of Islam and under the pretense of defending Muslims, the Iranian regime pretends to support people of Bahrain, Egypt, Tunisia, and Jordan. Yet in the case of Syrian people, this same government hypocritically and under the pretense of ‘resistance against Israel,’ supports, assists, and justifies the brutalities of Assad regime, since it perceives that the fall of Bashar Al-Assad weakens the foundation of the Iranian regime.

In its closing line, *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* urges Syrian dissidents to learn the lessons of Iran’s 1979 revolution and avoid replacing one dictator with another, clearly considering the present Iranian government a dictatorship. Thus according to *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* the autocratic behavior of the Iranian government persists in both domestic and foreign policy. In the case of involvement in Syria, it is the support of brutality against dissidents (autocracy as repression) that *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* objects to, whereas in the prior statement, *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* decries the burdens for the public that the government’s autocratic rule creates.

In May, 2012, *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* published a statement calling for an end to what it termed “nuclear adventurism” [امّاجراژویي هسته ای]. The organization stated that the government’s focus on nuclear technology was posing a burden on the public with its huge financial cost and the response
of the international community. Interestingly, *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* connected this “adventurism” with the lack of a fully democratic state:

as long as exclusive rule احکامیت انحصاری is not replaced with democracy

[“popular rule”] مردمسالاری Iranians will have to bear ever-increasing difficulties.

The statement seems at minimum to imply that bad decisions come from autocratic rule, and perhaps that if fully democratic governance of the kind they advocate were to become a reality in Iran, nuclear “adventurism” in particular would not take place. In this statement *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* explicitly lays blame at the feet of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, by name, citing his unwillingness to negotiate with foreign powers on the nuclear issue (p. 1, ln. 45-46). His choices, *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* contends, have placed ongoing financial and political costs on the Iranian public, and also prevented the public from debating the merits of bearing these costs:

During this period, any discussion on the consequences of nuclear adventurism in the domestic media met with the severest security confrontations, and this trend continues to this day (p. 2, ln. 7-9).

Once again, it is the problem of autocratic rule that plagues the Iranian nation and which *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* seeks to challenge. In this case it is because autocracy allows the Supreme Leader to direct foreign policy to (they feel) Iran’s detriment, and because he suppresses any public discussion that might urge a different course.

As long as the people of Iran are kept in the dark about the key policies and
there exist no possibility of freely critiquing the critical decisions, national

Prognostic framing

Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s prognostic frame, or the proposed solution to its diagnostic frame of
autocracy, is democracy, articulated through discourses of individual rights, popular sovereignty, and
collective action to bring about these goals. Again, the founding manifesto most clearly and fully
articulates this prognostic framing. In this manifesto the group links itself to historical Iranian
movements against autocratic governments of the present and past, explicitly situating itself as part
of the “Iranian people’s freedom movement [جنگش آزادیخواهی ملت ایران], which was embodied in the
Green Movement [جنگش سبز]” (p. 1, ln. 41-42). Having positioned itself as part of a historical
tradition which it describes as struggling for “suppressed rights” [شده پایمال حقوق], Doostaan-e
Demokrasy sets out its six principles, delineated above, which I categorize into principles related to
goals and objectives, and principles related to processes. The four principles related to goals and
objectives are #1: national sovereignty [ملی حاکمیت]; #2: pursuing democracy and fighting autocracy
[استبداد سئیزی و دموکراسی خوافی]; #4: establishing social justice [عدالت اجتماعی]; and #6: independent
judiciary [نظام قضایی مستقل]. The two process-related goals are #3: human rights [حقوق بشر]; and #5:
avoiding violence [ترهید از خشونت].

Clearly “pursuing democracy” (principle #2) establishes democracy as a clear goal and a
solution to its opposite, the problem of autocracy identified by Doostaan-e Demokrasy. Democracy is
defined in this text as “the rule of people over people,” and includes, by Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s
definition, equality before the law, supervision of the “ruling power” by elected representatives and
parties, and the “guarantee of free elections.” Thus Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s definition of democracy as
a goal is articulated in terms of popular sovereignty via free elections, responsive, representative
government, and supervision of or limitations on the “ruling power,” echoing the discursive framing of past Iranian sovereignty movements such as the Constitutional Revolution and post-World War II efforts to curb the Pahlavi monarchy.

Popular sovereignty is a theme of principle #1 as well, “national sovereignty” [حاکمیت ملی]. It should be noted here that the Persian word “melli,” generally translated as “national,” has connotations both of the state and of the nation (of persons/peoples). In many political discourses of the prior century Iranians articulated their concern for the state vis-a-vis other states. In the case of Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s prognostic framing, national sovereignty [bokumát-e melli] can be understood as referring to “the powers of the country stems from the nation’ principle” (Manifesto, p. 2, ln. 12), by which a state can only have legitimacy if it “has the consent of the majority of the people” (Manifesto p. 2, ln. 15).

Indications that the state lacks legitimacy because it lacks popular trust include “[e]xercising a social, political and economic monopoly and arresting and imprisoning opponents,” (Manifesto, p. 2, ln. 15-16) i.e., violating the rights of opponents and thwarting political parties and public debate. Rights are again referenced in principle #6 independent judiciary, which Doostaan-e Demokrasy identifies as “one of the pillars of democratic rule” [حکومت دموکراتیک] (Manifesto, p.3, ln. 9-10).

Doostaan-e Demokrasy asserts the need for an independent judicial system in order to “prosecut[e] those who have abused the rights of the people” (Manifesto, p. 3, ln. 10-11). Thus in its founding manifesto, Doostaan-e Demokrasy links democracy, popular sovereignty, and individual rights in its proposed solution to autocracy in Iran.

The second element of prognostic framing is the means by which change should be brought about according to the organization in question. Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s texts indicate that collective action in the form of discussion and informing the public is their preference for effecting change in Iran. This stance is consistent with Azadeh’s comments to me in an interview when she she said,
“Our goal is definitely to get to the point that we see other political organizations forming with their own ideas and engaging in this dialog” (interview, p. 6, ln. 9-11). The prognostic frame of collective action is salient in Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s statements on the anniversary of the February 14, 2010 uprising, and in its call to boycott the 2011 parliamentary and local elections.

In its statement on the anniversary of the Feb 14, 2010 uprisings Doostaan-e Demokrasy identifies “opportunities to make the world hear our voice against dictatorship and to show our active presence in various arenas as we did the year before,” including the anniversaries of the house arrest of reformist candidates of the 2009 election, and the 2011 parliament and local elections (p. 1, ln. 47 - p. 2, ln. 1). Doostaan-e Demokrasy urges collective action, calling on Green Movement activists to “activate their networks [شبکه های اجتماعی] and use all opportunities for discussion and inform the public about the damages associated with the continuation of the authoritarian form of rule (p. 2, ln. 9-10).” This collective action is clearly meant to be primarily discursive, involving public education and discussion. Indeed, Doostaan-e Demokrasy goes on to assert that “awareness and strengthening of social networks are the most effective way for breaking the atmosphere of suppression and putting an end to authoritarianism” (p. 2, ln. 13-14).

The statement on the (then upcoming) parliamentary and local elections primarily calls for collective action in the form of a boycott of the elections, and spends the majority of the statement explaining the reasoning behind this stance. Once again, however, Doostaan-e Demokrasy presents the boycott as an opportunity for public education, saying,

we ask all political and civil groups, who respect the protection of Iran’s national interests and the basic rights of the citizens, to take a stance to actively boycott the elections and educate the public with regard to the government’s ever-increasing trends of adventurism in domestic and foreign arenas. (p. 2, ln. 15-18)
Preliminary Conclusions

*Doostaan-e Demokrasy* situates itself explicitly as part of a century-long period of struggle in Iran, dating from the Constitutional Revolution of the early twentieth century to the present day. Discursively it is heir to an even longer-lived frame of national, individual (Poulson, 2006) and popular (Azimi, 2008) sovereignty, interwoven with a more recent frame of individual rights, which it extends in the contemporary context of the Green Movement. *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* frames the current political crisis in Iran in terms of autocracy epitomized in the person and position of the Supreme Leader (diagnostic frame), while proposing a solution of democracy through responsive governance structures (prognostic frame). It proposes advancing this goal via collective action in the form of free public discussion and debate (prognostic frame), which it enacts via its own knowledge production and urges others to do both inside and outside Iran.

While identifying itself as being in solidarity with the Iranian Green Movement, *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* does not make explicit use of homeland-produced knowledge in its online presence, though members are in contact with homeland activists (interview, 6/14/12). Instead the organization attempts to use members’ own analyses to introduce and disseminate ideas which they view as progressive, or as risky or taboo to articulate within Iran itself, while urging others to consider and debate these ideas along with their own in their own social networks. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* may be achieving these goals, since the organization’s website and facebook page do not contain comments and discussion of this type, though they may be occurring elsewhere either online or offline. In the next chapter I discuss the nature and implications of *Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s* pedagogical strategy as a member of a technologically-connected social movement network, and compare it with that of *Adelante*.
CHAPTER 5: Conclusions

In this chapter I argue that the two social movement organizations in this case study enact activist pedagogies as they both learn and teach (each other and the public) in technologically-connected transnational learning networks. Their pedagogical choices are derived from their perception of their role(s) within a broader social movement to affect Cuba and Iran respectively. I assert that these roles, in turn, derive from each organization’s goals, sense of audience, geo-political context, and relationship to the respective homeland movements they seek to support. First I present the concept of social movement networks as learning networks, followed by cross-case analyses of Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s and Adelante’s collective action framing in light of my research questions. I then offer a typology of activist pedagogies within technologically-connected transnational social movement learning networks, situating Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s and Adelante’s pedagogical choices within this typology. Finally, I reflect upon the limitations of this study, its implications for the field, and potential directions for future research.

Social Movement Networks as Learning Networks

Though they are not new structures, networks have become a pervasive—perhaps even a defining—feature of social movements in the 21st century, especially with the advent of the internet and wireless mobile devices (Castells, 2009). Networks are organizational structures populated by “interconnected nodes” (Castells, 2009, p. 19) in the form of people and organizations (Torres et al., 2013) whose interactions are “characterized by voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange” (Keek & Sikkink, 1998, p. 8). Unlike more comparatively unitary structures, such as individuals or formal organizations, networks contain actors “whose boundaries of action are not the same, but which present themselves as a structure that, in certain contexts, work to achieve common objectives” (Torres, Romao, and Teodoro, 2013, p. 4). While Tarrow
(2006) finds the concept of “networks” to be too imprecise to be useful in discussing social movements, I consider the fluidity of the term to be a strength for conceptualizing social movements linked via internet technologies as learning networks.

Tarrow (2006) prefers the term coalition, which implies purposeful coordination undertaken with known actors to achieve specific goals. Networks, he asserts, can consist of actors who don’t even know of each other’s existence within the network, and certainly don’t act with intentional unity (pp. 163-164). I agree that networks and coalitions are not synonymous though, as the quotation from Torres, et al., above, makes clear, they have elements in common. Furthermore, any given social movement actor can be part of a network and also choose to act as a member of one or more specific coalitions for a particular purpose—activists need not choose to act within one structure over the other. As a conceptual tool, however, the strength of the term network as applied to social movement learning lies within its very fluidity and multivalence. Learning within a social movement network, I argue, includes a variety of forms and practices, from purposefully coordinated efforts with specific, time-bound aims, to more general contributions to an intellectual milieu which, activists hope, will introduce particular ideas to broader circulation. Eschewing the term network in favor of the more particular and pragmatic coalition forecloses a portion of this variability. It favors the planned, programmatic learning of the curriculum (in the case of social movements, an informal curriculum to be sure) and erases the potential for learning across a serendipitous connection—just the sort of connection for which the vast virtual territory of the internet is known.

I rely on the concept of networked social movements in this study because I agree with Castells (2012) that, while social movements arise in social conditions of conflict and contradiction (and not “because of” technology), “digital social networks based on the Internet and on wireless platforms
are decisive tools for mobilizing, for organizing, for deliberating, for coordinating and for deciding. Yet, the role of the Internet goes beyond instrumentality: it creates the conditions for a form of shared practice that allows a leaderless movement to survive, deliberate, coordinate and expand” (p. 229) [emphasis added]. The organizations under study here participate in just these sorts of activities, largely using the internet, in social movements that operate without functioning unified leadership and under conditions of repression. Indeed, I assert that it is because the internet is available as a tool and a structure that Adelante and Doostaan-e Demokrasy can do the work they do: co-constructing knowledge with counterparts overseas, disseminating that knowledge quickly and with relative efficiency to a transnational audience, and deliberating with that audience (and others) about the future direction(s) of their movement(s). Despite these benefits, the internet is not a straightforward “good” in social movements.

Though valuable tools, the internet and mobile devices are themselves enmeshed within existing structures and relations of power (Kahn & Kellner, 2005; Kellner & Kim, 2010). These structures and relations must become “cognizable objects” (Freire, 2012) of activists’ learning if the internet is to be a true tool of horizontal relations (Keck & Sikkink, 1998) among social movement actors. Moreover, social movement networks do not exist exclusively in cyberspace, but are multi-modal, with online and offline elements and manifestations. Castells (2012) identifies this multi-modality as a key feature of networked social movements which, he says, exist in the “Space of Autonomy” in between the (cyber-) space of flows and the (physical) urban space of defiance (p. 32).

I must add two caveats in my characterization of the Iranian Green Movement and the Cuban opposition as operating without functional unified leadership. First, in the Cuban case especially, leaders do exist within the many small dissident organizations on the island, as well as within coalitions among these organizations. On a national level, however, there does not appear to be a single tactical or symbolic leader, or group of leaders, of the opposition as a whole. Second, I do not mean to suggest that “leaderlessness” is an ideal state for social movements, since I agree with Yahyanejad & Gheytanchi (2012) that movements ultimately require some form of coordinated strategy, planning, and leadership in order to be successful (p. 151). Nevertheless, the movements with which Adelante and Doostaan-e Demokrasy are in solidarity appear to be (at least at the national level) leaderless at the time of this writing, and Castells’ characterization of the internet-connected network structure is apt.
Autonomy, in Castells’ formulation, allows for “the social actor to become a subject” via the construction of a socio-political-cultural project that is independent of existing institutions (p. 230). The decentered nature of the internet, social media, and wireless platforms allows for this transformation (pp. 230-231) but is not synonymous with it. Moreover, I argue that the value of any social movement actor’s pedagogical choices—their activist pedagogy—lies in its ability to manifest fully as a praxis, both in cyberspace and “on the ground” in Castells’ (2012) urban space of defiance.

As subjects in internet-connected, multi-modal social movements, members of Doostaan-e Demokrasy and Adelante use the space of autonomy to co-construct and disseminate knowledge, and to deploy that knowledge via particular pedagogical practices and with particular pedagogical goals. In light of these practices, the networked social movements in which they participate can be seen as social movement learning networks. In what follows I explore Doostaan-e Demokrasy and Adelante as two case examples of how social movement organizations can function within technologically-connected transnational social movement learning networks, situating them within a proposed typology of activist pedagogies. I do so by examining their respective collective action frames as sites of the co-construction of knowledge and, therefore, of both learning and teaching.

Activists in social movement organizations (SMOs) must find ways to articulate their perception of a social problem (diagnostic framing) and a proposed solution (prognostic framing) in order to mobilize action on a particular issue. When they engage with their colleagues within and outside the SMO to understand the nature of the social problem and what may be necessary to change it, they act, collectively, as learners. When they share this information with other social movement actors or with the public at large they act, again collectively, as teachers. As learners and teachers each organization selects and enacts particular activist pedagogies based on its self-perceived role (including its goals, perceived audience, geo-political context, and relationship to the

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33 For more on collective action framing see chapter one. For more on each case study organization’s chosen frames, see chapters three and four.
In the remainder of this chapter I analyze the objects of knowledge on which this study focuses—Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s and Adelante’s collective action frames—and each organization’s use of homeland-produced knowledge within these frames. Then I lay out my proposed typology, including the learning/teaching relationship embedded in each pedagogy, and the potential activist pedagogies have for liberatory education. Finally, I describe in more detail how Adelante and Doostaan-e Demokrasy fit within this typology.

Cross-case analysis

Doostaan-e Demokrasy and Adelante each participate in a (different) technologically-connected transnational social movement learning network to which they contribute in distinct ways. Based on the detailed findings described in chapters three and four, in this section I will analyze the similarities and differences in how these organizations co-construct knowledge with their respective interlocutors in order to frame their causes and what these approaches can tell us about their relationship to each organization’s homeland (Iranian or Cuban) counterparts. While both organizations share a desire to see democracy and political freedoms increased and state repression decreased in their respective homeland countries, they differ from one another on a variety of levels, including their framing of their respective causes; their use of technology—especially social media tools—in articulating and disseminating these frames; and in their relationships with counterparts in their homeland countries and in diaspora. Most notably for this study, the two organizations differ substantially in the activist pedagogies they use as actors in social movement learning networks.

Diagnostic and prognostic frames used

As was discussed in detail in chapters three and four, Adelante and Doostaan-e Demokrasy have distinct diagnostic and prognostic frames through which they conceive and discuss their work.
These frames are sites of knowledge about Cuba or Iran and the political situation each organization perceives in the country, knowledge that is co-constructed with counterparts in each homeland country and in diaspora. *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* frames the problem (diagnostic frame) in Iranian political life as one of autocracy, specifically blaming the structural position of the Supreme Leader, to articulate a critique of the structure of government in Iran. It identifies democracy in the form of popular sovereignty through responsive governance as the solution to this problem (prognostic frame). *Adelante*, by contrast, deploys a diagnostic frame of state repression in Cuba, identifying Fidel and Raul Castro as the primary blameworthy parties. The organization advances a prognostic frame of increased respect for international human rights as the solution to this problem.

Interestingly in light of their geographic locations (primarily) in the United States, neither organization deploys the specific ideological rhetoric commonly used against the governments of Iran and Cuba in this country. *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* bypasses a critique of Islamism—or even an explicit critique of theocratic governance more broadly—focusing instead on the un-elected nature of the Supreme Leader’s position and the power of that office to override the more electorally responsive organs of the state, such as the Parliament. *Adelante*, for its part, only rarely invokes communism in its denouncements of the Cuban political structure, instead personalizing its critique by focusing on the Castros themselves, and characterizing their government as totalitarian and dictatorial.

*Homeland-produced knowledge and frame construction*34

The use of homeland-produced knowledge in the construction of diagnostic and prognostic collective action frames is perhaps the area in which *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* and *Adelante* contrast most starkly. *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* uses homeland-produced knowledge mainly as background

34 Based on Research Question 1
information, which its members collect from a variety of sources and then analyze themselves for publication online. The ideas of activists in Iran are not directly quoted or cited, nor is the work of an Iranian activist or separate group published on the Doostaan-e Demokrasy website.

According to Azadeh, members of Doostaan-e Demokrasy get information from opposition news sites mainly outside Iran, as well as personal contacts within Iran. She referred to these personal contacts in describing Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s earliest work compiling a list of students and other demonstrators detained in the post-2009 election protests. Doostaan-e Demokrasy also speaks directly with the family members of detained activists in Iran, when possible, in order to determine whether and how to advocate for the release of individual prisoners, though this is not a primary focus of the organization’s work. Direct contact with individuals inside Iran—especially via email—is assumed to be vulnerable to surveillance by the Iranian state, however, and Azadeh described group members’ personal contacts as under pressure (Azadeh interview, 6/14/12, p. 9, ln. 13). Indeed, the study period (October, 2011-September, 2012) coincided with a period of repression against dissidents in Iran, which made contact with homeland activists difficult and may have affected group members’ choices about whether and how to use homeland-produced knowledge in their own work.

Adelante, by contrast, uses homeland-produced knowledge extensively in developing its diagnostic and prognostic frames. The organization repeatedly presents and even highlights words, still images, and video created by island activists in its online presence by (re)tweeting, posting on YouTube, and publishing on its websites texts, video, and audio recordings made by or with island activists. Furthermore, Adelante interacts with these activists directly online via platforms such as Twitter, as well as via telephone. As described in detail in chapter three, Adelante uses homeland-produced knowledge to provide evidence of its diagnostic and prognostic frames, and emotional urgency to act on the situation. It also uses homeland-produced knowledge to present the demands of island

35 For more on what I mean by "homeland-produced knowledge" see chapters one and two.
activists for freedom and human rights in the activists’ own words.

The politics of knowledge and solidarity: the diaspora/homeland relationship

Members of both organizations told me that change must come from within Iran or Cuba respectively, and they emphasized the importance of supporting the homeland movement there. Indeed, supporting a movement in the homeland country is a stated goal of both organizations: Miguel and Antonio both stressed the importance for Adelante of supporting the opposition movement in Cuba, while Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s manifesto describes the group as supporting the Iranian people’s Green Movement. The organizations differ, though, in how they enact support for their homeland counterparts, and the role homeland-produced knowledge plays in these practices. While both groups link their own values to those of the movements they seek to support, and both provide some tactical information to counterparts overseas, Adelante centers islanders’ knowledge production in its online presence, whereas Doostaan-e Demokrasy provides a kind of broad cultural support to the Iranian Green Movement, in which homeland-produced knowledge serves as background information for Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s own analysis.

Affirming or reflecting the values of the homeland opposition is a supportive practice of both SMOs. Adelante does so by following the lead of the Cuban movement in adopting a strategy and philosophy of non-violent action (Miguel interview, 2/8/12). Doostaan-e Demokrasy discursively situates itself alongside the Iranian Green Movement and within a century-long history of a people’s movement for freedom (Doostaan-e Demokrasy Manifesto). Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s values, as articulated in its manifesto, are presumably thought to be those of—or aligned with—the Green Movement, including values such as social justice for minority groups, non-violence, and respect for human rights.

Based on Research Question 2
Both Adelante and Doostaan-e Demokrasy also support their overseas counterparts by providing tactical information as they are able. Miguel explained that travel restrictions and monitoring of telecommunications make it difficult for Cubans on the island to get a broad picture of what is happening in the opposition nationally, but that Adelante, because it is in touch with groups all over the island, can sometimes confirm news emerging from Cuba and pass it on to activists in other provinces via telephone. The group also appears to use its Twitter feed in some cases to inform islanders (and others) of events such as arrests of activists, solidarity events taking place elsewhere on the island (or outside Cuba), and the like. Doostaan-e Demokrasy members also connect via telephone, video chat, or other means with their personal contacts in Iran to share information that may protect them and advance their cause. Azadeh related the example of learning about the Iranian government’s use of proxy tools to disrupt and monitor activists’ internet use and damage their computers. Once Doostaan-e Demokrasy learned of this practice, they alerted their contacts to its existence and attempted to find ways to get around it (Azadeh interview, p. 9-10).

The major difference in how Adelante and Doostaan-e Demokrasy enact support for their respective homeland counterparts is in the extent to which they center the knowledge production of these movements in their own solidarity work. Adelante centers knowledge produced by or with island activists by devoting much of its social media and website space to disseminating island activists’ text, audio, and video documents. Adelante (re)tweets Cuban activists’ tweets, quotes them extensively (and often by name) in reports, publishes opinion pieces by islanders on the organization’s website, interviews activists via telephone and posts the recordings on YouTube, and posts YouTube videos created by islanders of their own protest demonstrations, hunger strikes, and the like.

For Doostaan-e Demokrasy the details of what it means to support the Green Movement do not include (re)presenting activists’ specific voices, but rather offering moral-intellectual support via
a broad cultural and political project. Iranian homeland activists’ knowledge remains “offline” in the sense that it is not centered (or, in general, referenced) in Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s digital presence. Instead, the analyses that Doostaan-e Demokrasy publishes and disseminates as its primary form of activism contribute to the development of cultural and civic conversations toward a more democratic Iran. In addition, Doostaan-e Demokrasy uses these analyses to call on other activists inside and outside Iran to “activate their networks” ([Doostaan-e Demokrasy] Statement on 2011 parliamentary elections) in order to encourage the kind of public dialog which they both advocate as part of their prognostic frame, and through which they themselves conduct their activism.

Geopolitical Context and the Homeland/Diaspora Movement Relationship

Each of the organizations examined in this study functions within the fraught context of geopolitics. Members’ country of residence (mainly the U.S.) is in an on-going tense relationship with the homeland country in each case. This tension limits logistical and technological possibilities for activism and solidarity, but it also shapes the perception and reception of each group’s work. In each case the relationship between Iran or Cuba and the United States specifically affected the potential for these groups’ work to be misconstrued by those both inside and outside the United States, yet members of each organization whom I spoke to had very different levels of concern about their work being misused by either the homeland government or the U.S. government.

When I asked members of Adelante about whether they worried that the Castros would accuse them of being spies, or the opposition of being connected to foreign spies, Miguel told me that the Castro government was “more than happy to say anything, depending on the situation that benefits them” (interview, 2/8/12, p. 10, ln. 27-28), and that Adelante could not be silenced because of that potentiality. Miguel’s response as an activist was to be careful to document facts and assertions via trusted sources: island activists with a history of credible information, or non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International (interview, 2/8/12). The group’s frame of international
human rights was also seen as protective, since it is shared in multiple countries and, Miguel and Antonio felt, the Cuban government could not credibly denounce calls to respect human rights.

When I asked if they worried that the U.S. might misconstrue their work as a pretext for bombing Cuba (as an example), neither interviewee seemed to really understand my question, and neither found that a credible concern. This may be because the Cuban American community has historically been very involved in shaping U.S. policy toward Cuba (see chapter three), or because the communist threat perceived to be posed by Cuba is no longer as powerful as it was during the heyday of the Cold War, making U.S. intervention less likely. Miguel and Antonio may also be correct about the sympathetic nature of a human rights frame in the international community being protective.

When I put these questions to Azadeh the response was quite different. She said *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* had faced criticism from some fellow diaspora activists who accused the group of being a “fifth column” (interview, 6/14/12, p. 11, ln. 28) when they sent out a questionnaire about whether and how to address Iran’s nuclear ambitions (see below). She also described the possibility that their work could be misused as a pretext for U.S. intervention in Iran as “our constant worry” (interview, 6/14/12, p. 10, ln. 37).

The contrast with members of *Adelante* may stem from the difference in geopolitical relations among the United States, Cuba, Iran, and each country’s U.S. diaspora population. First, Iran, Islamism, and the “War on Terror” are currently perceived as more active threats than are communism and Cuba. Second, the activism of Iranian immigrants to the United States has been viewed rather differently by the U.S. government. In the 1960s and ‘70s the U.S. government paid little heed to the demands of Iranian anti-Shah activists in this country when shaping its foreign policy. The more recent activism of monarchists and supporters of the mujahedin, by contrast, is

37 My thanks to Shabnam Shenasi Azari for helping me think through this issue.
viewed as a potentially useful justification for U.S. intervention in Iran (Mansour Farhang, personal communication, 2/28/13). Despite its stated commitment to non-violence, Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s explicit focus on the creation of democracy and the end of autocracy in Iran may erroneously be viewed as more likely to be reframed by opponents of the Iranian government to promote “regime change” in the vein of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Geopolitics, global discourses, and the production of knowledge about democracy

The case study organizations here each operate within and alongside evolving global discourses of democracy, yet this discourse takes different forms in different national and regional contexts, and activists in transnational solidarity must account for the particular dynamics of such discourses in both local/regional and global/inter-state contexts. Doostaan-e Demokrasy explicitly articulates democracy as a prognostic frame, a choice that extends current Iranian discourses of democracy and anti-despotism (particularly as democracy is contrasted with autocracy), but which differs from Adelante’s less-direct framing. Though its mission explicitly references democracy, Adelante pursues that mission within the discourse of human rights, a strategy that not only aligns with international human rights discourse, but which appears to align with extant opposition discourses in Cuba since the 1970s, from the Consejo Cubano Pro Derechos Humanos through to the Varela Project.38

These discursive choices—only two examples, among many others globally—evince distinct ideas about the definition and practice of democracy, as well as the manner of its pursuit in repressive states, which are shaped by national, cultural, and geopolitical forces, pressures, and opportunities. Such formulations lead to particular, and particularly situated, “knowledges” about just what democracy is and ought to be, knowledges which are then (potentially) disseminated through social movement actors’ networks, where they may be further shaped (co-constructed) by

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38 See chapter three for more on each of these efforts.
other activists and movements.

**Toward a typology of activist pedagogies in social movement learning networks**

In what follows I outline a proposed typology of activist pedagogies used by actors within technologically-connected transnational social movement learning networks, situating the pedagogies used by *Adelante* and *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* within this typology. By pedagogies I mean, simply, the techniques and philosophy by which a particular social movement actor shares their message, values, and ideas with others in their social movement and with the public. A given actor (such as a non-governmental organization or activist group) within a movement or network may select different pedagogies from those of their counterparts. I propose that the choice of which pedagogy to use is related to each actor’s self-perceived role in the social movement, and that this role stems from the social movement actor’s goals, audience, geo-political context, and sense of the appropriate relationship between their own movement and the movement with which they are in solidarity.

I propose four activist pedagogies here, though there are no doubt others, which future scholarship may enumerate and expand. They are a Pedagogy of Mentorship, a Pedagogy of Demonstration, a Pedagogy of Amplification, and a Pedagogy of Discussion. The typology is based on my observations of *Adelante* and *Doostaan-e Demokrasy*, as well as my consideration of other recent social movements. As I envision them, each of these activist pedagogies exists along a continuum from the didactic to the dialogic, from the “banking” to the critical (Freire, 2012). They might be used by causes of the Left as much as by those of the Right, and by repressive social movements as easily as by movements that advance freedom and justice. Since, like the internet, activist pedagogies are tools that may be used for good or ill, I draw on Paulo Freire’s work in thinking about how activists may use these pedagogies as part of a dialogical, liberatory praxis enacted in a context of truly horizontal relationships, or how they might be (mis)used to attempt to impose the views and
aims of one movement or movement actor upon another. Freire (2012) posited that, in order for a pedagogy to be truly liberatory, the relationship between teachers and students must become a “cognizable object” between them, to be analyzed and developed dialogically along with the social problem they seek to address. In approaching their relationship this way the teachers and students synthesize their roles to become teacher-students and student-teachers (Freire, 2012). Similarly, I argue that the relationship between a given social movement and its counterparts in solidarity must become a cognizable object between them in order for any activist pedagogy to be truly liberatory. Likewise, the social movement actors engaged in such a pedagogical practice can enact horizontal relations of knowledge production to the extent that each both learns and teaches within the relationship.

**Pedagogy of Mentorship**

A Pedagogy of Mentorship involves one social movement actor (or group of actors) requesting specific instruction or assistance with a particular challenge, such as how to hold a non-violent demonstration, which tactics are most effective in politically repressive circumstances, or how to craft a culturally resonant collective action frame for a given issue in a given cultural or national context. It is vital that this mentoring relationship arise at the request of the actor or movement needing assistance, otherwise it is simply the imposition (or attempted imposition) of the agenda of a more powerful group. Such a pedagogy is likely most appropriate and effective when the actors involved occupy the same geographic region, cultural milieu, or political context (e.g., First Nations peoples, or women living in politically repressive states on the same continent), so that similar strategies, tactics, and collective action frames are likely to resonate for all parties. A Pedagogy of Mentorship is more liberatory as it is more dialogical; each party must fully embrace a synthesized role as both learner and teacher, approaching the “cognizable object” (Freire, 2012) that is both the
social problem to be (mutually) addressed and the nature of the mentoring relationship.

**Pedagogy of Demonstration**

When engaging in a Pedagogy of Demonstration activists construct, embody or live out as a form of activism the new structures and social relations they seek to promote. Examples include the communities constructed by the Occupy Wall Street movement in Zuccotti Park and elsewhere, in which activists attempted to implement new social relations and norms that reflected the change they advocated in society more broadly. Radical media and hacktivist communities constitute another example, in which activists seek to create alternatives to the corporate- or state-dominated media they critique, embodying an “information wants to be free” ethos by developing that form of media themselves.³⁹

This type of pedagogy may be more difficult for transnational and diasporic solidarity movements than for movements within the same country due to simple geography, unless the solidarity movement’s demonstration is focused on how the community in solidarity contributes to the problem identified by the homeland movement. Environmental activism could be an opportunity to do this—for example, an activist organization in a high-consuming industrialized country attempting to live with a low environmental impact as a way to highlight the effects of over-consumption on a developing country or vulnerable population, and how to ameliorate those effects.

**Pedagogy of Discussion**

A Pedagogy of Discussion begins, continues, or advances a conversation about a social problem by introducing or disseminating ideas, questions, or vocabulary; articulating critiques that

³⁹ For more on hacking, as well as radical, alternative, or “indy” media activism, see Lievrouw, L. A. (2011). *Alternative and activist new media*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
cannot be safely articulated or disseminated in the originating (homeland) country; or which are heavily censored in that country. Such a pedagogy is likely to be of great use to social movements in abeyance,\textsuperscript{40} when direct action is scarce or impossible and activists must prepare for a more opportune time. The pedagogy also lends itself to transnational or diasporic solidarity movements in which the homeland movement is active but operating under repression, though this is also its greatest danger—the very conditions which make it most difficult for the pedagogy to be truly mutual and dialogical. In a more didactic manifestation it may consist of simply presenting ideas and making assertions; a more dialogical manifestation would involve contestation and debate within cyberspace and urban space, discursively and in its on-the-ground praxis. *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* engages in a Pedagogy of Discussion, as I detail below before proceeding to describe the fourth pedagogy in the typology.

*Doostaan-e Demokrasy* and the Pedagogy of Discussion

*Doostaan-e Demokrasy* enacts a Pedagogy of Discussion by focusing its activism primarily on the online publication and dissemination of analytical texts about what it frames as the problem of autocracy in Iran. As part of this Pedagogy of Discussion *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* attempts to prompt or advance discussion among its audience and interlocutors through the introduction, extension, and circulation of new, risky, or taboo topics and vocabulary into Iranian political discourse, specifically a critique of the structural position and particular decisions of the Supreme Leader as an autocratic force in Iranian political life. This pedagogical choice derives from *Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s* stated goals, from its (limited) access to homeland counterparts, and from the challenges of operating in diaspora within a country with a historically hostile relationship to Iran and while the Iranian government is cracking down on dissent in Iran itself.

\textsuperscript{40} For more on abeyance see chapter one.
In its manifesto *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* identifies goals, priorities, and values such as “help[ing] the Green Movement” through “a solid and organized political work” (p. 1, ln. 21-22), “striving to reform the political, social, economic and cultural structures of [Iran]” (p. 1, ln. 26-27), and abiding by its six principles. These principles are national sovereignty [پرهیز از خشونت], pursuing democracy and fighting autocracy [عهدنامه حقوق بشر], social justice [弘扬正义], avoiding violence [قضایی نظام مستقل], and an independent judiciary system (pp. 2-3). Though its goals are explicitly oriented toward change inside Iran, *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* focuses its activism on discursive work online and circulating mainly in diaspora. Azadeh described these goals this way,

Our goal is definitely to get to the point that we see other political organizations forming with their own ideas and engaging in this dialog. So I cannot say [Doostaan-e Demokrasy] as a political organization has any political ambitions as a party. . . . But we would like to keep certain beliefs of ours, which we think are more progressive, we would like to remind people of that, remind activists of that. And I think we like our role as this other thinker, this other critic. (interview, 6/14/12, p. 6, ln. 9-16)

An explicit example of this goal to foment discussion appears in *Doostaan-e Demokrasy*’s statement on the anniversary of the 25 Bahman uprisings, which references the then upcoming Parliamentary and local elections of 2011:

This election is an appropriate opportunity for the Green activists to activate their networks and use all opportunities for discussion and inform the public about the damages associated with the continuation of the authoritarian form
of rule . . . . That’s because the awareness and strengthening of social networks are the most effective way for breaking the atmosphere of suppression and putting an end to authoritarianism. (p. 2, ln. 8-14)

In the quotation above, fomenting discussion is identified as both a goal of Doostaan-e Demokrasy in order to change the political situation in Iran and, simultaneously, as an embodiment of (part of) the very change the organization seeks: an end, via the expansion of free public discussion, to the “atmosphere of suppression” and “authoritarianism.” Thus in the case of Doostaan-e Demokrasy, a Pedagogy of Discussion overlaps with a Pedagogy of Demonstration based on the organization’s self-perceived role within the social movement network.

The discussion Doostaan-e Demokrasy seeks to advance and to demonstrate can only reach Iran in a limited way, however. When I asked Azadeh who Doostaan-e Demokrasy sees as part of its audience, she described activists, politicians, journalists and thinkers, both inside and outside Iran, who have internet access (interview, 6/14/12, p. 6). She acknowledged, though, that for the most part their audience and interlocutors were largely outside Iran due to the Iranian government’s attempts to disrupt internet use inside the country (interview, 6/14/12, p. 6, ln. 18-20). As a result of these restrictions, and the repression faced by activists within Iran, Azadeh told me that most of the discussion Doostaan-e Demokrasy is able to have takes place with those in diaspora. As she put it,

[Doostaan-e Demokrasy] is very aware of our small board of audiences. Not everyone reads our stuff. . . . people in Iran, people in the streets or who, they are not in the streets anymore but who we wished to at some point energize enough to take another stand won’t necessarily read our stuff, so one of the things we kept in mind is that our goal should be bringing up new vocabulary and new discussions in the scene of political activists about Iran’s situation. (interview, 6/14/12, p. 4,
Azadeh and her colleagues clearly perceive their audience as limited—limited not only by their own goals and who they perceive to be willing and able to participate in them, but also limited by the Iranian government’s pressure on homeland activists. Within these real limitations, however, the choice to engage in a Pedagogy of Discussion can advance what Doostaan-e Demokrasy sees as a solution to the problem of autocracy in Iran: public dialog leading, eventually, to a more open atmosphere of critique and to a more responsive government structure. The internet as a diasporic space (partially overlapping with cyberspace in Iran) then, enables Doostaan-e Demokrasy not only to carry out its own discursive solidarity work, but to participate (with others) in maintaining the life of the Iranian Green Movement during a period of repression against homeland activists and, perhaps, even to help set the stage to inspire activists in Castells’ (2012) urban space of defiance within Iran at a more opportune time.

It is less clear whether or not Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s enactment of a Pedagogy of Discussion is truly dialogical and liberatory or if it consists mainly of “communiques” (Freire, 2012, p. 72) deposited into cyberspace and the minds of its readers. Doostaan-e Demokrasy’s website does not include comments from others, and none of its facebook posts during the study period (which are mostly links to their official statements) had comments debating their ideas; if Doostaan-e Demokrasy is successful at fostering debate, it appears to be taking place outside of the organization’s own digital space, either offline or in other online spaces. Doostaan-e Demokrasy members live all over North America and participate in other local organizations to support the Green Movement (interview, 6/14/12), so it is possible that these discussions continue at the local level in person or via other forms of technology.

One comment in particular from Azadeh in our interview suggests a sincere attempt on the
part of *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* members to act as learners (and not merely as teachers or purveyors of knowledge) in their activism, though it also highlights the challenges they faced in doing so. Azadeh explained to me that as international debate about Iran’s intentions for nuclear development became more prevalent, many Iranian activists in diaspora feared that critiquing Iran on this issue might be used to justify foreign military intervention (interview, 6/14/12, p. 5). Members of *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* responded to the situation by sending a survey to their counterparts in diaspora, as well as several activists and analysts inside Iran, asking whether or not they felt the diaspora should address the nuclear issue, and if so, how?

As Azadeh put it,

> It was a very hard situation, but we decided it’s needed. We sent out a questionnaire [asking], what do you think about this program and what do you think, either way, what do you think our role as political activists outside of Iran is towards that? (interview, 6/14/12, p. 5, ln. 9-12)

They promised privacy to the respondents, saying they would not publish respondents’ answers, yet *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* received very few replies—too few to articulate a consensus position or the points of a debate based on that feedback. Ultimately they decided simply to publish their own analysis of the situation, as they had done on other issues, and this statement was placed on their website and Facebook page, as well as being published by some opposition news sites (interview, 6/14/12, p. 5). If this occasion offers a concrete example of *Doostaan-e Demokrasy*’s attempts to be in a more formal, transnational dialog with their counterparts, it also illustrates how difficult it was for them to carry out such a dialog. In addition, it highlights the delicate position some diaspora activists perceive themselves to be in, perhaps wishing to criticize some aspect of Iranian foreign or domestic

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41 She even asked me to forward their request to any Iranian activists and academics in diaspora that I knew who might be interested in responding, which I did.
policy, yet fearing the geopolitical consequences of doing so.

**Pedagogy of Amplification**

A social movement actor engaging in a Pedagogy of Amplification seeks to expand the audience to which the values, perspectives, and needs of a more repressed or marginalized movement are perceptible and comprehensible, enabling such a movement to gain access and apply leverage to more powerful actors. A Pedagogy of Amplification lends itself to the work of networked human rights organizations, for example, who bring human rights violations against individuals and populations to the attention of citizens, non-governmental organizations, and governments around the world.

In thinking about this pedagogy I draw on Keck and Sikkink’s work on the Boomerang Pattern of influence used by actors in transnational advocacy networks:

> When channels between the state and its domestic actors are blocked, the boomerang pattern of influence characteristic of transnational networks may occur: domestic [non-governmental organizations] bypass their state and directly search out international allies to try to bring pressure on their states from outside. This is most obviously the case in human rights campaigns.  
> (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 12)

In this scenario, transnational networks of activists have access to alternative or marginalized information (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 18) from persons who are less valued by national and international leaders, who have limited access to global media, or who a repressive state may be working to silence. Once armed with this information, network actors attempt to render it “comprehensible and useful to activists and publics who may be geographically and/or socially
distant” (p. 18). This (mediated) information—what I would describe as (co)constructed knowledge—is then deployed to international publics and arenas of power (such as the United Nations) to change the behavior of the target state. This act of mediating and co-constructing the knowledge of marginalized populations to render it “comprehensible and useful” to the “geographically and/or social distant” is what I mean to highlight by reframing the political strategy of the Boomerang Pattern of influence as a pedagogical (teaching/learning) strategy of amplification.

*Adelante* engages in this pedagogy when it centers the knowledge of Cuban (homeland) activists in order to share their message and publicize their experiences with an international audience.

*Adelante and the Pedagogy of Amplification*

*Adelante* engages in a Pedagogy of Amplification in order to render the messages of the opposition inside Cuba “audible” to a larger, international audience. One might imagine *Adelante* acting as a megaphone through which voices of island opposition speak to each other, to Cuban exiles, and to the international community. Before going any further I want to emphasize that I don’t claim that *Adelante* is actually transmitting island dissidents’ “true” voices in an unmediated fashion, but rather that the organization’s chosen pedagogy highlights the messages of Cuban activists. This choice leads *Adelante* to center homeland-produced knowledge in its online space. Indeed, supporting the [Cuban] opposition and spreading “the message from inside Cuba” (Antonio interview, 7/23/12, p. 5, ln. 4), are important elements of what Miguel and Antonio saw as the organization’s role, and primary ways of advancing its mission to “[work] for democracy in Cuba by way of a civic, nonviolent struggle” (*Adelante* website, English version).

*Adelante’s* Pedagogy of Amplification is related to the role of supporting the opposition, discussed above. The organization engages in this pedagogy by centering the knowledge production of Cuban (island) activists in its work in cyberspace. As described in detail in chapter three, *Adelante*
uses Twitter, YouTube, and its own website to enact this pedagogy. The organization (re)tweets tweets by islanders, frequently posts audio recordings of telephone interviews with activists on one of its two YouTube channels, and quotes islanders extensively in its reports posted on the website, occasionally also posting opinion pieces by island activists themselves. *Adelante* makes extensive use of testimony in this work, in which the activist in question tells his or her own story via audio, video, or text.

The choice to engage in a Pedagogy of Amplification also aligns with *Adelante*'s audience, as perceived by my interviewees. As Miguel put it,

> [W]e’re trying to, one, raise awareness, what the human rights situation is inside the island, what’s going on where are the latest things that are taking place, and informing as many people as possible. In part through raising awareness but also dealing with other human rights organizations. . . . You want to get information from what’s taking place inside the island into the hands of these organizations who can put pressure on the Cuban government to cease and desist from abusive practices. (interview, 2/8/12, p. 4, ln. 18-26)

When I asked Antonio, a volunteer focusing on the organization’s online content, who he sees as the group’s audience, he identified Cuban exiles as key members of that audience. Exiles, he told me, needed to know that the Cuban opposition exists, since many believed that the Cuban population as a whole accepted the Castro government and supported the current political situation in Cuba.

Finally, members of Cuban dissident groups themselves appear to be an audience for *Adelante*. The organization’s Twitter feed, in particular, is sometimes used to publicize opposition demonstrations in progress or after the fact, as well as activist arrests or their medical conditions if
they have faced state violence or are on hunger strike. Miguel explained that, due to travel restrictions placed on residents in Cuba, members of the opposition often had difficulty staying in touch with their fellows on the island. *Adelante*, since it was in touch with groups all over the island, often had a clearer picture of events affecting the opposition nationally than did Cuban activists themselves. I conclude then that Twitter is one way that *Adelante* not only informs its other audience members of happenings in Cuba, but also keeps Cuban dissidents updated on events affecting their colleagues.

By reaching these audiences with the words and images of Cuban dissidents, *Adelante* is able to extend the work of the Cuban opposition into transnational spaces that are both deliberative and active: the deliberative space of discussion and publicity—both online and in international halls of power—and the tactical, physical space of decision, sanction, pressure, and protest. By amplifying the voices of dissidents online, *Adelante* helps enable the possibility of, among other things, solidarity demonstrations in U.S. cities (for example); by amplifying these voices offline in international human rights meetings, the organization may actually convince international bodies to place economic or political pressure on Cuba to advance *Adelante*’s cause. And by communicating with dissidents directly via Twitter and other digital platforms, *Adelante* may facilitate activity in the Space of Defiance (Castells, 2012) in Cuba itself. Thus *Adelante* operates in Castells’ Space of Autonomy by amplifying voices of the opposition in cyber space and, potentially, sparking action in the Space of Defiance.

A Pedagogy of Amplification has the potential for criticality and mutuality to the extent that the message relayed is developed in close dialog with the more marginalized movement—preferably at their request—and to the extent that this relationship becomes part of the “cognizable object” (Freire, 2012) posed for their mutual assessment. The risks are similar to those inherent in a Pedagogy of Discussion: in both cases the messages and goals of the movement being “amplified”
can be (intentionally or inadvertently) distorted or misused by the solidarity movement.

As with Doostaan-e Demokrasy, it is not fully possible to ascertain whether or not Adelante is truly in a dialogical relationship with its island counterparts without having direct access to those counterparts themselves. However, because so much homeland-produced knowledge exists in Adelante’s digital space, the relationship is visible to some extent. Islanders’ tweets and videos are posted and reposted; islanders are tagged in Twitter streams with updates about the status of various activists and demonstrations, and their occasional calls for publicity (as when an activist is in physical or medical danger) are heeded by Adelante. Moreover, comments from Miguel and Antonio suggest a sincere effort to work closely with the Cuban opposition. Specifically, Miguel attributes the organization’s choice of non-violent civic change (per the mission statement) to the decision made by islanders to embrace those methods. In addition, Adelante is a member, along with numerous others, of the Asamblea de la Resistencia, a coalition of island and exile groups. These relations and decisions suggest that Adelante values a partnership with its island counterparts, though I cannot definitively claim that the relationship is fully horizontal, or the object of analysis among the parties.

What difference does transnational learning make?

The ultimate utility of transnational learning in technologically-connected social movement networks is an unresolved conundrum. Three problems within this larger issue are salient: the question of unity, the question of efficacy, and the question of solidarity.

As Castells (2012) notes, technologically-connected transnational networks can be powerful structures for sustaining and advancing (especially leaderless) social movements, such as the movements in which Adelante and Doostaan-e Demokrasy are respectively embedded. The transnational presence of such networks means that they can continue to operate—at least on some level—in the face of repression in one or more locations. The network structure itself enables flexibility in ideas, strategies, and tactics among a potentially wide variety of actors with a correspondingly wide array of
roles or skills. At the same time, these factors may make a unified strategy—let alone a unified pedagogical program—difficult or impossible to create and sustain. There is likely no way around this tension, as one must necessarily sacrifice some flexibility for unity and vice versa, and different situations will call for different decisions on the matter. This challenge makes a multiplicity of available activist pedagogies all the more necessary, as different actors in the network confront their particular circumstances with their chosen (or available) partners.

Related to the question of unity is the question of the efficacy of transnational learning in social movement networks: what difference does it make? In a transnational network, clearly, it is difficult to fully assess the efficacy of a particular pedagogy or other initiative for the entire movement, though some highly effective pedagogies, strategies and tactics may emerge as crucial in retrospect. In some cases, though, one can identify a clear cause and effect. For example, a human rights organization engaging in a Pedagogy of Amplification may bring the video-taped testimonies of political prisoners to a meeting of the UN Human Rights Council as part of a successful attempt to secure an investigation by the UN of a particular country. A pedagogy of Mentorship may also lend itself to clearly identifiable results, particularly if the education requested is highly specific, such as tactical training.

Other pedagogies, such as a Pedagogy of Discussion or a Pedagogy of Demonstration, may yield far more subtle and diffuse results. These sorts of pedagogies aim to promote dialog, discussion, emulation and adaptation which may take place out of sight of the social movement actor that uses them (or indeed, of anyone studying them). By the same token, such discussions or efforts at emulation may affect the thinking and behavior of other activists slowly and over a relatively long period, influencing them in subtle ways. Despite their more nebulous effects, such pedagogies can have an important effect on social movements: they may advance or bolster the ideological and institutional maintenance of discourses and structures (such as the international
human rights regime) that exert concrete pressure on specific states (Keck & Sikkink, 1998); They serve as means to deliberate in the Space of Autonomy (Castells, 2012) and, in the case of the internet and mobile devices, constitute one of the few communal spaces in which such deliberations can take place. (See for example Yahyanejad & Gheytanchi, 2012, p. 141). For these reasons it would be hasty to dismiss the potential impact of the learning and teaching that networked social movement actors do transnationally.

Finally, there is the question of solidarity. As I describe in the cases of Adelante and Doostaane Demokrasy above, some transnational solidarity organizations may claim that they want change to come from within the homeland (or target) country, in which case any learning done transnationally runs the risks of co-opting or distorting the messages of homeland activists, or of putting them in jeopardy (in repressive societies). This is the ever-present danger into which any group in solidarity with another transnationally may fall, and it warrants constant vigilance. Despite this danger, transnational solidarity can become a necessity for a struggling movement, particularly one facing repression by its own government.

Limitations of the Study

My own identity and skills as a researcher limited the study, and may have contributed to my small sample of interviews, another limitation. My positionality as an outsider to the communities I studied may have negatively affected people’s willingness to talk with me, and my limited Farsi skills also meant that I relied on professional translation for much of my understanding of Doostaane Demokrasy’s texts, especially in the subtleties of different word choices.

Restricting of the study’s scope to material produced online is a limitation of this study, though arguably a necessary restriction for a project undertaken by a single researcher. Certainly the online component of any digitally-connected social movement is a key site of study in the present era.
Nevertheless, multi-modal movements with multiply-connected actors should be studied, as much as possible, in their complexity, both on- and offline.

Focusing only on social movement actors in diaspora is a limitation of the study. Contact with homeland activists in Iran and Cuba would have been logistically difficult—or impossible—for me as a foreign researcher and potentially highly dangerous for the homeland activists involved. Yet the absence of these voices is a limitation of the study. Without them I could not see the “other side” of the diaspora/homeland relationship and the full extent to which any given homeland activist’s message may have been (purposefully or inadvertently) distorted by his or her diaspora counterparts. Talking with activists who had recently emigrated or been exiled could potentially have ameliorated this limitation.

Finally, the social movements in which Adelante and Doostaan-e Demokracy participate are ongoing, and their geo-political contexts continue to evolve. The need to place parameters on my data collection meant that I could not determine whether or how events after September, 2012 affected the case study organizations or the homeland movements with which they are in solidarity. Such affects may be the subject of future work.

Significance for the Field

This study advances the field of learning within social movements in two ways. First, my conceptual re-orientation of social movement networks as learning networks has the potential to open up new avenues of research within the broader field of activist learning, and of social movement processes and structures, in the digital age. Moreover, the typology of activist pedagogies I propose offers a new way of thinking about the variety of activists’ learning practices within networked movements that simultaneously centers the relationship between learners and producers of knowledge in order to develop truly critical pedagogy in fully horizontal relationships among
activists.

**Directions for Future Research**

The cases presented in this study offer two examples of how social movement actors (in this case relatively small organizations) participate in learning networks, focusing on the collective action frame as the site of knowledge production. Work in this vein focusing on other types of social movement actors (e.g., hacktivists) or sites of knowledge production (e.g., strategies and tactics or critical consciousness about a social issue) would expand understanding of how activists learn, teach, and produce knowledge in a wide variety of circumstances within the increasingly predominant structure of the social movement network. Of course, as mentioned above, networked social movements do not operate exclusively in cyberspace, making study of social movement actors’ multi-modal learning and activism an important realm for future research. Finally, and again as mentioned above, the Iranian Green Movement and the Cuban opposition movement are on-going, and their geo-political contexts evolving. Future research should examine how events occurring after my data collection period have effected, or may yet affect, the work and the pedagogical practices of these movements and their supporters.
Appendix

Categories used to code *Doostaan-e Demokrasy* texts and interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Adelante texts and interviews</th>
<th>Democracy</th>
<th>Homeland/diaspora movement relationship</th>
<th>Political prisoners</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Access to information</td>
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<td>Democracy</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td></td>
<td>Descriptions of Cuban government</td>
<td>Homeland movement actions</td>
<td>Prison conditions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brotherhood/peoplehood</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diaspora activism</td>
<td>Homeland-produced knowledge: types used</td>
<td>Responsabilizar [to hold responsible]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call to action/demands</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diaspora knowledge production: types used</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>Solidarity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Climate of repression</td>
<td></td>
<td>Education/public education</td>
<td>Nature of <em>Adelante</em></td>
<td>State repression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communism/socialism</td>
<td></td>
<td>Framing</td>
<td>Nature of homeland movement/activists</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td></td>
<td>Geo-politics</td>
<td>Non-violence</td>
<td>Verifying accuracy</td>
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