PRACTICAL IDEOLOGY IN MILITANT ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Ideology shapes militant recruitment, organization, and conflict behavior. Existing research assumes doctrinal consistency, top-down socialization of adherents, and clear links between formal ideology and political action. But it has long been recognized that ideological commitments do not flow unaltered from overarching cleavages or elite narratives; they are uneven, contingent, fraught with tension, and often ambivalent. What work does ideology do in militant groups if it is not deeply studied, internalized, or sincerely believed? How can scholars explain collective commitment, affinity, and behavioral outcomes among militants who clearly associate themselves with a group, but who may not consistently (or ever) be true believers or committed ideologues? I argue that practical ideologies—sets of quotidian principles, ideas, and social heuristics that reflect relational worldviews rather than specific published political doctrines, positions, platforms, or plans—play a key role in militant socialization through everyday practices. Ethnographic evidence gained from fieldwork among Palestinians in Lebanon demonstrates how militants and affiliates render ideas about ideological closeness and distance accessible through emotional, intellectual, and moral appeals. This approach reaffirms the role of discourse and narrative in creating informal mechanisms of militant socialization without expressly invoking formal doctrine.

> I am hanging out in the Abdullahs' shop in the [refugee] camp when the meeting around the corner ends and Sabah, Aysha, Sawsan, and three other Fatah women walk into view of the open storefront. Sabah calls out to me as she walks past the entrance: "Come on, we're going!" She seems to assume that I will follow, which I do following a hurried goodbye. We all cram into Sawsan's small SUV; two women in the front passenger seat and me perched on Aysha's lap in the back. There are three animated conversations running simultaneously, but Sabah flips around in the front as though something popped into her head and she doesn't want to forget: "You need to wear black and white tomorrow. It's special for the Women's Office."
>
> —*Field notes, May 13, 2010, the day before Nakba Day commemorations*[1]

> On Wednesdays, we wear pink.
>
> —*"Karen Smith,"* Mean Girls[2]

INTRODUCTION

SCHOLARS of civil war and violence have long linked ideology and ideological difference to conflict outcomes like the onset of hostili-

[1] Nakba Day commemorates Palestinians' 1948 expulsion from land that subsequently became the state of Israel. See Khalili 2007 on memory and commemorative practices in the camps.

[2] Waters 2004.

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ties,[3] organizational and movement recruitment trends,[4] patterns of violence,[5] discipline,[6] and mass killing.[7] Within armed groups, processes of political education and socialization—themselves often outgrowths of organizational ideologies—shape patterns of unit cohesion and discipline, with implications for military outcomes.[8] Ideological commitments broadly shape regimes' and armed organizations' decision-making contexts by framing events like territorial losses or strategic challenges in specific, meaning-laden terms.[9] Intuitively, these findings make sense. At their core, ideologies prescribe and proscribe certain individual-level behaviors, establish social signifiers, influence customary practices, and shape armed-group institutions and relationships with regimes.[10] Yet as Jonathan Leader Maynard notes, "debates in conflict research are characterized by considerable uncertainty over the micro-foundations of political ideology: exactly what ideologies are and how they can influence political outcomes."[11]

Scholars acknowledge that in any group there are usually relatively few true believers or committed ideologues.[12] Existing research recognizes that individuals' ideological commitments do not necessarily or directly flow from master cleavages or elite narratives; they are uneven, contingent, fraught with tension, and often ambivalent.[13] Members of militant organizations frequently act in ways that diverge from what seem like foundational ideological commitments, sometimes comically so. Ostensibly gritty guerrilla leaders sport Gucci shoes at negotiations.[14] Purportedly fundamentalist Islamist militants drink beer, smoke cigarettes, and consume pornography. More broadly, literature on comparative political parties in nonviolent contexts emphasizes that political entrepreneurs regularly abandon ideological commitments and principles for instrumental reasons—to get elected, for example.[15]

What work does ideology do in militant groups and among their supporters when it is not deeply studied, internalized, or sincerely believed?

[3] Costalli and Ruggeri 2015.
[4] Gates 2002; Eck 2007; Thomas and Bond 2015.
[5] Ron 2001; Thaler 2012; Wood 2009; Kalyvas and Balcells 2010; Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017; Revkin and Wood Forthcoming.
[6] Oppenheim et al. 2015.
[7] Leader Maynard 2015; Leader Maynard and Benesch 2016; Straus 2015a.
[8] Hoover Green 2018; Hoover Green 2017.
[9] Straus 2015b, 12–13.
[10] Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014; Eck 2007; Hoover Green 2016; Wood 2009; Staniland 2015.
[11] Leader Maynard 2019, 636.
[12] Leader Maynard 2019, 636, 643.
[13] Wedeen 2019; Wedeen 1999; Kalyvas 2009, 592–94; Kalyvas 2003; Leader Maynard and Benesch 2016, 74.
[14] Coll 2005, 131; *Asharq al-Awsat* 2008.
[15] Hanson 2010, 57, 61.

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In addition to anchoring formal organizational and regime doctrines, ideologies act as sets of overarching social norms and collective commitments, thus structuring individual-level social proximity, accountability, and distance.[16] Building on this more expansive understanding of ideology, I argue that everyday social practices[17] and interactions within militant groups—for example, consistently and casually referring to affiliates of opposing parties as immoral or stupid, telling jokes about members of rival groups, or spreading rumors about them—teach militants and affiliates forms of practical ideology,[18] horizontally socializing[19] them through mechanisms like stigma generation.[20]

Practical ideologies informally delineate and reinforce group boundaries, norms, and obligations, shaping relations among affiliates of different organizations. They contribute to internal organizational cohesion, bolstering the work that macrolevel doctrine—attitudes, strategies, and institutions—does from the top down through formal socialization.[21] Their quotidian forms allow for the mutual, routine participation of elites, rank and file, and those who are only loosely affiliated or even unaffiliated with an organization, without requiring any internalization of or commitment to formal doctrines. Practical ideologies leverage militants' everyday ties to create and reproduce informal collective norms, but they also feed back into macro-organizational structures, galvanizing ideological and institutional differences between organizations. The universal social legibility and actionable heuristics that practical ideologies contain provide flexibility to militants and affiliates who might not be as doctrinally committed as their peers or leaders. Rather than parsing doctrinal differences that may have little resonance to demarcate and maintain group boundaries, people simply learn and repeat that members of another group have some sort of unacceptable flaw. Practical ideologies consequently become vectors for the negotiation of dynamic, often ambiguous, intergroup status claims.[22] These intergroup status claims may be more resonant than formal ideological doctrines in militants' everyday lives.

The mutually co-constitutive nature of formal doctrine and practical ideology is especially important to understand given that organizational cohesion and political polarization among militants and in

[16] Ugarriza and Craig 2013, 450.
[17] Bourdieu 1977.
[18] Schneiderman and Turin 2004, 93; Eck 2007, 27.
[19] That is, peer-to-peer rather than top-down. See Wood and Toppelberg 2017, 626.
[20] Goffman 1963.
[21] LeBas 2006; Wood and Toppelberg 2017, 626.
[22] Gould 2003.

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broader communities demonstrably shape recruitment, mobilization, and decisions to use violence.[23] The argument I make in this article complements and adds nuance to scholarly understanding of how ideology translates into action. It does so by focusing on how militants leverage ideological difference to socialize members, affiliates, and sympathizers, building and maintaining cohesion across memberships with varying ideological commitments. I examine the roles that individuals who are not technically members of militant organizations—those to whom I refer as affiliates or sympathizers—play in these dynamics by engaging with and reproducing practical ideologies (even if they are unaware that they are doing so). The argument and evidence that I present broaden the scholarly understanding of what political ideas are and how they influence militant organizations' behavior.

My in-depth account of how practical ideology operates centers on ethnographic evidence regarding how members of rival political groups use it to socialize members and to maintain organizational boundaries. This evidence is based on nearly two years of ethnographic research with members of more than a dozen different Palestinian militant factions who live in Lebanon and span the ideological spectrum from Marxist to secular nationalist to self-proclaimed Salafi jihadist. Building on theories of socialization in both state and nonstate armed groups,[24] I show how previously underexplored practices in militant groups anchor ideological difference in everyday life. For example, militants' social interactions surrounding food preparation and their gendered notions of morality reveal how ideological schisms play out between members of Fatah and former members and affiliates of Fatah–Revolutionary Council (also known as the Abu Nidal Organization). Militants leverage discursive tools, such as gossip, to informally expand organizational boundaries while drawing clear distinctions (particularly through emotional appeals) regarding who belongs, notions of accountability, and invocation of social obligations. This approach draws on a rich tradition of exploring the everyday social incarnations and implications of ideology, especially in the context of the Middle East.[25]

Methodologically, I demonstrate how organizational ethnography allows sites of ideological practice and organizational boundaries (or lack thereof) to emerge organically, rather than defining relevant sources of

[23] McDoom 2012; Kopstein and Wittenberg 2011; Staniland 2012; Staniland 2014; Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour 2012.

[24] Hoover Green 2017; Bateson 2017; Manekin 2017; Wood and Toppelberg 2017; Wood 2006; Wood 2009; Cohen 2016; Cohen 2013.

[25] Wedeen 1999; Wedeen 2019; Deeb 2006; Mahmood 2011; Behrouzan 2016; Hirschkind 2012; Ben Shitrit 2016.

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ideology or taking for granted categories like membership or nonmembership.[26] Organizational ethnography reveals how militants use organizational affiliations to generate and maintain emotional bonds and biases as well as associated ideological affinities in ways that in-depth interviewing or surveys would not. It also creates a framework to examine overarching structural dynamics of affiliation, polarization, and organizational influence over time and in a social and historical context.

This article unfolds below in four sections. First, drawing primarily on literature on the role of ideology in civil war, I present an understanding of militant organizational ideology that distinguishes between doctrine and practical ideology. These conceptual distinctions, I emphasize, help scholars to more carefully link broad outcomes associated with ideology, such as patterns of violence, to particular social practices and modes of social interaction. Within the realm of practical ideology, I zero in on the role of informal discursive practices in socializing members and affiliates of militant organizations in ways that build organizational cohesion and replicate distance between the memberships of distinct organizations. Second, I discuss my ethnographic methodology and the siting of the study in Palestinian communities in Lebanon. I emphasize the way that organizational ethnography provides an incomparable view of processes and practices that are otherwise nearly impossible to study.[27] Third, I present extensive ethnographic evidence for these claims. This evidence centers on the significance of food and gossip among predominantly female members and affiliates of two militant organizations. Fourth, I summarize my findings and suggest productive avenues for future research, emphasizing the potential that organizational ethnography holds for scholarship on the role of emotion and obligation in organizational politics.

From Ideology as Doctrine to Practical Ideology

Francisco Gutiérrez-Sanín and Elisabeth Jean Wood conceptualize militant ideology as "a set of more or less systematic ideas that identify a constituency, the challenges the group confronts, the objectives to pursue on behalf of that group, and a (perhaps vague) program of action. Moreover, some ideologies prescribe strategies and institutions for the realization of those objectives."[28] They outline two approaches to studying militant ideology that are particularly significant for understanding

[26] Laumann, Marsden, and Prensky 1992.
[27] Moro 2017.
[28] Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014, 214.

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how ideology links to militant behavior.[29] In instrumentalist accounts, Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood argue, ideology operates to smooth potential principal-agent problems among diverse actors, making tasks like fighting and institution building more manageable. In normative approaches, scholars center rebel leaders' considerations of ideological resonance and affinity. In these accounts, ideology is a necessary commitment mechanism that undergirds collective action; individuals who subscribe to the organization's chosen ideology are more likely to be dedicated to the good fight.[30] Emotions play a key role in militants' affinity for an ideology and the group that subscribes to it. But this second approach presents a clear puzzle. People's ideological commitments and motivations are often tenuous, uneven, contingent, episodic, and ambivalent. They are also often distinct from master political cleavages and elite narratives.[31] What explains commitment, affinity, and collective behavioral outcomes among militants, affiliates, and sympathizers who clearly associate themselves with a group, but who are not consistently (or ever) true believers or committed ideologues?

Formal Doctrine and Political Outcomes

Scholars have achieved an increasingly nuanced understanding of the mechanisms through which ideology produces political outcomes.[32] Accounts focused on ideological internalization underscore the importance of indoctrination and socialization for political and conflict outcomes, including obedience, civilian targeting, and sexual violence. Researchers studying these phenomena emphasize that socialization targets both active militants and civilian communities in which rebel organizations operate (or wish to), often underlining the importance of formal indoctrination and socialization programs in propagating rebel doctrine.[33] Stefano Costalli and Andrea Ruggeri, for example, note the role of political entrepreneurs in spreading shared conceptions of priorities and political meaning from the top down:

> Ideological networks play an essential role in the process of collective armed action because the aggregation process from individual discontent to collective action develops within and thanks to such networks. Through ideological

[29] Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014, 214.

[30] Gates 2002, 114.

[31] Wedeen 2019; Wedeen 1999; Kalyvas 2009, 592–94; Kalyvas 2003; Leader Maynard and Benesch 2016, 74.

[32] Cohen 2013; Cohen 2016; Oppenheim et al. 2015; Hoover Green 2018; Hoover Green 2017.

[33] Bateson 2017; Eck 2007; Hoover Green 2017; Hoover Green 2018; Zech 2018; Zech 2019; Mampilly 2011; Revkin 2020; Revkin and Wood Forthcoming; Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015; Viterna 2006; Viterna 2013.

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> networks, political entrepreneurs translate ideas into practice, providing new worldviews as well as financial, organizational, and military resources. For ordinary people (followers of political entrepreneurs), the existence of rebel networks is essential to providing not only information and political meaning to the current situation, but also practical assistance.[34]

In their research, Livia Schubiger and Matthew Zelina underscore that how groups practice different ideologies varies greatly in terms of programmatic emphasis (for example, provision of services like schooling and healthcare), governance, and institutionalization. They further observe, "The institutional manifestations of ideology often penetrate the everyday life of combatants, continually connecting individual experiences to the goals and principles of the group."[35]

Although contemporary approaches often deftly link ideological content to large-scale political outcomes through formal socialization practices, they tend to gloss over more diffuse, nuanced social effects, which also influence collective behaviors.[36] By contrast, this article directly addresses the ways that organizational ideologies percolate within everyday life and explores their social effects. In so doing, it reveals complex, varied modes of militant engagement with political ideas through practical ideologies; anchors militants' ideological commitments in broader social dynamics; and contends that practical ideologies shape processes that in turn affect collective action, such as boundary policing. Furthermore, unlike previous research focused on either top-down socialization by political elites or horizontal socialization through peer-to-peer insider networks, my research highlights the roles of affiliates and sympathizers alongside members in reinforcing overarching organizational norms, beliefs, and loyalties through everyday interactions, contributing to militant socialization through previously unexplored mechanisms.

The Social Dynamics of Militant Ideology

Interactions between ideology as written and ideology as socially instantiated influence processes like the development of group boundaries, the formation of in-group solidarities, the increasing tendency to view people associated with out-groups as a collective rather than as individuals, the construction of negative impressions of out-groups, and political polarization.[37] Juan Ugarriza and Matthew Craig, among

[34] Costalli and Ruggeri 2017, 925.
[35] Schubiger and Zelina 2017, 49.
[36] Schubiger and Zelina 2017.
[37] Wood and Toppelberg 2017; McDoom 2012, 212; Wood 2008.

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others, stress that in addition to operating as a "set of political beliefs that promotes a particular way of understanding the world," ideology also broadly "shapes relations between members of a group and outsiders, and among members themselves."[38] One vein of research in this realm emphasizes that to take hold, ideological tenets must be rendered consumable by collective audiences. Kristine Eck, for example, stresses that translating such tenets through techniques like theater presentations rendered them accessible and appealing to Nepalese communities, which was particularly important for Maoist recruitment in those communities.[39]

Another strand of scholarship emphasizes how explicitly informal socialization practices profoundly (and sometimes unexpectedly) influence collective outcomes. Scholars who dig deeply into the sources of militants' ideological affinities often find that these informal factors, as well as formal doctrines, shape rebels' ideological commitments and group attachments. Ugarriza and Craig, for example, uncover strong evidence that families' political leanings shape individual rebels' trajectories.[40] Wood and Nathaniel Toppelberg highlight the intersection of top-down and horizontal (peer-to-peer) socialization processes in perpetuating sexual assault in the US military.[41] These findings align with research on religious militancy that examines how religious and other ideological commitments shape political action through interpolation and rooting in social networks.[42] But how ideological commitments permeate militants' everyday lives, how militants themselves understand those commitments, and how collective worldviews connect individuals to militant organizations remain underexplored in part because of the methodological difficulties involved with studying these questions.[43]

The research program upon which this article builds challenges doctrinal bias, that is, the academic focus on aspects of programmatic or formal organizational ideology like written doctrine, institutions, political education, and training processes. Doctrinal bias masks the ways that quotidian militant interactions and practices also shape aspects of conflict like recruitment, exclusion, motivation, competition, cohesion, schism, and (de)escalation. Specifically, intraorganizational social dynamics generate and reinforce what I term practical ideologies. Practi-

[38] Ugarriza and Craig 2013, 450.
[39] Eck 2007, 19.
[40] Ugarriza and Craig 2013, 462, 467.
[41] Wood and Toppelberg 2017, 626.
[42] Nielsen 2017; Ben Shitrit 2016; Pedahzur and Perliger 2011.
[43] Moro 2017.

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cal ideologies are sets of everyday principles, ideas, and social heuristics that reflect relational (that is, socially situated) worldviews rather than specific published political positions, platforms, or plans. But they may index either overt or embedded doctrinal commitments. For example, the notions of masculinity that Wood and Toppelberg link to sexual assault intrinsically connect to broader practical, patriarchal ideologies prevalent in many military organizations, although those notions of masculinity do not explicitly incorporate specific political positions. Many Palestinians with whom I worked understood members of Amal, a predominantly Shia political party, to be "violent thugs," "immoral," and sexually loose whereas they saw members of Hizbullah as generally "respectable" and "honorable," associations that were partially linked to Hizbullah's explicitly Islamist political ideology.[44] My interlocutors may not have felt any particular affinity toward either group or have been moved by either group's formal doctrine, but these social heuristics shaped how they interacted with members of each organization.

Militants and affiliates generate and spread practical ideologies through often banal, everyday behaviors—jokes, gossip, unsanctioned rituals,sartorial choices—that in turn shape social relations through status-based mechanisms. These informal, collective practices (1) help to generate, update, and maintain practical ideologies; and (2) socialize militants and affiliates into associated practices, such as social acceptance or distancing. The role of discourse and narrative is especially significant in generating, spreading, and maintaining practical ideologies; speech has particular power in generating social and political effects.[45] It is important to note that these processes are not linear. Rather, practical ideologies come to constitute militant collectivities and to drive group behavior through complex feedback loops.

Practical ideology is not simply a vernacular ideology,[46] that is, a doctrine that is distilled into more accessible forms, such as public performances, to be digested by the rank and file.[47] It is a system of socially accessible collective practices that potentially contain little or no explicit doctrinal content.[48] Practical ideologies may or may not reinforce an organization's official policies. Practical ideology complements and bolsters group socialization by allowing militants, affiliates, and sympathizers at various levels of belief or dedication to engage in common,

[44] Parkinson 2018.
[45] Leader Maynard and Benesch 2016, 73–75.
[46] Leader Maynard 2019, 638.
[47] Zech 2019; Zech 2018; Eck 2007.
[48] Seen in another light, these practices teach members to "hail" (Wedeen 2019, ix, drawing on Althusser [1971] 2001) each other, and to be successfully "hailed" as members of the same group.

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accessible practices. Unlike the informal practices of socialization that Wood and Toppelberg describe as working against top-down socialization, for example, hazing and sexual assault, practical ideologies and the practices that perpetuate them may be sanctioned by leadership. Militant elites and other authority figures may strongly encourage and commonly engage in such practices alongside the rank and file, as in the case described below. This dynamic may be particularly relevant for less absolutist and less exclusionary[49] ideologies; practical ideology offers everyday, easily accessible tenets, such as "those people are immoral," which may be embedded in, say, a religious ideology. In fact, practical ideologies may be particularly likely to center around ideas of morality, authenticity, and gender because of how those ideas interact with broader status claims. Practical ideology is consequently often accompanied by social expectations of distancing, of loyalty, of wearing the same clothes, and of closing ranks when necessary.

An Ethnographic Approach to Practical Ideology

Visual representations of formal ideological persuasions—Palestinian nationalist, Islamist, Marxist, Nasserist, and Salafist—are everywhere in the twelve Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and compete for visual dominance over any space classified as Palestinian. The factions (*al-fasā'il*), as people refer to Palestinian political parties like Fatah, Hamas, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), boisterously advertise their presence with calligraphy banners, martyr posters, party flags, and graffiti over access roads and alleyways. Flags printed, for example, with Fatah's crossed rifles (on yellow), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine's (DFLP) red star (on red or white), the PFLP's arrow (on red or white), or the PFLP General Command's (PFLP-GC) crossed rifles (on black) wave in front of political, social, and military offices. Green or black flags with the *shahāda*—the Islamic declaration of faith—printed in white hang outside Hamas's and Islamic Jihad's headquarters. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) maintains offices marked with clean white plastic plaques that bear green maps of Palestine; the red, black, green, and white Palestinian flag; and a red flame. Yasir Arafat, the former leader of Fatah and the PLO, and Shaykh Yassin, a founding member of Hamas, both deceased, look down from banners and out from cleverly designed, spray-painted stencils. Occasionally, the face of the late Egyptian pres-

[49] Brehm 2015.

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ident Gamal Abdel Nasser also makes an appearance, thanks to left-leaning graffiti aficionados. The plaques featuring the insignia of the (unaffiliated) United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East's (UNRWA), a white globe and olive branches on light blue, guards the doorways of its clinics, schools, and administrative offices.[50]

Many people who live in the camps, non-camp settlements known as gatherings, and other predominantly Palestinian communities casually refer to each other in terms of their organizational affiliations, their occupation (especially if it is with a social association), and the community where they live or grew up. For example, in response to the question, "Which Muhammad?", someone might answer, "Muhammad, from the mobile phone shop in Shatila, he's with Hamas, but his mother is a communist. His cousin works in UNRWA." The majority of people to whom I spoke ordered their lives in this way. In social network terms, they considered who was close to them by function of similar social ties and clearly identified people whose relationships bridged organizations, families, and locales. Fictional Muhammad's family, for example, spans two factions and the militant group/United Nations professional divide. Muhammad, his mother, and his cousin would probably tell each other selective tidbits of what they know from their positions: individual officers' political backgrounds, former clandestine activity, and corrupt practices, as well as who is a patronage hire. This kind of knowledge could protect or advance fellow family members. Within organizations and across families, people tend to keep this type of mental dossier.

Although visual representations of ideological distinctions are ubiquitous in the camps, these seemingly dominating ideologies' roles in everyday life and interpersonal relations are less obvious. Disparate ideologies are, for example, deployed to justify each party's support of similar political and social programs, such as educational and healthcare services. But when asked about their ideological leanings, individuals may or may not cite party personalities like the late writer, journalist, and leading PFLP thinker Ghassan Kanafani, or famous political figures (Che Guevara was popular among some leftist youth), as sources of their own political beliefs. Publicly secular, nationalist members of Fatah might first cite the Quran, rather than Fatah's principles or the PLO charter. Often, respondents may simply shrug. In Palestinian communities in Lebanon, as in other diverse polities, many families have multi-

[50] Operational since 1950, UNRWA provides schooling and healthcare, and maintains some infrastructure in the camps.

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ple factions represented at the dinner table. On more than one occasion, interlocutors who identified as secular relayed how they couldn't reason with family members who belonged to a fundamentalist group, such as Islamic Jihad, much like their US or European counterparts may complain about fundamentalist or evangelical relatives. Most members of older generations could state at least a prior political affiliation. But many members of younger generations forswore factional affiliations, often wearing jewelry, carrying keychains, or getting tattoos featuring Handala, a popular cartoon character created by the artist Naji al-'Ali representing a Palestinian refugee child, to symbolize this unaffiliated position—an embodiment of practical ideology in and of itself.

Extended ethnographic fieldwork among members of Palestinian militant groups and civil society associations grounds this article's approach to practical ideology. The article inductively emerged from a larger project on Palestinian militant organizations' evolution during and following the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990).[51] Because of the larger project's focus on micro- and mesolevel conflict dynamics, the methodology I employed and the nature of the evidence I gathered speak to the relationship between practical ideology and political outcomes in particularly salient and nuanced ways. Over the course of

[51] This project was conducted under University of Chicago Institutional Review Board protocols H07177 and H10075. I conducted the research upon which this article is based in the summers of 2007 and 2008, from October 2009 to October 2010, in the spring of 2011, and during the spring and summer of 2012. Although I returned to Lebanon twice in 2014, I was primarily focused on a new project and avoided asking questions pertinent to my earlier research, given political sensitivities in the context of the Syrian Civil War. Additional archival work occurred in the summer of 2018. To protect my interlocutors, I did not make audio recordings of our conversations and obtained only verbal consent from participants. I conducted all interviews in locations that my interlocutors chose. Interviews were conducted in Levantine colloquial Arabic or in English; with the exception of a small number of interviews conducted in 'Ayn al-Hilwa camp in 2007 and 2008, all research occurred without a translator present. I took detailed, handwritten interview notes in Arabic and English. In some cases, I had interviewees check my spelling of Arabic terms or direct quotations for accuracy. I later transcribed those notes digitally, encrypted them, and destroyed all paper notes. Although I arrived for my longest period of fieldwork in October 2009, I did not begin participant observation with the Women's Office until Sabah invited me to follow her around for a project related to Nakba Day in the spring of 2010. I spent the preceding months doing archival work, volunteering, developing contextual knowledge, and building trust with potential interlocutors. I always identified myself as a researcher who was interested in the history of the Palestinian factions in Lebanon and was clear about my funding sources (about which people frequently asked). I discussed the concepts of ethnography and participant observation explicitly with my interlocutors, who encouraged me to, in their words, "live the reality" to better understand street-level politics in Palestinian communities. During participant observation, I generally made short, handwritten jottings and later expanded them into more thorough digital field notes; I then destroyed the jottings. All interlocutors have been given pseudonyms; I usually asked them if there was a pseudonym they preferred I use. I have concealed or changed some identifying details to protect confidentiality. With the exception of the vignette that begins this article, I have concealed the specific dates of interviews and participant observation to protect my interlocutors. Following the research period, I had extensive member-checking conversations with both Sabah and a member of the Abdullah family (who was present for nearly all interactions with the family) regarding this article's theoretical and empirical focus.

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nearly two years in Lebanon, I completed in-depth interviews with 114 current and former members of Palestinian militant groups, social workers, humanitarian aid workers, and longtime UNRWA employees. I conducted interviews or participant observation with individual members of most of the major ideological currents in Palestinian politics, including Ba'thists, Marxists, Muslim Brotherhood–inspired Islamists, Salafists, and secular nationalists.[52] These included members and former members (in the case of parties that no longer exist) of Ansar Allah, the Arab Liberation Front, the DFLP, Fatah, Fatah–Revolutionary Council, Hamas, the Palestine Liberation Front (both wings), the PFLP, the PFLP-GC, the PLO and its various popular organizations (for example, the General Union of Palestinian Women), al-Sa'iqa, and Usbat al-Ansar. I also interviewed and conducted participant observation with many people who had quit these factions or who considered themselves to be unaffiliated.[53]

My research also included extensive participant observation with Palestinian factions and civil society organizations. I carried out ten months of organizational ethnography among members of Fatah's Women's Office.[54] I observed meetings (at the camp, regional, and national levels, both open invitation and invitation only); visited party offices; collected and studied the party's publications (for example, Fatah's Arabic-language magazine, *al-Quds*); watched its television channels; visited members' and affiliates' homes; attended events like poetry readings, festivals, and demonstrations; and gathered materials like party-produced yearly planners. I studied sites of ideological discourse, such as a listserv for publicizing party events and public Facebook pages. This approach allowed me to examine different manifestations of organizational ideology and the practices that accompanied them, especially as questions about my own political beliefs often served as a way of vetting me for access.

Engagement with Palestinian civil society further informs my understanding of the interplay between doctrine and practical ideology. Civil society and service provision are often key instantiations of political parties and militant factions' ideological programs.[55] During the

[52] I was unable to interview members of Fatah al-Intifada, Islamic Jihad, Jund al-Sham, or Usbat al-Nur.

[53] My personal social circle included peers who would not have identified with any specific organization but would have loosely identified themselves with a leftist strain of secular Palestinian nationalism.

[54] For an overview of organizational ethnography, see Yanow 2012.

[55] Mampilly 2011; Arjona 2014; Arjona 2016; Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015; Cammett 2011; Cammett 2014.

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summer of 2008 and from October 2009–October 2010, I volunteered with three social associations, each of which was known for being close to different Palestinian factions.[56] As a US citizen, I could not feasibly work with some civil society groups—specifically, groups linked to certain Islamist and Salafi factions, as well as those linked to the PFLP—due to legal concerns stemming from these organizations' association with factions labeled as foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) by the US government.[57] My volunteer work was consequently limited to organizations historically linked to specific secular-nationalist and leftist parties. This constraint meant that my interactions with practical ideology in these parties were much more extensive than those with practical ideology in Islamist parties, although I made every effort to gather materials that represented the latter's ideological standpoints. A substantial body of scholarly research already exists on connections between Islamist parties' ideologies and everyday practice in the Middle East;[58] my focus provides an opportunity to examine how ideology interacts with everyday practice among more secular-nationalist and leftist activists.

My research with public-facing party organizations and my volunteer positions in the camps eventually opened access to more private spaces (for example, invitations to lunch). At least partially due to my status as a young, unmarried, female-identified researcher, I was increasingly invited into family homes and to social gatherings.[59] Developing deep ties within Palestinian factions afforded me the opportunity to observe organizational practices and hierarchies, and to participate in everyday life by accompanying people on social visits, watching the news with them, and attending weddings.[60] Conversations and complaints about UNRWA schools, for example, presented the opportunity to ask how people thought education should be provided and pedagogically approached, two core aspects of many militant groups' ideologies.

[56] In the summer of 2008, I taught English for al-Najdeh Association, a group focused on educational and social support for women and girls. Now an independent association, it is understood as being historically close to the DFLP. From fall 2009 to summer 2010, I worked for an association that focused on training Palestinian journalists, which was run by a member/former member of various leftist parties. That job led to an invitation from a community center that ran a tutoring program for young students in one of the refugee camps in South Beirut.

[57] Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the PFLP, the PFLP-GC, and Usbat al-Ansar were or are on the FTO list; at the time of my research, Fatah–Revolutionary Council/the Abu Nidal Organization was also on the list. It was delisted in 2017. The DFLP was delisted in 1999.

[58] Mahmood 2011; Ben Shitrit 2016; Brooke 2019; Clark and Schwedler 2003; Schwedler 2007; Clark 2004.

[59] For a discussion of the advantages and challenges of conducting research in the Middle East as a Western woman, see Schwedler 2006.

[60] See also Parkinson 2016.

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Immersion in these social networks is a crucial means of assessing how ideological commitments play out in everyday life and of recognizing the informal modes of socialization that occur in ostensibly private spaces. This approach provides incomparable insight into the meanings that people associate with their affiliations and the ways that social practices structure intraorganizational relations. By highlighting insiders' views, performances, and understandings of membership, it privileges interlocutors' experiences of the organizational worlds that they inhabit rather than relying on external categorizations.[61]

My understanding of organizational ideology, and particularly of the distinctions between doctrine and practical ideology, is also informed by extensive archival research. In the summer of 2008, from October 2009 to October 2010, and in the summer of 2018, I conducted archival research at the American University of Beirut, the Institut français du Proche Orient, the Lebanese newspaper *al-Safir*, and the Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS). At IPS, I was able to access and read back issues of formal party publications from across the political spectrum.

In the following section, I present ethnographic evidence drawn predominantly from my research with Fatah's Women's Office, which is responsible for outreach to women and families as well as for engaging with political issues relevant to these groups, and with a family affiliated with Fatah–Revolutionary Council, along with insights from my broader fieldwork. I underscore how everyday practices—in this case, gossip—work to root practical ideologies among members and affiliates of militant organizations. Focusing on secular organizations and on the member-nonmember divide allows me to demonstrate how practical ideologies operate even in organizations with less socially prescriptive ideological tenets and in the absence of serious doctrinal commitments, in this case among female youth.

Food, Family, and Ideological Affinity

> Sabah stopped on the uneven pavement of the camp alleyway and rounded on me, visibly upset. "Do you know what his job was? He used to be an interrogator. He killed people in the camp."[62] She meant, specifically, that he had killed people in Fatah, but Sabah [seemed to judge] that I was more likely to be upset if she didn't explicitly link his behavior to party rivalries.

[61] Bayard de Volo and Schatz 2004; Pachirat 2009; Wedeen 2009; Wedeen 2010; Schatz 2009; Yanow 2012.

[62] An "interrogator" in this context is a member of a political organization who tortures people for information. Sabah was referring to an individual's role in interorganizational witch-hunts among Palestinians during the 1990s.

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> This was the first time Sabah had spoken so bluntly about a member of another militant organization's activities during the war or occupation.[63]

After I had been a volunteer for about a month in a refugee camp in South Beirut, several families sent their children to invite me over for a meal. The Abdullahs—Abu Ghassan, Umm Ghassan,[64] their daughter Muna, and their four sons—hosted me for a huge *maqluba* lunch.[65] Muna and Umm Ghassan took the opportunity to question me about my friendship with Sabah, a local woman and officer in Fatah's Women's Office. Cautious, I replied simply that I had been to her house a few times and had obviously met her family. "Well, I'm sure she just wanted to try to get you to marry her brother. He'll want you for your passport," Muna said with a tone of disdain. She was referring to a common practice in the camps, where families tried to find foreign spouses for their children so that the children could obtain citizenship and a route out of Lebanon. Admittedly, the possibility stung and I subsequently raised my level of caution around the brother. But I continued to spend time with Sabah and her family and the issue of marriage to her brother never emerged, other than in some lighthearted joking. Sabah's mother, Umm Muhammad, invited me to dinner the next time she made maqluba. At the end of the meal, Umm Muhammad made a point to ask, "It's better than Umm Ghassan's, isn't it? She makes it the *Jordanian* way, not the Palestinian way." The family snickered. Although only Sabah's family's factional affiliation was clear to me at the time, it was obvious that crossing the social boundary between the Abdullahs and Sabah's family created tension.

Later interactions revealed the deeper, political significance of this seemingly throwaway slight and others that followed. Repeated interactions with people from different factions who inhabited various roles demonstrated that people often used comments about food to refer to the country or region where someone had once lived because of political activity like training, education, or a diplomatic posting. This practice was often employed by referencing a distinctive flavor, such as hot chili, or grain, such as fine-grained couscous, not used in traditional Palestinian cooking. The referenced location could be immediately linked

[63] This conversation occurred after six months of increasingly close friendship with Sabah. The ethnographic evidence in the following section is drawn from the author's field notes during spring, summer, and fall of 2010 unless otherwise noted.

[64] In Arabic, parents are referred to by the terms "Abu" (father) and "Umm" (mother), paired with the parents' eldest son's name. Thus "Abu Ghassan" literally means "father of Ghassan."

[65] Maqluba is a traditional Palestinian dish. The word maqluba literally means "upside down"; the masculine version of the term, maqlub, denotes "defeated." A typical platter of maqluba consists of a mountain of spiced rice, chicken, eggplant, potatoes, and nuts.

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to specific ideological affiliations or to personal ties to an exiled officer known for particular political positions. For example, a preference for spicy food and couscous could indicate a high-ranking member of Fatah who had been deported from Lebanon to Tunis in 1982 and acquired a taste for Tunisian food, which is spicier and uses smaller, semolina-based couscous than traditional Palestinian food.[66]

Food preferences could also signal rank or prestige. The intersection of politics and seemingly mundane decisions about the food one prepared for one's family was repeated across different walks of life. High-level officers sometimes expressed affection for Chinese, Cuban, or Eastern European food (and occasionally alcohol), which they had consumed while training or studying abroad. Overseas study was itself often a statement of ideological commitment—especially to Marxism. Tracing a family's or family member's food preferences could therefore reveal a current or former organizational membership, an approximate position in the organization's hierarchy, and, potentially, hints of ideological commitment. For example, hard-core Marxists who had earned the opportunity to train or study in Eastern Europe might acquire an appreciation for vodka, which would differentiate them from members of secular-nationalist groups, such as Fatah, who are more frequently observant Muslims and who may regard mention of alcohol consumption as taboo. Depending on who deploys it, commentary about spicy chili and couscous might indicate someone whose past proximity to Yasir Arafat made the person a mentor; someone who left others in the faction behind to suffer in Lebanon during the wars of the 1980s; or someone who had been corrupted by their closeness to Arafat and other leaders of the PLO. When it came to maqluba, I later deduced that Sabah's mother was referring to Abu Ghassan's former affiliation with Fatah–Revolutionary Council while simultaneously questioning his authenticity as a Palestinian, given his faction's political stances. When Sabah later announced that Umm Ghassan was an "ignorant whore" who used the wrong rice, she was deliberately referring to regional and local preferences regarding the size and type of the rice grain used to cook maqluba, in effect calling Umm Ghassan's Palestinianness into

[66] Author's field notes, spring 2011. The conversation occurred over lunch, when I added chili to a sandwich in front of a friend's mother. She grinned and commented that unlike many Palestinians, she liked her food spicy because she had lived in Tunis. In the conversation about food that followed, she also explained to me that "Palestinian" couscous, or *maftul*, is bulgur-based and larger than Tunisian couscous. Following Israel's June 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the summer-long siege of Beirut and the military defeat of the PLO and its constituent factions, a negotiated settlement provided for approximately fifteen thousand fighters and PLO bureaucratic staff to evacuate Lebanon at the end of August.

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question in light of her ideological affiliations, which Sabah considered to be those of a traitor.

Social Intimacy and Organizational Stigma

Ideological rivalries often played out in intimate circles and operated through recognition of basic social courtesies, rather than in public debates. Food commentary commonly assumed moral and gendered undertones, with each family implying that women in the other were low class, trashy, or dirty. Airing these concerns was an explicit appeal for alliance and sympathy. As my conversations with Muna fell into a comfortable but superficial zone of girl talk, she would frequently interject her personal commentary about Sabah. I needed to watch how much time I spent with Sabah in the camp, Muna said; people in the community thought she had loose morals and might think the same of me. Did I ever smoke *arguileh* (hookah) with Sabah? Muna "heard" that Sabah and her friends spiked the flavored tobacco with "other things that made them crazy."[67] Again, in her view, I should *really* think about whether I wanted people in the camp to think that we were friends. Muna's stories became increasingly suspect. Her father joined the effort by implying that Sabah and her colleagues were promiscuous, a grave accusation within the conservative camp community and one that directly affected me as a white, US-passport-holding, unmarried woman. People in the camp, according to Abu Ghassan, were judging me poorly for befriending Sabah. Yet Muna and Abu Ghassan's assessments did not match those of other families with whom I worked. Moreover, other young women in the camp often chose Sabah to mediate their disputes; the youth population clearly respected her and saw her as a figure of some authority.

Over time, the appeals' emotional intensity increased. Muna and Sabah started by showing basic disdain for each other, continued by impugning each other's morality, and then escalated to accusing each other of massive breaches of trust. The emphasis on trustworthiness, in particular, subtly referenced the historical split between Fatah and Fatah–Revolutionary Council. Members of the former saw members of the latter as having betrayed the parent movement from which they split. But this tactic held specific, immediate significance in the camps, given the perceived omnipresence of intelligence informants in and around Palestinian communities. Due to the nature of my research, everyone

[67] Some youth spike their arguileh—flavored tobacco smoked in a hookah pipe—with hashish.

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assumed that someone would try to inform on me at some point, probably for money or for a much-needed favor. Sabah carefully crafted a narrative that the Abdullahs were untrustworthy, which operated as a blanket warning for me and the young women in the camp. Umm Ghassan was a gossip, she said, "Don't tell her a thing you don't want the whole camp to know." Muna was, in Sabah's uncensored words, "a bitch [*kilba*]." Sabah accused her of trying to get the attention of a man in the camp whom another girl liked, the lesson being that she would betray her friends and community. Sabah argued that Muna was marrying her fiancé "for his money," an accusation that Sabah broadened to claim that the Abdullahs used everyone for their money and would betray them for it. Sabah then claimed that Abu Ghassan was a child molester. I never added anything to these conversations; I usually tried to change the topic. I recorded what the women said about each other in my field notes. For a long time I attributed their behavior to personal animosity.

Emotional appeals of this sort operate by creating both confusion and distance, particularly for those not previously enmeshed in the social system (in this case, the camp community). They are politically if not socially subtle. At first glance, the nastiness described here does not seem ideological; it appears that Muna, Sabah, and their families simply did not like each other, which was true. Yet broader observation indicated that the gossip replicated well-known political alliance structures in the camp and could have escalatory effects. As I became more embedded in the community, two rival groups started manipulating concerns for reputation.

Degrees of Social Distance

Muna's wedding provided an opportunity for socializing across organizational boundaries and an opportunity to engage with practical ideology. After Muna delivered invitations to various offices around the camp, I watched as a female member of Fatah dramatically dropped Muna's wedding invitation into the trash and rolled her eyes as several other members of the organization laughed. Her stated rationale for these actions was in part that she didn't live in the camp and thus didn't owe the Abdullahs the basic courtesy of attending; indeed, only three out of at least twenty members of Fatah whom Muna invited to the wedding attended. One declined but allowed her teenage daughter to go; two other mothers came at least in part to chaperone their daughters among Muna's family and family friends, whom they regarded as questionable. At the wedding, the three women from Fatah vocally in-

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sisted that I sit at their table because it was the "classy table." Relationships on both sides of the conflict were becoming strained, in particular due to the evolving social implications of each. When Sabah revealed that Abu Ghassan had been an interrogator, she was giving me an ultimatum to choose sides between the two factions and families.

People's deployment of the practices described above, including gossip and slander, worked to induce mistrust and social distancing.[68] Members, affiliates, and supporters used the coded, informal language of family and friendship ties to relay commentary on political allies and enemies, thus attempting to alter the behavior of anyone in their proximity. These interactions demonstrate the ways in which formal political affiliations and close associations seep into everyday life through practical ideologies, expanding the domain of political work to the balcony, living room, and kitchen. Moreover, these exchanges demonstrate how the emotional appeals and obligations that form the bedrock of practical ideologies act as unwritten but central elements of militants' lives, even for individuals who are not formally members of a party, such as Muna and Umm Ghassan.

Formal ideological affinities played little role in these interactions. Abu Ghassan was the only party to them with whom I had extended conversations about doctrine. Neither Sabah nor Muna had been born when the rivalry between factions and families developed. Sabah's political activity began years after Abu Ghassan's ended (so she was never one of his targets), and Muna, I later learned, didn't even know that her family had been affiliated with a particular faction. Their behavior was acquired from their social context and through observed practices. Muna learned from her parents (predominantly her father, a former party member) and Sabah through her family (either members or affiliates of Fatah) and organizational colleagues. The same dynamic also applied in other families. My friend Huda told me that her mother, along with other pro-Arafat parents, had forbidden her from visiting Muna's family home as a child; for years, Huda simply understood that something was "bad" or "dangerous" about Muna's parents.[69] The discursive techniques that the young women deployed operated across multiple domains. What at first glance appeared to be a petty rivalry between young women was revealed as families replaying a decades-old animosity be-

[68] Wiessner 2005.

[69] Huda grew up in the 1980s and 1990s, after Syrian authorities had expelled pro-Arafatists from Beirut and most members of pro-Arafat organizations were underground. Pro-Arafat parents had genuine safety concerns for themselves and their children during this time; a child's offhand mention of his or her father reading a banned magazine could have resulted in the father's torture or assassination by a friend's anti-Arafat parent.

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tween two Palestinian militant groups and appropriating it for their own reasons.

The practical ideologies that Sabah and Muna invoked centered on notions of morality and authenticity. They used narratives featuring everyday, accessible themes, such as sexual promiscuity, drug use, betrayal, and ignorance to index factions' relative status positions. Sabah, for example, would display disgust with the Abdullahs, which would then elicit feelings of distrust and uncertainty in me toward them. She would also use her status—a female politician who was actively recruiting new members—to condemn Muna's social machinations. Abu Ghassan seemed to calculate that I wouldn't judge people based on their political orientation, as he did, but that I would instead make decisions based on threats to my reputation. He deployed what I eventually understood to be commonly used tropes about Fatah in personal terms because he wanted to change my behavior rather than my political opinion. In general, people did not slander others to change my core ideology or with the hope of convincing me to join an organization. Instead, the explicitly moral nature of these scripts targeted individuals on a more fundamental level by working to alter conscious and instinctual social behaviors. Their foundational assumption was that no one wanted to be known for hanging out with, for example, drug dealers or loose women, because doing so carried social costs.

Gossip generated within organizational networks therefore worked to mold individuals' webs of affiliations. Gossip was not just a symptom; it shaped organizational membership, kinship, and social bonds through ongoing feedback. Particularly in contexts in which political, ethnic, or religious affiliation is paramount, the ways in which emotions like respect, envy, and hatred are deployed toward third parties, including researchers, may indicate the social repurposing of political practices, which in turn reshape logics of political affiliation and interaction, rather than one-dimensional manipulation.

In the camp, gossip, especially slander, worked to shape informal, organization-specific worldviews. By mobilizing practical ideologies over the long term, families or groups of friends (the latter to some extent self-selecting and gendered) rendered interactions with members of both in-groups and out-groups nearly instinctual by labeling them as "appropriate," "neutral," or "abhorrent." Practical ideologies also not so subtly extended political obligation beyond the boundaries of formal membership in a militant party to individuals in a member's social orbit. The scripts embedded in these practical ideologies carried unique leverage because they functioned to create stigma, defined by Erving

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Goffman as an attribute that reduces someone from a "whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one."[70] As Goffman notes, stigma is frequently seen as contagious and can spread to the stigmatized person's family and friends.[71] Throughout the camps, members of PLO-affiliated organizations repeatedly described former Fatah–Revolutionary Council officers as dirty criminals; members of leftist groups, even those who were privately quite pious, often referred to Hamas members as ignorant because they were ostensibly easy to woo with religious ideology. Gossip thus contributed to an overarching structure in which affiliates of certain organizations were more ostracized by (or, in network terms, were more distant from), certain factions than others.

Members of militant organizations casually ranked other groups along a number of dimensions, such as morality, intelligence, and social engagement. The Abdullahs were associated with a particularly ostracized faction; members of multiple parties from across the political spectrum in the camp described them as only caring about money, a measure of ideological authenticity,[72] or as criminals, an indicator of morality. A member of the DFLP could naturally interact with members of Fatah in almost any camp, but the Islamic organizations in 'Ayn al-Hilwa wouldn't even play in the same soccer league as the secular militant groups.[73] A young woman like Muna might consequently have no idea why other women would not visit her or why men from the camp would not be interested in her; she would therefore appropriate the language her father used to refer to their parents and redeploy it against her own rivals. Meanwhile, a party member like Sabah would understand that I, as her friend, owed it to her to avoid the Abdullahs because of the potential for my association with them to taint her. In this sense, as Niko Besnier observes in his study of gossip in Pacific Islander communities, "the relationship between ideology and linguistic practice is unstable and dynamic, and linguistic practice can in turn contribute to the construction of ideology. Thus linguistic production does not just reflect ideology, but also produces and reproduces it."[74]

Conclusion

Militant organizations' ideological differences are grounded in both doctrinal distinctions and practical ideologies. This article focuses on

[70] Goffman 1963, 3.
[71] Goffman 1963, 30.
[72] Parkinson 2016, 977, 984.
[73] Interview with al-Nahda (a local soccer team) supporters and Fatah members, 'Ayn al-Hilwa, August 2008.
[74] Besnier 2009, 99.

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the latter. It develops the concept of practical ideology, examines some of the practices that ground and maintain it, and argues that these processes informally socialize affiliates of militant organizations independently of their formal ideological affinities. In delineating practical ideology as a set of political ideas expressed through everyday notions of, for example, morality and authenticity, I demonstrate that militants' collective understandings of other organizations and their members may be only loosely connected to formal doctrinal distinctions. This argument implies crucial lessons for the study of both ideology and militant behavior more broadly.

Ideological affinity and ideological resonance are two key factors that scholars use to understand how organizational ideals shape individuals' thinking and influence behavior. Yet the ideas that organically bubble up in organizational spaces and that militants subsequently wield to informally distinguish themselves from others constitute organizational ideology and should be studied as such. This article grounds discussion of political ideas by examining how militants share core organizational ideologies—if not formal doctrines—in practice. In so doing, it demonstrates how militants render ideas about ideological closeness and distance accessible to broad and variably committed audiences by using emotional appeals, for example, via gossip. The collective production of social heuristics in this way suggests important new trajectories for scholarship examining how individuals learn about groups' ideologies, conceive of ideological differences between organizations, decide which organizations to join or refuse, and reproduce those distinctions in politically consequential ways. Importantly, this research program necessitates reaching beyond organizational memberships and understanding the role that affiliates and nonmembers play in these organizations.

My research complements perspectives that emphasize affinity- and resonance-based understandings of political proximity and distance while highlighting that these approaches likely gloss over core interpersonal dynamics that directly affect social dynamics among militants and affiliates. It suggests that militant cohesion, collective behavior, and polarization must be understood at least in part as products of everyday social practices. Such understanding requires more relational and multilevel, rather than individually based, approaches to the study of militant ideology. This article also brings into question the extent to which doctrine matters to dynamic, everyday social processes. It opens new theoretical and empirical avenues for studying how political beliefs align with, reinforce, challenge, or even contradict formal orga-

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nizational and party doctrines, and what the consequences of those interactions may be.

These conclusions also carry tangible implications. In polarized and fragmented polities, scholars and practitioners should understand that formal ideological differences, or expressions of proximity, between militant groups may provide an incomplete story when it comes to their members' relationships with each other. That is, treating extreme forms of social and political distance as the aggregate of disagreements (or agreements) between, for example, opinions on appropriate social policy or the role of religion in politics, may miss the fact that members of rival groups have been strongly socialized to see each other as amoral and/or inauthentic. This nuance implies a different set of policy interventions from those often applied in violence-affected settings. Attempting to increase social cohesion—a common programming goal for humanitarian agencies—through respect for the Other becomes more challenging if a group perceives the Other as unworthy of respect, rather than as simply thinking differently about the world. Research in US politics suggests that focusing on issues other than political disagreement can help to overcome perceptions of ideological polarization,[75] but more work is needed to see if these findings might extend to comparative, nondemocratic, and postwar contexts.

The events described in this article illustrate the advantages and tensions of ethnographic approaches to studying militant ideology. Organizational ethnography provides researchers with inside perspectives on the role of overlapping, everyday social ties in formal organizational processes. The methodology thus creates a space in which the researcher can examine larger structural dynamics like affiliation, socialization, internal critique, and collective behavior. In particular, my research in Palestinian communities allows me to challenge many previously held assumptions regarding how the factions operate within those communities, and particularly how people casually use ideas of morality and authenticity to index deeper political schisms.

As academics continue to pursue fieldwork in conflict zones and deeply divided polities, and specifically as ethnography becomes increasingly popular in political science research, questions regarding the nature of the data collected, the methodologies deployed, and the ethics involved should and will continue be debated. Questions regarding how and under what circumstances data are collected, understood, and

[75] Rogowski and Sutherland 2016.

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interpreted should be central to this conversation. Directing attention to the ways in which emotion and obligation operate through social relations provides critical perspective on the intimate channels through which political affiliations manifest and boundaries evolve. Rather than seeking to dissuade scholars from confronting situations in which these dynamics operate on them, this article emphasizes that only by facing these challenges directly in the field can researchers understand some of the most foundational relationships that influence political participation and behavior.

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