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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Ideology and Extreme Protests

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Abstract

Ideology can be understood as a type of cultural system, a set of interrelated meanings that are symbolically mediated through semiotic devices such as metaphors. Ideologies underlie social orders as well as help people make sense of their environment and decide on courses of action. While much has been said about ideology, little has been written on the sources of ideological change beyond pointing to ideological entrepreneurship. Even less has been written on the relationship between violent and disruptive social movements and ideology beyond pointing to the ideological motivations for the movements. We contend that extreme protests are often triggered by an ideological crisis, that is, an intolerable disconnection between the ideology adopted by some group and the current circumstances or, alternatively, an inability of their ideology to make sense of their current situation. Moreover, extreme protests are a form of ideological work, as they are often sources of ideological inspiration, development, and change.

Keywords: ideology; spontaneous order; social movement; protest; riot

Introduction

Ideology is a contested term with competing definitions.[1] Coined in the late-eighteenth century by Antoine Destutt de Tracy to denote his general "science of ideas," ideology has generally come to mean a system of beliefs shared by some group.[2] Our approach to ideology treats it as a type of cultural system, a web of meanings symbolically mediated through semiotic devices such as metaphors.

[1] See, e.g., John Gerring, "Ideology: A Definitional Analysis," *Political Research Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (1997): 958–59, for a review of competing definitions of ideology. See also Molly Brigid McGrath, "The Insidious Ambiguity of 'Ideology'," elsewhere in this volume, who presents alternative interpretations of ideology that contribute to the concept's ambiguity. We ultimately adopt what she calls the social-scientific approach.

[2] Antoine Claude Destutt de Tracy, *Mémoire sur la Faculté de Penser, De la Métaphysique de Kant et Autres Texts*, ed. Anne Deneys and Henry Deneys (Paris: Fayard, 1992), 71. For an English translation of the key passage from Tracy's *Mémoire sur la Faculté de Penser*, see *Antoine Louis Claude Destutt De Tracy's*

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Ideologies underlie social orders while helping people make sense of their environment. Ideological commitments serve as rules that frame alternative courses of action. While much has been said about ideology, little has been written on the sources of ideological change beyond pointing to ideological entrepreneurship.[3] Even less has been written on the relationship between violent and disruptive social movements and ideology beyond pointing to the ideological motivations for such events.[4]

Our essay adds to the discussion by framing extreme protests—which involve disorderly demonstrations, riots, and other disruptive acts—as a form of ideological work.[5] Ideological work involves creating, developing, maintaining, revising, and/or refining an ideology. A protest becomes *extreme* when its protestors resort to violent means of affirming their aims.[6] Extreme protests are often sources of ideological inspiration, development, and change. Additionally, extreme protests are often triggered by an ideological crisis, that is, an intolerable disconnection between the ideals embedded in the ideology adopted by some group and the current situation or, alternatively, an inability of an adopted ideology to make sense of the current situation.[7] Arguably, the way (extreme) protests affect ideological development is often ignored and, so, deserves special attention. Although we recognize the significance of nonviolent ideological work, we believe that extreme protests—involving spontaneous acts of collective violence—are unique cases that deserve better understanding and explanation.[8]

In the "Understanding ideology" section, we summarize the literature on ideology and, following Clifford Geertz, argue that ideology is appropriately

Elements of Ideology, Volume 1: Ideology Strictly Defined and "On Love" from Elements of Ideology, Volume 5: On Morals, trans. Juan Christian Guerrero (Paris: The American University of Paris, 2011), 72–73.

[3] See, e.g., Douglass C. North, *Structure and Change in Economic History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), 45–58; Virgil Henry Storr, "North's Underdeveloped Ideological Entrepreneur," in *The Annual Proceedings of the Wealth and Well-Being of Nations, 2008–2009, Volume 1: Social Institutions and the Rule of Law*, ed. Emily Chamlee-Wright and Jennifer Kodl (Beloit, WI: Beloit College Press, 2009), 99–115.

[4] See, e.g., Nona P. Martin and Virgil Henry Storr, "'I'se a Man': Political Awakening and the 1942 Riot in the Bahamas," *The Journal of Caribbean History* 41, nos. 1–2 (2007): 72–91; Nona P. Martin and Virgil Henry Storr, "Demystifying Bay Street: Black Tuesday and the Radicalization of Bahamian Politics in the 1960s," *The Journal of Caribbean History* 43, no. 1 (2009): 37–50; Nona P. Martin and Virgil Henry Storr, "Bay Street as Contested Space," *Space and Culture* 15, no. 4 (2012): 283–97.

[5] Ideological work can be thought of as efforts to resolve ideological crisis, that is, a disconnection or distance between an ideology and reality.

[6] We use "extreme" in a morally neutral way, as we are in no way endorsing or opposing the aims of protestors.

[7] Ideological crisis is linked to the concept of cultural dissonance, which is a feeling of disharmony that individuals experience when there are sudden and unexpected shifts in their cultural environment.

[8] There is, of course, a sense in which every human action is ideological work, at least in the sense that we mean it here. As such, we should not be read as arguing that riots are ideological work and showing up to one's job, competing in a sport, or writing a treatise is not ideological work. Each of these can be understood as an effort to make one's reality make sense. Our essay, however, attempts to highlight the specific ways in which extreme protests are ideological work.

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understood as a type of cultural system.[9] Next, in the "Understanding extreme protests as emergent phenomena" section, we discuss the literature on violent and disruptive social movements and treat these extreme protests as emergent orders.[10] In the "Social unrest as a form of ideological work" section, we then argue that extreme protests are triggered by ideological crises and are a form of ideological work. Social unrest and protests reveal, clarify, and crystallize holes in an ideology. As protestors make sense of their actions during and immediately following a protest, they rearticulate their ideological commitments, retain and refine some old ideological views, and discover new ideological positions that resonate. We then offer some concluding thoughts.

Understanding ideology

Because the concept of ideology is generally understood as shared beliefs, it is closely tied to notions of group identity or groupthink and "the phenomenon of ideas becoming a source of our sense of identity."[11] Adherence to ideology can also mean rigid views and a closed mind, a habitual unwillingness to come to terms with the beliefs of diverse others. As ideologues we are blind to evidence that might contradict our worldviews. We seek adherence to our group's beliefs and may even be incapable of considering the beliefs of some other group, depending on the concepts that are available within our interpretative schemes. Our social discourse devolves into a team sport in which "we boo the visiting team and cheer for the home team, irrespective of the merits of the ideas" that the visitors bring to the table.[12] People who are under the sway of ideology, in short, subscribe to shared beliefs that frame the world in a certain way, often at the expense of another group.

Another widely held meaning of ideology is that it consists of false beliefs. When ideology is understood as a form of "false consciousness," specifically in Marxist theory, it is viewed as an expression of the dominant social class masquerading as the unequivocal truth for all of society.[13] Ideology then operates as a set of eyeglasses or a frame of reference that can reveal but often obscures how the world really works.[14] On this view, the ideology of the economically dominant class obfuscates *true* class positions and interests. It largely operates as a cloak for the exploitation and oppression of subordinate

[9] The advantage for us of adopting Geertz's definition of ideology as a cultural system is that it focuses our attention on the bottom-up processes that spur ideological change and shape ideological development.

[10] As we will expand on below, riots (and other extreme protests) can be understood as emergent orders that are the result of rule-governed human action, where rioters are not following commands per se but are guided by their ideological commitments, some of which are being worked out as they are rioting.

[11] David Schmidtz, "Freedom of Thought," *Social Philosophy & Policy* 37, no. 2 (2020): 6–7.

[12] Schmidtz, "Freedom of Thought," 7.

[13] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, ed. C. J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 1970).

[14] Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 159.

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classes who also adopt the dominant ideology.[15] Social circumstances appear upside down, as in a "camera obscura," which leads the subordinate group to mistakenly believe that their interests are being served by a current circumstance when it is in fact serving the interests of the dominant group.[16]

Victims of ideological thinking, in the Marxist tradition, are unable to reason their way out of false beliefs to identify their oppression and correct any injustices they suffer.[17] Because ideologies are "distorted by illusions" they are regarded as "epistemically defective"; it is through illusions that ideology "functions to establish or reinforce social relations of oppression."[18] In some cases, ideologies lack the concepts that would enable the oppressed to conceptualize and understand their oppression, meaning that ideologies can at times be "epistemically disabling."[19] Even if certain groups identify their oppression, however, they may still believe that they lack the necessary agency to revolt, fight back, and overcome their oppression.[20] In other cases, false beliefs (or "legitimizing myths") turn what would otherwise be morally neutral social categories into normative social hierarchies that become "grounded in superiority and inferiority."[21] Certain groups come to perceive themselves or others "as justifiably possessing lower standing."[22]

Although the Marxist approach to ideology is clear and useful, we find that its primary focus on false beliefs imposed by a dominant social class cannot adequately deal with all ideological phenomena. Ideologies arguably emerge in any context and can operate to serve the interests of people from a variety of social positions or classes. Marxist theory thus offers an approach for understanding a specific instance of a more general phenomenon. While Karl Marx's approach is compatible with some of our purposes, a more general approach to ideology with neutral connotations is arguably better suited.[23]

[15] See Brian Leiter, "How Are Ideologies False? A Reconstruction of the Marxian Concept," elsewhere in this volume, for a more detailed discussion of ideology in the Marxist tradition. See also Brian Kogelmann, "The Demand and Supply of False Consciousness," elsewhere in this volume, for an explanation of why the oppressed would adopt the oppressor's ideology.

[16] Marx and Engels, *The German* Ideology. See also Sarah Kofman, *Camera Obscura: Of Ideology*, trans. Will Straw (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

[17] Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 178–222.

[18] Tommie Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," *The Philosophical Forum* 34, no. 2 (2003): 183–84.

[19] Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power & the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 151.

[20] See Allen Buchanan, "The Explanatory Power of Ideology," elsewhere in this volume, for an explanation of why the concept of ideology—and not merely collective action failure—is needed to explain why the oppressed do not revolt against the oppressor.

[21] Christopher Lebron, *The Color of Our Shame: Race and Justice in Our Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 57.

[22] Lebron, *The Color of Our* Shame, 57.

[23] The relevant part of Marxist theory for our purposes, and one that Leiter, "How Are Ideologies False?" clarifies, is the disconnection between ideology and reality that can influence a group's adherence to an ideology that does not serve their interests. We do not, however, view ideology as necessarily false or exclusively imposed on a subordinate class. Ideology is, arguably, a means of

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The work of Michael Freeden and Geertz offer approaches to understanding ideology that can get at the significance of ideology when it is not operating as a form of false consciousness.[24] Ideologies, for Freeden, are understood

> not as defective philosophies, but rather as ubiquitous and patterned forms of thinking about politics ... [as] clusters of ideas, beliefs, opinions, values, and attitudes usually held by identifiable groups, that provide directives, even plans, of action for public policy-making in an endeavor to uphold, justify, change or criticize the social and political arrangements of a state or other political community.[25]

Ideology, here, is understood as a general way of making sense of the world by reference to shared meanings. These meanings are often political in nature. Ideologies can be found "in the entire field of thinking about political ends and principles, and virtually all members of a society have political views and values they promote and defend."[26]

Geertz, like Freeden, offers a general approach to ideology that is more semiotic and thus useful for our purposes.[27] Ideology, for Geertz, is one type of "cultural system" consisting of "interacting symbols" that are conveyed and interpreted as "patterns of interworking meanings" that contribute to social order and change.[28] An ideology provides symbolic vehicles for conceptions that help people make sense of their worlds. Ideological attitudes are "given a public existence," as Geertz puts it, through "elaborate symbolic structures."[29] Following the work of Walker Percy, Geertz is essentially getting at the "figurative nature of ideology," which is characterized by language that uses "metaphor, analogy, irony, ambiguity, pun, paradox, hyperbole, [and] rhythm."[30] For Geertz, then, ideologies "are, most distinctively, maps of problematic social reality and matrices for the creation of collective conscience."[31] They are cultural systems equipped to interpret and legitimate worldviews. An ideology—like other cultural systems such as religion or common sense—provides "orientation

coordination for subordinate or dominant groups—whether they are social majorities or minorities—to maintain or change current circumstances that may or may not align with their ideology.

[24] Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

[25] Michael Freeden, "Ideology, Political Theory, and Political Philosophy," in *Handbook of Political Theory*, ed. Gerald F. Gaus and Chandran Kukathas (London: Sage, 2004), 6.

[26] Freeden, "Ideology, Political Theory, and Political Philosophy," 6.

[27] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 211–51.

[28] Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 214, 226.

[29] Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 226.

[30] Walker Percy, "Symbol as Hermeneutic in Existentialism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 16, no. 4 (1956): 522–30; Walker Percy, "Metaphor as Mistake," *The Sewanee Review* 66, no. 1 (1958): 79–99; Walker Percy, "Symbol, Consciousness, and Intersubjectivity," *The Journal of Philosophy* 55, no. 15 (1958): 631–41; Andrey Zorin, "Ideology, Semiotics, and Clifford Geertz," *History and Theory* 40, no. 1 (2001): 57.

[31] Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 239.

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for an organism which cannot live in a world it is unable to understand."[32] Through our "construction of ideologies" we therefore devise "schematic images of social order."[33]

Although politics remains the "home turf" of ideology, we believe that ideology is usefully understood as a more general frame of reference through which actors make sense of their worlds in alternative contexts.[34] It not only provides directives for political action but can also provide plans of action for social interactions and engagement, for example, who to consider allies, how to treat the members of certain groups, the obligations owed to others, and so on.

Additionally, as noted above, ideology need not take on the more evaluative or derogatory meaning that it sometimes does. Indeed, ideology can have neutral or even positive connotations. Friedrich Hayek, for instance, believes that ideologies are general "sets of principles" that are indispensable for any given social order; they provide a means of perspective for acting within the world.[35] For Hayek, "every social order rests on an ideology."[36] Moreover, although "an ideology is something which cannot be 'proved' (or demonstrated to be true), it may well be something whose widespread acceptance is the indispensable condition for most of the particular things we strive for," as attaining a goal in a complex order entails coordination with countless others trying to attain their own goals.[37] An ideologically motivated action need not, therefore, be entirely guided "by explicit particular purposes which one consciously accepts."[38] We regularly rely on "general values whose conduciveness to particular desirable results cannot be demonstrated" but which nonetheless provide a crucial means of mutual orientation.[39]

This way of conceiving ideology—that is, as a cultural system that grounds social order—raises the question of what occurs when there is disconnection between the ideological system individuals have adopted and the prevailing

[32] Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 153.

[33] Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 236.

[34] Gerring, "Ideology," 968; we also recognize that the lines separating cultural from political or economic phenomena are porous.

[35] Friedrich A. Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty, Volume 1: Rules and Order* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1973); F. A. Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty, Volume 2: The Mirage of Social Justice* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1976). See also Adrian Blau, "Social Science and Its Critics: An Ideological Analysis," elsewhere in this volume, who, following Peter Sederberg, distinguishes between "procedural" and "substantive" ideologies that are "perspectival," that is, those which have features that help people interpret their worlds.

[36] Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty, Volume 2*, 54. An implication of this view is that an ideological crisis, as might occur when an adopted ideology does not help to make sense of the existing circumstances, might undermine social order. For example, imagine if an oppressive regime was supported by an ideology that insisted on the inferiority of the oppressed group, but the oppressed group was frequently and unambiguously demonstrating their capacities. This has the potential to shake the ideology and so, too, the oppressive regime that the ideology supports. Similarly, imagine an economic system that rests on an ideology that celebrates free exchange as the foundation of the system, but where cronyism and patently unfair advantages are pervasive. This has the potential to undermine the legitimacy and desirability of that economic system.

[37] Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty, Volume 1*, 58.

[38] Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty, Volume 1*, 58.

[39] Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty, Volume 1*, 58.

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social order. What happens when the ideological tools that individuals have at their disposal are not up to the hermeneutical function they are meant to serve? How do individuals react when their ideology and their social circumstances are incompatible? Any gap between an ideology and the social order necessitates ideological work. Again, ideological work can be understood as creating, developing, maintaining, revising, and/or refining an ideology. Arguably, extreme protests are a form of ideological work where the fracture between an ideology and the existing social order is laid bare, the social order is directly undermined and challenged, and further ideological developments are given their impetus.[40]

Understanding extreme protests as emergent phenomena

Extreme protests, like their nonviolent counterparts, can involve marches, demonstrations, petitions, boycotts, strikes, sit-ins, vigils, fund-raisers, or the burning of effigies.[41] But their more salient actions are violent, involving property destruction, arson, harassment, sabotage, kidnapping, bombings, guerilla warfare, or armed conflict.[42] Consider, for instance, the New York Draft riots in 1863. Also, consider the racial riots of the Red Summer (that is, the late spring, summer, and fall of 1919) where whites terrorized blacks in cities across the United States. Additionally, consider the Watts Riots in 1965 and the Los Angeles riots in 1992, which occurred against a backdrop of multiple incidences of perceived police abuse and in response to a particular act of police violence against a member of the local black community.

There is a large social-science literature on "social movements," some of which involve extreme protests.[43] Most definitions of social movements are based on at least several conceptual axes, including collective or joint action, change-oriented goals or claims, some extra- or non-institutional collective action, some degree of organization, and some degree of temporal

[40] We admittedly do not engage the contemporary philosophical literature on ideology as much as we could; a more thorough engagement with the philosophical literature, however, is beyond the scope of this essay. See, e.g., Stanley, *How Propaganda Works*, 178–222, for a useful analysis of the relationship between ideology and injustice in the Marxist tradition, in which false (and often racist) beliefs are understood as perpetuating the low social status ascribed to a group.

[41] Jack A. Goldstone and Daniel P. Ritter, "Revolution and Social Movements," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, 2nd ed., ed. David A. Snow et al. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2019), 690.

[42] Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston, MA: Extending Horizons, 1973); Goldstone and Ritter, "Revolution and Social Movements," 690.

[43] Since the early 1990s, there has been a relatively large number of social-scientific, edited volumes published on social movements. See, e.g., Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller, eds., *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Anne N. Costain and Andrew S. McFarland, eds., *Social Movements and American Political Institutions: People, Passions, and Power* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); David A. Snow et al., eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004); David A. Snow et al., eds., *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2019), See also, e.g., Mikayla Novak, *Freedom in Contention: Social Movements and Liberal Political Economy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021).

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continuity.[44] As a form of collective action, social movements challenge authorities either to "bring about social change" or "prevent such change from occurring."[45] When social movements involve group action, it is typically planned in such a way as to articulate the shared grievances and claims of the group.[46] Although the type of social change that is sought in social movements often varies, most definitions of social movements emphasize their change-oriented nature, specifying that actors within any movement seek to promote or resist changing some aspect of their local or global worlds.[47]

Other scholars focus on what they call "social movement organizations."[48] Organized actors plan, combine, and employ resources for orderly and disorderly protests as well as other types of campaigns that serve to attain the organization's goals.[49] Successful organizations serve as focal points around which participants can orient their actions. Social scientists look to organizations in their attempts to understand the important coordinative purpose they serve in social movements.[50] Although the life spans of social movements are variable, a period of sustained collective action tends to be necessary for change to occur. If social movement actors want to have a reasonable chance of attaining their goals, in other words, some sense of "temporal continuity" is often required.[51]

An arguably underappreciated characteristic of social movements and, specifically, extreme protests, is that they are often spontaneous (or emergent) orders, products of human action but not of human design.[52] A spontaneous order is perhaps most often associated with the works of Adam Smith and Hayek who wrote in the mainline tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment.[53] An order is spontaneous when it is not entirely made or designed by any one person or organization but is, rather, an unplanned by-product of human interaction. In contrast with an organization, a spontaneous order consists of individuals and organizations acting in accordance with their own hierarchies of ends and plans that may differ and compete with one another.

[44] David A. Snow et al., "Introduction: Mapping and Opening up the Terrain," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, 2nd ed., ed. Snow et al., 5.

[45] Snow et al., "Introduction," 5.

[46] Snow et al., "Introduction," 5.

[47] Snow et al., "Introduction," 7.

[48] Snow et al., "Introduction," 8.

[49] See, e.g., John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (1977): 1212–41.

[50] McCarthy and Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements," 1212–41.

[51] Snow et al., "Introduction," 1–16.

[52] Friedrich A. Hayek, "The Results of Human Action but Not of Human Design," in *The Market and Other Orders*, ed. Bruce Caldwell (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 293–303; Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty, Volume 1: Rules and Order*. See also Nona P. Martin and Virgil Henry Storr, "On Perverse Emergent Orders," *Studies in Emergent Order* 1, no. 1 (2008): 73–91.

[53] Peter J. Boettke, Stefanie Haeffele-Balch, and Virgil Henry Storr, eds., *Mainline Economics: Six Nobel Lectures in the Tradition of Adam Smith* (Arlington, VA: Mercatus Center at George Mason University, 2016).

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Violent and disruptive social movements are collective disturbances in which individual reactions spontaneously coalesce to form a "shared collective defense, i.e., a collectively sanctioned defense against demoralization" during a time of distress.[54] An extreme protest, in other words, is the "spontaneous coalescence of *individual* reactions in a distressing situation," which in some circumstances means that "*members* of an aggrieved population act directly and coercively to assert certain norms against established authority."[55] By saying that extreme protests are spontaneous, we do not mean to suggest that there are no organizers or planners involved. Despite their leadership roles, however, protest organizers, planners, or first movers cannot fully control the ebb and flow of the protest. Where a protest appears to be flowing depends on how each protestor responds to their local circumstances of time and place.[56] The choice by one protestor to start an influential chant or that of another to throw a rock through a storefront are individual actions that can engender collective responses, even though they are not organized in the way, say, an organizer's mission statement is designed. The "ebbing of protest," Frances Piven and Richard Cloward explain, is not the result of "the purposive effort of leaders and organizers."[57] A protest organizer can at best "try to win whatever can be won while it can be won," but must necessarily act within her local circumstances, like the other protestors, to engender or combat social change.[58]

To adequately understand the dynamics of an extreme protest—or any spontaneous order—we must draw our attention to the rules and feedback mechanisms that govern its emergence and sustain its existence.[59] Extreme protestors mutually orient their actions toward a shared but dynamic ideology.[60] They rely, in part, on their ideologies to give meaning to their experiences and to prescribe and proscribe certain actions. Ideological commitments serve as rules that ultimately shape the emergence of extreme protests and govern how they play out.[61]

[54] Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, "Racial Disturbances as Collective Protest," in *Riots and Rebellion: Civil Violence in the Urban Community*, ed. Louis H. Masotti and Don R. Bowen (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1970), 122.

[55] Lang and Lang, "Racial Disturbances as Collective Protest," 122.

[56] Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 37.

[57] Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, 37.

[58] Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, 37.

[59] Martin and Storr, "On Perverse Emergent Orders," 73–91.

[60] See Jonathan Bendor, "The Cognitive Complexity of Ideologies and the Ambitious Aspirations of Ideologists," elsewhere in this volume, who explains the survival of ideologies with "self-correcting properties."

[61] Importantly, there may be a difference between the ideological commitments that even protestors might have believed would govern their behavior ex ante and the commitments that remain in force during the protest. Indeed, extreme protests might lead to ideological discovery. For instance, a rioter may have articulated solidarity with members of all oppressed groups prior to the riot, but they might discover that solidarity beyond their group might be unsustainable. The reverse might also occur. On the streets, as it were, a rioter might discover that they have common cause with some group that they might have "othered" previously.

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When the largely black participants in the 1992 Los Angeles riots, for instance, targeted stores owned by Koreans but stayed clear of stores that were black owned, they were relying on an ideology that emphasized the unfairness of racially biased policing, the perceived disrespect shown by Korean store owners in what were largely black and Hispanic communities, and a solidarity despite class differences with other members of the black community. Consider also the South African protests over the past decade, often referred to as "service delivery" riots, during which protestors blocked public roads with burning debris and, in some cases, burned municipal buildings and the homes of local ward councilors.[62] The protestors were following an ideology that insisted they deserved higher quality municipal services, such as roads and sanitation, than was being provided by their local government.

Although scholars often point to some triggering event as the proximate cause of an extreme protest (for example, the beating of Rodney King as leading to the 1992 Los Angeles riots) and highlight the underlying economic, political, and social conditions to explain the protest (for example, there had been repeated incidences of apparent racially biased policing in Los Angeles), they rarely emphasize that an ideological crisis is often the connective tissue between the protest's underlying and proximate causes. Stated another way, extreme protests often occur because an adopted ideology is unable to make sense of the current situation or there is an intolerable disconnection between the ideals embedded in the ideology adopted by some group and the current circumstances. The beating of Rodney King was incompatible with an ideology that maintains that blacks are worthy of dignity and respect.

Likewise, the 1921 Tulsa race massacre occurred because blacks forcibly intervened to prevent the lynching of a young black man and, moreover, the success of the black merchants in Tulsa was incompatible with an ideology of white superiority. The disconnection between the ideology of the dominant white majority and the apparent reality (that is, black success) in 1920s Tulsa rallied the white majority to make reality more reflective of the dominant ideology (that is, black failure), which was a rearticulation, repair, or maintenance of existing beliefs.[63]

In addition to being motivated by ideology and triggered by an ideological crisis, protestors and those witnessing the protest often revise their ideologies during and in the aftermath of an extreme protest. Indeed, extreme protests are also often sources of subsequent ideological inspiration, development, and change.

[62] Abraham Klaasen, "The Quest for Socio-Economic Rights: The Rule of Law and Violent Protest in South Africa," *Sustainable Development* 28, no. 3 (2020): 479; Ed Stoddard, "South African Riots Over Poor Services, Poverty Hit Record in 2018," *Reuters*, October 17, 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/ozatp-us-safrica-politics-idAFKCN1MR2GN-OZATP.

[63] If we limited our approach to Marx, we arguably could not use the concept of ideology to explain the Tulsa race riots or other cases in which violence is used to enforce social orders that are viewed as unjust.

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Social unrest as a form of ideological work

Extreme protests are often a form of ideological work and can be an impetus for ideological work. Susan Gal and Judith Irvine regard all types of ideological work as "fundamentally communicative."[64] When people are engaged in ideological work, they are necessarily using "semiotic materials," such as metaphors, to make sense of their surroundings and to formulate plans for sustaining, repairing, or changing the social orders they (largely) unintentionally constitute.[65] Gal and Irvine explain that

> in some cases ideological work may motivate action to alleviate, remove, or transform what is seen as a divergence from the [ideological] schema. It is when the "problematic" element is seen as fitting some alternative, threatening picture that the semiotic process involved in erasure might become some kind of practical action to remove the threat, if circumstances permit.[66]

Gal and Irvine define "sites of ideological work" as "moments and practices in social life in which experiences and ideas are swept up—drawn into ideologized interpretations."[67] Giving analytical priority to the site of ideological work forces us to grapple with the meanings that are being used to engender or prevent social change. In drawing our attention to how ideology creates meaning, we move beyond a sole focus on the individual psychologies of isolated actors and toward the shared communicative processes they interpret and convey. Gal and Irvine also suggest that for an ideology to be effective, it should perhaps "be produced and reproduced" in response to new circumstances.[68] Again, extreme protests are partly understood as a form of ideological work through which protestors and others affected by the protest produce, reproduce, and revise their ideologies.

Specifically, using examples from various violent and disruptive social movements, especially the 1942 riot in the Bahamas, we contend that extreme protests do two things. First, they reveal, clarify, and crystallize fissures in the ideology that undergirds the prevailing social order or reinforces key features of the ideology that seem to be weakening. Second, they convert grievances to concrete ideological positions; as protestors make sense of their actions during and in the immediate aftermath of the protest, they are forced to figure out and often articulate what their ideological commitments are, which old ideological views they are still attached to, and which new ideological positions resonate.[69]

[64] Susan Gal and Judith T. Irvine, *Signs of Difference: Language and Ideology in Social Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 2.

[65] Gal and Irvine, *Signs of Difference*, 168.

[66] Gal and Irvine, *Signs of Difference*, 21.

[67] Gal and Irvine, *Signs of Difference*, 167.

[68] Gal and Irvine, *Signs of Difference*, 172.

[69] The 1942 riot in the Bahamas was chosen to illustrate how extreme protests can be a form of ideological work for several reasons. First, it is a generally understudied extreme protest that some of the authors have researched. As such, our understanding of it is not limited to secondary sources, but

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Reveal, clarify, and crystallize fissures in the ideology

The 1942 riot in the Bahamas was ostensibly a riot over wages. During World War II, the American and British governments decided to build two bases on New Providence Island in the Bahamas. The Project, as it was called, was supposed to employ over two thousand Bahamians. The wages those Bahamian laborers were offered, however, were lower than was expected. More problematic than this, the Americans and Bahamian laborers employed at the same jobs were paid different rates. Although this inequity led to a growing dissatisfaction among the Bahamian laborers, neither the Project's management nor the Bahamas government did anything to reconcile the wage dispute. Eventually, the laborers would march to Bay Street, where the parliament building and the main commercial district were located, to express their grievances. When they learned that the pay dispute would not be resolved and, moreover, that it was the local merchant elite and not the British or American governments who had suppressed their wages, the laborers began rioting. The stores on Bay Street were badly damaged.

Bay Street, where the laborers had gathered to protest, served as a natural site for ideological work. As Nona Martin and Henry Virgil Storr describe:

> For much of The Bahamas' history, Bay Street, Nassau's chief thoroughfare, has been to Nassau what Nassau has been to the rest of The Bahamas: It is the center of activity in the city. It is the site of all major festivals in The Bahamas and a space at the center of everyday life in the country. Bay Street runs along the northern end of New Providence stretching from the current site of the British Colonial Hotel in the west to the Eastern Parade. It is the home of The Bahamas' Houses of Parliament, the Cabinet Office, the main branches of several prominent banks, law firms and other professional services, as well as stores selling stationery, books, jewelry, perfume, linen, liquor, foodstuffs, clothing, and every other category of goods. ... Bay Street is, thus, at the axis of political, economic, and social life in the city and so the country.[70]

At the time of the riot, the Bahamas was still segregated. The minority white population comprised the colony's political and economic elite. In 1942, then, Bay Street was also a space that largely excluded Bahamian blacks. As such, the street itself was a manifestation of a particular ideology that situated and

also includes primary sources, including interviews. See, for instance, Martin and Storr, "I'se a Man." While this is not meant as a contribution to the historiography of the riot, our teasing out of the relevant aspects of the case for the discussion of ideological work benefits from our understanding of and contributions to the literature on the 1942 riot in the Bahamas. Second, the 1942 riot offers a clear example of the ideological work that we are focusing on here. Our hope is that by discussing the case somewhat deeply, we will illustrate the relationship between ideology and riots, specifically, how riots are triggered by ideological crises, how rioting is a form of ideological work, and how riots inspire further ideological work. As the other examples we point to suggest, however, we do not believe that the 1942 riot differs from other extreme protests in its significance regarding the effects of and its effects on ideology.

[70] Martin and Storr, "Bay Street as Contested Space," 283.

justified the economic, political, and social stratification that existed as well as the formal and informal barriers that perpetuated it.

This ideology was arguably shared at the time by the elite and many in the majority population,[71] and, before this riot, had not been challenged—at least not so directly. The Attorney General, who tried to pacify the crowd, and the police superintendent, who tried to disperse the crowd, both explicitly called on that ideology, urging the crowd not to "spoil" their good reputations as a peaceful people. Similarly, almost everyone interviewed in the investigations after the riot expressed surprise that it occurred. It was widely held that an ideology justifying minority rule, segregation, and racialized inequalities would (forever) go unchallenged.

The 1942 riot in the Bahamas, however, occurred in part because that ideology was incompatible with the aspirations and desire for justice of a portion of that population. This ideological crisis triggered this violent response but, for some, also began an ideological shift, an orientation to new ideological commitments. The 1942 riot was the first move in a struggle for political change in the Bahamas and led to the emergence of a pro-Black consciousness in the British colony.[72] Doris Johnson describes the riot as "the first awakenings of a new political awareness [that] began to be felt in the hearts of black people .... [T]ime ... and the remarkable foresight, courage, and initiative of a few dedicated members of that majority were required to crystalize this awareness into a mighty political force."[73] Johnson describes the riots as the first stage in the ideological work that replaced an ideology holding that the political and merchant elite were unassailable with an ideology according to which majority rule (along with dignity and equality) were a requirement. As we argue elsewhere, "the riot ... was more than an isolated act of venting. ... [T]he riot is rightfully considered as the first shot in the battle for political change in the Bahamas. The riot also kindled the development of a pro-Black consciousness in the colony, a necessary precursor to Black rule and independence."[74] Although majority rule would not occur for another twenty-five years, the riot began the ideological work necessary for majority rule to occur.

Violent and disruptive social movements, such as the 1942 riot, then, reveal cracks in the prevailing ideology. The racial massacres that occurred across the United States during the Red Summer of 1919, for instance, were a response to

[71] Again, see Kogelmann, "The Demand and Supply of False Consciousness," for an explanation of why the oppressed would adopt the oppressor's ideology. As he explains, the psychic costs of maintaining that the social order is unjust when the social order is unlikely to change may be too high. Instead, the oppressed may be more likely to succeed within oppressive limits if they adopt the oppressor's ideology. Indeed, one way to understand our argument that an ideological crisis can trigger extreme protests is to view individuals as wanting to hold an ideology that does not conflict with their reality. The existence of slavery, for instance, triggers an ideological crisis in anyone who truly believes that blacks are dignified equals deserving of liberty and justice. For that individual, they must either restlessly fight against slavery or abandon their ideology.

[72] Martin and Storr, "'I'se a Man'," 73.

[73] Doris L. Johnson, *The Quiet Revolution in the Bahamas* (Nassau: Family Islands Press Limited, 1972), 27.

[74] Martin and Storr, "'I'se a Man'," 73.

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what was perceived to be members of the black community stepping out of their place. Either the ideology of superiority had to be abandoned or it had to be (violently and terribly) reasserted.[75] As Sally Haslanger explains, an ideology is a web of "semiotic relations" that can "sustain unjust social relations," with racist beliefs constituting one type of "ideological formation."[76] Because blacks during the Red Summer were perceived as acting inappropriately in fighting back against mistreatment, racist beliefs indicated that violence against blacks could make reality more reflective of the social hierarchy indicated by those beliefs.

Extreme protests also clarify and crystallize ideological rifts.[77] The 1773 Boston Tea Party made clear that Americans were thinking about their relationship to Britain in a way that was incompatible with the way the British were thinking of their relationship with America. One reason the Boston Tea Party holds such a central place in the American narrative and in the self-conception of Americans is because it clarified the contours of the ideological gap between the Americans and the British.

Convert grievances to concrete ideological positions

Violent and disruptive social movements also begin the conversion of grievances to concrete ideological positions. An extreme protest often precipitates a better explanation of the economic, political, and social situation and potential paths forward.

Recall that the 1942 riot in the Bahamas began as a labor dispute. The Bahamian workers on the Project were paid less than the American workers on the Project, even though they were doing the same jobs. Additionally, they were made to understand that the American contractor had been willing to pay equal wages, but the local economic and political elite prevented them from doing so to keep wages low in the local labor market. The workers marched to Bay Street from the work sites to seek redress. As they marched, Bahamians not affiliated with the Project joined the march. By the time the riot occurred, what began as a labor dispute had morphed into demand for more respect and equality —an ideological commitment that proved more relevant moving forward.[78]

Rioters and observers both remarked that it was dismissive and patronizing remarks of the political leaders and public officials who tried to placate them that triggered their anger.[79] Attorney General Eric Hallinan, in fact, confessed that

[75] Sally Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," *Res Philosophica* 94, no. 1 (2017): 1–22.

[76] Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 16.

[77] Christopher Wellman, "Hate Crime Legislation as an Antidote to Hate Ideology," elsewhere in this volume, helpfully discusses the problems with hate ideology. One additional reason that we might worry about hate ideology is that wherever the hate ideology is not the dominant one and/or the social reality does not conform to it, the holders of hate ideology are constantly going to be confronting ideological crises that may inspire violent responses.

[78] As noted above, the boundary separating cultural from political ideologies is porous. Consider, as an example of this, our focus on the 1942 riots in the Bahamas. The problem was both politically and culturally significant: Bahamian blacks were disrespected. It shaped their self-perceptions and how they sensed their natural relationship with Bahamian whites. We see this in the fact that women and men not associated with the Project joined in the riots.

[79] The Marxist approach to ideology provides a useful frame for understanding the Bahamas case. The dominant ideology of the pre-1940s riots included the belief that blacks should be grateful for the

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"there was [*sic*] signs that [the crowd] resented [his] remarks."[80] Moreover, as Leonard Storr Green, who was eventually convicted as a leader of the rioters, remarked when explaining his demands for higher pay, "I'se a man."[81] Although on the surface the dispute was over wages, at its core the riot was over respect. Being paid a lower wage than the person working beside them doing the same job simply because they were from different countries or were of a different race was something that the workers could not countenance. Additionally, being dismissed when they made their complaints was, similarly, intolerable. It became clear to both the rioters and observers that Bahamian blacks would not passively accept blatant disrespect. After all, despite their socioeconomic circumstances, they (believed that they) were men and women who deserved to be treated with dignity.

Additionally, the riot clarified that while the rioters were content to remain British subjects, they expected equal treatment. Indeed, as the crowd marched to Bay Street before the riot, they sang patriotic songs, including "We'll Never Let the Old Flag Fail," a British World War I war anthem.[82] However, they (now) expected the liberty and justice symbolized by that flag. As one of the rioters, Napoleon McPhee, explains, "I willing to fight under the flag, I willing even to die under the flag, but I ain't gwine [sic] starve under the flag."[83] Importantly, the rioters did not wish to harm the Bay Street Boys, the nickname for the local economic and political elite, but they did want to dismantle the economic and political system that the Bay Street Boys relied on to maintain their hegemony. Although the crowd was hostile to the whites they encountered, there were no assaults. Theodore Symonette, a Bay Street Boy, reports walking down the center of Bay Street at the height of the riot and not being interfered with by any of the rioters.[84] Despite this, the stores of all the Bay Street Boys who seemed hostile to black advancement were looted and destroyed.

In the decades after the riot, as Johnson suggests, a group of Bahamian politicians would translate the grievance into a concrete and clear ideology. That ideology would emphasize the economic and political advancement of Bahamian blacks, specifically, economic justice and majority rule. The labor unions in the country would frequently draw inspiration from the 1942 riot when formulating their demands for higher wages or better conditions. When Sir Randol Fawkes began his effort in 1955 to encourage Bahamian workers to unionize, he did so by invoking the riot.[85] Similarly, political leaders would point

opportunities available to them, regardless of any mistreatment they faced. This belief was inconsistent with reality in that it made an unjust system appear justified. We thank our anonymous reviewer for sharing this insight with us.

[80] Eric Hallinan, cited in what is known as the "Russell Commission," that is, the *Report of the Select Committee of the House of Assembly* and *Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into Disturbances in The Bahamas which took place in June 1942* (Nassau: Nassau Public Records Offices, 1942).

[81] Leonard Storr Green, cited in "Russell Commission."

[82] "Russell Commission."

[83] Napolean McPhee, cited in "Russell Commission."

[84] "Russell Commission."

[85] Randol Fawkes, *The Faith that Moved the Mountain: A Memoir of a Life and The Times* (Hialeah: Dodd Printers, 1977).

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to the riot as teaching Bahamians the importance of majority rule. "Until people waken to their own responsibilities," Methodist minister H. H. Brown explained to his congregation four years after the riot, "they will not have a responsible government. But nothing can possibly justify the attempt of any government to keep the people asleep. Who has learned the lesson of the 1942 riot?"[86] Although not dispositive, these statements suggest that the riot played an important role in clarifying the limits of the pre-riot dominant ideology and highlighting the contours around which further ideological development needed to occur.

Perhaps the key moment in the concretizing of the ideological positions inspired by the 1942 riot was the set of events that occurred on April 27, 1965, referred to as "Black Tuesday." On Black Tuesday, supporters of the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP), which represented the black majority population and was pushing for majority rule, marched to the Parliament Building on Bay Street. They were protesting the constituency boundary maps that they believed were drawn unfairly. When the efforts of the PLP members of the House of Assembly to have the maps redrawn failed, leader of the party Lynden Pindling grabbed the ceremonial mace, which represents the authority of the parliament, and hurled it through the window to the waiting crowd. As Pindling walked over to the Speaker's desk to grab the mace, he shouted, summarizing the ideology of the PLP—and increasingly of the majority black population—that "this [mace] is the symbol of authority—and the authority—and the authority on this island belongs to the people and the people are outside."[87] Violent and disruptive social movements, like the 1942 riot, convert grievances to concrete ideological positions.[88]

Conclusion

Violent and disruptive social movements are sometimes successful at generating social change. For example, although there is some debate, the urban riots of the 1960s in the United States were effective at inspiring sustained (and usually less violent) social movements that were able to effect social change.[89] In

[86] Philip Cash, Shirley Gordon, and Gail Saunders, eds., *Sources of Bahamian History* (London: MacMillan Caribbean, 1991), 291.

[87] *Nassau Tribune*, April 27, 1965, quoted in Michael Craton and Gail Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume 2: From the Ending of Slavery to the Twenty-First Century* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 341; Martin and Storr, "Demystifying Bay Street," 145.

[88] The Marxist approach to ideology is again relevant here. The ideological disconnection from reality that was beginning to become unmasked in the 1942 riots was being brought to reality when unequal political representation among blacks and whites was challenged in the 1960s. It could be argued that the dominant ideology before the unmasking was a type of false consciousness. The alternative understanding of reality articulated by the protestors can be thought of as a true consciousness. We thank our anonymous reviewer for bringing this point to our attention.

[89] Ted Robert Gurr, "On the Outcomes of Violent Conflict," in *Handbook of Political Conflict: Theory and Research*, ed. Ted Robert Gurr (New York: Free Press, 1980), 238–94; Larry Isaac and William R. Kelly, "Racial Insurgency, the State, and Welfare Expansion: Local and National Level Evidence from the Postwar United States," *American Journal of Sociology* 86, no. 6 (1981): 1348–86.

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summarizing James Button's famous work, Marco Giugni offers five conditions under which violence and disruption are likely to be successful:

> 1. When powerholders have enough public resources to meet the demands of the movement, 2. when violent actions and events are neither too frequent as to cause massive societal and political instability nor severe enough to be noticed and to represent a threat, 3. when a relevant share of powerholders and the public are sympathetic to the goals of the movement and the violence is not so severe as to undermine this sympathy, 4. when the aims and demands of the movement are relatively limited, specific, and clear, and 5. When violence is adopted in combination with peaceful and conventional strategies.[90]

Successful extreme protests walk a fine line between the under- and over-use of violence. Although the public whom the social movement is addressing must be sympathetic to its goals, they must also be comfortable with the social movement's use of violence. Clarity of argument, in addition to the right amount of violence to not overly change people's worldviews, are also key to successful violent and disruptive social movements.

Although Button's approach avoids overly simple causal relationships between "the use of violence and its outcomes," as Giugni argues, Button's approach has been criticized for being too broad and running "the risk of leading to trivial results."[91] In attempting to correct for what might be considered an overly broad set of criteria under which violent and disruptive social movements are successful, Paul Schumaker narrows the approach.[92] Schumaker's empirical findings from studying social movements of the twentieth century suggest that a movement is more effective when its actors limit how much their violence and disruption affects the general, unaffiliated public and instead directs it toward a key demographic, such as a particular industry, political party, or leader.[93] "In contrast," Giugni explains, "when the [general] public becomes involved in the conflict (i.e., when the scope of conflict is broad)," the use of violence and disruption tends to reduce the effectiveness of the movement.[94] In some cases, such as the 1960 U.S. urban riots or the dozens of protests that characterized the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand from 1960 to 1977, the over-use of violence limited the effectiveness of the movements by increasing the amount of repression faced.[95]

[90] Marco G. Giugni, "Was It Worth the Effort? The Outcomes and Consequences of Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, no. 1 (1998): 378. See also James W. Button, *Black Violence: Political Impact of the 1960's Riots* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).

[91] Giugni, "Was It Worth the Effort?" 378.

[92] Paul D. Schumaker, "The Scope of Political Conflict and the Effectiveness of Constraints in Contemporary Urban Protest," *The Sociological Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1978): 168–84.

[93] Schumaker, "The Scope of Political Conflict and the Effectiveness of Constraints in Contemporary Urban Protest."

[94] Giugni, "Was It Worth the Effort?" 378.

[95] Giugni, "Was It Worth the Effort?" 378–79.

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The cases of extreme protests we presented in this essay are meant primarily to illustrate and not test our theory.[96] Our goal was to show that if extreme protests are to bring about genuine social change, they must necessarily have an impact on ideology, given that social orders are undergirded by ideology. The fact that extreme protests can sometimes be a form of ideological work might, then, offer a mechanism that explains why these protests sometimes lead to positive social developments. The success of extreme protests in generating positive social change might largely depend on their capacity for ideological work. Indeed, extreme protests can reveal, clarify, and crystallize fissures in the ideology that undergirds the prevailing social order and can convert grievances to concrete ideological positions as protestors make sense of their actions and rearticulate their ideological commitments.

Competing interests. The authors declare none.

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[96] To systematically bring in additional evidence would demand a detailed historical treatment that would take us beyond the scope of our essay.

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