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**How 'gangsters' become jihadists:
Bourdieu, criminology and the crime-terrorism nexus**

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Abstract

A background in 'ordinary' crime, violence and drug use seems to characterize many European individuals recently involved in ISIS related jihadi-violence. With its long tradition of studying marginalized populations and street culture, criminology offers novel ways to theoretically explore these developments. In this paper, we demonstrate how Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus, and field allow for a nuanced analysis of how certain individuals move from street to politico-religious criminality. We show that 'investments' in street capital can be expended within the field of violent jihadism. We argue that an embodied street habitus supports continuities in attitudes and behaviours within different violent contexts, and furthermore that street social capital facilitates recruitment to violent jihadism. Finally, reflection is offered on resonances between street and jihadi fields. The paper explains how continuities in lifestyle can exist between the European city and Middle Eastern battleground.

Introduction

In the small Norwegian town of Fredrikstad, three friends: Sammiulla Khan, Abo Edelbijev og Torleif Angel Sanchez Hammer (all born in 1991) travelled to Syria in 2013 and 2014. They had not shown any sign of religious commitment until a year before travelling. Rather they would hang out together to smoke hashish and play videogames. Meanwhile in the UK, Mohammed Emwazi (born 1988) was reported missing by his London-based family in August 2013 only to be identified again a year later in the much-circulated grisly murder video of US journalist James Foley. Dubbed by the media as 'Jihadi John', he featured in a number of similar videos, although his contested biography suggested an individual whose affinity at one time seemed to lie more with petty crime and street culture than militant violence. Far from alone in his terrorist endeavours, Emwazi was one of a number of young, marginalised British men from similar parts of London to fight and kill for ISIS.

These two cases are indicative of a more general trend in what Sageman (2006) describes as the 'third wave of jihadi terrorism': predominantly marginalized individuals, usually born and raised in Europe (as opposed to the expatriate intellectuals studying in the west that characterized the first two). There is evidence that street culture and the prison have become notable arenas for the recruitment of terrorists (Basra and Neumann, 2016). More heterogeneous, complex, fluid, partial and networked than previous forms of radicalization, recruitment and organization, contemporary jihadism also relies heavily on the internet and social media (Brauchler 2004, Thompson 2011). Marginalized individuals always have been part of European jihadi networks (Nesser 2015), but it seems that the involvement of street criminals has been more pronounced in ISIS. The profiles of

terrorist attackers increasingly feature previous criminal records and more ‘western’ backgrounds, targets and cultural preferences (Sageman 2008; Hegghammer 2009; Rabasa and Benard 2014). Empirical research specifically exploring the links between street crime and contemporary terrorism is now emerging (see e.g. Lakhani 2018), providing impetus for the development of theoretical explanations to understand them. Drawing on the emerging perspective of Bourdieusian criminology, this paper provides one.

While the links between crime, street culture, and contemporary violent jihadism have been described in previous research (see Basra and Neumann 2016), few attempts have been made to explain them in relation to social theory. Drawing on case studies of the Norwegian and British individuals cited at the beginning of this paper, we examine how those who initially exhibit adherence to a hedonistic and materialist culture end up committing acts of violence ostensibly in the service of an ascetic and politico-religious ideology. We explain why such individuals retain forms of street practice and lingo even as they undertake violent jihad. Positioning these two cases as illustrative of wider trends in contemporary terrorism, we show how the concepts of street capital, street habitus, and street social capital in different ways explain the transition.

The aim is thus to develop a theoretical framework that accounts for both the role of politico-religious cultures and varying kinds of marginalization involved in the process of becoming jihadi. In these efforts, we share a spirit with those scholarly works that depart from simplistic model of cognitive radicalisation and emphasize the existential emotions (Cottee and Hayward 2011) embodied transformations (Crone 2014) and fractured lives (Walklate and Mythen 2016) of contemporary western jihadists. However, rather than accordin a master status to issues of marginalization, ideology or aggression, the Bourdieuan account offered here provides a dynamic understanding that captures the fluidity of identity and ideological commitment, the durability of existing modes of being and the resonances between street and jihadi fields. The paper in this way makes a novel contribution to the terrorism literature, whilst expanding the scope for the application of Bourdieuan criminology.

From the street to jihad

The *crime-terror nexus* describes the linkages between organised criminal groups and terrorists. Traditionally, it refers to terrorists using crime as a source of funding, and the partnership of organized criminal organizations and terrorist groups (Wang 2010). Basra, Neumann and Brunner (2016) describe a new development where the criminal and jihadi worlds increasingly merge, so that both kinds of group ‘have come to recruit from the same pool of people, creating (often unintended) synergies and overlaps that have consequences for how individuals radicalise and operate’ (Basra, Neumann and Brunner 2016: 3). This does not mean that such tendencies are entirely novel (see Kjøk and Lia 2001) nor that the radicalisation of street criminals and gangs is widespread (Decker and Pyrooz 2011). Sageman’s (2007) characterization of third wave jihadi terrorism tends to refer more to notions of marginalization, culture and cool than street criminality. There is not the evidence to suggest that a great number of ‘ordinary’ street criminals are at risk of radicalization, rather a growing awareness that individuals who have become jihadists were once street criminals.

Bakker (2011: 8, see also 2006) reports that a fifth of the jihadi terrorists in Europe had previously been convicted before their arrest for terrorist offences, and numbers seem to have increased over the last five to six years. The Norwegian Police Security Service (PST 2016) studied a sample of 137 individuals suspected of being potential violent jihadists, from those frequenting extreme Islamist environments to others planning terror attacks or travelling to Syria to join ISIS. The relatively small group of women were generally law-abiding, but 68% of the men had been suspected, charged or sentenced for criminal acts prior to radicalization. Moreover, 43% were reported drug abusers, 42% had been involved in drug related crime and 46 % were charged with non-political violent offences.

There are similar numbers in Sweden where two out of three jihadi foreign fighters are reported to have been previously suspected for at least one crime (Rostami et al. 2018).

Although high these numbers are based on registered crime, so it can be assumed that they are under-estimates. There has been evidence to suggest that those second-generation immigrants who feel marginalised within their western countries of residence seek alternative fields of life in which to thrive (Cottee, 2011). This is reflected in Nesser's (2015) 'misfits' typology of jihadist terrorists in Europe. These he argues, display violent tendencies from early adolescence, often have a criminal and troubled background and do not perform well socially.

Hagedorn (2008) in his work on global 'gangsta culture' notes that what are referred to as 'terrorist groups' share many characteristics with criminal street gangs and paramilitary militias. He argues that the more general phenomenon of 'armed young men' engaging in destabilising forms of violence are a ubiquitous symptom of globalised, late-modern society and economics. The styles, tropes and attitudes associated with 'ordinary' street culture and criminality find expression in political conflicts and violence (Ilhan, 2015). In relation to previous generations, hybrid militant and street subcultures were noted – with 'radical rudeboys' fusing the aesthetics of street culture with Islamist tendencies (Vidino 2010; Quarishi 2013). Political messages from an Islamist perspective have featured in the incongruous genre of rap music (see e.g. Lombard 2007), more usually recognised for representing the concerns and aspirations of marginalised western populations.

According to Basra, Neumann and Brunner (2016: 26), violent jihadism plays two different roles for street criminals. It can be a way to justify criminal activity, arguing that stealing or killing enemies in *dar al-harb* (the lands of war) is a form of jihad. Jihadism can also be something of a 'redemption narrative' for marginalised street criminals (Basra and Neumann, 2016: 28-9), sometimes part of genuine processes of religious conversion. This is said to be one of the factors that render prisons into fertile recruiting spaces. This stands in contrast to the notion of religious conversion as a conventionally redemptive force for change in the life of the criminal. Indeed, in Messerschmidt's (1997) analysis of the biography of Malcolm X, conversion to the Nation of Islam (which was followed later by conversion to 'conventional' Islam) was posited as a means by which the famous black activist could enact a respectable form of masculinity and transition from a life of hustling to one of righteousness. Such matters highlight the importance of disentangling conventional religiosity from practices of violent extremism.

Bourdiesian Criminology

We argue that Bourdiesian Criminology can help make sense of how petty-street criminals from a conventional or convert Muslim background make the transition to violent jihadism. Emerging from a number of different studies, this developing perspective applies Pierre Bourdieu's (1977; 1984; 1990) 'thinking tools' of field, habitus and capital to understand how individuals respond to social structure in becoming criminal agents. Sandberg and Pedersen's (2011 see also Sandberg 2008a, 2008b) work began this contemporary movement in earnest, conceptualising street culture as a 'field' of social life and competition within which the marginalised strive for success, advantage and status through deploying the 'street capital' at their disposal. Bourdiesian criminology is finding applications in describing various kinds of street-criminal behaviour from ritualised violence (Fraser 2015) to drug selling in different countries and contexts (Grundetjern and Sandberg 2012; Fleetwood 2014; Moyle and Coomber 2016). It is also contributing to theoretical debates around the relationship between structural and individual factors in criminal aetiology (see Prieur 2018).

In Bourdiesian terms, the street field is conceptualised as a heterodox arena of social life – where conceptions of worth, value and legitimacy are different to those operating within mainstream

fields. What advantages an individual in the street field will often devalue their position within orthodox fields of socio-economic life (Sandberg, 2008b: 157). Valuing inter-personal violence and a rugged demeanour bestows advantages in the world of street drug dealing but are arguably counter-productive in the legitimate employment market. Importantly, fields are delineated by the operation of state law-enforcement mechanisms and the everyday operation of the society/economy whereby particular demographic groups can be more excluded (through criminalisation and marginalisation) or included (see Shammas and Sandberg 2016).

The operation of social fields bisects with individual habitus – the accumulation of past experiences that orientates a person towards future events, a durable set of habits and acquired dispositions that shapes interpretations, actions and reactions. Habitus is created in an interplay between strategic agency and structures, but reproduced ‘without any deliberate pursuit of coherence’, or ‘without any conscious concentration’ (Bourdieu 1984: 170). Fraser (2013; 2015) set out how a ‘street habitus’ can emerge from experiences of poverty and marginalisation within specific contexts, in his research, young men on the socio-economic periphery of post-industrial Glasgow who participate in ritualised ‘gang’ violence during their teenage years. He notes that some of the same concerns around exhibiting a rugged, defiant masculinity can be observed amongst street cultures in other parts of the world, a phenomenon he discusses in terms of ‘homologies of habitus’ (Fraser, 2015).

Indeed, as imagery and ideas float between marginalised populations globally, there is greater impetus for street cultures to increasingly borrow from each other and increasingly appear similar (Ilan, 2015). People committed to street culture also engage in other social fields, for example through schooling and family life (Kalkan 2018). There would still be reason to expect that a strong street habitus, with a developed capacity for interpersonal violence, will be transferable between heterodox fields.

A key operational aspect of the habitus is the ways in which it orientates individuals to view their own characteristics and what they encounter around them as variously advantageous and disadvantageous. What Sandberg and Pedersen identified as ‘street capital’ (2011) are precisely those traits and resources that allow an individual to thrive within the street field: a capacity to engage in interpersonal violence, the ability to look ‘right’ (to have the mannerisms and style that communicate appropriate toughness), to deploy mental agility (or ‘smarts’) appropriately to get the best out of trades and interactions and to narrate their experiences and aspirations in the appropriate manner (see Sandberg and Fleetwood, 2016).

In addition, Ilan (2013) notes the importance of ‘street social capital’: the advantages that are available through networks of street cultural contacts. In his study, he demonstrated how the cultivation and expenditure of street social capital allowed individuals to form protective alliances with other groups of tough, young men and to find criminal markets in other parts of the city. Street capitals can be acquired and expended where the habitus orientates an individual to *feel* this is the appropriate course of action. The process of growing older and changing life-stages can prompt individuals to invest in different forms of capital acquisition and expenditure (Barry, 2006), explaining how some individuals ‘age out’ of crime as they gain opportunities to cultivate and expend different capitals in the mainstream fields of employment and independent domestic life. Whether overt and observable, or internal and identity-related, events and changes in circumstances demonstrably have the power to reorder how individuals accumulate and expend capitals.

A Bourdiesian framework can prove helpful for research on political and religious radicalization because it merges economic and cultural explanations (Bourdieu 1990). It can thus provide a more

nuanced, multi-faceted and dynamic understanding than those exclusively focused on ideology, geopolitics or aggression. Cultural ideas such as violent jihad – or street culture (Sandberg 2008a) will always relate and be embedded in a concrete material context, but this socio-economic foundation does not entirely determine their nature. The ideas may be more, less or in no way oppositional to more mainstream western ways of being. Marginalized and radicalised networks/individuals act with agency but at the same time are restricted by dominant structures in contemporary social fields of power (see Bourdieu, 1990). In part the existence of capitals allows for this agency in both street and jihadi fields. These capitals are forms of power only within heterodox fields and are relational and situational, but fundamentally embodied and based on early socialization and common experiences (Bourdieu 1977; 1990).

Marginalized groups, like any other, have practical rationality and act to generate what they understand to be profit and social status, with the capitals available to them and within the areas of social life they feel such capitals will yield dividends. Such opportunities are by their nature limited, and whilst based on locally specific factors (e.g. particular configurations of poverty and racism), they have a tendency to share characteristics more broadly. In other words, exclusion from ‘mainstream’ fields of socio-economic life play roles in the development of both street and jihadi fields. This does not make social and economic marginalization the sole explanation for radicalization or violent street culture (most living under similar conditions do not become either gangsters or jihadists), but it is within this context and responding to these structural conditions that radicalization in the west now appears to be increasingly occurring.

Bourdieu’s framework offers a way of understanding the interplay of culture, ideology and socio-economics in a manner that can explain both broader trends and individual careers in contemporary terrorism. This moves beyond existing strain theories of terrorism (Agnew, 2010) that operate at a macro geo-political level with ideology more central to explanations of motivation. We use Bourdieu’s theories and more particularly recent developments in Bourdieusian criminology to shed light on the move from the street violence, drug use and petty crime to international violent jihadism. We deliberately avoid debates about the numbers of individuals from street culture gone jihadist and of the ideological implications of faith and religion. Rather, our aim is to provide a framework that makes sense of how notable individuals seem to have radically altered their modes of being and to understand how they could move from relatively petty criminality to murderous violence with divergent ideological underpinnings, within a relatively short timeframe.

Two case studies were selected for this purpose, each of which was high profile and definite, ensuring that sufficient publicly available information was available, and the facts reasonably uncontested. The paper relies on the availability of high quality, book-length journalistic treatments of the individuals at the centre of our case studies: Robert Verkaik (2016) chronicled Mohammed Emwazi’s life, journey to Syria and brutal violence. Erlend Ofte Arntsen (2016) similarly described the groups of friends in Fredrikstad, Norway that ended up as foreign fighters in Syria. Their stories confound simplistic radicalisation narratives, and indeed typical accounts of marginalised, ethnic minority youth.

Street Capital

Bourdieu (1984) describes how taste, practices and preferences can operate to create different hierarchies. Street capital builds on this idea and describes the competencies and skills that provide status in what is often described as street culture (see e.g. Bourgois 2003). The concept explains how individuals might deploy what they perceive of as their own advantageous traits in a subculture of crime, violence and street style when faced with social and/or economic exclusion. The concept

recognises that what is valued by particular groups can vary and is impacted by the operation of social structure (see similarly Jensen 2006). Decades of research has revealed how the street can be an arena for empowerment, status and alternative recognition (Ilhan 2015). Below we explore how this has occurred in our case studies, constituting a first step in a journey from street culture to violent jihadism.

A young man of middle-eastern ethnicity wears a stony face and fashionable flat-peaked, baseball cap. This is a photograph of Mohammed Emwazi, reputedly from his time as a university student that adorns multiple media stories reporting on his transition into ‘Jihadi John’. His story reveals a young man who once took solace in drug taking, street crime and rap music before finding international notoriety as a violent jihadi (Verkaik 2016). Emwazi was the child of a Bedouin family that had fled Kuwait to settle in the UK. Membership of this group meant that his family had been subject to various degrees of state and other persecution and thus his life began with an inherited experience of marginalisation. This must, however, be tempered by the fact that his family were able to find a secure existence in London, where Mohammed was able to be educated to university level. His experience is thus not typical of the inner-city poverty that is often associated with street culture. The specific factors that can constitute experiences of marginalization can vary however (Ilhan 2015), and thus so too can motivations for an individual to become encultured into different varieties of street culture.

Emwazi as a young teenager was small for his age and was frequently bullied. He was also coming to view himself as part of a faith persecuted and oppressed by the war on terror. At this point, his perceived marginalisation seemed to translate into a fascination with street culture: an admiration for the music and style of US rappers, a penchant for cannabis, alcohol, ‘hanging around’ and casual violence: ‘Emwazi had turned his back on his religion, detached himself from his Muslim upbringing and embraced a destructive teenage lifestyle’ (Verkaik 2016: 13). He is described as participating in ‘gang’ activity and certainly could not be viewed as adhering to his faith. Instead, it is arguable that Emwazi took solace from and invested in a ‘gangsta’ persona both to refute a potentially ‘weak’ image and to challenge the mores of a culture that was seemingly heaping suspicion on young Asian men. In this context, dedication to the heady thrills of street life, the willingness to deploy violence at the slightest provocation and the cultivation of an appropriately tough and unpredictable persona can constitute the accumulation of street capital that could be deployed in a number of ways to advantage him amongst his peers.

There are homologies in the case of Sammiulla Khan, Abo Edelbijev and Torleif Angel Sanchez Hammer, all born in 1991. Khan was the son of a Norwegian-Pakistani criminal drug abuser once convicted of murder. He was thus socialized into crime and substance use early. Failing at school, and limited by his family background from attempting various mainstream endeavours – he was nevertheless well placed to thrive within street culture. Edelbijev came to Norway from Chechnya with his family in 2002. He followed his father’s interest in weight lifting, and later got interested in Thai boxing and other martial arts. His war-zone background might have given him ‘street cred’, but it was his physical competencies and abilities to fight that gave him capital within a street field that venerates violent potential. When asked by his parents why he travelled to Syria he explained that it was because he felt rejected and without prospects in Norway (Arntsen 2016: 226).

Hammer was the son of a poorly integrated immigrant from the Philippines. He lost his Norwegian father early and got involved in extensive drug dealing and taking. He lacked the fighting skills of Edelbijev or the family background of Khan to draw on when entering the street world. For a time drug dealing and being able to use his mother’s apartment as a place to hang out gave him a certain position among friends in Fredrikstad. With time, a conversion first to Islam and then engagement in

violent jihadism gave him the sense of belonging he seems to have missed his entire life (Arntsen 2016).

While having very different backgrounds and interests the three became good friends and spent their adolescence hanging out together. In the beginning they shared interest in girls, partying and internet conspiracy theories. Each of them possessed traits that initially could provide them with advantages within the street field. What have been described as ‘angry young men’ (Sageman, 2007) and/or ‘misfits’ (Nesser, 2015) can perceive there to be a lot on offer from participation in jihadi groups:

‘Just like the criminal gangs of which they used to be members, jihadist groups offered power, violence, adventure and adrenaline, a strong identity, and – not least – a sense of rebellion and being anti-establishment’ (Basra, Neumann and Brunner, 2016: 24).

Both UK and Norwegian case studies demonstrate the extent to which these street turned politico-religious criminals developed traits that were responses to their particular experiences of marginalisation. The cultivation of these traits requires ‘investment’ – both practical and psychic. In street culture it is not enough that violence be embodied and signified through demeanour and attitude (although this is important) – the capabilities to effectively dispense the violence are necessary too. Similarly, the daring to commit the criminal act is not sufficient, criminal competencies are important. Young men possessed of these traits are not simply advantaged as street criminals but possess embodied capacities of high value to jihadi groups. For the young men themselves, this means that their investments are not wasted, but transferred into a different arena where they retain value.

As Basra, Neumann and Brunner (2016: 35) note, these are young men with practised abilities and competencies that are not necessarily easy to cultivate in a short space of time: evading the gaze of law enforcement, access to weapons and the lived/embodied experience of violence (something very different to the appreciation of it as a tool in the abstract). Finally, that an aspect of street capital is the ability to look appropriately tough as well as on trend in terms of streetwear fashion, vests those with a stock of it with additional appeal to jihadist recruiters – such individuals can actively attract a wider cohort of young people which might make additional recruitment easier yet.

Street social capital

The recruitment of street-competent individuals does not take place in a vacuum but draws on, and can occur through, organically existing networks of friendship and acquaintance within the street field. These are not simply part of a landscape of sociability but are themselves a source of ‘capital’ for those to whom they bestow benefits. Bourdieu defines social capital as ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition’ (Bourdieu 1986: 248). In the context of marginalised young men involved in street culture, this can comprise of other tough young men who can be called upon to boost numbers in the case of conflicts, or banks of contacts who can facilitate access to criminal markets (Ilan, 2013). Street friendship dynamics and the advantages bestowed by street networks facilitate the transition from street culture to violent jihadism.

Both street and jihadist groups offer solidarity and a sense of brotherhood, sometimes occupying affective spaces that might otherwise fill with despair. Emwazi’s eventual recruitment into ISIS was the ultimate outcome of his relationship with men, some years older than him, who had become involved in overseas politico-religious violence. His local scene is described as having evolved from a

more typical street ‘gang’ into an ideologically orientated grouping that could self-finance through robbery and send members abroad to fight (Verkaik 2016). Emwazi identified with the street mythologies of leading members of that set, and was impressed by photographs of them wielding weapons while fighting in Somalia and their tales of derring-do evading the security services in Britain. In such a way: ‘jihad [was given] a “gangsta” context which made it feel both exciting and worthwhile’ (Verkaik 2016: 34). Emwazi was thus not just presented with the opportunity to join a movement that resonated with his existing orientation, but to mix in the company of men he admired – that were both of the street and transcendent of it.

Arntsen’s (2016) account of the Norwegian case, also shows how street networks are important for recruitment. In the months leading up to the departure of Khan and Edelbijev to Syria in September 2013, the three friends discussed tactics. Khan was the most eager to travel while Edelbijev and especially Hammer seemed more hesitant. Hammer argued that they could do good in Norway collecting money for, and promoting the cause. Edelbijev was persuaded that he did not need parental permission to fight by a fatwa forwarded to him by Khan, convincing him that his obligations to God were more important than those to family (Arntsen 2016: 208). Hammer, however, remained in Norway and was forced to endure both unemployment and the absence of his close friends. They kept in regular contact via the internet.

Hammer’s exposure to Islam was through his friendship group not his family. The participation of Khan and Edelbijev in violent jihad, and their travels to Syria impressed on him the extent to which he was left out, and arguably created a strong impetus for him to follow them over. Whether he was as committed to the ideology or the adventure is an open question but in total seven people from the same street in Fredrikstad became foreign fighters in Syria (Arntsen 2016). Those who went first constantly encouraged friends at home to join them and assisted in practical arrangements. For some, travelling to Syria was a way to catch up and share experiences with their good friends. Street culture tends to ask its adherents to show ultimate loyalty to their peer group, and there is cause to conclude that the individuals who travelled saw themselves as being able to participate in an opportunity opened up through their friendships.

Nesser (2015) shows how well-established networks of jihadists are crucial to understanding radicalization and the enactment of terrorist plots. In the Emwazi case, he was guided toward violent jihad by the older men he had befriended who themselves were connected to overseas organisations. The same can be said of the Fredrikstad trio who developed friendship links with those who in turn had their connections abroad. For Nesser (2015) such networks are particularly adept at catching ‘drifters’, the most populous of the recruit-typology groups he identifies. Friendship groups become the spaces in which violence can be valorised and ideologies praised. They serve thus to hold and indeed bolster the commitment of group members seeming to waiver. For individuals to constitute a source of street capital for their friends, they must demonstrate willingness to be appropriately violent – a trait that serves the interests of jihadi groups. The desire not just to avail of opportunities made available through friendship but to be a useful contact (in turn generating street capital through building a reputation) sustains systems of street social capital (Ilhan 2013). This has clear echoes in the group processes of jihadi recruitment.

Street Habitus

For Bourdieu habitus is a ‘system of durable, transposable dispositions’ that orientates individuals towards practice (Bourdieu 1990: 53). A street habitus thus constitutes a range of bodily postures, modes of speech, ways of interpreting the world and patterns of ‘instinctive’ behaviours that both mark people as marginalised and make crime and violence seem like appropriate reactions to

particular situations (Fraser 2013; 2015). Since the habitus is the product of accrued experience and operates at a pre-conscious level, the ways of being and modes of behaviour it facilitates are difficult to consciously ‘perform’ (or ‘put on’).

Of course, individuals tend to operate across different fields (Bourdieu 2005) and a street habitus should not be understood as ordering every aspect of an individual’s life towards an absolutely street orientation. There are degrees, contexts and of course notions of agency that are important. The concept does, however, deftly describe some of the currents operating below the level of conscious agency. The embodiment of violent potential and ability to readily deploy violence are often components of the street habitus (Ilhan, 2015) and can thus constitute a key resource within contexts that operate outside of the operation of legal regulation. Where a violent habitus must thus be ‘grown’ as opposed to ‘selected’, it becomes clear that street cultural individuals offer an attractive proposition to jihadi recruiters as individuals whose dispositions can be put to work immediately (see Basra, Neumann and Brunner, 2016).

Usefully, the concept of street habitus allows for an understanding of the particular nature of the conversion to Islam that has been noted in the context of the latest wave of recruits. Cottee (2016a) describes this as: ‘a sort of radicalization lite, where self-identity, not behavior, becomes the relevant transformational measure’. Crone (2016) emphasizes how recent processes of radicalization are fundamentally embodied, pointing out how recent jihadists seem to be acquainted with violence before entering into politico-religious radicalization. Indeed, such accounts point to an uptake of a jihadi narrative on top of more durable dispositions and patterns of behaviour more commonly associated with criminality and street culture. Recruits are able to retain many of their existing ways of being within a new context of politico-religious violence where these produce a further asset to recruiters: ‘street cool’, a potent set of symbols that can be used to boost the popularity of ‘brands’ to a youth market (see Ilhan, 2015).

The links between the overrun of street habitus into the world of jihadi violence are evidenced by Verkaik’s (2016) accounts of those within the wider network in which Emwazi was embedded. They were arrested for being drunk and disorderly on their flight to Tanzania from which they were due to continue to a life of sober combat on behalf of al-Shaabab (Verkaik 2016: 71). Similarly, some of the young men who participated in the 2016 terror attacks in Paris and Nice had persisted with deeply hedonistic ‘party’ lifestyles (a noted facet of street culture) until close to their infamous acts of violence (Cottee, 2016a, 2016b). Upon arrival in Syria, street cultural tropes around the reverence of consumer culture and luxury, casual violence and the projection of a sense of mastery and control could continue and indeed flourish.

Much like Emwazi and his network the three Fredrikstad fighters were noted for a fondness of marijuana, gaming and the adoption of street fashion and slang. They too began to intersperse this mode of speech with Arabic as their interests in Islam and jihad grew. For the Fredrikstad network, their earlier experiences of conflict and violence over time can be understood to have sedimented into a street habitus. The prospect of transposing this way of being into the context of the war in Syria offered the exciting possibility of affirming their street masculinities within a context that seemed heroic. The Fredrikstad friends a number of scams to secure the funds to travel to Syria, breaching several Islamic rules. They maxed out credit cards, obtained cheap mobile phones by signing up for long contracts, and even secured a student loan before absconding from their debts to Syria. They justified this by reasoning that their victims were not Muslim and that their actions were beneficial to their cause (Artnsen, 2016: 212). Meanwhile Verkaik (2016) describes how young men from Emwazi’s wider network had undertaken similar practices with similar justifications. Arguably

their familiarity and comfort with breaking the law and social convention to obtain what they deem important stemmed from their street habitus, but could serve a new agenda.

Religious conversion has been theorised as a transformative process that encapsulates a pedagogic imprint on the habitus (Shilling and Mellor 2010). As such, the persistence of a pre-conversion habitus into a new religious identity merits examination. A striking component of the Norwegian's conversion was the sincerity and religious devotion they suddenly seemed to exhibit. The change was most dramatic for Hammer who lacked Muslim family. At first, he claimed that conversion changed his behaviour, texting a friend: 'I used to be the worst criminal, not long ago, until I found the light' (Arntsen 2016: 129). Habitus, however, often has the connotation of inertia, whereby early experiences and socialisation tend to influence life trajectories (Bourdieu, 1990: 54). The stated desire to behave differently butts up against years of patterned orientations. Leaving their street lives behind was difficult for the three friends.

Although they seemed to try hard, their embodied habitus seemed to draw them back towards the street. Hammer sometimes drank and partied heavily whilst other times he refused to celebrate his birthday stating that it would go against his new Muslim beliefs (Arntsen 2016: 227). This ongoing struggle between their different cultural influences can be seen in the messages they sent each other. Before going to Syria, Edelbijev wrote to Khan: 'If there is a khalifa (caliphate) I hope I go. "Fuck" this illusion of a world brother' (Arntsen 2016: 205), combining religious references (brother, caliphate), references to Internet-based conspiracy theories ('illusion') and the street ('fuck' in English) in two short sentences. Khan replied that he did not want to die in a hospital and instead wanted a proud death, reflecting how the machismo of street culture can dovetail with jihadi ideas.

Khan continuously shared photographs of himself posing with weapons 'gangsta-style' on social media – seemingly performing identity work that bridges his former identity with his new aspirations of becoming a jihadist warrior. Drawing on Bauman (2000) Cottee (2016a) notes, that the gangsta-jihadi persona is the product of flows between the two identities. The street habitus is transposed, not transformed. Emwazi was said to have become increasingly cold, vicious and violent in the war-zone context (Verbaik 2016). Here, the field of politico-religious war served to allow him to present the traits of exaggerated cruelty that the street tends to more rhetorically celebrate than practically deploy. Whilst the accounts of the Norwegian friends suggest that they did not revel in sadism to the same extent, they variously fought with heavy or specialist weaponry, whilst showing support for decapitation.

Street habitus is tightly linked to street capital in explaining why individuals with a background in 'ordinary' crime, violence and drug use become jihadists, the inertia of habitus can also help explain why they do not change more once joined. It seems newly radicalized individuals from street culture retain much of their old street style, and old street practices while committed to a politico-religious violence. Indeed the kinds of 'jihadi cool' noted by Cottee (2015) arguably draw on these tropes and allow groups like ISIS to circulate messages and images that draw simultaneously on piety and street culture. Fraser's (2015) notion of 'homologies of habitus' notes the similarities in what is valued amongst tough, masculinist cultures of marginalisation across different global contexts. The language of the street field (Sandberg and Fleetwood 2016) fuses with that of international jihadism, emphasizing the gloriousness of violence and death, fatalism, Arabic expressions and machismo. The new life in Syria could deliver what their street habitus guided them to seek: a close fellowship of young men engaged in exciting and daring activities.

Street Field

Bourdieu (1993) defined ‘field’ as the arena in which individuals struggle for position. Fields embody the logic and rules that give capitals their value (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) and they both house and continuously shape the habitus (see Swartz 1997; Hanks 2005). Every individual exists within multiple fields (e.g. the fields of education, employment, religious devotion, consumerism etc.). Fields, moreover, are positioned in relation to each other with the field of power (politics) imposing a master order. Those who feel that they cannot thrive within mainstream fields may instead invest themselves in struggles in ‘heterodox’ fields – those that run contrary to the grain of the field of power. Shammas and Sandberg (2016) developed the notion of the street field within which deviant acts and embodying street culture enable individuals to gain stature. Importantly, they argue that state action (in particular the creation and enforcement of the law) delineates the street field by causing individuals to feel that their interests would be best served by investments outside of mainstream life. Socio-economic marginalization can operate in a similar manner.

In the UK case, Verkaik (2016) reports that experiences of xenophobia and negative interactions with the security services served to cement young men first into street and later jihadi fields. The journalist shared the story of a group from North London (at least one of which was linked to Emwazi’s network) – who first had to learn to fight simply to secure a place on the street, but then faced post-9/11 a more confusing state of affairs where, despite their British street accents, they were forced to somehow prove their loyalty and authenticity. They reported manipulation and intimidation tactics on the part of the British security services who would bombard them with accusations and threats. They faced travel bans, perceived harassment and had their families drawn into these desperately uncomfortable ordeals: ‘it was hardly any wonder that they found it easier to simply disengage from mainstream society...’ (Verkaik 2016: 67). The consequence of intense and visceral feelings of exclusion – whether imposed by racist bullies in the park or overbearing security officers serve to convince the targets that they have no chance within mainstream fields and that if they are to invest their energies to advance, this would only be a reasonable possibility within ‘outlaw’, heterodox fields.

In the Norwegian case experiences of security forces and xenophobia seemed to be less important. Rather, their increasing religious commitment seemed born of a genuine awakening and a sense of having ‘grown out’ or gotten tired of street life. Nevertheless, their experiences of more typical socio-economic marginalization would seem to have viscerally impressed on them their distance from the mainstream fields of education and employment and they felt that they would need to cultivate a sense of belonging elsewhere.

These cases serve to illustrate the resonances between heterodox fields that can appear very different: the materialist and hedonistic street and religious, ascetic politico-religious combat. That similar traits and characteristics can serve individuals well within both, however, indicates the extent to which they have running against the grain of mainstream life in common. The move from the street to jihad is not so improbable when viewed through this lens. Indeed, jihad is open to be perceived by street cultural adherents as a more ‘mature’ and ‘fulfilling’ field of struggle in which to invest energy. Evidently also, many Western jihadists have experienced state violence as a consequence of engagement in both ‘ordinary’ crime and jihadist milieus, and state responses to both fields have served to more forcefully delineate and funnel individuals into them (Crone 2016; Walklate and Mythen 2016). Both dressing in street style and sporting the styles of religious Islamic devotion can attract the attention of the authorities – although both styles are also adopted by the law-abiding. There is a racial element to these visual practices of exclusion, moreover, where it is ethnic minorities that tend to be targeted in the campaigns against both fields. The resonances between the fields are strengthened by the criminalization of a wide variety of acts as precursors to, or supportive of terrorism – whereby those who are politico-religious can be subject to a criminalizing gaze in a manner previously more associated with street populations.

The resonances between the street and politico-religious fields furthermore accounts for the hybrid styles and practices earlier noted, where some of those fighting for groups such as ISIS engage in a range of behaviours prohibited by Islam: consuming intoxicants and participating in secular, street violence. It also explains the kinds of ‘jihadi cool’ noted earlier including styles of rap music (though music is forbidden in strict Salafism) and videos and video games that have more visually in common with western action genres than Islamic culture (Barbara 2015). Sartorial features are shared between the two fields, where kufiyahs, camouflage, beards, baggy trousers, sunglasses, all - terrain vehicles, automatic weapons, baseball caps, US gang-style poses and t-shirts become part of a visual grammar common to groups across both.

Conclusion

In a research field dominated by political science and religious studies, Bourdieusian criminology offers a distinct understanding of the processes that occur when criminology’s ‘usual suspects’ (drug users and street criminals) turn political or religious extremist . In this paper, we have shown how this perspective allows for an understanding of what occurs in recent shifts from street culture to politico-religious criminality: between a ‘gangster’ and violent jihadist identity. The connections between ‘conventional’ street criminality and extremist political violence are of course not restricted to jihadism. Particular Northern Irish paramilitaries have been involved in practices that are more typical of criminal gangs (Guardian, 2003). More recently, a number of scholars have noted that certain politically violent organisations might be better categorised as street gang in nature (Pyrooz and Densley 2018; Valasik and Reid 2018; Reid and Valasik 2018). There is arguably however, a particular significance with jihadism given that IS has strategically reached out to those who may hold more of a street criminal identity (Andersen and Sandberg, 2018). In contemporary public and academic debates characterized by a false dichotomy between marginalization and politico-religious explanations of jihadi-violence, Bourdieu’s work (e.g. 1977; 1990) offers a valuable theoretical synthesis. Capital, habitus and field are concepts that emphasize the interplay between ideology, socio-economic processes, social networks and the state. They can thus assist an understanding of the ‘ambiguous and messy situations’ that constitute contemporary western extremism (Walklate and Mythen 2016: 11).

Bourdieu’s (1990) emphasis on practical rationality problematizes simplistic notions of radicalisation and the desire for self-sacrifice (Roy 2017). Individuals with street capital can ‘reinvest’ their competencies and skills in violent-jihadi milieu, where their embodied characteristics and orientations advantage them. In this way such individuals are not merely ‘redeemed’ through jihad but elevated in status amongst new and old peers, the importance of peer groups and networks retaining their value in the transition. Bourdieusian criminology furthermore allows for an understanding of the distinction made between behavioral and cognitive radicalization (see Vidino and Brandon 2012). The street habitus can be viewed as a ‘pre-existing’ habituation into practices of violence and threat – the cognitive justification of religious goals need only be overlaid onto it. In this way, it is furthermore less difficult to understand how the seemingly disparate fields of street culture and politico-religious struggle can share style and symbolism as well as soldiers and temperaments. Of course, stark contradictions exist between the secular, materialist and hedonistic worlds of street culture and the spiritually orientated, restrictive dictates of the violent jihadi ideologies. Our argument is that embodied characteristics and logics from the street field play a significant role in processes of contemporary radicalization in Europe.

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