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Old Games–New Meanings? Understanding Modern Gun Violence in the Light of Nineteenth Century Habits

Cultural practices are part of everyday life. This paper analyzes the link between violence and cultural practice. Via an analytical focus on social practices and interaction theory it argues that cultural patterns of interaction form a set of routines which link micro structures of daily encounters with macro effects (1). It shows that these habitual patterns are closely linked to historical ancestors and gender constructions (2). Finally it explains how habitual patterns and rituals can be linked to the process of historical transformation (3).

The paper analyses historical examples of violent behavior in order to offer a fresh perspective on certain widespread behaviors. It demonstrates that in order to understand gun violence of the early 20th century, the reconstruction and understanding of historical antecedents of contemporary interactions is necessary. Through a close reading and comparison of weaponry practice in the 19th and 20th centuries, it becomes clear that modern rituals incorporated elements of the historical habitus. Thus it becomes evident that ritual forms of interaction have the potential to fuse historical patterns with new elements. This is the reason rituals prove essential to modern societies, as they combine elements of continuity and stability with the dynamics of change.

Key words: violence, cultural pattern of violence, masculinity, doing gender, habitus, rituals, social interaction, social practices, cultural games, gun-violence, modern German history, gun-regulation, cultural criminology, artefact, Bourdieu, Latour, cultural history, gender history, gun-technology, historical transformation

Violent action can be rooted in situational aggression, develop within social contexts, or be linked to criminality (Karstedt, Oberwittler 2004; Gadd et al. 2011) – in any case violent action is formed by cultural patterns (Inheteen 2005; Bronner 2011; Dollinger 2010; Gudehus, Christ 2013). Therefore in order to understand

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modern practices of violence, a concept of the cultural patterns which have molded forms of violent activity will assist in the development of a full understanding of all factors that determine violent social encounters.

Meaning of cultural traditions in the light of historical change

Recent studies have stressed that violence is deeply embedded into cultural contexts. Cultural interpretations form the framework of potential violent activity and determine the range of possible interpretations of aggression, as well as what is thinkable in terms of violent fantasy. (Inheteven 2005). Violent practices of hooligans, (Esch 2013; Buford 2010) for example, as well as violent behavior at rock concerts (Bohnsack 1995; Inheteven 1997) and police violence have been analyzed with a view to their communicative meanings, (Weinhauer, Requate 2012; Colin et al. 2008) cultural rules and distinct locations (Weinhauer, Ellerbrock 2013). This paper works with the idea that violence cannot be understood by ripping it out of its social and cultural context. It argues that only a close reading of actual violent interactions will reveal the full significance of patterns of violence. Once we begin to work with this principle it becomes clear that customs and traditions can be instructive in the understanding of modern practices of violence. This correlation becomes even more significant if one takes into account that cultural patterns have their own distinct temporality. Sometimes cultural habits change rapidly; sometimes they persist even in times of rapid political, economic or technological transformation. This offers the opportunity of a more precise understanding both of processes of historical transformation and meanings of cultural traditions.

The paper is situated in early 20th century Germany. These decades are perceived as a time of significant modernization in terms of urbanization, industrialization, mass-migration, globalization, mediatization, commercialization and mass-consumption. What kind of role do cultural patterns play within these macro-concepts? How do social interactions and cultural traditions fit into a process of change that is for the most part understood as macro structural change? What impact does an analysis of cultural tradition have on the understanding of such historical transformation? To answer these questions the paper puts cultural practices and social interactions center stage before linking them to structural factors of historical change.

Analytical framework: Cultural Pattern of Violence from the Perspective of Social Practices

Social practice theory emerged as an innovative perspective within cultural studies (Schatzki et al. 2000). In contrast to practice theory (*Handlungstheorien*), which argued from the position of rational actors, concepts of social practice stressed performance and routine as important elements of social interaction (Goffman 1972). Four basic elements can be seen as constitutive in practice theory: (1) the continuous repetition of identical or similar sequences of actions, which through repetition and routine constitute social practice, (2) the materialization of social practice, which includes embodied practice as well as material artifacts, (3) the embedding of social practice in cultural knowledge systems and systems of meaning, and (4) the moment of performance (Reckwitz 2006). That means that social practice is always embedded and performed in a collaborative context.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus can be considered as one of the most important intellectual streams within social practice theory (Krais, Gebauer 2010; Bourdieu 1977; Gilcher-Holtey 1996). His concept of habitus offers a highly articulated model with which to link social structure with the micro level of actual social interaction. According to Bourdieu the habitus is "a permanent system ... of dispositions" that structures perception, assessment and future action. The habitus is acquired through repetition of practices which are internalized and condensed into a habitus. This habitus is incorporated nature. It incorporates experiences, knowledge and practice. The habitus is thus at the same time product and producer of social practice. Structured and structuring disposition, as Bourdieu put it, "opus operatum" – the result of practices – and at the same modus operandi, mode and instructions for future forms of activity. Within the context of ongoing exchange, embodied cultural knowledge guides social practice beyond individual interests and awareness.

Taken these assumptions into account, the following will analyze violent practices at the beginning of the twentieth century in Germany.

Gun crime in the early twentieth century

At the beginning of the twentieth century German police officers and lawyers became concerned with an apparently new phenomenon. Gun crime seemed to be a growing problem within German cities and towns. In June 1911, the German interior minister prepared a report giving an overview of gun crime during the last several years in the German Empire. The Berlin official breathlessly detailed the most disturbing cases:

"In Cologne a worker shot down a man who had given him some information as to where the next pub could be found. In Hamm a 20 year old miner bumped

into another man on the street for no reason and shot at him four times with his revolver. In Celle, a 20 year old guy, also unprovoked, shot into a group of playing children, damaging the eye of one boy. In Breslau a young boy gunned down his mother after a brief quarrel. In Düsseldorf, a 17 year old worker killed his father with six gunshots in the middle of a family dispute”².

The interior minister’s report numbered more than 100 pages. The cases he listed all seemed to be similarly structured though to the German officials this structure and the similarity of the cases were hardly clear.

To understand what kind of transformation had occurred and why most officials struggled to understand what they assumed to be a new phenomenon, a more detailed interpretation of the violence observed will prove helpful.

In nearly all instances young boys shot down either strangers in the street, their friends or even family members. In general it turned out that the shooting practices in most of the cases had been performed by young men, mostly aged between 15 and 25. Most incidents occurred in public places, and there seemed to be no social or religious differentiation. People from all social and religious backgrounds, married and unmarried, and those in rural or urban areas were involved in gun violence (Ellerbrock 2011b).

In the view of the German officials these kinds of violence, formerly completely unheard of, could be regarded as a new phenomenon. In order to understand what was actually new to these practices of the emerging twentieth century, a look back into the weaponry practices of the nineteenth century will prove helpful.

Context: Weaponry rules of the first half of the 19th century

The practice of arming oneself was unregulated in the German states during the 19th century. In general, possession of weapons, be it guns or knives, was not prohibited³. On the contrary, the arming of the people was encouraged widely in order to develop a general military preparedness within the civilian population. This was an early modern tradition (Tlusty 2011) which remained alive until well into the 19th century (Ellerbrock 2014a). Only the use of firearms for hunting purposes had been prohibited (Reyscher 1828–1851, IV 1831: 70). In general it had been permitted to use firearms and carry weapons for reasons of self-defense since the Middle Ages (Ellerbrock 2014b).

² GhStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 84a, Nr. 5728, Entwurf des Schlußberichts des Justizministers, betreffend das Tragen und den Gebrauch von Schusswaffen an den Innenminister, 21.6.1911. All source quotes are originally in German, the translations to English are mine (D.E.) I would like to thank Sabine Küntzel, Karola Rockmann and Matthew Scown for supporting research, and proof reading.

³ In 1844 the City council of Stuttgart mentioned “the unlimited right to carry arms” for Wuerttemberg had been was the generell rule. HStA Stuttgart, E 146/1, Bü. 3809, Bericht der Königl. Stadtdirektion Stuttgart an die Königl. Regierung des Neckarkreises, betreffend das Recht zum Waffenbesitz, Az. 2284, 13.3.1844.

Because of this, the private ownership of guns and pistols was a common phenomenon throughout German history (Magin 2003; Reinle 2003), a situation which did not change in the 19th century. Apart from guns and pistols, knives had been present in every household as an everyday tool (Ellerbrock 2014b). Since the possession of arms and the use of weapons were so common until well into the 19th century, weaponry practices only gained attention in exceptional circumstances. In the 1850s, border officials in Baden routinely screened the luggage of craftsmen, intent on confiscating the knives and guns that the mainly young workers habitually carried with them⁴.

Considering how widespread the possession of arms was, it is surprising that records of armed violence are so rare in the criminal records dating from this time. Armed violence hardly appears in the criminal records as “injuries inflicted with weapons, but without premeditation, and causing an inability to work lasting not longer than five days, should be punished only as a misdemeanor” (Anonymous 1862). Therefore most injuries were not rated as acts of delinquency but as simple wrongdoings. This judgment indicates that most cases of weaponry violation did not lead to scandal and were not considered a matter that needed regulation by law. Instead of restricting weaponry practices by legal norms, social rules controlling the handling of arms clearly worked quite effectively.

But cultural habits did not prevent all kinds of violence with weapons. How social roles and cultural habits functioned to regulate a socially acceptable usage of weapons, and how they interacted with gender roles, would become obvious in a discussion between the Prussian Minister of Justice and his attorneys. This debate is a potent example of the conviction that weaponry practices could be most effectively regulated through cultural habits rather than legal enforcement. It also offers a fine example of the cultural rules that guided the weaponry practices of the 19th century.

Traditions: the Weaponry practices of the nineteenth century

In the 1830s the Prussian Minister of Justice discussed with his district attorneys whether Prussia was in need of a knife law in order to regulate the habit of carrying (and using) a knife in public. Moritz Bessel, senior public prosecutor from Cleve (Rhine Province), argued that a new law to “eradicate usage of the knife” would prove entirely impracticable. Even suppression of the “carrying of unconcealed knives [would] only be justified if people were carrying the knife with the purpose” of using it as a weapon. But that was not the case here. “On the contrary, a knife in the pocket is an indispensable tool for living and in disputes it is used

⁴ BayHStA, MIInn, Nr. 31010, Schreiben Staatsministerium des Innen an sämtliche Königliche Regierungen, betr.: Behandlung der Waffen führenden Handwerksbur-schen in Baden betreffen, Az. 19703, 3.7.1853.

only **occasionally** [emphasis in original]⁵. According to this evaluation, it was not only the difficulty of executing a knife ban that influenced Bessel's judgment. More relevant to his judgment was the fact that use of knives posed no danger to public order.

What became clear during this debate was the fact that there were no serious data about weaponry use available. For this reason, in 1837 the Prussian Minister of Justice coordinated a systematic survey detailing to what extent, in which situations and with what consequences weapons were used. The reports drawn up by the prosecutor of the Upper Rhine provinces provide deep insight into the scope, character and context of knife use. This documentation reveals the understanding of cultural traditions needed to compare nineteenth century customs to those of the early twentieth century.

Structural pattern of weaponry practices of the nineteenth century

The surveys of the procurators of the Upper Rhine province provide us with some general structural insights. From 1 May to 31 July 1837, a total of 13 cases in which knives were used came before the Royal District Court of Dusseldorf. A total of about 20 people were involved⁶. At that time 244,013 people lived in the district (Viebahn 1836: 87), which means that 0.01% of the population were involved in stabbings that went punished by the court. Estimating that about 30% of the population had been children and another 50% of the remaining adults were female, we are left with 0.02% of the adult men who were shown to be involved in crimes in which knives were used. Comparable rates of injury were noted in the court district of Aachen, where there were nine cases with 14 participants in the same period⁷. In the court district of Saarbrücken, two cases went to trial, dealing with a total of eight men⁸. Besides the small number of stabbing cases that actually went to court, two additional aspects are clear. Most of the delinquents that were taken to court in the Prussian Rhine Province due to knife violence in the 1830s were male and between 18 and 25 years of age. 60% of all offenses had been committed by young people between 14 and 25, with an accumulation within the age group of young men between 18 and 25. The 26–35 age group was involved

⁵ GhStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 84a, Nr. 56334, Bl. 6–13, Bericht des *Ober-Prokurators zu Cleve* an den *Staats- und Justizminister Herrn Freiherrn vom Kamptz im Betreff des Gebrauchs der Messer bei Streitigkeiten*, Az. E 3923, 17.12.1835.

⁶ GhStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 84a, Nr. 56334, Bl. 52–57, Verzeichnis der bei dem Königl. Landgerichte zu Düsseldorf vom 1. May bis 31. July 1837 vorgekommenen Mißhandlungsfälle, wobei von einem Messer Gebrauch gemacht worden ist, 08.1837.

⁷ GhStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 84a, Nr. 56334, Bl. 27, Verzeichniß derjenigen Mißhandlungen, Verwundungen und anderer Thätlichkeiten, bei welchen Messer gebraucht worden sind, in dem Zeitraum vom 1en Mai bis 31sten Juli 1837, *Königl. Landgericht Aachen*, 01.08.1837.

⁸ GhStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 84a, Nr. 56334, Bl. 33+34, Verzeichniß derjenigen Mißhandlungen, Verwundungen und anderer Thätlichkeiten, bei welchen Messer gebraucht worden sind, in dem Zeitraum vom 1en Mai bis 31sten Juli 1837, *Königl. Landgericht Saarbrücken*, 31.07.1837.

in 30%, and 10% of all knife offenses had been committed by people over 35. Although the data is limited due to the small numbers of trial cases, these figures indicate an age structure with regards to violence with weapons that subsequently repeated itself in later surveys. In general it can be said that young men in their adolescence were responsible for the majority of weapons offenses.

Therefore statistically the curve of weaponry crime showed a profile also familiar from statistics on contemporary male youth violence (Raithel 2004). It started around the age of 15 and reached its peak with the age group of 18 to 25, slowly dropping off up to the age of 35. After the age of 35 it flattened significantly and settled finally for the over 35 age group at a very low level when compared to adolescents.

Until this point we can say that in the mid-nineteenth century in the Rhine Province, weaponry violence was a phenomenon that could be accorded a very specific age profile. Weaponry practices took place, as the District Court of Düsseldorf explained, almost always in public places: on the street, in the pub, at the fair. Many fights were related to alcohol, most occurred during leisure time—on Sundays, in the evenings, during the holidays. As the lawyers of Düsseldorf reported, nearly any event could occasion the use of a knife: anger at the football score, a landlord's refusal of another drink at a pub, a dispute between two guests at a family party, an unprovoked attack from pure bravado, a brawl between young people from neighboring villages, a brawl among craftsmen, a dispute in the tavern, a war of words on Sunday night. The list could be continued. It detailed numerous different situations in which men known and unknown to one another argued and finally resorted to their knives (Ellerbrock 2011a).

The numbers already indicate which variables are irrelevant when explaining the logics of weaponry practices (social class and religious context) and which factors offer promising insights into the cultural meaning of violent practices (gender and age). Since gender and age seem to be center stage, both categories will demand further inspection.

Masculinity as leading cultural pattern of weaponry practice

According to Pierre Bourdieu, masculinity is the result of complex socialization. It is “a set of seemingly natural dispositions, often visible in a particular way of sitting and standing, a tilt of the head, a bearing, a gait, bound up with a way of thinking and acting, an ethos, a belief, etc.” a way to move and behave which is deeply fixed in conversation and the body. This system of perception, judgment and action Bourdieu calls habitus. The male habitus directs masculine behavior. Constitutive for the masculine habitus is “the capacity to fight and exercise violence,” the readiness to compete, to prove superiority in all kind of different situations, the permanent desire to struggle and to win, and the effort “to assert his manliness in all circumstances” (Bourdieu 2001).

Violent masculine games—like sports and in particular martial arts—are especially well suited to making visible, testing and proving features of masculinity. Fighting and violent games are directly related to the body. The body in these games is not only used as a means of aggression, the body and the male identity are *created* through these violent games. Soccer and boxing shape male muscle memory, fencing and the marks it leaves on the skin function as proof that the boy carrying them was courageous enough to take part in the fight. Boys according to Bourdieu need to be trained in the games of masculinity in order to become a part of the male community. Since competition, fighting and readiness for any kind of risky behavior are an essential part of the male habitus, to participate in male games is a necessary step towards growing into a man. This explains why adolescent boys are so eager to fight, to provoke and to compete: there is no other way to become part of the masculine community. From this perspective adolescent fighting is not a behavior which aims at violating social norms. On the contrary, it is a practice which aims at becoming a part of society, becoming integrated into the community.

We know from gender research as well as from performance studies that gender is learned through the implementation and internalization of practices as *doing gender* (Meuser 2002; West, Zimmerman 1987). The practices which are essential to constituted gender identity acquire a special urgency during puberty. To internalize the appropriate gender practice it is necessary to learn the expected gendered behavior through steady imitation. To consolidate a proper male habitus the constant repetition of practices and routines is necessary. During adolescence this creation of gendered identity becomes exceptionally intense. According to Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf the mimesis of adolescent practice is built on imitation; it is passed from body to body “without being reflected” (Gebauer, Wulf 2003).

The repetition and imitation of practices is never an exact copy, but always implies shifts and changes. While this applies to any kind of social practice, it is particularly true for adolescent practices, partly because these inchoate gendered practices are initially unfamiliar and uncertain for the young boys. Therefore the repetition often fails to imitate the model exactly. Shifts occur partly because the adolescent habitus is still barely established, thus still elastic and flexible. Finally shifts may result from the fact that adolescents tend naturally toward experimentation.

Keeping in mind these ideas of male practice and the concept of a male habitus centered on competition and fighting, a close reading of the weaponry practices which emerged among young men in Germany in the nineteenth century will revealsome of their cultural meaning.

Weaponry practices as *doing masculinity* in adolescents

Within the survey mentioned above, the Royal Chief Prosecutor of Aachen gave a description of a typical knife fight which is detailed enough to understand their basic logic. “Usually the fights were less about wounding the opponent than winning by cutting his clothes.” Damaging the skin only appeared to happen by accident. So it was not physical injury that was the goal of the knife fights, but symbolic damage of the enemy. The fighters aimed to defeat their opponents but they did not intend to hurt their counterparts seriously.

The victory could be won by violating the enemy though the destruction of his clothes. Possession of the requisite courage to face battle was proven in a pure, noble fight and did not require serious bodily harm, though a little bit of blood was always welcome to prove the sincerity of the game.

The Chief Prosecutor of Aachen explained that “near the Dutch border, the manual skill in the use of knives had to be so sophisticated that every peasant understood how to cut his opponent at any depth and in every possible way”⁹. According to this description the stabbings were not an outburst of uncontrolled aggression but a martial art, requiring a lot of experience, exercise and body control to finally grow into an ability which every adult male possessed. In the end the sheer physical presence and demonstration of restrained aggression and the ability to control a knife in an advanced manner served to demonstrate masculinity—serious harm was not necessary and not part of the game.

The art of carrying a knife in such a controlled manner that the injury of the opponent could be controlled precisely—from damage to clothing that holds back from scratching the skin to more painful injuries—was essential for the male habitus. To learn this art was a difficult and complex process of socialization and needed many rounds of combat to become fully internalized.

From this perspective, the high number of young men participating in knife quarrels appears logical, since it was boys who needed to practice these skills. As long as the young men were still learning the male habitus of controlled combat, they attracted some kind of police attention since they did not always successfully execute these practices in line with normative codes which prescribed avoidance of heavy injuries. It is at around the age of 25 that these young men suddenly disappear from criminal statistics. We know from many descriptions that men were still fighting, even beyond the age of 25, but obviously at this age they had become familiar with how to control the weapon and finally internalized the perfect combat habitus, which made it possible to fight without becoming the object of police investigation.

⁹ GhStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 84a, Nr. 56334, Bl. 22–26, Schreiben des *Aachener Oberprokurators* an den Königl. Staats- und Justizminister Herrn von Kamptz, betr. die vorgekommenen Mißhandlungen mit Gebrauch von Messern, Az. D. Nr. 473, 02.08.1837.

Change and Stability of cultural patterns over time

Weaponry practices proved to be a commonly practiced and widely accepted form of doing masculinity during the nineteenth century. Obviously this was still the case at the beginning of the twentieth century. In almost the same manner as described by the senior prosecutor of Aachen in 1837, young boys were 70 years later still eager to go toe-to-toe with each other in order to constitute and prove their manliness through competitive sports, martial arts and fighting games.

Gun-violence in the early 20th century

In 1911 the Stuttgart police headquarters complained about conditions, which “have slowly become like those in the Wild West, where people pursue their work armed with loaded revolvers”¹⁰. The presidents of the Prussian Courts of Appeal mentioned that “the wearing and also the use of firearms in recent years... increased significantly”, and the President of the Prussian Court explained: “This terrible habit” of walking around with a gun in one’s pocket “seems to have become a matter of course in the eyes of the people”¹¹. The Saxon Ministry of the Interior complained that “young people, often training students, and even school boys can be found with weapons”¹². All these reports and complaints, which reflect a similar situation in all German states in 1910, did not itself constitute any new evidence.

In the early 20th century a similar cultural pattern of weaponry violence committed mainly by young men can be observed. Despite the many similarities in contemporary perspective these practices had a completely different quality than the weaponry games of the preceding decades. What kind of weaponry practices were observed at the beginning of the 20th century and what was the reason for the different perception?

The Prussian Chief Public Prosecutor Bessel had in 1835 already stated that the knife was part of the standard equipment permitted to males. In the early 20th century it was not cultural customs but rather the kind of artefacts carried that changed. Instead of the common knife, that had been the norm of the 19th century, the firearm was to become the weapon of choice of the 20th century.

¹⁰ HStA Stuttgart, E 151/3, Bü. 711, Schreiben der Polizeidirektion der Stadt Stuttgart, betr. Gesetz über den Verkehr mit Waffen, 06.02.1911, S. 3.

¹¹ All quotes filed in: BArch, R/1501, Nr. 113802, Denkschrift des Justizministers für den Herrn Reichskanzler betr. das Tragen und den Gebrauch von Schußwaffen, Az. Anlage zu I 4554, 06.08.1911.

¹² BArch, R/1501, Nr. 113802, Schreiben an den Reichskanzler betr. die im Königreich Sachsen geltenden Bestimmungen, 18.1.1911.

Cultural pattern in times of rapid technological change

The cultural pattern of doing masculinity did not change during this time, but the weapons did (Wiesener 2004). The adolescents still aimed to prove their masculinity to one another via these fights, but this still did not extend to hurting or even killing each other.

This practice was already hard to learn with knives, but it was nearly impossible with modern firearms. This becomes obvious if we look at the descriptions of adolescent fighting games which took place at the beginning of the twentieth century. Boys are trying to outfight one other, for instance: a shot goes off and kills one of them. They aimed at each other's cups but struck a head. Sometimes they even shot in the air in order to impress each other and ended up hitting one another. Even when they intended to just show off or talk about the weapons with their friends, shots went off and left injuries and dead bodies. The technology of modern firearms did not easily fit into the old rules of masculine games. Modern revolvers and pistols were not fit to inflict mere minor injuries. To merely scratch the skin was impossible with modern firearms. Of course it was possible just to wound a man without killing him, but even this wounding – for example a shot in the leg – nearly always was so severe that it had to be classified as serious injury, which always provoked police investigation. In summary, modern firearms were not made for these masculine games. Instead of making men out of boys, revolvers and pistols made criminals out of otherwise decent boys.

Old meanings–new games and old games–new meaning

For this reason, gun crime of the early twentieth century was perceived as a new phenomenon by politicians as well as lawyers. Fights with weapons that hurt and killed had never been part of the repertoire of doing masculinity. But gun practices—as explained above—in many cases did seriously hurt and kill a growing number of people. This development was due to technological innovation and the invention of new artifacts which introduced their own logic and meaning to the established pattern of doing masculinity (Akrich, Latour 2006; Belliger, Krieger 2006; Latour 2002).

Therefore gun practices and the social interpretation of them have to be understood within two contradictory frameworks.

Old meanings–new games

On the one hand, gun practices of the twentieth century have to be understood as cultural patterns still informed by old meanings but at the same time as producing these meanings by means of new games. Doing masculinity and producing manliness though use of new artefacts finally resulted in new games. These new

games had different qualities and in the end were not to be played according to the old rules.

In this sense German politicians and lawyers who described the gun practices of the twentieth century as new innovations were right—since the new artefacts forced interactions that could not be assimilated to the well-known practice of producing masculinity using weaponry. The material logic of the artefacts initiated change in the games which was so overwhelming that the still-present tradition of doing gender became significantly clouded.

Old games–new meanings

At the same time use of competitive weaponry practice remained generative in the production of masculinity. This practice of doing masculinity was so deeply rooted in the culture that it gained habitual qualities and was performed in ritual-like routines (Morgenthaler, Hauri 2010; Wulf 2008). As a consequence of the habitual character and its ritual qualities, young men stuck to these practices even when they endangered their lives, and misfiring risked the forfeiture of the chance to become a well-respected man and risked the chance of being condemned a criminal.

But the new technology did not only contradict the old games. At the same time the new artefacts also *sped up* the old games (Kunze 2010) – since shooting with modern revolvers and pistols was much more fun and dramatic than using old fashioned weaponry.

In this sense, with respect to the gender identities and the practices of doing gender which lay at the core of cultural pattern of weaponry practices, we can observe a broad continuity. The shooting rituals of gender production were obviously capable of integrating both traditions and innovations. This potential made them a powerful tool since they offered the stability of traditional practices of doing gender and combined them with the dynamics of invention of new forms and skills that proved adaptable to changing social conditions (Wulf 2004).

Conclusion: Understanding Change and Continuity of Cultural Practices in Times of Macro Transformation

The gun practices of the beginning of the twentieth century grew out of centuries-old cultural practices of doing masculinity. Procedures of producing and incorporating a competitive, ready-to-fight masculinity were repetitively acted and re-enacted. In times of technological change and an emerging consumer culture the acquisition of masculine habitus naturally integrated new elements. In the process of repetitive performance new weapons functioned as co-actors, re-shaped patterns of cultural practice and altered their outcomes.

This link proves that macro factors have to be integrated into the analyses of cultural practice in order to understand the change as well as the continuity of

cultural patterns (Rössel 2009; Wulf 2008). The twentieth and twenty-first centuries are characterized by rapid political as well as social and economic change. These factors of transformation do influence cultural practices, rules and norms. At the same time cultural patterns inherit a certain solidity and preserve their own logics even in times of rapid change.

Using the example of gun practices it becomes quite obvious that practices of the past proved important in the shaping of modern cultural patterns. Ritual forms of interaction, which have the potential to fuse historical patterns with unknown elements, prove themselves thereby essential to modern societies, since they combine elements of continuity and stability with the dynamics of change. Contemporary violent practices can only be understood within the pattern of a gendered habitus which incorporates cultural patterns and meaning. While elements of habitual practice assimilated quite quickly to changing conditions of social practice, some habitual elements stayed attached to their historical antecedents for some time.

Contemporary Germans no longer reproduce the masculine habitus by means of gun practices, though the structure of the male game—once acted out with pistol and revolver—is still obvious on the *Autobahn*, in soccer stadia and other places.

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