

An Analysis of Bourdieu's Habitus and Field Theory in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

Kelle Taha

Language Centre, The University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan

Hala Maani

Language Centre, The University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan

Khawla Al Dwakiat

Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan

Khulood Abu-Tayeh

Language Centre, The University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan

Abstract—The purpose of this study is to investigate Mohsin Hamid's novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by utilizing the theory of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. The study, a theoretical construct founded on two key concepts from Bourdieu's theory, namely habitus and field, aims at offering a new perspective to understand the dilemma of the protagonist Changez from a sociological cultural perspective. It shows how Changez cultivates his habitus to pursue a specific taste in America through multiple forms of cultural capital and manifests how these forms shape his attitudes and relations. It also offers a metaphorical portrayal of Changez as a footballer who struggles within various positions to retain power and eventually fulfill his American dream through both the macrocosmic and microcosmic social fields that he finds himself in. The assumption that this paper is seeking to validate is that there is a common ground between the novel and Bourdieu's theory of practice in some key concepts and that understanding the habitus and the doxa of Changez' social fields can help understand his practices, dispositions, and most importantly the reasons behind him leaving America.

Index Terms—Bourdieu, habitus, field, 9/11 fiction, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

I. INTRODUCTION

Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) was one of the leading figures in the field of contemporary French cultural sociology. His ideas concerning social practices and classes were highly illuminated by the German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) and Carl Marx (1818-1883) (Navarro, 2006, p.14). Weber raised fundamental questions about social behavior and its drive focusing on whether members behave in response to "external" factors including "culture" along with "social structures" or whether their actions totally have an internal basis (Navarro, 2006, p.14). Both thinkers' approach to social classes is clustered within their social relational field, which is dispersed from Marx's theory (Kurtişoğlu, 2013, p.76). Marx's approach to reality condensates in one field which is mainly economic while Bourdieu's theory is multifaceted (Thompson, 1991). To be more specific, Bourdieu elaborated a sociological conception of cultural capital, which converges with Marx's idea of capital as Bourdieu extends the scope of Marxist capital and embraces the symbolic dimension of capital that the latter overlooked. Bourdieu deviates from Marx's approach in his interpretation of classes. According to Marx, classes exist because of differences in possessions, which splits the social world into the binary opposition of having and not having. In Bourdieu's social world, individuals are divided into classes as "a set of agents" who have a natural affinity in terms of the amount of capital, opportunities, and tendencies they share (Thompson, 1991, pp. 29-30).

Although Bourdieu's fields of focus are primarily cultural and anthropological, their impact extends to other scopes including "art, philosophy. . . [and] language" (Grenfell, 2008, p.1). However, the challenge of reading a novel from Bourdieu's eyes mainly stems from the limitedness of literary application of his theory in literature, especially in the English-speaking academic field, and this can be attributed to several factors. Navarro states that Bourdieu's ideas and concepts introduced him to the English-speaking culture as a specialized sociologist rather than a literary theorist. The complexity of his ideas also intensifies the shortage of his theory in English society as they include aspects that are not common in English (Navarro, 2006, p. 13). An article entitled "Pierre Bourdieu and the Sociology of culture: an Introduction" also draws the attention to the "fragmentary" immersion of Bourdieusian theory in the Anglophone field as his theory incorporates a wide range of fields, which usually raises the risk of "misreading" his ideas (Garnham & William, 1980, p.209). With that said, this paper offers an attempt to encompass two central concepts of Bourdieu's sociological theory, namely habitus and field, from a literary eye to offer a new perspective to understand the social

practices of Changez and how he struggles within his social world in order to retain power within the American society. Understanding Bourdieu's habitus facilitates understanding behavior and knowledge within social surroundings through which it is produced and reproduced (Costa & Murphy, 2015, p. 6).

II. METHODOLOGY

Habitus is one of Bourdieu's key milestones in his practice theory, yet the term was not originally invented by him. The term traces its origins back to Aristotle (Wolf, 2012). The core element for constructing the *habitus*, according to Aristotle, relies on both "experience" and "memorization", it is constructed through "physical processes" of multiple different actions (Wolf, 2012, p. 12). Richard Jenkins in his book *Pierre Bourdieu* (1992) also referred to the original meaning of the term in Latin is referred to as "a habitual or typical condition, state or appearance, particularly of the body. Bourdieu relied on some aspects of the original meaning of the term and its Aristotelian use in regard to the interconnection between the habitus and the physical aspect of it to develop the concept to serve his theory (Jenkins, 1992, p. 45). From Bourdieu's point of view, habitus settles 'inside the head' of the individuals, so it is somehow related to the body, and it can be manifested through physical practice, like how one talks or behaves (Jenkins, 1992, p. 46). Crucial to the discussion is understanding the definition of the term from Bourdieu's lens. In his book *Outline of a Theory Practice* (1977), Bourdieu describes the habitus in one of the most quoted lines:

Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predispositions to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can objectively "regulated" and "regular" without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a continuous aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operating necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72)

Closely looking, the definition pinpoints some characteristics of the term that one needs to pause at. To start with, the word given to describe the habitus, "dispositions", does not merely indicate 'attitudes' because these dispositions also include other emotional and mental bases such as emotions and beliefs (Jenkins, 1992, p. 47). These dispositions are also "durable", which mirrors the early stages of their acquisition in an individual's life on one hand, and their naturalized as well as observable in physical "hexis" nature on the other (Jenkins, 1992, p. 49). Dispositions are also remarkable for being "transposable". The point Bourdieu brings forward here is that dispositions are generated in specific social fields, yet they have the ability to adjust themselves to fit in other fields that they were not necessarily originated in (Jenkins, 1992, p. 48). Bourdieu also depicts the habitus as "principles of the generations and structuring of practices" to stress the habitus' ability to produce 'practice'. These practices are "structuring" in that they can regenerate social structures through the individual's habitus.

Bourdieu's understanding of individuals' practices transcends their words as well as their actions and puts much weight on the social space of their communication, or what he refers to as the field as Patricia Thomson refers to in her chapter "Field". Bourdieu continually resorts to the analogy of a football field to elucidate his field theory. To illustrate, playing football requires a field that is divided into specific parts where players have precise "positions" and roles. Players' actions and their movements are determined by their field positions. Equipped with their skills and talents, players must abide by the rules of the game in order to win. Moreover, one should not ignore the impact of the environmental status of the field itself, such as the wetness or dryness of the weather, which has a full force on the performance of the players and eventually the result of the game. Accordingly, the idea of the football game having players seeking power through the ball is closely related to a social field having individuals seeking power each in their position. From a Bourdieusian scope, the social field similarly comprises a set of social "agents" that have specific "positions" and roles. Thus, agents' behavior is determined by their position which regulates the way through which they socialize with other agents (Thomson, 2008, p. 67-69). Therefore, while football players within their positions seek control over the ball, agents in the social world also seek control over power. In Bourdieu's theory, a field is a social space in which individuals battle over power. The social world has multiple various fields. Each field has its own construction and rules (Jenkin, 1992, p.52). To use Bourdieu's words as he defines a field as:

a structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and others who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which the various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field. All the individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies. (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 40-41)

In his definition, Bourdieu argues that a field is a 'structured' arena engaged by different agents (Jenkin, p. 53). These agents constantly struggle for dominance over their positions within a field and across other fields. In short, a field is a metaphoric football 'field of forces' among these positions. These positions are circumscribed by the "distribution" of various forms of resources or 'capital' (Thompson, 1991, p. 14). The first type is the 'economic capital' which includes "material wealth" like cash, stocks, houses, cars, and other possessions (Thompson, 1991, p.14). The second type is 'cultural capital' which encompasses formal "qualifications", "skills", and "knowledge" that can mold its holder into a cultural status (Thompson, 1991, p.14). The third type is called 'social capital', which refers to a person's

highly beneficial relations with powerful people (Jenkin, p. 53) The last form of capital is ‘symbolic culture’ which is represented through “accumulated prestige and honour” (Thompson, 1991, p. 14).

III. DISCUSSION

Mohsin Hamid’s novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, (2007) is a masterpiece that depicts how the aftermath of the terrorist attack on the Commercial Twin Tower on September 11, 2001 clashes with the American experience of its main character, Changez, and leads him to a state of identity split through which he narrates his journey in retrospect. Changez is a highly educated Pakistani analyst who introduces himself as “a lover of America” and narrates his four-year flourishing journey at Princeton University and a prestigious firm in New York as well as his love affair with an American lady until his American dream gets shattered due to the attacks of 9/11 (Hamid, 2007, p.1). Through his narrative confession to a shadowed listener in Lahore, he conveys his feelings of anxiety, fear, and denial of his dilemma.

The novel can be grouped under the umbrella of post-9/11 fiction; nevertheless, one should be aware of the cultural, and racial contexts that govern the experience of its protagonist. “Possessed by whiteness: Interracial affiliations and racial melancholia in Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*” highlights the impact of the 9/11 incident on modulating the protagonist’s racial experience of “self -identification” as being the object of whiteness through his relation with Erica and the passport (Munos, 2012, p. 396). Another reading of the novel is present in “Ambivalent identities and liminal spaces: the reconfiguration of national and diasporic identity in Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*” which depicts the clash between the transnational identity and diasporic identity of Changes showing that the novel transcends national borders in its narration (Shirazi, 2017, p.1).

Significant to the novel’s subject is the form of its narrative. The novel is structured in a dramatic monologue to depict the impact of the terrorist attack on the Commercial Twin Tower on the experience of a non-American. The first-person narrative technique serves Hamid’s purpose of portraying the agonizing experience of Changez (Žindžiuvienė, 2014, p. 148). Changez is making a confession of his feelings to an American listener who does not utter a single word in the whole novel, which raises the question of his actual existence around Changez whose narration is unreliable being the first person. According to Mariejanne Van Dijk, the significance of tongue-tying the American’s point of view towards Changez’s experience is to highlight the perspective of non-Americans especially Muslims on the aftermath of 9/11, which is seldom surfaced (qtd in Žindžiuvienė, 2014, p. 152).

This study explains Changez’ social behaviors and relations before and after the 9/11 attacks can be comprehended through understanding his habitus and how Changez struggles throughout various fields in the novel to attain dominance. The assumption that this paper is seeking to validate is that there is a common ground between the novel and Bourdieu’s theory of practice in some key concepts and that understanding the habitus and the doxa of Changez’ social fields can help understand his practices, dispositions, and most importantly the reasons behind him leaving America.

IV. CULTIVATING THE HABITUS OF CHANGEZ

To understand Changez’ habitus through Bourdieu’s lens, one needs to scrutinize two pivotal spots; the first of which is to examine the impact of Changez’ early childhood experiences on his current tastes and dispositions. This area involves two levels: the literal one that addresses Changez’ early life in Lahore and the metaphorical one that highlights his early days of innocence and childhood in the States before the 9/11 attacks. This analysis shows how the protagonist’s habitus is inculcated and acquired from very early experiences and how it becomes durable through his characterization. It also encompasses his habitus as both generative and transposable. The other area of interest delves into both the hexis and the mental set of dispositions that constitute Changez’ habitus. It shows how his attitudes, tendencies, and tastes are also structuring that they, without any deliberation, shape his practices and actions in various fields. In doing so, a reading of Changez’ habitus from Bourdieu shows how the protagonist’s life is a chain of perceiving and reacting throughout the novel.

To start with the acquisition of the protagonist’s habitus, one needs to trace several references to Changez’s early days to grasp the way he acts and behaves. In his interview at Underwood Samson and Company, Changez considers the interview part about his origin to be “the most important” part of the whole interview at which he starts to lose his “temper” (Hamid, 2007, p. 9). This scene pinpoints the importance of one’s early life in shaping their personality. The talk about his family introduces the reader to Changez’ initial perception of the world. To dig the argument further, he stresses three forms of capital to justify why he studies on a scholarship; this appears when he hints at the cultural capital that he is equipped with from Lahore by referring to his great grandfather who has been a lawyer, and his “grandfather and father [who] both attended university in England (Hamid, 2007, p. 10). Then, he jumps to highlight the economic capital that his family has by hinting at the “acre of land” in one of the costliest areas in Lahore and the servants they could afford (Hamid, 2007, p. 11). He even hints at the social capital that his family enjoys by referring to their relations with “the city’s elites” through various social events (Hamid, 2007, p. 11). Through this conversation, Changez introduces himself to Jim, the American Society through Jim, to the stranger and the reader, hoping to regain a sense of power and authority that he has enjoyed in Lahore. These dispositions are inculcated from childhood and his

early days in Lahore before he moves to the States, and they are of great significance to him that he even narrates them to the passive stranger in the first chapter of the novel. In fact, these attitudes and dispositions will accompany him as a weapon to retain power within American society. This mirrors what Bourdieu means by “the generation and structuring of practices” in his definition of habitus as the interview, especially with Jim’s embarrassing question about the scholarship, generates an appropriate answer from Changez that helps Changez impress Jim and gets the job. The impression the reader gets from this scene shows how Changez sees himself in his early life as coming from a prominent family that he himself compares to “the Old European aristocracy” (Hamid, 2007, p. 12). Accordingly, the impact of the way he has been raised in Lahore as being one of the elites can elucidate the way he reacts in the States. It helps him both get rid of the embarrassment he gets from Jim and get the job and eventually fulfill his American dream. It is worth mentioning that Jim, the interviewer, sets an example of how habitus is collective and shared among people of the same class. Bourdieu’s “collectively orchestrated” habitus is articulated in the way Jim shares the same experience with Changez. He understands Changez’ “hunger” and “where [he is] coming from (Hamid, 2007, p. 10). That Jim has been obliged to work hard so as to maintain a prestigious social façade in his early days may have helped him read the profile of Changez in this interview and indirectly affected his decision in hiring him.

Metaphorically speaking, one can see Changez as a child who grows up through his journey to America, and his four-and-half-year journey has also shaped his current dispositions and attitudes in his narration. One example of the impact of his journey is when he first introduces himself to the stranger. The first piece of information he offers is about New York where he has lived and Princeton University where he has studied, that he even does not mention his name until page seven, which reflects upon the influence he grasped from his stay in America even on his narration. Jim understands Changez’ actions as he sees Changez as a version of himself so he keeps on supporting and encouraging him because he sees his early days in him.

Understanding the impact of Changez’ early days on his current dispositions leads the reader to question the representation of the protagonist’s habitus throughout the novel. Bourdieu describes habitus as “structuring”, that it regenerates through the individual’s body and mind, which can be seen on both the physical and the abstract level (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). All the structured dispositions Changez has acquired from his childhood experiences, especially those of superiority and power, formulate the characterization of the hexis and the abstract of the character. He was a soccer player (Hamid, 2007, p. 4). Equipped with the feel of power that is inculcated since his childhood, the analyst training program exemplifies how Changez’ habitus is translated into action. Changez is highly admired for his “Anglicized accent” which is “associated with wealth and power” (Hamid, 2007, p. 47). He takes advantage of the British accent he speaks with to retain a position of power and a sense of superiority and accordingly self-satisfaction. This accent is his form of cultural capital that he uses as a weapon to retain power in that incident. Additionally, Changez’ habitus is represented in his elegant, sophisticated style, which helps him acquire social power among his colleagues. This can be seen in his apparent “politeness and sense of formality” which serve him as a form of capital that makes him feel less foreign and admired by his colleagues (Hamid, 2007, p. 46).

Changez’ habitus is not only represented through his accent and mannerism, but it also appears in his social ‘taste’, attitude, and choices. On his first visit to Erica’s house, Changez “spent the afternoon deciding what to wear” (Hamid, 2007, p. 55). He could not decide easily on what to wear, unlike Erica who, with her Mickey Mouse t-shirt, apparently does not appear to be concerned with that matter. Eventually, his taste goes for a “white kurta” and “a pair of jeans”, which helps him create a sense of both Pakistani belonging and a social American identity (Hamid, 2007, p. 55). His selection is an attempt to be accepted by Erica’s family by assimilating to the American family with the casual look he chooses with the jeans. He also plays on the “ethnic” card by wearing a kurta in an attempt to be appreciated by her family. The same visit can also show how habitus is reflected through attitude. When Changez notices that Erica conceals some bitter feelings in her eyes, he does not ask her to talk about it; he justifies that “such things are revealed by a person when and to whom they choose” (Hamid, 2007, p. 59). He does not push her into talking and he does not ask her as he believes that one has the right to talk about what he wants when he decides to. This attitude of not asking private questions and sticking to what the person reveals justifies both what he chooses to present from his culture as diversity, and what he feels when Erica’s father asks him about fundamentalism in Pakistan (Hamid, 2007, p. 63). From page one, Changez reveals what he wants about his origin, especially what he believes to be shining and socially attractive and gets shaken as well as ashamed whenever someone asks him about aspects that he himself neglects. He is, for example, proud to be raised among the elites and acts elegantly; however, Erica’s father sees “fundamentalism” in him being one of the elites that “the elite has raped the place well and good” the thing which makes him feel “griddle” and stressed (Hamid, 2007, p. 63).

Changez sense of habitus in its physical and abstract representation guides his social interactions and practices throughout several incidents in the novel. The dispositions he is equipped with since his early days in Lahore offer him a solid guideline to interact and socialize in American society. Those dispositions are collectively shared with people among Changez’ social class, which justifies James’ high level of understanding and embracement of Changez.

V. CHANGEZ’ STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL FIELD

Bourdieu’s theory of field is applied to the characterization of Changez, who sees himself throughout the novel in relation to places. The focus in this respect will be on two areas; the first of which depicts several examples of how he

struggles for social power within different fields, and the second proves Bourdieu's theory of how these acquired social positions can be variable depending on the "power that defines [the individual's] position in the field" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 41). It is not a coincidence that Changez can be seen as the metaphorical embodiment of Bourdieu's footballer because he is also the literal footballer in his own terms as he refers to football and imagines himself to be a footballer in one incident:

There was a mental state I used to attain when I was playing soccer: myself would disappear, and I would be free, free of doubts and limits, free to focus on nothing but the game. . . . Possibly, ancient warriors did something similar before they went into battle, ritualistically accepting their impending death so they could function unencumbered by fear. (Hamid, 2007, p. 14)

Changez, without the least deliberation, makes a reference to Bourdieu's theory of the game especially when he refers to how an individual must "focus on nothing but the game" as if it is his sole way of surviving. Similarly, Bourdieu sees the individual in a constant football match through which the individual has to keep struggling in order to socially survive.

Changez sees himself in relation to places. The position he acquires within a certain environment determines the power he enjoys, and accordingly his metaphorical success and existence. This can be depicted in four fields: Princeton University, Underwood Samson, Erica, and the macro-American society. Princeton University is a highly competitive academic field that requires great effort from a person to enroll as it has its own rules. The pressure must be double for an international agent like Changez to join this field. Yet, Changez is one of two Pakistanis in his class without a single B (Hamid, 2007, p. 4). With that said, Changez succeeds in retaining academic power which supplies him with a cultural form of capital. Equipped with the needed cultural capital, Changez becomes one of the few "identified" international students in the Princeton field (Hamid, 2007, p.37) and manages to fulfill part of his American Dream at Princeton. Moving to Underwood Samson, Changez continues to see himself in relation to the power he retains through his position in his work field that he identifies himself as "an underwood Samson trainee" (Hamid, 2007, p. 38) because he succeeds to grasp a sense of power that he makes him feel "empowered", especially during the analyst training program (Hamid, 2007, p. 42). It is at that precise moment that he feels his American Dream has been fulfilled that he describes himself as "a New Yorker" (Hamid, 2007, p. 37) as if he links his powerful position in Underwood Samson to his state in New York that he defines himself by New York, one of his competitive fields. Changez' struggle to retain power in his work field is also manifested in his attachment to his impressive offices" which makes him feel "proud" of himself, which emphasizes how fields influence Changez' practices and feelings (Hamid, 2007, p. 38). The most important social field Changez finds himself struggling in is the field of Erica on its literal and metaphorical level. At one level, Erica symbolizes home for Changez (Hamid, 2007, p. 105); this is apparent through the confidence he feels when he is by her company. Erica gives him power because she enables him to see the beauty of his homeland through her eye (Hamid, 2007, p. 104-105). As for Erica in the literal sense, she represents Changez' form of capital that authorizes him into the American macro society and leads him a step forward toward his American Dream. To push the argument a bit further, Changez' relationship with Erica nurtures his sense of the economic capital that he missed during his childhood. "This role pleased" him that he feels assured, "that this was how [his] life was meant to be" (Hamid, 2007, p. 97). That is to say, his attempts through Erica to join the macro-American field as a member of the bourgeoisie represent his efforts to make up for the power of the economic capital his family has enjoyed in Lahore; in pursuing Erica lies a desire to grasp more social power.

Among all the microcosmic fields that Changez enters through his experience in America surfaces the macro space which metaphorically represents the macro field in which Changez' struggle for dominance becomes explicit. The structure of the novel that both mingles current and past events through retrospective narration and surfaces a rigid fluctuation of identities for Changes, eventually transcending national identities and time, paves the way for Changez to rise above national spaces throughout the novel (Shirazi, 2017, p. 2). In other words, all the spatial spots in the novel metaphorically become one societal field. Thus, the macro field of Changez is metaphorically visible in his diasporic experience. Understanding Changez' transformation before and after 9/11 requires a Bourdieusian analysis of the scene. In this respect, the fundamental rhetorical question that Changez repeats to his interlocutor and never directly answers is "what exactly [he] did to stop America?" (Hamid, 2007, pp. 191, 201). To start with, one may analyze the ambiguity of this question on two bases; first, it might ponder what Changez has done after 9/11 to stop thinking about America or it might possibly question his actions and dispositions that oblige him to leave the field of America. The first reading dwindles because the fact that Changez is still narrating his journey to America and his emotional attachment to Erica proves that subconsciously he has not surmounted his American experience. The invalidity of the first suggested analysis leads to the other more likely interpretation of the question that ponders on the reasons for which Changez' dominance has failed after 9/11.

According to Bourdieu, when agents enter a field, they are in a constant conflict to either keep the power they have through maintaining whatever form of capital they already have or to change the allocation of the capital to their favor. In order for them to achieve their goal, they need to have faith in the rules of "the game" they are taking part in (Thompson, 1991, p. 14). Since these rules are consciously and unconsciously created by the doxa of the social field, the doxa represents a form of social power that determines an individual position in the field (Deer, 2008, pp. 121-122). In the novel, Changez remains dominant because of the cultural and symbolic capital he grasps which explains both his

supremacy and his flourishing American Dream before 9/11. On the other hand, understanding the way Changez perceives and reacts to the 9/11 attacks through his dispositions and actions determines his position within that macro field and explains his dilemma. The novel unriddles the reaction of non-Americans toward “the backlash” of the 9/11 attacks as it offers sociological insights “on the dilemma of Muslims trying to cope culturally in the American society after the terrorist attacks (Francia, 2017, p. 394).

One example is the failure of his trip to Valparaiso which can be justified because Changez could not abide by the rules of the game. This is apparent when he confesses that his “days of focusing on fundamentals were done” (Hamid, 2007, p. 175). At one point, he admits that he has been “unable to concentrate” on his job (Hamid, 2007, p. 162); which contradicts “professionalism”, one of the fundamental rules that Jim has referred to (Hamid, 2007, p. 41). Changez could only focus on fundamentals before 9/11; however, “the crumbling” of the Twin Towers affected the whole macro field including Changez (Hamid, 2007, p. 106). The fact that Changez could not manage to change his position marks the beginning of his leaving the field. “Power comes from *becoming* change,” Jim advises Changez (Hamid, 2007, p. 110); Changez’ ability to alter his position failed.

Changez’ perception of the 9/11 attacks also appears in his hexis through growing his beard. This is apparent in the opening lines of the novel when he warns the interlocutor: “Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America” (Hamid, 2007, p. 1). According to Francia, this statement carries feelings of “suspicion and mistrust” that Changez has been loaded within the aftermath of the terrorist attacks (Francia, 2017, p. 396). That the American listener has been “frightened” by Changez’ appearance sets an example of how Changez’ perception of the social world is affected by other agents’ attitudes towards him. The abortion of his dominant position becomes clearly visible when Changez “was suspected to verbal abuse by complete strangers at Underwood Samson. . . [and turned into] a subject of whispers and stares” because of his beard (Hamid, 2007, p. 148). To conclude, Changez can be seen in relation to the positions he occupies within the various fields he finds himself in, which makes him a perfect embodiment of Bourdieu’s footballer and offers a possible reading of him stopping America through his habitus and practices.

VI. CONCLUSION

The research has tried to establish a common ground between Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and some notable concepts from Bourdieu’s theory. It is possible, in conclusion, to metaphorically analyze the characterization of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*’s protagonist from a sociological perspective. The paper, thus, utilizes Bourdieu’s theory to develop a portrayal of Changez as the metaphorical embodiment of Bourdieu’s footballer who seems to be in the constant struggle within various fields to fulfill his American dream and retain social power. Analyzing Changez’ multiple forms of cultural capital along with his habitus manifests that Changez’ life is a chain of acting and perceiving and shows that his sense of habitus in its physical and abstract representation guides his social interactions and practices throughout several incidents in the novel. The dispositions he is equipped with since his early days in Lahore offer him a solid guideline to interact and socialize in American society. Through understanding the relationships between habitus, doxa, and social fields, the paper offers a sociological reading of the reasons for which Changez has stopped America and grown his beard. Changez remains dominant because of the cultural and symbolic capital he grasps which explains both his supremacy and his flourishing American Dream before 9/11. On the other hand, understanding the way Changez perceives and reacts to the 9/11 attacks through his dispositions and actions determines his position within that macro field and explains his dilemma.

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Kelle Taha is an assistant professor with 30 years of teaching experience. She has Bachelor's and Master's degrees in international education from American universities and her PhD in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Jordan. Her research interests are in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, education, and comparative language studies. She has been teaching English courses to undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Jordan for 21 years.

Hala T. Maani is a full-time lecturer with five years of teaching experience at the Language Center, University of Jordan, Amman. She obtained her bachelor's degree and her master's degree in English literature from the University of Jordan. Her research interests lie in literary theory, specifically in Jungian Analytical theory, and Shakespearean drama.

Khawla AL Dwakiat got her PhD in English literature and Criticism from the University of Jordan in 2021. Her dissertation is entitled "Perennialism and the "Divine Reality" in Aldous Huxley's Philosophy and Fiction. Currently, Khawla works as a Part - Time lecturer at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Jordan.

Khulood Abu-Tayeh is a full-time lecturer at the University of Jordan. With a solid experience of more than 20 years in the field of education, she currently teaches English as a second language at the Language Center to both bachelor and graduate students. She also teaches literature courses at the Department of English- Faculty of Foreign Languages. Her research interests include literary studies, literary theory, poetry, comparative studies and English as a second language. Khulood is a member of the Association of Professors of English and Translation at Arab Universities (APETAU).