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Varieties of Violence in Street Culture

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ABSTRACT

Violence is central to social life, especially for people at the margins of urban society. This article examines ethnographic data collected in Oslo among individuals who are involved in street life and crime. We propose the following typology for understanding violence in this population: respect-based violence, business violence, drunken violence, and family violence. We argue that from an emic perspective, these types are substantially different from one another and evoke varying moral evaluations. Violence that has to do with respect, business, or drinking tends to be tolerated, sometimes even celebrated, whereas family violence tends to be condemned. Violence is not a uniform phenomenon. It comes in different types and is experienced and made sense of differently across cultural contexts. These findings challenge a dominating trend in contemporary micro-sociology, spearheaded by Randall Collins, which focuses on identifying universal rules of violent situations at the expense of sensitivity to cultural variation.

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The fear of city streets has long haunted the public imagination. Countless books, movies, and television shows have promoted and capitalized on this fear with graphic depictions of run-down urban areas, violent youths, and corrupt police officers. Numerous video games revolve around the same fear, and entire music genres are dedicated to the portrayal of everyday brutality of life on the street. The overall impression that emerges is that street rhymes with violence.

The research literature largely confirms that violence is central to the street or to what we here refer to as "street culture," meaning the shared values, beliefs, symbols, customs, and activities of people living in marginalized urban contexts (Bourgois 2003). In the literature, street culture is commonly associated with minoritized youth, violent crime, and the celebration of "self-indulgent activities" (Wright and Decker 1996), "bad ass" meanness (Katz 1988), and "locura" identities (Vigil 2002). Arguably, research in this area has reductionist elements that correspond with stereotypical representations circulating in the wider public sphere (Flynn and Fleisher 2020; Young 2004). There is a tendency to overemphasize crime while underemphasizing other facets of this culture, such as its art and ingenuity. More nuance is called for, also in the study of violence in street culture.

The starting point of this paper is the view that street culture should not be understood as a homogeneous and unchanging whole inhabited by people who think and act the same. Rather, street culture is better understood as a "sensitizing concept" (Blumer 1986) that covers a broad range of phenomena pertaining to urban marginality (Jimerson and Oware 2006). Street culture may be said to exist on a "continuum" along which there are different degrees of "adherence and practice," ranging from people who peacefully hang out on the street to people who systematically use violence for profit (Ilan 2015:10). Similarly, we argue that violence should be understood as a range of phenomena that may be categorized into different types and exists in varying degrees (Rodgers 2016:85). Only a fraction of people involved in street culture perpetrate violence on a regular basis, and the

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probability, severity, and experience of this violence varies greatly across situations and locations (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). Misunderstanding these complexities may perpetuate public stereotypes, fuel racism, and justify police repression.

This paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork among individuals involved in street culture in Norway's capital, Oslo. Our aim is to catalog the main forms of violence in this cultural context. By this we do not mean the forms of violence that occur most often on the street but rather the forms that our research participants considered most central to their lives. In other words, what we propose is a culturally sensitive and culturally specific typology that captures how violence is experienced, categorized, and morally evaluated from a first-person perspective, which in our case is the perspective of people in Oslo street culture. Our findings challenge a dominating trend in micro-sociology (Collins 2008), which focuses on identifying universal rules of violent situations at the expense of sensitivity to cultural variation.

Violence and street culture

Research on violence is dominated by studies focusing on the prevalence of violence and on the psychological, social, and economic profile of violent actors (e.g. Agnew 2006; Akers 1998). For example, a number of studies show that individuals who drink heavily are at increased risk of both committing and being victims of violence (e.g. Rossow, Pernanen, and Rehm 2001). Studies like these have significantly improved our understanding of violent actors and the circumstances they come from. They have also proven invaluable for the development of interventions targeting the groups most likely to commit violent acts and the locations where violence is most likely to occur (Cooney 2009).

Micro-sociological researchers, notably phenomenologists and symbolic interactionists, have argued for more situated, qualitative approaches in the study of violence. Rather than focusing on the background conditions of violence (e.g. ethnicity and childhood experience), micro-sociologists mainly focus on the body-to-body interactions and the experiences that take place during confrontations. Katz (1988) has played a key role in setting up this micro-sociological agenda. He writes that while scholarly literature abounds with data on the psychological and socioeconomic forces that can drive individuals to commit crimes such as violence, it contains "only scattered evidence of what it means, feels, sounds, tastes, or looks like to commit a particular crime" (Katz 1988:1). The work of Katz and his collaborators (e.g. Jackson-Jacobs 2013; Lloyd 2017) represents a phenomenological line of enquiry that explores how violence is understood from within by those involved in the violence (Tutenges 2023:13–14) with a special focus on the embodied, emotional, and enticing dynamics of confrontations.

The work of Collins (2008) is also key to the micro-sociology of violence. His main finding is that both perpetrators and victims are full of tension and fear during violent confrontations. They are pumped up with adrenaline and cortisol and their hearts are racing, often to a level that disturbs their perception and fine motor coordination (Collins 2022:21). These visceral reactions are impediments to individuals' ability to initiate violent activity and carry it out with precision. For violence to occur, perpetrators must employ behavioral techniques to break through these impediments. This could mean attacking a weak victim, conducting clandestine attacks, striking opponents from a distance, or seeking support from a group that encourages violence. Collins's theoretical framework has been widely employed, for instance in studies on white supremacist violence (Windisch et al. 2018), bystander interventions (Liebst, Heinskou, and Ejbye-Ernst 2018), and sexual violence (Tutenges, Sandberg, and Pedersen 2020).

Collins-inspired micro-sociology has identified a set of laws and processes (e.g. the reaction of tension and fear) that allegedly pertain to all violent situations across cultures (Collins 2008:77), be it violence in poor or rich countries or in situations of war, riots, extremist attacks, sexual abuse, hooligan clashes, and gang conflict. However, these universalizing claims require further testing and refinement (Liebst, Lindegaard, and Bernasco 2021). There is a need to elaborate culturally sensitive typologies that correspond to the ways in which members of a particular culture make

sense of violence. For as argued by cultural scholars (e.g. Smith 2005), all acts of human violence are embedded in a dynamic cultural landscape of affect, meaning, and storytelling (see also Presser 2018). Indeed, the way people experience and behave during confrontations is shaped by the cultural meanings they attach to violence, which is why processes of meaning making should be described and accounted for in the study of violence. Typologies are powerful but often downplayed tools in social science research (Collier, LaPorte, and Seawright 2012) that, when used critically and carefully, can facilitate new understandings and more precise and systematic descriptions of empirical realities.

Several typologies of violence have been proposed by quantitative researchers, but these do not necessarily correspond with emic representations, nor were they meant to. Many of them are based on logical criteria and judicial concerns about the severity of violence. For example, a quantitative study of husband-to-wife violence distinguishes between verbal aggression, mild physical aggression, and severe physical aggression (Pan, Neidig, and O'Leary 1994). Another quantitative study of intimate partner violence distinguishes between physical and psychological abuse, which may be further divided into deception behaviors, restrictive violence, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, and overt violence (Borjesson, Aarons, and Dunn 2003; see also Mennicke 2019).

In the ethnographic literature on street culture, several types of violence are evidenced, especially what may be termed respect-based violence (Ilan 2017). Key to this form of violence is the antagonistic struggle for respect – also known as "juice" in the U.S. context (Anderson 1999) – which is an important currency on the street. Those who have it rank high in local hierarchies and have access to various privileges. By contrast, losing respect can lead to social exclusion and may even be dangerous since the disrespected are considered easy prey for exploitation (Mullins 2006). Various forms of retaliatory violence have been identified in the street criminal underworld where it serves several purposes, such as exerting social control, repairing reputational damage, and restoring a sense of justice (Jacobs 2004). Ludic forms of violence are also central to street culture, ranging from harmless play fights to drunken brawls (Corrigan 1979). This violence may increase or decrease a person's share of respect, but it mainly serves as a form of entertainment (Wästerfors 2016). This is contrasted with more instrumental forms of violence, which are undertaken to acquire material gain, for instance by robbing individuals who deal drugs (Jacobs 2000).

In a study of Dutch youth, Weenink (2015) proposes that street violence comes in two basic ideal types. The first type is termed "contesting dominance," which is a form of aggression aimed at establishing a dominating self (see also Athens 2005). The second type is termed "performing badness" and is a form of one-sided brutality undertaken to humiliate victims and demonstrate meanness (see also Katz 1988:80–113). This two-pronged typology presents violence as a form of impression management (Goffman 1990), through which individuals seek to save face and establish a preferred self-identity.

In this paper we propose a different typology consisting of respect-based violence, business violence, drunken violence, and family violence. These types were not selected based on rational criteria or a judicial concern with the severity of violence, nor were they selected based on an interactionist focus on the kind of self-image that violence projects. Rather, our typology is based on a concern with the way people involved in street culture experience and make sense of the violence that exists in their lifeworld.

Methods

This study is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted by the first author between 2017 and 2018 in Oslo. The main site of fieldwork was Norway's largest street drug market, which is situated in and around Vaterland park. It was operated by an estimated 70–80 individuals, but typically only five to ten at a time. Most of them were young men with immigrant backgrounds from Somalia and also, to a lesser extent, countries in the Middle East. They mainly dealt with cannabis in small quantities, but some were also involved in other crimes such as smuggling, theft, and

selling hard drugs. The first author was allowed to make observations among individuals working at the drug market, although a few preferred to be left out of the study – a preference that was respected.

In addition to observations, the first author conducted semi-structured interviews with 26 men and three women from 18 to 33 years old. Most of them were recruited at the drug market, whereas others were recruited through chain referral and negative chain referral sampling in other parts of Oslo (Hannerz and Tutenges 2022). This gave access to a broad spectrum of interviewees, ranging from individuals who merely hung out on the street to individuals who were part of a gang. The interviews lasted between one and two hours and followed an interview guide that included questions on demographics, career, religion, violence, the police, and violent jihadism.

The first author was in many ways an outsider to the field. Although coming from a troubled urban background, he is a white academic, with Danish and French parents, and one or two decades older than the research participants. However, the relatively long presence in the field and the development of friendship ties improved his empirical sensitivity and the participants' trust in him. In this way he became an outsider who was provided some measure of "inside knowledge." This status is arguably not "a liability that needs to be overcome," but provides "the ethnographer with a different perspective and different data than that potentially afforded by insider status" (Bucerius 2013:690). Most importantly for this study, the outsider status may have helped elucidate some of the meanings people give to their actions, which is often part of the hidden knowledge in a social environment (Tutenges 2013:235–236). On the downside, there is the possibility that some of the interpretations of violence lean toward over-rationalization, not fully capturing the here-and-now of decision-making.

The data were analyzed in three rounds. The first round consisted of reading through the interview transcripts and field notes to build a coding scheme. This scheme was tested on parts of the data and then modified. Finally, the scheme was used to analyze the complete data set. One of the main codes was violence, which we sub-divided into the following four types previously mentioned: respect-based violence, business violence, drunken violence, and family violence. We argue that these are the types that feature most centrally in the lives of our research participants. An earlier ethnographic study conducted from 2005 to 2006 by the second author at the same drug market (Sandberg and Pedersen 2011) was used to solidify the analysis. This earlier study also found evidence of the types of violence proposed in this article.

Our approach is ethnographically, culturally, and phenomenologically oriented (Tutenges 2023) in the sense that it is concerned with the way violence is experienced, categorized, and morally evaluated by people in a specific cultural context. Most of our data come from their accounts of violence rather than direct observation of actual violent activities. Accordingly, we make no definitive, universalizing, or positivist claims about the situational conditions that lead up to and cause violence. Instead, we make culturally specific claims about how violence occurs to people on the streets of Oslo with a focus on their system of classification.

Our study zeros in on a particular street drug market in Oslo, which is dominated by young men with immigrant backgrounds from Somalia and the Middle East. Our findings pertain to this specific cultural context; however, given the documented resemblances between street cultures across the world (Ilan 2015), our analysis draws on ethnographic studies from several countries, notably the US and UK. This is not to suggest that these contexts are identical. Importantly, Oslo street culture is situated in a Nordic welfare state where the unemployment rates are relatively low and marginalized groups have access to a great deal of social and economic support. However, although on a lower scale, ethnic minorities in the Nordics also experience racism, discrimination, poverty, and other social problems (Kalkan 2021; Lalander 2009), all of which is central to street cultures worldwide (Ilan 2015). Moreover, the massive exposure to US popular culture – and the process whereby "the street scripts the screen and the screen scripts the street" (Hayward and Young 2004:259) – have created cultural homologies (Kalkan 2022:428) that make it possible to transfer insights across these otherwise different contexts. We therefore suggest that our typology may be used critically and heuristically to understand violence in street cultural contexts beyond the Nordics.

The study was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data. Before being included in the study, the participants were given detailed information about the project. Potential risks were discussed with them, and various measures were taken to protect them (e.g. erasing audio recordings immediately after transcription, removing all identifying details from transcripts and field notes, and keeping all data on secure computers). All participants gave consent to participate and expressed support for the research project. (For more details on the fieldwork, see Tutenges 2019).

Violence in street culture

There are numerous types of violence in street culture. Our proposed typology is not exhaustive but covers the four types that feature most centrally in the lives of our research participants. In the following, we will describe each of these types in turn with a focus on what they consist of and how they are morally evaluated by our research participants.

Respect-based violence

The most common type of violence in street culture in Oslo, and elsewhere (Anderson 1999; Millie 2009), revolves around issues of respect. This violence involves actual or threatened physical force to command respect from other people, to diminish the respect other people possess, or to defend oneself against losing respect. Most people in our study had extensive experience with this type of violence, which they presented as a necessary retaliation against someone who had wronged them. That is, they typically presented their fight for respect as fair and reactive, triggered by the unfair behavior of someone else.

The field note below illustrates an incident of respect-based conflict, which took place in a bus. The 31-year-old Magan and the first author were sitting across from each other, chatting about girlfriends. Earlier in the day, Magan had been in a good mood, but not any longer. He seemed frustrated and suddenly flew into a rage:

> "What the fuck you looking at?" he roars at a guy sitting two meters away from us. The guy is white, approximately 30 years old, and has large earphones on. I am pretty sure that he was minding his own business, looking out of the window and listening to music. He fumbles with his earphones and mumbles an apology. Magan settles back into his seat, but still looking furious.

Questions such as "What are you looking at?" and "Why are you staring?" are common precursors to violence in street culture in Oslo and elsewhere (Ilan 2015:97). These questions call somebody out for their disrespectful demeanor and invite them into an antagonistic confrontation. If both sides proceed with disrespectful behavior – such as persistent staring or "mad dogging" (Vigil 2002) – escalation is likely, especially if there is an audience expressing support of escalation (Collins 2008. In the context of street culture, staring often comes with threats of violence, and it may serve several purposes, including the projection of toughness (Sandberg and Pedersen 2011:125) and the intimidation of potential enemies to avoid future victimization (Collins 2008:275). Moreover, stare-downs and confrontations may serve to express and transform negative emotions. A diffuse sense of shame and anxiety, for example, may be momentarily replaced by anger against a specific person, who may or may not have acted disrespectfully (Butler 2008: 867; Gilligan 1996). It is possible that the bus incident was triggered by disrespectful staring from the passenger with the headphones. However, it is also possible that Magan construed the situation as disrespectful in order to vent his frustrations over something else (e.g. problems with his girlfriend) while bolstering his reputation as a tough guy.

Respect-based violence is mainly, but not only, practiced by men (Miller 2001). Several examples of respect-based violence came up in an interview with Gulsan, 24. She used to hang out with a group of men who sold drugs but had never dealt drugs herself, she said. However, she had been in many fights, mostly with people who had insulted her or one of her friends. This is how she described a fight that took place during a night out:

> This guy just looked at me and says,"whore." I was like, "whore!?" and go, "OK." He turns and right away I set off, jump kick him in the back so his head [snaps her fingers] smashed into a box and then straight to the ground. And you know what, that drunken friend of mine, she just [makes vomiting sound and laughs]. What the fuck! She just spewed on the guy!

As Gulsan and her friends walked away, a bouncer stopped them and accused a man in the group of the assault. Gulsan said that she was culprit, but the bouncer would not believe her because she was "too tiny." Once again Gulsan became angry. She explained that she was sick and tired of all the people disrespecting her and looking at her the wrong way. "It's like I have these buttons," she said. "People push the wrong button, and all hell breaks loose." Almost all of the conflicts she told about revolved around some sort of identity crisis. In the situation above, the insulting remark, "whore," was followed by other gendered insults, including the bouncer's dismissal of her fighting skills. The entire incident is typical of respect-based violence: A perceived threat against somebody's status or person triggers the violent reaction, which is supposed to restore the respect that was lost.

Respect-based violence is the most important type of violence in street culture. It is closely connected to street masculinity (Mullins 2006), which is a form of identity that is performed mostly by men but also other genders (Grundetjern 2015). The sociological literature on street culture abounds with descriptions of this type of violence. From the classical studies (Anderson 1999) to more contemporary ones (Kalkan 2021), respect-based violence is widely portrayed as a way to build identity, settle disputes, contest dominance, achieve symbolic capital, defend masculinist ideals, and obtain a sense of self-worth in a context of marginalization (Bourgois 2003; Lalander 2009; Millie 2009). Stewart and Simons (2010:574) write that, "at the heart of the street culture is an emphasis on respect, toughness, retribution, and ultimately, violence." This formulation is arguably overly dystopic, but there is no questioning that violence is a central aspect of life on the street across the world, including in Norway (Sandberg and Pedersen 2011). In street culture, violence used to uphold respect is widely accepted, expected, and indeed celebrated. It has great legitimacy in this cultural context.

Business violence

Business violence belongs to the realm of the underground economy and is used to secure money and other material resources. For example, it is relatively common among people involved in street-level drug dealing to engage in verbal or physical fights over customers or the theft of someone's stash of drugs. This kind of violence is generally represented as a justified response to a business crisis of some sort: valuable resources are at stake and, therefore, violence is called for (Berg and Loeber 2015; Brezina 2000).

A 26-year-old named Usma sold drugs in larger quantities than most of the other participants in this study. Rather than waiting for customers on street corners, she or an associate made deliveries to reliable customers upon request. Violence was rare in her branch of the trade, and it was something she disliked yet sometimes had to deal with. She gave an example of a customer who once put a price on her head because of a disagreement about a small amount of money. "You don't do that over pennies," she said, adding that in the end, he was "beat up real bad" and that he "deserved this." Usma also gave the example of a former associate who had his finger cut off because of debts:

> I don't like watching these things, but then again. He deserved it . . . The problem was that he owed half a million kroner [50,000 pounds] to this guy and hadn't answered his phone for a month. He was out partying away all the money, having a good time, saying "this shit is mine" and "fuck the guy I got the money from." This is asking for trouble.

Usma presented herself as a peaceful person, and she did not have a reputation for violence among her friends. She explained that violence was an unpleasant but integral part of the "drug business" because of all the money involved. Money can turn people into "devils," she said. To prevent "chaos," acts of violence were sometimes needed and justified, in her opinion.

This logic was common among the participants in this study. It was widely held that some measure of violence was justified when used against individuals who threatened one's business or broke professional principles, such as not paying back debts. Most agreed that, ideally, business-related violence should be bounded and proportional to the original damage done. For example, some said that torture or putting a price on someone's head could be justified but only in extreme cases, such as in response to murder attempts or thefts of very large sums of money from an associate. In Weenink's terms (Weenink 2015), the business violence in our data typically had a strong element of "contesting dominance," but in rare cases it evolved into a form of "performing badness" to secure market shares or dominance.

Several participants mentioned incidents of business-related violence that they considered unjustified. Cumar, 27, explained that many of the fights between people dealing drugs were "stupid" and based on minor money issues. "People will sometimes fight you over 50 kroner [5 pounds]," he said. "Or there is a customer who wants weed from you and others fight you because they think the customer is theirs." He said that these "everyday fights" sometimes turned into "big fights" and mentioned that he was recently "put into a coma" by a man who wanted to borrow a bit of money. "I told him, 'No, can't help you today' [. . .] then it turns into a fight. The last thing I remember is that I punched him on the nose and then I wake up with a doctor by my side."

Violence attracts police attention and drains organizational resources. As a result, many actors in illegal drug markets prefer to avoid or use a minimum of violence (Coomber and Maher 2006; Jacques and Wright 2008; Taylor 2007). However, having a reputation for violence – and occasionally setting a violent example – is commonly regarded as necessary for prosperity in the drug economy (Berg and Loeber 2015; Brezina 2000; Moeller and Sandberg 2017). In Usma's account, the customer had breached an important rule in the business of drug dealing, which is why he had to be punished. Similarly, while Cumar was deeply skeptical of the many violent conflicts on the street, he accepted the principle that violence could sometimes be used to settle conflicts. According to the participants in this study, violence used for business purposes was widely accepted. Attitudes toward business violence thus resembled attitudes regarding respect-based violence, with one important difference: violence for business was presented as typically impersonal whereas violence for respect was considered more personal.

Drunken violence

Drunken violence typically occurs amid alcohol consumption in festive settings, such as warm-up sessions in parks or nightlife venues. This type of violence tends to be clumsy in the sense that it involves impaired mental and physical coordination: slurred speech, imprecise movements, and irrational decision-making (Tutenges 2023:8–9). Sometimes participants in the conflict are so intoxicated that they proceed violently without knowing exactly what the conflict is about, how it began, and who the opponent is. This confusion may result in self-injury, violence against bystanders, and other accidents (Collins 2008). Some of the participants considered drunken violence wrong and unpleasant while others considered it acceptable and entertaining.

A 23-year-old named Hirsi recounted that he had taken part in many serious fights in his early youth, but that now he mainly engaged in what he called "drunken fights," which typically broke out during nights out and because of small disagreements or misunderstandings. He described a recent fight with a friend that started "out of the blue."

> He got stitches across [points to his cheek]. It was because of a plate [makes a throwing gesture and laughs]. Alcohol was part of this, you know. But now things are fine between us. It happened some days, no, three weeks ago. He knows that I didn't mean to. Well, I did mean to but also sort of didn't [. . .] He said something wrong to me. Can't remember what."

Hirsi did not consider this a serious incident because it caused no long-term damage to his relationship with his friend. They both liked unserious fights from time to time – both for the thrill of it and also for the chance to let out anger. As he put it, "It's always kind of cool with a bit of action."

Magan occasionally wound up in drunken brawls, although he preferred to avoid them. He mentioned that he was recently attacked by three men during a night out. He had no idea why it happened. He described another recent fight that he recalled more clearly, but without knowing exactly what it was about. "A friend of mine was in a fight with someone. I tried to stop it, but you know everyone was drunk. As I stepped in, a whole bunch of them jumped us. They were more people than us. And I got this glass, bam, in my head." Magan got nothing out of these drunken brawls, he said. He was tired of fighting with random strangers, and he was ashamed of the scars on his body.

Violence that revolves around respect or business is integral to street culture but is less common in other parts of society. The centrality of these two types of violence has to do with the tendency in street culture to view authorities with suspicion: the street ethos is to deal with problems yourself rather than call the police or other social services (Anderson 1999). By contrast, drunken violence is found in many parts of society, such as mainstream drinking venues. As in wider Norwegian society, the participants in our study considered drunken violence as particularly confusing, chaotic, and unpredictable. In the aftermath of such violence, they often found it difficult to recall exactly what had happened as well as why it had happened. Many, but not all, found this type of violence acceptable, even "fun," if it had a competitive element featuring opponents with violent abilities (Jackson-Jacobs 2013). This violence was viewed as unserious, which makes it different from the other types of violence presented in this paper.

Family violence

Another type of violence that marks street culture in Oslo is between family members. This may take many forms, ranging from disciplinary punishment to sexual abuse. Unlike the other forms of violence in our typology, family violence is taboo and rarely spoken about. It may occur on a regular basis over several years, including early childhood. Many people on the street have suffered such violence directly or witnessed family members suffering it. In particular, many had traumatic experiences with abusive fathers and male family members. Such exposure is associated with numerous problems in children and adults, including an increased risk of perpetrating violence outside of the family (Hotaling, Straus, and Lincoln 1989) and perpetuating aggressive masculinist ideals. Accordingly, although family violence mainly takes place in the home, it significantly shapes attitudes and behaviors on the street.

A common response to questions about family problems was encapsulated in the words of 23-year-old Yasir: "There are situations I don't like to talk about. It was a bit like hell, and I don't have a good relationship with my family." Yasir mainly had problems with his father and was forced to move away from home at a very early age. He estimated that the abuse he had suffered at home was a major cause of his current psychological problems. Another young man Zahi had a good relationship with most of his family, but not with his uncle who acted violently when he gave Quran classes in his childhood:

> He told me, "read the Quran," and I read and memorized. Have to remember, right. He came back and said, "now read without the book." And I made this tiny mistake and [slams together his hands]. Boom. Punches me. I was so small, tried to fight back, but boom. I went into a coma.

As mentioned, family violence mainly takes place within the confines of private homes, away from public scrutiny. However, it sometimes spills out into the streets, as illustrated in this field note passage:

> Assis sniffs cocaine that he has lined up on his cell phone. Juma asks him: "Where have you been lately?" "Rehab," Assis says in a dry tone of voice. Without further explanation, he tells a story about a brother who beats up his sister. "A real psycho," he says. "Who would go beat up his own sister like that?" The other day, Assis had tried to help, but he passed out from an overdose just as he was about to confront the brother.

Family violence often serves the purpose of punishing, disciplining, and repressing the physically weakest family members. When this violence was mentioned, it was generally in a grave tone of voice. It was framed as mean and illegitimate. The main reason for this may be that family

violence runs counter to the gendered code of the street, such as the notion that you are supposed to fight someone "your own size." The opposition to family violence was not complete, however. For example, some considered it acceptable for parents to spank their boys occasionally because this would prevent the boys from becoming too unruly (Kalkan 2021). Overall, however, family violence was widely condemned, and it is a key reason for some youths to leave their homes in the evening to hang out on local street corners. For some, abuse and corporal punishment becomes normalized and accepted as an unavoidable part of life. Gradually, a "street habitus" is formed, which makes violent responses more likely during conflicts (Sandberg and Pedersen 2011).

Discussion

Violence is not a singular phenomenon. It comes in multiple forms and affects people in myriad ways. There are fundamental differences, for example, between a confrontation over a perceived insult, a fight in defense of a street corner, a drunken brawl in a bar, a father beating his child, and a terrorist attack. This was made clear by the participants in this study. All of them were familiar with violence and distinguished between different forms of violence, which they evaluated based on diverse and to some extent mutually conflicting criteria such as purpose, legitimacy, and place of occurrence. In general, they accepted the use of bounded violence to avoid the loss of respect and defend business interests. Many also considered it acceptable to use bounded violence as a form of entertainment during nights out, as long as the adversaries were willing and competent. By contrast, they generally did not accept the use of unbounded violence against individuals considered innocent or weak, such as children.

These findings challenge a dominant trend in the micro-sociology of violence, which has sought to unravel the situational conditions that shape violent behavior across cultural contexts. Collins (2008) has spearheaded this trend with his examination of the pathways that actors take to circumvent the "confrontational tension/fear" experienced during confrontations. This search for universal situational rules has significantly deepened our understanding of violence but at the expense of sensitivity to the phenomenological differences between types of violence (Jackson-Jacobs 2013:28). It has also neglected to take into account the motivations (Liebst, Lindegaard, and Bernasco 2021) and culturally specific meaning-making that drive all conflicts (Smith 2005).

Based on ethnographic research, our study draws on a combination of phenomenologically oriented micro-sociology (Katz 1988), cultural sociology (Smith 2005), and cultural criminology (Ilan 2019) to advance a four-pronged typology that highlights how violence is experienced and made sense of by people involved in street culture in Oslo. Unlike most existing typologies of violence, ours is not based on logical criteria, judicial concerns, or the symbolic interactionist interest in the kind of selves that violence projects. Rather, our typology focuses on how violence is experienced and understood in cultural context from the perspective of the people living it (Katz 2002). For example, while evaluations of business violence often follow an almost bureaucratic logic that emphasizes "narrow, instrumentally rational actions" (Smith 2005:23), respect-based violence tends to be expressed in more high-strung terms where good stands against evil, action is portrayed as unavoidable, and the hero triumphs over adversity (Smith 2005:27).

Scholars of street culture will not be surprised that *respect-based violence* forms part of our typology. This type is widely documented in the sociological and anthropological literature on urban marginality (e.g. Anderson 1999; Bourgeois 2003; Kalkan 2021). Indeed, it appears to be the most common type of violence in street cultures worldwide (Ilan 2015). Another component in our typology is *business violence*, which is also widely documented, especially by scholars interested in the economic aspects of illegal drug markets. Scholars in this tradition include Reuter (2009), who argues that in the absence of formal authorities, illegal drug markets are governed by a "visible hand" that operates through threats and violence. Goldstein (1985) similarly describes the systemic violence of drug markets as intrinsic to the way business is done in this context.

Our typology also includes *drunken violence* and *family violence*, both of which go almost unmentioned in the research literature on street culture, perhaps because these two types are so pervasive in contemporary society and not unique to street culture per se. The literature tends to focus on exotic facets of the street, such as respect and business violence, rather than phenomena that are commonplace throughout society, such as drunken and family violence. This imbalance in the literature is problematic because it contributes to the othering of people involved in street culture. What our study suggests is that much of the violence taking place in street culture is strikingly similar to the violence taking place in other parts of society.

As mentioned, our data indicate that there is a certain acceptance on the street of violence that revolves around issues of respect, business, and drunken antics. Violence within families and households is far less accepted, in part because it is deemed unmanly and weak. This attitude toward violence in the private realm contrasts with the historical tendency in many societies to view domestic violence as a legitimate strategy for men to control "their" women and children (Johnson 1995). Patriarchal violence and "intimate terrorism" (Johnson 2006) within the home may no longer be as accepted as it once was, but it is still a widespread problem also for people involved in street culture.

Our data contain examples of types of violence that we have not covered in this article, including sexual violence (Tutenges, Sandberg, and Pedersen 2020) and extremist violence (Tutenges and Sandberg 2022). Studies from other contexts involve types of violence that we have not named here and which, undoubtedly, are surrounded by alternative processes of meaning making. Our typology is not complete, in other words. However, it forms a key step toward a typology of violence in Oslo street culture, which – we hope – can give nuance to our understanding of street culture more generally and the ways in which violence is experienced and imbued with meaning in this kind of cultural setting.

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Ethics

The project has been approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

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