Violence and the Code of the Street: A Study of Social Dynamics Among Street Children in Makeevka, East Ukraine

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Abstract
This article explores violence among street children in Makeevka, Ukraine. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data gathered during longitudinal field research, extra-, intra-, and inter-group violence is analyzed with an emphasis on the child’s situational interpretation and adoption of the code of the street through subsequent code/identity switching and subcultural reactions. The main findings suggest that street children subculture has developed a unique code based on the need to survive and on solidarity and reciprocity; violent acts emerging among them must be understood within this context. The influence of violence on the children’s lives and street careers is considered, and alternative explanations of violence are discussed.

Keywords
youth violence, child abuse, domestic violence

Introduction
Violence is one of the most important factors influencing street life, particularly when those living on the street are children. Violence is one of the most

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frequently cited reasons that children flee from their families (Aptekar, 1994; Tyler, 2006), and widespread violence on the street is among the most frequent events in a street subculture (Davies, 2008; Magazine, 2003; Naterer & Godina, 2011). However, street children are not mere victims; they are, in fact, active participants in violence. The propensity for violence among these children is heavily influenced by a history of caretaker abuse, substance abuse (Crawford, Whitbeck, & Hoyt, 2011), and by the “code of the street” (Anderson, 1999).

Evidence suggests that violent behavior is learned through early negative interactions in coercive families (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1990). These negative experiences subsequently influence interactions in other social settings and tend to steer violent adolescents toward aggressive situations (Caspi, Bem, & Elder, 1989). The process of perpetuation of violence has been explained by the concepts of **interactional** and **cumulative continuity**, within which an individual’s style (hostility, for instance) “evokes reciprocal, sustaining responses from others in ongoing social interaction, thereby reinstating the behavior pattern across the individual’s life course whenever the relevant interactive situation is replicated” (interactional continuity; Caspi et al., 1989, p. 375), while sustaining behavioral patterns through progressive accumulation of their consequences (cumulative continuity; Caspi et al., 1989, p. 377). Studies of homeless youths who speak in support of this explanation are numerous (Aptekar, 1994; Chitradub, 1998; Davies, 2008; Tyler, 2006).

However, to fully understand violence among street children, their micro-social context, particularly participation in a street subculture, must be considered. One of the basic characteristics of street children is collectivity, for it is nearly impossible to find a child living on the street by him or herself (Aptekar, 1988, 1994; Davies, 2008). For protection and material, social, psychological, and emotional support, street children form groups that can be described as subcultures with relatively stable and distinct social structures (Chitradub, 1998; Magazine, 2003). Through integration in a street subculture, children also acquire a series of new identities that ensure survival outside traditional frames of socialization (Beazley, 2003; Naterer & Godina, 2011). These identities are incorporated in an existing idiosyncratic psychosocial frame and do not repersonalize a child (as do change of name or identity). Nevertheless, they heavily influence behaviors and profoundly shape the children’s individual trajectories and street careers. Within this context, violence often results in the public perception of repulsion and disempowerment of youngsters but can, at the same time, attract them and can be understood as a form of capital and a source of control (Parkes, 2007).
Anderson’s (1999) *Code of the Street* analyzes violence in street subculture. One of Anderson’s core postulates is that the persistent threat of violence and status insecurity of youngsters result in the development of a belief that survival on the street depends on their adoption of aggressive behavior (Anderson, 1999). This belief is not dependent on an individual’s actual inclination to violence:

Most people identify themselves as “decent,” but in the interest of deterrence, especially when danger and uncertainty loom, it often becomes important for individuals “to know what time it is,” and to be perceived as more “street” than “decent” and to act accordingly; a premium is placed on being able to read public situations and then to “code switch” when appropriate. (Anderson, 2002, p. 1534)

When faced with a coercive situation, to avoid interpersonal transgression, one must show no weakness and become aggressive, for by adopting a “decent,” non-aggressive demeanor, one risks becoming a victim.

Street children in general are not entirely congruent with Anderson’s (1999) ghettoized gangs—they are seldom delinquent or aggressive per se and tend to blend into their microsocial environment (e.g., Aptekar, 1994; Davies, 2008). At the same time, there are particularities in broader social and historical contexts of both phenomena. Street children in the region of the former Soviet Union have a relatively long history and unstable, yet predictable periodical patterns of emergence (e.g., Bosewitz, 1988; Naterer & Godina, 2011), whereas the gangs presented by Anderson appear to be a relatively modern and stable phenomenon. Although direct comparison of ethnographic data is hindered by social, cultural, and historical differences between the United States and Ukraine, Anderson’s *code of the street* can be used as a starting point for the study of violence and the code of the street emerging among street children in Ukraine. Juncture of both concepts emerges from the fact that the *code of the street among street children in Makeevka*, although including violence, is based on cooperation and integration and is an essential element of their physical and social survival.

The violence occurring among street children in Makeevka, Ukraine has important functions within the social dynamic of their subculture. Violence occurs on three social levels—extra-group, inter-group, and intra-group—and acts of violence vary according to the child’s situation interpretation, subsequent code/identity switching, and subcultural reactions. One of the purposes of this study is to give a sense of the fragile nature of the social structure in post-socialist Ukraine that results in the development of a harsh environment for street children.
Method

The data presented here were collected in Makeevka between 2000 and 2012, with 16 months of direct, in-field participation. From the start, I was regarded by participating street children not as a researcher or official person but as someone coming to the street who was interested in their way of life and who regarded them as friends. Through time, this enabled the development of a close relationship with them, and they grew ever more eager to participate and to share their life stories with me. In return, I involved myself in solving their daily problems, such as participating in food and clothes acquisition and solving medical problems and legal issues. This relatively tight relationship influenced both data collection and analysis, which I tried to overcome by using a mixed method research design, application of data triangulation, and by refraining from excessive generalization of results.

The main theoretical and interpretative foundation of this study is Grounded theory, which starts with data collection. Once gathered, data are coded, codes are grouped according to similar content and key concepts, and categories are derived. These data were used along with previous findings (Naterer & Godina, 2011) to form the theory of violence among street children in Makeevka.

The three main methods used were as follows:

1. participant observation—observation of the day-to-day life of four groups of street children. Data were gathered in the form of field notes written as a diary, field report, or conversation record;
2. interview—a questionnaire with flexible, open-ended questions inquired about participants’ current personal situation, family background, group relationships, living conditions on the street, and their future aspirations; transcripts were coded (first stage through open-ended coding, second stage through axial/focused coding), and on the topic of violence, three major categories of violence together with relevant functions were identified; multi-stage, semi-standardized interviews were conducted on the topic of violence;
3. visual notes—photo and video equipment were used to create a series of video records of the children’s everyday lives; between 2005 and 2008, photo cameras were distributed among participants to analyze photos created by the street children themselves.

The following additional methods were used:

1. a questionnaire with pre-coded questions with the aim of gathering socio-graphic and quantitative data;
2. observation without participation—used with the aim of triangulation;
3. thematic drawings—children were given paper and pencils and were asked to draw thematic pictures (e.g., “Please draw the worst situation on the street”), to sample their pictorial perception of life on the street and subsequently, to interpret the content in interviews.

Data on sensitive and possibly comprising topics such as sexuality, substance abuse, and criminal activity were gathered mostly through individual interviews with assured privacy and anonymity of participants.

The data gathered were archived by making paper copies of diaries, field notes, interview reports and thematic drawings, digital copies of interview transcripts, audio recordings, and digitalized quantitative data in the form of Excel tables. Visual notes and other video material were not copied because of inappropriate equipment; original material was stored on videotapes and flash cards. Qualitative data were sampled and analyzed mainly using Grounded theory (partly managed with Atlas.Ti), and quantitative data were managed and analyzed with Microsoft Excel and SPSS. During the analysis, all the data were triangulated.

A non-random sample of 68 street children was chosen and researched (52 boys, 16 girls, average age 13.6 years). Participants were approached directly on the street. Initial contact was made with help from people living and working in the street children’s microsetting and after that snowball sampling was applied. Study participants lived in four groups at four different locations in the city: the center of Makeevka (Group 1); Ziljoni district (Group 2); Pushka district (Group 3); and Group 4 (living near city center). To protect their identities when presenting qualitative data, pseudonyms were used.

Data collection was performed at locations throughout the city, including market places and surrounding buildings, bus stations, the Marshrutka stations and shopping malls. All data collection and a substantial part of the interpretations were performed with the consent or involvement of the children in cross examination of data or triangulation.

Results

The results are derived from data gathered relevant to the use of the code of violence and other information that could add to the understanding of violence, such as family background, motivation to run away, and substance abuse. From this mixed method approach, qualitative data can partly be quantified and presented as percentages along with quantitative data. However, qualitative data elements that could not be quantified, including individual accounts, interviews, and diary fragments, but nevertheless add to the
understanding of violence, are presented as quotations with the aim of supplying examples, clarification, or illustrations.

**Participants’ Background**

Of the 68 participants, 43 had both parents alive, 18 only the mother, 1 only the father, and 6 had no living parents. Of 66 children reporting on the status of their families, 36 described their families as complete and 32 as incomplete, disintegrated, or as single parent families. Triangulated data point to a prevalence of the matrifocal configuration of the family as the major characteristic of their social background, in line with the findings of other authors (Aptekar, 1994).

Major motivational factors for running away from home include poor living conditions within the family, parental criminal activity, alcoholism, substance abuse (inhalants, pharmaceuticals, opiates), and domestic violence. Domestic violence included strong verbal and psychological aggression and mild to moderate forms of physical abuse (slapping and hand-beating), with perpetrators being predominantly fathers, stepfathers, and other male members of the family. Despite relatively insignificant physical injuries, these forms of violence have a great impact on children. Participants perceived them as harsh violations of their rights and reported great suffering and feelings of victimization. These findings identify their social background as high risk; several studies confirm that substance abuse, criminal activity, and violence are more likely to become part of a child’s behavior if they were experienced in their family relationships (Tyler, 2006).

**Survival on the Street**

The key to survival on the street is a membership in a group already living on the street \( n = 68 \). Their major source of income is begging, often combined with other forms of economic activity such as collecting scrap materials and performing odd jobs, such as guarding stands in the marketplace. Until the emergence of intravenous drug use, criminal activities were relatively rare and comprised mostly petty crimes such as pickpocketing. Once these drugs were introduced, however, more serious criminal activities, particularly muggings and shoplifting, became more frequent.

Most of the money is spent on alcohol, cigarettes, and inhalants, the most common combination of abused substances. Fifty-nine participants reported consuming these substances regularly, eight occasionally, and one never. More than 50% of the children engaged in relatively frequent intravenous consumption of the psychotropic substance *Baltushka*.\(^2\) Substance abuse, of
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baltushka in particular, has a strong impact on the occurrence of violence among these children and on their trajectories; by producing symbolic bonds and boosting cohesion, it results in a drop in the level of violent acts both within the group and between groups of street children, but at the same time, it raises the level of substance-related deaths (substance-related deaths over the course of the study \( n = 11 \), substance-related violent deaths over the course of the study \( n = 5 \)).

Most of the children \( (n = 62) \) report experiencing, on average, five or more violent events per day while living on the street:

Most of the time you are intimidated . . . people yell at you, push you around . . . you get slapped . . . particularly by these gambling machines owners, if you stand too close their customers while playing. (Informant 1, 12 years, 2006)

Violence and Life on the Street

Among participants, three distinctive categories of violence (see Figure 1) were observed:

- Violence from the general social environment, directed at a particular group of street children or an individual child (extra-group);
- Violence between two groups of street children (inter-group); and
- Violence from the group and directed inward (toward a group peer or peers, intra-group).

Extra-group violence is the most common form of violence experienced by street children in Makeevka. It includes psychic violence (intimidation), verbal violence (harsh language, shouting), and physical violence (slapping, beating). In their interviews and thematic drawings, the children described most instances of abuse as coming from local landlords, local gang members, drug addicts, car owners, and the police:
Drug addicts came and started harassing Wem [nickname]... after a heavy beating they stabbed him with a broken bottle... in the liver. We [peers] found him bleeding, half dead. (Informant 8, 15 years, 2008)

Cases of sexual violence within this context are rare, but when they do occur, they have a greater impact on street children than other forms of violence (question of interviewer included to preserve context):

One day, this djadka [elderly gentleman] approached me and my friend, as we were sitting on a sidewalk... He asked us what we were doing, if we were hungry... he was very friendly and invited us to his apartment, saying that his wife would cook something for us. We went with him... when we entered the vestibule of a building, he dropped his shopping bags and jumped on us. I managed to escape but he raped my friend... she is bit younger and smaller than me and couldn’t resist. It was devastating for her... and for me too.

Did you go to the police? (AN)

Hell no! Some girls that went to the police [after a similar situation] were locked up at the police station and abused by the policeman as well. (Informant 3, 13 years, 2002)

Participants perceive extra-group violence as a direct assault and report a high level of individual suffering. The involvement of non-street participants such as police officers in these acts prevents activation of the code of the street, and the children have no option but to remain “decent” and accept the outcome. Their coping strategies in confrontations are based on avoidance or escape. This form of violence has a strong negative impact on the street children, for they evidently suffer and are victimized. However, important social functions for their subculture are in the creation and maintenance of distinctiveness and consequently the consolidation of subcultural identity: “They [police] see us as sub-humans. Well, they look the same to us... that’s why we call them [police] musara [rus. garbage]” (Informant 8, 17 years, 2010).

However, their social and cultural capital, combined with their street identity, enables them to exploit the situation. Street children base their economy on begging and other charitable actions by the general public (Naterer & Godina, 2011), and the identity of the victim is one foundation of his or her success. Therefore, if violent encounters occur, the children strive to exploit them with loud yelling during the incident; obvious, exaggerated limping and moaning after a violent encounter are often part of the show for them to be perceived as victims. They often show off their wounds
to boost their begging effectiveness: “They [the general public] have to see you as poor and ill-fated. Otherwise they will not give you any money” (Informant 3, 13 years, 2002).

Inter-group violence originates in the distinct relationship of street subculture to their local social environment and other groups of street children. Street children in Makeevka are not nomads; they are predominantly localized and well integrated into social networks within a particular microregion of the city. Each group lives in a separate territory centered on the local marketplace. Most of their activities are defined by social relationships in the marketplace; they work, eat, and sleep there, and generally spend most of their time either in or near the marketplace. Most of their social network is based on good relationships in the marketplace, which are crucial for their survival on the street. Children regard this territory as their semi-private space. Elsewhere (Naterer & Godina, 2011), I have shown that street children do not engage in delinquent acts within their own territory. That does not mean that they cannot be delinquent; delinquent acts by individuals or the group are performed in public spaces, outside their private and semi-private space. However, the spaces that one group perceives as public are sometimes occupied by other groups of street children and fiercely defended. Such intrusions commonly result in verbal and mild to moderate physical violence between the two groups. Although rare, cases of severe violence occasionally occur and sometimes lead to serious injuries or even the death of a peer:

Natasha told me about E . . . a few years back, he went to the Krasny rinok [Red Marketplace] . . . Then they [group in the center] caught him. They each beat him up and demanded money. He didn’t have anything, so they beat him up some more, poured gasoline all over him and set him on fire. I was shocked! Not only because of his physical scars, but also because of the psychological scars he must have suffered. Eventually, I forced myself to approach E. To my surprise, he was more than happy to tell me all about it and even suggested that I photograph the scars. He was almost showing them off, as if they were medals from the war—look what I have, he bragged I survived and came back to tell the tale . . . the group peers almost ogled. (AN, diary fragment, 2000)

The impact of this form of violence is mostly limited to the direct physical suffering of the individual child. By occurring within a subcultural context, these acts offer a wide range of both conventional and street codes to be adopted by an individual. It is evident that children tend to adopt such codes because of the support that they expect from their peers (e.g., code Guliat’, see “Findings and Their Application” section).

Inter-group violence also acts as an instrument of self-regulation of the social system on the street. First, it limits the level of delinquency within the
city. It functions as a system of social control over street children by street children; it maintains an established social order and discourages or hinders different groups from engaging in delinquent acts: “I’ve been here all my life. All my friends are here . . . we are the guardians of our rinok [Marketplace]!” (Informant 4, 18 years, 2006). Second, it has an impact within the subcultural context. Groups engage in violent acts against other groups to reaffirm the symbolic boundary of their own semi-private (the marketplace, for instance) and private spaces (teplukha). It is not just about preservation/protection of their space; it manifests the group’s power and ability to control their own environment. The results of violence, particularly if an individual has an opportunity to display them (scars, loot, or trophies, for instance), enable the accumulation and demonstration of prestige, which can be directly linked to the acquisition of subcultural capital and promotion within the distinct social structure of the group. Third, these violent acts enable a child to experience the sense of belonging to a social group and his or her own power of control over the situation: “I need the group and the group needs me!” (Informant 4, 2006). Street children perceive this category of violence as part of the game—a set of rules pertaining to street life, and they make no complaint of any violation of their personal rights, victimization, or obvious suffering. Within this context, they function as active participants, although not always as direct perpetrators: “That’s life on the street—bite and get bitten!” (Informant 5, 15 years, 2010).

**Intra-group violence** originates within the group and is directed inward, toward group peers, usually from the top downward within the group’s social structure. Most of these acts are limited to verbal and mild to moderate physical violence, and scuffles and tussles are a part of day-to-day life within the group. However, severe physical and sexual violence occasionally appears as an extension of the common level of violence:

M. [peer] is a bit younger and weaker than the rest of the guys. They started picking on him, and since he [M.] rebelled and didn’t want to knuckle under, the violence only increased. After a while group peers, mainly D. [the group leader] and S., proposed that the others focus their kicks on the left side of M.’s torso. Even that didn’t convince M. to conform. The situation escalated on one occasion when, after a severe beating, guys dragged him into the teplukha and raped him in turns. (A.N. diary fragment, 2000)

This category of violence is strictly limited to the interior life of the group and its social structure. Children perceive this kind of violent acts as a part of social normality in life within the subculture. This context presents ultimate subcultural reality—it enforces the code of the street while rendering
alternatives, particularly individual interpretations of “decent,” almost impossible. Although having the ability to accumulate economic benefits (looted belongings) and social advantages (gaining alliance through collective attack), the main function of these acts remains the sanctioning and social positioning of individuals and the maintenance of the group’s social/hierarchical structure.

The Subculture and Violence

Street children in Makeevka are not homeless individually but organized in groups that can be characterized as subcultures. Although not in a classic sense, these subcultures nevertheless represent a collective response to individual problems, such as an abusive family or family disintegration; they function as a simulation of a family, exhibit subculturally produced distinctions, including specific identity, image, language, and behavior, and are formed around sets of social structures, relations, and norms, and with a developed, distinct inner-culture.

Acquisition of a street identity begins with socialization into a street group; however, it can be activated only when the child actually starts living on the street. Activation/accumulation of new social, cultural, and subcultural capital can only be performed in the context of the street, outside traditional frames of socialization, although these frames can never be fully bypassed or omitted. Street children regularly report experiencing an inner conflict about values of decency when facing awkward situations: “I know that beating other people or stealing is bad, but what can I do . . . this is the street” (Informant 7, 14 years, 2002).

The data show that there are two important sets of forces involved in the formation of these value conflicts—a centripetal force (me, acting as a member of the group), pulling a member toward the center of the group, and a centrifugal force (me, acting as an individual), pulling him or her away from the group. By entering a street group, street children abandon neither conventional identities nor norms and values. They merely add new elements to the already existing frame of their psychosocial structure. Using Anderson’s (2002) terminology, they do not regard themselves exclusively as “street” or “decent” but as both at the same time, which works fine in solving average problems in daily life on the street. However, in situations that are either exceptionally important, such as financial opportunity, or genuinely threatening, such as external attack, the subculture as a social system kicks into action and boosts cohesion and responsiveness by subordinating participants. The primary instrument for this intervention is the hierarchical social structure of the group.
The data also point to a hierarchical social structure of all participating groups of street children in Makeevka. The main function of this hierarchy is to ensure the survival of individuals in challenging situations by boosting the group’s collective responsiveness. Although different in appearance and function, the social structures of these groups follow the same general rule: The more challenging or dangerous the situation facing the group or a peer, the more hierarchical the formation must be to solve the problem. Among study participants, it is evident that groups living in challenging environments such as the city center develop a higher level of group hierarchy and use a greater level of violence in maintaining the structure. During challenging situations, the frequency of violent acts within all groups stays relatively the same, whereas the severity increases dramatically. In these situations, the group structure demands greater subordination of peers, which enables the leader to spearhead the (counter) attack or solve the problem collectively and the group as a whole to prevail: “When these things [attacks] happen, you don’t think with your own head . . . you usually just go and follow D. [group leader]. He is like our general, ha, ha” (Informant 7, 14 years, 2002).

Adoption of the code of the street, particularly the elements leading to participation in violent acts, has a profound impact on the trajectories and street careers of these children. During their street careers, most children \((n = 47)\) had already been detained at least once, and by 2012, six of them were imprisoned (on charges of either possession or active use of knives or tools that could be used as weapons), while five of them had died a violent death on the street.

**Discussion**

Anderson’s (1999, 2002) concept of the code of the street and the concomitant understanding of violence form an adequate explanation of the violence emerging among ghettoized youth. However, it is not fully applicable to an understanding of either the code of the street of street children or the violence emerging among them. Codes and violence are clearly different within these two contexts. Anderson’s (1999) code implies the assumption that low-status young men experience status insecurity, which hinders their social advancement and culminates in their belief “that their self-worth is dependent on the ability to command respect in public” (Brezina, Agnew, Cullen, & Wright, 2004, p. 305). This is one of the main reasons for their cultivation of a tough image and a violent attitude. Code of the street within the context of street children, however, is based not on status insecurity but on the direct need to survive outside traditional frames of socialization. This is the main element governing their attitudes, perceptions, norms and values, relationships, social
formations, and other aspects of their lives. At the core of this code are values of cooperation and solidarity (e.g., Aptekar, 1988, 1994; Davies, 2008), whereas values of respect or masculinity remain on the periphery. Violence must therefore be understood, not as an expression of an individual acting for oneself, but as an expression of individuals as participants in a street children subculture and, therefore, of the collective.

Findings and Their Application

Anderson’s code of the street provides a good explanation for the violence occurring within a group of street children, where it is one of the main instruments of identification, interaction, inner social mobility, and structural maintenance.

Extra-group violence, although occurring often, usually results in minor injuries. Both individual street children and the groups are highly dependent on good relationships with the general population; therefore, adopting the street code within this context literally means cooperating. In addition, outside their subcultural context, street children act as individuals and not as fully fledged participants in a subculture, for within this context, they are regarded as children and once again act like children.

Inter-group violence, although occurring in a public space, has a strong subcultural connotation. One of the core characteristics of street children not only in Makeevka but also around the world is the striking predominance of boys in cohabitation (Aptekar, 1994). Therefore, the parallel concept of fraternal interest groups as “coresident collection[s] of related males” can be used to explain some of the violence occurring:

Harsh, affectionless socialization is strongly linked to violence, with socialstructural variables, especially cross-cutting ties, rates of local endogamy and prominence of fraternal interest groups, determining whether the hostility generally occurs within or between communities. (Barfield, 2009 p. 484)

Such relatedness can be perceived among street children based on their subcultural participation, and as has been shown, subculture functions as a simulation of the family. Following Divale’s observation that “localized groups of related males are likely to get into fights with other such groups in nearby communities” (Ember & Ember, 2003, p. 130), we can understand inter-group violence as a form of feuding that is something inherent in the nature of the street group and not just as something that children, for whatever reason, do. According to Divale’s conception, group matrilocality would solve the problem by scattering related males and dispersal of fraternal interest
groups. However, this cannot be applied as a solution to street children, for they do not enter into mutual marital relationships. Nevertheless, there is already a self-evolved social code ensuring alliance among groups of street children in Makeevka in terms of functioning, the Guliat’ code (Naterer & Godina, 2011). The code is widely respected among street children and induces reciprocity and obligation in hostile relationships, while comprising an essential part of their symbolic economy. The main problem of general application with this code lies in its relative exclusivity, for it is shared by individuals who have a common history on the street, whereas others, mainly younger and more vulnerable children, are excluded.

**Study Implications**

The violence occurring among street children in Makeevka has an important social function and must be understood as an integral part of street life. The three categories of violence evident in Makeevka, extra-, intra-, and inter-group violence, perform crucial functions in a child’s survival on the street and have great impact on both the social and personal lives of these youngsters. Because their social life appears to be saturated with violence, future studies will have to focus on the question of how to eradicate violence on the street without destroying their social life. Although the direct results of this study cannot be generalized in a global perspective, they offer important insights into the mechanisms that constitute the social reality of street children. Understanding the complex nature of street life is particularly important for policy developers, law enforcement, and programs that strive to ease the suffering of street children and reintegrate them. These should recognize, first, that street children participate actively in their social environment as perpetrators in violent acts and not only as victims. Second, the origin of violence has to be understood in the context of their distinctively structured social life as an incidence of social control, as an instrument for accumulating various forms of capital, and as acts of social entities, and not only as the deeds of irrational or evil individuals, popping up randomly across the social milieu. Third, it must be acknowledged that violence among street children plays an important role in the broader social and cultural environment, where these children are needed for establishing a common sense of social normality. Looking at all the evidence presented in this study, we can conclude that there is no social safety net for these children, which only makes resocialization and reintegration harder. Social interventions should therefore be targeted at both the micro- and macrosocial levels, with a holistic understanding and approach.
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**Notes**

1. “Decent” in Anderson’s (2002) conception depicts the set of value orientations of conventional society, whereas “street” remains associated with “the troublesome aspects of the ghetto life” (p. 1533).
2. The word Baltushka is a subcultural expression for a substance composed of flu medication (containing pseudoephedrine), KMnO4, vinegar, and water that street children consume intravenously, from 4 to 10 ml at a time, at rates of 4 to 8 times a day. Baltushka itself does not produce any direct physical addiction observable from withdrawal symptoms when not injected but does result in high levels of social dependence. Effects on the consumer’s health are devastating (HIV/AIDS, symptoms of epilepsy, reduced mobility, speech obstruction, mental disturbance, and death).
3. Teplukha (rus.: tepla trasa) is a slang expression for an underground dwelling within the heating system occupied by street children. Street children regard it as their private space and focus many of their daily activities around it (Naterer & Godina, 2011).
4. There are also important individual personality traits involved in violent behavior, but to further explore the relation between individual and contextual factors would be beyond the scope of this article.

**References**


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