

The Grammar of Violence

Insights from Danish Ethnosyntax and the Wierzbicka-Pinker debate

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THE GRAMMAR OF VIOLENCE: INSIGHTS FROM DANISH ETHNOSYNTAX AND THE WIERZBICKA-PINKER DEBATE

This paper explores the Danish keyword *vold* ‘violence, abuse’ and its associated ethnosyntax. Calling into attention (i) the differences and similarities of *violence*-related concepts in ethnolinguistic communities, and (ii) the key role played by ethnosyntax in the elaboration of *violence*, *vold*, and similar concepts, the paper aims to open a new ethnolinguistic research agenda for the study of negative sociality constructs and the positive value system hidden in such concepts. The Danish ethnosyntax of *vold* ‘violence, abuse’ hidden in compound morphology is scrutinised. Focusing on the compounds *hustruvold* ‘wife vold’ and *politivold* ‘police vold’, the paper explores the hidden conceptual syntax embedded in such coinages. Exploring more recent constructs, such as *forældrevold* ‘parent vold’, it is argued that Danish ethnosyntax embodies a view of the world in which traditional authority figures are coded as aggressors: men, police, parents, whereas women, citizens and children are coded as victims.

KEY WORDS: ethnosyntax; *violence*; *vold*; sociality constructs; cultural scripts; Danish; English; NSM semantics

1. Introduction

This paper has a double aim. Firstly, I want to scrutinise “violence discourse” from a cross-linguistic perspective. Secondly, I want to use evidence from grammar to shed light on the cultural logics of *violence* and related concepts. I will begin by summarising some important cross-linguistic findings and introducing some central discussions in “violence studies”. This is followed by a case study on Danish discourse, with an in-depth study on the word

vold ‘violence, abuse’ and its grammatical elaborations. The NSM approach to “ethnosyntax” is used as a framework for analysis. (On the NSM approach, see Wierzbicka 2013; Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014; Goddard 2018).

The “ethnosyntax” concept was originally proposed by Anna Wierzbicka in her seminal paper “Ethno-syntax and the philosophy of grammar” (1979). Studies in ethnosyntax have since been developed further by several other researchers, including Enfield (2002a,b), Goddard (2002, 2010), Burridge (2002), Gladkova (2014), and Peeters (2015). The common conviction in ethnosyntax research has been spelled out by N. J. Enfield as follows:

Grammar is thick with cultural meaning. Encoded in the semantics of grammar we find cultural values and ideas, we find clues about the social structures which speakers maintain, we find evidence, both historically relevant and otherwise, of the social organization of speech communities. (Enfield 2002b: 3)

Of course, the idea that grammars are (or represent) ethnophilosophies is not new. These ideas form part of the Humboldt-Sapir-Whorf traditions of research, which in recent years has been operationalized in new ways by NSM researchers. Goddard (2010) explains:

Wierzbicka argued that the natural semantic metalanguage promised to bring new rigor into an area of study anticipated by von Humboldt, Bally, Baudoin de Courteney, Boas, Sapir and Whorf; namely the study of the philosophies (or ethnophilosophies) built into the grammar of different languages. (Goddard 2010: 837)

Ethnosyntax comes in two varieties: a “narrow” or a “broad” type of research. The present paper falls into the broad type, since it deals with how “pragmatic and cultural rules affect the use of grammatical structures” (Gladkova 2014: 33).¹ Thus, the “broad” ethnosyntax approach provides a lens through which we can study *violence*, *vold*, and their cultural elaborations, and the NSM approach offers a tool for the articulation of hypotheses which is rigorous, and which allows for cross-linguistic comparison.

The paper is organised as follows. The first section opens up the field of violence studies with an introduction to the Wierzbicka-Pinker debate, and with reflections on cross-European semantics and evidence from “the expanding Anglosphere”. In section 4, I present the NSM framework. Section 5 explicates the Danish word *vold* ‘violence, abuse’ and studies three *vold*-based compounds: *hustruvold* ‘wife vold’, *politivold* ‘police vold’ and *forældrevold* ‘parent vold’, while section 6 discusses the findings, and their consequences for violence studies, ethnosyntax, and sociality. Section 7 provides some concluding remarks.

¹ The “narrow” approach to ethnosyntax studies the cultural semantics of particular grammatical constructions.

2. Violence discourse

Arguably, *violence* has become a keyword of our time, and a word around which whole international discourses revolve (on keywords, see Levisen and Waters 2017a). Bearing in mind that reality does not demand on us any particular ways of conceptualising sociality, it is all the more interesting to note how the English word *violence* stands out in contemporary global discourse. For instance, Anglo-international debates on politics and international relations, news reports, and discussions about the media, are often couched in a discourse of *violence*. Also, academic English has produced a series of new violence-based terminologies, such as “structural violence”, “epistemic violence”, “linguistic violence”, and “the violence of categorisation”. Coinages such as “intimate partner violence”, “situational couple violence”, and “emotional violence” are spreading from Anglo counselling and psychotherapy talk, and the term “domestic violence” is found in the language of the law, as well as in social work. Given its prominence and conceptual proliferation, it is important for linguists to scrutinise the *violence* concept, but also to study non-English ways in which people talk about “negative sociality” as well as the “the body in society”. Cross-linguistic perspective can help develop accounts of the diversity of ways in which different languages have captured negative sociality constructs with words, and more broadly explore what cultural scripts for values and social knowledges that such words embody.

So far, only a few linguists have engaged in the study of *violence* discourse, (see Klein 2013, and Silva 2017), and hardly any cross-linguistic comparative and conceptual work has been undertaken (but Kulick 2016 presents an innovative, ongoing work on violence and “rape talk” in the Pacific, and Lempert 2012 deals with Tibetan “language of violence”). As an introduction to the topic, I will begin by summarising a highly illuminating discussion between Anna Wierzbicka and Steven Pinker.

3. The Wierzbicka-Pinker Debate

In his book *The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence has Declined* (2011), Pinker argues that the human species is living in the most peaceful era in the history of humanity. His argumentation rests on the idea that violence is declining in the world and that altruism is rising. Pinker acknowledges that his claim sounds counter-intuitive, but according to Pinker the standard view that “violence is increasing” is nothing but a cognitive

bias. Through statistical analysis, Pinker attempts to show how “violence” has steadily decreased, due to an increase in empathy, self-control, moral sense, and reason in humanity, and how the global spread of Enlightenment values has led to moral progress. Pinker’s association of *violence* with “backwardness”, and “non-violence” with modernity has been challenged by several anthropologists (see e.g. Ferguson 2013), but Pinker’s claims are also problematic from a linguistic perspective. Most importantly, there are no cross-linguistic considerations in his analysis, and “violence” is taken for granted as a meaningful word through which data from several world areas can be readily interpreted. In *Imprisoned in English* (2013), Anna Wierzbicka demonstrates how Pinker’s interpretations of data impose on all cultures and eras a modern and highly Anglo-specific take on sociality, based on the semantics of *violence*. Comparing *violence* with Russian *nasilie*, Wierzbicka relativises and denaturalises the status of *violence* as a lens for studying morality and social norms.² She says:

Pinker links *violence* with a lack of self-control: “Ever since Adam and Eve ate the apple [...] individuals have struggled with self-control [...]. Violence too is largely a problem of self-control” (p. 592). He may be right as far as the English word *violence* is concerned – but this only highlights the differences between *violence* and words like *nasilie*, which have nothing to do with any self-control. English sentences like “Violence erupted in the streets” could not be translated into Russian with the word *nasilie* because *nasilie* – which is one-sided – can be carried out in cold blood (and with a good deal of “self-control”), whereas *violence* cannot. (Wierzbicka 2013: 55)

On Wierzbicka’s analysis, *violence* is an English word with a modern Anglo meaning. Thus, it is clearly not a universal human concept, nor a universally human concern. Yet it has become a keyword of Anglo-international discourse that currently occupies a privileged position in the emerging global value system. But the fact is that not even Europeans share a semantic currency in this domain, a point I will reflect on in the following.

Shortly after the terrorist attack in Nice, 15 July 2016, French president François Hollande went on national TV to speak to his people. He described the happenings with the words: *une violence absolue!* The next day, the Editorial of *Le Monde* followed up with the similar description: *La violence, encore*. As a Danish observer, who happened to be in France at the time, this description struck me. To my mind, *violence* seemed like a misplaced word – not nearly strong enough to describe the horror of the situation.

² To my knowledge, Pinker has not yet replied to Wierzbicka’s criticism, and it might therefore be premature to talk about a real “debate” between these two scholars. However, this paper attempts to create a momentum for a scholarly debate on violence, and the arguments provided by Pinker and Wierzbicka serve as an important frame of reference for the advancement of such a debate.

Through further reflection, I came to realise that my unease was caused by a problematic semantic transference: I understood the French word *violence* via the Danish concept of *vold* ‘violence, abuse’ (potentially, with the English homograph *violence* as backing for my interpretative bias). In Danish discourse, a presumably “radicalised” terrorist, who, in an act of planned and organised terror, killed innocent women and men in a most spectacular way, would not be described through the word *vold* ‘violence, abuse’. Regardless of what adjectives the French commentators added on to *violence* (for instance *absolue* and other adjectives), *vold* would be a misplaced word in this context, partly because it would trivialise the event, and partly because *vold* semantically seems at odds with something spectacular and well-planned. *Vold*, on first analysis, suggests to me the habitual behaviour of a social loser, who lacks control or social skills, or perhaps alternatively, the action of an abusive, authoritarian personality. On a par with Wierzbicka, this experience suggests to me that Europeans do not share a conceptual semantics in this domain, but worryingly, it also suggests that Europeans (including linguists) perhaps misguidedly *think* that they share such concepts.

Since European languages do not align, what kind of semantic diversity would we then expect to find on a larger global scale? On this point, I would like to offer a perspective from what has been called “the expanding Anglosphere” and some insights from postcolonial semantics (Levisen and Jogie 2015; Levisen, Sippola and Aragón 2016; Levisen 2016). The dominance and spread of Anglo concepts in the globalizing world has been documented by several studies. Words like *happiness*, *security*, *depression*, *cooperation*, *education*, *development* etc. are not neutral, but quintessentially Anglo (Wierzbicka 2013; Levisen 2018). *Violence* belongs to this group of keywords that are currently spreading with the influence spheres of Anglo English. When Western governments and NGOs spread their messages in postcolonial nations, they do not only criticise the “violence” of other nations, they also export the very “violence concept” into these new settings.

Let me illustrate this with an example from Vanuatu, a postcolonial nation in the South Pacific, where *vaelens* has recently been introduced as an English loan concept (on South Pacific semantics, see Levisen 2016, 2017; Levisen et al. 2016). In Bislama, the national ni-Vanuatu creole, there are now campaigns on how to stop *vaelens againsem woman* ‘violence against women’, and *vaelens againsem pikikini* ‘violence against children’. While this new *vaelens* concept is not yet a part of all speakers’ conceptual vocabulary, other traditional terms have high prominence. These include *faetem*, roughly ‘to punch, to fight physically’, *kilim* ‘to hit, to beat’, and *rao*, roughly ‘dispute, argument’ (Levisen 2017). *Faetem*, *kilim*, and *rao* are descriptive

terms. Unlike English *violence*, and the loan concept of *vaelens*, the words do not encode a moral message about the scenario they describe. In *violence* (as well as in *nasilie*), the key idea is to combine a scenario with an evaluative component. The Bislama concepts, by contrast, do not encode a moral condemnation, but offer a descriptive frame for understanding a particular sociophysicality as a norm and fact of life, a point to which I will return in section 3. The main purpose of including the expanding Anglosphere into this study is to further deconstruct the *violence* concept, to demonstrate its non-universality, and to simultaneously highlight its growing significance in the world.

It seems clear that there are several complications for a comparative study on “the grammar of violence”. Or put more bluntly: it is simply not tenable to investigate the “grammar of violence” across the world’s languages, given that the *violence* concept is not a universal, human concept. Even in cross-European discourse, there is no shared concept around which we can build genuine comparisons – only rough meaning equivalents such as Polish *przemoc*, Russian *nasilie*, French *violence*, and Danish *vold*. At the same time, the English concept of *violence* and Anglo-international discourses of *violence* appear to be spreading across the globe. The two complications are of a rather paradoxical nature: (i) *violence* is an English concept, not a global concept or concern, and (ii) *violence* is becoming more global, and is affecting semantics in many parts of the world through conceptual borrowing and hidden semantic shifts. Nevertheless, ethnosyntactic innovation seems to be emerging within these two contradictory trajectories.

4. The NSM approach

In this section, I will briefly outline the key ideas of the NSM approach, and exemplify how this approach can be used for doing high-resolution meaning analysis. The twin techniques of “semantic explication” and “cultural scripts” constitute the basics of NSM’s interpretative kit.

A “semantic explication” aims at defining the meaning of a word. This method compares roughly to the “cognitive definition” of the Lublin school of Cognitive Ethnolinguistics (Bartmiski 2009). A “cultural script” articulates more broadly some of the prevailing linguacultural assumptions, attitudes, and values that can be studied through an analysis of cultural discourse. Both explications and scripts are based on the same technique of compositional practice called reductive paraphrase. The conceptual building blocks of NSM analysis are “semantic primes” and “semantic molecules”. Primes are

ultimately simple units of meaning, which cannot be analysed further, and which appear to have been lexicalised across all languages in the form of a lexical or lexicogramatical unit. The English and Danish exponents of the primes are replicated in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Semantic primes: English exponents (Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014)

I~ME, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING~THING, PEOPLE, BODY, KIND, PART
THIS, THE SAME, OTHER~ELSE~ANOTHER
ONE, TWO, SOME, ALL, MUCH~MANY, LITTLE~FEW
GOOD, BAD, BIG, SMALL
KNOW, THINK, WANT, DON'T WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR
SAY, WORDS, TRUE
DO, HAPPEN, MOVE
BE (SOMEWHERE), THERE IS, BE (SOMEONE/SOMETHING)
(IS) MINE
LIVE, DIE
WHEN~TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME, MOMENT
WHERE~PLACE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE, TOUCH
NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF, VERY, MORE, LIKE

Table 2. Semantic primes: Danish exponents (Levisen 2012, Levisen and Waters 2017b)

JEG~MIG, DU~DIG, NOGEN, NOGET~TING, FOLK, KROP
SLAGS, DEL
DEN HER, DEN SAMME, ANDEN
ÉN, TO, NOGLE, ALLE, MEGET~MANGE, LIDT~FÅ
GOD, DÅRLIG
STOR, LILLE
VED, TÆNKER, VIL HAVE, VIL IKKE HAVE, FØLER, SER, HØRER
SIGER, ORD, DET PASSER
GØR, SKER, BEVÆGER SIG
ER (ET STED), DER ER, ER (NOGEN/NOGET)
(ER) MIN
LEVER, DØR
NÅR~TID, NU, FØR, EFTER, LÆNGE, KORT TID, ET STYKKE TID, ØJEBLIK
HVOR~STED, HER, OVER, UNDER, TÆT PÅ, NÆR VED, SIDE, INDENI, RØRER
IKKE, MÅSKE, KAN, FORDI, HVIS, MEGET, MERE, SOM~MÅDE

“Semantic molecules” are relatively simple chunks of meanings that serve as conceptual building blocks in other more complex meanings and scripts. Molecules can be further decomposed, i.e. they are not ultimately simple, and only some molecules are universal. Apart from primes and molecules, explications and scripts follow the principles of NSM syntax, which, in essence, means that they should adhere to a simple, conceptual, and cross-translatable combinatorics of primes and molecules (Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014: 14).

To exemplify, NSM explications have been proposed for both *violence* and *nasilie* as discussed in 2.1 (Wierzbicka 2013, ch. 6).

***violence* (English)**

- a. it can be like this:
- b. something happens in a place for some time because some people do some bad things to some other people in this place at that time
- c. these people do these things at that time because they feel something very bad at that time
- d. they can know that something very bad can happen to these other people's bodies because of this
- e. it is very bad when it is like this

***nasilie* (Russian)**

- a. it can be like this:
- b. something happens in a place at some time because some people do some bad things to some other people in this place for some time
- c. these other people don't want these people to do these things
- d. these other people want to do something because of this, they can't do anything
- e. it is very bad when it is like this

On Wierzbicka's analysis, the *violence* concept and the *nasilie* concept share a basic template grounded in a prototypical scenario and an evaluation of this scenario: "it can be like this", and "it is very bad when it is like this". Both prototypical cognitive scenarios describe something that happens in a place, and the idea that "some people do some bad things to some other people in this place". On Wierzbicka's analysis, the most significant difference in the prototypical cognitive scenarios for *violence* and *nasilie* is the emphasis on "feeling" in *violence*. The motivation for doing bad things is in the *violence* concept analysed with a feeling-based causative logic "because they feel something very bad at that time". By contrast, in *nasilie*, there is no reference to emotions, or to bodily injuries. Instead, component d in *nasilie* captures something like "helpless resistance". The two words might be dictionary equivalents, but they are far from semantically equivalent.

For the sake of deconstructing "violence", let us now consider again Bislama, where *vaelens* is only a recent conceptual introduction, and still marginal in the discursive community. As argued earlier, the transitive verb *faetem* is one of the main discursive counterparts of "violence". *Faetem* has origins in English *fight*, but its semantics is both broader and richer. *Fight* in English is reciprocal (they fight), but *faetem* is not necessarily so. Consider, for example, *dadi blo mi i faetem mi*, roughly 'my dad beat me up/punched me', which by an Anglo observer could very well be interpreted through the lense of the word *violence* (see Levisen 2017, in progress, for a full analysis). *Faetem* encodes a manifest and specific physical meaning, represented in part by the molecule *hands* [m]:³

³ The corresponding Bislama molecule is *han* [m]. The lexeme *han* has several meanings, including 'hand', 'arm', 'tree branch', 'sleeve (of clothing)' (Crowley 2003: 103).

faetem (Bislama, partial explication)

- a. someone X does something with his/her hands [m] to one part of someone else's Y body in this place for some time
- b. at the same time something bad happens to Y's body because of it
- c. this someone X feels something bad towards this other someone Y at this time, because this someone X thinks like this:
 "you did something bad to me before
 I want you to feel something very bad now because of it"
- d. when X does something like this to Y, many bad things can happen because of this after this
- e. many bad things can happen to Y's body, many bad things can happen to people in this place

Overall, *faetem* stands out from *violence* in a number of ways. Firstly, it is a descriptive term, rather than an evaluative term. It construes *faetem* as a fact of life, but does not moralise about it like the component "it is very bad when it is like this", found in *violence* and *nasilie*. Also, *faetem* elaborates on the potential interpersonal impact and the social consequences of an emotionally tense encounter between people. These emotions are linked to the salient feeling of *kros* 'anger, wildness' (Levisen 2016).

5. The Ethnosyntax of *Vold*

Based on this general discussion and demonstration of NSM, we can now begin the case study of Danish *vold* and its associated ethnosyntax. The analysis of the compounds *hustruvold* 'wife vold', *politivold* 'police vold', and *forældrevold* 'parent vold' will be backed by corpus evidence from daTenTen14/Sketch Engine, a corpus of nearly 2,200,000,000 tokens, created in 2014.

5.1. *Vold* and *vold*-based compounds

Translational evidence suggests that *vold* differs from *violence*, given that *vold* can be both translated as *violence* and *abuse* in English.⁴ The most elucidating example of how the prototypical configuration of *vold* and *violence* differ can be found in the discourse and practice of physical punishment of children. This domain attracts the concept of *vold* in Danish,⁵

⁴ Historically, *vold* meant something like 'force, power', often with a socio-spiritual ring. This is reflected in fossilised expressions, most notably *Gud i vold* 'In God's vold', *med djævelens vold og magt* 'with the vold and power of the Devil'. The link between *vold* and power is also present in the concept of *voldtægt* 'rape', etymologically 'taking by vold'. Leaving aside etymology and phraseology, it seems clear that the contemporary meaning of *vold* is a rather new conceptual invention.

⁵ Interestingly, in English, *violence* is not (at least not prototypically) linked with *smacking*, *spanking*, and the punishment of children for discipline, whereas the Danish perspective prototypically associates this with *vold*.

where all kinds of physical punishment tend to be viewed as *vold*. This is not the case – at least not prototypically – in English *violence*. Åke Daun explains:

In Anglo-American culture, with its British legacy of integrating corporal punishment into the system of child-rearing, punishment is usually meted out after calmly considering the child's wrongdoing and then deciding suitable punishment. . . . However, in the Nordic countries [. . .] it is thought despicable to hit children deliberately, but understandable if one does it when provoked and very riled. (Daun 1989: 92)

While many attitudinal shifts in both Nordic and Anglo cultural scripts have taken place since Daun's analysis, there is deep emic logic which remains embodied in two different types of lexicogrammar. Semantically speaking, the Anglo/British concept of *corporal punishment* is different from *violence*, whereas it would be seen as a prototypical example of Danish *vold* (i.e. *vold mod børn* 'vold against children'). One way of explaining this is that the "loss of control" component in *violence* is at odds with the British concept of *corporal punishment*, precisely because this concept emphasises that such punishment should and carried out in a calm and controlled manner, and, as Daun says, meted out in a fair way according to rules. Furthermore, the English lexicon allows for distinctions to be made between *smack*, *spank*, *hit*, *beat*, which from a Danish perspective are all but the same thing: *slå* 'hit, beat, etc'. Thus, it is virtually impossible to argue in Danish that smacking children is acceptable but hitting them is wrong. With these considerations in mind, I will suggest an explication for *vold* in which some kind of cognitive collapse takes place in the agent of *vold*, rather than on "(lack of) control of emotions". *Vold* is something that can happen, something a person can do, presumably because he or she doesn't think about the consequences at the time of the action. Another smaller adjustment in my explication is about the role of the *krop* 'body'. The violation of the *krop* 'body' appears to be the central issue in *vold*, hence it is fronted in the explication.

vold (Danish)

- a. it can be like this:
- b. something happens in a place for some time because some people do some bad things
to some other **people's bodies** in this place at that time
- c. when these people do these things at that time **they don't think like this:**
many bad things can happen to these other people after this because of it
- d. people can know that something very bad can happen because of this
- e. because of this, it is very bad when it is like this

Like in other Germanic languages, compounding is a highly productive feature of Danish ethnosyntax, and a constitutive element in Danish

morphosyntax (see e.g. Szubert 2015). *Vold*-based compounds offer a fascinating glimpse into how the ethnophilosophy of sociality is constituted in Danish discourse, but also how new compound coinages reflect discursive change. The ethnophilosophy of the NN structuration is highly revealing. In a sense compounding is a paradoxical grammatical device because it “hides by highlighting”. As Haspelmath and Sims remind us in their introductory textbook in morphology, a *street seller* is not a person who sells streets, but a person who sells something in the street, and the reason why we know that this is the case is because of our knowledge of the world (Haspelmath and Sims 2010:140). I would add to this explanations that such “world knowledge” is culturally and ethnophilosophically defined. Thus, we need to analyse the cultural scripts for “knowledges” that make such compounds interpretable within a linguistic community. This is not to say that the meaning of compounds is generated from scratch at every occurrence in discourse. Surely, this is not the case. Conventionalised compounds are coded, and some have even drifted away from the cultural scripts that made them interpretable at the time of coinage. However, if a cultural script and a coded meaning point in the same interpretation, as is often the case in more recent coinages, this leads to a powerful, holistic, and motivated linguacultural code in a supportive linguacultural context.

In the following, it is my aim to articulate the cultural scripts through which the coinages *hustruvold* ‘wife vold’, *politivold* ‘police vold’ and *forældrevold* ‘parent vold’ have come to make sense and compare the hidden ethnosyntax and the covert meaning that underlie these concepts.

5.2. *Hustruvold* ‘wife vold’

Grammatically, *hustruvold* is a typical Germanic NN compound, made up by two constituents: *hustru* ‘wife’ and *vold* ‘violence, abuse’. Based on its constituents, this compound is open to many different interpretations. In principle, it could mean ‘wives committing *vold* towards their husbands’. But in a corpus of 835 tokens, this interpretation is favoured 0 times.⁶ In fact, I have not been able to locate a single example or instance in any corpora or texts, where *hustruvold* construes a situation where a *hustru* ‘wife’ is the agent of *vold*. All examples reify a particular scenario where *mænd* ‘men’ are violent and abusive towards *kvinder* ‘women’, and typically, but not exclusively, men who are married to these women. Consider the following examples from the corpus.

⁶ A handful of examples in the corpus questions the validity of the conventionalised meaning in *hustruvold* but I found no sentences in which *hustruvold* as a default meant ‘wives committing violence towards their husbands’.

(1) *Men Hanne-Vibeke Holsts roman er alligevel læsværdig. Hun sætter fingeren på nogle helt vedkommende og aktuelle emner: den politiske magtelites troværdighed eller snarere mangel på samme, integrationsproblemer, tvangsægteskaber og først og fremmest den afskyelige **hustruvold**, som findes i alle sociale lag – også blandt politikere, hvis program understreger lighed mellem kønnene.*

However, Hanne-Vibeke Holst's novel is still worth a read. She points out some very relevant and topical issues: the credibility of the political elite, or rather, the lack hereof, problems with integration, forced marriages, and first and foremost the hideous **hustruvold** that exists across all social strata, including in politicians whose political platform advocates gender equality.

(2) *Reinicke påpeger da også, at han interesserer sig mest for de mørke sider af mænds tanker og handlinger, hvorefter han så sandelig også udfolder et langt synderegister: Mænd og porno, mænd og **hustruvold**, mænd som karrieredyr, mænd og omsorgssvigt, mænd og vold, mænd og prostitution, mænd som (symbolske) magtudøvere, mænd og voldtægt, mænd i krise med fatale følger.*

Reinicke also points out that he is more interested in the dark side of men's thoughts and actions, after which he certainly unfolds a long record: men and porn, men and **hustruvold**, men as career animals, men and neglect, men and *vold*, men and prostitution, men as (symbolic) powerbrokers, men and rape, men in crisis with fatal consequences.

(3) *Hermed ikke sagt, at jeg anerkender utroskab, løgn, mord, brandstiftelse, tyveri, **hustruvold**, tortur, terror, dopingmisbrug, eller hvad du ellers kunne finde på at skyde mig i skoene.*

This does not mean that I recognize adultery, lying, murder, arson, theft, **hustruvold**, torture, terrorism, drug abuse, or other things you might accuse me of.

(4) *Der ses bort fra **hustruvold**, skattesnyd, smugleri, spritkørsel og lignende.*

We will ignore **hustruvold**, tax evasion, smuggling, drink-driving, and the like.

(5) *Små byer fyldt med arbejdsløse og underuddannede mennesker; hvor alkoholisme, **hustruvold** og hundekampe ikke er usædvanlige.*

Small towns filled with unemployed and undereducated people, wherein alcoholism, **hustruvold** and dog fights are not uncommon.

The hidden knowledge in the *hustruvold* compound is clear: it is men who are the agents of *vold*. Also, the examples show how *hustruvold* is often "listed" as a well-defined social problem in society, together with other evils such as alcohol addiction, tax evasion, theft, torture, and terrorism.

The *hustruvold* compound was coined in the 1980s (*hustruvold*, DDO), where it became part of Danish discourses of relationships and social change. The constituent noun *hustru* is in itself an interesting concept, given that there are two words for 'wife' in Danish: *kone*⁷ and *hustru*. *Kone* is both a relational and a social category. It can mean 'somebody's wife' (relational) or 'an older, worn-down woman' (social category). Furthermore, the definite form *konen* 'the wife' has a sexist ring. So while *kone*, in the basic relational

⁷ While *konevold* is attested in the corpus, it is very marginal, and almost all instances are from Norwegian texts that by mistake have been included in the corpus.

sense, can still be considered to be the default word for ‘wife’, the whole lexeme with its polysemy patterns and grammatical elaborations is tainted with both semantic and indexical meanings that from the perspective of a feminist, progressive agenda, is rather unattractive. By contrast, *hustru* only exists as a relational concept, and semantically, it encodes an element of “dignity” that *kone* does not. Thus, the selection of *hustru* for the *hustruvold* concept seems to have been partly a motivated deselection of *kone*, and partly a strategic selection of *hustru*, as a means of dignifying the female victims of abuse or violence. Semantically speaking, *vold* against a *hustru* seems more outrageous and criminal than *vold* committed against *konen* ‘the wife’. This suggests that *hustruvold* has a built-in progressive, feminist semantics that reflects the discursive era of its coinage. *Hustruvold* is discursively linked with campaigns and testimonies, in which women leave their husbands based on there being *vold* ‘abuse, violence’ in the relationship.

(6) *En velstillet midaldrende kvinde, som i sit ægteskab lejlighedsvis har været udsat for **hustruvold**, forlader en skønne dag hjemmet og søger tilflugt i et krisecenter, hvor hun møder den forståelse, hendes familie ikke formår at give hende.*

One day, a well-off middle aged woman, who in her marriage occasionally was a victim of **hustruvold**, leaves home and seeks refuge in a crisis centre, where she meets with the kind of understanding that her family was not able to give her.

(7) *Kampagnen sætter fokus på **hustruvold** og opfordrer folk til at melde ud, hvis noget virker forkert i et forhold nær dem.*

The campaign focuses on **hustruvold** and encourages people to report it, if something feels wrong in a relation close to them.

Based on these contexts, I will propose a cultural script that serves as an interpretative backdrop for the *hustruvold* compound. The script is composed in semantic primes, with inclusion of the molecules men [m], women [m], and husbands [m], (Danish: *mænd* [m] *kvinder* [m], *mænd* [m]):

[E] Cultural script for the “social knowledge” embedded in the *hustruvold* concept

It is like this, everyone here knows it:

sometimes some men [m] do some very bad things to women’s [m] bodies
 these men [m] live with these women [m], often these men [m] are the husbands [m] of these women
 it is very bad when it is like this
 because of this, if something like this happens to a woman [m], people can think like this:
 “it is good if this woman [m] doesn’t want to live with this man [m] anymore
 it is good if she does something because of it”
 it is good if other people do something good for this woman [m] because of it

The script spells out the social knowledge that undergirds the concept of *hustruvold*, namely the tacit understanding that “some men sometimes do very bad things to women’s bodies”, prototypically, but not exclusively, within the context of marriage. This situation is “very bad”, and consequently

it is both in the interest of society and the individual woman to break free from such a relationship.

The cultural assumptions embodied in the ethnosyntax of *hustruvold* organises social reality in a highly gender-bifurcated and heteronormative fashion, and exemplifies how the culture-grammar interface can reify sociality in highly specific ways. While the concept remains discursively prominent, the assumptions built into the *hustruvold* have been challenged in recent times. What, for instance, do husbands do discursively, if they are violently abused by their wives? To cater for more recent sociophysical sensitivities, a discourse of *mænd udsat for partnervold* ‘men exposed to partner *vold*’ has been established. While not entirely stable or widespread, this phraseme appears to be now entering Danish discourse. This lengthy phrasemic innovation suggests that the situation it describes is still viewed as somewhat unusual, but nevertheless, it provides an interesting conceptual nuance born out of a new discursive need. *Partnervold* does not specify whether the patient and the agent are women or men. Recent coinages such as *partnervold* and *kærestevold* are conceptually more open to multiple dynamics of *vold*, using the constituents *partner* ‘partner’ and *kæreste*, literally ‘loved one’, are thus less tied to the prototype of (i) married life, and less anchored in the (ii) heteronormative semantics built into *hustruvold*.

One more interesting aspect of *hustruvold* discourse emerges from the corpus examples. More than a third of the examples in the Korpus (312 out of 835 tokens) describe “men in other countries”, or “men in ethnic minority groups in Denmark”:

(8) *Kvinderne klarer sig igennem det utroligste med denne oplæring og indkomst. Mange af dem har fået sprængt lemmer af ved mine-ulykker, er blevet HIV-smittede, eller har været ofre for den udbredte **hustruvold** i Cambodja.*

The women are handling everything incredibly well with this training and income. Many of them have had limbs blown off in mining accidents, have been infected with HIV, or have been victims of widespread **hustruvold** in Cambodia.

(9) *På en golfgrunde fortalte en ældre mand som havde boet i Spanien i 20 år, at dernede var **hustruvolden** steget markant inden for de senere år.*

During a round on the golf course, an elderly man who had lived in Spain for 20 years, said that the **hustruvold** had increased down there [i.e. in Spain] significantly in recent years.

(10) *Chivasa har som mand gennemgået en forvandling fra at være kendt i landsbyen for at banke sin kone til nu at tale imod **hustruvold** ved enhver lejlighed.*

As a husband, Chivasa has gone through a transformation. He was previously known in the village for beating his wife, but now he’s known for speaking out against **hustruvold** at every opportunity.

(11) *Og hvad med **hustruvold** udført af pæredanske ægtemænd?*
And what about **hustruvold** done by very Danish husbands?

In (9)–(11), men’s abusive behaviour towards women in Cambodia, Spain, and Zimbabwe are discussed and described, and the cultural assumption seems to be that the violence and abuse by men in other countries is a fact of life, but “newsworthy” and reportable in a Danish context. Example (11) exemplifies, by means of a presupposition, that *vold* against women is at odds with Danish norms and values, but also that men of other nationalities are likely to differ from Danish men in their view on *vold*. This calls for yet another cultural script related to the “national knowledge” which we can locate in a subsection of the discourse of *hustruvold*. The script is articulated in semantic primes, with inclusion of the molecules *men* [m], *countries* [m], and *Danish* [m] (in Danish: *mænd* [m], *lande* [m], and *dansk* [m]):

[F] Cultural script for the “national knowledge” embedded in the *hustruvold* concept

It is like this, everyone knows it:

men [m] in many countries [m] sometimes do some very bad things to women’s bodies,
these men [m] live with these women [m], often these men [m] are the husbands [m] of these women”

it is very bad that it is like this

Danish [m] men [m] do not often do things like this, this is good

The national knowledge script articulates anti-*vold* as a defining national value, including a nationalised ideology of relationship and life together. The ethnocentrism of such script is worth studying in its own right, and the script clearly has potential for framing intercultural relations, including intercultural dating and political decision making, in a problematic and stereotypical way. “Othering” non-Danish men as being prone to, or more prone to *hustruvold*, seems to be a part of national narrative, and a nationalised conception of gender. While the “social knowledge” script is more openly accessible, the “national knowledge” might be more a case of crypto-ethnosyntax, given that the attitude is rarely spelled out in the way I have done in [F].

5.3. *Politivold* ‘police *vold*’

Politivold is made up of the constituents *politi* ‘police’ and *vold* ‘violence, abuse’. In the corpus, *politivold* (734) has roughly the same frequency level as *hustruvold* (835). *Politivold* is formally identical to the NN structuration in *hustruvold*, whereby one might be misled to assume that *politi+vold* ‘police + *vold*’ means ‘violence/abuse against the police’. This, however, is clearly not the case. Consider, the following examples:

(12) *Tak til forældre mod **politivold**, og tak til alle de andre gode mennesker der holder fokus på hvad det hele drejer sig om: Nemlig at vi i Danmark har frihedsberøvet folk der intet ulovligt har foretaget sig.*

Thanks to parents against **politivold**, and thanks to all the other good people who keep their focus on what this is all about: the fact that we in Denmark have detained people who have done nothing illegal.

(13) *Jeg vil atter opfordre alle til, at blive medlem af facebookgruppen: til minde for Ekrem Sahin – initiativtagerne bag grupperne fører en kamp for, at ingen skal dø i danske fængsler pga **politivold**.*

I would again encourage everyone to join the facebook group: in memory of Ekrem Sahin – the initiators of these groups fight for the cause that no-one should die in Danish prisons because of **politivold**.

(14) *Vicekriminalkommissær Axel Steen skal opklare et mord, der skete, mens Ungdomshuset på Jagtvej blev ryddet. Mistanken går indledningsvis på **politivold** mod en ung autonom.*

Deputy Commissar Axel Steen is going to solve a murder case that happened while Ungdomshuset on Jagtvej was cleared. Initially, the suspicion is based on **politivold** against a young left-wing activist.

In these examples, the *politivold* concept construes a situation where *vold* is committed *by* the police, prototypically, by the use of unnecessary or illegal use of power. In the corpus, I found a handful of examples where *politivold* had a different meaning than the conventional one. Consider example (15):

(15) *På Christiania har jeg mødt kvindeforagt, vold, trusler, racisme, bandekriminalitet, likvideringer, **politivold** (mod politiet) og en frapperende egoisme og et hykleri som er uden sidestykke i dansk samtidshistorie.*

In Christiania, I have encountered contempt for women, *vold*, threats, racism, gang crimes, liquidations, **politivold** (against the police) and astounding egotism and a hypocrisy without parallel in Danish contemporary history.

In (15) *politivold* seems to be an ad hoc construct, generating a new meaning on the basis of the NN constituents, in which the police becomes the victim of *vold*. Interestingly, the author has to add *mod politiet* ‘against the police’ in a parenthesis, to ensure that the reader understands the word correctly. This shows an awareness of the conventional meaning, as well as an awareness of the novel (or unusual) reanalysis of the word.

When we contrast the meanings of *hustruvold* and *politivold*, it does seem quite remarkable that these two concepts are sharing a name, given a very profound conceptual difference: *Politiet* ‘the police’ are allowed and actually expected to apply *fysisk magtanvendelse* ‘physical use of power’. This physicality is conceptually different from *vold*, but at the same time *fysisk magtanvendelse* can become *vold* in certain situations, where the police fail to act professionally or if a “normal” situation gets out of hand. Needless to say, one person can also experience something as *vold* (i.e. a protester), which another person sees as *fysisk magtanvendelse* (i.e. a police officer). This is reflected in script [G], where the social knowledge embedded in the

politivold concept is reflected. The script is composed in semantic primes, with inclusion of the molecule *the police* [m] (Danish: *politiet* [m]).

[G] Cultural script for the “social knowledge” embedded in the *politivold* concept

It is like this, everyone knows it:

sometimes the police [m] do some things to some people's bodies
they do these things to these people, because many bad things can happen, if they don't do these things
because of this, it is good if the police [m] do these things

at the same time it is like this, everyone knows it:

sometimes the police [m] can do some very bad things to some people's bodies
not like when they do things because they don't want bad things to happen to people
it is very bad when it is like this
because of this very bad things can happen to these people's bodies

The script spells out the positive premise of *fysisk magtanvendelse*, i.e. that the police “do these things to these people because many bad things can happen if they don't do things”, but also that these expectations and premises are not always met. Also, it is articulated that the result of such breaches can have severe consequences: “very bad things can happen to these people's bodies”. This scenario is deemed “very bad”.

With *politivold*, the discursive organization of national v. international examples is even more pronounced. More than half of the tokens (404/734) deal with *politivold* in international circumstances.

(16) *I Rumænien forskelsbehandles romaerne på alle områder og er ofte udsat for politivold, på trods af at der er indført nye love, som skal beskytte dem. . .*

In Romania, the Roma are again being discriminated against in all areas, and are often victims of **politivold**, despite the fact that new laws have been made to protect them.

(17) *I Egypten er bloggere . . . blevet omtalt af Associated Press, fordi de har blogget om overgreb på kvinder, politivold og tortur.*

In Egypt, bloggers have been mentioned by the Associated Press, because they have blogged about violations against women, **politivold** and torture.

(18) *Vi håber, at Danmark vil slutte sig til de andre europæiske lande, Sverige, Tyskland, Storbritannien, Litauen og Polen, som allerede har fordømt politivolden i Ukraine.*

We hope that Denmark will join other European countries like Sweden, Germany, Great Britain, Lithuania and Poland that have already condemned the **politivold** in Ukraine.

The United States, the Middle East and Russia/Ukraine are often mentioned, but there also African, Asian, Caribbean, and Southern and Central European examples. This leads to yet another “national knowledge” script in semantic primes, with inclusion of the molecules *the police* [m], *countries* [m], and *Denmark* [m] (Danish: *politiet* [m], *lande* [m], *Danmark* [m]):

[H] Cultural script for the “national knowledge” embedded in the *politivold* concept

It is like this, everyone knows it:

in many countries [m], the police [m] can sometimes do some very bad things to people’s bodies,
this is very bad
in Denmark [m], the police [m] do not often do things like this,
this is good

The naivety of script [H] corresponds to that of script [F], but if we are to capture the linguistic worldview that is enacted in discourse, the “nationalised” aspect of the discourse of *vold* is important to account for, articulate, and understand.

5.4. *Forældrevold* ‘parent-vold’

As discussed in section 5.1, there is a wealth of new semi-conventionalised *vold*-based terms emerging in the discursive community, some of which are grounded in popular conceptualisations. Others are neologisms that have entered into public discourse from professional language use. One of such very recent terms is the Danish *forældrevold* ‘parent-violence’. It is only attested 10 times in the corpora (2014), and is not (yet) adapted as a dictionary word. Given its marginality, I will not attempt to articulate any specific scripts related to this concept, but from an ethnosyntax viewpoint, novel compounds are interesting because they allow us to test hypotheses and explore potential candidates for popular lexicalisation. Will the *forældrevold* concept align with the template in *hustruvold*, or *politivold*? Will the agents of *vold* be parents, or will *vold* be committed against parents by their children in the coded scenario?

(18) *En stresset person vil være langt mere tilbøjelig til at “slå fra sig” – også i forhold til børnene – end en ikke-stresset. Den bedste kamp mod **forældrevold** er at støtte og aflaste forældrene.*

A person under stress will be far more inclined to “hit” – also in relation to children – than a non-stressed person. The best way to fight **forældrevold** is to support and help the parents.

(19) *Desuden viser tallene, at tosprogede unge er mere udsat for **forældrevold**. I hjem, hvor der tales andet end dansk, svarer hele 26% ja til at være blevet udsat for **forældrevold** en eller flere gange i det forløbne år.*

The numbers show that bilinguals are more exposed to **forældrevold**. In homes where a language other than Danish was spoken, almost 26% [of the respondents] say that they have been exposed to **forældrevold** more than once last year.

(20) *Ganske vist er offeret her allerede myndig og derfor ikke omfattet af FN’s Børnekonvention, men vi oplever alt for mange sager med **forældrevold** overfor homoseksuelle unge.*

Of course the victim is already of age and therefore not protected by the UN Child Convention, but we see far too many cases with **forældrevold** towards homosexual youth.

(21) *Vi iiiih'ede og næææh'ede over at se en rigtig levende stork . . . – det er os jo ikke forundt at bese nationalfuglen derhjemme mere. Undtagen i Ribe og der begår de voksne storke vistnok **forældrevold** med døden til følge. . .*

We oooohed, and woowed watching a real living stork. Viewing the national bird is not often granted to us anymore. Except in Ribe, and that's where the adult storks commit deathly **forældrevold**, I think.

From the examples in the corpus, it is clear that *forældrevold* is similar to *politivold* in its conceptual combinatorics, and dissimilar to *hustruvold*. The agents of *vold* are always the parents, and the victims of *forældrevold* are always children. This reading of the compound would most likely be the preferred even without contextual evidence, given that the discourse of *vold* itself has parental *vold* against children as one of its central discursive tropes. The discourse of *forældrevold* has a ring of “parental pedagogy” to it, most clearly articulated in (18), where the parents who happen to use *vold* towards their children are construed as people who need more support from society, so that they can better cope with stressful situations. It seems to me that there is an underlying humanism in the concept, in which *vold* is something that is done not out of ill will, but out of lack of knowledge or due to stress and pressure. Also, the national logic is again strongly played out in the examples. In (19) “statistics” show that *vold* is related to not speaking Danish well enough, and in (20) gays in the Philippines are represented as being exposed to *forældrevold*, i.e. being abused and beaten by their parents because of their sexual orientation. Example (21) is a humorous example where a pair of storks in the city of Ribe is described as committing *forældrevold* towards their offspring. In the narrative, the inhabitants of the city are shocked to find out that their much celebrated stork couple committed *vold* against their young ones, to the point that the chicks died of the bodily injuries. Thus, while the police are expected to use force to some degree, the *forældrevold* concept seems to move closer to the *hustruvold* concept, in which all kinds of physical use of power is frowned upon.

6. Discussion

Based on the analysis, I would like to highlight some the principal issues in the study of ethnosyntax, violence discourse, cultural moralities, and positive values that underlie negative sociality constructs.

The paper shows that the ethnosyntax of *vold* in Danish discourse embodies a progressive, humanistic, and anti-authoritarian ethnophilosophy in which women, children, and citizens should be protected from abusive men, parents, and police officers. However, as we have seen, progressivism and

humanism can also be packaged in a national, and at times, nativist discourse, where *vold* is something “others” do (non-Danish men, police officers, parents, etc). While the social knowledges are more easily detectable, the national knowledges make up a case that could be dubbed “crypto-ethnosyntax”, since these nationalisations are often not aired directly. Yet, meta-discursive evidence and hints from presuppositions point towards a common trope across *vold*-syntax: in the Danish universe of meaning, *vold* functions, much like *violence* in English, as a super-demon, and offers the ultimate anti-value for how sociality should unfold (see also Daun, for a Swedish perspective on aversion to *våld* ‘violence, abuse’ as a national value). Thus, on the structural level, the study of *vold* supports Sapir’s old dictum “all grammars leak”; that is, both the victims and the agents of *vold* can be selected as an N constituent in a compound construction, and the cultural constraint on the structuration system is the most important guiding principle. In other words, ethnosyntax trumps formal syntax. The cultural semantics points in a very specific direction. The ethnophilosophy that is promoted by the Danish ethnosyntax of violence is one that sides with the part that is seen as the physically least powerful.

With regard to the Wierzbicka-Pinker debate, this paper adds a couple of new perspectives. We have seen that “violence” does not exist pre-linguistically as any clearly delineated social process or category. Also, and importantly, both *violence* and *vold* are value words that include negative evaluations which in turn mirror positive values of the speech community. These values are linked to ways of knowing in the speech community and to social knowledges encoded in cultural scripts. Discursive communities encode and enact specific grammars of sociality, and scripts undergird the conceptual elaboration in ethnosyntax.

The validity of using *violence* as an analytical concept must be questioned for at least two reasons. The first problem arises from the reliance on *violence* as an interpretative lens, given that *violence* is a value word which in part is constituted by the element “this is very bad”. It comes as no surprise that people (even Chomsky) have reacted strongly against Pinker’s claim that *violence* is in decline, given the status of *violence* as a super-demon in the Anglo system of morality. Secondly, sociality constructs are often culturally specific. As we have seen, *violence* is an untranslatable word, and one that imposes a specific Anglo take on sociality. This is underscored by the fact that Danish, which in many ways is conceptually aligned with Anglo English, does not provide exact equivalence on *violence*-based terminologies. Seen from a wider global perspective, European concepts such as *violence* and *vold* are rather peculiar, and the way they capture social reality cannot readily

be translated across languages and cultures. Precisely therefore, much more caution is needed, as are multiple perspectives on sociality constructs and value words, if we are to make conclusions about human life and living.

As I have argued and demonstrated throughout this paper, a fine-grained and high-resolution metalanguage is needed to make headway in the study of linguistic concepts and comparative ethnosyntax. The NSM framework offers a non-Anglocentric framework that can bridge semantics, pragmatics and morphosyntax. *Violence discourse* is so prominent that speech communities everywhere are being overtly or covertly influenced; Anglo semantics is adapted and new polysemic meanings, by loanwords or similar, are created. *Violence discourse* does not give attention to the non-Anglo alternatives on how the sociality of the body, interpersonal relations, and sociality at large are construed. Non-English concepts are under-represented in international discourse, both in global academia and in the global media.

7. Concluding remarks

Vold has become a Danish discourse tool for the maintenance of progressive anti-authoritarian values. It serves in the interest of maintaining a view on the human body as a sanctity, often in the context of a breach of such sanctity. The *vold* concept has clear affinities with the English *violence* concept, yet, the two concepts differ, both in terms of lexical semantics and ethnosyntactic elaboration. The paper has explored how *vold*-based ethnosyntax in the form of NN compounds interacts with cultural scripts, and how cultural scripts serve as an interpretative backdrop providing “knowledges of the world” through which compounds make sense. The language of sociality is all but neutral and innocent. Firstly, there is no basic agreement at the conceptual level: *violence*, *nasilie*, *faetem*, and *vold* all stand for different perspectives of what social life is like. All ethnophilosophies maintained by discursive systems are likely to highlight certain aspects of reality, and hide other aspects. Secondly, ethnophilosophies are not fixed, and new phraseologies and compounds can supplement and nuance the discursive possibilities. The importance of the English word *violence*, as well as the spread of the concept, has made it all the more important and interesting to describe and analyse how linguistic categories of sociality are encoded in words and in ethnosyntax.

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CO O „GRAMATYCE PRZEMOCY” MÓWI NAM DUŃSKA ETNOSKŁADNIA
I KONTROWERSJA MIĘDZY WIERZBICKĄ A PINKEREM

Artykuł dotyczy semantyki i etnoskładni duńskiego słowa *vold* ‘przemoc’, kluczowego dla duńskiej kultury. Biorąc pod uwagę (i) podobieństwa i różnice między słowami oznaczającymi ‘przemoc’ w różnych społecznościach etnolingwistycznych oraz (ii) kluczową rolę etnoskładni w opisie takich konceptów, jak angielskie VIOLENCE, duńskie VOLD itd., artykuł otwiera nową perspektywę badań nad konceptami wyrażającymi negatywne zjawiska społeczne i związanymi z nimi pozytywnymi systemami wartości. W artykule bada się etnoskładnię, składnię „pojęciową” duńskiego *vold*, zawartą w strukturze morfologicznej złożen takich jak *hustruvold* ‘*vold* (w stosunku do) żony’ czy *politivold* ‘*vold* policyjna’. Analiza nowszych tworów, np. *forældrevold* ‘*vold* rodzicielska’, pokazuje, iż duńska etnoskładnia zawiera w sobie obraz świata, w którym tradycyjne autorytety, takie jak mężczyźni, policja, czy rodzice, postrzegani są jako agresorzy, natomiast kobiety, obywatele i dzieci kodowane są jako ofiary przemocy (w sensie *vold*).

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: etnoskładnia; *violence*; *vold* ‘przemoc’; konstrukty społeczne; skrypty kulturowe; duński; angielski; semantyka Naturalnego Metajęzyka Semantycznego