

**CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON ATTITUDES TOWARD AGGRESSION: A  
COMPARISON BETWEEN SPANISH, JAPANESE AND SOUTH AFRICAN  
STUDENTS**

**KARIN BEIROWSKI**



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Supervisor: Ms. W.H. Theron

## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work, and it has not previously, in its entirety or in part, been submitted at any university for a degree.

## **ABSTRACT**

The primary aim of the present study was to examine whether the culture of a society influences the way in which people justify certain aggressive behaviours in certain situations. A total of 756 students from Spain, Japan and South Africa participated in completing the CAMA, a measure of justification of aggression. The results showed that there were significant differences within the countries. There were differences in the levels of acceptance of certain acts between these countries. Further findings also indicated that there was a difference between the males of the countries and between the females of these countries. It was found that cultural influences and the norms within these countries bring about differences in justification of aggression in different situations. There were also some general trends of acceptance, with direct and indirect verbal acts e.g. sarcasm, hindering and shouting being more acceptable than physical acts such as hitting, killing and torture. It is hoped that the present findings of this research will make members of society more aware of their responsibility to help reduce aggressive acts by teaching and reinforcing norms against it. It is also hoped that the international community will gain better insight into the fact that South-Africa faces unique challenges because of the political and social changes in the country.

## OPSOMMING

Die primêre doel van die huidige studie was om vas te stel of 'n samelewing se kultuur 'n rol speel by die regverdiging van sekere aggressiewe gedrag in bepaalde omstandighede. 'n Totaal van 756 studente van Spanje, Japan en Suid Afrika het die CAMA vraelys voltooi. Die vraelys meet die regverdiging van aggressie in sekere omstandighede. Betekenisvolle verskille is tussen die lande gevind. Daar is ook betekenisvolle verskille tussen die mans van die drie lande asook tussen die vrouens van die drie lande gevind. Daar is gevind dat kulturele verskille en die norme binne 'n samelewing meebring dat daar verskille is in die mate waarin samelewings sekere aggressiewe gedrag aanvaarbaar vind in sekere situasies. Daar was ook 'n groter algemene aanvaarbaarheid van verbale aggressie bv. sarkasme, verhinderende en skreeu as fisiese aggressie soos slaan, om dood te maak en marteling. Hopelik maak hierdie navorsing mense meer bewus van elkeen in die samelewing se verantwoordelikheid om die norme teen geweld te versterk asook om die norme aan hulle nageslagte oor te dra. Verder sal die internasionale gemeenskap hopelik beter insig kry oor die unieke uitdagings wat Suid-Afrika bied as gevolg van die politieke en sosiale veranderinge in die land.

## **STATEMENT OF DEPARTMENT**

This work is the result of a research project, which is of the same extent as that required for a master's thesis.

It is the rule of the Department of Psychology that the report of the research may take the form of an article, which is ready for submission for publication to a scientific journal.

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South Africa has experienced profound changes within the last decade. The country now for the first time has a democratically elected government and this brought about that a Constitution and Bill of Rights was created where human rights would be protected at international standards. Amidst all these changes the country carries scars of a long history of oppression, which has caused South Africa to become a society characterized by violence and aggression, which once again violates human rights. Aggression is present in a variety of spheres - it manifests in interpersonal relationships, and is depicted in the media daily. This has led many South Africans to accept aggression as a commonplace, acceptable solution to conflict (McKendrick & Hoffmann, 1990). According to McKendrick and Hoffmann, the South African society has become desensitised towards violence, which eventually leads to a dehumanisation of people, as well as people no longer considering the human consequences of their actions when they evaluate the legitimacy of aggressive acts.

Björkqvist (1997) states: "If modern warfare is a consequence of human culture rather than human nature then perhaps culture is also the best cure against it" (p.35). Cross-cultural research has demonstrated that persons from various cultural settings show similarities with regard to the expression of aggression; however, some significant differences do exist (Best & Williams, 1993). The present researcher aimed to investigate the influence of culture and gender on the justification of acts of aggression, since a number of studies supported the view that the social norms in a cultural setting and the gender of the person, influence whether or not aggression is acceptable (Fujihara, Kohyama, Andreu & Ramirez, 1999; Smith & Bond, 1994; Taylor, Peplau & Sears, 2000).

The present research was conducted as part of a joint international project with Prof. J.M. Ramirez of the University of Complutense, Madrid. The project consisted of several international cross-cultural studies on aggression. In the present study two Western societies (South Africa and Spain) were compared with an Eastern society (Japan) by analysing the data on the norms that regulate aggression. Previous research (Ramirez, 1991, 1993) among Western cultures found a "universality" of norms and beliefs about aggression. Very few studies have been done in the South African context. It would be of great value to investigate whether the justification given for the aggressive acts is similar among the different societies, or whether there are significant differences, which will indicate whether there are different norms within the cultures. This in turn will provide a chance to evaluate the culture of violence in South Africa, giving us a

better understanding of the social processes that make South Africa unique, as well as providing information with which to develop and implement suitable programmes. In order to decide whether or not an aggressive act is justifiable, the definition of aggression must first be considered.

Defining aggression can be a very controversial matter because the term can have so many different meanings (Taylor et al., 2000). According to Taylor et al. societies differ in how they conceptualise aggressive behaviour. In other words, social norms must be considered when evaluating aggression. For the purpose of the present study the following working definition was used: *Aggression is any form of behaviour that is intended to injure someone physically or psychologically* (Berkowitz, 1993).

Different theories have tried to explain how and why aggression occurs. The instinct theories state that the aggressive tendencies people portray are similar to those of animals and that these aggressive acts can be aimed at self-destruction, but can also be turned outward toward other people (Taylor et al., 2000). The drive theories of aggressive behaviour state that people engage in goal-directed behaviour; if this behaviour is blocked, frustration is encountered and the person responds with aggression (Baron & Byrne, 2000). According to the social learning theory, as developed by Albert Bandura, aggression is not an innate drive, but is learned. The theory focused mainly on observational learning and on how this occurs through a process of conditioning. It is suggested that vicarious conditioning takes place when a subject learns from models and that positive vicarious reinforcement takes place if the model attains his or her goals through aggressive means (Berkowitz, 1993). According to Björkqvist (1997), every child has innate programmes for laughing, crying, walking and crawling, but not for clenching fists, beating, kicking or shooting others. These are scripts learned from watching models behave in this way and the learning occurs even more intensely if the society is accepting of this kind of behaviour. In other words, in an atmosphere/culture tolerant of aggression, it is more likely that people will engage in these behaviours than if it was disapproved of (Fujihara et al., 1999). This finding was confirmed in a study by Lee and Tedeschi (1996) using a North American sample. They studied situations in which no prescribed norms were present for subjects administering electrical shocks to participants. A lack of norms that disapprove of aggression caused the subjects to find it acceptable to use the highest possible level of shocks, that was available. Researching whether circumstances affects attitudes towards aggression, as well as whether

culture and the environment have a significant effect on the acceptability of the aggressive acts, could possibly point out the moderatory role of norms in society. (Ramirez, Andreu & Fujihara, 1999)

Different cultures may therefore have differences with regard to the conceptualisation and acceptability of aggression, and in order to understand these differences researchers need to examine the basic assumptions concerning aggression and its control within the cultures. It is also important to understand the meaning ascribed to the term "culture". According to Staub (1996), culture refers to the perspectives, meanings and worldview shared by members of a group. This also incorporates their beliefs, values, norms of conduct, myths and conception of God. Black and Avruch (cited in Avruch, 1998) refer to generic and local culture. Generic is a species-specific attribute of Homo Sapiens, an adaptive feature of species on this planet for at least a million years. This directs our attention to universal attributes of human behaviour (human nature). Local cultures, on the other hand, are complex systems of meanings created, shared and transmitted by individuals in particular social groups. The focus here is on diversity, differences and particularism. Staub reports that cultural characteristics generate and shape psychological processes and actions that contribute to violence. Moghaddam, Taylor and Wright (1993) also write that much of the cross-cultural evidence confirms the diversity of cultural norms and values concerning aggression. Levi-Strauss (cited in Björkqvist, 1997) further adds to these suggestions that norms are formed in cultures to prevent potential conflict that are latent in each culture. This, once again, points out the moderatory role of the cultural norms as stated by Ramirez et al. (1999) and that legal systems in the countries could play a role in it.

McKendrick and Hoffmann (1990) write that the legal system of a country often construes which aggressive acts are legitimate or illegitimate. The legal system in a culture becomes, through a process of socialisation, part of the norms and values in that culture. According to these authors the family as well as larger organisations within the South African society teach an individual to be part of a group and to internalise its values and norms, which in turn regulates a person's conduct within this family and group. These rules are established within the society and determine its well-being. Norms play a significant role in the way people within a society act in certain situations. According to Lauer (1989), norms are shared expectations about how each of us should behave, and people learn to abide by these norms in accordance with the group. The inter-group and interpersonal violent behaviour that occurs are often acts that have become a

legally sanctioned norm, e.g. children are taught to defend themselves using violence (McKendrick & Hoffmann, 1990). Socio-cultural factors within South Africa have led researchers to look at society as a whole when researching the causes for violence and aggression.

Justification of aggression has been researched in Western societies (Fraczek, 1985; Fujihara et al., 1999; Lagerspetz & Westman, 1980; Ramirez, 1991, 1993) as well as Oriental societies (Ramirez et al., 1999). These studies all refer to a moral code or norms within every society that regulate whether an aggressive act is justifiable or not. Theron, Matthee, Steel and Ramirez (2001) refer to socio-cultural scripts, which in South Africa's situation are strong authoritarian and patriarchal prescriptions. The researchers found in their study of South African and Spanish females that the norms in society caused South African females to use less direct and indirect aggression than the Spanish females, who found it more justified to use indirect aggression. In Ramirez, Lagerspetz, et al. (2001), comments are made on the fact that Spanish participants approved of the situation of emotional agitation as a justification for using aggressive acts and explain it against the background of Mediterranean countries being more emotionally expressive. This is also confirmed in Ramirez (1993), who reports that the Spanish sample found it more justifiable, than the Finnish and Polish samples, to use aggressive acts in a situation where emotional agitation occurred. This according to Ramirez (1991) is consistent with the stereotypical view of Latin people as being emotional. Ramirez (1993) studied the degree of acceptance of various forms of aggression in different situations in four Spanish regions and compared his findings with similar studies done in Finland and Poland. Only minor differences between the groups and genders were found in this study, hence indicating a universality of norms and beliefs about the acceptance of aggression in these societies. This is a clear indication of the impact of cultural norms on the acceptance of aggressive acts.

In contrast with the Spanish sample, research in Japanese societies indicated that Japanese people proved to be more repressed. Asian cultures have an interdependent conceptualisation of the self and are more concerned about fitting in and belonging to a group, and promoting other's goals (Fujihara et al., 1999). Japan started out as a matriarchal society, but under the influence of China in its early history became more patriarchal, with Confucianism being the underlying belief system. This philosophy stressed a strong patriarchal ideal, a hierarchal society with strong male dominance and internal qualities such as integrity and righteousness (Reischauer & Craig

cited in Sugihara and Katsurada, 2000). Parents will actively discourage quarrelling and tell their children *Makeru ga kachi*, which means "To lose is to win". Komiya (1999) conducted a study on the low crime rate in Japan. He found that the Japanese people have a rule of conduct that indicates appropriate behaviour within the inner circle of important people in their lives. The Japanese people have a traditional Japanese duty stating that a dispute should not and will not arise; consequently aggressive behaviour is not justified and does not occur within these circles. The researcher also found that Japanese people did not have the same sense of loyalty towards the outer circle of unknown people and that disputes, and even a legal culture of selfish rights, existed in these contexts.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) discuss the differences between Western and Eastern culture. According to them, in many Western cultures the dominant norms and values reinforce the idea of the self as independent and autonomous, and these cultural groups evaluate themselves in terms of individual achievements and characteristics. They found that, in contrast to this, in many Eastern cultures the dominant cultural milieu supports conceptions of the self as intertwined with and interdependent on others. These groups evaluate themselves in terms of their acceptability in social settings and their fulfilment of cultural obligations. In the study by Ramirez et al. (1999) the researchers found that the Japanese participants showed a higher justification of direct verbal aggression (shouting and rage), compared to the Spanish sample that was more permissive of indirect verbal aggression (sarcasm and hindering). Further evidence for this was found in the study by Ramirez et al. (2001b) in which they explore moral approval of aggressive acts by urban students, the researchers compared respondents on four continents. The researchers found that respondents from Finland, Japan and Iran treated sarcasm, which is an indirect verbally aggressive act, as a serious offence and did not find it as acceptable as respondents from Poland, Spain, South Africa and the USA. The researchers also found that in Japan there was a significantly higher level of approval of rage (direct verbal act) as an aggressive act, than in the other countries. Ramirez, Lagerspetz, et al. also found, like Fujihara et al. (1999), that some differences in culture may be linked to the different construes that the Japanese participants have of themselves, as well as societal regulations that exist within their culture. The Japanese sample, with their interdependent perception of themselves within society, seem to be more permissive of the expression of emotions related to anger (such as shouting or showing rage), while the independent Western societies justify indirect verbal aggression.

Research by Ramirez, Fujihara, van Goosen and Santisteban (2001) with Japanese and Spanish students, found that the Japanese sample had a higher proneness to anger expression. Fujihara et al. (1999) as well as Ramirez et al (2001a) found a high justification of physical and direct verbal aggression among the Japanese samples in their studies. This is in contrast with what would be expected from a society that is more subject to social control and is concerned with fitting in. Ramirez, Fujihara et al. (2001a) give an explanation for this by referring to the fact that the questionnaire measured what actions the subjects would feel inclined to do not what they would actually do. This illustrates that although the cultural norms in society may influence how aggression is expressed, this does not necessarily mean that the subjects do not feel inclined (or do not find it justified) to use aggression. Ikegami (cited in Ramirez et al., 2001a) refers to the fact that the Japanese are seen as a harmonious nation, concerned with fitting in, is very contrary to the history of this nation. According to Ikegami the Japanese have deep roots of violence, portrayed especially in the times of state formations in this country. Ramirez et al. (2001a) even refer to the Japanese as being “warlike”(p. 94).

Many studies have researched cultural differences in the acceptability of aggression and found that it is influenced by factors such as the situation and the gender of the person (Fujihara et al., 1999; Ramirez, 1993; Ramirez et al., 1999). A study by Sugihara and Katsurada (2000) in present day Japan indicates that Japanese men and women both had higher feminine characteristics than masculine characteristics, which would be associated with aggression. This was not consistent with the social desirability ratings, which expected men to have higher masculine and women to have higher feminine characteristics. According to the researchers, this suggests that, although the traditional roles have been present for over a thousand years, other factors are influencing the development of gender roles. Sugihara and Katsurada (2000) report that the Confucian ethic of being diligent and dedicated was transferred into post-industrial society. Since men left home to work long hours, the mothers were left alone to look after the children, nurturing and disciplining them, which meant she had to take on both masculine and feminine roles. Children then internalise these roles. The men also have to take on feminine roles in the workplace when they have to play nurturing, caring roles in order to be seen as good managers. In the workplace women also now have the opportunity to fill positions traditionally held by men and this allows them to acquire certain masculine traits.

Ramirez et al. (1999) conclude from their research that norms and values determine conflicts that may lead to violent encounters and that culture has an effect on the acceptance of these acts because it influences attitudes. Richardson (cited in Eagle, 1988) reports that culture is taught (via family, school and media) and then also maintained (via religion, law, biological and social science). The findings of all the above-mentioned studies indicate that it can be concluded that cultural differences in attitudes towards aggression exists and that this influences the acceptability of aggressive acts that occur within a given society.

In South Africa there have been few studies to determine what this particular society would consider as acceptable aggressive acts in certain circumstances. It is very important that further research be focused in the South African society to explore how culture, current programmes, the justice system and the social-political situation influences the norms formed on the acceptance of aggressive acts. Chikane (1986) mentions concerns that children in South Africa are being dehumanised and socialised to find violence acceptable. Botha and van Vuuren (1993) confirm these concerns, adding that South African children, who already have a high level of aggression and are then exposed to constant violence, are more likely to develop and maintain cognitive scripts that emphasise aggressive solutions to social problems.

In their study, Botha and Kirsten (1993) included an investigation of South African youth involved in training and education in the field of conflict resolution. Most of these youths (age 12-30) reported that they experienced a high level of family-related conflict and conflict with friends and teachers, as well as within the political sphere, especially when experiencing racial discrimination. The identified categories for their preferred way of conflict resolution were most significantly to work together to find a solution, to compromise and to try to see an issue within a different frame of reference. The remaining categories of conflict resolution were to attack verbally, cry, and retain their own standpoint, ignoring a situation, attacking physically, running away and yielding. The group was, as a whole, highly supportive of the idea of peaceful conflict resolution.

The socio-political situation in South Africa has created an atmosphere where aggression and violence are justified. In the apartheid period individual freedom and collective safety were obtained by the repression of certain groups, which led to resentment and disorder (Smith & Cilliers, 1998). During this time, Section 49 of the Criminal Procedure Act authorised police to

use lethal force, thereby legally justifying police brutality (Bruce, 2002). Bruce, a senior researcher at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation at Wits University South Africa, did a critical study about when it is acceptable to kill in South Africa. According to the researcher, the current legal situation in South Africa differs from countries in North America and Europe in an important way. In these countries the use of lethal force for the purpose of arrest is only permitted for members of the police. In South Africa this power extends to the public and armed security guards. It is also justifiable to kill in self-defence, but ironically the death penalty is not permitted. Bruce discusses the law that was currently reviewed on the justification of killing a fleeing person who has possibly committed a crime. In South Africa it is often necessary for civilians to use force when faced with crime, therefore civilians do not necessarily want measures imposed that restrict self-defence. The act of civilians using forceful measures for safety, according to Bruce, needs to be clearly defined because much of the South African society, including police, are poorly trained and semi-literate. This means that excessive force is often accepted as the only measure that works in a society that is riddled with violent crimes.

Smith and Cilliers (1998) continue, commenting that the government is responsible for the protection of all citizens and their rights, but it is clear against the background of all the killings and injuries taking place in post-apartheid South Africa that the government is failing in this respect. Violence in the South African society is perceived as permissible when the criminal justice system is abusive or neglectful. Epstein (1998) emphasized that South Africa has become a society structured through violence and that hi-jacking, rape and other violent crimes have become a part of everyday existence.

Aggressive behaviour in society is not influenced by culture alone but also by the gender of the person. There have been many studies looking at gender differences in aggressive styles (Berkowitz, 1993; Biaggio, 1989; Björkqvist, 1994; Björkqvist, Österman & Kaukiainen, 1992; Theron et al., 2001). According to Björkqvist (1994), there are no reasons to believe that females engage in fewer conflict situations or are less hostile than men, although it seems to be well established that there are differences. Many researchers (Berkowitz, 1993; Biaggio, 1989; Eagly & Steffen, 1986) believe that the differences arise because of the traditional gender roles people learn as they are growing up. The research by Eagly and Steffen found that female subjects in their study saw certain aggressive acts as causing more anxiety and guilt, and ascribed these

differences to the gender roles present in societies. In other words, looking only at physical aggression is not really a true reflection of the aggressive acts being performed. Men and women also develop more refined ways of being aggressive because of social norms that find these aggressive acts undesirable (Björkqvist et al., 1992; Theron et al., 2001). This is also illustrated by the effect/danger ratio, which as explained by Björkqvist, Österman and Lagerspetz (1994), is a technique that the aggressor uses to assess what the consequences of the aggressive act could be. Men and women try to find techniques that have the desired effect, while trying to keep the risks to themselves at a minimum. According to these researchers, direct (physical) aggression has the least favourable effect/danger ratio, resulting in people often making use of indirect or verbal aggression in order to achieve their objective. At first some authors such as Olweas (cited in Björkqvist, 1994) claimed that female aggression occurred so seldom that it was not worth researching. Olweas later changed his opinion and started to investigate female bullying. Other researchers such as Buss (1961) started to investigate the quality of female aggression rather than the quantity. Studies suggest that, on the whole, women found indirect aggression more acceptable than direct aggression (Björkqvist et al., 1992; Theron et al., 2001).

Theron et al. (2001) compared a South African female sample with a Spanish female sample when researching direct and indirect aggression in women and found that the South African respondents had a significantly lower expression of aggression. The researchers suggest that the patriarchal nature of the social and familial structures in South Africa places women in a position of submission, which takes away their power, and expressing aggression is seen as unfitting. They further comment that during the apartheid period the power was mostly with white males whom used gender and race as categories for the distribution of power.

There have been studies indicating biological causes for higher levels of actual and self-reported aggression in males (Berman, Glyde & Taylor, as cited in Baron & Richardson, 2000). Researchers interested in gender differences in aggression often refer to cross-cultural similarities (e.g. men from different cultures finding physical aggression more acceptable than the females) as evidence for biological bases for such differences (Best & Williams, 1993). These researchers rely on biological theories to provide evidence for their studies. Many researchers agree that biological processes do underlie the expression of anger, but further explain that the processes interact with social and environmental influences (norms and gender roles) to determine the chosen behaviour (Baron & Richardson, 2000; Berkowitz, 1993).

The Social learning theory accounts for many differences in male and female gender roles. According to this theory accredited to Bandura, parents, teachers, peers and other socialisation agents shape gender-related behaviour. This process takes place through modelling, expectations, reinforcement and punishment of gender-appropriate and -inappropriate behaviours and of differential treatment of boys and girls (Best & Williams, 1993). Lorentzen (1998), claims that masculinity is constructed and that, since men are the perpetrators in most violent and aggressive acts, this should be understood under the concept of masculinity. Men are frequently rewarded for aggressive behaviour as they grow up and they subsequently approve more readily of the use of aggression in different situations (e.g. social control, law enforcement and interpersonal relationships) (Berkowitz, 1993). According to Brittan (1989), masculinity is always defined in relation to femininity, and that it will always be an expression of the current image that men have of themselves in relation to women. Brittan distinguishes between masculinity, masculinism and patriarchy. According to him, masculinity refers to aspects of men's behaviour that fluctuate over time, e.g. wearing different hairstyles according to the presiding fashion era. He argues that role-reversal is taking place between men and women, that the men are taking responsibility for fatherhood and sometimes even staying at home to do house work. Since it has been suggested that this is leading to a crisis in masculinity, Brittan argues that masculinity can be seen as a fragile and tentative thing, not secure in a contemporary world. He recognises that men are often described as aggressive, assertive, independent and competitive, and also that men are seen as having a nature that determines their behaviour in all situations. According to Brittan this is all ascribed to masculinism. Masculinism is the ideology that justifies and naturalises male domination, just as the ideology of patriarchy does, in the public and private sphere. According to Lorentzen (1998), the public and media attention should be on violence in the private sphere (domestic violence) since it is transferred and extended from here into the public sphere. Femininity on the other hand is often shaped by the socialization process that little girls encounter as they are growing up. This socialisation process often results in women avoiding aggressive acts, or reverting to indirect aggression, because it causes anxiety or guilt (Björkqvist, 1994). Björkqvist suggests that females develop distinctive strategies and methods, partly because they are physically weaker, but also because of developmental changes that have taken place in terms of aggressive styles. Verbal and social skills are often utilised in a situation where physical aggression is not appropriate.

In apartheid South Africa violence, perpetrated by white males, was often seen as acceptable in certain circumstances. Violence took on many forms, including physical torture as recounted to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Epstein, 1998). White masculine identities were created in terms of how men saw women and men of colour (Epstein, 1998). White South African citizens saw themselves as superior and masculinity was implicated in interpersonal and institutional violence. Segel and Labe (1990) stated that past research in South Africa demonstrated a link between broader societal violence and violence in the family. The researchers also stated that wife abuse is a serious social problem in South Africa and that it is a feature of patriarchal gender relations under conditions of broader societal violence. In the historical composition of the Afrikaans farming community, there was only one leader in the family and the wife fell under the authority of her husband (Cronje & Venter, 1973). In these families, resulting from dominant Calvinistic theological ideology, the husband took on the role of leader in the family and his wife as his helpmate. Even though some wives have become wage earners and heads of households, the pervasive model in South Africa was still the husband as earner and the wife as housekeeper and childminder (Eagle, 1988). In present day South Africa there has been a change in the political power structures and the related social norms. The woman have been given the chance to become empowered, but since the process is not complete women do not yet feel confident enough to express themselves socially and politically in all situations (Theron et al., 2001).

The aim of the present study was to research whether the culture of a society influences the way in which people justify certain aggressive behaviours in particular situations. The following hypotheses were investigated:

1. There will be significant differences between Spain, Japan and South Africa for the total group (males and females) regarding the justification of aggression (acts and situations).
2. There will be significant differences between Spain, Japan and South Africa for males regarding the justification of aggression (acts and situations).
3. There will be significant differences between Spain, Japan and South Africa for females regarding the justification of aggression (acts and situations).

## METHOD

### Participants

The subjects consisted of undergraduate students, male and female, born and living in Spain, Japan and South Africa. They were of similar age (18 - 25 years). The majority of the South African sample was Afrikaans-speaking students. The present researcher decided to use a homogeneous, westernised sample to compare with the Spanish sample and an Oriental sample (Japan). Consequently only white students were used in the South African sample to minimise the influence of confounding variables on the internal validity of the study.

The frequency distribution of the three groups (N = 756) and the gender compilations are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

#### *Frequency Distribution of the Countries and Gender*

	SPAIN	JAPAN	S.AFRICA	TOTAL
	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>
Male	80	137	136	353
Female	130	105	168	403
Total	210	242	304	756

### Questionnaire

The CAMA (Questionario de Actitudes Morales Y Agresion) is an adapted version of the Social Attitude Inventory, an elaborate rating scale originally devised in Finnish by Lagerspetz and Westman (1980). The CAMA was developed (translated and modified to measure a wider variety of interpersonal actions) and adapted for research by Ramirez on Spanish subjects (Ramirez, 1993). The questionnaire consists of three parts: norms, feelings and moral reasoning.

The CAMA examines attitudes toward interpersonal aggression. The questionnaire lists six different circumstances (situations) that may serve to justify an aggressive act: in self-defence, for protecting another person, as a way of overcoming communication difficulties, due to emotional agitation, in defence of one's property and as a punishment. Each situation is

accompanied by eight categories of aggressive behaviour (acts) of different intensity and quality (being sarcastic, threatening, hindering a person from doing something, using torture, shouting, hitting, having a fit of rage or killing somebody). The subjects have to rate the justification of a given aggressive behaviour under specified circumstances using a 2-point scale: whether the act is not acceptable (1) or acceptable (2). The latter score reflects a high degree of justification of the kind of aggressive act.

In the sample used for the test construction, the K-R reliability of the test was 0,87. Only the first part (norms) of the translated version from the original Spanish version of CAMA was applied in the present study.

The listed aggressive acts in the CAMA, can also be combined into three categories (Fujihara et al., 1999):

Physical aggression: torture, hit, kill and threaten

Direct verbal aggression: shout and rage

Indirect verbal aggression: hinder and sarcasm

### **Procedure**

Permission to conduct the present research was granted by the Psychology Department, University of Stellenbosch as well as Prof. J.M. Ramirez of the University of Complutense, Madrid. South African data were obtained from undergraduate students studying in the department of Psychology at the University of Stellenbosch. The data for Spain and Japan were obtained from Prof. J.M. Ramirez, who is the co-ordinator of the international cross-cultural research project on aggression.

All participants were briefly informed of the identity of the researcher and the rationale of the research study. Confidentiality of the test material was ensured and honesty was emphasised before the testing started. The questionnaire was administered according to the prescribed instructions.

## **RESULTS**

Country and gender differences for each act and situation were studied by applying Chi-square. An alpha level of .01 and .05 was used for all the statistical tests.

The results are reported as follows:

1. Differences between Spain, Japan and South Africa (total group) in accepting aggressive acts in different situations.
2. Differences between males from Spain, Japan and South Africa in accepting aggressive acts in different situations.
3. Differences between females from Spain, Japan and South Africa in accepting aggressive acts in different situations.

Table 2 indicates differences between the cultures (total group) regarding the acceptability of using the different aggressive acts in self-defence (Situation 1).

Table 2

*Results of the Chi Square Test for Spain, Japan and South Africa. (Situation 1: Self-defence)*

ACT	SPAIN	JAPAN	S.AFRICA	DF	$\chi^2$
	%	%	%		
1.Sarcasm	81.7	59.5	73.0	2	27.82**
2.Threatening	61.5	49.2	59.9	2	8.18
3.Hindering	80.4	71.9	89.1	2	26.18**
4.Torture	9.0	25.2	8.9	2	35.79**
5.Shouting	72.9	81.8	73.0	2	7.04*
6.Hitting	54.3	57.0	58.2	2	0.77
7.Rage	76.0	90.9	74.7	2	25.72**
8.Killing	16.8	17.4	24.2	2	5.66

\* p<0.05

\*\*p<0.01

*In the situation of self-defence* significant differences were found between students from the three countries on the acceptance of five of the eight acts: Sarcasm, hindering, torture, shouting and rage. No differences were found with regard to the acceptability of threatening, hitting and killing.

It appears that:

- Sarcasm is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan
- Hindering is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan

- Torture is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in South Africa
- Shouting is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain
- Rage is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in South Africa

Table 3 indicates differences between the cultures (total group) regarding the acceptability of using the different aggressive acts to protect another person (Situation 2).

Table 3

*Results of the Chi Square Test for Spain, Japan and South Africa. (Situation 2: Protect another)*

ACT	SPAIN	JAPAN	S. AFRICA	DF	$\chi^2$
	%	%	%		
1.Sarcasm	81.4	62.0	72.9	2	21.32**
2.Threatening	67.1	48.8	77.0	2	47.76**
3.Hindering	87.1	78.9	93.4	2	24.96**
4.Torture	6.7	21.5	10.2	2	25.10**
5.Shouting	77.1	83.1	76.6	2	3.82
6.Hitting	55.0	47.9	67.1	2	21.08**
7.Rage	75.6	91.3	77.3	2	23.68**
8.Killing	10.1	9.1	19.4	2	15.15**

\*\*p<0,01

*In the situation of protecting another person* significant differences were found between students from the three countries on the acceptance of seven of the eight acts: Sarcasm, threatening, hindering, torture, hitting, rage and killing. No differences were found with regard to the acceptability of shouting.

It appears that:

- Sarcasm is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan
- Threatening is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan
- Hindering is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan
- Torture is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain
- Hitting is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan
- Rage is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain

- Killing is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan

Table 4 indicates differences between the cultures (total group) regarding the acceptability of using the different aggressive acts when communication fails (Situation 3).

Table 4

*Results of the Chi Square Test for Spain, Japan and South Africa. (Situation 3: When communication fails)*

ACT	SPAIN	JAPAN	S. AFRICA	DF	$\chi^2$
	%	%	%		
1.Sarcasm	71.9	40.9	57.6	2	44.26**
2.Threatening	18.2	13.2	27.0	2	16.53**
3.Hindering	52.9	30.2	57.2	2	43.14**
4.Torture	1.0	2.1	2.3	2	1.31
5.Shouting	28.2	44.2	36.5	2	12.34**
6.Hitting	5.3	2.9	13.5	2	23.60**
7.Rage	28.7	49.6	45.9	2	22.67**
8.Killing	1.0	1.2	0.7	2	0.50

\*\*p<0,01

*In the situation of communication failure* significant differences were found between students from the three countries on the acceptance of six of the eight acts: Sarcasm, threatening, hindering, shouting, hitting and rage. No differences were found with regard to the acceptability of torture and killing.

It appears that:

- Sarcasm is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan
- Threatening is most acceptable in South Africa and least in Japan
- Hindering is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan
- Shouting is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain
- Hitting is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan
- Rage is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain

Table 5 indicates differences between the cultures (total group) regarding the acceptability of using the different aggressive acts as a result of emotional agitation (Situation 4).

Table 5

*Results of the Chi Square Test for Spain, Japan and South Africa. (Situation 4: Emotional agitation)*

ACT	SPAIN %	JAPAN %	S. AFRICA %	DF	$\chi^2$
1.Sarcasm	86.6	50.4	73.5	2	72.63**
2.Threatening	38.5	26.4	39.1	2	11.19**
3.Hindering	52.9	30.2	63.4	2	60.42**
4.Torture	1.4	7.9	2.6	2	14.56**
5.Shouting	82.9	75.2	67.8	2	14.97**
6.Hitting	21.4	23.1	17.8	2	2.54
7.Rage	77.1	74.8	65.5	2	10.04**
8.Killing	1.9	2.1	1.3	2	0.51

\*\*p<0,01

*In the situation of emotional agitation* significant differences were found between students from the three countries on the acceptance of six of the eight acts: Sarcasm, threatening, hindering, torture, shouting and rage. No differences were found with regard to the acceptability of torture and killing.

It appears that:

- Sarcasm is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan
- Threatening is most acceptable in South Africa and least in Japan
- Hindering is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan
- Torture is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain
- Shouting is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in South Africa
- Rage is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in South Africa

Table 6 indicates differences between the cultures (total group) regarding the acceptability of using the different aggressive acts in defence of property (Situation 5).

Table 6

*Results of the Chi Square Test for Spain, Japan and South Africa. (Situation 5: Defence of property)*

ACT	SPAIN	JAPAN	S.AFRICA	DF	$\chi^2$
	%	%	%		
1.Sarcasm	73.3	60.3	69.3	2	9.39**
2.Threatening	58.6	51.2	80.6	2	56.50**
3.Hindering	88.1	79.3	92.7	2	21.81**
4.Torture	26.8	13.6	7.9	2	35.26**
5.Shouting	74.8	83.9	79.6	2	5.77
6.Hitting	26.8	37.2	45.1	2	17.66**
7.Rage	72.2	91.7	76.0	2	31.74**
8.Killing	3.3	4.1	7.6	4	6.89**

\*\*p<0,01

*In the situation of defence of property* significant differences were found between students from the three countries on the acceptance of seven of the eight acts: Sarcasm, threatening, hindering, torture, hitting, rage and killing. No differences were found with regard to the acceptability of shouting.

It appears that:

- Sarcasm is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan
- Threatening is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan
- Hindering is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan
- Torture is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in South Africa
- Hitting is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Spain
- Rage is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain
- Killing is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Spain

Table 7 indicates differences between the cultures (total group) regarding the acceptability of using the different aggressive acts as a punishment (Situation 6).

Table 7

*Results of the Chi Square Test for Spain, Japan and South Africa. (Situation 6: Punishment)*

ACT	SPAIN	JAPAN	S. AFRICA	DF	$\chi^2$
	%	%	%		
1.Sarcasm	81.4	49.6	56.9	2	52.37**
2.Threatening	50.0	36.8	58.6	2	25.64**
3.Hindering	66.7	47.6	84.2	2	74.89**
4.Torture	2.9	19.8	8.2	2	37.32**
5.Shouting	65.7	80.6	65.1	2	18.23**
6.Hitting	10.5	43.0	42.6	2	70.10**
7.Rage	48.3	88.8	60.5	2	89.70**
8.Killing	1.0	8.7	5.6	2	13.48**

\*\*p<0,01

*In the situation of punishment* significant differences were found between students from the three countries on the acceptance of all eight acts: Sarcasm, threatening, hindering, torture, shouting, hitting, rage and killing.

It appears that:

- Sarcasm is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan
- Threatening is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan
- Hindering is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan
- Torture is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain
- Shouting is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in South Africa
- Hitting is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain
- Rage is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain
- Killing is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain

The results for the males and females in the different countries are stated within one table for every situation, however the results shall be discussed separately according to the stated hypotheses for the males and the females.

Table 8 indicates the differences between males and the differences between females, from the three countries, regarding the acceptability of using the different kinds of aggressive acts in self-defence (Situation 1).

Table 8

*Results of the Chi Square Test for Males and Females in Spain, Japan and South Africa.*

*(Situation 1: Self-defence)*

ACT	SPAIN		JAPAN		S. AFRICA		DF	DF	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2$
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE				
	%	%	%	%	%	%				
1.Sarcasm	87.5	78.1	56.2	63.8	72.1	73.1	2	2	24.03**	6.16
2.Threatening	66.7	58.5	55.5	41.0	59.6	60.1	2	2	2.59	10.74**
3.Hindering	88.6	75.4	70.8	73.3	81.5	95.2	2	2	10.41**	30.30**
4.Torture	8.8	9.2	27.7	21.9	8.1	9.5	2	2	23.66**	11.00**
5.Shouting	80.0	68.5	83.9	79.0	65.4	79.2	2	2	13.72**	5.44
6.Hitting	61.3	50.0	61.3	51.4	57.4	58.9	2	2	0.54	2.75
7.Rage	82.3	72.1	89.1	93.3	66.2	81.5	2	2	22.08**	17.39**
8.Killing	22.8	13.2	17.5	17.1	26.5	22.3	2	2	3.19	4.15

\*\*p<0.01

*In the situation of self- defence* significant differences were found between **male** students from the three countries on five of the eights acts: Sarcasm, hindering, torture, shouting and rage. No differences were found on the acceptance of threatening, hitting and killing.

- It appears that for **male** students, sarcasm is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, hindering is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, torture is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in South Africa.
- It appears that for **male** students, shouting is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in South Africa.
- It appears that for **male** students, rage is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in South Africa.

*In the situation of self-defence* significant differences were found between **female** students from the three countries on four of the eight acts: Threatening, hindering, torture and rage. No differences were found on the acceptance of sarcasm, shouting, hitting and killing.

- For **female** students, threatening is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- For **female** students it appears that hindering is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- **Female** students in Japan found torture most acceptable and it was least acceptable in Spain.
- **Female** students in Japan found rage most acceptable and it was least acceptable in Spain.

Table 9 indicates the differences between males and the differences between females, from the three countries, regarding the acceptability of using the different kinds of aggressive acts to protect another (Situation 2).

Table 9

*Results of the Chi Square Test for Males and Females in Spain, Japan and South Africa.  
(Situation 2: Protect another)*

ACT	SPAIN		JAPAN		S. AFRICA		DF	DF	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2$
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE				
	%	%	%	%	%	%				
1.Sarcasm	90.0	76.2	60.6	63.8	70.6	74.9	2	2	21.30**	5.30
2.Threatening	77.5	60.8	59.1	35.2	75.0	78.6	2	2	11.29**	51.31*
3.Hindering	90.0	85.4	78.1	80.0	87.5	98.2	2	2	7.03**	25.45*
4.Torture	8.9	5.4	25.5	16.2	10.3	10.1	2	2	15.62**	7.42*
5.Shouting	80.0	75.4	85.4	80.0	69.9	82.1	2	2	9.87**	2.08
6.Hitting	66.3	48.1	54.7	39.0	70.6	64.3	2	2	7.74**	18.00*
7.Rage	83.5	70.8	89.1	94.3	68.4	84.5	2	2	18.98**	23.10*
8.Killing	15.2	7.0	8.8	9.5	26.5	13.7	2	2	15.39**	3.65

\* p<0.05

\*\*p<0.01

*In the situation of protecting another* significant differences were found between **male** students from the three countries on all eight acts: Sarcasm, threatening, hindering, torture, shouting, hitting, rage and killing.

- It appears that for **male** students, sarcasm is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, threatening is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, hindering is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, torture is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain.
- It appears that for **male** students, shouting is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in South Africa.
- It appears that for **male** students, hitting is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, rage is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in South Africa.
- It appears that for **male** students, killing is most acceptable in South Africa and least in Japan.

*In the situation of protecting another* significant differences were found between **female** students from the three countries on five of the eight acts: Threatening, hindering, torture, hitting and rage. No differences were found on the acceptance of sarcasm, shouting and killing.

- For **female** students it appears that threatening is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- For **female** students it appears that hindering is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- **Female** students in Japan found it most acceptable to torture and it was least acceptable in Spain.
- It appears that for **female** students, hitting is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- **Female** students in Japan found rage most acceptable and it was least acceptable in Spain.

Table 10 indicates the differences between males and the differences between females, from the three countries, regarding the acceptability of using the different kinds of aggressive acts when communication fails (Situation 3).

Table 10

*Results of the Chi Square Test for Males and Females in Spain, Japan and South Africa.*

*(Situation 3: When communication fails)*

ACT	SPAIN		JAPAN		S. AFRICA		DF	DF	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2$
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE				
	%	%	%	%	%	%				
1.Sarcasm	80.0	66.9	42.3	39.0	61.0	54.8	2	2	30.22**	18.21*
2.Threatening	22.8	15.4	18.2	6.7	32.4	22.6	2	2	7.50*	12.23*
3.Hindering	62.0	47.3	38.0	20.0	50.7	62.5	2	2	12.15**	46.96*
4.Torture	0.0	1.5	2.2	1.9	2.9	1.8	2	2	2.24	0.05
5.Shouting	32.5	25.6	45.3	42.9	32.4	39.9	2	2	5.91	9.31**
6.Hitting	8.9	3.1	2.9	2.9	14.7	12.5	2	2	11.81**	13.74*
7.Rage	26.6	30.0	45.3	55.2	34.1	55.4	2	2	8.19*	22.64*
8.Killing	0.0	1.5	0.7	1.9	1.5	0.0	2	2	1.31	2.97

\* p<0.05

\*\*p<0.01

*In the situation of communication failure, significant differences were found between male students from the three countries on five of the eight acts: Sarcasm, threatening, hindering, hitting and rage. No differences were found on the acceptance of torture, shouting and killing.*

- It appears that for **male** students, sarcasm is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, threatening is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, hindering is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan.

- It appears that for **male** students, hitting is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, rage is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain.

*In the situation of communication difficulties* significant differences were found between **female** students from the three countries on six of the eight acts: Sarcasm, threatening, hindering, shouting, hitting and rage. No differences were found on the acceptance of torture and killing.

- It appears that for **female** students, sarcasm is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **female** students, threatening is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- For **female** students it appears that hindering is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **female** students, shouting is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain.
- It appears that for **female** students, hitting is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- **Female** students in South Africa found rage most acceptable and it was least acceptable in Spain.

Table 11 indicates the differences between males and the differences between females, from the three countries, regarding the acceptability of using the different kinds of aggressive acts because of emotional agitation (Situation 4).

Table 11

*Results of the Chi Square Test for Males and Females in Spain, Japan and South Africa.*

*(Situation 4: Emotional agitation)*

ACT	SPAIN		JAPAN		S. AFRICA		DF	DF	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2$
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE				
	%	%	%	%	%	%				
1.Sarcasm	88.8	85.3	51.1	49.5	71.3	74.9	2	2	34.14**	37.87
2.Threatening	35.4	40.3	37.2	12.4	44.1	35.1	2	2	2.05	23.64
3.Hindering	62.0	47.3	38.0	20.0	59.6	66.5	2	2	17.10**	55.81
4.Torture	3.8	0.0	10.9	3.8	4.4	1.2	2	2	6.12*	5.92
5.Shouting	81.3	83.8	76.6	73.3	61.8	72.6	2	2	11.92**	5.88
6.Hitting	22.5	20.8	31.4	12.4	23.5	13.1	2	2	2.96	4.30
7.Rage	82.5	73.8	69.3	81.9	55.1	73.8	2	2	17.63**	2.77
8.Killing	2.5	1.5	1.5	2.9	2.9	0.0	2	2	0.70	4.44

\* p<0.05

\*\*p<0.01

*In the situation of emotional agitation* significant differences were found between **male** students from the three countries on five of the eight acts: Sarcasm, hindering, torture, shouting and rage. No differences were found on the acceptance of threatening, hitting and killing.

- It appears that for **male** students, sarcasm is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, hindering is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, torture is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain.
- It appears that for **male** students, shouting is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in South Africa.
- It appears that for **male** students, rage is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in South Africa.

*In the situation of emotional agitation* significant differences were found between **female** students from the three countries on three of the eight acts: Sarcasm, threatening and hindering. No differences were found on the acceptance of torture, shouting, hitting, rage and killing.

- It appears that for **female** students, sarcasm is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan.
- For **female** students, threatening is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan.
- For **female** students it appears that hindering is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.

Table 12 indicates the differences between males and the differences between females, from the three countries, regarding the acceptability of using the different kinds of aggressive acts in defence of property (Situation 5).

Table 12

*Results of the Chi Square Test for Males and Females in Spain, Japan and South Africa.*

*(Situation 5: Defence of property)*

ACT	SPAIN		JAPAN		S. AFRICA		DF	DF	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2$
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE				
	%	%	%	%	%	%				
1.Sarcasm	85.0	66.2	57.7	63.8	69.6	69.0	2	2	17.62**	0.83
2.Threatening	67.5	53.1	59.1	41.0	80.1	81.0	2	2	14.26**	49.49*
3.Hindering	91.3	86.2	82.5	75.2	89.7	95.2	2	2	4.69	22.97*
4.Torture	37.5	20.2	19.0	6.7	10.3	6.0	2	2	23.55**	17.86*
5.Shouting	78.8	72.3	85.4	81.9	79.4	79.8	2	2	2.18	3.68
6.Hitting	38.0	20.0	48.9	21.9	61.0	32.1	2	2	11.08**	6.68*
7.Rage	76.3	69.8	89.8	94.3	66.9	83.3	2	2	20.90**	23.85*
8.Killing	6.3	1.5	4.4	3.8	14.1	2.4	2	2	8.82*	1.25

\* p<0.05

\*\*p<0.01

*In the situation of defence of property*, significant differences were found between **male** students from the three countries on six of the eight acts: Sarcasm, threatening, torture, hitting, rage and killing. No differences were found on the acceptance of hindering and shouting.

- It appears that for **male** students, sarcasm is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, threatening is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, torture is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in South Africa.
- It appears that for **male** students, hitting is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Spain.
- It appears that for **male** students, rage is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in South Africa.
- It appears that for **male** students, killing is most acceptable in South Africa and least in Japan.

*In the situation of defence of property*, significant differences were found between **female** students from the three countries on five of the eight acts: Threatening, hindering, torture, hitting and rage. No differences were found on the acceptance of sarcasm, shouting and killing.

- It appears that for **female** students, threatening is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- For **female** students, hindering is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **female** students, torture is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in South Africa.
- It appears that for **female** students, hitting is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Spain.
- **Female** students in Japan found rage most acceptable and it was least acceptable in Spain.

Table 13 indicates the differences between males and the differences between females, from the three countries, regarding the acceptability of using the different kinds of aggressive acts as a punishment (Situation 6).

Table 13

*Results of the Chi Square Test for Males and Females in Spain, Japan and South Africa.*

*(Situation 6: Punishment)*

ACT	SPAIN		JAPAN		S. AFRICA		DF	DF	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2$
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE				
	%	%	%	%	%	%				
1.Sarcasm	85.0	79.2	49.6	49.5	55.9	57.7	2	2	27.94**	24.70**
2.Threatening	46.3	52.3	42.3	29.5	61.0	56.5	2	2	10.26**	20.24**
3.Hindering	65.0	67.7	54.0	43.8	75.0	91.7	2	2	13.15**	73.91**
4.Torture	5.0	1.5	28.5	8.6	12.5	4.8	2	2	22.89**	6.40 *
5.Shouting	58.8	70.0	83.9	76.2	69.1	61.9	2	2	17.37**	6.36*
6.Hitting	11.3	10.1	50.4	33.3	43.4	41.9	2	2	34.49**	36.57**
7.Rage	42.5	51.9	87.6	90.5	47.8	70.8	2	2	62.67**	40.98**
8.Killing	2.5	0.0	13.1	2.9	8.1	3.6	2	2	7.27*	4.54

\* p<0.05

\*\*p<0.01

*In the situation of punishment, significant differences were found between male students from the three countries on all eight acts: Sarcasm, threatening, hindering, torture, shouting, hitting, rage and killing.*

- It appears that for **male** students, sarcasm is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, threatening is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, hindering is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **male** students, torture is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain.

- It appears that for **male** students, shouting is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain.
- It appears that for **male** students, hitting is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain.
- It appears that for **male** students, rage is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain.
- It appears that for **male** students, killing is most acceptable in Japan and least in Spain.

*In the situation of punishment* significant differences were found between **female** students from the three countries on seven of the eight acts: Sarcasm, threatening, hindering, torture, shouting, hitting and rage. No differences were found on the acceptance of killing.

- It appears that for **female** students, sarcasm is most acceptable in Spain and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **female** students, threatening is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **female** students, hindering is most acceptable in South Africa and least acceptable in Japan.
- It appears that for **female** students, torture is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain.
- **Female** students in Japan found shouting most acceptable and it was least acceptable in South Africa.
- **Female** students in South Africa found hitting most acceptable and it was least acceptable in Spain.
- It appears that for **female** students, rage is most acceptable in Japan and least acceptable in Spain.

## DISCUSSION

To simplify the discussion the listed aggressive acts are divided into three categories as previously discussed (Fujihara et al., 1999):

Physical aggression: torture, hitting, killing and threatening

Direct verbal aggression: shouting and rage

Indirect verbal aggression: hindering and sarcasm

The discussion will also take on the form of referring to the results within the context of each separate situation to be able to enlighten certain findings.

The first hypothesis was confirmed by the results, which indicated that there would be significant differences between South Africa, Spain and Japan for the total population (males and females) regarding the justification of aggression (acts and situations). These differences suggest that one's culture and the nature of the immediate situation significantly affects one's attitude toward interpersonal aggression. This finding is consistent with findings by Ramirez (1993) and Fujihara et al. (1999). There were also some general trends of acceptance, with milder acts such as sarcasm and hindering being more acceptable than physical acts (eg. hitting, killing and torture).

It was found in situation one (self-defence) that the students from all three countries differ significantly on the acceptability of the direct and indirect verbal aggressive acts as well as on the act of torture (physical aggression). It seems that on the whole, in self defence, the acts of verbal aggression was found more acceptable than the physical aggression with the two Western cultures (Spain and South Africa) showing little difference in acceptance percentages of verbal aggression. The higher justification of direct verbal aggressive acts and the physical act of torture among the Japanese participants is not surprising if compared to findings by Fujihara et al. (1999); Ramirez et al. (2001a) and Ramirez et al. (2001b). Although there are many references to the Japanese society as being repressed because they are concerned with fitting in (Fujihara et al., 1999) and have integrity and righteousness (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2000), research also refer to the Japanese society as having a history of violence (Ikegami cited in Ramirez et al., 2001a) which might indicate that in circumstances of self-defence they would find it more justified to use aggressive acts like torture (physical aggression), shouting and rage (direct verbal

aggression). The fact that the results showed an overall higher approval of the verbal aggressive acts, could be an indication that similar norms are present in societies when it comes to using verbal aggression in self-defence. Ramirez (1993) reports on a universality of norms in Western countries that also share a common Christian background, as is the case with South Africa and Spain. When looking at the differences and similarities from the perspective of Black and Avruch (cited in Avruch, 1998), as previously discussed, the researchers refer to generic culture, the fact that there were no significant differences within the countries for the physical acts (threatening, hitting and killing), in self-defence, reveals a generic culture which refers to universal attributes among the participants. The fact that the South African participants only justified one act (hindering) more than the other two countries, is interesting since there would be expected that in a violent climate they would find it more justified to defend themselves.

In situation two (to protect another person) the students from the countries differed significantly on all the acts except shouting. The verbal aggressive acts were more justifiable than the physical acts by all three countries, with the exception of the physical act of threatening for which the South African participants showed an equally high acceptance. As in the previous situation the Japanese sample showed the highest acceptance of rage compared to the other two countries. This confirms findings by Ramirez et al. (2001a) that these interdependent cultures find the expression of emotions related to anger more acceptable. The Spanish sample found the indirect verbal act of sarcasm more acceptable than the other two countries, this was also found in the situation of self-defence and is consistent with findings by Ramirez et al. (2001b) which found that Spanish participants did not treat sarcasm as a serious offence. In other words they are more inclined to find it a justified aggressive act that can be used. The South African participants accepted the use of physical aggression (kill, threaten and hit) in order to protect another person more than in the other two countries. This higher justification of these physical acts, by the South African sample, might be explained by the fact that South Africans experience real danger, often leading to a fear for safety and that of their families, in the violent and aggressive circumstances prevailing in the country at present. This, in turn, creates a perception that physical aggression is an acceptable form of defence. This confirms research by Botha and van Vuuren (1993) that children who are exposed to constant violence are more likely to develop and maintain cognitive scripts that emphasise physical aggressive solutions to social problems. In Japan a higher percentage of participants found it acceptable to use the physical aggressive act of torture. This is

consistent with findings in the previous situation (self-defence) and researchers like Ramirez et al. (2001a) even go as far as saying that this is “consistent with the stereotyped image of the Japanese as being barbaric and warlike” (p.94).

In situation three (when communication fails) there was significant differences between the students from all three countries on the verbally aggressive acts and the physical acts except for torture and killing. On the whole, the acceptance of all the verbal acts were higher than the acceptance of the physical acts, with the Spanish sample, showing the highest justification, of the three countries, for sarcasm when communication fails. This is consistent with previous findings of Ramirez et al. (2001b) and also with the present findings in the previous two situations of self-defence and to protect another person. The Japanese sample differed significantly by once again showing higher acceptance for the direct verbal acts. All three groups showed a low level of acceptance for physical aggression (hitting and threatening) when they are used as a response to failure of communication. The response percentages to these physical acts were higher when the situation displayed a threat towards the person e.g. self-defence (Situation 1). This confirms the findings by Fujihara et al. (1999) that moral judgement, and thereby justification, is influenced by the recognition of the intentions ascribed to the aggressor. According to the researchers, norms that are usually seen as illegitimate become justified in proportion to retaliation. The students are more likely to justify acts made in self-defence, than acts used because of communication failure, since it is seen as more acceptable to defend yourself. The South African sample scored highest on the acceptance of the physical acts hitting and threatening when communication fails. This is a possible explanation for the high levels of domestic violence in South African culture, where hitting and threatening can become a learned response (Segel & Labe, 1990). In situations where communication fails, as could happen within a domestic setting, frustration is experienced, often leading to acts of aggression (e.g. hitting). These consequences of frustration are explained by the drive theories of aggressive behaviour, which state that people engage in goal-directed behaviour; when behaviour is hindered, frustration is experienced and the person responds with aggression (Baron & Byrne, 2000). Segel and Labe state that research has demonstrated a link between broader societal violence and violence in the family. They confirm that wife abuse is a serious social problem in South Africa and that it is a feature of patriarchal gender relations under conditions of broader societal violence.

In situation four (emotional agitation) there were significant differences between the countries for all the verbal acts as well as for the physical acts of threatening and torture. Overall the countries found the verbally aggressive acts more justified than the physical acts. The Spanish sample scored higher percentages than the other two countries on the acceptance of sarcasm, shouting and rage (all examples of verbal aggression). Throughout the study the Spanish sample rated highest on the acceptance of sarcasm in all the situations. These findings confirm research by Ramirez (1991) where the Spanish sample valued verbal aggression as justifiable for certain acts more than the Finnish and Polish samples did. Ramirez further states that this is consistent with the stereotypical view of Latin people as being emotional. This also confirms findings by Ramirez et al. (2001b), which found that Spanish participants approved of the situation of emotional agitation as a justification for using aggressive acts and explain it against the background of Mediterranean countries being more emotionally expressive. The South African sample scored lowest, in comparison with the other countries, on two of the direct verbal acts (shouting and rage). These findings seem to illustrate that South Africans find these acts to be serious offences in reaction to emotional agitation. The only two acts of physical aggression that showed significant differences between the countries were those of torture and threatening. Japan displayed the lowest score on the act of threatening, which confirms studies by Markus and Kitayama (1991) and Ramirez et al. (1999) which state that Japanese people have an interdependent construal of themselves, and are concerned with fitting in and belonging. This is in contrast with the much higher justification that the Japanese sample shows for torture. A possible explanation for this could be something noted in research by Ramirez et al. (2001a) that Japanese people are more subject to social control and although this could lead them to act less aggressively in some situations it might be that they interpreted this act as something they would feel like doing and not as something they would actually do.

In situation five (protection of property), students from the three countries differed significantly on all the verbal acts except shouting and on all the physical acts. Students from all three countries scored high on direct verbal (rage) and indirect verbal acts. On the whole the countries found the verbal aggressive acts more acceptable than the physical acts. The only exception to this was the South African students that rated threatening (physical aggression) as the second most acceptable act, within the country, to use in defence of property. South Africa scored the highest of the three countries on three of the physical aggressive acts (hitting, killing and

threatening) and one verbally aggressive act (hindering). The only act for which Japan scored highest was rage. The high justification in South Africa for hitting, killing, threatening and hindering might be explained against the background of the high crime rate in South Africa, where many people lose personal possessions in burglaries, which often include brutal attacks. The greatest number of respondents in the study comes from white Afrikaans communities, of which many have farming connections. In South Africa there have been many savage attacks on farmers, and the people affected by these attacks, as well as the broader South African community, do not always agree that the government is doing enough to protect them. The preceding results indicate that white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans may deem it necessary to protect their own property with what they perceive to be adequate measures, even including physical aggressive acts.

For situation six (as a punishment) there were significant differences between the three countries for use of all of the acts as a form of punishment. On the whole students from all three countries ranked verbally aggressive acts as most acceptable. Overall, the use of physical aggression was low, except in Spain and South Africa where they also ranked threatening (physical aggression) as more acceptable to use as a punishment. Japan again ranked highest on the direct verbal aggressive acts (shouting and rage), which is consistent with findings in most of the other situations. Japan also showed differences from the other countries on the acts of killing and torture, these acts being more acceptable in Japan than in Spain and South Africa. This accentuates the fact that the Japanese have a strict code of conduct and conformity. If somebody needs to be punished they are willing to justify the use of more serious, physical acts. The South African students scored highest of the three countries only for the acts of threatening and hindering, as a punishment. Japan and South Africa had similarly high acceptability for hitting as a punishment. Looking at the South African justice system, where the death penalty is illegal, the low acceptance percentage of an act such as killing might indicate that many South Africans agree with the policy of not having the death penalty. In the South African justice system, all corporal punishment has also been abolished; however a higher percentage of the participants found it acceptable to hit as a form of punishment. This may indicate that there is a perception that the current system of punishment is not severe enough and that there are too few deterrents that discourage further crimes being committed.

General conclusions that can be made:

- In general verbal aggressive acts were more justified than physically aggressive acts, which according to Ramirez, as cited in Ramirez et al. (2001b) suggest that overall, physical aggressive behaviour is not favoured by people as a means to resolve conflict.
- Being sarcastic was always most acceptable to the Spanish students and least acceptable to the Japanese students, which is consistent with findings by Ramirez 1991; 1993 and Ramirez et al. (2001a). The difference in this act and attitudes of Spanish participants are linked to cultural norms within the country.
- The Japanese participants in most situations scored higher on the acceptance of direct verbal aggression (rage and shouting). Ramirez et al. (2001a), speculates that these results suggest that differences in culture may be linked to their perception of themselves, as well as societal regulations. They also argue that rage and shouting are the more emotional aspects of anger, and because Eastern cultures are more concerned with fitting in and promoting the goals of others, they are more permissive about the expression of the emotional aspects of anger.
- The act of torture was most acceptable among the Japanese participants in four of the six situations (self-defence, to protect another, emotional agitation and punishment). The act of torture is seen as a barbaric and primitive act that was normally used to interrogate prisoners of war. The fact that the Japanese participants show high levels of approval for this act, compared to South Africa and Spain, could cause them to be seen as brutal. Although Japan has a history of brutal fighting in wars (Ikegami as cited in Ramirez et al., 2001a) they mostly seen as an interdependent nation, which act with regard to those around them and also act appropriately to their cultural context. A possible explanation could be that because of their history the Japanese participants might find it justified but that does not necessarily mean that they would actually physically do the act themselves.
- The South African sample also found the verbal acts more justified in most of the situations, indicating similar norms than in the other two countries for these acts. There were some situations where the students from South Africa justified the physical acts

more than the other two countries as in the situation of protection of property. These findings might be reflective of the current situation in South Africa, indicating that the participants might be frustrated with the way the government is handling crime and that they thus feel justified to take matters into their own hands.

In the following section the second and third hypothesis will be discussed:

The hypothesis that there will be significant differences between Spain, Japan and South Africa for males regarding the justification of aggression (acts and situations) was confirmed.

Situation 1: (Self-defence) It was found that when comparing the males from the countries studied, there were significant differences between the countries for all the acts of verbal aggression and also for the physical act of torture. Verbally aggressive acts were also ranked more acceptable than physical acts in all countries. The only physically aggressive act where significant differences appeared was to torture in self-defence, with Japan finding this most acceptable. This is again consistent with what was found for the total Japanese group. The image of the Japanese as having warlike roots (Ramirez et al., 2001a) (p.94) is again confirmed when researching the males within this group. The fact that the South African students did not show the highest justification for any of the acts where significant differences were indicated is in contrast with what would be expected from a society where so many violent crimes are committed. This might be due to the fact that corporal punishment is abolished and authorities are also taking violence within the justice system much more seriously. The norms on the use of aggression, in self-defence, might have changed in the South African society.

Situation 2: (Protecting another person) The males differed significantly on all the acts. On the whole all the countries showed a higher acceptance of the verbally aggressive acts as apposed to the physically aggressive acts. The Spanish males scored highest on the indirect verbal acts and the Japanese males highest in the direct verbal acts. The significantly higher prevalence of sarcasm among the Spanish males is consistent with findings by Ramirez, et al. (2001a) that found that the Spanish sample possibly considers sarcasm as more justifiable because they don't consider it as a seriously harmful act. The fact that the Japanese sample scored highest on the direct verbal acts is consistent with findings by Ramirez et al. (1999) who show that Japanese participants are more inclined to accept the more emotional side of aggression. The South

African males found physical aggression (hitting and killing) much more acceptable than the other two countries. This shows that the males in South Africa feel very strongly when it comes to protecting somebody else. In the historical composition of the South African society men were raised to be the leader and the protector of their families (Cronje & Venter, 1973). The above-mentioned findings show that in the violent context of the country, South African men in the study might have interpreted the situation (to protect another person) as protecting those around them from violent perpetrators.

Situation 3: (When communication fails) Significant differences were found between the males of all the countries on the verbal acts and all the physical acts except torture and killing. On the whole the males found the verbal acts more justified than the physical acts which can be explained by the fact that communication difficulties does not necessarily hold a threat to a persons safety and it is therefore more appropriate to react with milder acts (e.g. sarcasm and hindering) of aggression than with physical acts like killing and torture where there were no differences between the countries, because they all showed very low acceptance. As in previous situations the Spanish males showed the highest justification for the indirect verbal acts. The fact that the South African males had the highest justification for physical acts of threatening and hitting seems unfitting since failure of communication is a non-threatening situation. As Lorentzen (1998) claims, men are often rewarded for aggressive behaviour and especially in the South African context boys are not raised to talk about their frustrations, even communication difficulties, therefore as the results show, they often act with hitting and threatening because this is the only way they know how to get what they want. This could possibly also be linked to the high levels of domestic violence that occurs within South Africa.

In situation 4: (Emotional agitation) There were significant differences between the countries for all the verbal acts. The males in all three countries justified the use of verbally aggressive acts above physical aggressive acts, with Spanish males scoring the highest on all of the verbal acts. This is consistent with previous findings found when describing the total group (males and females) of Spanish participants in this study. Ramirez (1993) found in his research that emotionality plays a big role in the Spanish culture of expressing aggression and this could be an explanation for why they score the highest on all the verbal acts when they get emotionally agitated. The present research shows that the use of these verbal acts are not just restricted to

females and that the Spanish males make just as much use of them rather than physical aggression. Japanese males scored highest on the justification of torture.

In situation 5: (Defence of property) There were significant differences between the countries for the verbal acts, sarcasm and rage and for all the physical acts. On the whole it seems that the males found the verbally aggressive acts more acceptable than the physical acts, the only exceptions were the South African sample that scored higher on the justification of threatening (physical act) than on the use of sarcasm or shouting (verbal acts) and Japan scoring higher on the use of threatening than on the use of sarcasm. The Spanish males scored highest of the three countries on the act of sarcasm and Japan highest on the act of rage which is consistent with findings for the total group. The results clearly illustrate that the South African males differ from the other groups when it comes to the acceptability of threatening, hitting and killing (physical acts of aggression) in defence of property, having a higher level of acceptance of these acts. This may indicate that the white South Africans feel distrust toward the criminal justice system's inability to protect people's property, and this often leads to them taking the law into their own hands. This also means that in relation to other countries the norms in South Africa differs when it comes to protection of property. Interestingly in the situation of self-defence there were no significant differences between the countries for these three acts, possibly indicating that the three countries have similar norms for using physical aggression in self-defence. It would be recommended that further research be done, so as to establish the amount of faith that South Africans have in their country's criminal justice system. Research of this nature could help governments to review the situation and their way of dealing with problems, also to get a better understanding of the prevalence of aggression in the country.

Situation 6: (As a punishment) When comparing the males of the three countries there were significant differences between the countries for every act. As a whole the three countries found the use of verbal aggression more acceptable than physical aggression. The Japanese males scored higher on five of the eight acts of which two were direct verbal acts (shouting and rage) and three were physical acts (torture, hitting and killing). The Spanish males consistent with previous situations scored highest on the verbal act of sarcasm, while the South African males scored highest on threatening (physical aggression) and hindering (indirect verbal aggression). This fact that the Japanese males showed so much aggression in this situation is contrary to what we would expect from a nation that is more subject to social control and is concerned with fitting

in. Perhaps as a nation they are helping to implement social control by not tolerating people that step out of line and need to be punished. These findings are also consistent with the present findings for the total group of Japanese students.

The hypothesis that there will be significant differences between South Africa, Spain and Japan for females regarding the justification of aggression (acts and situations) was also confirmed.

Situation 1: (Self-defence) When comparing the females of the three countries, there were significant differences between the countries for two verbal acts (hindering and rage) and two physical acts (threatening and torture). On the whole the females showed higher justification for verbal acts than for physical acts. In comparison with the other countries the South African females scored highest on the acts of hindering (verbal aggression) and threatening (physical aggression). Japan scored highest of the females in the three countries on the act of rage (verbal aggression) and torture (physical aggression), which shows that even the Japanese females, which would not be expected to show much aggression, might feel inclined to act in this way although it does not necessarily mean that they would (Ramirez et al., 2001a). The explanation for the South African females scoring higher on two acts could possibly be related to the situation in the country where people are surrounded by many acts of violence and aggression on a daily basis. Rape, high-jacking and armed robberies are realities and as research by Chikane (1986) showed, children in South Africa are being dehumanised and socialised to find violence acceptable. These children grow up to become parents who then set an example for their children. The fact that there were no differences for the acts of sarcasm and shouting (verbal acts) and hitting and killing (physical acts) might indicate that there are similar norms among the females of the different countries as to how aggressively they can act in situations of self-defence.

Situation 2: (To protect another person) The females differed significantly on two verbal acts (hindering and rage) and on three physical acts (threatening, torture and hitting). On the whole the females from all three countries found the verbal acts more justified to use to protect another person. The only exception to this was the South African females who found it more justified to threaten (physical aggression) than to use sarcasm (verbal aggression). The South African females scored higher than the other two countries on the acts of hindering, hitting and threatening which points out that the culture of violence in South Africa can cause females who

traditionally make use of mostly indirect and verbal acts (Björkqvist, 1994), feel they are willing to use more serious physical acts to protect another person. This is consistent with present findings among South African males whom justified the physical acts of hitting and killing more than the males in the other two countries. There was no significant difference between the females of the countries for the act of killing. This again suggests a universally expected behaviour; the females from Western and Eastern cultures possibly share similar norms about the acceptability of the use of killing. The Japanese females interestingly do have different norms when it comes to the use of torture to protect another person, finding it more justified than in Spain and South Africa.

In situation 3: (When communication fails), there were significant differences between the females for all the verbal acts and also for the physical acts of threatening and hitting. On the whole the students from all three countries displayed a higher justification for the verbally aggressive acts. This indicates that females, as with the males in this situation, prefer to use levels of aggression fitting to the situation. As illustrated by the effect/danger ratio (Björkqvist et al., 1994), the aggressor assesses what the consequences of the aggressive act could be and tries to find techniques that have the desired effect, while trying to keep the risks to themselves at a minimum. Physical aggression has the least favourable effect/danger ratio, resulting in people often making use of verbal aggression in order to achieve their objective. Since having communication difficulties is a non-defensive situation, it is not necessary to risk using physical aggression. The South African females differed from the females in other two countries, scoring higher percentages of justification, in four of the eight acts. Two were verbally aggressive acts (hindering and rage) and two were physical acts (threatening and hitting). The South African males also indicated a higher justification than the males from the Spain and Japan, for these physical acts. Although the levels of acceptance for these acts are not very high it is higher than in the other two countries and might indicate that South African children are not equipped with sufficient communication skills and get very frustrated if their attempt at communication fails. School intervention programmes could teach children alternative, constructive ways to cope when communication fails.

Situation 4: (Emotional agitation) There were significant differences among the female participants for two indirect verbal acts (sarcasm and hindering) and a physical act (threatening). On the whole the females displayed higher justification for the verbal acts than the physical acts.

The South African females scored highest on the act of hindering as a result of emotional agitation. This might indicate that South African females in this study is part of a new generation becoming more empowered to manipulate their environment, moving away from the gendered power imbalances as mentioned in the study by Theron et al. (2001) where the South African females showed significantly lower expression of aggression than the Spanish participants. This is a slow process in South Africa but as more females get the opportunity to further their studies and they feel more confident to start making changes. Spanish females scored highest for sarcasm and threatening. Theron et al. found that in Spanish female university students emotionality indicated the social sanctioning of expression of powerful feelings such as anger and frustration. The Japanese females scored the lowest levels of justification on the indirect verbal aggressive acts (sarcasm and hindering), which is consistent with findings for the total group of Japanese participants. The fact that there were no significant differences for the direct verbal acts and the physical acts might indicate that the females from the three countries have similar values and norms about how acceptable it is to use these acts in a situation where emotional agitation occurs. This also makes sense since emotional agitation is also a non-defensive situation.

Situation 5: (Defence of property) There were significant differences for five of the eight acts in this situation. These were hindering and rage (verbal acts) and threatening, torture and hitting (physical acts). On the whole the females found the verbal acts more acceptable than the physical act, the only exception being the South African females whom scored higher on the justification of threatening (physical act) than on the verbal acts of sarcasm and shouting. This is consistent with present findings of the South African men in defence of property. The South African females, when compared to the Spanish and Japanese females, scored highest on four of the eight acts (verbal acts: sarcasm and hindering and physical acts: threatening and hitting). This again puts into perspective the levels of frustration the South Africans are encountering in a climate of high crime levels. It also suggests that the females in the violent South African context is inclined to justify more acts and even score similar patterns of justification than the South African males on acts like threatening and hitting (physical aggression). Although the females scored much lower than the males on the act of hitting it was still the highest among the female participants in the three countries. The Japanese females had the highest justification for rage, which is consistent with the previous findings in this study. The Spanish females found torture to

be more justified than the females in the other two countries, which is not consistent with findings in the other situations. This is consistent with present findings among the Spanish males, also scoring highest on the act of torture in defence of property. This might be due to certain cultural norms that might be useful to explore further.

Situation 6: (As a punishment) There were significant differences among the female participants of the three countries on all the acts except killing. On the whole the verbal aggressive acts were more acceptable in all three countries. Overall there were low levels of acceptability for the physical acts so it seems even in a situation of punishment females prefer using indirect aggression rather than physical aggression. This confirms research as found by Björkqvist et al. (1992) and Theron et al. (2001), this is also illustrated by the fact that the Spanish and South African females scored higher than the males in their countries for three of the verbal aggressive acts (in Spain for the acts of hindering, shouting and rage; South Africans for the acts of sarcasm, hindering and rage). The Japanese females scored a higher percentage of acceptance for the act of rage than the Japanese males. The South African females scored higher than the females in Spain and Japan for the physical acts of threatening and hitting which indicated that even though they find the verbally aggressive acts more acceptable they are more inclined to find these physical acts acceptable than the females in Spain and Japan.

General conclusions that can be made:

It was found that even though there were many similarities amongst the genders, some overall gender differences did occur. According to Ramirez et al. (1999), these differences indicate that there are limits as to how aggressively different people think they can act in certain situations. The differences could be ascribed on the one hand to cultural factors, which could differ from society to society. Within their respective cultures, children are taught which behaviours are acceptable, as well as what is expected from them in society. On the other hand it could also be ascribed to gender-roles (Best & Williams, 1993; Ramirez et al., 1999) where males and females are taught gender specific behaviour, which is mediated by childhood experiences of rewards or punishment. These differences were explored by comparing the males in the three countries with each other, and the females in the three countries with each other.

- On the whole direct and indirect verbal acts were found to be more justified than physical acts among the males of Spain, Japan and South Africa and also among the females of the three countries.
- General trends were that the levels of justification for aggression increased among both genders if it was a defensive situation for example self-defence, protecting another person or protecting property
- The Spanish males scored the highest of all three countries on the act of sarcasm in all the situations which indicates that males are just as willing as the female participants to use verbal aggression instead of physical aggression. The Spanish males indicated even higher levels of acceptance than the Spanish females whom also found this act more acceptable than the females from Japan and South Africa in all the situations except defence of property
- Even though the South Africans mostly preferred to use verbal aggression the South African males scored the highest on the justification of physical aggressive acts (hitting and killing) in the defensive situations (protecting another and protecting property). This could lead to a conclusion that South Africans resort to this kind of behaviour more often, as indicated by the high prevalence of killing in the country. This also confirms research by Chikane (1986) where he states that South Africans might be socialised to find violence acceptable.
- Overall the differences that were found might suggest that the culture of the respondent and their immediate situation influences the person's attitude toward interpersonal aggression.
- The South African females, on the whole, indicated higher levels of acceptance for aggressive acts in all the situations, than the Spanish females. There were a few exceptions with the most prominent one being for the act of sarcasm. The Spanish females scored higher, than the South African females, for the act of sarcasm in all the situations except defence of property. This is contrary to what was found by Theron et al. (2001) where the South African females showed lower levels of acceptance of aggression than the Spanish females. Hopefully this indicates that South African females are slowly

moving out from under the control of an authoritarian and patriarchal system and towards being free to express themselves.

The South Africa history has contributed to the culture that has formed in this country. Epstein (1998) argues that present day violence is a continuation of previous attitudes and acts, taking new form in situations such as hijacking and rape. Since culture has a significant effect on the acceptance of aggressive acts because it influences our attitudes toward aggression (Ramirez et al., 1999) it is important that in the present volatile situation in South Africa, new emergent forms of masculinities must be formed by interventions in the schools and labour markets. Björkqvist (1997) also states that we need a general change in attitude about aggression. Acting and justifying aggression is something we can reduce by teaching and reinforcing norms against it.

It is hoped that researching the effect of culture on aggression in South Africa will make members of society more aware of their responsibility for the external causes of such behaviour, like reinforcing fighting behaviour among boys, and the attitudes that go with it. Such responsibility can only be taken if educators are aware of where the problem areas are situated. Youth educational interventions, which are usually school based, can be planned, and teachers can be recruited as intervention agents. Anger management, conflict resolution and life skills training can be taught. Previous programmes have led to significant decreases in the tendency to legitimise aggression, as well as to improved knowledge of aggression risk factors (Butchart & Kruger, 1998).

The results of researching the acceptability of aggression in certain situations, portrays that the assumptions made about aggression and the control of it in our country is far from satisfying. We need to start working with children at a very young age to teach and nurture a set of new values. Every citizen in this country needs to take responsibility for their acts, language, the way they expose their children to media and to take steps to encourage non-aggressive conflict resolution skills.

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