

Indirect Modes of Aggression Among Women of Buenos Aires, Argentina¹

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This study utilizes the construct indirect aggression to investigate aggressive behavior among middle class Argentine women and men by administering an attitude and self-report survey to 95 inhabitants of Buenos Aires and by analyzing ethnographic interviews and observations conducted over a nine month period in 1992. An examination of sex roles in Argentina, including machismo and marianismo, provide a cultural context for interpreting aggression. Factor analyses revealed the presence of indirect aggression (e.g., social manipulation, gossip, exclusion) in addition to verbal and physical aggression. Survey and ethnographic findings converge in suggesting that women employ more indirect aggression than men, while men utilize more physical aggression. While competition and aggression are salient elements of social life for both sexes, women and men tend to favor different approaches. The findings are compared with the literature on female aggression from other cultural settings. We conclude that cultural and evolutionary perspectives elucidate aspects of female aggression.

Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, & Peltonen (1988) point out that psychological research often reports male children and adults to be more aggressive than their female counterparts. However, these researchers then go on to cau-

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tion that within psychology there has been an emphasis on measuring direct, often physical, aggression. In fact, Björkqvist & Niemelä (1992, p. 5-6) argue that much Western psychological research on gender differences in aggression focuses on physical aspects of behavior and is male-biased in various respects:

We suggest that the characteristic 'male' perspective has greatly biased aggression research. Male investigators have not only usually chosen male subjects, but their *operationalizations* of aggression have favored typically 'male' forms, even when the research *object* has been female aggression.

Based on the findings of her cross-cultural survey of societies, Burbank (1987) emphasizes, however, that the magnitude of male physical aggression does not mean that women are always non-aggressive. Burbank (1987) found women to engage in physical aggression in 61% of 137 societies. To consider a specific ethnographic case of female aggression, Cook (1992) reports that out of 18 instances of physical aggression she observed on Margarita Island off the coast of Venezuela, eight (44%) involved physical aggression by women. Instances of female physical aggression have also been reported in Zambia (Schuster, 1983; Glazer, 1992), China (Glazer, 1992) and the Zapotec of Mexico (Fry, 1992), among other cultures. Hence, women in some cultural settings do engage in physical aggression, although they are generally less *physically* aggressive than men (cf. Daly & Wilson, 1988, p. 137-161; Mednick, Brennan, & Kandel, 1988, Table II; Nash, 1967; Taylor, 1979; United States Department of Justice, 1979).

Furthermore, we should be open to the possibility that women may tend to express aggression differently than men. When aggression is defined as actions intended to inflict physical or psychological harm on another person (cf. Björkqvist & Niemelä, 1992, p. 4; Carthy & Ebling, 1964, p. 1), it is clear that aggression can be *verbal* as well as *physical*, and *indirect* as well as *direct*. Several review articles indicate that both men and women use verbal aggression (Burbank, 1987; Frodi, Macauley, & Thome, 1977), and such evidence leads Lagerspetz et al. (1988) to conclude that "the distinction between verbal and physical aggression is perhaps *not* the best indicator of what distinguishes male from female aggression" (p. 404, emphasis added). On the other hand, the many subtleties of how men and women engage in verbal aggression within different cultural settings has hardly been explored.

While Buss (1961) discussed the distinction between direct and indirect aggression over thirty years ago, recently Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen (1992), Björkqvist, Österman, & Lagerspetz (1994), and Lagerspetz et al. (1988) have been exploring indirect aggression and sex differences. Björkqvist et al. (1992, p. 52) explain that indirect aggression can be conceptualized as:

. . . a kind of social manipulation: the aggressor manipulates others to attack the victim, or, by other means, makes use of the social structure in order to harm the target person, without being personally involved in attack.

Pertaining to their research with Finnish subjects between the ages of 8 and 18 years, Björkqvist et al. (1992, p. 55) summarize:

The results reveal that boys are consistently *physically* more aggressive than girls; the two sexes usually do not differ significantly from each other with respect to direct *verbal* aggression (although considerable variation may be revealed on single items); girls are estimated by their peers to use *indirect* means of aggression significantly more than boys in all age groups except for the youngest (8-year-olds — at that age, it appears indirect means of aggression are not yet fully developed) [emphasis in original].

In summary, the theoretical construct, *indirect aggression*, may have utility for comparing the sexes. Women's aggressive behavior has hardly been studied, compared to the attention paid to male aggression, and has not been viewed in its own light. Thus, many studies of aggression may reflect male biases of various kinds including an assumption that physical and verbal aggression are the only patterns worth investigating (Björkqvist & Niemelä, 1992).

In light of these considerations, we examine in this article the nature of women's aggressive behavior in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Contributions of this article include, first, an assessment of the applicability of the *indirect aggression* concept to an Argentine cultural setting, and second, a description and discussion of sex differences in aggression in Buenos Aires generally. Hence this study provides culturally comparative data on indirect aggression from a cultural setting substantially different from Finland — where most of the recent research on indirect aggression has been conducted — and more broadly this study contributes to the cross-cultural literature on sex differences and aggression. Third, this study employs several complementary methodologies in order to provide quantitative as well as qualitative data on aggression. Through the use of a survey instrument, ethnographic interviews, participant observation, and homicide statistics, we attempt to provide a holistic and culturally meaningful perspective on aggressive attitudes and behavior. Finally, we discuss sex differences regarding aggression in light of both cultural and evolutionary considerations. Following a brief discussion of the Argentine cultural setting, we present the findings of our survey research followed by a presentation of the ethnographic findings.

THE CULTURAL SETTING

Within Argentina well over 80% of the people are of European descent, originating primarily from Spain and Italy, but also from France,

Germany, England, Russia and elsewhere in Europe (Harrison, 1985, p. 103; Kinzer, 1973, p. 160). One Argentine expressed the heterogeneous nature of Argentine society: "We are a people of crosses and races." Jaquette (1989a, p. 199) notes that "Argentina is a middle-class, educated, cosmopolitan society; it has a high per capita income, which is relatively well distributed in comparison with Peru or Brazil."

Buenos Aires, sometimes called the "Paris of South America" (Clarke, 1992, p. C-7), has a population of about fourteen million. Although multi-cultural, there is still a predominant "Latin" influence in Buenos Aires, based in part on Roman Catholicism. The strong European influence within Buenos Aires and Argentina generally stems from the early colonization of the country by the Spanish and continues to this day. The architecture, technology, fashion, and attitudes echo those of Europe. Traditionalism and the influence of Europe within Argentine society also are reflected in sex roles.

Sex Roles

There is obvious male dominance and female submission, a traditional "Latin" pattern, in many aspects of Argentine society (Deutsch, 1991, p. 272; Feijoó, 1989, p. 79; Jaquette, 1989a, p. 200). Hollander (1973, pp. 143-144) states that during the early 20th century "women were still subject to the control of their fathers and husbands due to their total juridical dependency on men inherited from Spanish legal tradition." This legacy contributes to the image of the Argentine woman as the housewife-mother, the "lovely decoration, weak, not very intelligent, and totally dependent on the male for her source of identification and status" (Hollander, 1973, p. 144). Our informants expressed corresponding views. "Here the man pays and commands . . . thus we adhere to the law of *machismo*," stated one woman. "The man must take care of the woman in Argentina," said another woman.

When considering sex roles in Argentina, it is crucial to explore *machismo* as an underlying element. *Machismo*, derived from the Spanish word *macho* for "male," is described as "a cult of virility which expresses itself in male assertions of superiority over females and competition between men" (Cubitt, 1988, p. 103). Within *machismo* a man must exercise control over females, be sexually promiscuous, father many children, not show fear, and be willing to fight. Male physical aggression also sometimes emerges in violent forms.

As elsewhere in Latin America, in Argentina there is an ideology of behavior for women called *marianismo*, the submissive female role. In this

ideology, a woman is “gentle, kind, long-suffering, loving, and submits to the demands of men, whether they be husbands, fathers, sons, or brothers” (Cubitt, 1988, p. 104). We also see a double standard relating directly to the opposition of the *machismo* and *marianismo* roles, as one informant expressed, “a man can have relations with many women, but a woman: No!” For centuries, the spiritual role model for women has been the image of the “Virgin Mary,” which symbolizes spiritual strength and the centrality of the family (cf. Ruggiero, 1992). This female emphasis on the family is reflected in Kinzer’s (1973, p. 161-162) findings for professional women in Buenos Aires:

Given the high premium Latins place on marriage and children, both the single woman and the married woman without children are objects of pity and scorn. We shall show that for working women the single woman is more unhappy than the married woman and the mother more satisfied than the childless female.

Women’s Rights and Position in Society

Beginning in the 1930s women’s organizations like the Argentines Association for Women’s Suffrage and the Argentine Union of Women, founded by Victoria Ocampo in 1936, fought for women’s rights (Hollander, 1973). Most importantly, Eva Perón, wife of Argentine President Juan Perón during the 1940s, contributed to the strong progression and mobilization of the women’s movement.

Under Eva Perón, the Peronist Feminist Party, which strove for women’s equality, was founded in 1949 and proclaimed, “the Peronist Feminist Party opens it’s doors to all women of the people, and especially to the humble women who have been forgotten by the poets and the politicians” (Hollander, 1973, p. 154). Eva Perón, however, provided only a limited challenge to the traditional sex roles, for as Deutsch (1991, p. 271-272) emphasizes, she portrayed herself as a humble wife “subordinate to her husband.” The women’s movement of the 1930s and 1940s marked the beginning of a new era concerning the progression of women which has continued with increasing strength until the present (Feijoó, 1989; Jaquette, 1989b).

Through changing times, it is important to note that in Argentina, women are becoming increasingly active in their “male-dominated” world and are becoming much more independent and self-motivated. For example, both male and female informants thought that economic hardships over the last decade or so have contributed to women’s liberation (cf. Feijoó, 1989, p. 73). They point out that now women have greater freedom of movement. It is now acceptable for young women to stay out later than in past years, and more women are working and attending college (Feijoó,

1989, p. 94). On the other hand, a double standard is still very evident in Argentine society; men's philandering is expected while women are supposed to be faithful (cf. Bonasegna, 1985, p. 40). In the economic realm, an informant noted that women's salaries are lower than men's, that many men have difficulty with having a woman boss, and that a woman must really prove herself and be better than her male competitors to get ahead in the work environment. The pervasiveness of a subordinate sex role for women is further reflected in the results of advertising research which found that many "Argentine women reject ads showing females in decision-making positions and prefer traditional sex-object and housewife roles" (Bonasegna, 1985, p. 40). One item on a survey administered to 95 middle-class citizens of Buenos Aires—the survey methodology and results are discussed below—asked for level of agreement with the statement: "The sexes are equal in society." Sixty percent of the male respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 80% of the female respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. While both sexes lean toward disagreement with the statement, the mean responses are significantly different ($t(92) = 2.87, p = .005$, two-tailed).

The legacy of Catholicism, the *machismo* and *marianismo* complexes, Peronism and the women's rights movements, and other historical, social, and economic factors contributing to the treatment of women in Argentina, positive and negative, have dynamically shaped the perceptions of women in Argentina today, regarding among other traits, domination and aggression. It is apparent in Argentine society that women as well as men display particular aspects of dominance and aggression, and although sometimes more subtly expressed, female aggression is nonetheless prevalent.

METHODS

Three methods were employed in this study. First, one coauthor, Hines, spent nine months in Buenos Aires in 1992 and recorded in field notes aspects of Argentine culture, paying particular attention to gender roles, female-male interaction, and aggressive behavior. Second, both authors—individually or jointly—conducted and tape recorded semi-structured ethnographic interviews with five women and three men from Buenos Aires in order to explore the cultural meaning of particular behaviors and investigate attitudes and beliefs about aggression and gender roles. All eight interviewees were young adults in their 20s or 30s, members of the middle class, and employed—e.g., bank employee, policeman—or attending college. Third, we developed and administered a survey instrument to assess both attitudes and self-reported behaviors pertaining to aggression

and gender role expectations. The survey was translated from English to Spanish with the assistance of two Argentines who are fluent in both languages.

Survey Instrument Sample

Random sampling was not attempted for logistical reasons. Instead, surveys were administered to college students (59% of the sample) and other willing respondents (41% of the sample). The college students in the sample were attending private colleges throughout Buenos Aires, while the remainder of the sample were contacted through acquaintance networks established by Hines during her stay in Buenos Aires. Most respondents were middle class although some were in the upper-middle class range. The sample consisted of 59 women (63%) and 35 men (37%). The average age was 23.5 years ($SD = 5.8$) for women and 23.7 years ($SD = 5.2$) for men, a non-significant difference ($t(92) = .24, p = .815$, two-tailed). The age range for the entire sample was 17 to 45 years. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents were born in Argentina, 9% in other South American countries, usually Chile, and 1% was born in Spain. About eighty-five percent of the respondents had lived their entire life in Argentina.

The Survey Instrument

In consultation with two natives of Buenos Aires and in reference to the psychological literature on indirect aggression, we designed an instrument to assess aspects of aggression and manners of dealing with conflict. Here we focus on the findings pertaining to *indirect* and *direct* aggression drawn from Sections I and III of the survey instrument (see Appendix). Section I called for respondents' self-report of having engaged in particular aggressive and non-aggressive behaviors within the last week. A number of neutral items were also included (e.g., "In the last week have you loaned money to a friend?"). Section III was designed to tap attitudes about sex differences by presenting statements such as, for example, "Men are more likely to judge someone else's work unfairly than are women," followed by a Likert scale consisting of the choices "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Undecided," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree." Half the sex-difference items were stated from a male perspective ("Men are . . .") and the other half from a female perspective ("Women are . . ."). Section II, which primarily focused on conflict resolution, is not reported on here.

Survey Procedures

Respondents were asked if they would be willing to complete a written survey on aggression and other topics as part of an anthropological study of Argentine culture. Respondents were told that their responses would be kept confidential. Nearly all individuals who were asked to complete the survey complied with the request, with only about 5% declining to do so. Once entered into a microcomputer, survey data were verified and statistical analyses performed using SPSSPC+.

SURVEY RESULTS

We performed a factor analysis (maximum likelihood, orthogonal, varimax rotation) on sex-difference items from Section III of the survey (Table I). Factors I through III account for 37.0% of the variance, and have eigenvalues of 4.77, 2.59, and 2.27, respectively. Factor I includes five items with factor loadings of at least .40 and reflects *indirect aggression*. Both Factors II and III reflect elements of aggression that are more direct and consist of seven items with loadings of .40 or greater.

A separate part of the survey, Section I, asked respondents to self-report whether they had engaged in particular behaviors *in the last week*. A factor analysis (maximum likelihood, orthogonal, varimax rotation) shows that three factors account for 33.4% of the variance (Table II). Factors I through III have eigenvalues of 5.18, 2.56, and 2.29, respectively. The first factor reflects *indirect aggression* and consists of four items with loadings

Table I. Factor Analysis: Respondents' Ratings of Sex Differences in Aggression

Survey item	Factor I: Indirect aggression	Factor II: Other types of aggression	Factor III: Other types of aggression
Judge	.72		
Lie	.63		
Exclude	.56		
Gossip	.53		
Interrupt	.44		
Aggressive		.59	
Judge work		.45	
Jealous		.76	
Destroy		.47	
"False"		.47	
Physically aggressive			.42
Verbally aggressive			.41

Table II. Factor Analysis: Respondents' Self-Report of Having Engaged in Particular Behaviors in the Last Week

Survey item	Factor I: Indirect aggression	Factor II: Other types of aggression	Factor III: Prosocial behavior
Rumors	.60		
Insult to back	.78		
Say bad things	.78		
Insult to face	.46		
Physical fight		.71	
Obscene gesture		.49	
Threaten		.87	
Attack self-esteem		.53	
Quarrel		.45	
Jealous quarrel		.50	
Falsefully accuse		.45	
Resolve dispute		.40	
Tell of importance			.47
Compliment			.58
Worry			.66

greater than .40. One item, "insulting someone to their face," is discordant with the indirect aggression concept, however.

Factor II reflects more direct forms of *aggression* and consists of eight items with loadings greater than or equal to .40. One item, involving *conflict resolution*, is discordant with the other items in this factor.

The third factor, which we term *prosocial*, has three items with loadings greater than .40. (If all values greater than .20 are listed for this factor, the list expands to include: doing a favor, giving a present, resolving a dispute, calmly talking about a problem, having a verbal quarrel, apologizing, helping someone solve a problem, and consoling a friend, most of which also reflect a *prosocial* orientation, although weakly manifested.) Interestingly, verbal aggression loads roughly equally across the three factors.

In summary, factor analyses on both attitudes regarding sex-differences (measured through a Likert scale format) and self-report ratings of behavior engaged in within the last week produce factors that can be labelled as *indirect aggression*. Other more direct forms of aggression can be identified in one or two factors, while a *prosocial* factor emerges for the self-report ratings.

We now consider respondents' rating of the sexes regarding certain attributes. Findings pertaining to perceived sex differences for the indirect aggression factor items are presented in Table III. Since Likert choices were coded using a 1 to 5 point coding scheme, the median coding point is 3.0. To facilitate the analysis, items stated from a male perspective (i.e.,

"Men are . . .") were reverse scored so that, across all items, mean values greater than 3.0 indicate respondent agreement that women express the characteristic in question to a greater degree than men, while mean values less than 3.0 indicate respondent agreement that men express the characteristic more than women.

It is noteworthy that without exception, all five items comprising the *indirect aggression* factor reflect respondents' perceptions that women express these characteristics more than men, with the means ranging from

Table III. Respondents' Ratings of Sex Differences for Indirect Aggression Items^a

Survey item and sex of respondent	SA%	A%	U%	D%	SD%	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> ^b
Women judge persons more than men.								
Women	13.6	39.0	18.6	22.0	6.8	3.3	1.2	1.78
Men	31.4	31.4	20.0	14.3	2.9	3.7	1.1	
Both sexes	20.0	35.8	18.9	20.0	5.3	3.5	1.2	
Women are more likely to tell a lie about someone to a third party than are men.								
Women	6.8	33.9	16.9	35.6	6.8	3.0	1.1	1.78
Men	25.7	31.4	14.3	20.0	8.6	3.5	1.3	
Both sexes	13.7	32.6	16.8	29.5	7.4	3.2	1.2	
Women are more likely to exclude someone from a social event than are men.								
Women	8.5	45.8	20.3	22.0	3.4	3.3	1.0	1.11
Men	26.5	38.2	11.8	17.6	5.9	3.6	1.2	
Both sexes	14.9	42.6	18.1	20.2	4.3	3.4	1.1	
Women are more likely to gossip about others than are men.								
Women	13.6	32.2	20.3	25.4	8.5	3.2	1.2	2.08 ^c
Men	42.9	20.0	8.6	25.7	2.9	3.7	1.3	
Both sexes	24.2	28.4	15.8	25.3	6.3	3.4	1.3	
Women are more likely to interrupt a conversation than are men.								
Women	11.9	44.1	18.6	22.0	3.4	3.4	1.1	-3.4
Men	22.9	25.7	20.0	31.4	0	3.4	1.2	
Both sexes	15.8	37.9	18.9	25.3	2.1	3.4	1.1	

^aN = 95; female n = 59; male n = 35. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; U = Undecided; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

^bValues of *t* are for tests comparing the means for women and men respondents.

^c*p* < .05, two-tailed.

3.2 to 3.5. Table III also presents separate mean scores for female and male respondents for the five items. In only one of the ten rating situations — where female respondents rated “telling a lie about someone to a third party” — are women *not* rated as more indirectly aggressive than men; in this case, perceptions about women and men are the same (the mean being 3.0). The other nine means, which range between 3.2 and 3.7, reflect female and male respondents’ agreement that women are more indirect than men. Interestingly, for four out of the five items, male respondents rate women as more indirect than female respondents rate women, and in the fifth case, female and male respondents have identical means of 3.4.

Turning to the self-report of respondents’ own behaviors and the factor labelled *indirect aggression*, three of four items are clearly *indirect* (Table I). For two of these three items, more women respondents than men report having engaged in the behavior in question. The percent of each sex self-reporting that they had engaged in particular behaviors in the last week are as follows: “spreading rumors about someone,” males 38%, females 35%; “insulting someone behind their back,” males 38%, females 45%; and “saying bad things about someone behind their back,” males 52%, females 60%. (A fourth item, in contrast to the preceding three, expresses *direct* aggression, and more males than females responded affirmatively to “insulting someone to their face” in the last week: males 41%, females 23%).

Items which load as *other types of aggression* are presented in Table IV, and four items involve physical aggression. In three of the four — “physical aggression,” “aggression,” and “hit” — men are rated as more physically aggressive than women, as reflected by mean values of less than 3.0. Interestingly, the fourth physical aggression item, “kill,” has a mean value of 3.0, showing that respondents see no difference between women and men pertaining to homicidal tendencies. Also, it is noteworthy that female respondents see men as significantly more likely to “hit” than do male respondents. Finally, we should mention that women are rated to be very slightly more verbally aggressive than men, with a resulting mean score of 3.1 (Table IV).

Pertaining to the self-report items, recall that for *other types of aggression*, the factor analysis produced a factor consisting of eight items (Table II). Differences in male and female self-reports of engaging in the behaviors are as follows: “having had a physical fight with someone,” males 9%, females 2%; “made an obscene gesture at someone behind their back,” males 33%, females 17%; “threatened a friend, verbally or physically,” males 15%, females 2%; “deliberately attacked the self-esteem of someone,” males 12%, females 5%; “initiated a quarrel with someone,” males 27%, females 29%; “initiated a jealous quarrel,” males 15%, females 14%; “falsely accused someone who was not present solely to create a problem

Table IV. Respondents' Ratings of Sex Differences for Physical, Verbal, and Other Types of Aggression^d

Survey item and sex of respondent	SA%	A%	U%	D%	SD%	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> ^b
Physical aggression								
Women are physically more aggressive than men.								
Women	3.4	8.5	15.3	55.9	16.9	2.3	1.0	1.02
Men	2.9	8.6	31.4	45.7	11.4	2.5	.9	
Both sexes	3.2	8.4	22.1	51.6	14.7	2.3	.9	
Men are more aggressive than women. ^d								
Women	8.5	35.6	33.9	20.3	1.7	2.7	.9	-.54
Men	11.4	37.1	34.3	14.3	2.9	2.6	1.0	
Both sexes	9.5	35.8	34.7	17.9	2.1	2.7	1.0	
Women hit more than men. ^c								
Women	1.7	10.2	15.3	54.2	18.6	2.2	.9	2.56 ^e
Men	5.9	20.6	20.6	50.0	2.9	2.8	1.0	
Both sexes	3.2	13.8	18.1	52.1	12.5	2.4	1.0	
Men are more likely to kill than women. ^{c,d}								
Women	6.9	27.6	27.6	27.6	10.3	3.1	1.1	-.61
Men	11.4	31.4	22.9	22.9	11.4	2.9	1.2	
Both sexes	8.6	29.0	25.8	25.8	10.8	3.0	1.2	
Verbal aggression								
Women are verbally more aggressive than men.								
Women	11.9	28.8	27.1	30.5	1.7	3.2	1.1	-.55
Men	8.6	31.4	25.7	25.7	8.6	3.1	1.1	
Both sexes	10.5	29.5	27.4	28.4	4.2	3.1	1.1	
Other types of aggression								
Men are more likely than women to judge the work of others unjustly. ^d								
Women	3.4	23.7	25.4	42.4	5.1	3.2	.9	.35
Men	5.9	14.7	26.5	50.0	2.9	3.3	1.0	
Both sexes	4.3	20.4	25.8	45.2	4.3	3.2	1.0	
Men are more jealous than women. ^d								
Women	8.6	22.4	22.4	43.1	3.4	3.1	1.1	.05
Men	14.3	8.6	34.3	37.1	5.7	3.1	1.1	
Both sexes	10.8	17.2	26.9	40.9	4.3	3.1	1.1	
Men are more likely to destroy things than are women. ^d								
Women	5.1	27.1	22.0	42.4	3.4	3.1	1.1	-.37
Men	14.3	22.9	14.3	42.9	5.7	3.0	1.2	
Both sexes	8.5	25.5	19.1	42.6	4.3	3.1	1.1	

Table IV. Continued

Survey item and sex of respondent	SA%	A%	U%	D%	SD%	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> ^b
Men are more "fake" than women. ^d								
Women	10.2	10.2	16.9	44.1	18.6	3.5	1.2	1.43
Men	11.4	0	14.3	37.1	37.1	3.9	1.3	
Both sexes	10.5	6.4	16.0	41.5	25.5	3.6	1.2	

^aN = 95; female n = 59; male n = 35. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; U = Undecided; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

^bValues of *t* are for tests comparing the means for women and men respondents.

^cAlthough during the factor analysis these two items did not load with a value of .40 or greater, they are included here as *physical aggression*.

^dMeans were computed after reverse scoring for these items (see text).

^e*p* < .01, two-tailed.

for that person," males 3%, females 5%. While nearly identical percentages of women and men report having initiated a quarrel or jealous quarrel, more men than women report having engaged in other types of direct aggression, while women lead slightly for one item that might be considered indirect (although it does not load in the *indirect* factor), namely, making false accusations in a person's absence.

In summary, the overall pattern is for both female and male respondents to view women as *more indirect* and *less physical* than men. Furthermore, male respondents tend to perceive women as slightly more indirect than females perceive their own sex. Pertaining to self-reports, there is a tendency for women to report more indirect aggression and for men to report more physical aggression, although sometimes the differences in self-report percentages are not large.

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESULTS

In this section, we draw upon the ethnographic observations and interviews to elucidate further women's aggression and to provide a cultural context for interpreting aggression vis-a-vis sex roles.

Physical Aggression and Sex Roles

Our interviewees explained that male aggression is more dangerous and more serious than female aggression; men are stronger and have a

greater capacity to harm one another. One man explained that for men, "when we talk of aggression [we mean] . . . an insult, very strong, bad words, violence, until the hitting breaks out; that is aggression."

Willingness to fight physically is an aspect of *machismo*. According to one interviewee, who is a policeman by occupation, men will fight for a variety of reasons such as over who is to blame for a traffic accident or over a debt. Additionally, several interviewees mentioned the connection of sports and male aggression. One young man explained that if two members of an opposing soccer team were to fight with one member of his team, he would join the fight to make it "fair." Another aspect of *machismo* is to fight to defend one's honor, and it is considered acceptable to respond to an insult with a punch.

The *marianismo* role for women does not embrace physical aggression, but it is clear that Argentine women sometimes attack physically, although physical aggression by women is not perceived as very harmful or dangerous. In contrast to fistfights between men, the women slap and perhaps pull an opponent's hair. In one observed instance of female-to-male aggression, an older woman was berating her husband quite loudly in public. Suddenly, she slapped him on the back of his head very hard. He did not react, nor say a word, and she continued to yell at him.

Somewhat paradoxically, physical aggression in women can also be seen as having *indirect* qualities as well, especially when directed towards other women. For instance, women were regularly observed pushing and shoving each other as they boarded crowded buses, but without making verbal or eye contact with each other. In an aerobics class, women were also observed pushing in front of other women to obtain exercise weights and steps, again with neither words being spoken nor eye contact being made. For example, Hines was doing her aerobic workout one day when another woman purposefully placed her exercise step so close that it interfered with the routine. The Argentine woman neither spoke nor made eye contact with Hines during this spatial encroachment. Even when Hines said "I'll just move where there is space," the woman made no comment of any kind, illustrating how Argentine women sometimes behave aggressively without directly acknowledging the aggressive nature of their actions. Another example of this "direct-yet-indirect" phenomenon is provided by a university food-server who became upset when students arrived late for meals. She expressed her annoyance at late arrivals indirectly, yet in an unmistakable manner, by roughly slopping the food onto the tray, giving the students less desirable food, and ignoring their food requests. It is noteworthy that this type of "direct-yet-indirect" behavior, should it be challenged by the recipient, readily can be denied as an accident or as a

misperception by the recipient, rather than being acknowledged as aggression.

While women sometimes fight over particular resources and locations, when asked why women fight *physically*, interviewees invariably referred to competition over a man. However, as we will discuss in the section "Competition and Indirect Aggression," the competition among women over men is usually not expressed through physical fighting. Among two women competing for a man, "the tendency is not to talk with each other at all, [but rather to] exchange nasty looks. [They] don't say anything . . . but look aggressively at the other," explained one male informant.

Turning to aggression between the sexes, the capacity for the male to abuse the female is clearly recognized. A couple of cases of physical violence by men towards women were mentioned by interviewees. At the same time, middle-class Argentines believe that it is not proper for a man to hit a woman. One female interviewee explained that if a woman hit a man, that would be alright, if she was angry, but it is not acceptable for the man to hit a woman. Another female described a recent argument with her possessive boyfriend. During the argument she said she hit him in the face because he was "out of control." She said it was understood that he would not dare hit her back. Similarly, the policeman we interviewed explained that there is a norm in Argentina that men do not hit women.

Verbal Aggression

Informants tended to see both sexes as verbally aggressive. One woman thought that women were more likely to shout at other people than were men. This impression was supported when we talked with a U.S. Marine who was stationed as a guard at the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires. He explained that it is the Argentine women who on occasion become upset with the Embassy bureaucracy or procedures and begin to scream and yell, necessitating their physical removal from the Embassy. Hines also witnessed an incidence of verbal aggression in a bus station where three women began complaining loudly and arguing with the driver about the poor management of the bus companies.

Two female interviewees noted that men are more likely to use crude or obscene language than women. Interestingly, in the self-report section of the survey, about twice as many men (33%) as women (17%) reported having gestured obscenely behind someone's back within the last week — rather high percentages for both sexes. Thus both men and women are verbally and gesturally aggressive, but the context and styles of their aggression appear to differ in some regards. These observations are in cor-

respondence with other sources that show both sexes engaging in verbal aggression (cf. Björkqvist et al., 1992, p. 51, 56; Burbank, 1987; Frodi et al., 1977, p. 640).

Competition and Indirect Aggression

While both men and women in Argentina are competitive, a recurring theme throughout the ethnographic interviews is that women in Buenos Aires are *very* competitive, envious, and jealous of each other. For example, female competition is expressed through invidious comparisons regarding clothing and appearance. Women are very concerned with remaining thin and attractive. They place great emphasis on dressing fashionably, often in clothes that accentuate their figures.

Both female and male informants concurred that competition among women is generally over men, either over a particular man, or else for the attention of men in general. Fighting among women results, according to one man, from "competitions for a man for sexual reasons."

The competition affects female relations in various ways. Several interviewees referred to the problems that competing women cause in work situations. For instance, pertaining to women in factories, businesses, and corporations, one male interviewee expressed:

If one woman must work, fine. If many workers are required, then businesses avoid hiring women, because here in Argentina there are many conflicts among women. If many women come together, they fight. . . . Therefore, we say sometimes, amongst us men, that it is impossible for the women to have friendships, because there is always one woman who tells a secret to the other and then the other divulges it, and then the feud begins between them.

Least such statements be questioned as representing a biased male perspective (as we ourselves initially were inclined to think), we note that several female interviewees expressed similar sentiments about the competitive nature of women, for example, "if the office is all men, generally, there will not be problems. But if they are all women, at any moment problems will arise due to gossip The women are the ones that start things." A different woman said there is, "more competition among the women than among men," and a third woman interviewee also stated, "women are more competitive than men."

Based on our observations and interviews, we conclude that much of the pervasive competition among Argentine women is expressed via *indirect aggression*. For instance, when we asked one male interviewee if one sex is more likely to exclude others from social events, he responded, "The women. Absolutely." He then voiced the opinion that the importance of relationships for women makes exclusion an important form of aggression,

more so than for men. Along these lines, an interesting illustration of indirect aggression was witnessed in a bar called "El Correo" (The Post Office) where people pass notes between tables to one another. Hines was seated at a table with four men and four women. A note was passed to the men from several women at a nearby table encouraging them to "get rid of the women" they were with and join the senders of the note. This is an interesting parallel to Lagerspetz's et al. (1988) observation that Finnish girls are more likely than boys to use nasty notes as a form of indirect aggression.

A view shared by virtually all of our interviewees is that middle class Argentine women are more socially aware than are the men. "Women know. They are attentive to social relationships," said a male informant. The policeman expressed that, "Women know the neighborhood Women talk about relationships. Men talk about things." A woman emphasized that, "women analyze more, much more." "Women are more in tune with what is going on socially . . . women calculate. Women are more complicated; men are more obvious," explained another woman. "The imagination of the woman flies three times more than that of the man," said another woman in reference to social relations. Finally, we were told that, "the woman is more subtle and indirect." The reason for noting the greater female awareness of and preoccupation with social relationships is that this a greater potential among women for using indirect forms of aggression, such as gossip and spreading lies about others, in a socially sophisticated manner.

The goal of injuring a rival indirectly in such a way as to avoid retaliation or social disapproval (cf. Lagerspetz et al., 1988) conceivably can be accomplished effectively when one has an understanding of the social relationships important to that person. Additionally, knowledge of who confides in whom—hence, the likely social paths of information flow—can lead to the efficient targeting of gossip about a rival.

Some informants thought women gossiped more than men and some thought there was no difference in gossiping behavior. We find it significant that no one thought men gossiped more than women. Sample interview statements include: "All women do this, it is typical." "Women gossip more, and they talk in a wider circle than men." "Women are more concerned with intrigue." "It depends on the character of the person." Pertaining to men, one male interviewee explained that "It is part of becoming a man. Part of men's education is learning that you don't talk about your friends, you don't gossip, you don't talk about their secrets with others. This is a code among men."

Telling lies about another person to a third party is also a form of indirect aggression. An Argentine woman was describing how she and an-

other woman were interested in the same man. She described her rival to Hines as fat, not very attractive, and as having a "bad reputation." In fact, Hines observed that the rival was neither fat nor ugly and that the woman she was talking with was the only source of information about her rival's "bad reputation." One male informant explained that on occasion two women have been interested in him at the same time and that in such cases, each woman said bad things about her rival to him. He also noted that the loser in such a situation perhaps will go out with the previous boyfriend of the winner. This would seem to be yet another way to indirectly aggress against a rival, as the loser attempts to turn her "loss" into a "win", and through her actions, convey to her rival a message that, "I have taken your boyfriend from you."

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We have been describing and explaining the nature of women's aggression within Argentine culture. We have related direct physical aggression to the male role, taking into consideration the cultural image of *machismo*. From ethnographic interviews and the surveys, we glean that men are perceived as more likely to engage in physical aggression than women. The men also self-report more physical aggression than women. The issue of homicide deserves special attention, because in contrast to other survey items pertaining to physical aggression, respondents saw the sexes as having an equal propensity for murder. These perceptions, however, are not supported by homicide statistics which show that for the capital, Buenos Aires in 1985, men were almost nine times more likely to commit murder than were women for crimes where the sex of the assailant is known (women, 3 homicides; men, 26 homicides) (Anuario Estadístico de la República Argentina [AERA], 1983–1986, 1989, p. 230).³ How can this large discrepancy between the perceived killing potential of women and the actual homicide rate for women be explained? Informants discussed the jealous nature of some women. One female interviewee explained that women are quicker to anger than are men. Hence there seems to exist a cultural image of the jealous, impassioned woman who is equally capable of murder as her male counterpart.

³For the entire country in 1985 when the sex of the perpetrator is known, males committed 1,528 homicides and females 91 (AERA, 1983–1986, 1989, p. 230). This is a ratio of 16.8 to 1. For the entire country in 1982, males committed 1,394 murders and females 147, giving a ratio of 9.5 to 1. For the Buenos Aires capital in 1982, the comparable unit for the figures cited in the text for 1985, males committed 77 homicides and women 10, providing a ratio of 7.7 to 1 (AERA, 1981–1982, 1984, p. 287).

The ethnographic interview and observational findings indicate that women, more than men, favor indirect aggression, and this finding corresponds with attitudes and self-report findings from the survey as well. Regarding perceptions of the sexes, respondents tend to agree that women, more than men, judge others, gossip, lie about others, exclude persons from social events, and interrupt conversations. On the self-report section of the survey, women more often than men report that they had insulted someone behind their back or said something bad about someone to a third party (but not that they had spread a rumor, which was reported at almost the same frequency for men and women).

We have discussed the use of indirect aggressive strategies by women as more consistent with their spiritually elevated yet authoritatively subordinate *marianismo* image. We also note among women that an enhanced social awareness and greater importance of relationships may facilitate the use of indirect aggression and may also increase the pain of the victim of indirect aggression. We emphasize that this thesis needs further exploration, both within the Argentine context and within other cultural settings. Overall, our findings suggest that both Argentine men and women practice indirect aggression, but that Argentine women may use indirect methods more than men.

Another analytical level that is in no way contradictory to exploring intra-cultural factors is to examine cross-cultural themes and patterns, looking to the consistencies and variations in the human species overall. Symons (1979) points out that the typical mammalian pattern is for males to be larger and more aggressive than females and to compete for sexual access to them. Turning to humans, Symons (1979, p. 142) notes that female body weight on the average is 80 to 89 percent that of the average male. Symons also refers to Sherwood Washburn's work and points out that human sexual dimorphism can be related to potential for physical aggression, "if one focuses on the anatomy that is primarily responsible for sex differences, it becomes clear . . . that human males have evolved roughly *twice* the aggressive apparatus of females" (Symons, 1979, p. 142, emphasis in original).

Due to the physiological nature of reproduction, human females are the sex that invests more in each offspring through gestation and lactation. Depending on the culture in question, and depending on the male in question, men may or may not contribute substantially to the rearing of the young as well. In accordance with the evolutionary theory of parental investment, Symons (1979, p. 153, p. 163) suggests that human males are adapted to aggressively compete over females more than vice versa:

Although ethnographic reports may sometimes have an androcentric bias that obscures the subtleties of female-female competition, it is certain that intense competition evidenced by organized fighting and killing—as is common among

men—occurs nowhere among women. . . . The evidence suggests, then, that for millions of years hominid males and females pursued substantially different reproductive 'strategies' and typically exhibited different behaviors: throughout most of human evolutionary history, hunting, fighting, and that elusive activity, 'politics,' were highly competitive, largely male domains.

Both sexes in Buenos Aires are competitive, sometimes over members of the opposite sex. All in all, our ethnographic and survey findings indicate that competition among women is less likely to result in direct physical altercations than is competition among men. Thus, the fact that Argentine men commit more murders and engage in more serious forms of physical aggression than women conforms with a species-typical pattern of greater violence among men, and this pattern is understandable through evolutionary models (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Fry, 1992; Symons, 1979).

Based on the ethnographic literature, Symons (1979, p. 153) suggests that "a woman is most likely to compete by promoting her image as a desirable mate, enhancing her physical attractiveness, or advertising her wifely skills." Our observations and interviews support at least some elements of this interpretation for Argentine women. Women strive to out-do each other in terms of fashion, sex appeal, makeup, hair styles, and so on. Hines comments in her field notes on the extreme concern among Argentine women for being thin, attractive, and fashionable:

This body, weight, food, image obsession: so many preoccupations with body image and food . . . with looking 'perfect.' Competition is fierce! To look better, yet with the same style . . . tight jeans, turtle necks, long hair, boots (black, blue, brown, cream, leather). The most expensive wins.

Additionally, interviewees emphasized how women are sexually provocative in their manner of dress, make-up, and behavior.

Women in Argentina do engage in physical aggression. They may push and shove each other in lines or hit their husbands or boyfriends. But women's physical aggression is perceived as less frequent, less severe, and relatively harmless compared to men's aggression. Similarly, pushing, slapping and hair pulling are mentioned as typical patterns of women's aggression cross-culturally (Burbank, 1987, pp. 87-88), and to cite a specific example, such behaviors were observed and emphasized by informants in Zapotec culture (Fry, 1992).

In Argentine society, both sexes are verbally aggressive. This corresponds with psychological studies from Western societies (Frodi et al., 1974) and cross-cultural reports (Burbank, 1987). We suggest that verbal aggression is a ripe topic for further study in various cultural settings.

How does the Argentine pattern of female aggression generally and the use of indirect aggression more specifically compare with other cultural settings? Burbank (1987), Fry (1992), Glazer (1992) and Schuster (1983)

all note that a prevalent reason than women fight—physically and non-physically—is over men. “There are cross-cultural regularities in female-initiated aggression. Such aggression is, for example, largely directed against other adult females, primarily co-wives and other rivals in sex and marriage” (Burbank, 1987, p. 95). This reason emerged as a theme during our Argentine research as well. While we observed women competitively fighting over space, limited resources, and for other causes, our informants repeatedly mentioned *men* as the reason that Argentine women compete.

Fry (1992) suggests that Zapotec women may employ indirect aggression, specifically gossip and witchcraft, more than men. Björkqvist et al. (1992) report that Finnish girls use more indirect aggression than boys, and correspondingly that Finnish women use more indirect aggression than Finnish men. Thus our attitudinal and behavioral results, which stem from survey self-reports of behavior and survey assessment of attitudes as well as ethnographic observations and interviews, are in correspondence with the findings of these previous studies. It is clear, however, that men also use indirect aggression, hence we are describing behavioral tendencies, not absolute sex differences.

We have employed multiple methodologies in order to cross-check the validity of our findings and also to provide as much information on sex roles and aggression as possible. Each methodology has its strengths and weaknesses. Survey findings have been analyzed quantitatively while ethnographic observation and interview data have been presented to portray Argentine cultural meanings in greater detail. Ethnographic observations and homicide statistics also provide behavioral data. We suggest that the use of multiple methodologies, some quantitative and some qualitative, some behavioral and some attitudinal, provide a more complete picture of the cultural phenomena of interest. Finally, we wish to emphasize that we have barely scratched the surface in terms of understanding women’s aggressive behavior in this context and others. We suggest that the concept of indirect aggression has considerable utility for focusing future research.

Appendix Parts I and III of the Survey Instrument

Statistical questionnaire on aggression

Sex: _____

Age: _____

Place of birth: _____

How many years have you lived in Argentina? _____

I. Social interactions in the past week

Have you in the past week . . . ? (circle yes or no)

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Done a favor for someone. | Yes or No |
| 2. Lent someone money. | Yes or No |
| 3. Spread rumors about someone. | Yes or No |
| 4. Insulted someone to their face. | Yes or No |
| 5. Insulted someone behind their back. | Yes or No |
| 6. Bought someone a gift. | Yes or No |
| 7. Had a verbal argument with someone. | Yes or No |
| 8. Had a physical fight with someone. | Yes or No |
| 9. Told someone how important they were to you. | Yes or No |
| 10. Talked negatively about someone behind their back. | Yes or No |
| 11. Felt envious of another person. | Yes or No |
| 12. Helped solve a dispute between two friends. | Yes or No |
| 13. Calmly resolved a dispute of your own. | Yes or No |
| 14. Said you were sorry. | Yes or No |
| 15. Made rude gestures behind someone's back. | Yes or No |
| 16. Threatened a friend (verbally or physically). | Yes or No |
| 17. Praised or complimented a friend. | Yes or No |
| 18. Deliberately put someone down. | Yes or No |
| 19. Helped someone in need. | Yes or No |
| 20. Interrupted a conversation. | Yes or No |
| 21. Initiated an argument with someone. | Yes or No |
| 22. Worried about your family. | Yes or No |
| 23. Helped to get someone out of a big problem. | Yes or No |
| 24. Initiated an argument over jealousy. | Yes or No |
| 25. Screamed or yelled over a trivial matter. | Yes or No |
| 26. Played a team sport. | Yes or No |
| 27. Consoled a friend. | Yes or No |
| 28. Accused someone of wrong-doing in their presence. | Yes or No |
| 29. Falsely accused someone who is not present in order to create a problem for them. | Yes or No |
| 30. Showed someone how to do something. | Yes or No |

III. Comparisons between the sexes

Choose one of the following: SA: strongly agree

A: agree

U: undecided

D: disagree

SD: strongly disagree

- | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| 1. Both sexes are treated equally in your society. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 2. Most of your aggression is focused toward members of the opposite sex. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 3. There are more physical fights between members of the same sex, than between members of the opposite sex. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 4. There are more arguments between members of the same sex, than between members of the opposite sex. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 5. Women are more physically aggressive than men. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 6. Women are more likely to hit someone than men. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 7. Women judge people more than men. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 8. Women compete for positions of power more than men. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 9. Women are more verbally aggressive than men. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 10. Women are more likely than men to call someone insulting names. | SA | A | U | D | SD |

11. Women are more apt to tell a third party a lie about another person.	SA	A	U	D	SD
12. Women listen more attentively than men.	SA	A	U	D	SD
13. Women are more likely to exclude someone from a social event than are men.	SA	A	U	D	SD
14. Women gossip about others more than men.	SA	A	U	D	SD
15. Women attempt to resolve conflicts more than men.	SA	A	U	D	SD
16. Women are more likely to insult someone to their face than are men.	SA	A	U	D	SD
17. Women are more likely to interrupt the person they are talking with than men.	SA	A	U	D	SD
18. Men are more aggressive than women.	SA	A	U	D	SD
19. It is more socially acceptable for men to be more aggressive than women.	SA	A	U	D	SD
20. Men are more likely to make negative facial expressions without saying anything to the other person.	SA	A	U	D	SD
21. Men are more likely than women to judge someone else's work unfairly.	SA	A	U	D	SD
22. Men attempt to discuss and solve a problem more than women.	SA	A	U	D	SD
23. Men are more likely to kill someone than women.	SA	A	U	D	SD
24. Men are more apt to work out a compromise where both sides are satisfied with the solution.	SA	A	U	D	SD
25. Men criticize people more than women.	SA	A	U	D	SD
26. Men avoid speaking to someone they are angry at more than women.	SA	A	U	D	SD
27. Men are more jealous than women.	SA	A	U	D	SD
28. Men avoid acts of physical aggression more than women.	SA	A	U	D	SD
29. Men are more likely to destroy things than women.	SA	A	U	D	SD
30. Men are more "false" than women.	SA	A	U	D	SD

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