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# The Cross-Cultural Use of Sexually Explicit Language to Express Anger and Aggression

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The Cross-Cultural Use of Sexually Explicit Language to Express  
Anger and Aggression

Senior Honors Thesis

Presented to the University Honors Program

Western Kentucky University

Bowling Green Kentucky

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### **Abstract**

Freud postulated that the instincts of sex and aggression are fused. One possible example of the expression of this fusion is the use of sexually explicit language to convey anger and aggression. If this usage is universal, then it may be construed as evidence for Freud's theory. The present study attempted to determine the pervasiveness of the use of sexually explicit language to express anger and aggression (SEL). Thirty-one representatives of languages other than American English completed questionnaires detailing the use of SEL in their native cultures. Results indicated that 28 of the respondents reported use of SEL in their native languages while only 3 indicated non-usage. However, the responses of these 3 have led to suspicions that these languages may have been misrepresented. The demographic factors found to influence use of SEL included gender, authority, education, economic status, age, and religiosity; these results were consistent with both past American studies and an American sample collected for the present investigation. Humor was also found to be an outlet for sexually explicit aggression.

## The Cross-Cultural Use of Sexually Explicit language to Express Anger and Aggression

### Introduction

Why do people use sexually explicit language and symbols to express anger? Americans often express angry feelings with the epithet "Fuck you." Non-verbal representations of this expression, such as raising the middle finger, are also used. Furthermore, it is not only the manner in which the word "fuck" is used that conveys aggression, but the word *itself* seems to have aggressive connotations. Gershon Legman (1975), author of *Rationale of the Dirty Joke*, wrote:

It is the presence of *anger*, when using such words, thus the 'sadistic concept of coitus,' that creates the imprecational or scatological use.... One should recollect always, in this connection, that the word '*fuck*' itself is most closely related, etymologically, to such Latin congeners as *pungo*, with its modern forms 'punch,' 'puncture,' and 'pugilist.' No mistake here. (p.692)

Upon initial reflection, one may find these usages to be strange and paradoxical: sexual feelings are among the most positive of emotions, and sex is a source of great interpersonal pleasure; aggression is among the most injurious of human actions, and anger

directs great interpersonal displeasure. Yet for some reason, sexual language and symbols are used to vent hostile and aggressive feelings in America and some other cultures.

Beginning with Sigmund Freud, a number of psychological theorists postulated that sex and aggression are innate human instincts, and that these instincts become fused during the process of development. As will be elaborated below, this theoretical fusing provides a plausible explanation for the relationship between sexual language and aggression cited above. One implication of these theories, however, is that this relationship should be universal rather than limited to America and other Western cultures.

How universal is this usage? If sexual language and symbols are used to express anger and aggression in all cultures and language systems, some form of innate linkage within human nature is clearly suggested. While such a finding would not prove Freudian theory, this universality would at least be consistent with that theory and would require that those who doubt the adequacy of that theory to provide rational alternative explanations. If, on the other hand, such usage is not universal, one could certainly question the accuracy of Freud's and others' theories of the fusion of the sexual and aggressive instincts; socio-cultural explanations of the use of sexually explicit language to express anger and aggression should then be given more weight.

The aims of this thesis are to review the psychological theories that propose an innate relationship between sex and aggression and to carry out an empirical study of the universality of the use of sexual language and symbols to express aggression. This study also examines the most frequent contexts of usage along with the influence of various demographic factors (sex, education, economic status, age, and religion) upon usage. The



contextual and demographic information help to clarify the similarities and differences between the various cultures represented in the study.

## Psychological Theories of Sex and Aggression and Their Fusion

### Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud's theory of instincts went through several transformations as his clinical experience progressed. These transformations were not necessarily complete changes of Freud's basic postulates, but were progressions from a limited understanding toward broader comprehension of what Freud termed *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* (1915/1957). In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930/1964) Freud recounted the development of his theory of instincts:

I took as my starting-point a saying of the poet-philosopher, Schiller, that 'hunger and love are what moves the world.' Hunger could be taken to represent the instincts which aim at preserving the individual; while love strives after objects, and its chief function, favored in every way by nature, is the preservation of the species. Thus, to begin with, ego-instincts and object-instincts confronted each other. It was to denote the energy of the latter and only the latter instincts that I introduced the term 'libido.' Thus, the antithesis was between the ego-instincts and the 'libidinal' instincts of love (in the widest sense) which are directed to an object. ...alterations in it became essential, as our enquiries advanced from the repressed to the repressing forces, from the object-instincts to the ego. The decisive step forward was the introduction of the concept of

narcissism -- that is to say, the discovery that the ego itself is cathected with libido, that the ego, indeed, is the libido's original home, and remains to some extent its headquarters. This narcissistic libido turns towards objects, and thus becomes object-libido; and it can change back into narcissistic libido once more. ...Nevertheless, there still remained in me a kind of conviction, for which I was not as yet able to find reasons, that the instincts could not all be of the same kind. My next step was taken in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920g), when the compulsion to repeat and the conservative character of instinctual life first attracted my attention. Starting from speculations on the beginning of life and from biological parallels, I drew the conclusion that, besides the instincts to preserve living substance and to join it into ever larger units, there must exist another, contrary instinct seeking to dissolve those units and to bring them back to their primeval, inorganic state. That is to say, as well as Eros there was an instinct of death. The phenomena of life could be explained from the concurrent or mutually opposing action of these two instincts. (pp.117-119)

According to Freud, then, "Eros" and the "death instinct" are the two basic instincts from which all other instincts arise. The "life instinct," or Eros, is the drive to unify and bind together to preserve life, a part of which is the aim to propagate the species. One of the most important expressions of the life instinct is sexual in nature.

The instinct of death has as its purpose to return living matter to its previous inorganic state. The death instinct can become directed away from the individual and expressed outwardly. This occurs through the actions of the body. Consequently, the death instinct has as its main representative the "aggressive instinct" (Freud, 1923/1961). When

the death instinct operates internally -- when it is not directed outward or expressed externally -- it becomes manifest as self-destruction. Freud asserted that it was unhealthy for the individual to keep the aggressive energy inside. Any restriction of aggressiveness outward increases the internal aggression, hence the self-destruction. In *The New Introductory Lectures* (1933/1964) Freud wrote, "It really seems as though it is necessary for us to destroy some other thing or person in order not to destroy ourselves, in order to guard against the impulsion to self-destruction" (p. 105).

Freud (1930/1961) theorized that "the struggle between eros and Death, between the instinct of life and the instinct of destruction ...is what all life essentially consists of" (p.122). Yet, there are times when these opposite instincts may work together. As examples, eating is the destruction of food with the aim of incorporating the object (food) into the body, therefore prolonging life. Also, satisfaction of the sexual instinct may require the help of the aggressive instinct in the active pursuit of the sexual object (Freud, 1933/1964). Commonly, and in many human endeavors, the achievement of a final goal may involve both instincts.

In *The Ego and The Id* (1923/1961), Freud proposed that the two basic instincts become fused with one another. "Fusion" takes place when advancing from an earlier to a later stage of development and is the normal state of the instincts in the mature individual. As development progresses, the two kinds of instincts seldom, if ever, appear in isolation and are combined in different degrees. As examples, fusion which results in a high degree of sexual aggressiveness will "turn a lover into a sex-murderer," while a low degree of aggressiveness will "make him bashful or impotent" (Freud, 1940/1964, p.149). The result

of fusion of the instincts can be seen in sadism and masochism, which Freud stated were normal aspects of all individuals. In *The New Introductory Lectures* (1933/1964) Freud observed:

..we call it sadism when sexual satisfaction is linked to the condition of the sexual object's suffering pain, ill-treatment and humiliation, and masochism when the need is felt of being the ill-treated object oneself. ... a certain admixture of these two trends is included in normal sexual relations, and we speak of perversions when they push the other sexual aims into the background and replace them by their own aims. ...It is our opinion, then, that in sadism and in masochism we have before us two excellent examples of a mixture of the two classes of instinct, of Eros and aggressiveness; and we proceed to the hypothesis that this relation is a model one -- that every instinctual impulse that we can examine consists of similar fusions or alloys of the two classes of instincts. These fusions, of course, would be in the most varied ratios. (pp.105-106)

Freud developed his theory of the death instinct from observations of "sadism" and from the great destructiveness of World War I.

To better understand Freud's theory of the instincts it is important to understand some of the processes involved in their development and expression. The final formation of one of Freud's most important theories was the development of the mind into three universally known regions: "the It," "the I," and "the Over-I."<sup>1</sup> From the It, the I and the

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These terms are used instead of the traditional Latin translations, *id*, *ego*, and *super-ego*, because they are more direct translations from the German *Das Es*, *Ich*, and *Über-Ich*, and because the Latin translations lose much of the personal meaning for these terms intended by Freud. Regarding *Ich* (Ego), Bruno Bettelheim (1982) has written, "The translation of these personal pronouns into their Latin equivalents. . . turned them into cold

Over-I are formed. But these regions are not three distinct and separate areas. The It, the I, and the Over-I are each, in some way, involved with each other. They can be thought of as "colors melting into one another" (Freud, 1933/1964 p. 79).

We are born with the It, which is the hereditary aspect of the mind. It is the deep, recessed, mysterious part of ourselves that we cannot know directly. Within the It, there is no concept of time, no notion of good and evil, and no judgement of value and morality. It is not ruled by logic, nor does it have an organization. Freud described the It as "a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations" (1933/1964, p.73). Instincts, which originate in the body, are "somatic demands upon the mind" that cause tension in the It (Freud, 1940/1964, p. 148). The It is very sensitive to changing tensions within the body caused by the instincts and it strives to achieve satisfaction of these tensions. Changes that occur in the body are felt as feelings of pleasure and non-pleasure (Freud, 1940/1964, p. 198). The It is propelled into action by these feelings and, consequently, acts according to the "pleasure

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technical terms, which arose no personal associations. In German, of course, the pronouns are invested with deep emotional significance, for the readers have used them all their lives; Freud's careful and original choice of words facilitated intuitive understanding of his meaning. . . . To mistranslate *Ich* as "ego" is to transform it in to jargon that no longer conveys the personal commitment we make when we say "I" of "me" --not to mention our subconscious memories of the deep emotional experience we had when, in infancy, we discovered ourselves as we learned to say "I." . . . Reading or speaking about the I forces one to look at oneself introspectively. By contrast, an "ego" that uses clear-cut mechanisms, such as displacement and projection, to achieve its purpose in its struggle against the "id" is something that can be studied from the outside, by observing others. With this inappropriate and -- as far as our emotional response to it is concerned -- misleading translation, an introspective psychology is made into a behavioral one, which observes from the outside. This, of course, is exactly how most Americans view and use psychoanalysis." (pp. 52-93).

principle," which is the tendency to keep the amount of excitation at a constant level and as low as possible (Freud, 1920/1955).

Every instinct has a source, tension, an aim, and an object. An instinct's source is the process of an organ or body part which gives rise to the internal stimulation that becomes represented in the It by an instinct. As examples, the genitals give rise to the sexual instinct and the stomach gives rise to the instinct of hunger. An instinct creates, tension which is the force of the demand of the instinct placed on the individual.

Instinctual tension is the cause of all activity in that it drives the individual to action in an attempt to reduce or eliminate the tension. Elimination of the tension is the aim of the instinct. Elimination occurs by removing the stimulation at the source of the instinct such as when an individual obtains sexual satisfaction or when he eats (Freud, 1915/1957).

Though the aim of an instinct is always the same, there may be different routes to achievement of its satisfaction. It is also possible for an instinctual aim to become "inhibited" when it is blocked from achieving its goal. Through an object, an instinct can achieve its aim. Without the object, the instinct can not be satisfied. Objects can be a person, food, things, or even parts of the subject himself. The object which satisfies an instinct may also change many times. Sometimes an object can offer versatility, allowing simultaneous satisfaction for more than one instinct. Whatever form or specificity an object takes, it is the means through which an instinct can achieve satisfaction.

Freud named the energy of the life instinct "libido" and used this term to distinguish the energy of Eros from the energy of the death instinct, which was not given a name (Freud, 1930/1961). Libido flows to the It from various organs and parts of the body.

These areas are known as "erotogenic zones," though the whole body can be viewed as an erotogenic zone.

When the It feels tension, it seeks to alleviate the pressure through objects. A "cathexis" occurs, which is the investment of libidinal energy onto an object, emotion, idea, or course of action. When a specific object is thought to be able to satisfy an instinctual urge, the thought, or idea, of the object becomes invested with energy of the instincts. This investment is called an "object-cathexis." Freud gave varying accounts of the libidinal sources from which these cathexis occur. In *The Ego and The Id* (1923/1961) Freud stated:

At the very beginning, all the libido is accumulated in the id [It], while the ego is still in process of formation or is still feeble. The id [It] sends part of this libido out into erotic object-cathexes, whereupon the ego [I], now grown stronger, tries to get hold of this object-libido and to force itself on the id [It] as a love-object. The narcissism of the ego [I] is thus a secondary one, which has been withdrawn from objects. (p. 46)

Yet, in the *Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (1940/1964) Freud wrote:

It is hard to say anything of the behaviour of the libido in the id [It] and in the super-ego [over-I]. All that we know about it relates to the ego [I], in which at first the whole available quota of libido is stored up. We call this state the absolutely primary narcissism. It lasts till the ego [I] begins to cathect the ideas of objects with libido, to transform narcissistic libido into object-libido. Throughout the whole of life the ego [I] remains the great reservoir, from which libidinal cathexes are sent to objects and into



which they are also once more withdrawn, just as an amoeba behaves with pseudopodia.

(p. 150)

Thus, our knowledge of libido in its initial state in the It is incomplete, but the libido's importance is paramount. Freud (1930/1961) asserted that "libido has a share in every instinctual manifestation" (p.121), indicating the extent to which libido permeates human life.

Unlike tension arising from outside an individual, an instinct creates tension from within the individual. Therefore, a person cannot escape an instinct, but must seek satisfaction. Occasionally, satisfaction of the instinct may cause harm to the individual. Thus, the I must develop and mediate between the inner pressure or tension to pursue satisfaction and the dangers and pleasures of the external world.

The I develops from the part of the It described by Freud (1940/1964) as "a cortical layer equipped with the organs for receiving stimuli and with the arrangements for acting as a protective shield against stimuli" (p. 145). The I was modified from the It because of the threats of danger in the pursuit of satisfaction. The I represents the external world to the It and tries to mediate between the demands of the It and reality. The I postpones action of the It by the activity of thought, which can be viewed as an experimentation with various ideas for the safest route to satisfaction of the instincts. During this postponement, the pleasure principle is put aside and the influence of the reality principle ensues. The reality principle is the I's determination of the safest route to satisfaction for an instinct or, in the absence of a safe route, the suppression of the instinct (Freud, 1940/1964). The reality principle garners more success and less danger for satisfaction of the instincts (Freud,

1933/1964). Still, the I is not independent. The relationship of the I to the It was described by Freud in *The Ego and The Id* (1923/1961):

The functional importance of the ego [I] is manifested in the fact that normally control over the approaches to motility devolves upon it. Thus in its relation to the id [It] it is like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse; with this difference, that the rider tries to do so with his own strength while the ego [I] uses borrowed forces. The analogy may be carried a little further. Often a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to go; so in the same way the ego [I] is in the habit of transforming the id's [It's] will into action as if it were its own. (p.25)

However, the I must not only contend with the It and reality, but also with the Over-I.

Freud explained:

...it [the I] is observed at every step it takes by the strict super-ego [over-I], which lays down definite standards for its conduct, without taking any account of its difficulties from the direction of the id [It] and the external world, and which, if those standards are not obeyed, punishes it with tense feelings of inferiority and of guilt. (p.25)

The Over-I develops from the child's early relationships. While an individual is still an infant, the parents place restrictions upon his or her activity. But, as time progresses, the individual develops an internal apparatus that eventually replaces the parents' restrictive role. Freud called this apparatus the Over-I. The Over-I functions as the individual's

conscience. The main function of the Over-I is the limitation of satisfactions (Freud, 1940/1964).

The Over-I develops partly from the dissolution of the "Oedipus complex."

According to Freud, during early childhood, an individual develops an object-cathexis for the parent of the opposite sex. The first object-cathexis a boy develops is for his mother. At about the same time he develops an "identification" (the process by which an I takes into itself the characteristics of another I and begins to imitate it) with his father. At first there is no conflict between the two. Yet, when the child begins to feel stronger sexual wishes toward his mother, he perceives his father as a threat. He then becomes hostile toward his father and wishes to get rid of him so that he may have his mother. When the boy discovers his penis, he develops the desire to use it in relation to his mother. After the boy becomes aware of the absence of a penis in girls, he develops a fear of castration by his father in retaliation for his desires toward his mother (Freud, 1923/1961). As a result, the child is forced to give up his object cathexis and replaces it with an intensification of his identification with his father or an identification with his mother. The child then represses his sexual feelings for his mother and in most cases destroys the Oedipus complex. In its place, the Over-I is formed (Freud, 1933/1964). A period of sexual latency is then initiated. In a girl, the castration complex precedes the "Electra complex" which is the female equivalent of the male Oedipus complex. According to Freud, a girl comes to realize that she does not have a penis and longs to have one of her own. Thus, she turns this longing into a desire to be given a baby by her father. The

Electra complex is then gradually given up because the desire never sees fruition. At this point, a girl also enters into a period of sexual latency (Freud, 1923/1961).

Once the Oedipus complex and Electra complex have been resolved, the Over-I develops and replaces the influence of the parents' supervision by becoming an extension of the parental influence.

As stated earlier, when an object-cathexis occurs, an identification will sometimes ensue. The I will initiate the identification in an attempt to gain control of the energy of libido. When it obtains this energy, the I changes the sexual energy into desexualized energy and gives it another aim. This displaced energy is used to assist the pleasure principle by finding possible routes to discharge of the energy of the instincts. This displacement of the mental energy is called a "sublimation." Freud stated that the energy for all thought was supplied by sublimation. When a sublimation of energy occurs, a defusion of the instincts results. The erotic component of a cathexis no longer has the power to bind the destructive component, and therefore a release of an inclination toward aggression and destruction results (Freud, 1923/1961).

The defusion that occurs from the first object-cathexis (at the time of the Oedipus complex) results in the defused aggression being transferred from the It to the Over-I. This aggression explains some of the harshness evident in the Over-I, which by imposing guilt for the impulse as well as the act, becomes a far harsher taskmaster than the parents it replaces.

Freud maintained that mental processes were either "conscious," "preconscious," or "unconscious." The conscious is the part of the mind that is aware of the immediate

environment. The preconscious is that which is not conscious but can easily become conscious. The unconscious comprises those mental processes which cannot be brought to awareness by ordinary means. A great effort, such as through psychoanalysis, must be expended for the unconscious thoughts to become conscious. The It has the quality of being unconscious. But during the development of a part of the It into the I, portions of the It become preconscious and then become part of the I. The I has the characteristic of being all three: conscious, preconscious, and unconscious.

Though an instinct can never become conscious, the idea that represents it can become conscious; this occurs through the function of speech. The preconscious state in the I has the characteristic of access to consciousness. A thing becomes preconscious by being connected with a "word presentation." Word presentations are the memories of conscious "auditory perceptions." Auditory perceptions leave traces of words in the mind. Thus, a word presentation is the residue of a word that was heard, at some previous time, by the individual (Freud, 1900/1952).

For an internal thought to become conscious, it must become cathected with an external thought or perception, such as the memory trace of words. This cathexis gives the thought or idea quality, which it needs to become conscious. This is not the same as becoming conscious but it makes it possible. The process entails the idea becoming cathected with mental energy or libido and proceeding to become preconscious. In the preconscious condition, the cathexis is maintained in a dormant state while only a small amount of the energy of the cathexis is used by the I in experimental thought processes. Possible routes to discharge are evaluated, and then the cathexis is allowed mobility through

the muscular apparatus (body) (Freud, 1900/1952; 1940/1964).

One common use of language as a means of discharging of libidinal energy is through jokes. Freud (1905/1960) thought that "tendentious jokes" could be used as a weapon against others, thus satisfying an aggressive urge. He wrote in *Jokes and Their Relation To The Unconscious* (1905/1960):

By making our enemy small, inferior, despicable or comic, we achieve in a roundabout way the joy of overcoming him -- to which the third person, who has made no efforts, bears witness by his laughter. ... A joke will allow us to exploit something ridiculous in our enemy which we could not, on account of obstacles in the way, bring forward openly or consciously; once again, then, the joke will evade restrictions and open sources of pleasure that have become inaccessible. It will further bribe the hearer with its yield of pleasure into taking sides with us without any very close investigation, just as on other occasions we ourselves have often been bribed by an innocent joke into overestimating the substance of a statement expressed jokingly. (p.103)

Freud (1905/1960) explained the development of sexually suggestive language or "smut" into sexually aggressive jokes. He stated that the desire to look and touch is present in all persons in two forms -- active and passive. One of these two forms is usually dominant over the other. The active form helps introduce the sexual act. When the sexual urge is felt, words must be used to make the urge known to the sexual object and to arouse the object. If the object is excited by the speech, sexual action may occur. However, if the object is not receptive to the sexual overture, the words or speech itself becomes an aim in

the form of "smut." The smut will cause the object to envision the act referred to, and the speaker will receive satisfaction from the excitation that ensues from the visualization occurring in the object.

When the smut is spoken in the absence of an object of the opposite sex, the listener becomes the person to whom the smut is addressed, and the smut then takes on the character of a "tendentious joke." The joke involves at least three people -- the teller, the listener, and the object of the sexual aggressiveness. Freud (1905/1960) described the process involving a man and a woman as follows:

When a person finds his libidinal impulse inhibited by the woman, he develops a hostile trend against that second person and calls on the originally interfering third person as his ally. Through the first person's smutty speech the woman is exposed before the third, who, as listener, has now been bribed by the effortless satisfaction of his own libido. (p.100)

According to Freud (1905/1960) jokes "make possible the satisfaction of an instinct (whether lustful or hostile) in the face of an obstacle that stands in the way." (p. 101)

### **Summary of Freud's Theory**

There are two basic instincts -- Eros (life instinct) and the death instinct. Energy from the instincts originates in the internal organs and flows to the It. The It perceives the energy as tension. The It then acts according to the pleasure principle and seeks to alleviate the pressure. The It begins the process by affecting an object cathexis. The idea of the instinct becomes conscious to the I by becoming cathected with words. The I reacts by

using neutral energy acquired by sublimation and temporarily halts the aim of the instincts until it can determine a safe route to satisfaction. The I uses some of the energy of the cathexis to carry out these thought processes. If the I does not act effectively and the aim of an instinct breaks through in an action or thought, the over-I will punish the I with intense feelings of guilt. Bodily action takes place once the I has determined which route to take.

Freud stated that the instincts of Eros and destruction become fused. From his writings it is not quite clear at what time or physical location this fusion takes place, but it is evident that Freud thought that the two instincts are responsible for all action. Thus, we eat, sleep, go to work, have sex, talk, yell, tear things apart, and fight because of the innate drives of destruction and life.

Following Freud, many other psychiatrists described a relationship between the sexual and aggressive instincts. Informed by both Freud's theory and their own therapeutic work, some accepted Freud's views with little modification. Others made substantial modifications, while still others initially accepted and later rejected Freud's views. The most prominent later theorists who postulate a merging of the sexual and aggressive instincts are described below.

### Alfred Adler

In 1902, Alfred Adler, a physician, was invited to join Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic circle. He was named Freud's successor as president of the Vienna



Psychoanalytic Society. In 1911, Adler left the Society and established a new society based on his Individual Psychology.

Alfred Adler's early views of instincts were very similar to Freud's. He developed many ideas that Freud eventually accepted and used within his own theoretical framework. Among these was the idea that the relationship between the drives was one of confluence. Adler's concept of drives differed from Freud's in that Adler believed that primary drives, for example the drive to see, the drive to eat, the drive to seek affection, were subordinated to a superior drive of aggression. The superordinated position of aggression served to unify the individual, in contrast to Freud's dualistic theory of the instincts.

Adler was a field theorist, meaning that he thought that all events that occurred within the individual as well as outside the individual were interrelated. He based his theories on the concept of organ inferiority. Organ inferiority occurs when the environment makes demands which exceed the capabilities of an organ of the body. If the inferior organ is unable to meet the environmental needs, the area of the brain corresponding to that organ will then compensate when it develops physically and functionally. From this development, the "psychological axes" are determined which direct how a person relates to the world. For example, a person who has inferior eyesight might develop an unusually keen sense of observation. Similarly, a person who has inferior hearing may become a musician. This axes or "superstructure" is thus driven to provide pleasure for the organ through environmental experiences. In inferior organs, the drive is always associated with pleasure. Adler wrote, "The psychological superstructure of the organ largely functions as a substitute

for the deficiencies of the organ in order to gain its pleasure in relation to the environment" (Adler, 1907/1956 p.27).

Adler conceived of personality as a unity in the form of a confluence of drives. He stated that every drive undergoes a confluence with one or more of the other drives and that the driving force in healthy, as well as perverted and neurotic individuals, apparently stems from two drives which, originally distinct, subsequently have undergone a confluence. Thus, the sadistic masochistic results correspond to two drives simultaneously: the sexual drive and the drive of aggression. Similar confluences are found regularly in the drives of adults....In short, every discoverable drive is connected with one or more drives... (Adler, 1908/1956 p.30).

Adler postulated that the drive of aggression is superior to all other drives. The purpose of the aggressive drive is to gain satisfaction for the primary drives. Aggression is part of the superstructure that is the superordinated psychological field connecting the drives. The excitation from the primary drives enters this field when the drives are thwarted from achieving satisfaction. The goal of the aggressive drive is determined by the availability of satisfaction for the primary drives within the culture. Adler wrote, "The unstable psychological equilibrium is always re-established by the fact that the primary drive is satisfied through excitation and discharge of the aggressive drive" (1908/1956, p.35). The aggressive drive uses the primary drives to determine the possibilities of discharge. It especially uses the drives of the inferior organs which make up the psychological main axes.

When Adler first proposed a superordinated drive of aggression, Freud rejected the idea. Twenty-two years later, Freud proposed the idea that the death instinct, as manifest in the form of aggression, was one of the two driving forces in life. However, Adler later changed his views regarding the status of aggression. He stated that aggression was not a drive but was an irrational attitude toward the demands of life. Thus, in his early career, Adler, like Freud, believed that aggression and sex could become related in a way that influenced their expression (Adler, 1956).

Hartmann, Kris, and Loewenstein

Heinz Hartmann, Ernst Kris, and Rudolph Loewenstein were co-authors of many papers, including "Notes on the Theory of Aggression (1949/1964) " and "Some Psychoanalytic Comments on Culture and Personality (1951/1964)." Heinz Hartmann, educated at the University of Vienna and the Psychiatric and Neurological Institute of Vienna, served as President of the International Psychoanalytic Association from 1951-1957. Ernst Kris, originally an art historian, became a psychoanalyst and member of the Psychoanalytic Society of Vienna in 1928. He was one of the editors of *Sigmund Freud's Collected Works* and Freud's posthumously published writings. Rudolph Loewenstein, educated at the Universities of Zurich, Berlin, and Paris and a member of the International Psychoanalytic Institute, served as president of the New York Psychoanalytic Society and the American Psychoanalytic Association.

In "Notes on the Theory of Aggression" (p. 59) Hartmann et.al. expressed their acceptance of Freud's theory of the life and death instincts, stating that psychoanalytic

assumptions that include the drive toward aggression are relevant to the study of human nature. They used Freud's term *libido* to signify the energy of the sexual impulses, but they used the term *aggression* to delineate the energy of the aggressive impulses as well as to represent the drive itself. Simultaneous discharge of libido and aggression frequently occurs and is considered normal. Aggressive impulses can threaten an object unless a cathexis of libido has been achieved and acts as the objects protection. Instinctual cathexes can occur and exist in two ways: simultaneously -- leading to the predominance of the libido over aggression; and by fusion -- leading to a melding of libido and aggression.

### Karl Menninger

Karl Menninger, a Harvard-educated psychiatrist, founded the Menninger Clinic for psychiatric patients with his father. He also founded the Menninger Foundation for Psychiatric Education and Research.

In *Man Against Himself* (1938) Karl Menninger called Freud's life and death instincts the constructive and destructive tendencies of the personality because of their proclivity to build up and tear down. Hate and love are the emotional representatives or expressions of these tendencies. Menninger wrote with regard to the fusion of the two instincts:

...the destructiveness in the world cannot all be ascribed to fate and the forces of nature, but must be in part laid at the door of man himself ... the best theory to account for all the presently known facts is Freud's hypothesis of a death instinct, or primary impulses of destructiveness opposed by a life instinct or primary impulses

of creativeness and constructiveness; it is various phases of interaction between these two which constitute the psychological and biological phenomena of life (1938, pp.29,81).

To Menninger, like Freud, the constructive instincts become absorbed or infused in the destructive instincts to create a neutralization of the destructive instinct. This occurs in varying degrees from absolute to almost none. "Neutralization" is the sublimation of the destructiveness into constructiveness and creativeness.

When it becomes too difficult to maintain the neutralization, the destructive and constructive tendencies revert back upon the individual with the possibility that the destructive tendencies may prevail, thus resulting in self-destructiveness. The degree to which the destructive instincts are neutralized determines the extent of the self-destruction.

To Menninger, a child is born with hate and learns who or what to hate through life experiences. If the child's assessments are accurate, the destructive tendency can be helpful in attaining self-preservation. However, it takes years to be capable of accurate assessment. Thus, patterns of loving and hating are established that are not always wise. Eventually, the mature individual is capable of successfully sublimating the destructive tendencies by channeling the aggressive energy into activities of living and loving.

Menninger (1963) also expounded on the use of humor. He contended that humor and swearing are often used to obtain relief from a state of tension. He cited Freud's *Wit and Its Relation to The Unconscious* (1905) as being the first psychological book to show how wit and humor have a tension-relieving capacity. In *Man Against Himself* (1938) Menninger asserts that sadism may be disguised in joking. According to Menninger, wit

and humor are releases for "hostile impulses." He concurred with Freud's assumption that pleasurable feelings result from humor due to the release of unpleasant repressed emotion. The unpleasantness is due to the hostile element within the emotions, "but released in disguise, as humor, it makes all who share such emotion feel better" (Menninger, 1938, p. 430).

The universal existence of using sexual language to express anger and aggression may indicate that these theories are, in fact, correct. The primary goal of the present study is to test this universality.

### **Demographic Factors and the Use of Sexually Explicit Language**

Demographic variables influence when and how sexually explicit language is used. Timothy Jay, author of *Cursing In America* (1992), has studied patterns and rules for this type of verbal expression in the United States. Jay indicates that his and others' findings suggest that males use sexually explicit language more often than females; teenagers and young adults use sexually explicit language more often than older adults; status affects the perceived frequency of use; and intensity of religiousness seems to affect use of sexually explicit language. For the sake of simplicity, the term "SEL" will refer to the use of sexually explicit language to express anger and aggression.

According to Jay (1992):

Some believe that verbal aggression is the civilized form of earlier, more primitively evolved, physical aggression. Which is to say I'll beat you with words, not hands or clubs. It would seem that every society had sanctions against aggression and physical violence, as well as verbal attacks. Those who live in controlled societies must learn the rules controlling the expression of anger by violence or verbal attack.... The major dimensions of a speech context that cause speakers to control anger even though they have experienced the physiological

effects of it, are the following: age...status...relation...physical size...reasoning ability.

(p. 103)

According to this rule, verbal aggression, which includes use of sexually explicit language to express anger and aggression, would be curbed toward certain groups such as those with higher status, for example employers, professors, and religious figures.

In addition, according to Jay (1992), use of SEL to express anger and aggression also seems to be influenced by a person's relationship to the speaker; for example, a person would be more likely to control this type of expression toward his mother or grandparent. Foote and Woodward (1973) found evidence of this restraint when 25 out of 40 subjects in a sample, stated that they rarely if ever used sexually explicit language in their parents' presence.

Another factor reported by Jay (1992) as influencing use of SEL is social- physical setting. In relaxed, private, or homogenous group settings use of SEL is more common than in business, public, or mixed group settings. Walsh and Leonard (as cited in Jay, 1992) also found that both males and females reported use of "dirty words" more often in same-sex groups than in mixed-sex groups.

Age also seems to be related to the frequency of a person's use of sexually explicit language. Johnson and Fine (as cited in Jay 1992) found that subjects believed that younger people use obscenities more often than older people.

Apparently religion also affects use of SEL. Mabry (as cited in Jay, 1992) found that religious females and males were more reserved in their projected use of sexual words than other subjects. He also found that strongly religious males had lower use ratings than



other males or females. Kutner and Brogan (as cited in Jay, 1992) also found that females' religious involvement was inversely related to extensiveness of sexual slang.

One example of the verbal use of sex and aggression comes from Gershon Legman in his book entitled *Rationale of the Dirty Joke*. Legman (1975) states that jokes are centuries old and come from a variety of countries. The purpose of many jokes is for sexual and aggressive pleasure. He maintains that "Jokes are, not least, a disguised aggression or verbal assault directed at the listener...." As his basis for interpretation of the motivation of jokes, Legman states that he uses Freud's (1905) analysis as set forth in *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious*.

To test the universality of the patterns that affect the use of sexually explicit language to express anger and aggression, questions concerning variables such as sex, authority, education, socio-economic status, age, and religion as well as questions concerning humor and expressions of use, are included in the study.

## Method

To determine the universal prevalence of the use of sexually explicit language and symbols to express anger and aggression, a survey questionnaire (Appendix A) was developed and administered to 31 representatives of non-English speaking cultures. Because of the use of subjects whose native languages are those other than English, test questionnaires were first administered to volunteers and suggestions for improving the questionnaire were solicited.

### Questionnaire

To test the accuracy of the questionnaire, a sub-study was performed on a larger sample of American respondents. The purpose of the sub-study was to determine if American respondents to this study concurred with the results obtained in earlier American studies. Given the consistency of the sub-study with previous research, one could conclude that responses to the questionnaire from a smaller sample of educated representatives likely reflected the usage of their culture as a whole.

The questionnaire -- which included examples of sexually explicit language and symbols used to express anger and aggression in the United States -- was administered to representatives of as many different cultures as possible. Following questions designed to delineate demographic variables of the respondent, question #11 asked respondents if

sexually explicit language is used to express anger and aggression in their native languages and cultures. A series of 21 questions (#12 - #32) then asked respondents to rate the frequency of usage from 1 (never) to 7 (often) for subgroups within their culture varying in age, educational level, economic status, and religion. Each frequency question had two corresponding answer scales - one on which to record the assessment of males' usage in a specific demographic group and the other for the assessment of females' usage in the same demographic group. Respondents were also asked if jokes are used to express sexual aggressiveness in their native culture and to give an example of a joke that is aggressive toward males and one that is aggressive toward females. They were then asked to list some of the words and symbols used in their culture and the social settings most likely to involve this type of language. Finally, the respondents were asked to describe any concerns or comments about the survey and/or their responses to the questions.

Because of the sensitive subject matter of the questionnaire, participants were informed through the opening statement that the study had serious and scientific aims. Participants were also assured that their participation in the study was completely voluntary and that participation could be discontinued at any time. To protect privacy, respondents' names were not solicited and the instructions at the beginning of the questionnaire explicitly stated that names were not needed and that participation was confidential.

### Subjects

The approach adopted for this study was a "key informant" investigation rather than a randomized sample survey. That is, educated native speakers were sought from each

culture, based upon the assumption that these individuals would be most likely to understand their native cultures well enough to report with reasonable accuracy on the use of sexual language to express aggression in their own cultures, including the variations in frequency of use associated with demographic subgroups. Twenty-four males and eight females responded, ranging in age from 20 to 69 years. Respondents included 14 professors, 2 graduate students, and 15 undergraduate students of Western Kentucky University. Appendix B contains the list of languages and countries that are represented by the sample.

The sub-sample contains 15 Caucasian American respondents -- 6 female and 9 male -- who range in age from 23 to 59 years. The educational level of the respondents includes 5 bachelors' degrees, 6 masters' degrees, 3 doctorates, and 1 law degree. All subjects reported English as their native language.

## Results

### Universality

The responses of the international sample indicated that 90% of the respondents answered that sexually explicit language is used to express anger and aggression in their cultures. Of the 9% that indicated that SEL is not used, one respondent stated that it does not even exist in the native language of Yoruba in Nigeria and its presence in Nigeria is due to European colonization. However, another representative of Nigerian culture indicated that SEL *is* used. Thus, conflicting results were obtained regarding use in Nigeria. Another respondent stated that in the Philippines SEL is used only in large cities and not in rural areas. The respondent's explanation for this difference was that Western culture could be observed on television in larger cities and, as such, its influence can be seen in the language of urban dwellers. The respondent from the Philippines was the only informant from that culture. A third respondent indicated that SEL is not used in the native language of Bengali, yet the respondent did indicate usage by some males, albeit the usage was very low. Thus, some conflicting results were received for at least two of these cultures.

One hundred percent of the respondents of the American sub-study indicated that SEL is used to express anger and aggression in the United States. (However, it was

explicitly stated in the questionnaire that SEL was used in the United States.)

Frequency assessments of the use of SEL have been divided into three ranges: low -- indicating a frequency rating of 1-2; moderate -- indicating a frequency rating of 3-5; and high-- indicating a frequency rating of 6-7. The reported percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who assessed usage to be within the reported range. Only the largest percentages are presented here.

#### Influence of Gender

Results of the international sample indicate that use of SEL to express anger and aggression is more common among males than females; the American sample is consistent with these results, which are presented below in table 1.

Table 1

#### The Influence of Gender Upon the Use of Sexually Explicit Language to Express Aggression

	International Sample			American Sample		
Usage:	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High
Males	6%	42%	52%	0%	36%	64%
Females	42%	52%	6%	0%	93%	7%

As table 1 also shows, both male and female Americans are perceived as more likely to use sexually aggressive language to express aggression than are their international counterparts.

The results also indicate that internationally as well as for Americans, both males and females are perceived as more likely to use SEL in same-sex groups than in mixed-sex groups. These results are presented in table 2.

Table 2

The Influence of Mixed-Sex vs. Same-Sex Groups Upon the Use of Sexually Explicit Language to Express Aggression

	International Sample			American Sample		
Same-Sex Groups:	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High
Males	6%	58%	35%	0%	60%	40%
Females	50%	46%	4%	0%	73%	27%
Mixed-Sex Groups:						
Males	32%	55%	13%	0%	73%	27%
Females	63%	37%	0%	20%	67%	13%

Influence of Authority

Both the international and American samples indicated that individuals are less likely to use SEL when addressing authority figures or parents than in general usage. Percentages of those who reported low, moderate, or high usage when addressing authorities and parents are reported in table 3. By comparing these figures with those in tables 1 and 2, one

observes that the authority figure strongly inhibits the used of SEL for both males and females, both non-Americans and Americans.

Table 3

The Influence of Authority and Parents Upon the Use of Sexually Explicit Language to Express Aggression

	International Sample			American Sample		
Speaking to:						
Authorities:	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High
Males	77%	20%	3%	27%	67%	7%
Females	90%	10%	0%	87%	13%	0%
One's Father:						
Males	79%	21%	0%	47%	53%	0%
Females	93%	7%	0%	93%	7%	0%
One's Mother:						
Males	82%	14%	4%	67%	33%	0%
Females	89%	7%	4%	80%	20%	0%

Influence of Education

The present study found a relationship between the use of sexually explicit language and level of education. Respondents in both the American and international samples



indicated that as educational level increases, use of SEL decreases. These data are presented in table 4.

Table 4

The Influence of Education Upon the Use of Sexually Explicit Language to Express Aggression

	International Sample			American Sample		
Education Level:						
Elementary or less:	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High
Males	7%	40%	53%	0%	0%	100%
Females	28%	55%	17%	7%	60%	33%
High School:						
Males	13%	71%	16%	0%	47%	53%
Females	43%	47%	10%	7%	67%	27%
College:						
Males	32%	58%	10%	0%	73%	27%
Females	60%	37%	3%	27%	67%	7%

The trend to report lower frequency ratings as the level of education increases can be seen for males in the international sample with 53% of respondents indicating high frequency of use, decreasing to 16% for high school and 10% for those with college education. The American sample also reported a decrease, with 100% indicating high frequency for those

with little education, dropping to 53% for those with a high school education, and 27% for a college education.

### Influence of Socio-Economic Status

The influence of economic status replicates the effects of education. As table 5 shows, as economic status increases from low to middle to high income, the perceived use of SEL decreases. This pattern is true for both non-Americans and Americans and for both females and males.

Table 5

The Influence of Socio-Economic Status Upon the Use of Sexually Explicit Language to Express Aggression

	International Sample			American Sample		
Economic Status:						
Low:	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High
Males	6%	45%	48%	0%	7%	93%
Females	33%	43%	23%	0%	73%	27%
Middle:						
Males	19%	74%	6%	0%	60%	40%
Females	50%	47%	3%	7%	80%	13%
High:						
Males	35%	65%	0%	0%	87%	13%
Females	77%	20%	3%	40%	53%	7%

Influence of Age

Overall, the use of SEL appears to increase dramatically from preadolescence to adolescence and decrease substantially after age 50. This pattern was found for both men and women and for both Americans and non-Americans. The data are summarized in table 6.

Table 6

The Influence of Age Upon the Use of Sexually Explicit Language to Express Aggression

	International Sample			American Sample		
Age Group:						
Under 13:	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High
Males	48%	45%	6%	20%	73%	7%
Females	80%	10%	10%	47%	53%	0%
Teenagers:						
Males	3%	68%	29%	7%	20%	73%
Females	52%	34%	14%	7%	60%	33%
Ages 20 to 50:						
Males	14%	69%	17%	0%	53%	47%
Females	43%	54%	4%	0%	80%	20%
Over age 50:						
Males	52%	38%	10%	20%	80%	0%
Females	78%	19%	4%	67%	33%	0%

-----

Frequency ratings for males in the international sample show an increase for males from 6% for high usage under age thirteen to 29% for teenagers, dropping to 17% for ages 20 to 50 and to 10% for those over age 50. Comparable results were obtained for females in the international sample as well as males and females in the American sample.

### Influence of Religion

Not surprisingly, the use of SEL appears to decrease as individuals become more religious. Table 7 summarizes the results.

Table 7

### The Influence of Religion Upon the Use of Sexually Explicit Language to Express Aggression

	International Sample			American Sample		
Level of Religiosity:						
Non Religious:	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High
Males	10%	52%	39%	0%	13%	87%
Females	33%	57%	10%	0%	87%	13%
Moderately Religious:						
Males	16%	81%	3%	0%	73%	27%
Females	60%	37%	3%	7%	87%	7%
Very Religious:						
Males	71%	26%	3%	53%	40%	7%
Females	93%	3%	3%	93%	7%	0%

Overall, a linear pattern of decrease in usage of SEL is observed as religiosity increases.

## Humor

As table 8 shows, sexual humor to express anger and aggression is used more frequently by males than females assessed by both the international sample and the American sample.

Table 8

### The Use of Sexually Explicit Humor to Express Aggression

	International Sample			American Sample		
Usage:	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High
Males	17%	45%	35%	13%	33%	53%
Females	46%	39%	14%	7%	87%	7%

## Words, Phrases, Gestures

The majority of respondents to the international and the American study listed variations on the use of the word "fuck" as one of the words or phrases used to express anger and aggression in their native languages (see appendix C for a complete list). For example, in the international study, some of the phrases reported were "Fuck your mother," "Go get fucked," "You look like you have just been fucked," as well as the words "Fuck," and "Motherfucker." Reported in the American study were phrases such as "Fuck you," "Fuckin bitch," and "Shut the fuck up..." as well as the word "Motherfucker." The second most frequently reported words or phrases involved the word "ass." For example, some of

the phrases reported by the international respondents include "Kiss my ass," and "You are an asshole." The American sample reported "Kiss my ass," "You asshole," and "Bite my ass."

The most commonly reported gestures (see appendix C for a complete list) were similar for both the international and American studies, with "The finger" reported most often. This gesture was followed in frequency by the American study with the gesture of a raised arm with fist sometimes crossed by the opposite arm -- "Up yours." The respondents to the international study indicated variations on the "finger" gesture as the next most frequently occurring gesture, for example, one fist punching into the palm of the other hand or a finger striking the palm of the other hand. "Up yours" gestures were also indicated with a raised fist, as in America.

### Setting

The most frequently reported setting in which SEL is used to express anger and aggression was reported by both samples as during "arguments" (complete list in appendix C). Respondents to the international sample indicated that "sporting events" were the next most common setting, followed by situations in which people were "drinking" and when they were "with friends." The American respondents reported the next most frequent settings to be "sporting events," "bars," and "in traffic" -- all reported with equal frequency.

### Discussion

Use of sexually explicit language seems to be common among the languages in this study. Yet, to use this evidence to support Freud's theory that the instincts of sex and aggression are fused is premature. Although other studies have shown that the use of obscenities are widespread, this does not indicate that they are used aggressively. Foote and Woodward (1973) have cited work by E. Leach, G. Legman, E. Sagarin, H. Vetter, and M. Pei indicating that

A familiar manifestation of the linguistic taboo in our own society and in almost all other past and present societies is the pervasive although situationally relative prohibitions against uttering certain phonemic strings, or representing these utterances in writing, that are generally referred to as obscene, dirty, filthy, vulgar, profane, cuss, blasphemous, Anglo-Saxon, or four-letter words... It seems that with few exceptions all known modern tongues contain a certain, relatively small subset of words among all the lexical items of their vocabularies that would be identified by the typical native speaker of the these languages as obscene, dirty, etc. (P.264)

Studies which identify the use of these obscenities would help to indicate a universal way of using sexual language.

The results of the present study are consistent with previous American studies. Jay (1992) reported that Fine and Johnson found that the main motive for using obscenity by both male and female American college students is to express anger or to express feelings.



Foote and Woodward (1973) found the same reason when 39 out of 40 American subjects reported that the main purpose for using obscenity was to "express my feelings," "let off steam," and "because I feel mad." This finding reflects the results of Driscoll (1981), who asked 96 American college men and women to rate on a scale of 0 (least aggressive) to 6 (most aggressive) epithets for aggressiveness and frequency of aggressive use. Results indicated that of the nine epithets rated over a "5" on aggressiveness, six referred to sexual behavior. The other three were "bitch," "son-of-a-bitch," and "pile of shit," of which the first two may be interpreted by some as having sexual inferences.

Jay (1992) reported that correlations of his 1977 tabooess study and Driscoll's study indicate that there is a moderate correlation between offensiveness and aggression. Thus, words rated as offensive may also be perceived as aggressive. Baudhuin (1973) found that of the twenty taboo words rated by college students for offensiveness, all but one of the top ten had sexual connotations. Performing a similar study, Bostrom and Rossiter (as cited in Baudhuin, 1973) found that the word "fuck" received a rank of 16, with 17 being the most offensive. Thus, studies of the use of sexually explicit language have found that SEL is used to express anger in America and that one of the most offensive or aggressive sexually explicit verbal expressions of anger is the word "fuck." These findings are similar to the findings of the present study in which phrases containing the word "fuck" were the most commonly reported sexually explicit phrases used to express anger and aggression in both the international and the American samples.

These results support the findings of the American sub-study. The results of the present study indicate that for Americans and non-Americans, gender, authority, education,

age, social status, and religion all affect the perceived use of SEL to express anger and aggression. Furthermore, gestures and humor are also used as vehicles to express anger and aggression. For the international study, similar results were obtained which may indicate universal rules for the use of SEL to express anger and aggression.

The present study is limited by the small percentage of languages represented in the sample. Concerns regarding comprehension of English and translation of concepts prompted limitation of respondents to university faculty and students, assuming they would be familiar with English and American customs. Therefore, only a small population of international representatives were available from which to draw the sample. Also, many students seemed to be reluctant to complete the questionnaire. I attribute this reluctance partly to the sensitive subject matter.

Though a large majority of respondents indicated that sexually explicit language is used to express anger and aggression in their native cultures, two respondents did indicate that SEL to express anger and aggression is not used in their native language and that any use in their countries is a direct result of Western influence. Because of the small sample size, it is possible that these languages were misrepresented in the study. If SEL *use* is forbidden but it does *exist*, then the answer to question # 11 should be yes regardless of frequency of use. Further studies must be performed before any conclusions regarding the universal use of SEL to express anger and aggression can be drawn. Larger samples and a more diverse representation of world languages will allow greater inferences to be made regarding use of SEL to express anger and aggression. Also, because of the confidential nature of the questionnaires and survey methods used in this study, personal interviews

were not possible. As a result, clarification of responses were not obtained. Future studies may need to include the use of personal interviews to clarify ambiguous answers or comments.

## Appendix A

### The Cross-Cultural Study of the Use of Sexual Language and Symbols to Express Aggression and Anger

The purpose of this study is to identify the prevalence, types, and contexts in which sexually explicit language and gestures are used to express aggression and anger in cultures around the world. The aims of the study are serious and scientific, and are based on important psychological theory.

Some respondents may find that this study creates embarrassment or uncomfortable feelings. Your participation is voluntary. You may discontinue now or at any time during the study for any reason. Participation in this study is also confidential. All information obtained through this questionnaire will remain confidential. Please do not sign your name; your personal identity is not wanted or needed. This study is being conducted by Dr. Sam McFarland and Ms. Deanna May of the Department of Psychology, Western Kentucky University.

**Please use English to answer all questions.**

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Male: \_\_\_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Married: \_\_\_\_\_ Single: \_\_\_\_\_ Divorced: \_\_\_\_\_ Widowed: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Native language: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Level of education: \_\_\_\_\_
7. How long have you been in the United States? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What is the main religion (or religions) in your native culture?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What is your personal religion (if any)? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How religious do you consider yourself to be?

Not at all  
Religious

Moderately  
Religious

Very  
Religious

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

We are interested in knowing if "vulgar" (offensive or indecent) sexual language and symbols are used to express anger and aggression in your native culture and language. In America, for example, sometimes these expressions, when taken literally, refer to sexual intercourse, such as "Fuck you," but the intended meaning is one of anger and aggression. Sometimes these expressions refer to the anus to express anger or aggression, such as "Kiss my ass!" Americans also sometimes raise the middle finger (a gesture of an erect penis) as an expression of anger. These expressions and gestures might be used to express anger or aggression in a variety of situations, such as when frustrated while driving, in an argument, or in a competitive game.

The following questions ask whether, by whom, and in what settings such symbols and language are used to express anger and aggression in your culture.

11. Is SEL (sexually explicit language) used to express anger and aggression in **your** native culture?

\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

For the following questions, please consider your native culture as a whole, not just yourself and your acquaintances. Please circle the response that best indicates the frequency of usage of sexually explicit language (SEL) to express anger and aggression in your native culture as a whole.

- |     |                           | <u>never</u> |   | <u>occasionally</u> |   | <u>often</u> |   |   |
|-----|---------------------------|--------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------|---|---|
|     |                           |              |   |                     |   |              |   |   |
| 12. | Usage by <u>males</u> :   | 1            | 2 | 3                   | 4 | 5            | 6 | 7 |
| 13. | Usage by <u>females</u> : | 1            | 2 | 3                   | 4 | 5            | 6 | 7 |

Please circle the response that best indicates the frequency of usage of sexually explicit language (SEL) to express anger and aggression for males and females in your native culture:

- |     |                                                                              | <u>never</u> |   | <u>occasionally</u> |   | <u>often</u> |   |   |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------|---|---|
|     |                                                                              |              |   |                     |   |              |   |   |
| 14. | In situations that include both males and females?                           |              |   |                     |   |              |   |   |
|     | <u>by males:</u>                                                             | 1            | 2 | 3                   | 4 | 5            | 6 | 7 |
|     | <u>by females:</u>                                                           | 1            | 2 | 3                   | 4 | 5            | 6 | 7 |
| 15. | In situations that include only members of the same sex?                     |              |   |                     |   |              |   |   |
|     | <u>by males:</u>                                                             | 1            | 2 | 3                   | 4 | 5            | 6 | 7 |
|     | <u>by females:</u>                                                           | 1            | 2 | 3                   | 4 | 5            | 6 | 7 |
| 16. | When one is speaking to authority figures (examples: employers, professors)? |              |   |                     |   |              |   |   |
|     | <u>by males:</u>                                                             | 1            | 2 | 3                   | 4 | 5            | 6 | 7 |
|     | <u>by females:</u>                                                           | 1            | 2 | 3                   | 4 | 5            | 6 | 7 |
| 17. | When speaking to one's father?                                               |              |   |                     |   |              |   |   |
|     | <u>by males:</u>                                                             | 1            | 2 | 3                   | 4 | 5            | 6 | 7 |
|     | <u>by females:</u>                                                           | 1            | 2 | 3                   | 4 | 5            | 6 | 7 |
| 18. | When speaking to one's mother?                                               |              |   |                     |   |              |   |   |
|     | <u>by males:</u>                                                             | 1            | 2 | 3                   | 4 | 5            | 6 | 7 |
|     | <u>by females:</u>                                                           | 1            | 2 | 3                   | 4 | 5            | 6 | 7 |

**The Influence of Education:**

		<u>never</u>		<u>occasionally</u>		<u>often</u>	
19.	How likely is someone with <u>little education</u> (an elementary education or less) to use SEL to express anger and aggression in <b>your</b> culture?	<u>by males:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
		<u>by females:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
20.	Someone with a <u>high school education</u> ?	<u>by males:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
		<u>by females:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
21.	Someone with a <u>college education</u> ?	<u>by males:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
		<u>by females:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7

**The Influence of Economic Status:**

22.	How likely is someone of <u>low economic status</u> to use SEL to express anger and aggression in <b>your</b> culture?	<u>by males:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
		<u>by females:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
23.	Someone in a <u>middle economic status</u> ?	<u>by males:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
		<u>by females:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
24.	Someone with <u>high economic status</u> ?	<u>by males:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
		<u>by females:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7

**The Influence of Age:**

25.	How likely is a <u>child under thirteen</u> to use SEL to express anger or aggression in <b>your</b> culture?	<u>by males:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
		<u>by females:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
26.	A <u>teenager</u> ?	<u>by males:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
		<u>by females:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
27.	An <u>adult between twenty and fifty</u> ?	<u>by males:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
		<u>by females:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
28.	An <u>adult older than fifty</u> ?	<u>by males:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
		<u>by females:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7

**The Influence of Religion:**

29.	How likely is a <u>non-religious person</u> in <b>your</b> culture to use SEL to express anger and aggression?	<u>by males:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
		<u>by females:</u>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7

- |     |                                        | <u>never</u> |             |   | <u>occasionally</u> |   | <u>often</u> |   |   |   |
|-----|----------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------|---|---|---|
|     |                                        |              |             |   |                     |   |              |   |   |   |
| 30. | A <u>moderately religious person</u> ? |              | by males:   | 1 | 2                   | 3 | 4            | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|     |                                        |              | by females: | 1 | 2                   | 3 | 4            | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 31. | A <u>very religious person</u> ?       |              | by males:   | 1 | 2                   | 3 | 4            | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|     |                                        |              | by females: | 1 | 2                   | 3 | 4            | 5 | 6 | 7 |

### **Humor and Aggression:**

(Please remember to consider your native culture as a whole, not just yourself and your acquaintances.)

- |     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 32. | Is sexual humor used to express anger and aggression in <u>your</u> culture (e.g. jokes inferring female promiscuity or male sexual inadequacy)?                                                                          | by males:   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | by females: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 33. | If you can and are comfortable doing so, please give an example of a sexual or vulgar joke that is used to express aggression <u>toward females</u> in <u>your culture</u> . Some are used, but I can't think of any ____ |             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 34. | If you can and are comfortable doing so, please give an example of a sexual or vulgar joke that is used to express aggression <u>toward males</u> in <u>your culture</u> . Some are used, but I can't think of any ____   |             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

If you are comfortable doing so, please answer the following questions as best you can .

35. What sexually explicit words or phrases referring to intercourse or the anus, if any, are commonly used to express anger and aggression in your native culture and language? Please give two examples, if possible. Please provide your answers in English.  
None, to my knowledge, are used \_\_\_\_ Some are used, but I can't think of any \_\_\_\_
- 1.
  - 2.
36. What sexually explicit symbols or gestures, if any, are used to express anger and aggression in your native culture? Please give at least two examples if possible.  
None, to my knowledge, are used \_\_\_\_ Some are used, but I can't think of any \_\_\_\_
- 1.
  - 2.
37. What social settings, if any, are people most likely to use "vulgar" sexually explicit language or symbols

to express anger and aggression in your native culture? (for example: during a sporting event, during an argument, etc.) Please give at least two examples if possible. None \_\_\_\_\_

1.

2.

38. If you have any concerns or comments about the questions contained in this survey or your answers to the questions, please describe here:

We thank you sincerely for your participation in this study.



### Appendix B

#### Languages and nationalities represented in the study

Nationality	Language	Nationality	Language
Africa	Lusoga	Nigeria	Igbo
Burma	Burmese		Yoruba
Chile	Spanish	Norway	Norwegian
Cuba	Spanish	Philippines	Filipino
France	French	Russia	Russian
Georgia	Georgian	Spain	Spanish
Germany	German	Singapore	Malay
India	Bengali		Mandarin
	Hindi	Sri Lanka	Sinhalese
	Urdu	Turkey	Turkish
Iran	Persian	United States	English
	Fursi	Zair*	Lingala
Ireland	English		Swahili
Kuwaiti	Arabic		Kiluba

\* All three languages were reported by one respondent.

## Appendix C

Sexually explicit phrases and words reported to be used to express anger and aggression.

## International Study

## American Study

fuck your mother  
 You are an asshole  
 Go get fucked  
 Dick  
 I'll strike you (I'll fuck you)  
 I'll blow your ass (I'll fuck your ass)  
 You look like you have just been fucked  
 I'll rape your ass  
 Mother fucker  
 Sisterfucker  
 fucker  
 fuck your sister  
 I did your sister  
 fuck  
 Pussy  
 Bitch  
 I shit on your mother's cunt  
 Son of the great bitch  
 Fag  
 Wide ass like an Arab  
 Lick my behind  
 Your an anus  
 Kiss my ass  
 Big tit  
 Slim body (aimed at female)  
 Sheepshagger  
*Millimeter man*

fuck you  
 Kiss my ass  
 Motherfucker  
 You asshole  
 Get screwed  
 Son of a bitch  
 Bite me  
 Bite my ass  
 Up yours  
 Piss off  
 Suck my dick  
 fuckin bitch  
 Shut the fuck up or I'll beat the shit out of your  
 sorry      ass!  
 Do you want me to kick your fucking ass?

note. Given in order of most frequently reported

Sexual gestures reported to be used to express anger and aggression.

International Study

American Study

The finger

Fist striking palm (fuck you)

Loosely clenched fist - insert finger

The finger but with the arm

Two raised fingers (up yours)

Raised fist with other hand on inside elbow  
(up yours)

Moving fist horizontally (penis in ass)

Strike finger three times in palm (fuck you)

Holding privates

Pointing to crotch

"Gestures with hands"

Make circle out of finger and thumb insert  
other finger

note. Gestures given in order of most

The finger

Raised fist with opposite hand on inside  
elbow

Moving pelvis

Pointing toward penis

A picture of male genitals

frequently reported.

Settings reported in which use of sexually explicit language to express anger and aggression occurs.

International Study	American Study
<p>During an argument</p> <p>During a sporting event</p> <p>Among friends</p> <p>When drunk</p> <p>During a fight</p> <p>When joking</p> <p>Men playing games in bars</p> <p>While gambling</p> <p>At night clubs</p> <p>While driving</p> <p>In the military</p> <p>While arguing with spouse</p> <p>Between prostitutes and clients</p>	<p>During an argument</p> <p>During a sporting event</p> <p>At a bar</p> <p>In traffic</p> <p>At parties</p> <p>When joking</p> <p>While drinking</p> <p>Couples arguing</p> <p>In crowds, concerts, etc.</p> <p>Casually</p> <p>Any non-religious setting</p>
<p><u>note.</u> Settings are given in order of frequency reported.</p>	

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