

# **Conceptualising the body in America and Britain.**

A profile-based study of the use of body-part terms in online diaries.

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## **Aims of the study**

### **Descriptive**

The conceptualisation of the body in contemporary British and American English

### **Methodological**

Develop quantitative methods to measure the effects of social variation on generalisations about conceptual structure

## **Problem**

### **Operationalising Idealised Cognitive Models?**

Introspection makes falsification of results difficult

Introspection makes identification of social variation difficult

#### **Proposal 1**

Choice of Keywords = Determined through relative frequency

#### **Proposal 2**

Patterns of characteristics of usage = index of Cognitive Model

# Data

## Choice of the body part terms:

UK			US		
Freq	Freq/1000	Word	Freq	Freq/1000	Word
21191	4,12	<i>hand(s)</i>	92082	3,74	<i>hand(s)</i>
6121	1,19	<i>finger(s)</i>	26134	1,06	<i>fingers</i>
5157	1,00	<i>lip(s)</i>	23406	0,95	<i>lips</i>
4530	0,88	<i>mouth</i>	22944	0,93	<i>mouth</i>
3966	0,77	<i>skin</i>	15552	0,63	<i>skin</i>

⇒ Taken from the first 10 most frequent body part terms in the corpus.

## Corpus

*LiveJournal Corpus* (Speelman & Glynn 2006 [2012]).

1000 occurrences

⇒ 50 occurrences of each lexemes in both American and British English in 2006 and 2012

# Method - Multifactorial Usage-Feature Analysis

Step 1. Data Analysis - Manual annotation of usage-features

Step 2. Meta-data Analysis - Multivariate examination of results

## Factors

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Dimension	Features
PERSPICUITY of sexuality	Explicit, Implicit
INTENSITY - in degree of sexuality	Likert scale 1 to 9
GENDER - of the referent	Masculine, Feminine, or Unknown
PERSON - of the referent	1 <sup>st</sup> (Subjective), 2 <sup>st</sup> (Interpersonal), 3 <sup>rd</sup> (Descriptive)
AXIOLOGY - moral judgement	Positive, Negative or Neutral

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# Analysis - Exemplification of feature analysis

## 1. PERSPICUITY (explicitness) of Sexuality

### a. Explicit Sexuality

“finally letting my hard cock out. I suck my FINGERS quickly lubricating them then massage one around Danny’s tight entrance”

### b. Implicit Sexuality

“Jack leaned in close his lips just brushing the sensitized SKIN of his neck. Ianto tried desperately to remember what he was going to say.”

## 2. INTENSITY of Sexuality - Based on Reduced Likert Scale 1-9

### a. Low Sexuality/or Non-Sexual

“The combination of a wide forehead, prominent cheekbones and a pointed chin, generally with thin LIPS, are signs of a brilliant and, intelligence and ambition”

### b. High Sexuality

“the lie was more interesting without his schoolboy smirk. Snape's FINGERS outlined the shape of Harry's cock. This was more interesting”

### c. High Intensity + Low Explicitness

“he felt hot underneath him – hotter than he ever imagined she could feel. He heard her breath catch in her throat as his FINGERS brushed to the inside of her thigh.”

## Analysis - Exemplification of feature analysis

### 3. GENDER of the Referent => looking at the pronoun linked directly to the lexeme

#### a. Male

“As the tension builds inside him they don't get faster they just get harder. **His** filthy **HANDS** tighten, her mouth feels crushed under his might, the hand that had held her forehead retreats to her scalp and collects an ever ightening wind of her hair.”

#### b. Female

“She drove three fingers hard and deep into the Confessor without mercy, smiling as she felt **her** virgin **SKIN** resist for barely a moment before breaking. Cara screamed, her back arching off the bed as Kahlan”

### 4. PERSON of the Referent => looking at the pronoun right before the lexeme

#### a. Subjective (1<sup>st</sup> Person)

“quarter of the burger with a steak knife and ate it while all the sauces dripped down **my** **FINGERS** and arm, then I asked for a to go box for the rest.”

#### b. Intersubjective (2<sup>nd</sup> Person)

“You know what feeling I'm talking about right? Waking up to that person's breath on your neck, the warmth of their lips on your cheek, the touch of their fingers on **your** **SKIN**, and the feel of their heart beating in sync with yours?”

#### c. Descriptive (3<sup>rd</sup> Person)

“He leaned over (not in) and gave Sirius a rather clumsy kiss. Sirius moaned as Remus's tongue gently licked open **his** **LIPS** and began its inexorable journey into his mouth.”

# Analysis - Exemplification of feature analysis

## 5. AXIOLOGY – moral judgment

### a. Positive

“she shattered the frame it was in a few months ago. With *tender* FINGERS, she tried to smooth out the wrinkles.”

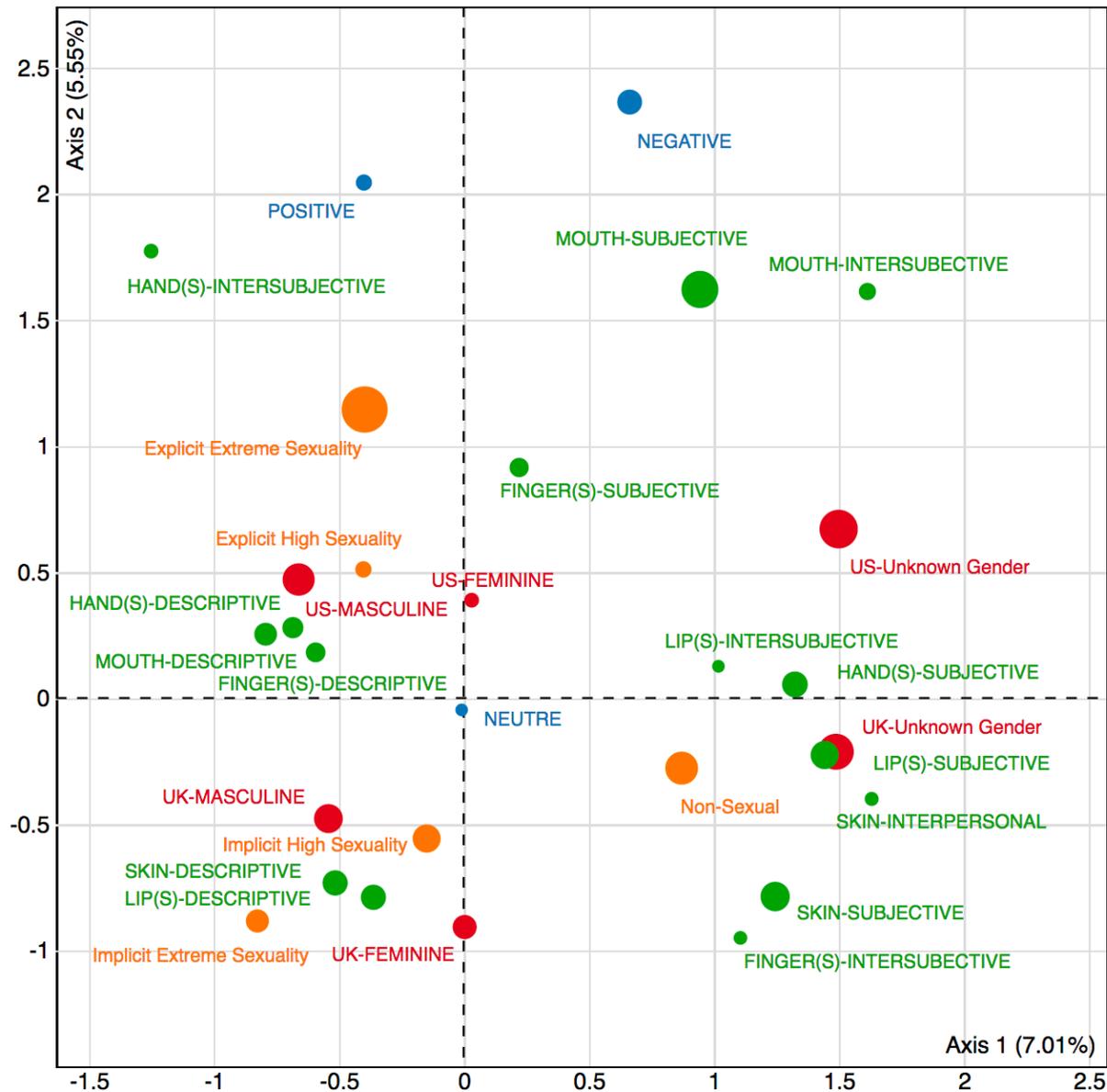
### b. Neutral

“and Clint presses his LIPS together to spot himself grinning.”

### c. Negative

““You. Are. Mine.” FINGERS pressing into his throat, careful to grip where the white collar would hide any bruising, holding tight enough to force him to slow his breathing”

# Results – Exploring Overall Multidimensional Structure of BODY ICM



**Dialect not Gender**  
US Masc./ Fem vs. UK Masc./ Fem

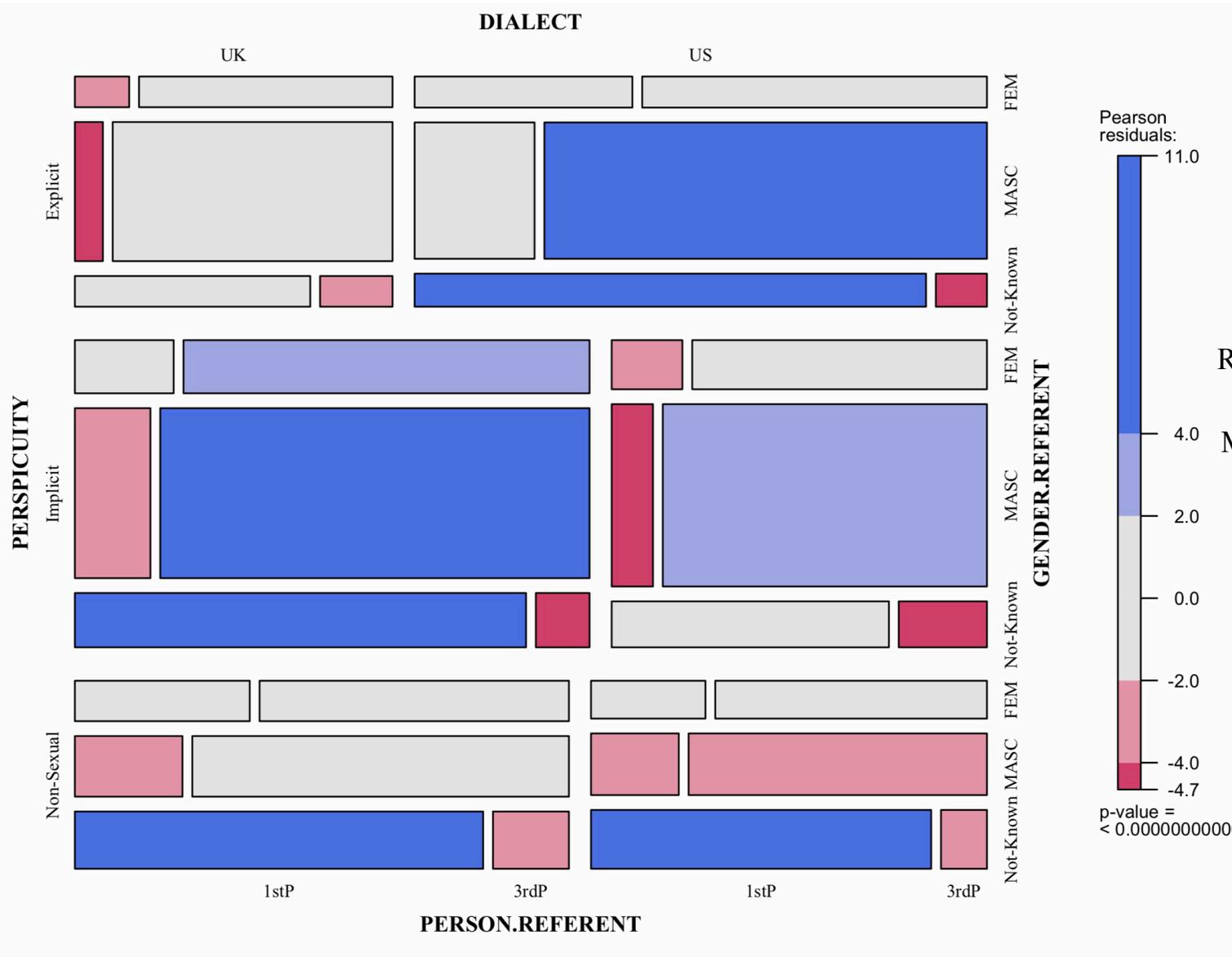
US body parts associated with explicit sexuality  
UK body parts associated with implicit sexuality

**Unknown Gender body parts**  
non-sexual uses  
and  
no difference between dialects

**Explicit High Sexuality**  
only Descriptive (3<sup>rd</sup> Person)

**Morality**  
Negative judgement associated with subjective and intersubjective uses of MOUTH

# Results – Confirming Multidimensional Correlations of BODY ICM



## Significant Correlations

US 3rdPers Explicit + Implicit  
Masculine Sexuality

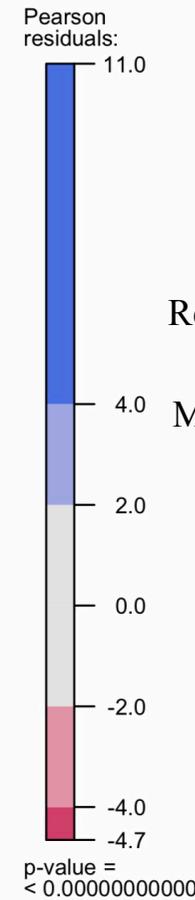
UK 3<sup>rd</sup> Pers. Implicit Sexuality  
Masculine Sexuality

## Significant Anti-correlations

Regardless of dialect or sexuality  
1<sup>st</sup> Person M Masculine

Men don't talk about their bodies

The only exception might be  
US explicit sexual reference



# Results – Predictive and Quantitative Modelling of BODY

Binary Regression: Predictive Modelling of Dialect

Only PERSPICUITY and AXIOLOGY are significant predictors of Dialect

PERSPICUITY Implicit Sexuality	0.8547	***	(Predicting UK)
PERSPICUITY Explicit Sexuality	0.8166	***	(Predicting US)
AXIOLOGY NEGATIVE	1.3312	*	(Predicting US)
AXIOLOGY POSITIVE		NS	

Stats

C: 0.602  
C Bootstrapped: 0.5975  
Highest VIF: 1.500642

## Fixed-effects Only

Adding gender or body-part as random variables had no effect in the significance of the predictors or the relative effect-size of the predictors

## Discussion

We have a multidimensional picture of how British and Americans talk about their bodies

This description is

- a. quantitative: calculate accuracy of description / falsify results
- b. variationist: includes differences between social groups

Is this also a picture of they think about their bodies, the Cognitive Models of their bodies?

1. How can these results be tied to kind of qualitative research done by Lakoff (1987) and Wierzbicka (1990)?
2. How confident are we that frequency-based usage indices adequately capture socio-conceptual structure?

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**Thank you**

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