Cultural Universalism in Social Touch

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Collecting data using the emBODY tool

a. Colour in the areas where your sister could touch you

For more about emBODY tool, see Nummenmaa et al. 2014
Code available at https://version.aalto.fi/gitlab/eglerean/embody
Collecting data using the emBODY tool

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255 Japanese subjects, 125 male, mean age 40 years (SD 14.6)
384 British subjects, 209 male, mean age 46 years (SD 12.6)

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(a) Colour in the areas where your sister could touch you

(b)

(c)

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Correlation between TI and emotional bond

How large proportion of the subject’s body a person is allowed to touch

The self-reported emotional bond between a subject and toucher (1 = no emotional bond at all, 10 = strongest possible emotional bond)
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Data are thresholded at p=0.05, FDR corrected
Touch allowance in Japan

Data are thresholded at p=0.05, FDR corrected
Touch allowance in United Kingdom

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Conclusions

- Impact of culture on social touch is relatively small
- This suggests biological (rather than cultural) basis for social touching behaviour
- Humans might use social touch as a method for establishing and maintaining social relationships

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