

Coming out on Youtube:
/s/, pitch and vowel space before & after coming out

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Sounding gay

- ▶ perception V production
- ▶ features which people might use to index sexuality
- ▶ features which are likely to mean someone is more likely to be rated as gay-sounding



Coming Out on



- ▶ Distinctive YouTube genre, videos may take a number of forms (Lovelock 2019: 73).
- ▶ Many YouTube coming out videos follow highly structured 'scripts' which are so common they have almost become clichés (Lovelock 2017: 88).
- ▶ Loosely follow Cass's (1979) 6 stage 'coming out' model (Craig & McInroy 2014).
- ▶ In [YouTube] videos, coming out becomes meaningful as a process of fulfilling the cultural mandate of 'being true to oneself' (Lovelock 2019: 80).

How far does coming out on Youtube actually generalise to real life contexts?

Coming Out

- ▶ [A] fundamental means by which an individual undertakes the process of constructing a sexual identity that is non-heterosexual (Chirrey 2003: 24).
- ▶ Coming out is a matter of **degree** rather than of a **binary** opposition (Liang 1997: 291).
- ▶ It is processual, a continual process of self-naming required to assert group membership (Liang 1997: 293).
- ▶ [I]nterpersonal communication very much depends on whether someone intends to communicate their group membership (or not) (Fasoli & Maass 2018: 98).

BUT...

- ▶ Burden of having to decide with every interaction whether or not to self-disclose (Ibid)

What features are salient when communicating/ distancing from group membership?

Which of these “gay sounding” features are actually used (if any) to index sexuality?

The 'Amazingphil' channel

- ▶ 2006 - present
- ▶ ~636 million views (2019)
- ▶ Never discussed his sexuality online but made reference to heterosexual relationships & love interests
- ▶ Came out during pride month 2019



Data

Not Out

No interlocutor



Not Out

Gay interlocutor



Coming Out

No interlocutor



Out

No interlocutor

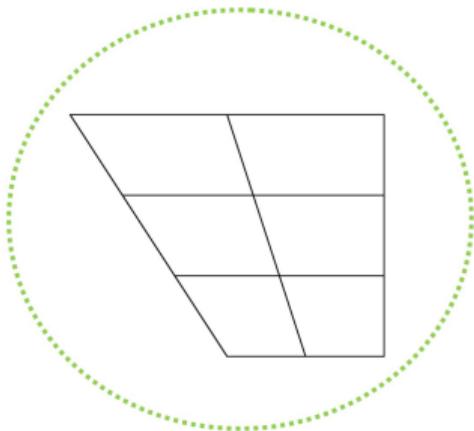
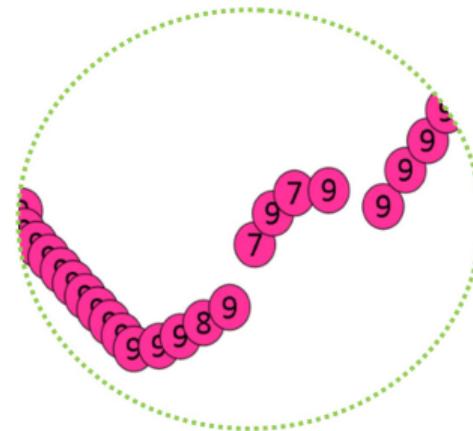


2 vids. Refers to heterosexual love interests

[1] Tyler Oakley
[2] Conor Franta

Sexuality foregrounded for the first time

First vid since coming out. Makes reference to the other vids



/s/

The gay lisp

(Munson & Zimmerman 2006; Van Borsel et al. 2009; Mack & Munson 2012)

Hyper-articulated /s/

(Munson, Jefferson, & McDonald 2006)

Mis-articulated /s/

(Mack & Munson 2012)

/s/- fronting

(Campbell-Kibler 2011; Levon &

Holmes-Elliott 2013)

Sibilant /s/

(Levon 2014)

[s+], [s] & [s-]

(Boyd 2018)

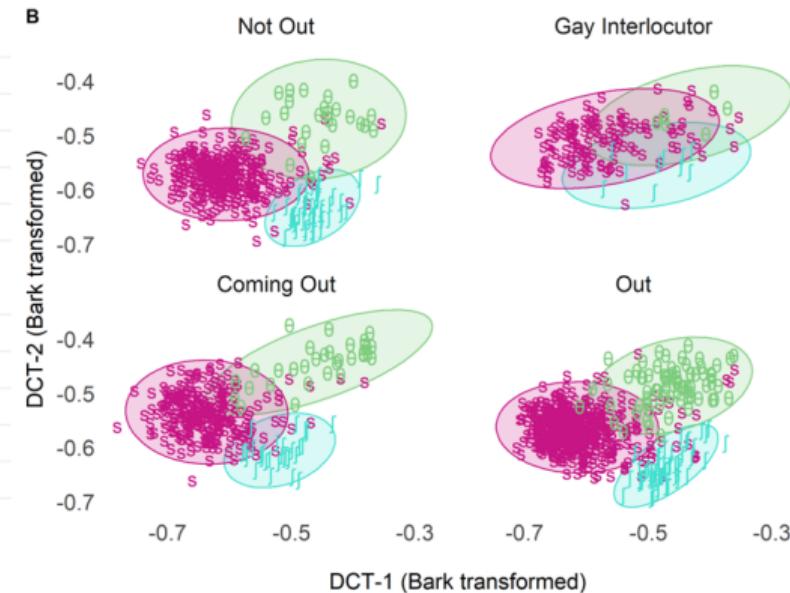
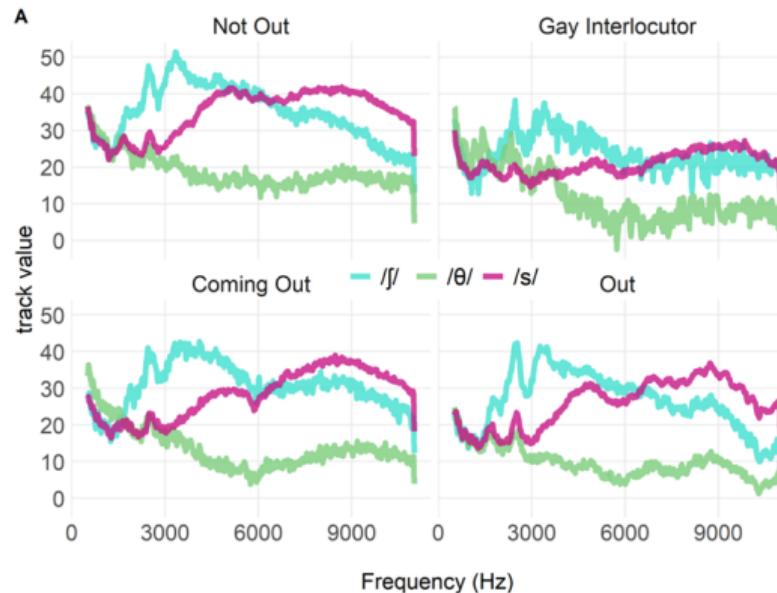
Moments Analysis

- ▶ Spectral moments of /s/ among the most consistently significant acoustic variables (Zimman 2013: 5)
- ▶ Moment 1: Centre of Gravity (CoG) → higher
Moment 3: Skewness → more negatively skewed
- ▶ Skewness possibly more salient than CoG?
(Munson, McDonald, DeBoe, & White 2006; Munson & Babel 2007)
- ▶ Mixed findings for fricative duration:
 - ✓ (Linville 1998)
 - ✓ (Rogers, Smyth, & Jacobs 2000)
 - ⚠ (Levon 2007)
 - ✗ (Zimman 2010)

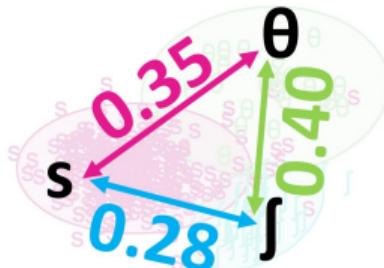
Spectral Analysis

- ▶ .wav files & aligned textgrids read into R (R Core Team 2019)
 - ▶ Spectral slices generated through  emuR (Winkelmann, Jänsch, Cassidy, & Harrington 2020)
 - ▶ emuR::dct() Discrete Cosine Transformation → DCT coefficients
 - ▶ emuR::moments() → moments 1-4
 - ▶ /ʃ, θ/ included along with /s/
-
- ▶ Onset tokens of /s/
 - ▶ Clusters of /str/ & /stj/ excluded (Bailey, Nichols, Baranowski, & Turton 2019)

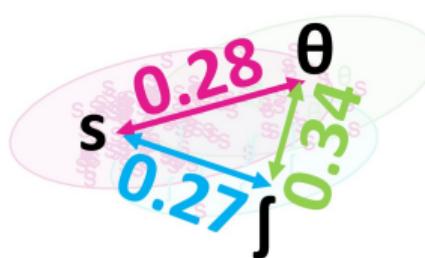
Spectral Measures



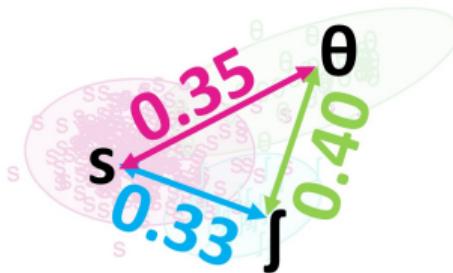
Not Out



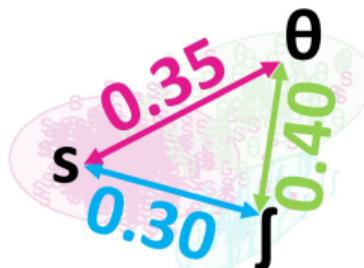
Gay Interlocutor



Coming Out



Out



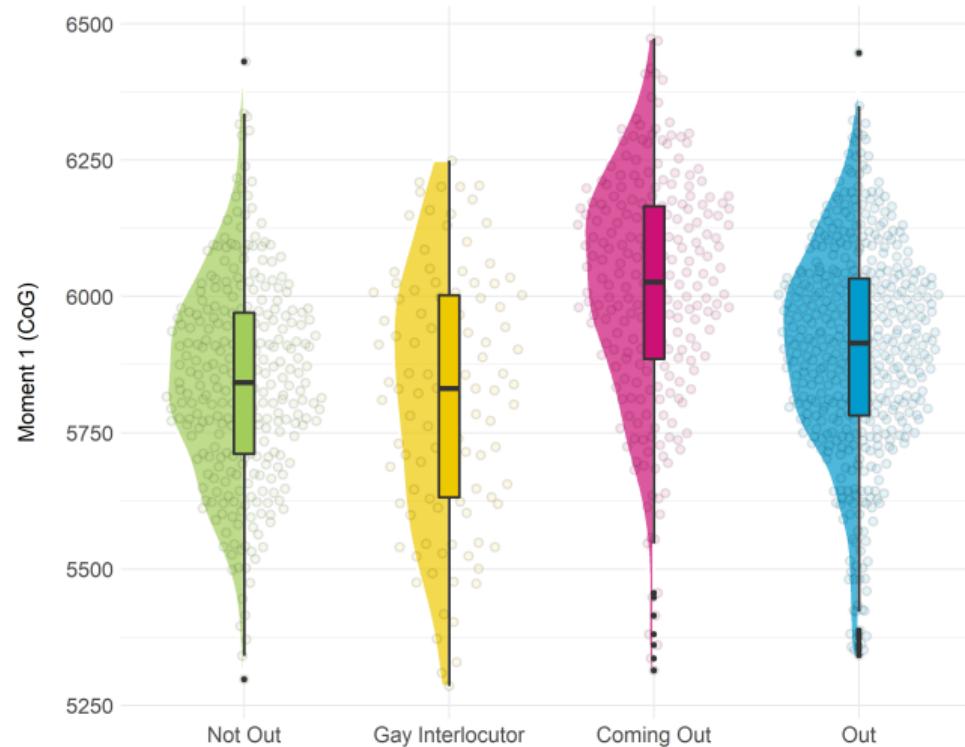
4D Euclidean distance equation (Jannedy & Weirich 2017)



any /s/ frontier than expected might be perceived as 'lisping'

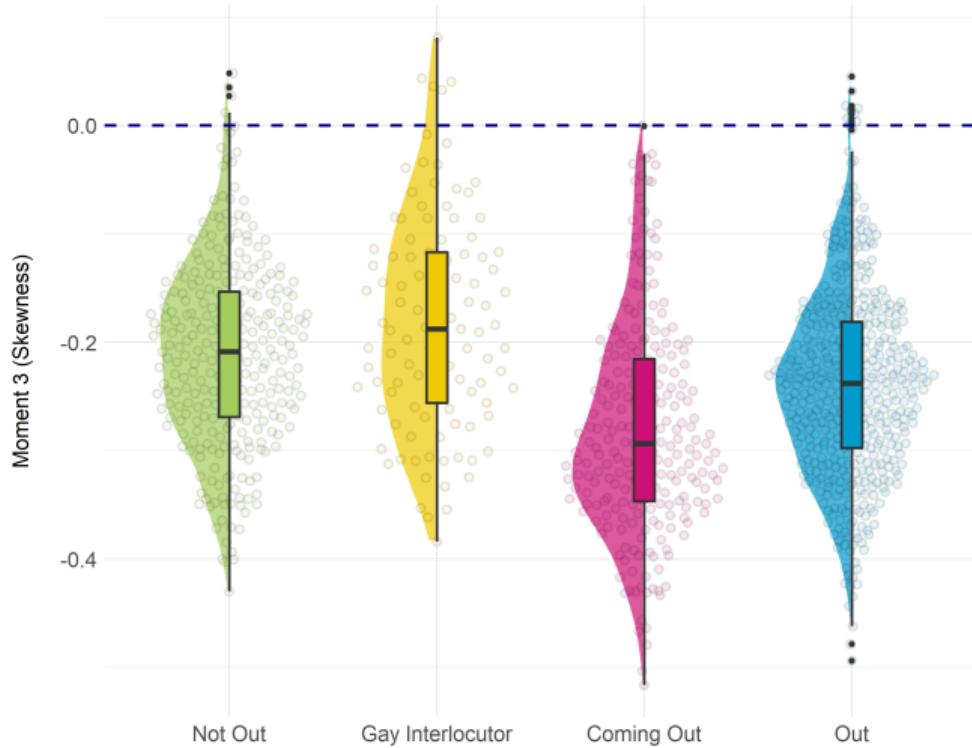
(Hazenberg 2017: 100-101)

CoG (Moment 1)



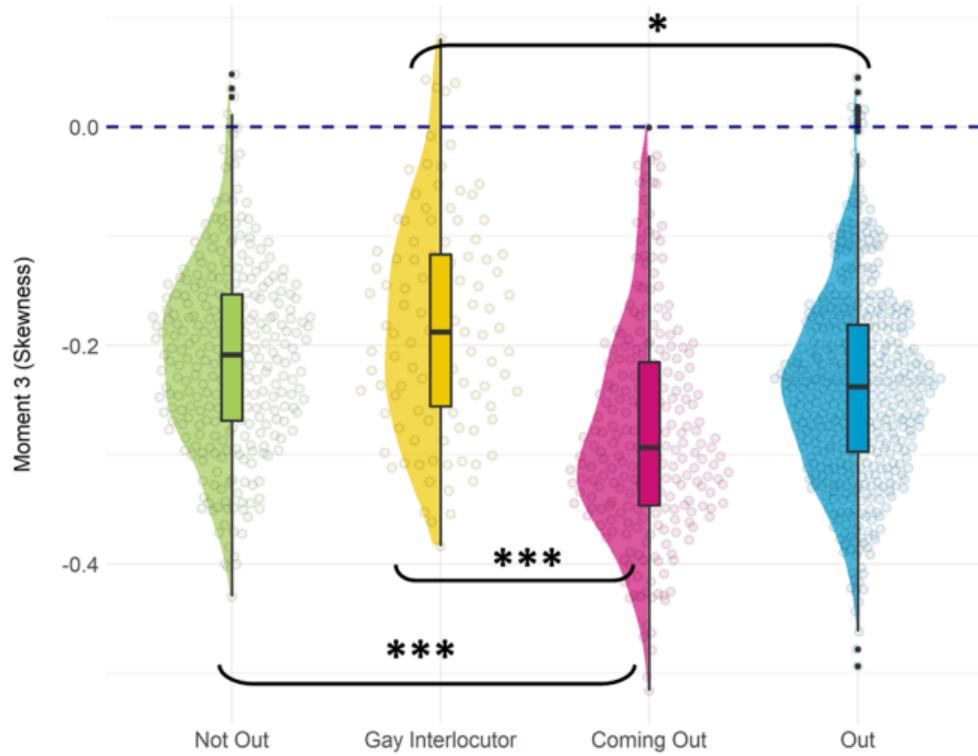
- ▶ $n = 1,666$
- ▶ Coming out context = higher CoG
- ▶ No significant differences

Skewness (Moment 3)



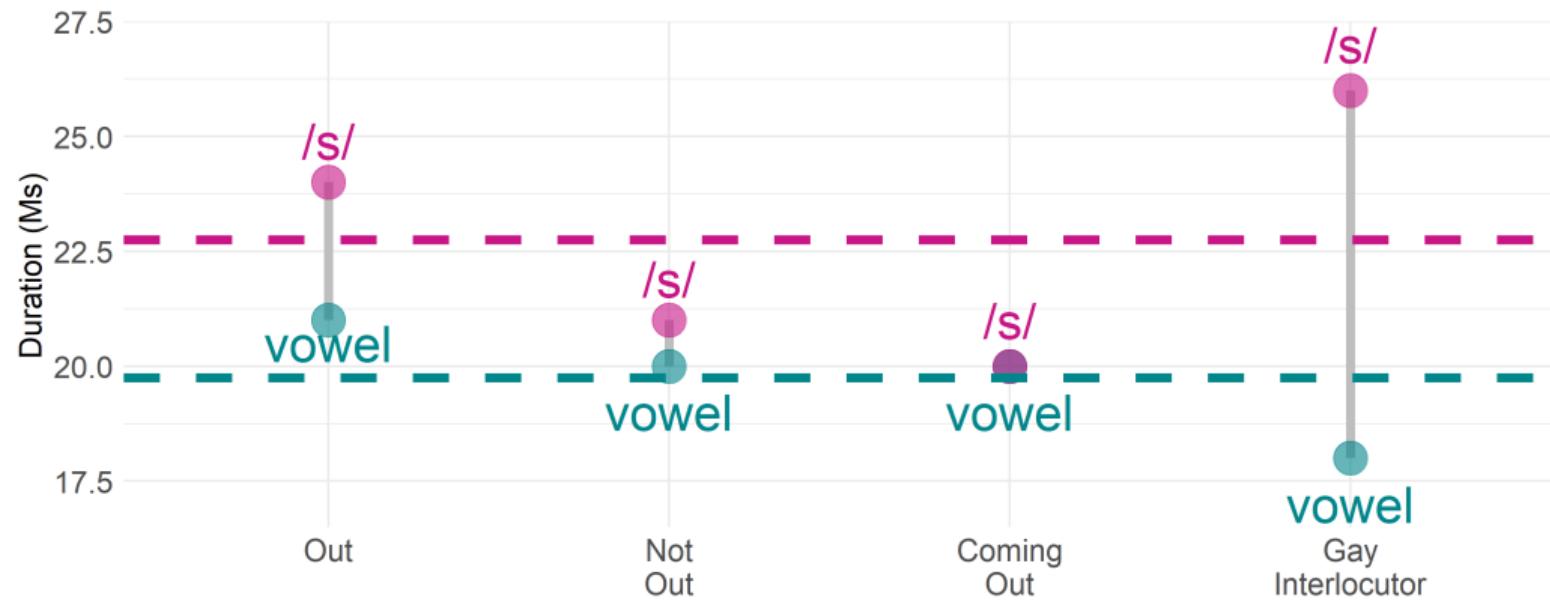
- ▶ $n = 1,675$
- ▶ /s/ significantly more negatively skewed for the Coming Out context ($p < 0.01$)

Skewness (Moment 3)



- ▶ $n = 1,675$
- ▶ /s/ significantly more negatively skewed for the Coming Out context ($p < 0.01$)
- ▶ Post-Hoc testing: significant variation between 3 contexts
- ▶ Gay Interlocutor - Out only just significant $p = 0.0495$

/s/ duration



Mixed findings for vowel space

- ▶ No overall difference in vowel spaces
(Pierrehumbert, Bent, Munson, Bradlow, & Bailey 2004; Smyth & Rogers 2008)
- ▶ Greater vowel dispersion (Smyth & Rogers 2002)
- ▶ Stylistic use of vowels → ongoing vowel changes at the community level (Podesva 2011)

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FLEECE
higher F1
lower F2

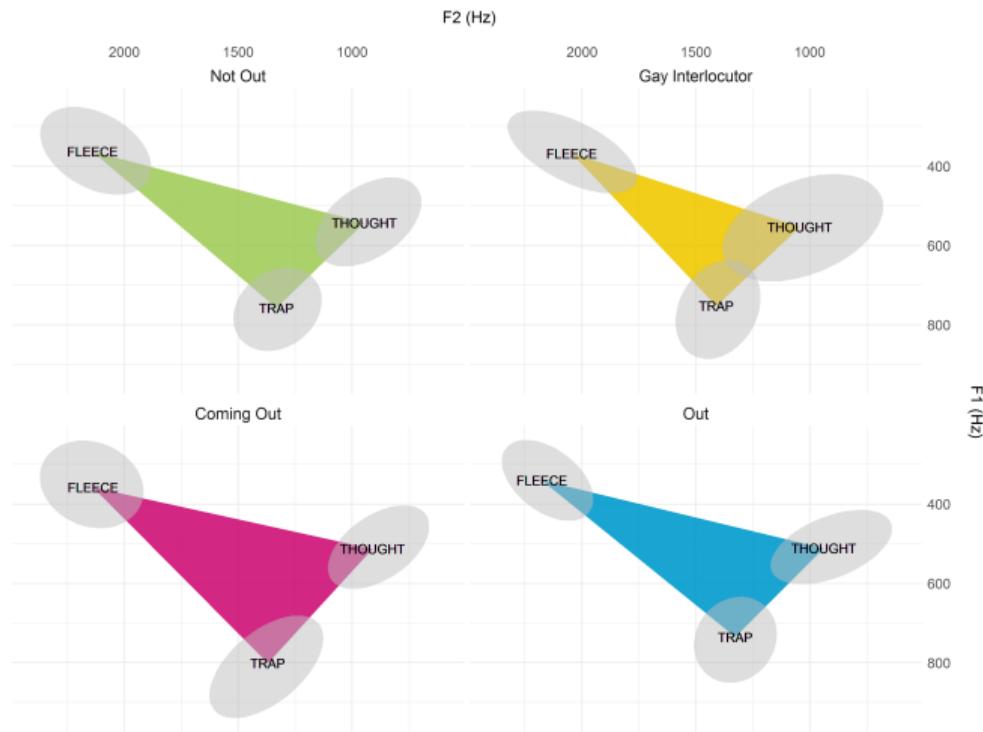
(Pierrehumbert et al. 2004)

FLEECE
F1 more peripheral
(Avery & Liss 1996)

TRAP
higher F2
Marginally higher
F1 (Pierrehumbert et al. 2004)

TRAP
higher F1
(Munson, McDonald, et al. 2006)

Vowel space area

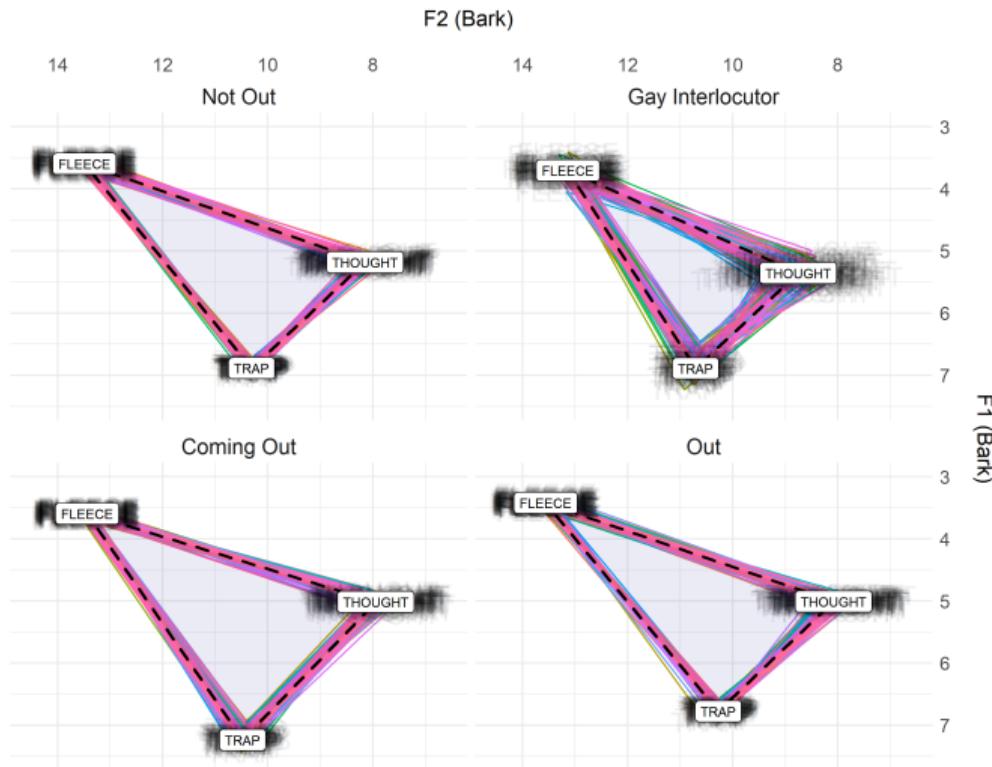


In line with GOOSE fronting findings for both Lancashire & Manchester

(Ferragne & Pellegrino 2010) & Manchester

(Baranowski & Turton 2015)

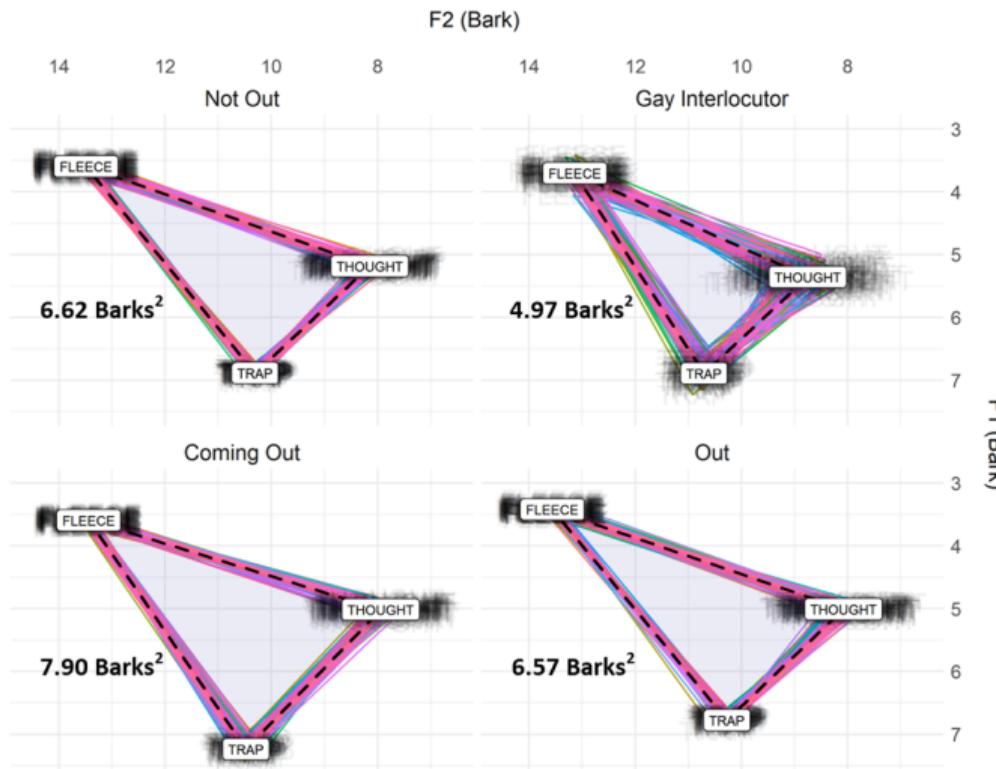
Bootstrapped vowel space area



100 bootstrapped VSAs, using the boot package (Canty & Ripley 2020)

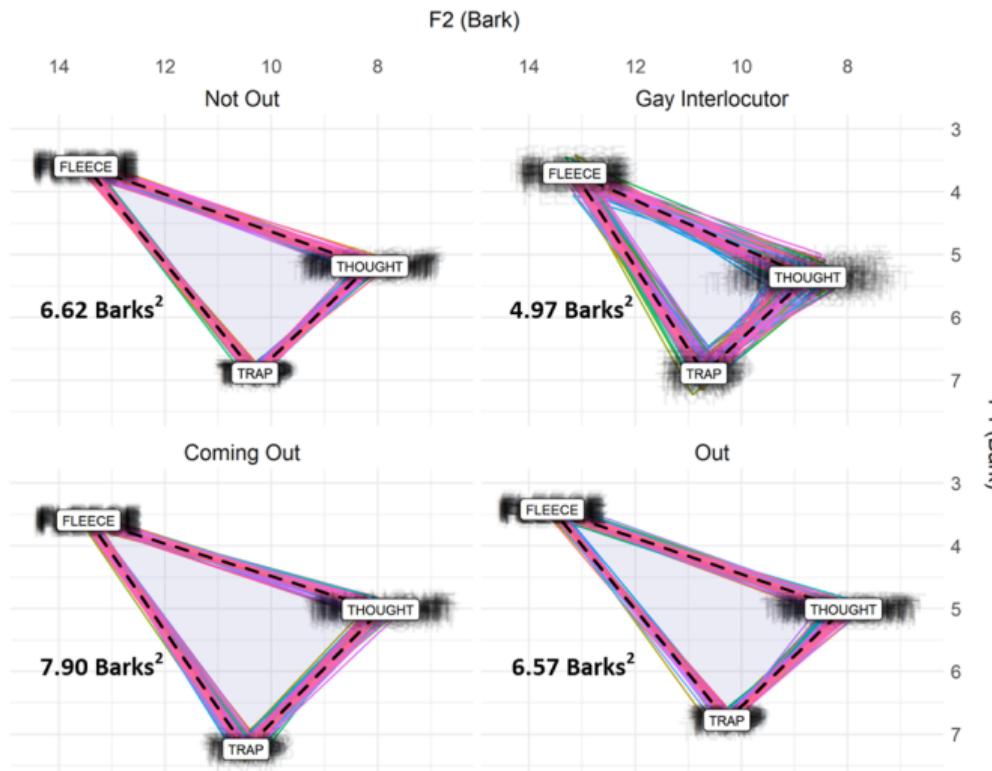
- ▶ Bark transformed for analysis
 - ▶ Vowel space calculated using `vowelMeansPolygonArea()` from the `phonR` package
- (McCloy 2016)

Vowel space area



- ▶ $n = 1,200$ (from 582)
- ▶ Coming out context larger than others
- ▶ Mainly due to:
 - F1 TRAP lowering** (~ 50Hz/ 0.13 Bark)
 - F2 TRAP fronting** (~ 40Hz/ 0.006 Bark)

Vowel space area



- ▶ gay interlocutor??
slower speaking rate =
better chance of hitting
articulatory target (Moon &
Lindblom 1994)
- ▶ connection with sounding
gay & sounding articulate

F0 as an acoustic correlate of pitch

Higher pitch → common stereotype of *gay-sounding* speech

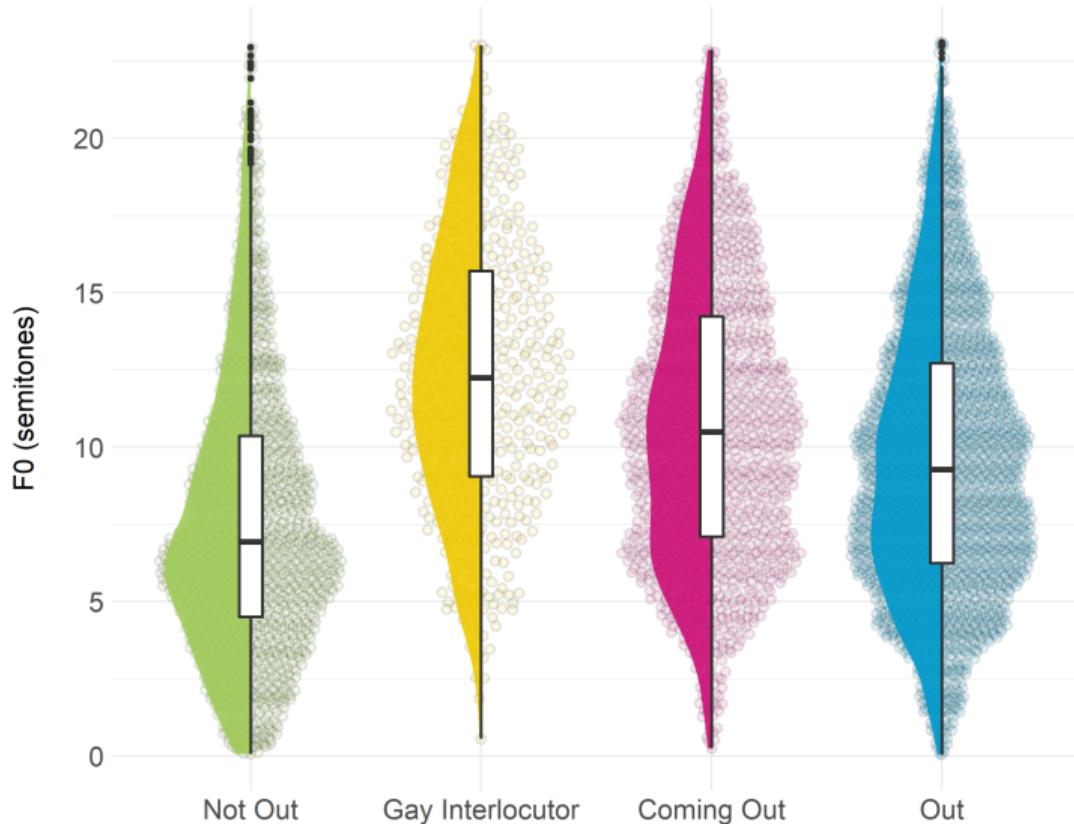
- ✓ Baeck, Corthals, and Van Borsel (2011)
- ✓ Podesva (2007)
- ⚠ Gaudio (1994)
- ⚠ Smyth, Jacobs, and Rogers (2003)
- ⚠ Rendall, Vasey, and McKenzie (2008)

Might actually index

- ▶ flamboyance (Podesva 2007)
- ▶ effeminacy (Campbell-Kibler 2011)

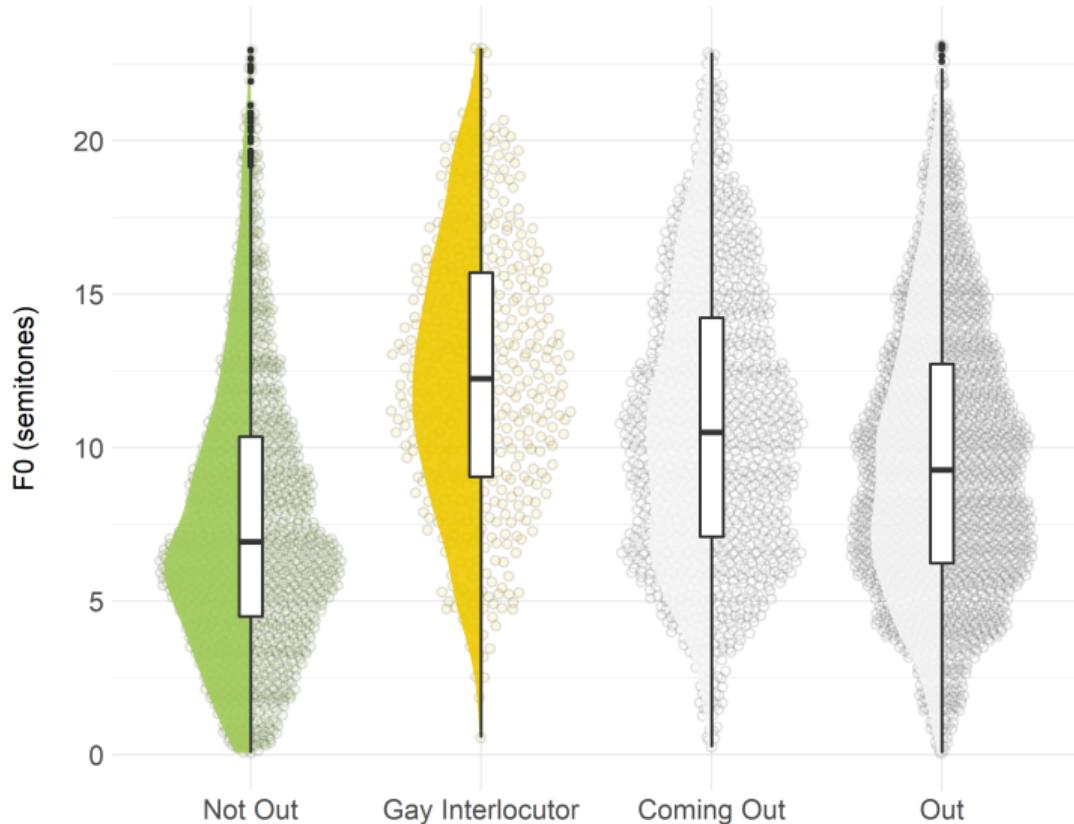
Mean F0

- ▶ F0 taken at 0.05 sec intervals
- ▶ $n = 5,573$



Mean F0

- ▶ F0 taken at 0.05 sec intervals
- ▶ $n = 5,573$



F0 Range

- ▶ 5th - 95th percentile
- ▶ Range almost identical
- ▶ Gay Interlocutor max/min raised by ≈ 3 semitones
- ▶ Larger SD in Gay Interlocutor context- possibly more 'lively' speech

(Traunmüller & Eriksson 1995)



What features are salient when communicating/ distancing from group membership?

Which of these "gay sounding" features are actually used (if any) to index sexuality?

- ▶ Skewness, rather than CoG
- ▶ Fronting of /s/ but not lisping?
- ▶ Overall VSA
- ▶ Mean pitch
- ▶ Pitch range

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- ▶ Mean pitch
- ▶ Pitch range

Even with a single speaker, identity construction is a complex issue

Background
oooo

Data
ooo

/s/
oooooooo

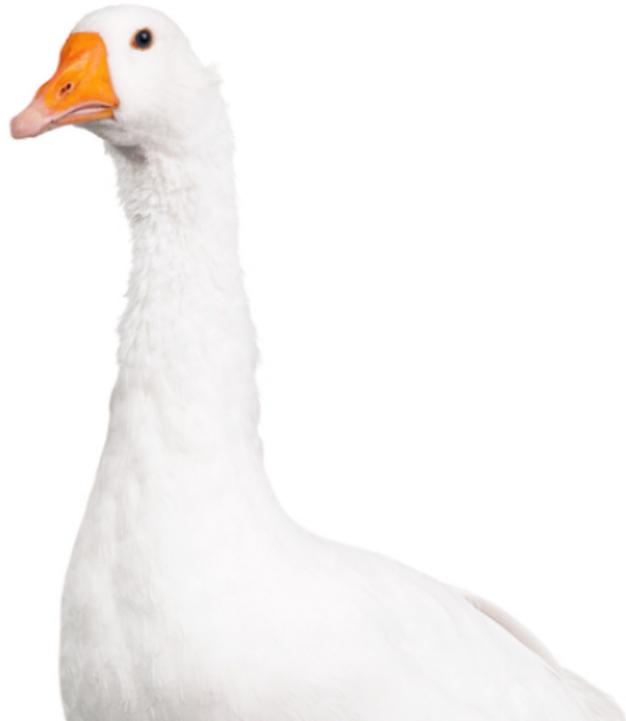
VSA
ooooo

F0
oooo

Summary
oo

References

Thanks!



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