



Aalto University
School of Science

Cultural Universalism in Social Touch

Juulia Suvilehto, Ryo Kitada, Robin Dunbar, Robert Turner, Sadato Norihiro, Lauri Nummenmaa



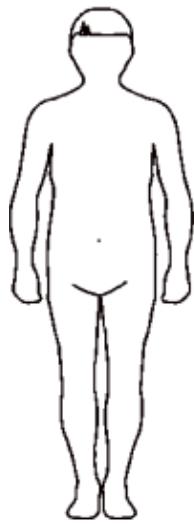
Photo by Richald Renaldi
from the Touching Strangers series
Used with permission

Collecting data using the emBODY tool

a Colour in the areas where

your sister

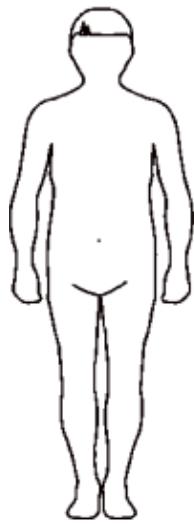
could touch you



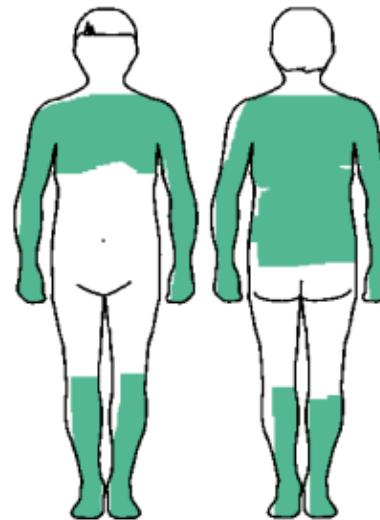
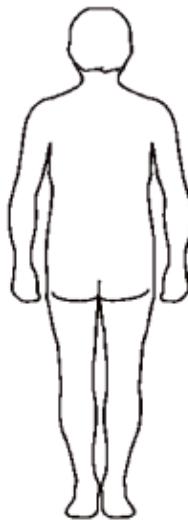
click here when ready

Collecting data using the emBODY tool

a Colour in the areas where
your sister
could touch you



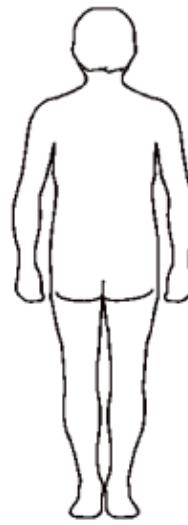
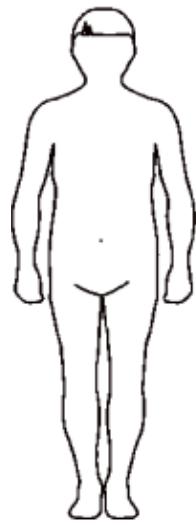
b



click here when ready

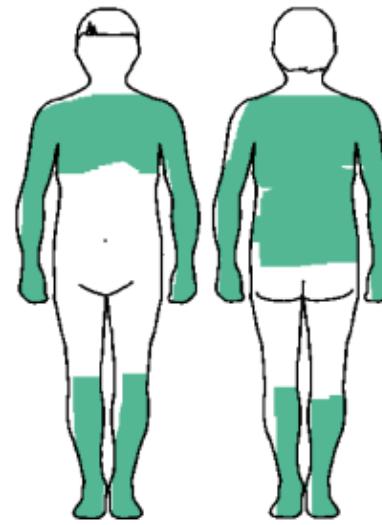
Collecting data using the emBODY tool

a Colour in the areas where
your sister
could touch you

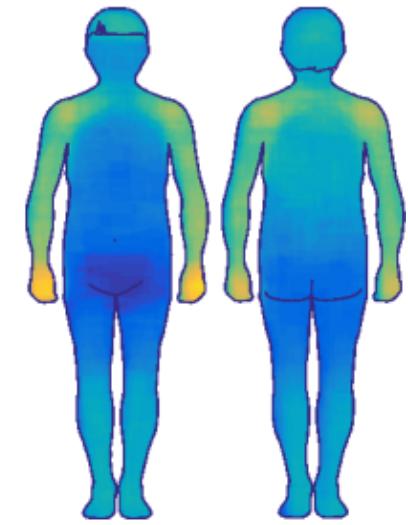


click here when ready

b

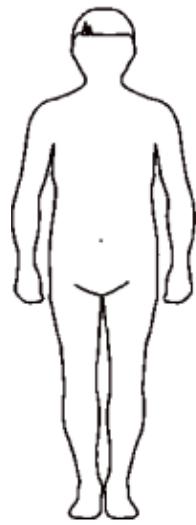


c



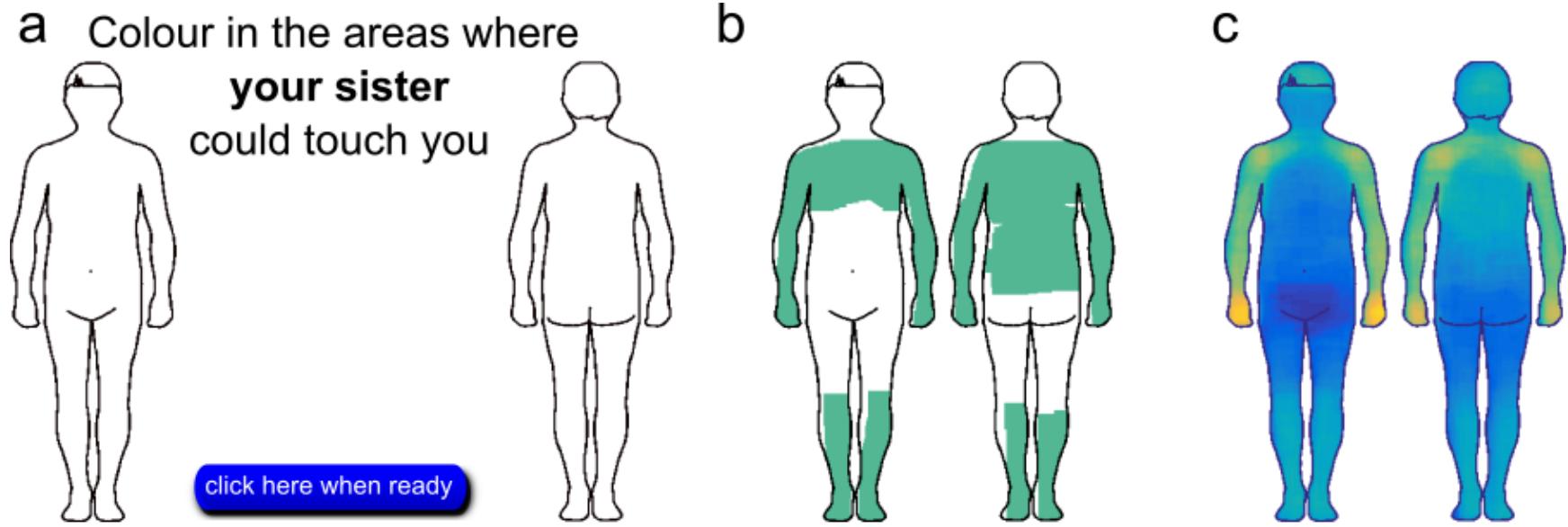
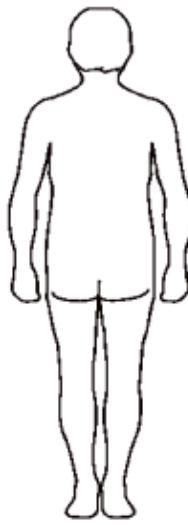
Collecting data using the emBODY tool

a Colour in the areas where
your sister
could touch you



click here when ready

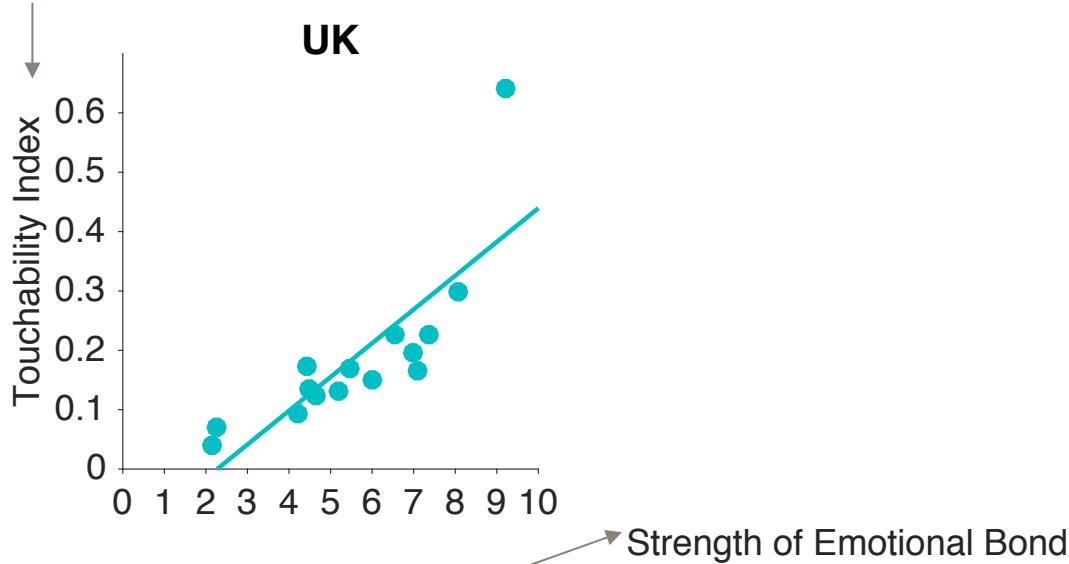
b



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

Correlation between TI and emotional bond

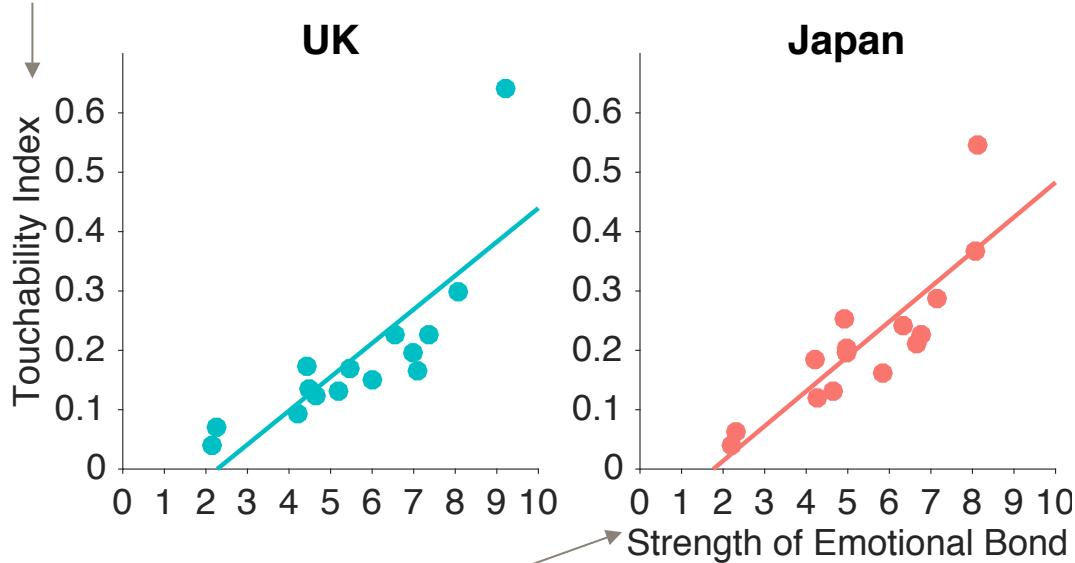
How large proportion of the subject's body a person is allowed to touch



The self-reported emotional bond between a subject and toucher (1 = no emotional bond at all, 10 = strongest possible emotional bond)

Correlation between TI and emotional bond

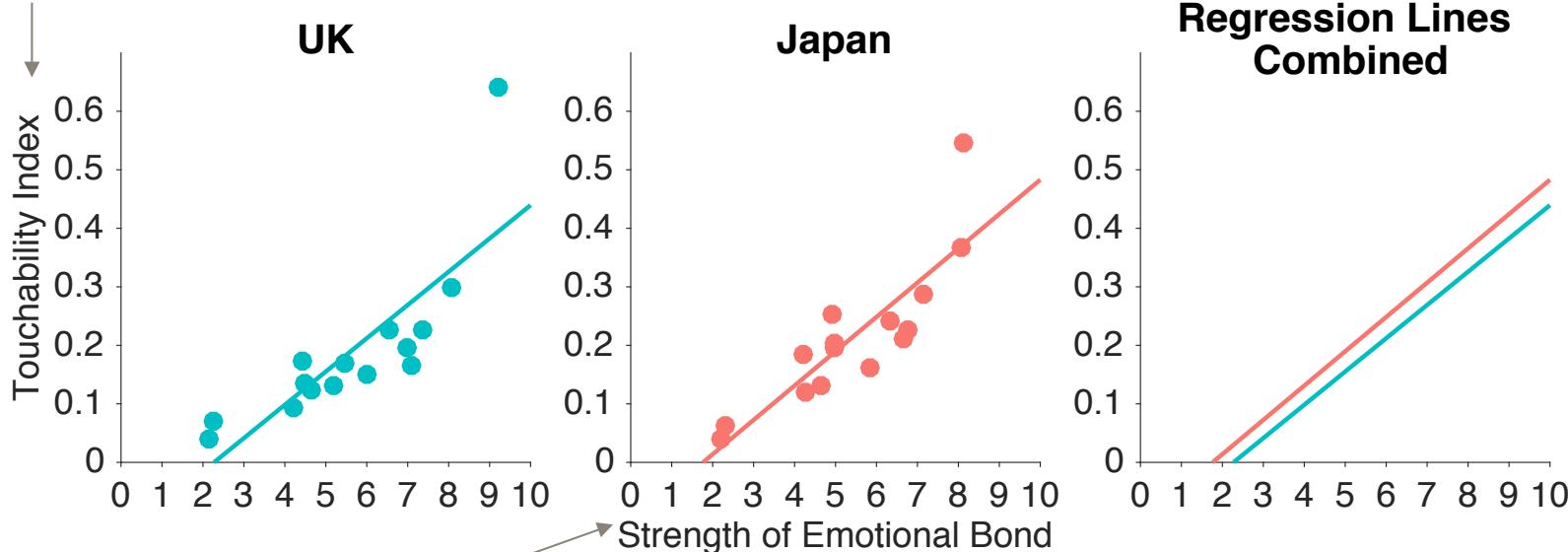
How large proportion of the subject's body a person is allowed to touch



The self-reported emotional bond between a subject and toucher (1 = no emotional bond at all, 10 = strongest possible emotional bond)

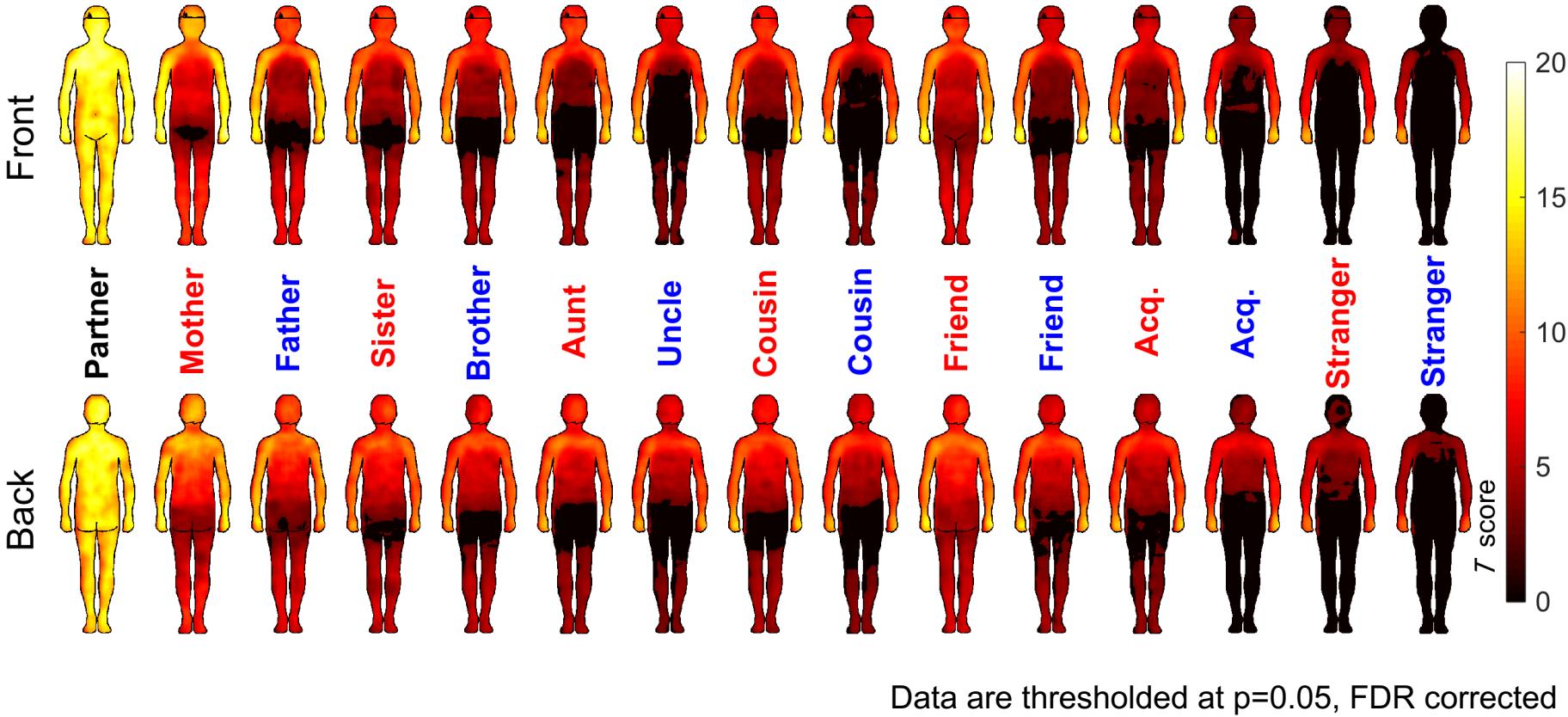
Correlation between TI and emotional bond

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



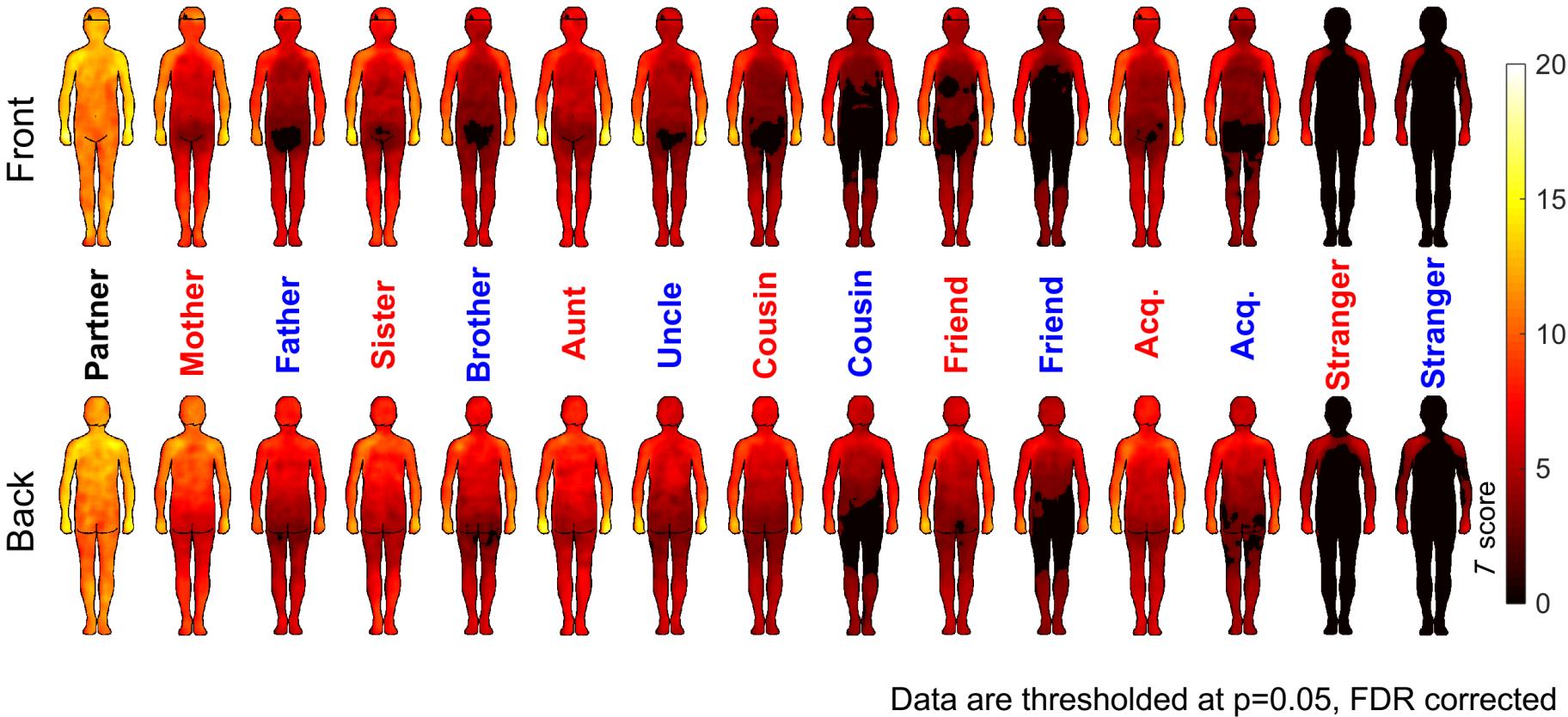
The self-reported emotional bond between a subject and toucher (1 = no emotional bond at all, 10 = strongest possible emotional bond)

Touch allowance in United Kingdom



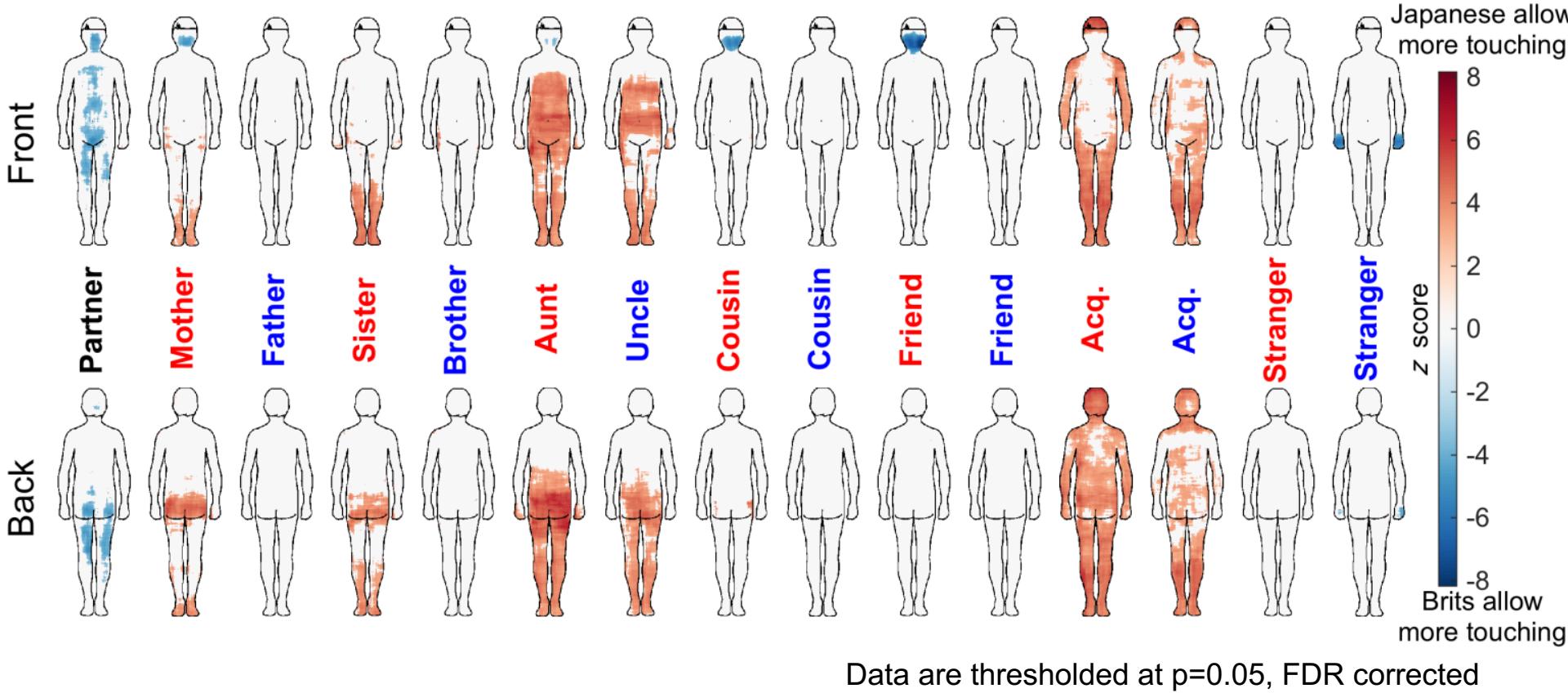
Data are thresholded at $p=0.05$, FDR corrected

Touch allowance in Japan



Data are thresholded at $p=0.05$, FDR corrected

Touch allowance in United Kingdom



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**

Collaborators

Ryo Kitada,
Robin Dunbar,
Robert Turner,
Sadato Norihiro,
Lauri Nummenmaa

Funding

European Research Council, Academy of Finland, Emil Aaltonen Foundation, Nanyang Technological University Startup funds, Japan Society for Promotion of Science