Gender and Dirty Words
Roger Berlyne, Austin Lambert, Daniel Kopeloff, Harry Shields, Alex Frankovic, Yayun Luo
ANT 100 – 21: Prof. Curtis

Intro
One area where language is seen to evolve quickly is in how we insult each other, especially in ways that are sexually provocative. This poster examines the “newest dirty word” that young people say they heard in order to find out what we can learn about this phenomenon. It further explores how much or how fast things can change.

Methods
This poster uses data collected from a survey of more than 850 New Yorkers that was completed by FYS students in the Fall of 2014.

The analysis focused on examining differences between the words and their interpretations that were offered by various groups. In this poster, we examine differences in the words offered by men and women.

Male Word Cloud
- anal
- ass
- beer
- but
- butter
- cunt
- dick
- ejaculate
- face
- fag
- fuck
- gay
- ho
- hood
- intercourse
- mouth
- masturbation
- penis
- promiscuous
- pussy

Female Word Cloud
- anal
- ass
- bitch
- but
- butter
- cunt
- dick
- ejaculates
- mouth
- multiple
- oral
- penetration
- penis
- promiscuous
- pussy
- vagina

Discussion
Examining the responses offered by men and women to the question about the newest dirty word they heard, men and women seem to offer very similar responses judging from the word clouds above. In general, men tended to offer more words of explanation than women. But a closer examination of the words offered by both genders reveals a pervasive bias: there are very few male-related words that might be used against someone that are considered offensive, but there are many female-related words that fall into that category. Calling someone a “penis” just does not carry the same weight as calling someone a “cunt.”

Conclusion
The English language is biased against women. There are more hurtful female “dirty” words than males ones. That’s no accident. Despite all the progress toward gender equality in the United States, this is one area where there is still a lot of work to do.

A silver lining to this dark cloud is the fact that there were no gay, lesbian or transgender-related “dirty” words that made the list. So, while these might be stigmatized statuses in some social circles, at least the language that we use does not seem to help perpetuate their status.