

**Frame Semantic Analysis:  
Sex Dysphemisms and Violence**

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## **Abstract**

This research uses frame semantics (Fillmore, 1976) to analyze the dysphemisms related to the conceptual metaphor SEX IS WAR. The goal is to determine which frames are used to model the metaphor SEX IS WAR and which verbs can be recruited from each frame; additionally, this study aims to show the conceptualization of men and women through an attacker/ victim dichotomy. The data for this research come from FrameNet (Baker, Fillmore, and Lowe, 1998) as well as online sources, such as urbandictionary.com for example sentences. The findings suggest that dysphemistic sex terms derive from the frames "Impact," "Cause Harm," and "Killing," and that men fill the attacker role and women fill the victim role. I argue that through semantic analysis of an underlying conceptual metaphor, taboo topics such as sex can better be understood and discussed.

## **Introduction**

This paper investigates the origin of slang terms related to sexual intercourse. Fernandez (2008) uses Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) as a framework to analyze sex related euphemisms and dysphemisms. A euphemism is a word or phrase used in order to take away negative characterizations of a taboo topic, whereas a dysphemism is a word or phrase used in order to highlight the pejorative characterizations associated with a taboo topic, such as sexual intercourse (Fernandez, 2008: 96). Fernandez argues that conceptual metaphors are used as a euphemistic or dysphemistic device; the source domain determines whether the metaphor is euphemistic or dysphemistic. He states that the metaphor SEX IS WAR is a dysphemism because the source domain, war, calls attention to violence, a negative characteristic (103). However, Fernandez does not include any semantic analysis. Therefore, I use frame semantics (Fillmore, 1976) as a framework in order to show participant structure of a frame, and discuss the different frames available to describe the metaphor SEX IS WAR. FrameNet (Baker, Fillmore, and Lowe, 1998) is used as a tool to analyze frames, frame relations, participant structure, and lexical units. Through this analysis, I am able to analyze the verbs that evoke sexual intercourse and show which frames these terms originate from.

The results of the analysis show that verbs recruited into sex terminology come from the frames “Impact,” “Cause Harm,” and “Killing” because they are different elaborations of the metaphor SEX IS WAR. I also show that the participant structure of these frames characterize men as an attacker, and women as a victim in sexual intercourse. Lastly, I explain that the invariance principle (Lakoff, 1993) illustrates why some lexical units are not recruited into sex terminology.

## Background

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) illustrates how conceptual mappings across domains structure knowledge and language use. Metaphors are conceptualized through a relationship between the metaphor’s source domain and target domain (i.e. TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN). The source domain is the more concrete concept, and the target domain is the abstract concept or taboo topic that assumes the characterizations of the source domain. The conceptual mapping of the metaphor SEX IS WAR is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: SEX IS WAR domain mapping

SOURCE: War	TARGET: Sex
Attacker →	Man
Victim →	Woman
Weapon →	Penis
Shoot →	Ejaculate
Battlefield →	Room, Bed
Manner →	Manner

The man fills the role of attacker, and the woman fills the role of victim when discussing sexual intercourse of a heterosexual couple. Furthermore, the penis is characterized as a weapon, ejaculation is characterized as the act of shooting the weapon, the battlefield is characterized as the location where sexual intercourse takes place (e.g. room, bed), and the violent and hostile manner of war is attributed to the manner of sexual intercourse. This analysis shows that sex is viewed as a violent interaction.

Fernandez (2008) builds on research on taboo (Burridge, 2004). Taboo topics, such as sexual intercourse, are often spoken of using euphemisms (neutral connotations) or dysphemisms (negative connotations). Fernandez argues that conceptual metaphor is a euphemistic or dysphemistic device; the source domain determines whether the taboo topic is conceptualized as euphemistic or dysphemistic (96). In Example A and B, Fernandez illustrates his argument.

- A. I remember the first time we went to bed and did the business. (BNC CGC 1671)
- B. When finally he grabbed the ropes which secured her, and shot his load deep inside her pulsing jewel, she screamed a combination of thankful relief and dark ecstasy. (BNC FPX 2551)

In Example A, Fernandez discusses the conceptual metaphor SEX IS WORK. The example shows how the conceptual understanding of working is mapped onto sexual intercourse. Table 2 illustrates the conceptual mapping.

Table 2: SEX IS WORK domain mapping

SOURCE: WORK	TARGET: Sex
Employee →	Man
Employee →	Woman
Do work →	Have sex
Finish work →	Climax
Office →	Room
Manner →	Manner

The phrase *did the business* is used in place of *had sex*. Using this phrase shows that Example A is a euphemism because the explicit understanding of sexual intercourse is conceptualized as an ordinary event, working, therefore erasing any negative connotations and neutralizing the taboo topic. Example B, however, is understood through the SEX IS WAR metaphor. Using Table 1 from above, the phrase *shot his load* is used to characterize the man as an attacker, and his penis as a weapon. Furthermore, by shooting his weapon, the attacker is attempting to kill the victim, his sexual partner. This illustrates a dysphemism because sexual intercourse is conceptualized as killing, highlighting the negative characterization of violence.

Frame semantics (Fillmore, 1976) provides a framework to determine from which frames sex slang terms are recruited. Fillmore and Baker (2009) argue that frames, conceptual

event structures, are based on experiences. When describing an event, the speaker evokes the frame with a word or phrase and all of the frame's relevant structure. Fillmore provides the example of the "Commerce Scenario" frame. A word such as *buy*, *sell*, or *pay* activates the frame and the speaker's understanding of the event. The participant structure includes a *Buyer*, a customer who wants to exchange money for goods, *Goods*, an item to be exchanged for money, *Money*, currency used by the customer to receive a product, and a *Seller*, a person or company who wants to exchange their goods to receive money. The buyer gives their money to a seller, the seller accepts the buyer's money, and the seller gives the goods to the buyer.

FrameNet (Baker, Fillmore, and Lowe, 1998) is a frame based organization of lexical units that shows which words evoke a particular frame. Each frame includes a definition, frame elements, and lexical units. The "Commerce Scenario" frame is defined as the interaction between a buyer and seller in order to exchange money for goods. Frame elements are semantic roles given to participants, objects, and event qualities; frame elements are further split into core frame elements, required, and non-core frame elements, non-essential semantic roles. In the "Commerce Scenario" frame, the core frame elements include a *Buyer*, *Goods*, *Money*, and a *Seller*. Non-core frame elements include *Manner*, *Means*, *Purpose*, *Rate*, and *Unit*; these semantic roles aid in understanding the frame, but are unnecessary to fully comprehend the frame's structure because they are not exclusive to the frame. Lexical units are words or phrases that evoke the target frame such as *commerce*, *merchandise*, and *price*.

FrameNet annotates example sentences to show how frame elements syntactically fit the lexical unit which evokes the frame. In the present study, I analyze the lexical units that are verbs because the predicate determines the argument structure. Analyzing the lexical units allows me to show how the act of sexual intercourse is characterized by multiple different frames with the underlying conceptualization of the metaphor SEX IS WAR, and how the man and woman is conceptualized in each of the following frames.

Myrntinen (2004) discusses the conceptualization of men in relation to sexual intercourse. He argues that men are defined by their masculinity, and that the dominant form

of masculinity is understood as inherently brutish and violent. Therefore, men are characterized as having a violent nature. Furthermore, Myrntinen argues that men and weapons are hypersexualized, which leads to the understanding that violence is sexy. This understanding of violence as part of sexual intercourse is reified through the conceptual metaphor SEX IS WAR, where the violent nature of war is mapped onto sexual intercourse.

The data show that not each lexical unit from the frames are recruited into sex slang. Previous research (Dominguez and Benedito, 2000; Fernandez, 2006; Fernandez, 2008) argues that this is due to the lexicalization of the lexical unit. Dominguez and Benedito (2000) propose three degrees of lexicalization: *lexicalized*, the figurative meaning is understood as the normal meaning, *semi-lexicalized*, the euphemism or dysphemism used to characterize the taboo topic shares a conceptual domain, and *creative*, the euphemism or dysphemism is achieved through a new association (68-70). The invariance principle (Lakoff, 1993) provides a conceptual understanding of why certain verbs are not recruited into sex slang. The principle states that the metaphorical mapping from the source domain to the target domain must maintain the image-schema structure. As an example, Lakoff uses the CONTAINER (IN-OUT) schema; he argues that a source domain interior must map to a target domain interior. Additionally, a source domain interior will not map onto the target domain exterior (215). The conceptual mappings of the metaphor BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS is provided below

Table 3: BODY IS A CONTAINER domain mapping

SOURCE: Container	TARGET: Body
Container →	Body
Sides of container →	Sides of body
Top of container →	Top of head
Bottom of container →	Bottom of feet
Inside of container →	Inside of body
Object inside →	Emotions
Physical pressure →	Social pressure

Each section of the container's outside is mapped onto the corresponding area of the body. The outside of the container is mapped onto the outside of the body, and the inside of the container is mapped onto the inside of the body. Mappings that violate this principle show

that the source domain and target domain are incongruent. Incorporating this analysis illustrates the importance of including more cognitive linguistics to structure research in other fields of linguistics, such as semantics.

## Methodology

The data collected in this research comes from FrameNet (Baker, Fillmore, and Lowe, 1998). The metaphor SEX IS WAR is analyzed to show a relationship between the “Sex” frame and other frames. The frames are related when they share lexical units. When two frames share multiple lexical units, that shows that the frames are more closely related; the shared lexical units illustrate a shared conceptualization between the frames. Verbs are analyzed in this data because they provide the participant structure of each frame. I utilized text from online chat forums, social media, and urbandictionary.com (cited as UDC) as sources for examples to show the use of the lexical units as sex related slang.

I used an iterative process to uncover a relationship between the “Sex” frame and the frames “Impact,” “Cause Harm,” and “Killing.” The lexical units of the “Sex” frame, shown in Table 4, were analyzed to discover the frames evoked by each lexical unit.<sup>1</sup> The verbs *bang*, *bump*, *knock*, and *slam* were all found to also evoke the “Impact” frame. This subset of verbs shows a relationship between the “Sex” frame and the “Impact” frame.

Table 4: Lexical Units of “Sex” frame

Bang	Do it	Have	Mate
Bed	Do	Jump	Pork
Bone	Fuck	Knock boots	Shag
Bump uglies	Give	Lay	Slam
Copulate	Go at it	Make love	Take

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1

The lexical units of the “Impact” frame, shown in Table 5, were analyzed to find which frames were evoked by each lexical unit.<sup>2</sup> The verbs *hit*, *slap*, *smack*, *smash*, and *strike* all evoke the “Cause Harm” frame as well. Multiple verbs from the “Impact” frame evoking the “Cause Harm” frame shows a shared conceptualization between the two frames.

I looked online for example sentences of each of the lexical units used as sex terminology. The lexical units in Table 5 followed by an asterisk (\*) were all found to be recruited as sex terminology. This illustrates that sexual intercourse is understood through the “Impact” frame. Furthermore, each of the verbs from the “Impact” frame that also evoked the “Cause Harm” frame (*hit*, *slap*, *smack*, *smash*, and *strike*) were found to be used as sex related slang terms. This shows that the conceptualization of the “Cause Harm” frame structures the understanding of sexual intercourse as a violent act.

Table 5: Lexical Units of “Impact” frame

Bang*	Clatter*	Crunch*	Knock*	Rap	Smash*
Brush*	Click*	Graze*	Patter*	Rattle*	Strike*
Bump*	Clink	Hiss*	Plash*	Run*	Thud*
Chatter	Clunk*	Hit*	Plop	Slam*	Thump*
Clang*	Collide	Impact	Plow*	Slap*	Tinkle*
Clash	Crash*	Impinge	Plunk*	Smack*	Touch*

The lexical units of the “Cause Harm” frame were analyzed to show the other frames evoked by each lexical unit.<sup>3</sup> Examples were found online to show the lexical units used as sex terminology. The lexical units in Table 6 followed by an asterisk (\*) were all found to be recruited into sex related slang.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 2.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 3.



Table 6: Lexical Units of “Cause Harm” frame

Bash*	Bruise*	Crush*	Gash	Knife*	Run through*	Strike*
Batter*	Buffet	Cudgel	Hammer*	Knock*	Slap*	Swipe*
Bayonet	Burn	Cuff*	Hit*	Lash*	Slice*	Thwack*
Beat up*	Butt	Cut*	Horsewhip	Maim*	Smack*	Torture*
Beat*	Cane*	Drug	Hurt*	Maul	Smash*	Transfix
Belt*	Chop*	Elbow	Impale*	Mutilate*	Spear*	Twist*
Biff*	Claw*	Electrocute	Injure	Pelt	Squash*	Welt
Bludgeon*	Clout	Flagellate	Jab*	Poison	Stab*	Whip
Boil	Club*	Flog*	Kick	Pummel*	Sting	Wound
Break*	Crack	Fracture	Knee	Punch*	Stone*	

Unlike the previous frames, the “Cause Harm” frame did not have multiple lexical units that evoked another related frame. Based on inferences from the SEX IS WAR metaphor that sex is a violent act, I looked at other frames that encoded violence and analyzed each frame’s lexical units.

The “Killing” frame provides another elaboration of the metaphor SEX IS WAR through the understanding that killing is an act in war, and the act of war is violent, therefore killing is violent. Table 7 shows the lexical units of the “Killing” frame. Each lexical unit was analyzed to discover the other frames evoked.<sup>4</sup> Examples were found online of the lexical units used as sex related terminology. The lexical units followed by an asterisk (\*) were all found to be recruited into sex slang.

Table 7: Lexical Units of “Killing” frame

Annihilate*	Crucify*	Drown*	Kill*	Silence	Suffocate*
Asphyxiate*	Decapitate	Eliminate	Liquidate*	Slaughter*	Suicide
Assassinate*	Destroy*	Euthanize	Lynch	Slay*	Take out*
Behead	Dispatch	Exterminate	Massacre*	Smother*	Terminate
Butcher*	Do in	Garrotte*	Murder*	Starve	

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 4.

## Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the semantic frames. I show that each frame is a different elaboration of the same underlying metaphor SEX IS WAR. The frames are structured on a scale of violence; the “Impact” frame illustrates sexual intercourse as forceful contact, the “Cause Harm” frame demonstrates one participant’s intention to harm the other, and the “Killing” frame provides the most violent elaboration of the metaphor. Furthermore, I show that the participant structure of the frames reflect the violence associated with each frame, and characterize the man as an attacker and the woman as a victim.

### “Impact”

The “Impact” frame is defined as an *Impactor* hitting an *Impactee*, which comprise the core frame elements.<sup>5</sup> The lexical units of the frame are shown in Table 5. The lexical units followed by an asterisk (\*) are used as sex slang.

Table 5: Lexical Units of “Impact” frame

Bang*	Clatter*	Crunch*	Knock*	Rap	Smash*
Brush*	Click*	Graze*	Patter*	Rattle*	Strike*
Bump*	Clink	Hiss*	Plash*	Run*	Thud*
Chatter	Clunk*	Hit*	Plop	Slam*	Thump*
Clang*	Collide	Impact	Plow*	Slap*	Tinkle*
Clash	Crash*	Impinge	Plunk*	Smack*	Touch*

This frame characterizes sexual intercourse as a forceful contact between two participants. Of the three frames elaborating the conceptual metaphor SEX IS WAR, the “Impact” frame encodes the least amount of violence.

1. **Crash** my ass Alan. (UDC)
2. That Nick McKenzie, you know, the one who lives in South Beach and drives an Audi TT..., anyway, he really loves to **plunk** gay men who hang out with his wife. (UDC)
3. Jessica I’d like you to come to my house after my performance at tonight’s concert, so we can **thump** all night long. (UDC)
4. That girl’s hot, I want to **smack** that. (UDC)

<sup>5</sup> See this link for more information:

<https://framenet2.icsi.berkeley.edu/fnReports/data/frameIndex.xml?frame=Impact>

5. **Rattling** my bitch (UDC)

Example 1 shows the use of *crash*, a violent collision between a person and an obstacle. *Plunk* in Example 2 conceptualizes sexual intercourse as an abrupt hit, similar to the use of *thump* and *smack*, both with the understanding that a person is hitting someone or something else with their hands or a fist. *Rattling* characterizes sexual intercourse as someone repeatedly hitting an object against a hard surface to create a sound.

Other frames evoked by the lexical units of the frame include “Motion Noise,” “Make Noise,” and “Cause to Make Noise.” These frame relations further illustrate that sexual intercourse is understood as a forceful contact between participants which results in the production of noise. This relates to the conceptual metaphor SEX IS WAR, illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8: SEX IS WAR domain mapping of “Impact” frame

SOURCE: War	TARGET: Sex
Impactor →	Man
Impactee →	Woman
Weapon →	Penis
Shoot →	Ejaculate
Battlefield →	Room, Bed
Manner →	Manner

In war, when two opposing forces come together to fight, there is a great deal of noise made. The noise comes from the force of weapons hitting, the firing of guns, and the cries of the soldiers. In the mapping, the manner of the source domain is mapped onto the manner of the target domain. Therefore, the noise created by the two enemies coming together to fight is mapped onto the noise made by the man and woman during sexual intercourse.

The conceptual mapping demonstrates the participant structure which encodes a relationship where one participant, the *Impactor*, is doing the action while the other participant, the *Impactee*, is receiving the action. Example 2 illustrates the distribution of power between the insertive partner and the receptive partner. The example states that “[Nick McKenzie] really loves to plunk gay men.” The lexical unit *plunk* selects the insertive partner, typically the man, to be the *Impactor*, and the receptive partner, usually the woman but in this

case gay men, to be the *Impactee*. This analysis shows that men are selected to fill the position of the participant which carries out the violent action.

“Cause Harm”

The “Cause Harm” frame is defined as an agent injuring a victim. The core frame elements include the *Agent*, the *Victim*, or a *Body Part*.<sup>6</sup> A *Body Part* can be used to further describe the location on the injury on the body of the *Victim*. The lexical units of the frame are shown in Table 6. The lexical units followed by an asterisk (\*) are used as sex slang. The lexical unit followed by a plus sign (+) are used as nouns for body parts used in sexual intercourse.

Table 6: Lexical Units of “Cause Harm” frame

Bash*	Bruise*	Crush*	Gash+	Knife*	Run through*	Strike*
Batter*	Buffet	Cudgel+	Hammer*	Knock*	Slap*	Swipe*
Bayonet+	Burn	Cuff*	Hit*	Lash*	Slice*	Thwack*
Beat up*	Butt	Cut*	Horsewhip	Maim*	Smack*	Torture*
Beat*	Cane*	Drug	Hurt*	Maul	Smash*	Transfix
Belt*	Chop*	Elbow	Impale*	Mutilate*	Spear*	Twist*
Biff*	Claw*	Electrocute	Injure	Pelt	Squash*	Welt+
Bludgeon*	Clout+	Flagellate	Jab*	Poison	Stab*	Whip
Boil	Club*	Flog*	Kick	Pummel*	Sting+	Wound+
Break*	Crack+	Fracture	Knee	Punch*	Stone*	

The “Cause Harm” frame conceptualizes sexual intercourse as a way for one participant to injure another. This frame shows a more violent elaboration of the SEX IS WAR metaphor. The “Impact” frame expresses sexual intercourse as a collision, and the “Cause Harm” frame goes further to show that there is an intent to harm.

6. Jaysus I’m tellin’ ya Mick, I **battered** her last night! (UDC)
7. I’m getting’ bombed tonight and **hurtin’** some guts. (UDC)
8. I’m going to **maim** that bitch! (UDC)
9. I’m going to **pummel** her so hard. (UDC)
10. So did you **squash** her? (UDC)

<sup>6</sup> See this link for more information:  
[https://framenet2.icsi.berkeley.edu/fnReports/data/frameIndex.xml?frame=Cause\\_harm](https://framenet2.icsi.berkeley.edu/fnReports/data/frameIndex.xml?frame=Cause_harm)

11. If you blacked-out last night you might have gotten “**stoned**” (UDC)
12. Dude, she was **thwacking** me for an hour yesterday. (UDC)
13. It is quite uncomfortable to be **speared**. (UDC)
14. Rochelle got **impaled** by J last night! (UDC)
15. Man I **sliced** the hell out of that chick last night. (UDC)

*Batter* conceptualizes sexual intercourse as repeated hitting. The terms *pummel*, *maim*, *stone*, and *thwack* also characterize sexual intercourse as a forceful and repetitive hitting. Examples 13 through 15 provide examples of other ways that sexual intercourse is conceptualized. Examples from the “Impact” frame conceptualize sexual intercourse as two participants coming into contact with one another vigorously, and with force. Example 15 shows how this frame characterizes sex as a cutting motion into someone, a penetration. The speaker *sliced* his sexual partner last night, with the understanding that he penetrated her with intent on harming her.

The lexical units also evoke the frames “Abusing,” “Cause to Fragment,” and “Corporal Punishment.” These frame relations show a more violent characterization of sexual intercourse than the frame relations of the “Impact” frame (e.g. “Motion Noise,” “Make Noise”). The conceptual mapping of the SEX IS WAR metaphor is shown in Table 9.

Table 9: SEX IS WAR domain mapping of “Cause Harm” frame

SOURCE: War	TARGET: Sex
Agent →	Man
Victim →	Woman
Weapon →	Penis
Shoot →	Ejaculate
Battlefield →	Room, Bed
Manner →	Manner

The participant structure also demonstrates that the frame is more violent than the “Impact” frame. The semantic frame includes *Agent* and *Victim*. This encodes a relationship where one participant is actively attempting to injure the other. Examples 6 through 11, and 14 and 15 demonstrate the man typically filling the position of the *Agent*, and the woman typically filling the position of the *Victim*. However, men can also fill the position of *Victim*, and women can fill the position of *Agent*.

In Example 13, *spear* refers to a woman using a strap-on on her male partner; however, in this example, neither the *Agent* nor *Victim* are lexically defined. It is inferred through context that the man is speaking of being speared by a female partner, therefore the man is the *Victim* and the woman is the *Agent* in this example. Example 12, “she was thwacking me,” also illustrates that a woman can fill the *Agent* role and the man can fill the *Victim* role. The term *thwack* refers to manual stimulation given to a man by his partner. The woman, referenced as *she*, forcefully hits her *Victim*, the man, who is also the speaker and refers to himself as *me*.

Of the lexical units in “Cause Harm” frame, eight are used as nouns related to body parts used in sexual intercourse. Examples 16 through 19 refer to the penis, Examples 20 through 22 refer to the vagina, and Example 23 refers to the butt. These examples use conceptual mappings of image metaphors. Penises are understood to be pointed objects that hit or penetrate, vaginas are understood to be openings, particularly related to being hit or stabbed. Butts are understood as a line that separates two halves.

16. He will conquer new lands with his **bayonet**. (UDC)
17. Damn girl! I’m going to hit you doggie-style and put my **sting** in you! (UDC)
18. She sucks **welt** on a daily basis (UDC)
19. Because peter had a **cudgel**, he had to pull down his pants and unravel it like a fruit by the foot in order to go to the bathroom. (UDC)
20. Frigginell she had a **clout** like a battered otter. (UDC)
21. That **gash** wasn’t very pretty to look at. Then again, neither is the rest of your mom. (UDC)
22. She spread her legs wide and asked me to lick her big, gaping **wound** below her mound of hair. (UDC)
23. Her thong was pulled so tight up her **crack**, you could see her asshole when she bent over (UDC)

Example 16 shows a domain mapping from the SEX IS WAR metaphor. The lexical unit *bayonet*, a weapon, is mapped from the source domain of war onto the target domain of sex to characterize the penis. The use of *cudgel* in Example 19, to refer to the penis, and *clout* in Example 20, to refer to the vagina, leads to an interesting analysis. A cudgel is a short, thick stick used as a weapon, and a clout is a heavy blow from a hard object. The penis is seen as a tool to attack the vagina during sexual intercourse.

## “Killing”

A killer causes the death of a victim in the “Killing” frame. The core frame elements are *Killer, Victim, Instrument, and Means*.<sup>7</sup> The lexical units of the frame are listed in Table 7. The lexical units followed by an asterisk (\*) are used as sex slang.

Table 7: Lexical Units of “Killing” frame

Annihilate*	Crucify*	Drown*	Kill*	Silence	Suffocate*
Asphyxiate*	Decapitate	Eliminate	Liquidate*	Slaughter*	Suicide
Assassinate*	Destroy*	Euthanize	Lynch	Slay*	Take out*
Behead	Dispatch	Exterminate	Massacre*	Smother*	Terminate
Butcher*	Do in	Garrotte*	Murder*	Starve	

This frame conceptualizes sexual intercourse as the violent act of one participant killing the other. This frame shows the most violent elaboration of the SEX IS WAR metaphor of the three frames analyzed. The “Cause Harm” frame expresses sexual intercourse as one partner injuring another, and the “Killing” frame expresses one partner not only injuring the other, but committing murder.

24. I **annihilated** her ass last night! (UDC)
25. Hey, I’m ‘bout to **assassinate** that pussy! (UDC)
26. if she’s old enough to bleed she’s old enough to **butcher** (UDC)
27. I **crucified** her! (UDC)
28. Man I **destroyed** that pussy last night, it looked like the Roman Coliseum. (UDC)
29. Damn you really **massacred** that chick last night. (UDC)
30. I **slayed** the fuck out of that hoocker last night! (UDC)

The use of *annihilate* is very aggressive and violent. The use of this word describes a scenario in which the speaker destroys, or wipes out, his partner completely so there will be nothing left. Other lexical units, such as *assassinate*, *massacre*, and *slay* more directly relate to

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<sup>7</sup> See this link for more information:  
<https://framenet2.icsi.berkeley.edu/fnReports/data/frameIndex.xml?frame=Killing>

the act of murdering someone. Each of these terms encodes a brutal and deliberate killing of the woman.

The participant structure shows that the semantic role of the man is the *Killer*, and the semantic role of the woman is the *Victim*.

Table 10: SEX IS WAR domain mapping of “Killing” frame

SOURCE: War	TARGET: Sex
Killer →	Man
Victim →	Woman
Weapon →	Penis
Shoot →	Ejaculate
Battlefield →	Room, Bed
Manner →	Manner

This participant structure moved away from the “Cause Harm” frame in which a person attempts to injure someone, to a structure that shows a *Killer* completing the act of killing a *Victim*. In Examples 24 through 30, the semantic role of *Killer* is filled by the man, and the semantic role of the *Victim* is assigned to the woman. This shows the underlying conceptualization that men are killers, and therefore violent.

In this section I showed how the frames “Impact,” “Cause Harm,” and “Killing” are all elaborations of the conceptual frame SEX IS WAR. The three frames are shown to be on a scale of violence. The “Impact” frame elaborates the metaphor as a clash between two participants, the “Cause Harm” frame elaborates the metaphor as an intent to harm another, and the “Killing” frame elaborates the metaphor as one partner causing the death of another. Additionally, I show that men are characterized as attackers and women are characterized as victims.

### *Invariance Principle*

This section discusses the invariance principle (Lakoff, 1993). This principle shows why some lexical units of the three frames are not recruited into sex slang terminology.

The data show that not every lexical unit within a frame is recruited to be used as sex terminology. The invariance principle (Lakoff, 1993) provides an understanding of which words



may or may not be recruited into sex slang; the image-schema cannot be violated. This explains why the verb from the “Cause Harm” frame *butt* does not get recruited, but *claw* does.

*Butt* refers to the action of a person hitting another person or an object with their head. This does not match the image-schema. While this verb denotes a hitting action, the problem arises with the object that is used – the head. The weapon used is typically a knife or a gun. The prototypical weapon is in the shape of a phallus. Therefore, the image of the weapon from the source domain cannot be mapped onto the head in the target domain. Table 1 illustrates the domain mapping of the SEX IS WAR metaphor.

Table 1: SEX IS WAR domain mapping

SOURCE: War	TARGET: Sex
Attacker →	Man
Victim →	Woman
Weapon →	Penis
Shoot →	Ejaculate
Battlefield →	Room, Bed
Manner →	Manner

In other examples, the source of the hitting comes from either full body contact, or contact with the hand or a fist and an object. The verb *claw* can be used because the verb denotes the process of using one’s hands, particularly their fingernails, to scratch at a person. This is similar to Examples 13 through 15 (e.g. *spear*, *impale*, and *slice*) because they all characterize an event of cutting something with a sharp tool, such as a spear, a knife, or sharp nails.

Similarly, in the “Killing” frame, *behead* and *decapitate* are not recruited into sex slang while verbs such as *asphyxiate* and *drown* are. *Asphyxiate* and *drown* are used to represent the lack of oxygen one may experience during sexual intercourse due to excitement, which causes shallow breathing, and leaves the participant feeling breathless. However, there is no similar feeling during intercourse of having your head cut off. Because the image-schema of the target domain cannot be violated, mappings are fundamentally limited (Lakoff, 2003: 216).

Furthermore, because the source domain of war is able to map onto the target domain of sex, there is an apparent shared structure between the two domains.

## Discussion

In this paper, frame semantics is used to analyze the metaphor SEX IS WAR. I provide a new methodology to analyze frames using lexical items provided in FrameNet (Baker, Fillmore, and Lowe, 1998). In carrying out a microanalysis of each frame, I am able to illustrate a connection between the frames “Impact,” “Cause Harm,” and “Killing” through an underlying relationship to the SEX IS WAR metaphor. Through this methodology, FrameNet could expand their frames to reflect slang terminology.

I illustrate that each frame is an elaboration of the SEX IS WAR metaphor. The different frames elaborate the metaphor on a scale of violence. The “Impact” frame encodes the least amount of violence, followed by the “Cause Harm” frame, and ending with the violent act of murder displayed through the “Killing” frame. Each of these frames contain lexical units that are used as sex slang terminology. This shows an underlying relationship between each of the three frames relating to sexual intercourse through the SEX IS WAR metaphor.

The participant structure of each of the frames also shows the scale of violence each frame encodes. The “Impact” frame uses the semantic roles of *Impactor* and *Impactee*. This language illustrates that one participant is doing the action, and the other participant receives the action. The “Cause Harm” frame demonstrates a more violent understanding of sexual intercourse. The semantic roles include the *Agent* and the *Victim*. The *Agent* actively pursues the *Victim* with the express intent to harm. The semantic roles of the “Killing” frame provide a more dynamic contrast. One participant is characterized as the *Killer* and the other as the *Victim*.

These conceptualizations are exceedingly problematic when compared to the example sentences. The example sentences show that men fill the semantic roles of *Impactor*, *Agent*, and *Killer*, and women fill the semantic roles *Impactee* and *Victim*. This analysis of the

participant structure shows that men are typically conceptualized as the partner who is committing a violent act during sexual intercourse. Women, on the other hand, are viewed as blameless victims of violence.

Understanding the male perspective is essential in continuing this line of research. Since men are defined by the masculinity, and the dominant form of masculinity is seen as inherently violent, men undertake an identity based on the idea that they must be harsh and unrelenting. Men assume the roles of attacker and killer because if they are seen as sadistic then they are reaffirmed in their masculinity, which reaffirms their manness and power status. The metaphorical understanding of the penis as a weapon becomes pivotal when evaluating the relation of sex and violence.

Being aware of the semantics of sexual intercourse in relation to men and violence constructs an inexorable cycle. Men must continuously define themselves through their masculinity. The dominant form of masculinity is one of violence, therefore, men must exhibit violent behaviors in order to reaffirm their masculine identity. Through the semantic analysis of the metaphor SEX IS WAR, I have shown that sex is conceptualized as a violent act. In order to show violence, men use sex. Moreover, men use their penis as a weapon against women during sexual intercourse. This analysis shows that the conceptualization of a penis as a weapon is what characterizes the man as the violent partner. This is also shown in Example 13, "It is quite uncomfortable to be speared." In this example, the woman uses a dildo on the man during sexual intercourse. When the woman possesses the weapon, she is the one characterized as the attacker. Because every man has a penis, the object that determines which sexual partner is the attacker and which is the victim, they fill the position of the violent partner causing harm.

In doing this analysis, I further argue that more research should be done on taboo topics and dysphemisms. Dysphemisms illustrate the pejorative understanding of taboo events, such as sexual intercourse. By using metaphorical language to discuss sexual intercourse, speakers give power to the taboo because they preserve the underlying structure. The metaphor SEX IS WAR conceptualizes sex as a violent act. Therefore, by using frames such as "Impact," "Cause

Harm,” and “Killing,” the speaker is establishing, or reestablishing, sex as a violent act. Allan and Burrige (1991: 96) states that approximately 800 terms are used to describe sexual intercourse. This paper includes 96 distinct verbs that are used to describe sexual intercourse in relation to the metaphor SEX IS WAR, 12% of the proposed total. This shows that a substantial amount of language used to describe sex encodes violence.

## **Conclusion**

My analysis of the frames “Impact,” “Cause Harm,” and “Killing” shows an underlying shared conceptualization through the metaphor SEX IS WAR. Each frame is an elaboration of the metaphor based on a scale of violence. The “Impact” frame encoding the least amount of violence, followed by the “Cause Harm” frame, and lastly the “Killing” frame. The conceptual metaphor SEX IS WAR is understood as a dysphemism since sex is being characterized as violent, a pejorative characteristic. Furthermore, by analyzing the participant structure, I show that men fill the role of an attacker and women fill the role of a victim in relation to sexual intercourse. The penis plays a vital role in this conceptualization because it helps determine which partner fills the violent role.

Additionally, models of masculinity affect the conceptualization of men as the violent partner in sexual intercourse. Masculinity is viewed as a violent trait; because men are defined through their masculinity they must act violent in order to be viewed as masculine. Men show violence through sex in order to assert their masculinity. This places men in the role of attacker in relation to sexual intercourse. Men will characterize and treat women as victims, which leads to the ever continuing concern for women’s safety at the hands of violent men.

For my research I focused on the conceptual metaphor SEX IS WAR. Further research on sex related slang terms can expand on this topic by looking at other conceptual metaphors of sex and follow the same methodology I have provided. Further research could also be done on the data I have provided. A microanalysis of the lexical units recruited into sex slang would lead to a deeper understanding of the conceptualization of sex as a violent act. More research should be done on dysphemisms to better understand how taboo topics are characterized.

## Appendix 1:

Frames evoked by each Lexical Unit of "Sex" frame

Bang	Motion Noise, Impact, Cause Impact, Sex
Bed	Sex
Bone	Emptying, Sex
Bump uglies	Sex, Impact
Copulate	Sex
Do it	Successful Action, Sex
Do	Intentionally Affect, Ingest Substance, Intentionally Act, Thriving, Touring, Sex
Fuck	Sex
Give	Giving, Infecting, Sex
Go at it	Sex
Have	Possession, Giving Birth, Ingestion, Inclusion, Have Associated, Ingest Substance, Sex
Jump	Self-Motion, Change Position on a Scale, Attack, Traversing, Sex
Knock boots	Sex, Cause Harm, Cause Motion, Impact
Lay	Placing, Giving Birth, Sex, Attack
Make love	Sex
Mate	Sex
Pork	Sex
Shag	Sex
Slam	Impact, Cause Impact, Judgement Communication, Cause Motion, Sex
Take	Removing, Ingest Substance, Taking, Bringing, Ride Vehicle, Taking Time, Have as Requirement, Conquering, Capacity, Sex

## Appendix 2:

Frames evoked by each Lexical Unit of "Impact" frame

Bang*	Motion Noise, Impact, Cause Impact, Sex
Brush*	Placing, Filling, Impact
Bump*	Impact, Sex
Chatter	Communication Manner, Make Noise, Impact
Clang*	Motion Noise, Make Noise, Impact, Cause to Make Noise, Cause Impact
Clash	Make Noise, Hostile Encounter, Compatibility, Impact, Cause Impact, Cause to Make Noise
Clatter*	Motion Noise, Make Noise, Impact, Cause Impact
Click*	Motion Noise, Make Noise, Impact, Cause Impact
Clink	Motion Noise, Impact, Cause Impact
Clunk*	Motion Noise, Impact

Collide	Impact, Cause Impact
Crash*	Motion Noise, Impact, Cause Impact
Crunch*	Motion Noise, Make Noise, Grinding, Impact
Graze*	Impact, Cause Impact, Experience Bodily Harm
Hiss*	Communication Noise, Make Noise, Motion Noise, Fluidic Motion, Impact
Hit*	Cause Harm, Impact, Experience Bodily Harm, Cause Impact, Hit Target, Hit or Miss, Cause Motion, Arriving, Eventive Affecting, Attack, Cognitive Impact, Attaching
Impact	Impact, Subjective Influence, Objective Influence
Impinge	Impact
Knock*	Sex, Cause Harm, Cause Motion, Impact
Patter*	Motion Noise, Make Noise, Impact
Plash*	Make Noise, Impact
Plop	Make Noise, Impact
Plow*	Impact, Cause Impact
Plunk*	Impact
Rap	Communication Noise, Impact, Cause Impact
Rattle*	Communication Noise, Experiencer Object, Make Noise, Cause Impact, Impact
Run*	Self-Motion, Leadership, Impact, Fluidic Motion, Cause Impact, Cause Motion, Operating a System, Path Shape, Cause Harm
Slam*	Impact, Cause Impact, Judgement Communication, Cause Motion, Sex
Slap*	Cause Harm, Impact, Cause Impact
Smack*	Cause Harm, Impact, Experience Bodily Harm, Cause Impact, Body Movement
Smash*	Cause Harm, Impact, Cause to Fragment
Strike*	Cause Harm, Impact, Cause Impact, Attack, Eventive Affecting, Light Movement, Erasing, Political Actions, Cognitive Impact, Being in Agreement on Actions, Coming to Believe
Thud*	Motion Noise, Impact, Cause Impact
Thump*	Motion Noise, Make Noise, Impact, Cause Impact
Tinkle*	Make Noise, Cause to Make Noise, Impact
Touch*	Manipulation, Impact, Spatial Contact

### Appendix 3:

Frames evoked by each Lexical Unit of “Cause Harm” frame

Bash*	Cause Harm
Batter*	Cause Harm, Abusing
Bayonet	Cause Harm

Beat up*	Cause Harm
Beat*	Cause Harm, Beat Opponent
Belt*	Cause Harm
Biff*	Cause Harm
Bludgeon*	Cause Harm
Boil	Emotion Heat, Cause Harm, Apply Heat, Absorb Heat, Cause Change of Phase
Break*	Cause Harm, Compliance, Experience Bodily Harm, Cause to Fragment, Render Nonfunctional, Breaking Off, Breaking Apart
Bruise*	Cause Harm, Experience Bodily Harm
Buffet	Cause Harm
Burn	Emotional Heat, Perception Body, Cause Harm, Experience Bodily Harm, Fire Burning
Butt	Cause Harm
Cane*	Corporal Punishment, Cause Harm
Chop*	Cause Harm, Cutting
Claw*	Manipulation, Cause Harm
Clout	Cause Harm
Club*	Cause Harm
Crack	Cause Harm
Crush*	Cause Harm, Reshaping, Grinding, Experiencer Object
Cudgel	Cause Harm
Cuff*	Cause Harm
Cut*	Cause Harm, Experience Bodily Harm, Cause Change of Position on a Scale, Cutting, Intentional Traversing, Change Direction, Change Operational State, Removing
Drug	Cause Harm
Elbow	Cause Harm
Electrocute	Cause Harm
Flagellate	Cause Harm
Flog*	Cause Harm, Theft
Fracture	Cause Harm, Cause to Fragment
Gash	Cause Harm
Hammer*	Cause Harm
Hit*	Cause Harm, Impact, Experience Bodily Harm, Cause Impact, Hit Target, Hit or Miss, Cause Motion, Arriving, Eventive Affecting, Attack, Cognitive Impact, Attaching
Horsewhip	Cause Harm
Hurt*	Perception Body, Cause Harm, Experience Bodily Harm, Cause Bodily Experience
Impale*	Cause Harm
Injure	Cause Harm, Experience Bodily Harm

Jab	Cause Harm, Cause Impact
Kick	Cause Harm
Knee	Cause Harm
Knife*	Cause Harm
Knock*	Sex, Cause Harm, Cause Motion, Impact
Lash*	Cause Harm, Attaching
Maim*	Cause Harm
Maul	Cause Harm
Mutilate*	Cause Harm
Pelt	Cause Harm, Mass Motion
Poison	Cause Harm
Pummel*	Cause Harm
Punch*	Cause Harm
Run through*	Cause Harm
Slap*	Cause Harm, Impact, Cause Impact
Slice*	Cause Harm, Cutting
Smack*	Cause Harm, Impact, Experience Bodily Harm, Cause Impact, Body Movement
Smash*	Cause Harm, Impact, Cause to Fragment
Spear*	Cause Harm
Squash	Cause Harm, Reshaping
Stab*	Cause Harm
Sting	Perception Body, Experiencer Object, Cause Harm
Stone*	Cause Harm, Emptying
Strike*	Cause Harm, Impact, Cause Impact, Attack, Eventive Affecting, Light Movement, Erasing, Political Actions, Cognitive Impact, Be in Agreement on Action, Coming to Believe
Swipe*	Removing, Theft, Cause Harm
Thwack*	Cause Harm
Torture*	Cause Harm
Transfix	Cause Harm
Twist*	Experience Bodily Harm, Path Shape, Body Movement, Manipulate into Shape, Go into Shape, Cause Harm
Welt	Cause Harm
Whip	Cause Harm
Wound	Cause Harm, Experiencer Object

#### Appendix 4:

Frames evoked by each Lexical Unit of “Killing” frame

Annihilate*	Destroying, Killing
Asphyxiate*	Killing, Death



Assassinate*	Killing
Behead	Killing
Butcher*	Killing
Crucify*	Killing
Decapitate	Killing
Destroy*	Destroying, Killing, Experience object
Dispatch	Sending, Killing
Do in	Killing
Drown*	Death, Killing
Eliminate	Removing, Killing
Euthanize	Killing
Exterminate	Killing
Gorrotte*	Killing
Kill*	Killing, Process Stop, Experiencer Object, Erasing, Change Operational State, Killing
Liquidate*	Killing
Lynch	Killing
Massacre*	Killing
Murder*	Killing
Silence	Silencing, Killing, Becoming Silent
Slaughter*	Killing
Slay*	Killing
Smother*	Killing, Putting Out Fire
Starve	Death, Killing, Prevent From Having
Suffocate*	Killing
Suicide*	Killing
Take out*	Killing, Destroying
Terminate	Firing, Killing, Activity Stop

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