



## Introduction

How do transmasculine people use language to affirm their identities?

### Background:

- Queer identity can be constructed through both the production and the consumption of **written work** (Koller 2013)
- Evidence of **queering normative body terms** with “boy cunt” and also “dick” for a dildo (Bauer 2008: 242)
- Minimal research on terminology used for genitals, but some on cisgender and heterosexual partners’ use of **pet names** for genitals (Cornog 1986)
- Female and male genital slang fall into different **semantic categories** and female genital terms are often **nonspecific** in referent (Braun & Kitzinger 2001)
- Transmasculine people use **four tactics** to affirm masculine identity (Edelman & Zimman 2014: 682)
  1. Decoupling our body parts from our gender
  2. Embracing that biological sex is nonbinary and nonstatic
  3. Embracing the continuum between penises and clitorises
  4. Mixing traditionally ‘male,’ ‘female,’ and trans-specific terms
- ‘Feminine’ terminology used in **three contexts** (Zimman 2014: 27)
  1. Technical or medical contexts
  2. Expressing emotional discomfort
  3. Reclaiming body parts

‘bottom growth’

‘swollen growth’

**Framework:** Edelman & Zimman (2014) and Zimman (2014) provide data for how terminology is used by transmasculine people in online contexts, primarily dating websites.

## References

Bauer, Robin. 2008. Transgressive and transformative gendered sexual practices and white privileges: The case of the dyke/trans BDSM communities. *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 36.233–253.

Braun, Virginia, and Celia Kitzinger. 2001. “Snatch,’ ‘hole,’ or ‘honey pot’? Semantic categories and the problem of nonspecificity in female genital slang.” *Journal of Sex Research* 38(2).146–158.

Cornog, Martha. 1986. “Naming sexual body parts: Preliminary patterns and implications.” *Journal of Sex Research* 22(3).393–398.

Edelman, Elijah, and Lal Zimman. 2014. “Boyconcs and bonus holes: Trans men’s bodies, neoliberalism, and the sexual productivity of genitals.” *Journal of Homosexuality* 61(5).673–690.

Koller, Veronika. 2013. Constructing (non-)normative identities in written lesbian discourse: A diachronic study. *Discourse & Society* 24.572–589.

Zimman, Lal. 2014. “The discursive construction of sex: Remaking and reclaiming the gendered body in talk about genitals among trans man.” *Queer Excursions: Rethorizing Binaries in Language, Gender, and Sexuality*, ed. by Lal Zimman, Jenny L. Davis, and Joshua Raclaw, 13–34. Oxford, UK & New York: Oxford University Press.

## Methods

25 stories from **Archive of Our Own**, an online corpus of written fanfiction and original work

- Publicly-accessible
- More trans stories available here than from published work
- Recorded genital terms used for transmasculine bodies, the frequency of those terms, and the tactics/contexts they employed

‘cock’

‘his rock hard clit’

### Search Parameters:

- ‘Trans Male Character’ tag
- Explicit rating, more likely to involve genitalia
- M/M category, to follow Edelman & Zimman (2014)
- Complete works only, English, max 5000 words, most recent from 1/1/20

## Results

Notable novel terms for external genitals:

1. **‘growth’** → trans-specific terminology that comes from the phrase ‘bottom growth’
2. **‘foreskin’** → uses Edelman & Zimman’s **second** and **third tactics** and refers to what one might call the hood of a clitoris

External Genital Terms						
clit	cock	dick	growth	nub	foreskin	hardness
50	28	22	5	2	1	1
Total: 109						

Internal Genital Terms					
cunt	pussy	hole	entrance	folds	labia
37	32	27	7	6	6
heat	lips	core	slit	opening	vagina
4	3	2	2	1	1
Total: 128					

## Discussion

### Frequency of Terms:

- Most common terms in Zimman (2014) were ‘dick’ and ‘cock,’ compared to most common terms here, ‘clit’ and ‘cock’
- Zimman saw no instances of ‘clit’ or ‘clitoris’ used in explicit transmasculine ways, but it was the foremost common term here
- Additionally, ‘clit’ makes up 45% of external term use and 100% of normative female external term use, which follows with Zimman’s findings that it was most common to use normative male body terms for external genitals

‘the man’s clit’

### Tactics for Masculine Identity Affirmation cont’d:

- Over half of the stories involved mixing normative male, female, and/or trans-specific terms, which is **tactic four**
- **Tactic one** was used throughout by the fact that normative male, female, and trans-specific terms were all used for the same transmasculine bodies

### Contexts for Feminine Term Usage:

- Almost all of my data fell into the **third context**, which follows given that the terms were drawn from erotica
- One story seemed to have use of the **second context**
- No stories used the **first context**

### Pet Names, Semantic Categories & Nonspecificity:

- No instances of pet naming like in Cornog (1986)
- Of the 17 semantic categories in Braun & Kitzinger (2001), almost all of the terms identified here fell into ‘standard slang’ category
- Nonspecificity of female genital terms was not present and neither was a lack of terms for ‘clitoris,’ as Braun & Kitzinger (2001) found

### The Take-Away:

- Differences in pet naming, semantic categories, and nonspecificity suggest that transmasculine language use is different from cisgender female language use, even when referring to similar body parts
- Creating novel terms and queering normative terms show the linguistic creativity transmasculine people employ to affirm identity