TRANSADVOCATE

Tranny: An Evidence-Based Review

By Cristan Williams

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Abstract

Discourse surrounding the term tranny has become more than a little heated. In fact, a RuPaul Drag Race runner-up enacted the mock execution of a trans woman named Parker Molloy for the apparent crime of asking that folks not be so casual with the language people use while killing trans people. Andrea James thought the mock execution [...]

Article

Discourse surrounding the term tranny has become more than a little heated. In fact, a RuPaul Drag Race runner-up enacted the mock execution of a trans woman named Parker Molloy for the apparent crime of asking that folks not be so casual with the language people use while killing trans people. Andrea James thought the mock execution was “hilarious” and a HuffPo Gay editor promoted the video.

There’s a number of posts out there critiquing the mock execution of Parker Molloy. This article will not substantively focus on these current issues. Instead, it will focus on the evidence-based history of the term because I’ve noticed a common historical narrative used when defending the use of the term. According to the narrative, tranny as a trans term goes way back. In fact, they assert, the term didn’t have a negative connotation when used way back when.

Writing for the Advocate, Calpernia Addams wrote:

But tranny has evolved, from scattered in-community usage by drag and trans entertainers to accreting negative connotations from its frequent use as a dismissive semi-insult -- it’s gone from “Those trannies kicked ass last night when they got raided at Stonewall” to “Ugh, look at that hot tranny mess!”

Addams recounts the latter meaning in her 2008 video, Bad Questions to Ask a Transsexual: Old Version. The video, which has almost half a million views, juxtaposes the term tranny with fag. This purposeful invocation of the slur fag is contextually important as it represents the only place in the video wherein fag is used.

Bad Question #10: ‘Girl, are you a tranny?’

[derisive laugh]

I usually get this one in gay bars and it’s usually coming from fags who already know that I’m transsexual. They’re just trying to let me know that I’m not getting away with anything. It’s kind of like saying, ‘Wow, you look really slim. Are you wearing a girdle?”

Backhanded compliment much? I'll backhand ya!

Addams makes it clear that the current contextual meaning of tranny is not something she appreciates being applied to her experience. While it seems that Addams' estimation of tranny is empirically shared among many trans women (as evidenced by strong social media backlash), the historical narrative Addams offers is not so easily supported by evidence.

Recently, the TransAdvocate featured a peer-reviewed paper looking at the historical rhetoric surrounding the term transgender. While doing research for this paper, I also looked into the historical context of tranny. The reality is that I did not find uses of the term earlier than 1983. Some have asserted that the term was in use before the term appeared in print and I would agree that this is likely the case. However, I can find no evidence to support the belief that the term was in wide use years or even decades before it appeared in print. This suggests that the term only gained cultural currency in the early 1980s.

What follows is a review of the term as it has been applied within media. The purpose of this article isn't to stoke the ire of any particular lexical faction. Instead, I invite you to review the evidence and thoughtfully consider the two debatable questions at the end of this article.

The Oxford Dictionary of English Slang (p. 336) has the following entry:

Trannie: Noun. A transvestite. 1983 -. GAY TIMES "By 11 pm they seem drunkenly immune to the influx of trannies, trendies, and other creatures of the night" (1990). [From abbreviation of transvestite + -ie.]

Word Usage: Historical Context

1985

his synthesizer. Suddenly, he dragged her into the bathroom. He emerged wearing her wig.

"I had become so comfortable with my own personality, there was no barrier as to who I could befriend if I wanted to," she recalls. "I remember John said, 'I never realized my girlfriend could so easily captivate a millionaire.'"

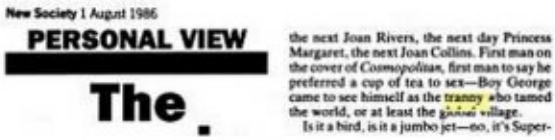
In March, Sally joined a cabaret act called the Tranny Crew. The group consisted of three women and one transvestite. All four stuffed their bras and performed original rap music at the Pyramid Club.

Next, Sally landed a part in a German film called *Ski Dance*, starring Suzy Chaffee. A BMW whisked her to the set in the early morning. "I thought, 'This is classy,'" she remembers. She played a fashion stylist with occult powers.

Figure 1. 1985, New Yorker, page 49

"In March, Sally joined a cabaret act called the Tranny Crew. The group consisted of three women and one transvestite. All four stuffed their bras and performed original rap music at the Pyramid Club."

1986


New Society 1 August 1986

PERSONAL VIEW

The

the next Joan Rivers, the next day Princess Margaret, the next Joan Collins. First man on the cover of *Cosmopolitan*, first man to say he preferred a cup of tea to sex—Boy George came to see himself as the tranny who tamed the world, or at least the global village.

Is it a bird, is it a jumbo jet—no, it's Super-

Figure 2. 1986, New Society (p. 23)

“First man on the cover of Cosmopolitan, first man to say he preferred a cup of tea to sex - Boy George came to see himself a the tranny who tamed the world, or at least the global village.”

1991

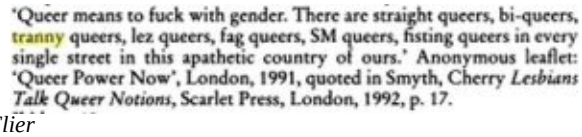

‘Queer means to fuck with gender. There are straight queers, bi-queers, tranny queers, lez queers, fag queers, SM queers, fisting queers in every single street in this apathetic country of ours.’ Anonymous leaflet: ‘Queer Power Now’, London, 1991, quoted in Smyth, Cherry *Lesbians Talk Queer Notions*, Scarlet Press, London, 1992, p. 17.

Figure 3. 1991 Queer Community Flier

“Queer means to fuck with gender. There are straight queers, bi-queers, tranny queers, lez queers, fag queers, SM queers, fisting queers in every single street in this apathetic country of ours.”

1993

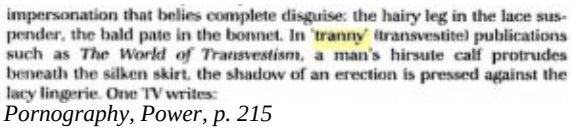
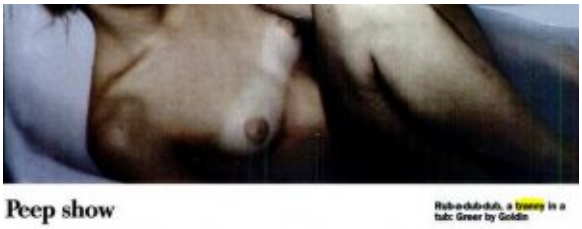

impersonation that belies complete disguise: the hairy leg in the lace suspender, the bald pate in the bonnet. In 'tranny' (transvestite) publications such as *The World of Transvestism*, a man's hirsute calf protrudes beneath the silken skirt, the shadow of an erection is pressed against the lacy lingerie. One TV writes:

Figure 4. 1993, Dirty looks: Women, Pornography, Power, p. 215

“Cross-dressers often desire, not the security of a perfect imitation, but rather the delicious impersonation that belies complete disguise: the hairy leg in the lace suspender, the bald pate in the bonnet. In ‘tranny‘ (transvestite) publications such as The World of Transvestite, a man’s hairsuit calf protrudes beneath the silken skirt, the shadow of an erection is pressed against the lacy lingerie.”

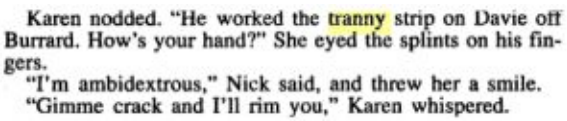
1994


Peep show

Rub-a-dub-dub, a tranny in a tub: Greer by Goldin

Figure 5. 1994, The Advocate Magazine p 115

“Rub-a-dub-dub, a tranny in a tub”



Karen nodded. "He worked the tranny strip on Davie off Burrard. How's your hand?" She eyed the splints on his fingers.
"I'm ambidextrous," Nick said, and threw her a smile.
"Gimme crack and I'll rim you," Karen whispered.

Figure 6. 1994, Ripper by Michael Slade, p159

"Karen nodded. "He worked the tranny strip on Davie off Burrard. How's your hand?" She eyed the splints on his fingers. "I'm ambidextrous," Nick said, and threw her a smile. "Gimme crack and I'll rim you," Karen whispered.

1998

The domain tranny.com is created

2000

B4 ENTERTAINMENT — Winnipeg Free Press, Sat

Series explores alternative side of sexuality

TORONTO — Transvestites, transsexuals, homosexuals, women who love killers and disabled lovers.

All are explored in a series of documentaries the Life Network airs next month under the title Another Side of Life.

The five hour-long documentaries, airing Nov. 13-17, explore the "intimate choices and challenges of human sexuality in all its shapes and sizes."

In Tranny School, a former porn model conducts training classes in how to be a transvestite. Going Straight looks at a recent Christian fundamentalist trend, gay deprogramming programs. Women Who Love Killers examines the phenomenon of women who find romance with convicted murderers. And finally, A Love Less Ordinary is an account of how four disabled women have come to find their sexuality.

— Canadian Press

Figure 7. October 2000, Winnipeg Free Press

"In Tranny School, a former porn model conducts training classes in how to be a transvestite."

2002

PICKS

ARTS AND CULTURE

Everything worth seeing, eating, reading, hearing & drinking about in Santa Fe

WEDNESDAY

Indie Inch

Not since The Rocky Horror Picture Show has a rag-tag troupe of trannie glamsters rocked so hard, and with such heart. Originally conceived and written by John Cameron Mitchell (who spent some of his formative years in Albuquerque), Hedwig and the Angry Inch is a musical about an aging German punk/glam chanteuse, Hedwig (ne Hansel), whose life is dictated by a sex change operation gone way, way wrong—the mishap leaves Hedwig stuck somewhere between male and female.

PERFORMING ARTS

HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH

8 pm
Wednesday, Aug. 21
Wednesdays through Sept. 11

$18-$35

The Paramount
328 Sandoval St.
982-0988

This clichéd-but-fabulous saga, spiced fishnets and Sex Pistols T-shirts, Hedwig bombs a band called The Angry Inch (named after his post-op, uh, leftovers). Their songs, written by Mitchell's partner, Stephen Trask, are not what you'd expect from a musical—Rolling Stone, New York Daily, David

FRIDAY-SATURDAY

Birthday Abstractions

It's art critic Clement Greenberg were alive today, I don't think he would like the abstract paintings of Miranda Magel.

VISUAL ARTS

MIRANDA MAGEL
APRIL 15

Reception 5:30-8 pm
Friday, Aug. 22
Through Sept. 21

ARTIST TALK

2 pm
Saturday, Aug. 23

CCA

Which is probably a good thing. So Greenberg-an standards. Greenberg would say that Magel's work has too much visual depth and content. He wouldn't care about the title of this show, April 15. That's the day Julia Magel's daughter was born. And the

SUNDAY

Haydn Hullabaloo

Seven years from now will be the 200th anniversary of Joseph Haydn's death. Haydn Festival International, which is dedicated to the Austrian composer, has gotten a jump on the gun and is already hosting summer music fest with astounding th ing bash of 2009.

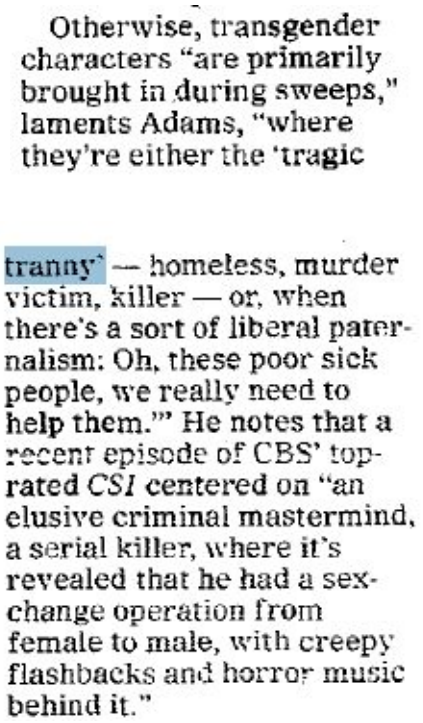
This weekend is the fourth annual perfo nuance of Haydn in the Desert, which brings together members of orches tras from around th world to play some of Haydn's 125 sym phonies and more than 400 other com positions. Events begin with the

Haydn Family Festival, which includes a short concert, a chance for kids to play th orchestra's instruments and lemonade wit the musicians. The main program consists of half-hour concerts around the Plaza, fol lowed by a wine-tasting and dinner. Such a gathering of prestigious artists playing fan tastic music is something you go to with

Figure 8. August 2002, Santa Fe Reporter

"Not since The Rocky Horror Picture Show has a rag-tag troupe of trannie glamsters rocked so hard, and with such heart. Originally conceived and written by John Cameron Mitchell (who spent some of his formative years in Albuquerque), Hedwig and the Angry Inch is a musical about an aging German punk/glam chanteuse, Hedwig (ne Hansel), whose life is dictated by a sex change operation gone way, way wrong--the mishap leaves Hedwig stuck somewhere between male and female."

2003



Otherwise, transgender characters "are primarily brought in during sweeps," laments Adams, "where they're either the 'tragic tranny' — homeless, murder victim, killer — or, when there's a sort of liberal paternalism: Oh, these poor sick people, we really need to help them.'" He notes that a recent episode of CBS' top-rated *CSI* centered on "an elusive criminal mastermind, a serial killer, where it's revealed that he had a sex-change operation from female to male, with creepy flashbacks and horror music behind it."

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Figure 9. 2003 TV listing for NYPD Blue's "Tranny Get Your Gun"

Clip from NYPD Blue's "Tranny Get Your Gun"

J SPOT

BE PROUD. AND LOUD.

BY JONANNA WIDNER
culture@sfreporter.com

Mothers, lock the doors and hide your children (unless you happen to be a member of PFLAG), because Pride Week is upon us. The Paramount has long been the traditional cornerstone of Pride activities, but this year Swig joins in on the fun, and the queer-friendly gaggle of ladies 'n' trannie gents at Backroad Pizza will throw a new twist into this favorite institution. Here's a lowdown on the music throwdowns that'll go down (see Hear Here, page 23, for times and prices).

BACKROAD PIZZA
(1807 Second St., Bldg. 1, 955-9055)
As of press time, Backroad's schedule has not been solidified, but plan on DJs, beer, friendly atmosphere, yummy, yummy pizza and a more casual alternative to the high-intensity goings-on at Swig and the Paramount. Call them later in the week for specifics.

the all-ages dance party and tent outside. In the big room Central's Elvira Kurt gets the $15), followed by DJ Bill Co Wonderbar. Saturday night c show from ultra-foxy ultra di doubt rip through her latest Pretenders' "Brass in Pocket

Finally, Sunday is the eve tion, with 10 DJs, three dan drink and general revelry.

THE PLAZA
Grab your Doc Martins, your cuz the annual Dyke March and moves all the way down Saturday's the big day, with celebration starring Swig's Roberts, guest performers a (I'm hoping my personal fav Rodeo Association, is there all day, and it's a great place

Figure 10. June 2003, Santa Fe Reporter

"Mothers, lock the doors and hide your children (unless you happen to be a member of PFLAG), because Pride Week is upon us. The Paramount has long been the traditional cornerstone of Pride activities,

but this year Swig joins in on the fun, and the queer-friendly gaggle of ladies ‘n’ trannie gents at Backroad Pizza will throw a new twist into this favorite institution.”

OUT OF FOCUS

BY JONANNA WIDNER
culture@sfreporter.com

BITS AND PIECES

The past few weeks have been, um, challenging, punctuated by spasms of debauchery involving staying up till dawn, bottling a strange combination of adrenaline and fatigue and trying to figure out who's a drag queen and who's not.[1] Lately, when asked "What'd you do last night?" my answer has consisted of a sigh and, "Oh, it's a long story..."

So a marking characteristic of this period of time has been that wrapping my brain around any one concept and focusing has remained difficult. A second characteristic is that I've had a strangely large number of conversations about rock 'n' roll. It's taxing trying to process all the music input when my brain remains out of joint. Rather than even try, it's best, I think, to just go with it. So what follows are snippets and vignettes, an attempt to put some of the pieces of the puzzles together.

First, I had a conversation with a friend of mine that sort of swirled loosely around the topic of rock-critic geekdom. You see, we music writers are a pesky lot, preferring to spend time indoors listening to Joy Division and asking each other questions like, "What are the top three songs you are most embarrassed to admit that you really like?"[2] rather than engage in any activity that might bring color to the cheeks. It was a fun conversation, but it left me wondering: Is it worth it? Is music truly one of the most important things in the world or is obsessing on it just a surrogate for a

night was "sweet." It was sweet of Andy Primm to step in at the last minute. It was sweet of Backroad Pizza to host the benefit. It was sweet of Urban Myth's Mikey Baker to hang out all night and run sound for, like, $20. It was sweet and it made me feel warm and fuzzy and communal, and grateful for the small details that made up the night.

Moment-in-time #2 also involved Andy Primm and Chopper Sick Balls' lead singer Sue Fury. It was last Sunday night, when CSB opened for the Hollis Wake at Bar B. The Hollis Wake busted into their groovy little number "Gingivitis," prompting Primm and Fury to commence what can only be described as strange punk rock lambada. It was hot and sexually ambiguous-- here's a borderline trannie singer with melting Iggy Pop eyeliner dirty dancing with Santa Fe's answer to David Bowie—and it made me feel sexy and careless and happy I was there.

But it was reflecting on the *High Fidelity* geek-out moments with my buddy that brought everything together. (He revealed his top most embarrassing song is Don Henley's "Boys of Summer,"[4] so I'm not going to mention his name lest he care to remain anonymous.) He asked me to name my Top Three Replacements Songs. I replied that's way too way too difficult. That's the point, he said, you have to *think*. And that's true, but when thought spins around and leads back to emotion and intuition, to feel, then you get the whole package. I like thinking about the Replacements, but mainly they make me happy, just like the small moments of the past few weeks.

Figure 11. October 2003, Santa Fe Reporter

“Moment-in-time #2 also involved Andy Primm and Chopper Sick Balls’ lead singer Sue Fury. It was last Sunday night, when CSB opened for the Hollis Wake at Bar B. The Hollis Wake busted into their groovy little number “Gingivitis,” prompting Primm and Fury to commence what can only be described as strange punk rock lambada. It was hot and sexually ambiguous-- here’s a borderline trannie singer with melting Iggy Pop eyeliner dirty dancing with Santa Fe’s answer to David Bowie--and it made me feel sexy and careless and happy I was there.

tranny

1642 up, **657** down

1. transvestite
2. transsexual
3. transparency (photog.)
4. transit van (veh.)

"Fuck. I have left the trannies of the trannies in the back of the tranny."

- A fetish photographer.

buy tranny mugs & shirts

by Viz Mar 16, 2003 share this add a video

Figure 12. 2003 Urban Dictionary: Tranny

2004

MOVIEZONE

A complicated 'Bad Education'

NEW YORK (AP):

SUPERFICIALLY, **BAD Education** comes off as a collection of Pedro Almodovar's greatest hits – junkies and drag queens and Catholics, oh my! – with an everything-but-the-kitchen-sink denseness about it.

This most personal film from the Spanish writer-director, who has shifted from the ridiculous (**Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown**) to the sublime (**Talk to Her**) throughout his storied career, is also his most challenging. It's so compli-

work," he tells his assistant – he is intrigued by Ignacio's writing.

As Enrique reads the short story, Almodovar jumps all over in terms of perspective and time, from Madrid in 1980 when the characters are adults to flashbacks to their youth. Characters who initially seemed villainous, like the school principal, reveal themselves to be surprisingly sympathetic. Sometimes they're even portrayed by different actors: Padre Manolo (Daniel Gimenez-Cacho) becomes Mr. Berenguer (Lluis Homar), and he teaches Enrique the truth about

and camp. Ignacio/Angel/Juan jumps into a shimmering swimming pool in slow motion, dressed only in his eighty-whiteys, over the head of Enrique, who's writing nervously in the water below. The real Ignacio (Francisco Boira), a drugged-out trannie, collapses over a typewriter while writing and smashes his/her heavily made-up face into the keys.

LEVEL OF FAMILIARITY

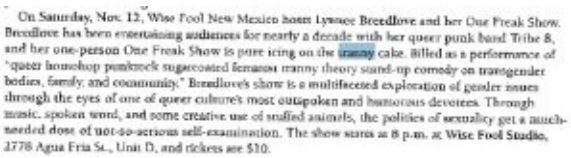
Your appreciation for all this will depend on your level of familiarity with and/or reverence for Almodovar's work. If you're not a fan, it will seem gratuitous – weird for weird's sake – and you'd be justified in thinking that. If you love him, as legions of loyalists do, you'll view **Bad Education** as a colourful *tour de force*: a Pedropalooza, if you will.

Bad Education, a Sony

Figure 13. November 2004, The Gleaner

"The real Ignacio (Francisco Boira), a drugged-out trannie, collapses over a typewriter while writing and smashes his/her heavily made-up face into the keys."

2005



On Saturday, Nov. 12, Wise Fool New Mexico hosts Lynnee Breedlove and her One Freak Show. Breedlove has been entertaining audiences for nearly a decade with her queer punk band Tribe 8, and her one-person One Freak Show is pure icing on the tranny cake. Billed as a performance of "queer homohop punkrock sugarcoated feminist tranny theory stand-up comedy on transgender bodies, family, and community," Breedlove's show is a multifaceted exploration of gender issues through the eyes of one of queer culture's most outspoken and humorous devotees. Through music, spoken word, and some creative use of stuffed animals, the politics of sexuality get a much-needed dose of not-so-serious self-examination. The show starts at 8 p.m. at Wise Fool Studio, 1778 Agua Fria St., Unit D, and tickets are $10.

Figure 14. 2005, Pasatiempo Magazine

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Stryker

/ continued from Page C1

Gonick's filmmaking sensibility is anti-Hollywood, which perhaps explains why he chose to make it virtually impossible to raise any feelings of empathy for any characters in the film, including, disastrously, Stryker himself.

Ever the provocateur, Gonick no doubt relished the notion of making a protagonist out of middle-class Winnipeg's worst nightmare: a young native arsonist. And that might have been a real achievement if Stryker had been given the mitigating dignity of a real character with a real past. But he is not really a character at all; he's a kind of elemental symbol of retributive justice, holding the promise of fiery cultural purification in his matchbook.

If the film aspires to represent hard-core realities of aboriginal issues of life in the North End, that representation is refracted and distorted in the prism of a filmmaker who tends to define himself by the fact that he is a defiantly uncommercial subversive. Maybe that's admirable, in a banging-your-head-against-the-wall kind of way, if you ignore the fact that the most successful subversive filmmakers — from Russel to Bertolucci — are the ones who can attract wide audiences.

A wide audience is not in the cards, here. Indeed, Stryker will likely be ignored by the very people it claims to represent.

It is unusually humourless, for one thing. Gonick can't direct the film's mostly amateur cast to credible performances, although Henry does a decent job in his almost wordless role. Mostly, the acting on view here detracts from the painstaking realism of cinematographer Ed Lachman's naturalistic winter-light patina.

The film offers little real enlightenment on the subject of Winnipeg's mean streets. There is only cursory substance here on the conflict between aboriginal people and Asians, and even less on the long-simmering tension between natives and cops, save for the film's climactic depiction of a "starlight tour."

On the other hand, there is a painstaking affirmation of traditional native tolerance to marginal sexuality — here represented by the aforementioned tranny hookers affiliated with the Indian Posse, a sign, Gonick and co-scriptwriter David McIntosh have compromised their script with agendas of their own, including: How do we make the film homo-erotic? Hence: a mass male shower scene as eye-rolling-gratuitous as its de rigeur female equivalent in a women-in-prison movie. By the time Omar is obliged to return to roots as a male exotic dancer at the cruel behest of his gang superiors, you can be assured you're not really getting a glimpse of life in a dangerous Main Street hut.

You're in Gonick World.

Stryker is not really a good movie, but perhaps something good will come of it. By its example, it proclaims the urgency of giving voice to aboriginal filmmakers with (hopefully) different agendas: maybe to create characters for whom the audience cares, maybe to redeem depictions of ugliness and violence with beauty and love, but mostly, crucially, to reflect aboriginal life from within.

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RENT The Winnipeg

Figure 15. March 2005, Minnipeg Free Press

"On the other hand, there is a painstaking affirmation of traditional native tolerance to marginal sexuality -- here represented by the aforementioned tranny hookers affiliated with the Indian Posse, a sign, Gonick and co-scriptwriter David McIntosh have compromised their script with agendas of their own, including: How do we make the film homo-erotic?"

Youth culture testing the boundaries of identity and roles

By MARTHA IRVINE
AP national writer

CHICAGO — When it comes to gender, Alex Polanco is not easily pegged. Some days, he wakes up in the morning and feels male, pulling on jeans and a T-shirt and leaving it at that. Other times, he wears makeup and one of the wigs he keeps in tidily packed boxes in his bedroom closet.

"I don't want to call it a split personality — but sometimes, I feel like a girl. So I put on the costume, what feels comfortable," says the 18-year-old Chicagoan, who refers to himself as "tranny boy." The term is deliberately ambiguous, reflecting the gray area in which Polanco exists, where gender is blurred and he feels no obligation to choose female over male — or vice versa.

He often switches back and forth around friends he trusts or in urban neighborhoods where he feels free to express

Francisco State University who's conducting a long-term sexual orientation and gender survey of youth and their families. "Gender has become part of the defining way that youth organize themselves and rebel against adults."

While researchers have yet to quantify the trend, Ryan says that, in the last five years, she's seen more young people coming out as transsexual — those who believe they are one gender trapped in the body of the other. She and others in her field also are seeing a noticeable number of young people who are taking it further by purposely evading gender definition.

They are "gender fluid," expressing androgyny with wardrobe, hairstyle or makeup — sometimes going as far as calling themselves a "boi" or a "grrl." For his part, Polanco calls his gender-bending friends "bro-sis," a combination of "brother" and "sister."

To some youth, playing

Figure 16. October 2005, Associated Press

"I don't want to call it a split personality -- but sometimes, I feel like a girl. So I put on the costume, what feels comfortable," says the 18-year-old Chicagoan, who refers to himself as "tranny boy." The term is deliberately ambiguous, reflecting the gray area in which Polanco exists, where gender is blurred and he feels no obligation to choose female over male -- or vice versa."

Figure 17. April 2005, San Francisco Weekly

“The Tranny Pack - Tonight an all-transgender troupe revives the vaudevillian are for with the”Tranny Roadshow.” a cross-country tour of artists and performers.”

Figure 18. Use of Trannie/Tranny in Books: 1983 - 2008

The above graph reviews the frequency in which the terms “tranny” and “trannie” were used in books published between 1983 and 2008. It’s worth noting that until the 1980s, the term “tranny” referred to any of the following words: transistor, radio, television, photograph or transmission. However, note the rise in the words use between the 1994 - 2001. Since this spike corresponds with a spike in other trans terms, it’s reasonable to conclude that it was in first part of the 1990s that “tranny” entered into common usage by society at large.

Current Contexts

Now that I’ve reviewed the way in which this term was used in a historical context, let’s look at the way our culture currently uses this term:

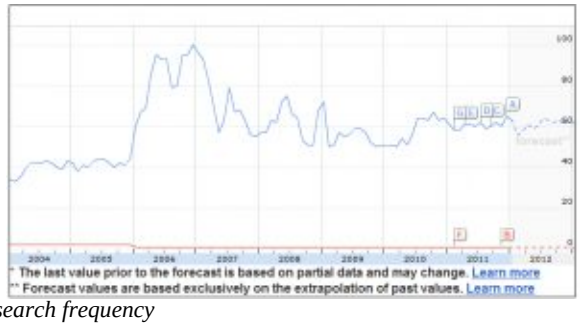

Figure 19. Tranny/Trannie Google search frequency

The above graph is a review of the frequency people use google to search for “tranny” and “trannie” between the years 2003 and 2011. During the last year (2011), a number of incidents account for spikes in the search trends:

A Neil Patrick Harris Apologizes for 'Live!' Tranny-Wreck
B Being cuckolded with a trannie is rough
C 'Shamcey tranny' remark raises ire on Twitter
D X Factor Pam's 'tranny' email fury
E Christina Aguilers looks like a tranny
F 'Second wife' turns out to be a trannie
G Plan B reveals his tranny Plan C at a booze-fuelled Brits aftershow bash

Figure 20. Cultural Context: 2011

Now lets look at exactly what people look for when they’re google’n “tranny” and “trannie”:

Top searches		
1.	tranny tube	100
2.	tranny sex	100
3.	tranny porn	100
4.	shemale tranny	95
5.	shemale	95
6.	free tranny	90
7.	tranny xxx	55
8.	tranny movie	45
9.	video tranny	40
10.	tranny videos	40

Rising searches		
1.	tranny tube	Breakout
2.	tranny xxx	+400%
3.	sexy tranny	+200%
4.	tranny porn	+180%
5.	free tranny porn	+150%
6.	tranny movie	+140%
7.	black tranny	+110%
8.	tranny videos	+80%
9.	video tranny	+60%
10.	tranny sex	+40%

Figure 21. Cultural Context

How does interest in “tranny” and “trannie” stack up against other trans terms such as “transsexual” and “transgender”?

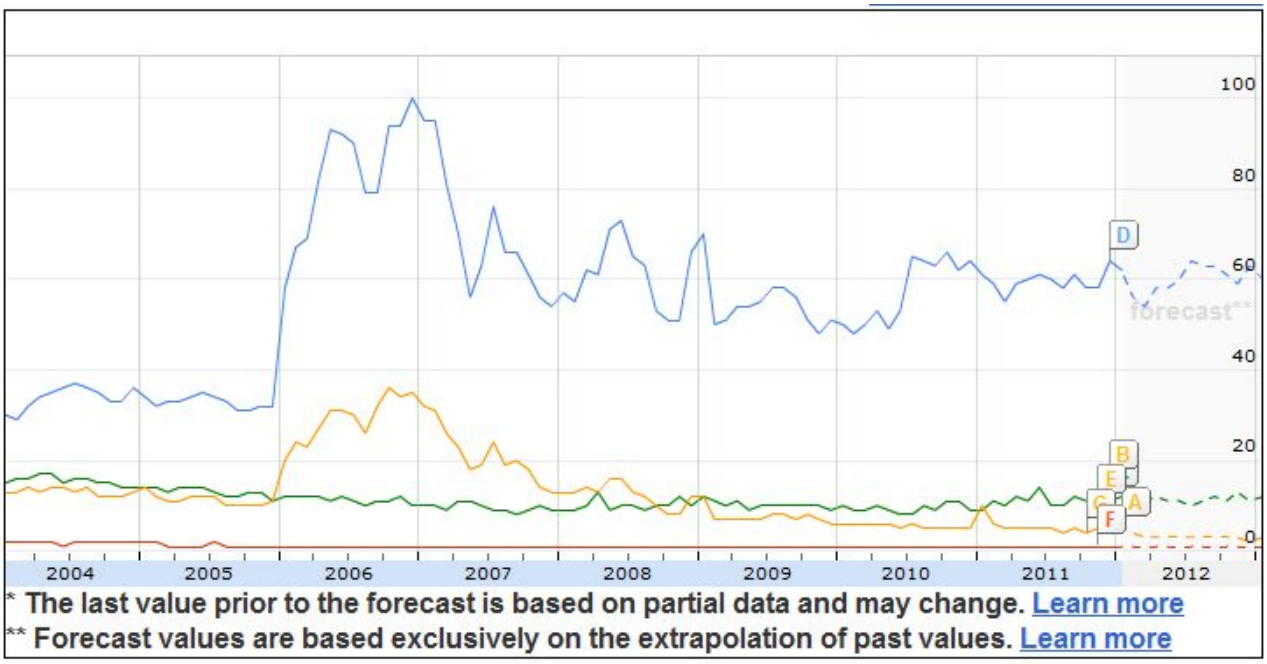

Figure 22. Search volume: Tranny (blue), Trannie (red), Transsexual (yellow) and Transgender (green)

When the data are narrowed to specific categories, interesting trends arise:

- Arts & Entertainment (TV & Video, Online Media):
- Online Communities (Dating & Personals, Forum & Chat Providers):
- People and Society (Ethnic & Identity Groups, Social Issues & Advocacy):
- News (Gossip & Tabloid News, Celebrities & Entertainment News, Newspapers):

(Note: The bars in the graph represent averages for each line on the above chart graph)

Wrap up

From the evidence available to me, I feel that I can draw some conclusions:

- This term seems to have originated from the gay male community.
- This term seems, in its original context, to relate to performers (closely associated with the party culture) of one type or another.
- The term became more closely aligned with the drag community (both FTM and MTF) in the 1980s to mid-1990s.
- The term became more closely aligned with the sex industry in the mid-1990s and this seems to be an upward trend.
- The term dominates google searches by orders of magnitude in most areas (especially in the media) with the exception of specific social causes.
- There seems to be a disconnect between the gay and drag community's uses the term "tranny" and the way the term "tranny" is most commonly used outside of these communities by the society at large.

Some debatable questions:

- What impact does an obviously very popular context of framing the trans experience (tranny) have on social justice movements?

- When the majority clearly associates “tranny” with the sex industry while the gay and drag community associates the term with performance and partying, will this affect the ability of the GLBT community to communicate well?

Suggested citation

Cristan Williams. "Tranny: An Evidence-Based Review." TransAdvocate, April 28, 2014.
https://www.transadvocate.com/tranny-an-evidence-based-review-2_n_13593.htm