Psychology of Popular Media Culture
2018, Vol. 7, No. 3, 274–288

2160-4134/18/$12.00 http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000135

An Exploration Into the Uses and Gratifications of Media for Transgender Individuals

Kami A. Kosenko
North Carolina State University

Bradley J. Bond
University of San Diego

Ryan J. Hurley
North Carolina State University

Transgender individuals, those whose gender presentation diverges from their biological sex, encounter unique obstacles to identity development and socialization. The present study examines how transgender individuals use both traditional and emerging media to better understand their own gender identities and their social worlds. A constructivist approach to the uses and gratifications perspective motivated interview questions about the role of media in the lives of transgender individuals. Forty-one transgender individuals participated in semistructured interviews. Results suggested media were instrumental for sensemaking. Participants used media to make sense of feelings, sexual relations, community, and transition options. Participants also used media to meet nonmediated goals or to initiate interpersonal negotiations. The potential impact of media on transgender audiences and the limitations of the uses and gratifications perspective are discussed in light of the findings.

Keywords: identity, media, sensemaking, transgender, uses and gratifications

Until recently, identity development was considered an adolescent phenomenon; however, a burgeoning body of literature has begun to examine the developmental processes of adults, particularly those who experience profound changes in their personal and social identities (Anthis & Lavoie, 2006). One population that often experiences momentous identity alterations during adulthood is the transgender community. Although transgender individuals might question their assigned gender from an early age, social stigma, shame, and familial pressure often push key developmental tasks, such as "coming out" as transgender, into later life (Bockting & Coleman, 2007). The term *transgender* is most commonly associated with individuals who aim to transcend the gender binary or to live as members of the other sex (Whitlock, 1996), though transgender also subsumes many gender-variant identities such as transsexuals, cross-dressers, genderqueer individuals, and gender nonconformists (Lombardi, 2001). Members of the transgender community who use medical interventions to facilitate the gender transition are commonly referred to as transsexuals and are classified according to two gender vectors: male-to-female (MTF) or female-to-male (FTM; Kenagy & Hsieh, 2005).

According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition* (*DSM-5*), individuals with intense and persistent discomfort over their assigned gender and who strongly identify with the other gender are considered gender dysphoric (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The nonconformity that is characteristic of gender dysphoria is itself not considered a mental illness; rather, the considerable distress associated with identifying as transgender warrants the inclusion of gender dysphoria in the *DSM-5*. The inclusion of gen-

This article was published Online First June 30, 2016.

Kami A. Kosenko, Department of Communication, North Carolina State University; Bradley J. Bond, Department of Communication Studies, University of San Diego; Ryan J. Hurley, Department of Communication, North Carolina State University.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Kami A. Kosenko, Department of Communication, North Carolina State University, 201 Winston Hall, Campus Box 8104, Raleigh, NC 27695. E-mail: kamikosenko@gmail.com

der dysphoria in the *DSM-5* sheds light on the complexities inherent to developing a transgender identity in a world that is still largely transgender adverse and, in turn, suggests that scholars continue to investigate social influences on transgender individuals in an attempt to alleviate the distress associated with gender-nonconformity. Media are one potential social influence worthy of consideration.

The role of media in the lives of transgender individuals, particularly during their identity development, has received scant attention from scholars in communication, psychology, and allied disciplines. The objective of the present study is to highlight the utility of the uses and gratifications perspective in understanding transgender individuals' media consumption and the influence of media messages on the development of transgender individuals' gender identities. To meet this objective, the literatures on transgender identity development and the uses and gratifications perspective are detailed before reporting the findings of qualitative interviews with transgender individuals about their gender identities and their media habits.

Transgender Identity Development

Scholars have relied heavily on existing models of gay, lesbian, and bisexual identity development when attempting to explicate the identity development processes of transgender individuals (Diamond, Pardo, & Butterworth, 2011). These efforts are complicated by the fact that gay, lesbian, and bisexual represent sexual identities whereas transgender is an identity attribute related to one's gender, not sexual orientation (Gagné, Tewksbury, & McGaughey, 1997). As such, existing transgender identity development models have been heavily critiqued, and no generally accepted model exists (Pleak, 2009).

Transgender identity development models are lacking, but the existing theory and research on gender identity development more generally can inform a study of this kind. Psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg (1966) was among the first to propose a model of gender identity development, but his stage-based model has been criticized for assuming that this process begins and ends in childhood. Recognizing the limitations of Kohlberg's model and the important developmental changes that occur during adolescence and adulthood, Bussey and Bandura (1999) developed their own model of gender identity development based on Bandura's social–cognitive theory. The social–cognitive theory of gender development and differentiation posits that biological dictates and social imperatives are key catalysts in the developmental process. Gender-related cognitions and behaviors are thought to result from the reciprocal influence of biology (e.g., genes, hormones, and secondary sex characteristics) and social factors (e.g., family and broader social systems). The model does not give equal weight to both factors. For example, in situations in which social roles are strict and unwavering, biological factors will have a greater influence. When biology is being altered, as is the case when transsexuals initiate hormone therapy or gender nonconformists mask their secondary sex characteristics, social factors have more weight. Thus, it is important to understand the social environment of transgender individuals if one is to dissect the transgender identity development process.

Transgender individuals often experience gender-based harassment, endure employment and education discrimination, and are often victims of violence (Lombardi, Wilchins, Priesing, & Malouf, 2001). Those who experience transphobic discrimination are more likely to engage in high-risk behaviors, attempt suicide, and resort to living and working on the streets (Bockting, Robinson, & Rosser, 1998; Miller & Grollman, 2015). Fortunately, support from families, schools, and communities offer transgender individuals some protection against the negative effects of transphobia (Minter, 2013); unfortunately, many transgender individuals experience social rejection and isolation from the very interpersonal resources that would otherwise buffer the negative consequences of harassment and discrimination. The National Transgender Discrimination Study reported that 57% of transgender individuals had been rejected by their families of origin, and 78% of those who had expressed their transgender identity in primary or secondary school had been bullied and harassed by peers and teachers. For 15% of these individuals, the bullying was so severe and pervasive that they dropped out of school (Grant et al., 2011). The stigma and isolation experienced by many transgender individuals is troubling given the importance of social sys-

tems like families and schools in the gender identity development process. Although like-minded peers might help fill a gap created by unsupportive families or schools (Bariola et al., 2015), many transgender individuals describe difficulties accessing peer support (Shapiro, 2010).

The absence of support from traditional social systems only increases the salience and influence of media messages for transgender individuals (Burgess, 2009). In fact, McInroy and Craig (2015) argued that media are likely ". . . the predominant source where people, both transgender and nontransgender, gain general knowledge about transgender issues" (p. 606). Critical media studies have examined the portrayal of transgender individuals in film (Willox, 2003), TV (Sandercock, 2015), young adult fiction (Norbury, 2014), talk shows (Gamson, 1998), and social media (Green, Bobrowicz, & Ang, 2015). However, very little research has investigated how transgender individuals use, experience, and interpret traditional or emerging media. McInroy and Craig (2015) conducted interviews with four FTM or genderqueer youth about their media experiences but noted that the very small sample size was problematic for drawing conclusions. Ringo (2002) interviewed 19 FTM transgender individuals about their media use, concluding that media played an important role in conceptualizing gender. Both Ringo (2002) and McInroy and Craig (2015) noted that media messages about transgender issues paradoxically assisted transgender audiences in rehearsing and negotiating their genders while simultaneously hindering development due to the stereotypical or negative representation of transgender individuals.

Notably, the research on transgender individuals' media experiences cited above is largely atheoretical and did not include any MTF participants. A more thorough theoretical examination of the uses and effects of media among transgender individuals is needed when considering the limitations of previous research coupled with the perceived importance of media messages on identity development generally (Grossberg, Wartella, & Whitney, 1998) and on transgender individuals specifically (Burgess, 2009). The uses and gratifications perspective serves as a useful lens through which to investigate transgender media use and identity development.

The Uses and Gratifications Perspective

The uses and gratifications perspective attempts to explain what attracts the individual to specific types of media and how media content can fulfill personal needs (Rubin, 2002), making it an ideal framework for a study of how transgender individuals use media to understand their own gender identities. Rubin (2002) wrote that the uses and gratifications perspective has basic assumptions: (a) all social behavior, including media use behavior, is primarily "goal-oriented, purposive, and motivated" (p. 527); (b) media users select channels based upon their goals; and (c) characteristics of media users (e.g., age, race, personality) and structural variables (e.g., medium access, social economic status, geographic location) influence media channel selection.

The relationship between mediated and nonmediated sources of gratification has been characterized as competitive. That is, "the media compete with other forms of communication, or functional alternatives such as interpersonal interaction, for selection, attention, and use so that we can seek to gratify our needs and wants" (Rubin, 2002, p. 528). Characterizing this relationship as a competition suggests that channel selection is a choice that has consequences for the use of other need-gratification channels (i.e., functional alternatives), such as interpersonal communication. The uses and gratifications perspective acknowledges, however, that interpersonal sources are often preferred over media sources (Rubin, 2002). Thus, uses and gratifications researchers are compelled by the times when media channels emerge as important need-gratification devices. The uses and gratifications perspective suggests that other need-gratification channels (e.g., interpersonal interaction) should be explored and considered with respect to media uses and gratifications. The uses and gratifications perspective, then, holds enormous potential for those interested in the connections between what have traditionally been thought of as interpersonal and mass communication variables. Both the functionalist perspective on uses and gratifications, with its focus on how individuals use media, and the psychological approach, which emphasizes the antecedents and consequences of media selectivity, underscore the importance of considering interpersonal uses and effects (Perse, 2014).

The Functional Approach

Early work in the uses and gratifications perspective that attempted to bridge the interpersonal/mass communication divide focused explicitly on categorizing individual uses of media into typologies. Different research teams in the tradition of the uses and gratifications perspective have identified unique sets of media uses, leading some to try to unify the disparate typologies. McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1972), for example, argued for a four-functional approach that included diversion, surveillance, personal relationships, and personal identity. Diversion refers to the use of a medium to escape or for emotional release, surveillance is defined loosely as information seeking and using media to accomplish tasks, the personal relationships function refers to companionship and social utility inherent to media experiences, and the personal identity function of media refers to the use of media to better understand the self. The personal identity function is of particular relevance to the present study.

The Psychological Approach

Scholars using a psychological approach to uses and gratifications have extended research at the nexus of mass and interpersonal communication scholarship with a concentration on effects. Researchers have examined how interpersonal experiences affect media selection (Nabi, Finnerty, Domschke, & Hull, 2006), how media messages influence interpersonal beliefs and behaviors (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Mayes, 1981), how the experience of media use influences interpersonal engagement (Gantz, 1985), and how the selection of one channel of communication may influence the selection of other channels (Chaffee, 1986). Although researchers working from a functional perspective and those adopting a psychological approach to uses and gratifications deserve credit for building an intellectual bridge across the interpersonal/mass communication divide, this work is limited in several ways.

Critique

The uses and gratifications perspective has been criticized over the years for its vague conceptual framework, lack of precision, and a failure to consider audience's perceptions and interpretations of media messages, among others (Ruggiero, 2000). One critique salient to work in the uses and gratifications perspective that considers both interpersonal and mass communication variables, such as the present study, is the failure to view audience perception as an active process (Swanson, 1977). Swanson argued that uses and gratifications appropriately conceptualizes individuals as active rather than passive media consumers but lacks a focus on audience activity in terms of cognition. A cognitive approach that stresses how people interpret messages not only provides a common theoretical foundation for the study of mass and interpersonal communication but also provides a link between the process of media selection and media effects (Perse, Pavitt, & Burggraf, 1990).

Although most frequently applied to interpersonal constructs and processes, the constructivist theory of communication provides a starting point for the study of the interpretive processes involved in uses and gratifications. The constructivist theory of communication suggests that humans engage the world through processes of interpretation, which yield constructs, and that construct formation is socially situated, meaning that processes of interpretation and evaluation are given shape within a particular sociocultural context (Delia, O'Keefe, & O'Keefe, 1982). This approach is particularly useful when attempting to understand what individuals "count" as a specific, meaningful communicative action, such as social support (Goldsmith, 2004), listening (Burleson, 2011), and, in this case, media use. Therefore, a constructivist uses and gratifications approach necessitates attention to how individuals make meaning from media messages and the actual use of media in a given context. The present study was designed through the constructivist lens to examine how transgender individuals, exploring their gender identities, use and make meaning of media messages. This study was guided by a general research question:

RQ: How do transgender individuals make sense of the media they use in the course of their identity development?

Method

Data were elicited through one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with people who self-identified as transgender as part of a larger

project on identity and communication in intimate relationships. The researchers approached the interviews from a symbolic interaction perspective, enabling the interviewees to speak for themselves. Such an approach empowered those whom the researchers were attempting to describe and understand by allowing them to use their own voice (Lal, 1995). For a stigmatized group such as transgender individuals whose diverse voices have gone unheard in communication research, methods that accomplish the research aims while empowering participants are ideal.

Sample

The lead author conducted recruitment via online groups (e.g., Yahoo! and Google groups by and for transgender individuals) and with the help of transgender community leaders. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in three large cities: one in the Midwest, one on the West Coast, and one in the South. Additional participants were located in a smattering of small towns and cities across the country. Purposive sampling methods were used to identify a diverse group of participants who would best represent the full range of gender-variant identities subsumed by the transgender umbrella, a limitation of sampling in previous research examining transgender individuals' media use (McInroy & Craig, 2015; Ringo, 2002). Effort was made to sample individuals from all stages of the gender transition (i.e., pre-, mid-, and posttransition), those who identified as cross-dressers, and those who adopted a both/neither gender presentation/identity (i.e., genderqueer individuals). Participants selected for one-on-one interviews received $25 remuneration. The final sample consisted of 41 individuals (M_{age} = 38.5, SD = 11.9, range = 21 to 66). The sample was predominately non-Hispanic White (73.2%), with African Americans (9.8%) and Latinas/Latinos (7.3%) composing the next largest groups. Participants self-identified as FTM or male (36.6%), MTF or female (36.6%), cross-dressers (14.6%), and genderqueer (12.2%). The majority of FTM and MTF participants (63.3%) self-reported being midtransition (i.e., having completed some but not all intended medical interventions). Four participants were considered pretransition (i.e., had begun transitioning with the help of hormones and/or surgery), and seven reported being posttransition (i.e., having completed the transition).

Interview Schedule and Procedure

Participants in pilot interviews (n = 5) responded to a number of open-ended questions designed to elicit identity development narratives. After reviewing pilot interview data, the interview schedule was refined to include a section that focused on the role of media in the identity development of transgender individuals. The interview schedule began with a section designed to build rapport and elicit the identity development narratives of the participants. The second set of questions focused on the participants' communication in developing relationships with regard to their gender and sexual identities, and the final set of questions addressed the specific role that both traditional media and emerging media had played in their identity development. For example, participants were asked questions such as "Have the media played a role in any of your experiences as a trans-person," "Do you use the media for any purposes related to your trans-identity," and "Have the media helped you in any way as a trans-person? Have they hindered you?" Probes were included, as needed, to clarify participant responses and to ascertain the most appropriate terminology to use in subsequent questions (such as correct pronoun usage). For this paper, we only describe data related to participant uses of and experiences with media.

The first author conducted one-on-one interviews with self-identified members of the transgender community who were 18 or older. Thirty-six participants were interviewed face-to-face; five additional participants were interviewed over the phone to increase the racial and geographic diversity of the sample. After completing an oral informed consent process, participants responded to a short demographic questionnaire. Interview lengths ranged from 26 to 92 min, and all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were then checked for accuracy.

Data Analysis

The third author, blind to the nature of the data collection method used for each interview, determined if any discernible differences in quantity or quality could be noted between nar-

ratives collected face-to-face and those collected over the phone. No such differences were found. Two authors then independently coded the transcripts using constant comparative techniques to generate a set of categories of media uses and experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The authors met to discuss the categories that each had identified, to assess the exhaustiveness of the categories, and to triangulate the data. The authors met once more to reach consensus on the categories and to identify data segments that would appropriately exemplify trends and patterns for use in this report. Validity of the results was assessed by using the responses of the participants in the second phase of data collection to validate the responses of the participants in the pilot interview phase and by conducting member checks with several participants. Member checks entailed sending interviewees a document that listed the identified themes and included representative quotations from the interviews. Participants provided feedback on the accuracy and completeness of the themes, and this information was used to modify the results presented below. All names reported in the results section are pseudonyms.

Results

Participant responses suggested that transgender individuals utilize messages about gender and sexuality from both traditional media and emerging media technologies to make sense of their own identities. Broadly, the data revealed multiple ways in which media facilitate the sensemaking processes of transgender individuals. Participants used media to make sense of their experiences, to empower meaningful actions implicative of sensemaking processes, and to create shared meaning in the interview process. Results will focus on how transgender individuals use media to make sense of their experiences and how transgender individuals' media use constitutes a meaningful, communicative action. Although the creation of shared meaning in the interview process was not within the realm of the research question, that participants used media references to help the interviewer make sense of the transgender experience and to create shared meaning in the interview context is compelling.

Media Use and Sensemaking

One common theme across interviews was the use of a variety of media by transgender individuals to make sense of their experiences. Participants reported turning to books, TV, and the Internet for help understanding their feelings, bodies, and relationships. Four main sensemaking uses of media emerged from close readings of participant responses: to explore and validate presentations of gender, to better understand the mechanics of transgender sex, to create community, and to research transition options. Each of these sensemaking uses of media is discussed, in turn, with evidence provided from interview transcripts.

Gender presentation. Participants reported using media to explore different approaches to gender presentation, as well as to clarify their own feelings about their gender expression. The Internet was the primary medium mentioned by participants when discussing how they used media to explore possible ways of presenting their preferred gender, arguably because of the perceived safety and anonymity of the medium. Sally, a MTF transsexual who lived full-time as a woman, described how posting pictures of herself in online forums and the resulting comments she received allowed her to determine if other people "saw" her as a woman.

> I was on, not dating lines, but like websites for transgenders. There are all these types of things that are not necessarily sexual or perverted but to put yourself and your profile out. I had 2,200 messages since last summer . . . Every time I got an e-mail I'd make a little checkmark because I really wanted to see how the world sees me, how I see me, is this real? Because I do not want to become a woman so I can flaunt like Paris [Hilton], but by the same token I want to know that if I am a woman I would like to be accepted that way.

For Sally, posting pictures of herself on the Internet was perceived as a safe way to validate her gender expression. Sally used the Internet to put herself on display, an act of vulnerability for anyone regardless of gender identity, so that she could feel legitimized in a way that would likely be difficult in an offline context.

A number of participants recalled using books to make sense of their gender identity growing up. Christian, a postoperative FTM transsexual who identified as a man, noted that print media filled a void during his adolescence.

"When I grew up, I mean, in the 80s, no one knew about this that much, and I had to go to the library to find out what I was myself. No one knew in the 80s." Logan, a postoperative FTM transsexual, also used books to make sense of his feelings:

> Lou Sullivan wrote a book called *Crossdressing for the FTM/Transvestite*. In the very beginning one of the things he said was, "You have what you have and what you have may be all you have, so you best learn to enjoy what you have." That was the beginning of my own education, my own acceptance.

Logan initially experienced confusion and despair over his gender identity; print media helped him understand his feelings and accept his gender identity. Participants utilized media to make sense of and explore their gender identities and how others could interpret their expressions of gender.

Mechanics of sex. Whereas some participants used media to experiment with and better understand gender identities, others used media to understand the mechanics of sexual activity with gender-variant bodies. Physical transformations (e.g., breast development, hair growth, changes in sensation in sex organs), hormone therapy, and surgical interventions (e.g., breast implants, medically constructed sex organs) can be in various stages of development and intervention throughout the lives of transgender individuals (Kenagy & Hsieh, 2005). For example, an FTM transsexual may be able to afford hormone therapy to facilitate hair growth but unable to afford a mastectomy. Participants used media to make sense of the implications of physical transformations for their identities and to better understand sex in the transgender body. Pearl, a MTF transsexual, consulted books to understand the male sexual experience, particularly in relation to the male's experience with condoms. When her current partner refused to wear condoms, she tried to make sense out of the situation. "For him, it—I don't know—they've got a million arguments. I've read about them. I don't know all of them, but I know some of it has to do with sensation. I looked it up." Although Pearl was born into a male body and had lived most of her life with a penis, she turned to media to understand the male sexual experience. Lindsey, a midtransition MTF individual, turned to the Internet to understand transgender sex and her changing body. She commented, "I went looking for Internet forums and stuff. Forums are anonymous. And, I got advice on how to achieve sexual satisfaction considering the different kinds of genitalia and such." A young MTF transgender individual named Bonnie relied on social media for ideas about sexual stimulation and fulfillment in the transgender body. She reported searching the term "transition" and finding YouTube videos created by transgender youth across the country who described in vivid detail how hormones and surgeries were affecting their bodies and sex lives. Transgender participants generally reported that books and various Internet sites, such as YouTube, were important resources for making sense of the mechanics of sex in a transgender body.

Sense of community. In addition to using media to make sense of their identities and sexual experiences, transgender individuals used media to construct community. Transgender individuals read books and viewed Internet sites to determine important characteristics of the transgender community, such as its breadth, depth, and common language. For example, participants were able to create a sense of community by identifying the features of trans community membership. Cory, an androgynous individual, expressed some initial confusion about whether androgyny was covered by the transgender umbrella. Cory subsequently consulted books and the Internet to develop a sense of in-group status with the transgender community.

> I'm not real mixed up about it anymore 'cause I've done a lot of reading on this stuff. And, I've met a lot of people in the community that are either way out or in the middle of the road . . . I do not really fit . . . I've looked it up online. You know, and the reading I've done is . . . there's more than one kind of transgender.

Cory used media to determine if he belonged in the transgender community and found that "there's more than one kind of transgender." Daniel, who identified as FTM, turned to the Internet to help him understand the language used by trans community members. He remarked,

> I used to have a hard time with "queer." I grew up in an age where that was a really derogatory term, but now it's okay. I had to read a lot, a lot of websites, to understand why. We've reclaimed it because LGBT doesn't always include everyone. Queer encompasses a lot more.

Books and the Internet allowed transgender individuals to create a sense of community by identifying criteria for community membership and the language shared by the members within the transgender culture.

Transition options. Participants used books and the Internet to make sense of their options for transition, including different surgeries for sexual reassignment. Transgender individuals reported a wide range of negative experiences with health care and, as a result, were dependent on media to help them understand their transition options. Christine looked online for help determining her options for feminizing her body.

> The Internet is a wonderful thing! It let me do a little research. There are a lot of people who have, who have done this, and they've posted the things that are good and bad, the things that have happened to them. And they always name the doctors. At first, I thought I only wanted to do an oophorectomy. And after reading a lot about that and finding out its cost, I decided against that, to use other medical means to stop the testosterone. And all the reading, that helped me look at the different doctors and the things that they did.

Cooper, a MTF transsexual living with HIV, used books and the Internet to determine how his transition options might be affected by his HIV status.

> I'd tell people to keep theyselves [sic] healthy 'cause you do not know. You might get stuck that way. Stuck in the wrong gender 'cause you sick. I've been trying to find, using the Internet, going, "Can I get surgery? Even with my HIV?"

Nearly all participants with an interest in transitioning (i.e., not those who identified as cross-dressers or sought to transcend the gender binary) made similar comments on the utility of media for making sense of their options for transitioning. Regardless of their interest in the transition process, transgender individuals used media to make sense of their experiences, including their gender expression, the mechanics of transgender sex, the transgender community, and transition options.

Media Use as Meaningful Action

A constructivist approach warrants an examination of meaningful, communicative action. In the context of uses and gratifications, that means uncovering what participants "count" as instances of media use and their evaluations of those actions. The following section describes how transgender individuals interpret an action as an instance of "media use." When questioned about the role of media in their lives, transgender participants reported numerous instances of media use. Their narratives had two common characteristics: media use was instrumental and negotiated.

Instrumental action. Participants described numerous times in their lives when they had used media to reach specific goals related to their gender identity development. In all of these cases, media use served an instrumental goal. Participants described four instrumental uses of media: to meet sex partners, to aid in their transition, to facilitate conversations with relational partners, and to supplant face-to-face conversation.

Participants provided several examples of using the Internet to meet sex partners, which is a decidedly instrumental goal. Alyssa, a MTF transsexual involved in sex work, met her customers online and used various Internet sites to advertise her services.

> I do this kind of work through the Internet. Like, I post ads on certain websites and they respond. They call me or e-mail me. I ask them to tell me about themselves and describe themselves. I try and make them send me a picture. A lot of them actually do send me pictures because they can see my pictures on the site, which was a hard decision because I didn't . . . It's like once you do it, you've done it. But, you know, it's like if I want to make money this way, then I have to.

Making money and meeting customers were two instrumental goals that Alyssa had for the medium, which influenced how she interacted with and interpreted the Web. Alyssa realized that her efforts to advertise her services might gain more of an audience than she would like. Pam, a MTF transsexual, also brought up sex work when asked about her media use. "When I lived in the city, I used to escort a lot on the Internet and, you know, just prostitute. That was my means." Although Alyssa and Pam both used the Internet in their sex work, most transgender individuals who spoke about seeking sexual partners online were driven by desire rather than money. Participant responses demonstrated their reliance on media to purposefully seek out sexual partners and enact their sexual identities.

Transgender individuals also purposefully used media in their transition. Participants re-

ported that various media, including voice tapes/DVDs and websites with tips on passing, helped shape their gender presentation. Bonnie remarked, "I have a voice DVD that I don't practice nearly enough with," and Robert, a FTM transsexual who was considering whether or not he was done with surgery, commented, "I've read a bunch of tips and things like that for my voice." Crystal, a postoperative MTF, also specifically mentioned the utility of media for help with passing.

> I do not probably pass as well as some people, and it's cost me in terms of jobs and things like that. So, as far as working on things like that, I did buy a tape, like a computer set-up to do voice and whatnot because I know that I could change my inflections if I really wanted to. I know I could be more breathy. I know I could take some of the chest resonance out.

Unlike Sally who used dating sites to help validate her gender presentation cognitively, participants like Bonnie, Robert, and Crystal all sought out media messages to help them with skills that could help perfect their gender presentation.

Another purposeful use of media by transgender participants entailed using media to facilitate identity-related conversations with relational partners. Participants selected media to use when broaching the topic of their transgender identities with family members. Mark, who self-identified as a cross-dresser, used a magazine article with pictures of him participating in a local singing contest for members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community to start a conversation about his cross-dressing with his nieces and nephews.

> I have my picture in a couple magazines where I'm dressed up. As a matter of fact, I, every year, they have this competition. And I showed them pictures of that and said, "Here I am." And, one of my nieces, she said, "Mommy, Uncle Mark looks so much like you!" But she said, "You really shouldn't wear a short skirt; you do not have the legs for it."

Mark intentionally selected a magazine containing pictures of him to bring to Thanksgiving and serve as a talking point with family. Jessica, a midtransition MTF transsexual, showed her mother an episode of *The Oprah Winfrey Show* featuring transgender panelists to facilitate conversations about gender identity.

> You know what's amazing was Oprah had a show on yesterday at 4:00 PM that was tremendously helpful. It was about, it had two teenage kids, one MTF and one FTM. One was 21, and one was 16. And it had the mother of the FTM and it was very well done and it was so well done . . . I mean it was so well done that it was really nice. During the commercials, you could have these little conversations and stuff like that. And it was very helpful to my mother for her to see these things and relate to me. I think we made a lot of ground yesterday.

Serena, a MTF transsexual who considered herself done with her transition, also recalled using media as a child to start conversations with her mother about transgender identity.

> I'm always thinking about the 60s because I love the 60s. Because that was when the media introduced me to Cat Woman because, as you can see, I'm a Cat Woman fan. And, Diana Ross and all of that. I was just so into Diana Ross 'cause I used to wear the wigs and everything and stuff like that. And, I remember my mother was like, you know, "Why are you wearing all these wigs, you know, cause you know that you have beautiful hair?" . . . I just wanted so much to be like Diana Ross. I pointed to the TV and said, "I want to look like her."

Even at a young age, Serena knew that media could be used to stimulate talk and create shared meaning in conversation.

Though some participants purposefully used media to facilitate interpersonal engagement, others utilized media to avoid face-to-face conversations. Participants' selection of media over interpersonal channels of communication were reasoned decisions and not simply part and parcel of media selection as is implied by the functional alternatives assumption of the uses and gratifications paradigm (Rubin, 2002). In other words, avoiding interpersonal conversation was not the inevitable result of selecting media channels, but, instead, media channels were purposefully selected to avoid the interpersonal alternatives. Charles, an FTM transsexual midtransition, strategically used ads on Craigslist and other online sites to avoid face-to-face negotiation of safer sex. He argued, "I pretty much only find partners over Craigslist because, you know, you can be explicit and clear and upfront . . . There's usually like an ad that says like 'safe play only' or whatever." Jacob, an FTM who was midtransition, also used media to avoid face-to-face sexual negotiation and to serve identity goals.

> For me, safe sex means you'll wear a condom during these activities, and, if you put that in your ad or you put that in your response to somebody, then you do not get to the point where you're face to face with them

> and do not know how to approach the idea of a condom. You put it—it's out there, and then they do not respond back to you. Nothing's been lost. Then you go on to the next ad or whatever, but you haven't had to do any kind of weird confrontation with them.

Use of media to avoid face-to-face conversation also involved disclosure of one's transgender identity in online profiles and ads. Peter, an FTM individual still considering genital surgery to complete his physical transition, tried to meet dating and sex partners online where he could get out of having to disclose his identity face-to-face. Doing so avoided any opportunity for face-to-face rejection: "I don't know; it's just sort of an easy way to meet a lot of people quickly and weed out people who might freak in that initial conversation." Charles, Jacob, and Peter all chose to use media as a means for communicating necessary information to potential dating and sex partners without having to disclose that information face-to-face. In summary, participants purposefully selected media in order to meet sex partners, to perfect their gender presentation, to facilitate conversations, and to avoid face-to-face conversation. These instrumental goals for media use suggest that transgender individuals engage with media as purposeful and instrumental action.

Negotiated action. Transgender individuals also used media messages to negotiate relationships. Silas, an FTM in the midst of transition, described how he and his partner used media to gain a better understanding of the implications of the gender transition for their previously lesbian relationship.

> We had another conversation about our concerns and then went to the computer. I was showing her photos of before and after top surgeries. And, she freaked out. I think it became like very real to her, right then, you know. And, she kind of freaked out and was like, "I do not know what to say to you right now because I like girls." You know, and I said, "Well, that's ok and everything, but what does all this mean for us or whatever?" And, so, it's been this, it's been this, I guess, lengthy, you know, I'll present something to her. We'll look it up online. At first, she might, she might freak out a little bit. But, then, after she has time to process, she's like, "Ok. I can handle that. I'm with you on that. I'm behind you." So that's kind of the way it's been going with us so far.

Silas's description of his course of the Internet with his partner is compelling for several reasons. First, he noted that they spoke about their concerns and then took those concerns to the computer. What they found amplified his partner's concerns about the implications of the transition for their relationship. The discrepancy between the gratifications sought and obtained required negotiation during media use and for some time after. The process of negotiating concerns through media use was a recurrent feature of their relationship.

Richard, an FTM, also provided an example of communal, processual media use. He and his partner negotiated important conversations for their relationship through the use of a book for lesbian couples. Richard noted that the book brought him and his partner together and allowed them the opportunity to negotiate how transitioning would influence their relationship.

> There's a book called *Feathering Your Nest,* and it's a fantastic book for couples . . . It's like 12 chapters or something. So every week we completed a chapter together. There was a chapter on sex, and Felicia wanted to delve a little bit deeper into the subject than what was initiated in the book . . . and so we did that and then we came together and then we discussed it.

Like Silas, Richard described deciding on the couple's needs ahead of time, selecting media to meet those needs, and negotiating the use of media over time. Other participants echoed these sentiments, describing times when they sought out specific media with parents, children, and therapists. For transgender participants, media use *was* interpersonal.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of media in the identity development of transgender individuals through the lens of the uses and gratifications perspective. The constructivist approach to data collection and analysis used in the present study revealed that transgender individuals used media messages for sensemaking. Transgender participants used media to make sense of their gender expression, sexual opportunities, community, and transition options. Careful attention to what participants "counted" as an instance of media use revealed that transgender individuals' experiences with media were also related to instrumental and negotiated action.

A careful read of the participants' narratives illustrates the importance of print media and the Internet for sensemaking. Participants often mentioned books and the Internet as

vital sources of information about gender expression and community; the Internet was the primary medium cited by participants for making sense of sex and transition options. The importance of print media and the Internet parallels previous studies investigating media use among transgender individuals (Marciano, 2014; McInroy & Craig, 2015; Ringo, 2002; Shelley, 2008). The video-sharing website YouTube was specifically referenced by several participants as having utility for sensemaking by providing visual representations of like-others talking about their transgender experiences. The salience of emerging media platforms (e.g., YouTube) among participants in the present study reinforces previous critical research arguing that social media provide safe places to negotiate transgender identity and build supportive community (O'Neill, 2014; Raun, 2010).

Print media and the Internet share one characteristic that may explain their utility for transgender audiences seeking information to help them make sense of their identities: the active nature of the audience. Unlike radio or TV, for example, one must actively and consciously select books to read or Internet sites to view. The specialized nature of content in books and websites increases the plausibility that individuals struggling to understand their gender identities would turn to these channels of mass communication to acquire the desired information they seek.

TV was perceived as less influential for transgender individuals trying to understand and make sense of their gender identities. Although transgender visibility on TV has increased in the past decade, researchers have concluded that depictions of transgender individuals are sensationalized and negative (Davis, 2009; Shelley, 2008). It is not uncommon for mainstream media to depict transgender individuals as mentally ill, sex workers, criminals, or comic relief (Davis, 2009; Shelley, 2008). Thus, the disparities in medium selection are unsurprising. TV was not cited as a primary resource for transgender individuals because televised messages about gender might have done little to gratify their sensemaking needs. However, TV has very recently welcomed the transgender movement with open arms.

Data for this study were collected prior to the recent rise in transgender visibility on TV and in film, suggesting the need for a follow-up study focused on community members' responses to these depictions. For example, the hit series *Glee* would feature two transgender characters in its final season whose storylines exemplified both the discrimination and assault faced by many transgender individuals as well as positive aspects of their friendships and romantic relationships (Sandercock, 2015). Once lauded as "the world's greatest athlete," Caitlyn Jenner publicly expressed her gender dysphoria to Diane Sawyer in an interview for the TV news program *20/20*. Caitlyn Jenner would subsequently star in her own reality TV series. The cable network TLC would simultaneously air *I am Jazz*, a reality TV program about a MTF transgender adolescent and her family. Netflix would include MTF transgender characters in their hit shows *Orange is the New Black* and *Sense8*, and Jeffrey Tambor would receive critical acclaim for his performance as a MTF transgender individual in Amazon's series *Transparent*. Writing about the dynamics of *Transparent*, Astudillo (2015) noted, "*Transparent* promises to be transformative . . . [it] could provide greater mainstream understanding of a community that has had to live for far too long in the margins, and for which the fight for full acceptance has only just started" (p. e16). The relative explosion of transgender characters in recent years suggests a changing TV landscape that must be the subject of future research on how transgender individuals use media messages during identity development.

Beyond providing initial insight into the utility of media messages during identity development among transgender individuals, the results also suggest valuable extensions to uses and gratifications and reveal opportunities for future collaboration between interpersonal and mass communication scholars. The results problematize some of the most basic assumptions of the uses and gratifications perspective. First, uses and gratifications assumes that media selection has consequences for functional alternatives, such as interpersonal resources, and that media compete with these functional alternatives for individuals' time and attention (Chaffee, 1986; Rubin, 2002). Participants in this study characterized media use *as* interpersonal and, thus, pointed

to a potentially false dichotomy in the logic of uses and gratifications. Communal uses of media, as described by both Richard and Silas, necessitated discussion and negotiation, making it difficult to divorce interpersonal from mass communication processes. The functional alternative assumption of uses and gratifications is useful for those interested in selective exposure and/or media dependency, but its current conceptualization in the uses and gratifications model perpetuates the bifurcation of interpersonal and mass communication scholarship and may limit the predictive or explanatory power of the uses and gratifications framework. Conceiving of media selection as a choice among options for need gratification is useful; however, pitting interpersonal and media resources against each other as "alternatives" is not. Future applications of uses and gratifications would be wise to avoid this narrow conceptualization of the interpersonal/media channel relationship.

Results of the present study also emphasize the processual nature of media use, calling into question the emphasis in uses and gratifications research on pre-, during, and postexposure periods. The characterization of media exposure and effects as segmented implies that audiences' needs are formulated preexposure and subsequently drive exposure to a particular medium and its message. Gratifications, then, are determined postexposure. Transgender interviewees in the present study experienced media use as an iterative process in which goals, media use behavior, and gratifications were continuously negotiated. For example, both Richard and Silas described turning to specific media for particular reasons, only to find that those media created new needs, which set in motion additional attempts at need gratification. In other words, goals were not only formed preexposure and gratifications sought were not only evaluated postexposure. Subsequent applications of uses and gratifications should move beyond looking at media use in a linear manner and instead should consider the potential reciprocal influences of variables in the uses and gratifications model.

The communal use of media uncovered in the current study also lies in sharp contrast to the individualistic perspective adopted in uses and gratifications research. Work in the uses and gratifications tradition focuses on the goals sought and obtained by the individual; however, transgender participants negotiated uses and gratifications of media within their interpersonal relationships. For example, a MTF transsexual participant intentionally sought out an episode of *The Oprah Winfrey Show* about transgender issues to watch with her mother to help stimulate discussion of a sensitive topic. The participant's goals for, experiences with, and gratifications obtained from the episode were negotiated with her mother. Uses and gratifications allows for the influence of structural and individual difference variables on media use (Rosengren, 1974), but it does not explicate influences of specific relational partners on media use motives and behaviors. The influences of specific relational partners throughout the media use process should be considered in future applications of the uses and gratifications perspective and dyadic or group uses and gratifications should be explored.

The present study also has important implications for work at the nexus of interpersonal and mass communication research. Swanson (1977) criticized uses and gratifications research for inattention to the "perceptual activity of interpreting or creating meaning for messages" (p. 220). Messages and processes of perception lie at the heart of human communication research, making this an obvious site for collaboration between researchers who have thought of themselves as strictly interpersonal scholars or media scholars. Accounting for the influence of relational partners and explaining and describing dyadic or group uses and gratifications will necessitate the construction of even more bridges between interpersonal and mass communication scholarship.

This study is not without limitations. First, the sample was predominately white and consisted of mostly "out" transgender community members. Those who conceal their gender identity and transgender individuals of various racial minority groups may have different experiences with media not identified in this study. In addition, members of both sexual and racial minority groups may face structural barriers to media use not experienced by members of this sample. Although efforts were made to recruit individuals from across the country, those in the northeastern United States were underrepresented in the sample;

however, we do not have reason to believe that these individuals experience or relate to media differently than those who live in other parts of the country.

Although virtually invisible in mainstream media (McInroy & Craig, 2015), transgender individuals are reliant on media for need gratification. The transgender experience is often a lonely and confusing one, and media help transgender individuals achieve a variety of goals, from meeting others to facilitating their gender transition to making sense of confusing feelings. As unique as the transgender life experience may be, their experiences with media should resonate with many media users and should prompt further study with a variety of populations.

References

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Anthis, K., & Lavoie, J. C. (2006). Readiness to change: A longitudinal study of changes in adult identity. *Journal of Research in Personality, 40,* 209–219. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2004.12.004

Astudillo, O. (2015, May). Transgender, through a modern looking glass. *The Lancet Psychiatry, 2,* e16.

Bariola, E., Lyons, A., Leonard, W., Pitts, M., Badcock, P., & Couch, M. (2015). Demographic and psychosocial factors associated with psychological distress and resilience among transgender individuals. *American Journal of Public Health, 105,* 2108–2116. http://dx.doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2015.302763

Bockting, W., & Coleman, E. (2007). Developmental stages of the transgender coming-out process: Toward an integrated identity. In R. Ettner, S. Monstrey, & A. E. Eyler (Eds.), *Principles of transgender medicine and surgery* (pp. 185–208). Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.

Bockting, W. O., Robinson, B. E., & Rosser, B. R. (1998). Transgender HIV prevention: A qualitative needs assessment. *AIDS Care, 10,* 505–525. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09540129850124028

Buerkel-Rothfuss, N., & Mayes, S. (1981). Soap opera viewing: The cultivation effect. *Journal of Communication, 31,* 108–115. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1981.tb00433.x

Burgess, W. C. (2009). Internal and external stress factors associated with the identity development of transgender and gender variant youth. In G. P. Mallon (Ed.), *Social work practice with transgender and gender variant youth* (2nd ed., pp. 53–64). New York, NY: Routledge.

Burleson, B. R. (2011). A constructivist approach to listening. *International Journal of Listening, 25,* 27–46. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10904018.2011.536470

Bussey, K., & Bandura, A. (1999). Social cognitive theory of gender development and differentiation. *Psychological Review, 106,* 676–713. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.106.4.676

Chaffee, S. H. (1986). Mass media and interpersonal channels: Competitive, convergent, or complementary? In G. Gumpert & R. Cathcart (Eds.), *Inter/media: Interpersonal communication in a media world* (pp. 62–80). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Davis, C. (2009). Introduction to practice with transgender and gender variant youth. In G. P. Mallon (Ed.), *Social work practice with transgender and gender variant youth* (2nd ed., pp. 1–21). New York, NY: Routledge.

Delia, J. G., O'Keefe, B. J., & O'Keefe, D. J. (1982). The constructivist approach to communication. In F. E. X. Dance (Ed.), *Human communication theory: Comparative essays* (pp. 147–191). New York, NY: Harper and Row.

Diamond, L., Pardo, S., & Butterworth, M. (2011). Transgender experience and identity. In S. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 629–647). New York, NY: Springer. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_26

Gagné, P., Tewksbury, R., & McGaughey, D. (1997). Coming out and crossing over: Identity formation and proclamation in a transgender community. *Gender and Society, 11,* 478–508. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/089124397011004006

Gamson, J. (1998). Publicity traps: Television talk shows and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender visibility. *Sexualities, 1,* 11–41. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/136346098001001002

Gantz, W. (1985). Exploring the role of television in married life. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 29,* 65–78. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08838158509386564

Goldsmith, D. (2004). *Communicating social support*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511606984

Grant, J., Mottet, L., Tanis, J., Harrison, J., Herman, J., & Keisling, M. (2011). *Injustice at every turn: A report of the National transgender discrimination survey*. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Green, M., Bobrowicz, A., & Ang, C. (2015). The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community online: Discussions of bullying and self-disclosure in YouTube videos. *Behavior and Information*

Technology, 34, 704–712. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2015.1012649

Grossberg, L., Wartella, E. A., & Whitney, D. C. (1998). *Mediamaking: Mass media in a popular culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kenagy, G. P., & Hsieh, C. M. (2005). The risk less known: Female-to-male transgender persons' vulnerability to HIV infection. *AIDS Care, 17,* 195–207. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19540120512331325680

Kohlberg, L. (1966). A cognitive-developmental analysis of children's sex-role concepts and attitudes. In E. E. Maccody (Ed.), *The development of sex differences* (pp. 82–172). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Lal, B. B. (1995). Symbolic interaction theories. *American Behavioral Scientist, 38,* 421–441. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0002764295038003005

Lombardi, E. (2001). Enhancing transgender health care. *American Journal of Public Health, 91,* 869–872. http://dx.doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.91.6.869

Lombardi, E. L., Wilchins, R. A., Priesing, D., & Malouf, D. (2001). Gender violence: Transgender experiences with violence and discrimination. *Journal of Homosexuality, 42,* 89–101. http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J082v42n01_05

Marciano, A. (2014). Living the VirtuReal: Negotiating transgender identity in cyberspace. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 19,* 824–838. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12081

McInroy, L. B., & Craig, S. L. (2015). Transgender representation in offline and online media: LGBTQ youth perspectives. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 25,* 606–617. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2014.995392

McQuail, D., Blumler, J. G., & Brown, J. R. (1972). The television audience: A revised perspective. In D. Mc Quail (Ed.), *Sociology of mass communications* (pp. 135–165). Middlesex, England: Penguin.

Miller, L., & Grollman, E. (2015). The social costs of gender non-conformity for transgender adults: Implications for discrimination and health. *Sociological Forum, 30,* 809–831. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/socf.12193

Minter, S. (2013). Supporting transgender children: New legal, social, and medical approaches. In J. Drescher & W. Byne (Eds.), *Treating transgender children and adolescents: An interdisciplinary discussion* (pp. 128–139). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

Nabi, R. L., Finnerty, K., Domschke, T., & Hull, S. (2006). Does misery love company? Exploring the therapeutic effects of TV viewing on regretted experiences. *Journal of Communication, 56,* 689–706. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00315.x

Norbury, K. (2014). Re-writing the script: Representations of transgender creativity in contemporary young adult fiction and television. *Barnboken—Journal of Children's Literature Research, 37*. Retrieved from http://www.barnboken.net/index.php/clr/article/view/180

O'Neill, M. G. (2014). Transgender youth and YouTube videos: Self-representation and five identifiable trans youth narratives. In C. Pullen (Ed.), *Queer youth and media cultures* (pp. 34–45). London: Palgrave McMillan. http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9781137383556_3

Perse, E. M. (2014). Uses and gratifications. In P. Moy (Ed.), Oxford bibliographies in communication. Retrieved from http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756841/obo-9780199756841-0132.xml

Perse, E. M., Pavitt, C., & Burggraf, C. S. (1990). Implict theories of marriage and evaluations of marriage on television. *Human Communication Research, 16,* 387–408. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1990.tb00216.x

Pleak, R. (2009). Formation of transgender identities in adolescence. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health, 13,* 282–291. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19359700903165290

Raun, T. (2010). Screen-births: Exploring the transformative potential in trans video blogs on YouTube. *Graduate Journal of Social Science, 7,* 113–130.

Ringo, P. (2002). Media roles in female-to-male transsexual and transgender identity development. *International Journal of Transgenderism, 6*. Retrieved from http://www.iiav.nl/ezines/web/ijt/97-03/numbers/symposion/ijtvo06no03_01.htm

Rosengren, K. E. (1974). Uses and gratifications: A paradigm outlined. In J. G. Blumler & E. Katz (Eds.), *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research* (pp. 269–286). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Rubin, A. M. (2002). The uses-and-gratifications perspective of media effects. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 525–548). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Ruggiero, T. E. (2000). Uses and gratifications theory in the 21st cenutry. *Mass Communication and Society, 3,* 3–37. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15327825MCS0301_02

Sandercock, T. (2015). Transing the small screen: Loving and hating transgender youth in Glee and Degrassi. *Journal of Gender Studies, 24,* 436–452. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2015.1021307

Shapiro, E. (2010). *Gender circuits: Bodies and identities in a technological age*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Shelley, C. A. (2008). *Transpeople: Repudiation, trauma, healing*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Swanson, D. (1977). The uses and misuses of uses and gratifications. *Human Communication Research, 3,* 214–221. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1977.tb00519.x

Whitlock, K. (1996). *Transgender outlook*. San Francisco, CA: Author.

Willox, A. (2003). Branding Teena: (Mis)representations in the media. *Sexualities, 6,* 407–425. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/136346070363009

Received November 5, 2015
Revision received March 22, 2016
Accepted June 8, 2016 ■