

2-1-2016

Complicating Transgender: White Privilege and the Politics of Rurality

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**COMPLICATING TRANSGENDER:
WHITE PRIVILEGE AND THE POLITICS OF RURALITY**

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
American Studies
The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

December 2015

Complicating Transgender: White Privilege and the Politics of Rurality

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American Studies, University of New Mexico, 2015

Abstract

This dissertation argues a dominant transgender narrative manifested through a focus on transgender bodies and prioritizing access to medical procedures when personal stories began to be publicly shared. With limited public conversations about the influence of a dominant transgender narrative, public understandings about the community have become isolated to one facet of some peoples lived experiences. Focusing on the Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico, I examine the ways in which white privilege and presumptions about rural life as in certain respects antithetical to a transgender community have shaped the predominant representation of transgender in ways that often obscure the complexities of local context. Examining the iconic visual and popular culture representations and how they have contributed to creating a dominant transgender narrative, I seek to complicate the ways in which these prevailing tropes that presume the centrality of transgender medical transition narratives and urban (coastal) community formation. My hope is this research created an opening to more fully understand the impacts of whiteness, privilege and oppressive practices especially around how public knowledge is put forth about the transgender community.

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Introduction

When I decided to pursue my master's degree, I wanted to deepen my understanding about the history of the transgender movement. My interest arose from my personal experience of embodying a transgender identity. In 2002, I finally embraced my transgender identity after many years of struggling to understand the complexity of my body and relationship to social structures in society. I had spent countless hours researching online for information to help me come to terms with my sense of self. I contemplated pursuing medical treatment and surgery for years because I was fearful of the potential outcomes in physically alter my body. A few years later, I made the decision to change my name legally than have gender confirmation surgery followed by starting hormone replacement therapy. As I entered the American Studies Department to pursue my doctorate, I wanted to expand my knowledge about transgender and elevate the stories of the transgender community. However, I also struggled with how a notion of transgender was publicly circulating and the approach of advocates working with community members.

Alongside starting my doctoral studies, I began to delve into advancing my knowledge about the notion of white privilege and looking at the impact of systematic oppressive practices. I started to attend the White Privilege Conference to gather insight from prominent critical whiteness scholars about how privilege and oppression operate. This conference also assisted me in developing a practice of continual self-reflection on my positionality in society as a white transgender man. I continue to expand my knowledge about how I am positioned and perceived in society. Between reading scholars on critical race theory for my studies and the conference, I started to examine the systematic oppression transgender people experienced in junction with how privilege, power and oppression were

operating within the community. Throughout this process, I recognized the significance in starting to challenge a complacency within the transgender community in New Mexico about simply elevating personal stories and gaining access to health-care systems. The above experiences assisted me with formulating my research on complicating a transgender identity, examining how whiteness operates, and exploring the politics of rurality. Throughout my dissertation, I take the stance of being in solidarity with the educational and advocacy efforts, yet challenge how these efforts are put forth and pushing against the replication of a dominant white perspective.

I am invested in advancing public understandings about a transgender identity and lived experiences. However, my dissertation critically analyzes the ways a notion of transgender publicly circulates and what have been the systems in which transgender emerged. In thinking about my interventions in the rapidly increasing knowledge production about transgender, the following questions prompted my research for this project. How has the emergence of a transgender identity primarily within urban areas potentially influenced rural approaches to raising awareness about the community? In what ways has the approach of sharing personal stories publicly alienated some transgender experiences and hindered the broader movement? How is a nationalist ideology impacting a sense of self and belonging within a transgender community? How have coastal states with transgender organizations contributed to driving a local and national dialogue about the broader movement? How has geographical and societal conditions informed the emergence of these nonprofit organizations? How might the development of the Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico be contributing to a dominant transgender narrative and public perception about transgender experiences? How does a discourse about race and class subtly filter through a

dominant transgender narrative and public understandings about the community? What might need to be confronted in relation to notions of self, power, and representation within understanding transgender lived experiences and organizational development?

Guided by these questions, my dissertation explores the manifestation of a dominant transgender narrative given the medical professions engagement with the community. I also examine the influence of whiteness and a nationalist ideology along with the impact of locality within the community and public understandings about transgender. Over the last few decades, transgender has become more visible and gained a robust public presence. Particularly in the last few years, transgender individuals such as Lavern Cox and most recently Caitlin Jenner have been highlighted in mainstream media coverage. The increase in a transgender public presence has been beneficial, yet also troublesome. Previously, visual representation of transgender individuals was very limited. Organizations have been working to advance public knowledge about the transgender community, which has assisted with gaining more national attention and visual representation. Throughout my dissertation, I look at those representing the community, and the ways in which these components influenced cultural understandings about transgender lived experiences. I argue a dominant transgender narrative manifested through a focus on transgender bodies and prioritizing access to medical procedures when personal stories began to be publicly shared. With limited public conversations about the influence of a dominant transgender narrative, public understandings about the community have become isolated to one facet of some peoples lived experiences.

Because public knowledge about transgender experiences have been primarily attentive to individuals who are physically transitioning through hormone replacement therapy and gender confirmation surgeries, the complexity of transgender lived experiences

is flattened. Race and locality within transgender peoples lives is minimalized. I recognize the significance of focusing on and addressing transgender bodies in relation to medical and legal frameworks although these professional systems have an intricate connection with state apparatuses and a national imagination. Transgender bodies have attracted public attention because of different cultural understandings about gender, physical bodies, and affective processes. With capturing this public attention, some transgender stories are possibly dismissed in order for other stories to make sense for spectators in a public realm.

Transgender personal stories are often crafted to allow for a space of familiarity and an entry point for spectators to engage with comprehending a transgender identity. White transgender people have been the prominent public figures.

A dominant transgender narrative rarely engages with issues of race and class and whiteness operates within this narrative because it is often unmarked. The silence about whiteness by presenters, organizations, and advocates reinforces a nationalist ideology based in a white, male, and heteronormative framework. By not openly discussing the impact of whiteness, personal stories and advocacy efforts subtly align with a dominant cultural framework. As mentioned earlier, my dissertation takes as one of its purpose to expose how whiteness is operating within the public presence of transgender. Not merely marking white identities, but exploring how whiteness is connected to the medical profession, nonprofit organizational structures as well as organizational priorities, and marking how transgender bodies are visually represented.

Alongside documenting these components, I examine how locality contributes to public knowledge about transgender. Nonprofit organizations have sought to address the concerns of transgender people and gain legitimacy in state apparatuses. A rich history exists

about lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) nonprofit organizations inclusion of transgender concerns within their organizational priorities. I address the potential influence of the LGB movement and organizational structures in the development of transgender organizations specifically in New Mexico. Specific transgender nonprofit organizations emerged predominately in urban environments along the East and West coast of the United States. These transgender organizations ranged from advocating for policy changes, gaining legal protections or providing direct service to community members. I examine the history and development of the Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico (TGRCNM). The advantage of looking at this specific organization, even though I recognize possible limitations to my research, is the longevity of its existence. TGRCNM is a relatively new organization, so the opportunity was available to critically analyze the development of this entity. Rarely, transgender organizations centralize race, class, and locality within their priority areas. Often times, nonprofit organizations are reacting to meeting the needs of community members and following a dominant cultural framework in their development process. I analyze the ways a dominant transgender narrative, dominant nonprofit organizational structures and governing processes, and locality potentially influenced TGRCNM's structure. Organizational development and prioritization are critical components to understanding how a dominant cultural framework becomes replicated unintentionally or intentionally.

Alongside nonprofit organization locality, my dissertation examines how urban environments have been a central component of understanding transgender lived experiences. I specifically use the term urban although recognize this term means different perspectives in different states. In New Mexico, urban is often a term used for four particular cities with the

surrounding areas considered rural. Often times, transgender individuals move to urban environments to access resources, feel a sense of connection with a larger community, and pursue employment opportunities. However, transgender rural lived experiences are vital to elevate as well because their stories provide a different perspective about the identity and lived experiences. Since 1999, I have lived in New Mexico and the first 11 years were spent living in Albuquerque, which is one of the most populated areas in the state. I moved to Gallup, which is 2 hours West, a very rural area with the majority of the population being Native Americans. Gallup and the surrounding area has a vibrant transgender community. In connecting with community members and hearing about their experiences being transgender, it provided me a new perspective about a notion of transgender. I decided to analyze the urban and rural dynamic within a transgender community because locality and metronormativity are rarely discussed within transgender studies.

In conjunction with transgender nonprofit organizations emerging, a human rights framework became a way to articulate to the general public the injustices transgender people were encountering. Organizations used a human rights framework to advocate for transgender concerns, yet this framework needs to be questioned because it subtly puts forth an individualistic and victimized status. By using a human rights framework for transgender concerns, the language used must be attentive to how national identities are constituted around a gender binary system and dominant cultural perspectives. Gender symbols play a significant role in reproducing a nationalist ideology about bodies. Marginalized community members have put forth a notion of human rights as a reason for engaging in political actions, yet transgender nonprofit organizations often do not pursue building community capacity to engage with political processes.

I am concerned with how a notion of human rights is put forth regarding transgender. If certain lives and bodies are not considered human and encounter significant acts of violence such as transgender people experience, the broader public message about these bodies conveys a dehumanizing component. And, the status of a human body and life are interconnected with notions of citizenship and national sovereignty. Even though a person can pursue and feel a personal bodily sense of right to autonomy and self-determination, a human rights framework gives minimal attention to the ways social and political structures influence an individual's sense of self and often represented through notions of suffering. So with using a human rights framework and bringing attention to transgender subjects and violent encounters, it requires a sense of self to be suffering, helpless, and vulnerable.ⁱ Kendall Thomas addresses how a transgender movement needs to draw attention to and complicate the notion of human within a human rights framework. He wrote, "From this perspective, a successful transgender human rights strategy must find ways to enlarge the public imagination regarding the lives and aspirations of trans people."ⁱⁱ For me, Thomas provides a departure point to further explore how a human rights discourse is interacting with public understandings of transgender and organizational development.

Many scholars and activists have addressed a history of transgender, shared personal stories, and visually represented transgender lived experiences. As I conducted my research, I engaged with the work of Joanne Meyerowitz's and her book *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States*. This book examines the interrelation between sex, gender, and sexuality as well as provides a historical perspective about the emergence of a notion of transsexual, which assisted in shaping contemporary understandings about transgender. She offers insight into how sex and gender shifted throughout history primarily

by looking at stories of individuals. In the *Transgender Studies Reader*, Stephen Whittle and Susan Stryker provided a historical compilation of articles that has become one of the most influential and thought provoking texts regarding a transgender movement. Stryker has also contributed immensely to the field of transgender studies by illuminating historical aspects of the community. In her book, *Transgender History*, she made a statement that brought me to examine how whiteness contributed to transgender lived experiences and representations of the community because of the ways it was unmarked within public dialogues about transgender. I also became concerned with how it was influencing transgender organizational development and priorities. She wrote, “It is often the most privileged elements of a population affected by a particular civil injustice or social oppression who have the opportunity to organize first. In organizing around the one thing that interferes with or complicates their privilege, their organizations tend to reproduce that very privilege.”ⁱⁱⁱ All through my dissertation, I expose how whiteness is manifesting within a dominant transgender narrative, transgender organizational priorities, visual representations of the community, and the emphasis for transgender people to migrate to urban environments.

Beyond scholars addressing transgender, I engage with authors looking at the nonprofit industrial complex, the influence of visual representation, and a notion of human rights. For instance, Marita Sturken informed my thinking about the visual representation of a transgender community. She addresses how cultural memory and history are entangled where the entanglement demonstrates narratives moving towards a production of historical meaning and back towards cultural memory.^{iv} Visual images must be examined in relation to how they are produced and consumed predominately through dominant perspectives. Images create an interaction between a practice of looking and way of being seen. W.J.T. Mitchell

suggests images are like living organisms that have desires and come alive. Images continue to live on as narratives and a site of remembrance.^v Besides Thomas addressing a human rights discourse, Sally Engle Merry offered me a way to rethink a notion of human rights by engaging her book *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice*. She addressed how a universal language such as human rights resonates in legal arenas, where the laws speak to notions of respect and dignity, which has been useful in local politics and raising awareness about a transgender community. Language about civilization and culture are rarely articulated within a human rights framework.^{vi} I am cautious about the utilization of a human rights framework because it can reproduce exclusionary practices and enhance a nationalist ideology about what human bodies matter. Overall, I weave into the conversation throughout my dissertation other pertinent scholars such as Judith Butler, Iris Marion Young, Miranda Joseph, Dean Spade, and many more.

In Chapter 1 “Emergence of a Dominant Transgender Narrative”, I argue a dominant narrative about transgender people has emerged because of the constant reiteration of personal stories based in medical aspects. Sharing personal stories publicly has been a primary way advocates and individuals increased the public presence about a transgender community. However, publishing agencies prioritized stories about hiding within another gender, also known as “trapped in the wrong body,” and autobiographies about physically transitioning. I have a great deal of respect for individuals willing to publicly disclose their lived experiences about embodying a transgender identity. However, the repetitiveness of transgender stories focused on hormone replacement therapy and gender confirmation surgery has hindered cultural understandings about gender, human bodies, and transgender lived experiences. This chapter looks at how the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care were

influential in determining the medical treatment of transgender individuals and assisted the community with accessing health-care needs. These standards of care, which were predominate in the medical profession, also reinforced within public spheres a notion of transgender individuals ‘trapped in the wrong body.’ I argue this idea was part of what created a dominant transgender narrative. A dominant transgender narrative was reinforced through the mechanisms to distribute stories, which has been influenced by whiteness. I also address the rigid social and cultural understandings about gender, and the individualistic aspects regarding public knowledge about transgender. In contextualizing my argument about the emergence of a dominant transgender narrative, I analyze the following books: *Self-Made Men: Identity and Embodiment among Transsexual Men*, *Testosterone Files*, and *Gender Outlaw: Men, Women and the Rest of Us*.

After establishing my argument about a dominant transgender narrative, in Chapter 2 on “Transgender Organizational Development” I examine the development, structure and priorities of nonprofit organizations advocating for transgender individuals. Specifically, I document how nonprofit organizations and programs become institutionalized and limited in expanding on notions of transgender through governing practices, organizational priorities, and funding mechanisms. The institutionalization of nonprofit organizations potentially limits transgender organizations capacity to make effective political and social change. For example, the TGRCNM has prioritized offering direct services and support groups for the community instead of implementing a community-based leadership program to mobilize people to advocate for social justice. In this chapter, I bring attention to how lesbian and gay nonprofit organizations may have influenced the development of transgender organizations. Many lesbian and gay nonprofit organizations are lead by white people and seeped in a

dominant cultural framework, so I examine how TGRCNM may have initially modeled themselves after a white, upper class, and urban centric nonprofit framework. As part of understanding organizational development, I explore the influence of neoliberalism because of the interactions between owning-class agendas and advocates working to raise awareness about a marginalized community. Neoliberalism often reinforces individualism and creates barriers to shift power relations.

Chapter 3, “Influences of a Nationalist Ideology and Human Rights Framework in Advocating for Transgender,” examines the influence of a United States nationalist ideology that is connected with a white, male, and heteronormative perspective. I build on the argument in Chapter 1 about a dominant transgender narrative through exploring transgender identity politics in which individuals come to understand a sense of self and belonging. A nationalist ideology has been shaped within a judicial system that interacts with a medical profession, which has stigmatized transgender bodies. The purpose of exploring a nationalist ideology is to understand how transgender subjects are potentially controlled. In this process, I also look at the influence of a human rights framework, since a notion of human rights has been circumscribed through a legal discourse. Both these aspects are connected to concepts of citizenship, which contributes to assimilation practices. This chapter is concerned with how a dominant nationalist ideology and human rights discourse impacts transgender advocacy efforts.

In the chapter, I point to the example provided by Issac West in his book *Transgender Citizenship* regarding People in Search of Safe and Accessible Restrooms (PISSAR). This is an example of how to rethink coalition building within nonprofit organizations especially around transgender advocacy efforts. Restrooms are a site of rigid notions of gender that

connect with a nationalist ideology and dominant cultural understandings about human bodies. A United States nationalist ideology has been situated in a liberal framework and utilizes language around equal opportunity or self-determination. This language may hinder organizational transgender advocacy efforts and avoid directly addressing institutionalized oppressions such as racism and classism. The chapter is also concerned with how a human rights discourse reemphasizes dominant cultural understandings about human bodies.

Visual representation about transgender individuals is another vital component in my dissertation since images potentially perpetuate a nationalist ideology. This is the focus of Chapter 4, “Visual Representation of Transgender Bodies.” Over the last two decades, transgender visual representation has significantly increased in the public sphere. Films, television shows including transgender cast, and a general public presence within the news or mainstream magazines about transgender experiences have become more pronounced. In this chapter, I argue visual representation of transgender individuals is perpetuating a national image situated in whiteness that sensationalizes transgender bodies and reiterates a gender binary system. I explore Loren Cameron’s book, *Body Alchemy: Transsexual Portraits*, the documentary *Southern Comfort*, and the production of *Beautiful Daughters* by Eve Ensler as a way to contextualize my argument. Visual representation and images are a way to change people’s mind about a community’s struggle, which has been effective in raising awareness about transgender experiences. However, I am cautious about what transgender bodies become prioritized in public spheres, whose stories are being shared, and how visual images are consumed, which influences public understandings about a transgender community.

Lastly, Chapter 5, “Rurality within a Transgender Movement,” addresses how urbanism influences a dominant transgender narrative, impacts identity formation, and

hinders transgender organizational development. When transgender stories are being disclosed publicly, they are often from an urban perspective, which limits public understandings about transgender lived experiences. Transgender community members are also encouraged to migrate to urban environments because they tend to have more resources and infrastructure to provide individuals with access to services or employment opportunities. Throughout this chapter, I address a pattern of migration in which symbolic images of cities such as San Francisco and New York provide a sense of community and opportunity for personal advancement for transgender individuals. I address that moving to urban environments does not reduce the daily experiences of oppression such as racism and classism. I draw on the authors of Doreen Massey, David Harvey, Scott Herring and Mary Gray to think through the dynamics of urbanism and rurality related to transgender.

All these chapters address the influence of a dominant transgender narrative, explores the organizational priorities of the TGRCNM, and begins to document the impact of whiteness in relation to transgender. Transgender studies has been rapidly emerging and producing a wealth of knowledge about human bodies, identity, and the social construction of gender. Given this increase in knowledge production about transgender, my dissertation will contribute to this emerging body of scholarship.

Chapter 1

Emergence of a Dominant Transgender Narrative

A transgender movement in the United States has been built on the disclosure of personal stories to raise awareness and move the community's issues forward. Today, many organizations are advocating on behalf of transgender individuals, and an increased public presence is noticed, such as in films, that barely existed more than 10 years ago. Yet, how have transgender personal stories hindered the advancement of the complexity of transgender experiences and reinforced dominant social, political, and economic systems that historically have been oppressive. Whose stories are being heard and what aspects of these stories are highlighted in the public sphere? In this chapter, the above question prompted my argument that a dominant transgender narrative has emerged through the public disclosure of personal stories. I do not discount the value of sharing personal lived experiences, yet I am attentive to how these public stories have been predominately situated in medical and urban perspectives.

With limited deconstruction on access to medical services, transgender advocates potentially hinder the possibilities of unraveling institutional inequities that are operating related to this identity. A dominant transgender narrative offers minimal critique about dominant systems being situated in a white heterosexual and male-dominant perspective, which raises a great deal of concern for me. I critically analyze a dominant transgender narrative throughout the following pages and explore how transgender bodies are positioned within social and political spheres. I am particularly interested in how transgender bodies become situated in New Mexico, because of the percentage of people-of-color within the state. The process of sharing personal stories

has been a mechanism for individuals to claim one's transgender identity and to express a sense of self to a public audience. Sharing personal stories, along with raising awareness about a community's struggle, created an avenue to justify the need for medical treatment and legal services. I understand the significance of these services although document how a medical and legal framework influence public knowledge about a transgender identity.

Because limited knowledge and public understanding about differently gendered bodies existed, Kate Bornstein addressed the need for a recognizable identity where a group of people could claim that identity and have a powerful sense of self. A transgender identity has created a dominant force within the United States that challenges dominant notions of gender and sexuality.^{vii} Because of the public recognition of transgender individuals today, easier access to medical services is available and potentially less discrimination exists in various environments such as within a place of employment. Transgender men and women may feel more comfortable sharing their personal story and request services in the medical profession, both of which enhance their sense of self and sense of belonging.^{viii} This has been one way transgender individuals embody authenticity. The medical profession is also a space where power relations manifest and control concepts regarding gender differences.

Through a medical treatment perspective, the profession and advocates produced sense of normalcy about transgender individuals desiring gender confirmation surgery and hormone replacement therapy. Henry Rubin wrote, "A history of the emergence of female to male transsexualism can be told as the medicalization of

inversion and the making available of medical techniques appropriated from both the emerging science of endocrinology and the surgical treatment of war veterans.”^{ix} By generating a history of transgender related to a medical framework, it created and shaped a dominant transgender narrative, which manifested through cultural imperialist practices. For example, endocrinology during the 1920s focused on the formation of synthetic hormones for sexual dysfunction, and they eventually became beneficial for the transgender community. The formation of synthetic hormones became a universal approach to working with transgender individuals within the medical field, and the distribution of this type of treatment became normalized. Magnus Hirschfield, Havelock Ellis, and Harry Benjamin were instrumental in developing an avenue for transgender individuals to access hormone replacement therapy. They eventually established protocols, which shifted slightly over time, for transgender individuals. For instance, transgender individuals were required to live as the opposite gender to obtain real life experiences prior to undergoing any medical services related to physically transitioning. The three people above were critical in raising visibility about transgender people, and their efforts contributed to developing a normalized practice when working with individuals.

Transgender people often have not been considered a legitimate community or were not publicly recognized until a diagnosis in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* emerged. Harry Benjamin, who was mentioned earlier, became one of the key advocates for transgender people during the early 1900s. He was a leader in developing the protocols or a guide for health professionals; it was titled *Harry Benjamin Standards of Care Guidelines*. The guidelines now are referred to as the

Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People.^x During the late 1970s, these guidelines were created to assist health-care professionals who worked with transgender individuals and it became a mechanism to institutionalize medical treatment for the community. Transgender individuals were expected to abide by the standards of care in order to gain access to hormone replacement therapy and surgical procedures. Today, these guidelines are available as a reference point for practitioners. The guidelines are an important component to the historical emergence of a transgender identity.

Transgender individuals have become more normalized and integrated into a nationalist ideology in some respects, primarily through the circulation of a dominant transgender narrative. Throughout history, nationalist ideologies have regulated gendered bodies through medical and legal practices, which are bound with a process of normalization.^{xi} This generates a tension because regulation practices assist in determining who counts in a dominant system as well as creates a standardized approach to advocating for human rights.^{xii} For example, it has become normal for transgender individuals to advocate for and pursue medical treatment, to change their legal documents, and to align with dominant cultural understandings of gendered bodies. Nancy Fraser wrote, “Overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalized obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction.”^{xiii} In the process of advocating for transgender concerns, I argue an opportunity exists to rethink how to approach fighting for social justice and consider prioritizing the dismantling of institutional racism and other oppressive practices within dominant systems.

In this chapter, the term transgender narrative addresses how public information about individuals circulates among nonprofit organizations, a medical field, legal institutions, and social service agencies, to name a few. A transgender individual's experience is referred to as a personal story or lived experience. The distinction between a transgender narrative and a personal story is critical, even though there is an intimate relationship between these two concepts. The disclosure of personal stories has predominately been a way to move forward the public presence of transgender struggles in the United States. As mentioned earlier, these personal stories also have been based in a medical framework, which created a foundation for education, advocacy, and organizational development. Bornstein discusses how stories about soul-searching and hiding within another gender were the stories people would be willing to publish. Given this opportunity, personal stories began circulating and contributed to the production of a dominant transgender narrative. Bornstein wrote, "Up until the last few years, all we'd be able to write *and get published* were our autobiographies, tales of women trapped in the bodies of men or men pining away in the bodies of women."^{xiv} These publications assisted in producing a dominant transgender narrative, which has contributed to the ways organizations prioritize their focus on transgender concerns. A dominant transgender narrative distracted some advocates and organizations when working with the community from looking at the underlying and unjust systematic practices.

From personal experience, I recall being expected to embrace a notion of being "trapped" in a wrong body and to reiterate a personal narrative based in medical procedures. I would constantly hear stories from community members about the

process of physically transitioning, yet rarely heard stories about any complications from hormone replacement therapy and gender confirmation surgeries. I encountered minimal stories about emotional struggles or challenges with familial relationships. I also would listen to other individuals share with me my emotional process and potential behaviors once I started hormones along with what would happen to my body physically. I realized that very little information shared with me prior to starting hormones actually manifested as part of my experience. Unexpectedly, I was surprised by the challenge of articulating my thoughts and words for a period of time after starting hormone replacement therapy. This aspect of transgender stories is not publicly disclosed. The experiences are overshadowed by the expectation to align with a dominant narrative to garner public recognition. When I began giving presentations in classroom settings about a notion of transgender, people often asked questions about taking hormones or pursuing surgical procedures to modify my physical presence. Questions were minimal about my family relationships or how I navigated the maze of public systems to change my legal documents. At the time, I did not fully comprehend what was taking place for audience members. I will never fully understand another person's struggle or discomfort, yet it was clear a dominant narrative existed.

A dominant transgender narrative can be very influential, especially in rural environments. It creates a national public perception of a community, which individuals may internalize. Judith, who now goes by Jack, Halberstam wrote, "Given that many gay, lesbian, and transgender people who grow up and live in small rural areas may not identify at all with these labels, the rural context allows for a different array of acts, practices, performances, and identifications."^{xv} A critical analysis of a dominant

transgender narrative offers a way to begin thinking about expanding notions of gender, within both urban and rural contexts. I expand on a transgender identity within rural context in Chapter 5. In looking at a dominant transgender narrative, this provides a way to examine language juxtaposed with a dominant national discourse and to explore how social and political systems reproduce concepts of human bodies through text. With an analysis of the following three books, this chapter creates a foundation to deconstruct a dominant transgender narrative throughout my dissertation. I decided to examine the following three books because they provide insight into what I call a dominant transgender narrative: *Self Made Men: Identity and Embodiment among Transsexual Men*; *Testosterone Files*; and *Gender Outlaw: Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*.

As previously mentioned, situated in a medical framework, a dominant discourse about transgender emerged through the disclosure and emphasis of transgender personal stories. A dominant discourse means people, organizations, or other entities in power determine how a subject is perceived and addressed, and thus, the subject becomes normalized through the way one speaks about a community. With a repetitive speaking act related to a transgender subject, the words spoken produces a framework and public perspective about transgender individuals. A medical profession has been focused on a notion that transgender individuals struggled with feeling “trapped” in a “wrong” body, which contributed to the production of a dominant transgender narrative. This narrative was reinforced by personal stories shared publicly and within community spaces predominately from an urban perspective, which I argue hinders a broader and more complex understanding about transgender embodiment.

Transgender stories from a rural perspective and/or not pursuing medical procedures have been publicly limited into advocacy efforts.

I employ the term urban in a geographical context, relating closely to the concept of a city. Urban environments are equipped with more resources and infrastructure, such as social-service agencies, community organizations, and employment opportunities. Individuals, organizations, or public entities based in an urban location, at times, hold onto or are unconscious of the privileges of these environments and perspectives. The geographical perspective has influenced public understanding about a transgender identity, narrative and social movement. This privileged geographic position is minimally critiqued because of a scarcity in overall resources for the transgender community. Individuals, organizations, or public entities based in an urban location hold onto the resources made available within these environments. Because transgender resources in urban environments are in a privileged position, the concepts of biopower, distribution, and truth must be explored. These concepts have contributed to public perspectives about transgender individuals and have been influential in the formation of this identity. Multiple organizations across the United States focused on advocating for and supporting transgender people, and the majority of these nonprofit organizations are located in urban environments. The urban and rural narratives put forth are also connected to a history of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual movement in the United States because cities such as San Francisco and New York were environments in which a transgender community gathered to access resources and find support.

A rich history about transgender individuals has been documented within academia, films, and nonprofit organizations who have been committed to raising

public awareness about the community's struggles. The term transgender began publicly circulating in the mid-1970s and became popularized toward the end of the 1980s. Susan Stryker addresses the emergence of transgender activism in the 1970s and wrote, "On one front, privileged white male transvestites were making community with one another in the nation's suburbs, while on the other front, multiracial groups of militant cultural revolutionaries were claiming space for themselves in the streets of America's major cities."^{xvi} Again, this demonstrates how whiteness, privilege, and historical oppressive systematic practices have been instrumental in the production of a dominant transgender narrative. Public forums and media exposure have been one way to advance the visibility and awareness about transgender lived experiences, yet often it was framed around the medicalization of transgender.

By perpetuating a medicalized perspective about transgender, it continues to humanize as well as dehumanize individuals and the community. The medicalization of transgender personal stories had been captured by media entities, which advanced this perspective more quickly and hindered the possibility of addressing the complexity of embodiment related to a transgender identity. As Stryker addressed, white transgender women and men were working to build a community in urban settings and put forth this public presence of urban, white transgender stories. This public presence shaped a national image about transgender and influences an individual's exploration of this identity.

Rubin's book discusses the emergence of transgender men through integrating their personal experiences. He provides critical insight into a lesbian culture when a transgender individual decides to physically transition and identify as a man. He

provides a perspective about how some transgender men relate to a lesbian identity or as he wrote a lesbian career, which is important to understand in a transition process. Transgender men began to emerge more publicly shortly after the lesbian community became very vocal during the mid-1970s. Given the history of a lesbian movement, tension has been present between the transgender and lesbian communities, especially in association with male privilege and heterosexism. Rubin's book explores experiences of transgender individual's coming to authentically feel like a man through pursuing medical treatment, such as hormone replacement therapy.^{xvii} Many transgender individuals prefer not to discuss past relationships or previous identities. I identified as a lesbian for over a decade and was immersed in this community prior to embodying a transgender identity. Upon changing my name and disclosing my preferred identity, my relationship with the community shifted.

I ventured to graduate school in San Francisco, where I felt extremely isolated from any form of community even though that city is perceived as an inclusive one specifically for LGBT community members. Upon returning to New Mexico, I found re-engaging with a lesbian community was extremely difficult after I embodied my transgender identity. The space of identity formation is crucial because individuals may struggle with claiming a particular identity. In this particular situation, this historical relationship of lesbians and transgender men is connected to the emergence of a dominant transgender narrative. The narrative components about being trapped in a wrong body and misunderstandings about behaviors once starting hormone replacement therapy created tensions, which has shifted over time. Rubin wrote, "The rise in the numbers of FTMs (female-to-male transgender individuals) in the 1970s is

the unintended consequence of identity work in the lesbian community.”^{xviii} When individuals began disclosing their identity and feeling a sense of pride within themselves, transgender people became comfortable expressing their gender differently and being open about their sense of self.

Max Wolf Valerio provides his personal experience of transitioning from female to male. He speaks about his relationship with identifying as a lesbian in *The Testosterone Files*; the book also demonstrates how a dominant transgender narrative operates through personal storytelling. His personal story addresses the struggle with deciding to transition and move forward with pursuing hormone replacement therapy in order to live according to his gender expression. He wrote, “My focus in this book is on hormones, not surgery – unlike many transsexual memoirs – as I believe that taking testosterone was actually the most definitive and crucial aspect of my transformation.”^{xix} Through hormone therapy treatment, the body slowly changes formations, the vocals are altered, and one’s public appearance begin to look differently. Valerio included before-and-after photos as a way to articulate a more concrete example of a physical transition process instead of keeping his history in the abstract.

Transgender people have various ways of speaking about and sharing the changes to their body. Valerio wrote, “The way my body is motivated through its flesh, I yearn to embody a physical presence that feels more tangibly other. Stronger, larger. My arm feels too slim, almost fragile, my skin too soft. I want my body to sharply contrast hers, to be muscular, firm, hard.”^{xx} He provides a slightly different way of thinking about the phrase ‘being trapped in the wrong body’. He also wrote, “... The moving backdrop of my life, feeling of being male-not so much a man in a woman’s body

as a man *with* a woman's body. When I was a child I could feel my boy self peering out of my eyes, knowing that other people were seeing a little girl."^{xxi} Valerio knew at a young age that he wanted to express his gender differently than how other people perceived him. Peoples' perceptions of a gendered body have been absorbed through social and political structures. Valerio also wrote, "Transsexuality is a crime of passion. A nearly savage act of body modification occupying a charged realm far beyond our culture's current obsession with 'safety'."^{xxii} Through personally documenting his experience of identifying as transgender, the book offers an example of the way a dominant transgender narrative operates even though individuals are challenging cultural understandings about gendered bodies.

Kate Bornstein's book, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and The Rest of Us*, was one of the first published texts to raise awareness about transgender people. Throughout the book, she elaborates on the details of an individual's transition process and offers a more in-depth analysis about the personal impact of a rigid gender system. She raises critical questions about the rigidity of a gender system and male privilege, yet she does not extensively integrate an analysis about the ways race and ethnicity impact a transgender identity. This book is an example about how public audiences engaged with comprehending a notion of transgender rarely hear or read about whiteness. I applaud her for addressing ways male privilege operates. Bornstein addresses to an extent the oppressive practices regarding a gender system, although deeply documenting the injustices of the binary system may potentially hinder the community's access to resources. Bornstein wrote, "A particular insidious aspect about gender – our gender system here in the West, and perhaps for the planet as a whole – is

that it is an oppressive class system made all the more dangerous by the belief that it is entirely a natural state of affairs.”^{xxiii} This book begins to analyze a notion of dominance related to transgender, yet the emphasis is often limited to the medicalization of transgender in order to obtain public recognition.

Bernice Hausman wrote about a concept referred to as “official” transgender accounts--or what I refer to as a dominant transgender narrative. She wrote, “Transsexuals are a notoriously well-read patient population, primarily because their success in obtaining the medical treatments that they seek depends upon their ability to convince doctors that their personal history matches the officially sanctioned etiology.”^{xxiv} Individuals have learned the significance of articulating a particular narrative, “official” or “dominant,” about their bodies to obtain medical services. At the same time, this dominant transgender narrative regulates a process for individuals navigating the medical and judicial system. For example, medical services, such as hormone replacement therapy, provide justification to decision makers about why someone needs to change their legal documents such as a driver’s license.^{xxv} Rubin wrote, “The belief that their bodies fail to express what they are inside is the central tenet legitimating their transitions.”^{xxvi} If individuals do not pursue medical procedures or alter their legal documents, their transgender lived experiences are often not legitimized in a public system.

Hausman looked primarily at autobiographies as a way to share the “official” story about being transsexual. Stories must be consistent with something physical, measurable, and detectable, which motivates and justifies the transition process.^{xxvii} She wrote, “The purpose of the narratives is to force the reader to comply with the author’s

experience, to begin to interrupt his or her own life along the same trajectory.”^{xxviii} A dominant transgender narrative created a means for medical and legal professionals as well as for the general public to comprehend individuals embodying a transgender identity. Recall that the standard of care guidelines created a way for individuals to gain access to medical treatment.^{xxix}

Christine Jorgenson was one of the first individuals to publicly disclose her transgender personal story, which drew a great deal of attention in the media. She was a white, transgender woman, who served in the military and became a public icon upon returning from Denmark where she received intensified care for hormone replacement therapy and underwent gender confirmation surgery. When Jorgensen’s story became popularized, doctors and other professionals capitalized on this attention and assumed more responsibility in determining people’s physical and emotional readiness to begin their medical transition process. They began marketing their services to the community, because transgender individuals contemplating transitioning were consuming stories put forth in the media, newspapers or books. JoAnne Meyerowitz wrote, “In the history of transsexuality, transgender subjects used available cultural forms to construct, describe, and reconfigure their own identities. The mass media and reading played critical roles in the articulation of these identities.”^{xxx} Recall, a dominant transgender narrative emerged through cultural imperialism, which creates unequal relationships amongst individuals. In this case, transgender individuals who pursue medical treatment are perceived to have more validity and power, which reproduces cultural hegemony.

In many ways, a transgender narrative is challenging a dominant gender system and cultural hegemony, yet it also subtly reproduces oppressive practices simultaneously. The dominant transgender narrative contributes to oppressive structural practices that have been developed from a white, heterosexual social, political, and economic framework. Bornstein wrote, “A dominant culture, to be truly dominant, needs freak populations be they racial, religious, and gender minorities, or whatever.”^{xxxix} If individuals do not align with a dominant transgender narrative, they are, at times, considered “freakish” or “othered,” from a public perspective even though this is not overtly spoken. Individuals not pursuing medical procedures or openly disclosing the complexity of their everyday experiences often are marginalized within public spaces and at times in the transgender community. With a history of institutional and internalized fear embedded in a transgender community, a subtle message is circulating about the need to pursue medical services if one intends to identify as transgender. Bornstein wrote, “Transsexuality is a medicalized phenomenon. The term was invented by a doctor. The system is perpetuated by doctors. But the demedicalization of transsexualism is a dilemma.”^{xxxix} If transgender was demedicalized, this may impact the social movement and advocacy efforts. Judith Butler wrote, “Our capacity to reflect upon ourselves, to tell the truth about ourselves, is correspondingly limited by what the discourse, the regime, cannot allow into speakability.”^{xxxix} For instance, a transgender identity needs to be familiar to the general public, which can handle how individuals share their stories about embodying this identity.

At this time, I want to briefly address how identities are formed and become institutionalized within particular public spaces. David Harvey wrote, “We must

recognize that once a particular spatial form is created it tends to institutionalize and, in some respect, to determine the future development of social process."^{xxxiv} As a notion of transgender gained public recognition, a dominant transgender narrative has become institutionalized. I argue this narrative has become the foundation within transgender related structures and educational efforts. Bornstein wrote, "Most of the behavioral cues, I can think of boil down to how we occupy space, both and with others."^{xxxv} Space, in this context, refers to individual's bodies juxtaposed with a dominant transgender narrative, which has predetermined how transgender bodies are supposed to interact with other people and present themselves in public spaces. Minimal opportunities exist for individuals to reflect on the ways in which a sense of self has become embodied in relation to others as well as social and political structures.

A dominant transgender narrative and the embodiment of a transgender identity are also connected to a distribution framework. With a plethora of images and messages publicly circulating, it can be challenging to navigate cultural expectations put forth about gendered bodies. By looking at a transgender identity through a distribution framework, this allows for a way to explore how transgender individuals come to understand their sense of self and how resources are allocated to community members. Because a notion of distribution derives from an economic framework, it provides an avenue to analyze how accessibility, proximity to urban spaces, and nonprofit organizational development are situated in relation to a transgender community. Harvey wrote, "Accessibility to employment opportunities, resources, and welfare services can be obtained only at a price, and this price is generally equated with the cost of overcoming distance, of using time, and the like."^{xxxvi} Urban areas are

equipped with more resources for transgender individuals than rural communities. Businesses are more willing to invest in urban locations, because of the economic and productivity value. For a transgender community, access to medical providers is one of the primary businesses that is considered here.

Another example of how distribution operates and encourages the medicalization of transgender is through a speakers' bureau. The Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico (TGRCNM) has a speakers' bureau, although its members typically are white transgender people who often speak about their process of transitioning. Transgender stories embody multiple lived experiences such as relationships, racial profiling, and struggles with becoming employed. With a distribution framework in mind, whose voices and what issues become prioritized is critical to document. With stories being shared, transgender experiences have become universalized, which created a familiar space for the general public and professional audiences to comprehend a notion of transgender. Yet, this avenue also coincides with focusing only on individualized aspects of transgender and the act of universalizing experiences feeds into oppressive practices by a dominant culture. Systematic oppressive practices have been dismissed and overshadowed by a dominant transgender narrative.^{xxxvii}

The public message put forth by TGRCNM feeds into this dominant transgender narrative. For example, medical and counseling services are highlighted their website. Counselors or social service providers have been a critical component for transgender individuals to access medical services, so I do not discount the need to distribute this information. These providers are, in some respect, gatekeepers in determining if an

individual is ready to live according to their preferred gender expression and to embody a transgender identity. As mentioned previously, the DSM has been a tool to diagnosis individuals and has provided a logical means for health-care professionals to distribute medical services to individuals.^{xxxviii} The categorization of gender identity disorder has been adjusted in the recent edition of the DSM to reduce the pathologization of the transgender community. When needed, therapists would diagnose transgender individuals and provided a letter of support, so individuals could obtain medical treatment. Medical treatment has enhanced some transgender peoples' confidence with navigating public perspectives regarding their gender expression.^{xxxix} In speaking with a therapist about accessing medical treatment, individuals would often need to disclose a dominant transgender narrative to these professionals about being in the "wrong" body. Throughout the decades and increased public awareness about transgender has advanced, the reliance on a therapist for medical treatment has shifted, so individuals are not necessarily obligated to see a therapist prior to physically transitioning.

Another critical aspect to consider historically is the rise of modernization within different states and the demographics, such as race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, of other states. Pablo Mitchell discusses the rise of modernization, cultural imperialism, and the practice of bodily comportment in a multiethnic state. What he addresses about New Mexico offers a perspective about how a dominant transgender narrative emerges in conjunction with a process of categorizing individual bodily practices, such as accessing public health-care systems. Cultural imperialism prioritizes dominant stories or experiences and contributes to establishing "norms" around a

notion of transgender.^{xI} As addressed earlier, a notion of human rights has been utilized for the past several years to advocate for transgender individuals. With a transgender body predominately being categorized within a white and heterosexual framework, a convergence happens between a dominant transgender narrative and institutional practices. Mitchell wrote, “Thus, one of the critical racial projects in New Mexico was the ‘naturalization’ of whiteness. By the naturalization of whiteness, I mean the process through which whiteness comes to be seen as the basic condition of humans, where the natural, normal, average, healthy, accepted state of humankind is that of being white.”^{xII} With a naturalization of whiteness focused on the body, social, political and economic systems reinforce white notions of masculinity and femininity. These systems also encourage individuals to align with national ideologies, which are deeply entrenched in a binary gender system. A dominant transgender narrative engages with a naturalization of whiteness of the body, which emerges through sharing personal stories deeply connected to medical procedures and the public visual representation of transgender.

Because white bodies became naturalized in a public perspective, these bodies were perceived to have an advanced standing within society. A dominant transgender narrative has generated a similar sense of an advanced standing by prioritizing a white status and focusing on the medicalization of transgender bodies. With medical practices deeply connected to the rise of modernization, Mitchell wrote, “Embodied gender distinctions similarly underwrote physicians’ description of white bodies. It should be noted that clear gender differentiation was frequently cited by Anglos as a characteristic of ‘higher,’ that is, more white, forms of civilization.”^{xIII} A transgender

trajectory based in the medicalization of bodies contributes to the practice of compartmentalizing individuals and prioritizing whiteness. For example, Lavern Cox talked at the Creating Change Conference 2014 about how transgender women of color are not supposed to survive. They are considered a “less than” form of civilization, she said.^{xliii}

Her statement speaks to the legacy and lack of intersectional analysis of race and gender. Bornstein wrote, “By focusing on the so-called ‘inherent differences’ between men and women, we ignore and deny the existence of the gender system itself, and so we in fact hold it in place.”^{xliv} The lack of attention to a gender system bolsters individualism within public understandings about transgender. A gender system is a product of whiteness and a prominent component within a dominant social, political, and economic system. Political power is also deeply connected to whiteness and intersects with legal protections and notions of citizenship.^{xlv} Fraser wrote, “What is at issue here is inclusion in, or exclusion from, the community of those entitled to make justice claims on one another.”^{xlvi} Transgender individuals have been excluded from making prominent decisions about changing the injustices experienced. Medical and legal systems have been a way people asserted whiteness and an avenue for transgender individuals to justify their sense of self.

A notion of authenticity or a politics of recognition need to be further explored regarding a naturalization of whiteness and transgender bodies. A dominant transgender narrative minimizes the possibilities of authenticity. As discussed earlier about a lesbian identity, some transgender individuals create a distance between their history and their current life. For instance, white transgender men, who may have

identified as lesbians previously, become situated in society where power and privilege accompany their current gender expression. However, these individuals may or may not recognize how their position in society shifted. Bornstein addressed how people who have male privilege may not want to surrender this social position. Male privilege provides a sense of entitlement, which is woven into many facets of culture in the United States.^{xlvii} She wrote, "I think that male privilege is the glue that holds the system together."^{xlviii} A dominant system needs to be rethought even though it may be complicated because of intense social conditioning and messaging to be a particular "way," especially in relation to gender. Butler also wrote, "At the same time, essential to so many political movements is the claim of bodily integrity and self-determination. It is important to claim that our bodies are in a sense our own and that we are entitled to claim rights of autonomy over our bodies."^{xlix} Transgender individuals do claim their bodies and assert self-determination on some level, yet how might this be expanded.

Partly, transgender individuals are socialized to dislike their bodies if their body does not align with a dominant cultural understanding of masculinity or femininity.¹ Jay Prosser examines how a notion of flesh impacts one's relationship with a sense of self. He wrote, "The skin itself becomes the article of gendered passing as gender shifts from doing to being, from performance to the flesh."^{li} Some transgender bodies have been misinterpreted in public spaces because they may not align with dominant perspectives of masculine and feminine as noticed earlier in Valerio's statement. The act of reading a gender body is connected to how power relations operate where white and male bodies become privileged, even within a transgender movement. For a transgender individual to be respectfully recognized in public environments and dominant systems, the person

had to be understood within a dominant framework of masculinity and femininity. Again, whose bodies and voices have been prioritized? The primary public presence has been white transgender women (male-to-female individuals) whose stories were circulated. In New Mexico, white transgender women and men are the primary public figures whose stories are circulating. Historically in New Mexico, whiteness has operated by positioning Hispanics and American Indians as socially inferior. If a transgender education and advocacy efforts are not attentive to this history, it replicates social practices elevating white people's experiences and asserts Whiteness in a predominately people of a color state. Mitchell talks about this history and wrote, "To claim whiteness, however, Anglo's in New Mexico could not simply racialize Indians and Hispanics as nonwhite; they would have to assert their own whiteness as well."^{lii} A dominant transgender narrative asserts a notion of whiteness by prioritizing bodies engaged with medical services, which creates positions of social inferiority within public knowledge about this identity.

The concept of being trapped in the wrong body also plays into the practice of asserting whiteness. Prosser wrote, "The image of being trapped in the wrong body conveys this force. It suggests how body image is radically split off from a maternal body in the first place, how body image can feel sufficiently substantial as to persuade the transsexual to alter his or her body to conform to it."^{liii} This force is the rigidity of a gender system based in a white and heterosexual framework. It relies on individuals accepting the unyielding dominant notions related to gender, race, sexuality, etc. As mentioned earlier, this narrative also has generated an avenue for people to be properly recognized among the general public and/or within more-intimate social

environments. Most people make a decision about one's gender based on their immediate socially conditioned gender perspectives. Transgender advocates have worked diligently to gain public recognition for the community and interrupt this immediate social condition process. Valerio wrote, "I'm beginning to discover just how many of our 'perceptions' are contextual--in contrast to, or grounded in, who are, relative. *Perception could be as much about the relationship between the observer and the observed as it is about actual definitive observations.*"^{liv} I elaborate more in depth on public perceptions by looking at how transgender bodies are usually represented primarily in Chapter 4.

How a person perceives an individual often determines the interaction amongst those involved. Physical perceptions do not necessarily lead to a point of "truth" about an individual. Gayle Salamon wrote, "Perception produces our relations with other objects and subjects, and these relations are, finally, the location of the objects meaning."^{lv} For instance, I am perceived as a white male, so I am treated according to society's cultural norms and assumptions about white men. If I do not disclose my transgender identity, I am categorized as male because of my masculine appearance. People assume I have knowledge related to masculinity, such as fixing an automobile, yet I am unfamiliar with the internal mechanics of a vehicle. I am rarely questioned about my actions such as returning or purchasing merchandise where men of color may have a different experience.

Michel Foucault raises important questions to consider at this juncture. He asks, "How are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge? How are we constituted as subjects who exercise or submit to power relations? How are we constituted as moral

subjects of our own actions?”^{lvi} Transgender subjects have embodied and navigated power relations. For example, the medical model was used as a way for people to share their wounds to physicians in order to be healed that has been beneficial for community members. The medical framework has been a framework employed within a judicial system, which assisted transgender individuals with changing information on their legal documents.^{lvii} However, biopower determines and manages whose life matters through the practice of regulating individuals. Putting forth dominant perspectives is a way to regulate bodies, in which case biopower operates to redefine boundaries between life and death.^{lviii} Rubin wrote, “In this culture, bodies are expressive representations of a person’s soul. We view bodies as the reflection of a gendered self.”^{lix} A gendered self is constructed through regulation practices based in a binary gender system that influences cultural understandings about masculinity and femininity. Individual bodies become a productive force in determining whose life matters.

Along with a focus on individual bodies, advocates have utilized a notion of human rights to advance transgender issues, which I expand on more in Chapter 3. Transgender stories have used a human rights framework as a way to raise awareness about equal access to medical services and about changing legal documents. Iris Marion Young wrote, “Rights are relationships, not things; they are institutionally defined roles specifying what people can do in relation to one another.”^{lx} A notion of human rights, such as an organizational policy or law, often has been considered to be a tangible item. Young offers a way to consider human rights as a relationship between social services, medical providers and psychological professionals. It provides a different approach to

addressing the underlying concerns within the community, such as racism and heterosexism. During the 20th century, a human rights claim regarding one's identity was an important part of the civil-rights tradition, and it became a dominant way to articulate a message to advance marginalized communities.^{lxi}

A human rights framework rarely has taken into consideration concerns about high-risk behaviors, such as use of substances or suicide rates, within the community. Transgender individuals may encounter barriers to accessing treatment facilities or other social service needs such as housing accommodations. With prioritizing the medicalization of bodies, it can produce feelings of inadequacy within transgender individuals and may contribute to higher suicide rates and overuse of substances. If advocates focused on addressing systematic barriers and oppressive practices that potentially lead to high-risk behaviors, I think a different conversation would emerge regarding a transgender community. Again, I do not discount the value of sharing personal stories about transitioning, because it has been a critical component for moving equity forward for the community. However, a human-rights framework addressing transgender concerns has elevated individuals wanting to access medical services and people experiencing violence, which situated transgender individuals in a victimized status. Young wrote, "Contemporary theories of justice are dominated by a distributive paradigm, which tends to focus on possession of material goods and social positions."^{lxii} Human rights discourses pursue obtaining justice and in this case access to medical treatment. "The idea of rights provides a familiar, and thus quietly powerful, lexicon through which to challenge injustices," according to Paisley Currah, and Shannon Minter.^{lxiii} By recognizing how the use of a human rights framework is used, it

can highlight the ways a dominant transgender narrative limits the possibility of individuals exploring a sense of self related to notions of masculine and feminine.

A human rights framework also feeds into a single story mentality and creates a way for individuals to name oneself along with being able to embrace a sense of belonging to a larger social movement.^{lxiv} Halberstam wrote, “Gender discomfort can be alleviated by narratives that locate the oddly gendered subject in the world and in relation to others.”^{lxv} A single story or dominant narrative provides a way for transgender individuals to make sense of their differently gendered bodies given the social, political, and economic systems established. It provides people a way to relate to one another and provides some alleviation of distress and feelings of isolation. Given the rapid increase of technology, the Internet has become a tool utilized by transgender individuals and organizations to develop a sense of community and interrupt feelings of isolation. It has been a space where people share stories and information about their experiences without having to engage with personal interactions. It also is a space where a dominant narrative is reinforced and policed by members of the community. The transgender movement needs to be cautious about how transgender personal stories maintain social, political, and economic conditions situated in suffering and inequality.^{lxvi} Dean Spade wrote, “In order to properly understand power and transphobic harm, we need to shift our focus from the individual rights framing of discrimination and ‘hate violence’ and think more broadly about how gender categories are enforced on all people in ways that have particularly dangerous outcomes for trans people.”^{lxvii}

Along with the emergence of transgender stories being publicly disclosed and recognized, cultural anxiety manifested because these stories challenged nationalist ideologies about who belongs and what human bodies are normalized in society. There are privileges, such as being a white transgender person, within these ideologies that some transgender people inherit with physically transitioning. As mentioned earlier, I inherited white male privilege to some extent. Transgender men of color gain access to male privilege, yet they often encounter dominant cultural assumptions regarding men of color. For instance, an African American transgender man may be pulled over by the police more often because of racial profiling in today's society. In an article by Daisy Hernandez, she wrote about an individual's experience of driving more cautiously in major cities such as San Francisco because of being perceived as an African American man. Louis Mitchell wrote, "I got pulled over 30 percent more than I had in the previous 23 years of driving, almost immediately. It was astounding."^{lxviii} This is one reason why an intersectional analysis is critical within the transgender movement.

Transgender men navigate public perspectives and narratives regarding notions of masculinity. Because some transgender men may not feel their masculinity aligns with a dominant discourse, they may feel threatened and insecure. This perspective about transgender men is rarely disclosed. Some transgender men may not believe they have the desired height based on cultural assumptions about masculinity. This insecurity about height can be a reason individuals overcompensate their masculine characteristics and play into stereotypical notions about males.^{lxix} This is one example of how to begin documenting the impacts of cultural imperialism and subtle process of naturalization. This process of naturalization is connected to biopower, where

disciplinary practices are regulating bodies and ideologies.^{lxx} Some transgender men may participate in dominant male behaviors and patterns because they internalize a dominant gender ideology. Foucault wrote, “Biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as a political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power’s problem.”^{lxxi} Biopolitics is a mechanism in place to monitor and regulate a community’s progress, which has evolved into a self-regulating practice. The production of a dominant transgender narrative emerged through this mechanism to control human bodies. The social and political mechanisms are deeply intertwined with medical and judicial procedures that revert to monitoring biological aspects of a human body.

This raises a question about the relationship between governmentality and a dominant transgender narrative. Governmentality is a mode of power that controls, overtly or subtly, human bodies. A dominant transgender narrative has become a way to control and determine whose life matters. With the focus on access to medical procedures, the dominant transgender narrative has subtly influenced a national perception and ideology about this community. Valerio wrote, “We aren’t beings with identities, we are consumers in search of a euphoric identity. A slight and whimsical euphoria that can be measured, quantified, and processed into a ‘safe’ space.”^{lxxii} With consumerism operating, the dominant narrative becomes the expectation within public spheres.

A transgender social movement is destined to repeat oppressive practices because of a drive to create a sense of safety and belonging. It strives to offer a notion of truth in relation to this identity where a transgender subject has been situated in

processes of normalization. Because of a history in creating cultural norms, it is vital to consider how dominant practices, such as science, have become intertwined with informing a sense of self.^{lxxiii} Social and political practices encourage individualism and pay little attention to how privilege, whiteness, and the impact of economic systems on whose life matters. Butler raises a critical question about dominant practices, which I find useful here. She wrote, "Perhaps the question cannot be heard at all, but I would still like to ask: Can we find another meaning, and another possibility, for the decentering of the first-person narrative with the global framework."^{lxxiv} Medical practices have a focus on individual problems, and I believe a human rights framework does as well. Butler's question offers an opportunity to rethink how a notion of transgender is being presented, emerging, and being advocated for in public spheres.

When individuals disclose their personal stories, they are sharing a sense of truth about their being. One's relation to self is interconnected with social and cultural norms, so individuals have a sense of coming to terms with oneself when speaking to someone else. However, social and cultural norms are part of a system of justice and punishment.^{lxxv} Butler wrote, "Confession becomes the verbal and bodily scene of its self-demonstration. It speaks itself, but in the speaking it becomes what it is."^{lxxvi} If transgender individuals do not have the capacity or knowledge to critically reflect upon themselves and how their identity has been produced through dominant systems, I argue a dominant transgender narrative inadvertently reproduces social and cultural understandings of gender and physical bodies. Foucault wrote, "The master's discourse has to talk, to explain, to persuade, he has to give the disciple a universal code for all his life, so that the verbalization takes place on the side of the master and not the side of

the disciple.”^{lxxvii} The medicalization of transgender has produced a dominant transgender narrative that exercises power through the universalization of stories and becomes consumed as a livable transgender identity.

Chapter 2

Transgender Organizational Development

During the 1980s and 1990s, transgender nonprofit organizations emerged to advocate for programs to meet the needs of individuals, to develop equitable policies, and fight for transgender human rights. National organizations such as the National Center for Transgender Equality began putting pressure on lesbian and gay organizations to incorporate transgender concerns into their scope of work and to expand these organizations' focus on state and federal policy efforts.^{lxxviii} This chapter examines the organizational development of transgender nonprofit organizations, particularly looking at the Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico (TGRCNM) as an example. I explore the organizational structure, institutionalization, and funding mechanisms of nonprofit organizations along with analyzing how whiteness emerges within these structures.

The following pages look closely at the ways nonprofit organizations working with a transgender community potentially limit their capacity to make effective political and social change. In the article "Native Organizing Before the Non-Profit Industrial Complex," Madonna Thunder Hawk wrote, "People in non-profits are not necessarily consciously thinking that they are 'selling out.' But just by trying to keep funding and pay everyone's salaries, they start to unconsciously limit their imagination of what they could do."^{lxxix} In 2010, TGRCNM began to emerge and continues to expand as a nonprofit, yet it may unconsciously reproduce an oppressive organizational structure. For example, most transgender organizations replicate a dominant nonprofit framework, which hinders the potential to critically address the underlying root causes of inequities for transgender people. I use the term a dominant nonprofit framework to articulate complacent practices within organizations that align with a dominant cultural framework. Most nonprofit organizations

operate within a hierarchical structure from a capitalist perspective, and are led primarily by white people.

Transgender organizations often model their governance structures and internal management practices after lesbian and gay organizations, which have replicated a dominant nonprofit framework. Rickke Mananzala and Dean Spade, who wrote in the article, “The Nonprofit Industrial Complex and Trans Resistance,” discuss the professionalization of nonprofit lesbian and gay organizations. They address how these organizations are funded by white gay people and hire primarily white staff. They also typically operate within a hierarchal model of governance such as by a board of director’s chair and vice-chair, who are instrumental in determining organizational priorities.^{lxxx} Nonprofit organizations usually have an executive staff, such as an executive director and assistant director, instead of co-directors. I delve into these internal structures and power relations later in the chapter.

However, some nonprofit organizations are beginning to operate differently such as with co-directors and challenge the historical organizational structure. The shift of leadership positions and structures begins to disrupt a dominant cultural framework. In thinking about the emergence of transgender organizations, Mananzala and Spade wrote, “This conversation is particularly meaningful because of the futility for trans communities in building organizations modeled on lesbian and gay rights frameworks that centrally benefit and concentrate power in the hands of people with race, educational and class privilege.”^{lxxxi} In general, organizational priorities continue to marginalize the needs of people of color, of individuals struggling socioeconomically, and of people living in a rural environment. White transgender women have been a dominant visual presence and public voice in the transgender movement, which I elaborate on in Chapter 4. Lesbian and gay nonprofit

organizations have emerged to provide direct services, advocate for policy changes, and create a sense of support for the community at large. Educating people about lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) issues has been a critical component to increasing the awareness about LGB peoples lived experiences. TGRCNM has replicated this model with emphasizing the ease of availability to medical services and usefulness of a drop-in center.

As nonprofit organizations become more professionalized and offer services needed for individuals, people in positions of power often are disillusioned about the demand and work that is necessary with community members.^{lxxxii} For example, the board of directors of TGRCNM may not engage deeply with community members who drop in to the center on a regular basis. Because a disconnect exists between organizational decision makers and the extent of services needed, the staff and board unconsciously privilege decisions and organizational priorities of people in power. At times, a board member may be in a position to fully comprehend the work involved with community members. For instance, a board member of TGRCNM has raised ideas and concerns within the organization's formal board meetings, yet the ideas that to advance the services offered are dismissed. This individual brings a unique perspective and lived experience, however does not receive credit for ideas proposed. If board members are not deeply engaged with examining how privilege and oppression emerge within their structure, the organization and services offered become unconsciously rooted in institutional racism, classism, and other oppressive practices.

In the article "are the cops in our heads and hearts?," Paula X. Rojas wrote about the need to challenge hierarchical structures and pursue building a people-based movement.^{lxxxiii} People have power to shift a dominant nonprofit framework and rethink how organizational priorities are implemented. Community members are in a position to hold nonprofit

organizations accountable for services offered, yet they do not often challenge staff leadership or board members. The disengagement of people from an organization is one way oppressive practices persist within a nonprofit structure. For example, TGRCNM is direct-service oriented and works minimally on policy change and building a political base for social change. Because TGRCNM is a drop-in center, an opportunity exists to build a strong politically engaged base through leadership development and educational programs. When I visited TGRCNM, community members were sitting in a lounge, talking and watching television. The image presented was complacency with space and services offered. I was not informed of any programs offered to people who dropped in at the center except for counseling services, HIV testing, or support groups.

Nonprofit organizations are state and federally regulated, which can be a barrier with incorporating a policy-driven entity although individuals can learn about the process of creating policies and laws. The organizational governing structure, which is the board of directors, could provide guidance on how to incorporate mobilizing people for political and social change. From my perspective, transgender organizations such as TGRCNM are not engaged with building a movement or mobilizing people to advocate for effective systematic changes that directly address racism, classism, and other oppressive practices. Even though advocates for a transgender community claim to be fighting for equal protections and human rights, the intentional focus on building a community-based movement and creating a sustainable and engaged group of people to strategically move the transgender movement forward is missing within New Mexico. Building an effective community-based movement and mobilizing individuals takes a tremendous amount of planning. When creating a long-

term plan for political and social change, leaders do not want to set up community members to fail.

Community outreach and understanding an individual's capacity is a critical component to developing this plan. At this time, TGRCNM has a simple plan to provide basic services to community members based on its marketing materials. The resource list on the website focuses on medical and social services offered in New Mexico. The educational materials at the resource center are from other organizations and provide information for health-care providers, educators, or other organizations on ways to accommodate the needs of a transgender community. These educational brochures become a mechanism to reduce discrimination. I use the term accommodate because the materials shared and services provided by TGRCNM do not address the root causes of social and economic inequities that transgender people encounter. I participated in one of TGRCNM's Transgender 101 training programs, where the PowerPoint presentation was focused on medical and legal aspects of an individual transitioning. The conversation did not highlight the complexity of lived experiences, especially for transgender people in rural environments. The discussion did not include a transgender individual's experience with partners struggling to comprehend a new identity, family members working through a grief process, or a work environment transitioning. I witnessed another presentation where a speaker on the panel provided basic information about their transitioning process and another speaker talked about their child's struggle with being transgender. The presenters did not delve into the broad experiences or various struggles, such as dealing with the racism or sexism that transgender individuals encounter.

Educational materials such as brochures and newsletters are an excellent way to circulate information from different transgender perspectives and can document stories throughout the state. These communication mechanisms can be a way to engage community members in the organization and to build a collective effort to challenge systematic injustices as well as to shift a dominant nonprofit structure. If the dominant organizational structure shifts, this action will challenge a dominant transgender narrative. Because of financial limitations, TGRCNM has decided to produce only a palm card with its logo, address, and information about services and support group meetings. They do not have additional education materials, which could begin challenging a dominant transgender narrative.

Between 2010 and 2011, TGRCNM had produced three newsletters that included organizational activity updates, information about the speakers' bureau, news from local and state advocacy efforts, and resources such as a book list. Even within these newsletters, the organization produced a narrow perspective about transgender issues. The first newsletter highlighted Transgender Day of Remembrance and information about Jamison Green coming to New Mexico; he wrote the book *Becoming a Visible Man*. Green delivered a talk at the University of New Mexico on "Identity --Category or Integration?" as well as met with community members during his visit. Two newsletters had a community spotlight section, which highlighted an individual's story. Both of the individuals highlighted live in Albuquerque, even though one is originally from the Gallup, N.M. area. This community spotlight space might be more valuable if it shared the experiences of community members at large. However, a decision was made to focus one of the articles on a board member and the other on the co-founder of the organization, both of whom live in an urban environment. I do not discredit the contributions these individuals made to the transgender community and

newsletter. Yet, another missed opportunity occurred to potentially circulate and acknowledge different community members throughout the state on the complexity of their lived experiences and on the work taking place in their respective areas.

The newsletters also list the location of speaking engagements, which are at universities or health-care environments. Most of the sites of these speaking engagements are in Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Speaker bureau panelists are also predominately living within these two cities, so audience members are hearing stories from an urban perspective and reinforcing a dominant transgender narrative. Even though TGRCNM may invite people to speak from different locations in the state, funds to support travel for these individuals does not exist nor is it made a priority. The invitation to speak at an event is usually on short notice, so making the necessary arrangements to participate can be difficult. The newsletter claims to have approximately 40 people on the speakers' bureau, yet that message is misleading if only a handful of people can participate regularly. This also addresses who has privilege and who is in position to be on a speaker's panel during business hours as well as who has access to reliable transportation and funds to support traveling. The newsletters are no longer produced, although this communication was launched as a way to circulate the development of TGRCNM. The lack of commitment to expand the newsletter and the decision to eliminate this communication mechanism with the public and community members is unfortunate. The newsletter had the potential to engage people on the complex lived experiences of transgender people in New Mexico and to begin circulating different perspectives about the community.

Given the organizational focus on direct social service programs and offering speaking engagements, communicating a message to the general public in multiple ways

becomes overlooked instead of prioritized as an outreach mechanism. Different forms of communication are a way to build a community-based and mobilized movement. For instance, social media has been a phenomenon over the last few years, and TGRCNM does utilize their Facebook page. The organizational priorities mentioned earlier have maintained a dominant cultural framework and reproduces a dominant transgender narrative. The act of providing social services depoliticizes a nonprofit organizational framework, limits building effective networks for social change, and hinders an analysis of structural oppression.^{lxxxiv} Mananzala and Spade wrote, “Base-building work that involves less tangible returns like the growth of shared political analysis within a community or relationship building is undervalued.”^{lxxxv} Funders are invested in tangible and measureable outcomes to ensure their funds are being adequately used for direct services or educational opportunities. Building trusting and effective relationships with marginalized and a historically dismissed community takes persistence and time. When funding is restricted to particular outcomes, relationship building becomes compromised to meet the funding deliverable. Yet, TGRCNM could decide to prioritize building a base if time and energy were spent on mapping out a long-term goal of the organization and pursue funds to support this work.

In the article “Social Service or Social Change?,” Paul Kivel wrote funding nonprofit organization’s direct social service programs creates an illusion of progress, which he called a buffer zone. This buffer zone silences people from demanding long-term structural and social change.^{lxxxvi} This zone distracts leaders from strategically creating a pathway toward political and social justice. The theory of change also provides a framework for effectively developing a plan to obtain a long-term goal if an organization can determine the purpose of the goal. This framework includes a component of documenting the outcomes and results for

organizational accomplishments.^{lxxxvii} These outcomes and results produce the necessary data to approach funding resources about the impact of the organization. The buffer zone can be dismantled through the utilization of a carefully thought out and strategic plan, which the theory of change is one framework to consider.

Organizational leaders have the potential to debunk the perpetuation of a dominant cultural framework within nonprofit organizational structures. In the *Meaning of Freedom*, Angela Davis wrote, “Instead of transforming dominant culture, dominant culture enlists new sectors to impose itself and perpetuate its ways.”^{lxxxviii} TGRCNM has sought access to social services and advocated for equality through dominant institutions such as universities, health-care services, and the judicial system. These dominant institutions may create changes to accommodate transgender people, yet a dominant culture framework is embedded in the institutions and reproduces oppressive practices toward transgender community members. For instance, the focus on transgender individuals has emphasized a possessive individualism that interconnects with capitalism.^{lxxxix} I elaborate on the impact of capitalism and an economically viable body later in the chapter. Transgender organizations may unconsciously enforce a dominant cultural silencing of understanding transgender lived experiences comprehensively. This silencing occurs through prioritizing a medical perspective about transgender individuals that generates a dominant transgender narrative. This dominant transgender narrative in conjunction with direct social service programs keeps the attention on individual needs being the priority within nonprofit organizations such as TGRCNM.

I argue TGRCNM has an organizational foundation based on a survival mentality and basic management of its programs because the organization has minimal financial resources to operate the center. While operating a nonprofit organization with a survival mentality,

power relations develop within the organizational structure between staff, board of directors, volunteers, and community members. Without intentionally addressing the power dynamics, a dominant culture continues to be perpetuated throughout the organization structure. State, federal, foundations, and donors are in a position to influence a organization's priorities through their fiscal support and regulation practices that reinforce the maintenance of a dominant social order.^{xc} Since the 1970s, nonprofit organizations have become linked with a federal and state accreditation structure, which is intertwined with owning class surveillance practices.^{xc} This federal and state institutionalized structure has manifested a dominant nonprofit organizational framework that has influenced grassroots organizing for social justice, and nonprofit organizations are pulled to align with a national and state system that emerged through a white racial lens. TGRCNM has been encouraged to align with this institutional structure, which means the nonprofit organizational status becomes legitimized within national and state systems. This alignment created a normalized corporate culture within a nonprofit structure.^{xcii} For example, TGRCNM is compelled to reproduce a corporate model because of its links to national and state systems. Employment opportunities, salaries, and credentialed professionals are part of this system and determine a priorities for organizations. Before discussing the corporate model and impact of employment structures of TGRCNM, I briefly address the federal categorization of the organization and how funding is linked with this structure.

The federal Internal Revenue Service (IRS), a National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) system, has been used to categorize nonprofit organizational structures. During the 1980s, the system was put forth by the National Center of Charitable Statistics to collect and analyze data along with providing quality information for public-policy decisions. In the

mid-1990s, the IRS decided to implement this system to determine and manage nonprofit organization classifications, which has become connected to the maintenance of a dominant social order.^{xciii} A few examples of the classifications include education, human services, religion related, and international foreign affairs. The TGRCNM is classified under P99, which stands for Human Services, multipurpose and other not elsewhere classified (N.E.C.).^{xciv} The IRS determines the category based on the mission statement and descriptive data submitted in an application. Instead of describing the TGRCNM organizational purpose as one of building community power, which could be classified as public, society benefit, the founders and board of directors decided to become state and federally recognized under a category based on a direct social service framework. The P99 code is used when organizations provide human services, although the organization description is not completely clear. Examples of a more specific category are P84 for Ethnic and Immigration Centers and P45 for Family Services for Adolescent Parents.^{xcv} Options for IRS classification are available when filing the application for nonprofit status.

Human service programs are critical to assisting people in various circumstances, such as transgender community members. However, a direct social service approach prioritizes individual needs with little attention to challenging the social, political, and economic injustices a transgender community encounters within dominant institutions. Counseling, case management, and support-group programs are direct services based on a medical framework and often require a licensed or certified individual to provide services. When launching the nonprofit organization, TGRCNM decided to develop peer-to-peer support groups as a way to avoid hiring a licensed counselor or group facilitator. Today, the organization partners with other entities that come to the center and are qualified to provide

counseling services. These licensed positions are another way to regulate services offered and determine who has the qualifications and credentials to be hired. Kivel wrote, “The problem comes when all of our time and energy is diverted toward social services to the detriment of long-term social change.”^{xvii} TGRCNM spends time and energy on support groups and provides drop-in services with minimal attention on programs that could lead to effective systematic social and political changes. Resources that provide funding have participated in determining where staff put their time and energy.

Funders providing fiscal support to nonprofit organizations in a human service framework require reports on outcomes of funds being utilized and want to know the measurements of success. Funders look for a change with the population receiving services. Funding deliverables may include documenting the number of people served, the number of educational workshops conducted, or individuals who benefited from the program or service. When applying for grants and foundational support, a nonprofit organization determines the goals and objectives to be accomplished within a specific time frame. These goals align with the request for proposal guidelines. State, federal, and foundation funding have an intensified proposal process and reporting mechanism to ensure deliverables are met. One challenge with pursuing funding opportunities is that nonprofit organizations write grant proposals to align with the funders’ requirements, which can lead the organization to stray from its mission statement. Donors also can influence the direction of an organization and expect to be informed of how their fiscal contribution is benefiting community members. If TGRCNM is focused on addressing the root causes of injustices toward community members, it may struggle to find fiscal support through a grant-making process or donor database.

Recall that community base building is undervalued because relationships and developing trust with individuals take extensive time and energy.

Along with reporting and documenting accomplishments to funders, nonprofit organizations must file an IRS 990 form so that they can be held accountable for receiving funds throughout the year. Many organizations produce an annual report to document their funding sources. All of the reporting mechanisms mentioned are a way to be transparent about the work being conducted on behalf of a community. An annual report is a way to acknowledge and appreciate funders and donors as well as to attract additional funding opportunities. The financial activity and 990 reporting of TGRCNM is not readily accessible nor is an annual report posted on its website. GuideStar is a nonprofit organization with a public charity category that provides information and dissemination about other nonprofit organizations as a way to be transparent about contributions, grants, performance of services provided, and other information. GuideStar's mission is "To revolutionize philanthropy by providing information that advances transparency, enables users to make better decisions, and encourages charitable giving."^{xcvii} According to GuideStar, TGRCNM reported \$92,724 in income, yet the funding sources are unclear.^{xcviii} In searching through GuideStar's database and other charity search engines, I was unable to locate any financial statements for TGRCNM that declared the funding sources of income for the organization. When financial reports are unavailable, the act of holding an organization accountable for its work becomes challenging.

In speaking with board and community members, I learned that the New Mexico Department of Health supports the HIV testing and prevention services offered at TGRCNM. I identified smaller grants received from local foundations such as the Santa Fe Community

Foundation and New Mexico Community Foundation. The local LGBTQ community has organized fundraisers primarily through drag performances where donations or a portion of the door admission went to TGRCNM. Again, the organization does not provide any information on its website or in an annual report to acknowledge the funding sources or contributions. The appreciation value of contributions is lacking within TGRCNM. The staff or a board member have not submitted information to online nonprofit data sources to ensure transparency with community members, funders, and donors. I recognize that an organization can opt to keep donor contact information confidential, yet documenting the number and quantity of contributions overall received is important. This lack of public fiscal reporting of the income and assets for TGRCNM calls attention to how privilege plays out in its organizational practice related to transparency and accountability.

By not publicly documenting funding resources, I question who is funding TGRCNM and how do the funding resources connect with a white, owning class and dominant cultural framework. At times, nonprofit organizational staff and boards of directors fear losing fiscal resources, especially if the organization has a small budget and operates in a survival mentality. This fear becomes embedded in the organization's governance structure and generates a dynamic where nonprofit organizations struggle to break away from a dominant cultural framework.^{xcix} As Mananzala and Spade wrote, "Part of the reason that decision-making power in nonprofits becomes concentrated in the hands of elites is because of how the organizations secure funding."^c I do not dismiss pursuing grant opportunities and building a donor database for an organization to provide direct social services to community members. However, I call attention to how funding resources can limit an organization's capacity, such as TGRCNM's investment in fighting for social justice.

In 2013, TGRCNM presented at the LGBTQ annual funders' retreat in Albuquerque, NM. It is an invitation-only event and serves as a time when professionals gather who support LGBTQ initiatives from various foundations and presentations. It's an opportunity for people working in philanthropy to network, share information, and engage in conversations about the direction of funding for LGBTQ concerns.^{ci} As a special guest, I attended a small portion of this event and witnessed the presentations given to the professionals in attendance. I also observed an unspoken rule that organizations presenting are not allowed to solicit funders during the retreat. Even though presenters cannot ask for funding, they are given an opportunity to highlight the value of their organization and how it works within the community. The presentation given by TGRCNM articulated its unique focus on transgender issues and claimed to be a one of a kind organization throughout the nation. The presenter was a white transgender man; no other representatives of TGRCNM were involved in the presentation. This presentation was another example of how white people obtain access to spaces, especially to funding resources.

Over the past decade, foundations have required organizations to collaborate when applying for funding opportunities. In the past few years, TGRCNM has partnered with organizations such as Equality New Mexico (EQNM), which works to achieve equality throughout the state. Historically, EQNM has been led by white individuals and operates in a dominant cultural framework. The work of EQNM is important, yet its organizational structure replicates the discussion earlier in the chapter about gay and lesbian organization's nonprofit model. Recall, some transgender organizations have modeled their structure after many gay and lesbian organizations. EQNM is one of the few organizations claiming to work throughout the state, and TGRCNM has reproduced a similar statewide organizational

structure. For instance, both organizations claim to conduct statewide education and advocacy work although spend the majority of their time and resources in urban environments. New Mexico is a predominately rural state except for three primary cities along Interstate 25, which I elaborate more on in Chapter 5. The organizations have partnered to apply for funding opportunities, such as signing up LGBTQ individuals to secure health-care coverage. Such collaboration is an example of how the outreach efforts of the two organizations for this health-care initiative took place in predominantly urban environments. Since the Affordable Care Act and grant was implemented, TGRCNM has not conducted educational workshops or outreach in rural environments that would inform community members about the program. An organizational gap exists between claiming statewide work and implementation.

Another grant that TGRCNM and EQNM received was from the State Equality Fund in partnership with the Southwest Women's Law Center and Santa Fe Mountain Center. With the grant funding, these organizations launched a Safe Schools initiative. It addresses bullying and harassment in schools throughout New Mexico. With this multiyear grant, the organizations will conduct outreach, build statewide momentum to address bullying and harassment, and adopt a statewide student policy model around transgender and gender nonconforming issues.^{cii} The organizations mentioned are primarily lead by white individuals and operate from a dominant nonprofit organizational framework. The State Equality Fund is administered through the Gill Foundation and was made possible by the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Foundation, Gill Foundation, Ford Foundation, and anonymous donors. The Gill Foundation is also primarily a white-led organization and is based in Denver. Not only are the local organizations based in urban environments, the funders contributing to this grant

opportunity are based in urban environments. Again, I further explore the influence of urban-based organizations in Chapter 5 but draw attention to this critical aspect here. People living and working in urban environments may not fully comprehend the different challenges one finds in rural atmospheres.

Foundations are influenced by a dominant cultural framework, urban perspectives, and potentially impose this framework on organizations. Cristine Ahn wrote, “The board and staff of today’s foundations are predominately white, middle-aged, and upper class.”^{ciii} Many funders require nonprofit organizations to act like subordinates and to follow their rules.^{civ} As an example, the State Equality Fund invites nonprofit organizations to send a letter of inquiry about the funding opportunity. From there, the decision makers of this foundation manage invited nonprofit organizations that have submitted a proposal. They may encourage alignment with their owning class agenda because this funding opportunity is not open to every organization. Today, many grant opportunities are invitation only and make access to funding sources a challenge, especially if the organization does not align with a dominant perspective. This funding opportunity is an example of how TGRCNM subtly aligns with gay and lesbian organizational priorities focused on programmatic work and policy change within a white dominant framework.

TGRCNM does not provide information about being a partner of the State Equality Fund or how the organization is engaged with the initiative. Organizational transparency becomes another important aspect within a nonprofit organization. Transparency means disclosing pertinent information about the organization, such as the names of the members of the board of directors on the website, providing an annual report, or communication clearly about the work taking place in the community. Through speaking with board members, I

have learned that financial reports are not available on a regular basis. With the executive of TGRCNM staff being white, this lack of transparency with finances is one way that privilege operates within its organizational structure.

In publicly documenting the board of director's names and biographies, one is able to learn about who oversees the organizational practices and community members are able to approach board members and hold accountable staff for organizational actions. In searching for TGRCNM's board of directors, I found minimal public information through nonprofit organization search engines. CenterLink's website, a National Community of LGBT centers, had information available because it posts a directory of members and listed the name of the board chair.^{cv} The lack of disclosure about who represents the TGRCNM board and general information of individuals who hold positions of influence creates an atmosphere where limited decision makers are engaged. Who is overseeing the fiscal management of the organization and how are funds being allocated to benefit community members? Also, TGRCNM claims to work throughout the state, so how does the board of directors ensure that rural communities are represented in decision-making processes?

As previously mentioned, an annual report is another mechanism of transparency about who is funding and supporting an organization's work in the community. Mananzala and Spade addressed how nonprofits have become funded more by business charities, which replaced previous government funding.^{cvi} Recall, foundations are connected primarily to owning-class populations and to a ruling class agenda, which can create barriers for organizations wanting to challenge institutional practices, raise public knowledge about systematic inequities, and mobilize people for political change.^{cvi} Dylan Rodríguez wrote, "The NPIC [nonprofit industrial complex] is the medium through which the state continues

to exert a fundamental dominance over the political intercourse of the U.S. Left, as well as U.S. civil society more generally.”^{civiii} Both the federal and state governments police nonprofit organizations by monitoring their economic revenue; such policing of practices reduces the possibility of challenging the dominant social, political, and economic order. Foundations police organizational practices because they are invested in their reputation and want to ensure that funds are utilized appropriately. A part of this monitoring takes place via reporting mechanisms, such as filing quarterly reports to the IRS or to foundations.

Because TGRCNM is a relatively new organization, the potential exists to build and mobilize individuals to make political change while advancing a transgender social movement throughout the state. Rodríguez addressed the political assimilation of nonprofit organizations and how they become aligned with dominant social structures. A new nonprofit organization must be recognized as a legitimate organization within these existing social structures. However, dominant social structures, which I consider to be based in a white and owning-class framework, manifested an unarticulated agreement with the political logic of state violence. This state violence enables various forms of domination within a white, civil society.^{cix} Rodríguez wrote, “The racial and white supremacist fears of American civil society, in other words, tend to be respected and institutionally assimilated by a Left that fundamentally operates through the bureaucratic structure of the NPIC [nonprofit industrial complex].”^{cx} Even though individuals or a community attempt to change unjust social and economic structures, most nonprofit organizations have become subtly influenced by a dominant culture and structure.

TGRCNM may claim to be the only organization focused on transgender issues and attempts to change unjust structures working with transgender individuals. Yet, TGRCNM’s

organizational priorities and practices demonstrate the ways whiteness and privilege operate that reproduce fear of politically challenging these structures to create social change. George Lipsitz wrote in his book *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* that the power of whiteness looks for ways to reward and privilege a ruling-class agenda at the expense of other people. He wrote, “Failure to acknowledge our society and possessive investment in whiteness prevents us from facing the present openly and honestly.”^{cxix} Power relations have emerged within TGRCNM’s organizational structure, which are linked with state violence. As forms of domination and an investment in whiteness emerge, nonprofit organizations become a restricted institutional space to organize for social justice.

Nonprofit organizations also have internalized philanthropic, state, and national power relations, and it was discussed earlier how people in privileged positions are establishing organizational priorities. Michel Foucault wrote about the ways power is connected with economic functionality, which reproduces class domination. He wrote, “Power is relations; power is not a thing; it is a relationship between two individuals, a relationship which is such that one can direct the behavior of another or determine the behavior of another.”^{cxii} Foucault offers a way to consider how power dynamics are operating within an organization. TGRCNM has only two staff people, who earn minimal incomes, which means that responsibility for operations are often distributed to a larger body of people connected to the organization, such as volunteers. However, how often do volunteers have the opportunity to contribute to organizational priorities or participate in a decision-making process? If board members are inadequately informed about the organizational direction and decisions being made on behalf of the community, the relationships established among organization staff and board members may not allow for conversations about how power

dynamics are operating. Over the past few decades in the United States, social justice advocacy work has also become linked with employment opportunities or a salary. These employment opportunities also contribute to power dynamics within an organization. At this stage in TGRCNM's organizational development, an opportunity exists to shape the structure of how salaries are considered and how positions are distributed. The TGRCNM employee structure could shift its organizational priorities and begin challenging white political, social, and economic structures. Recall, volunteers are vital to organizations because they contribute time and energy to the organizational priority areas. These individuals should be provided equal access to decisions being made to move the organization forward.

Volunteers are significant contributors to TGRCNM, yet these individuals often are overlooked for their contribution of time to the organization. Dominant social and organizational structures have convinced volunteers and community members that they cannot participate in challenging systematic organizational oppression, especially if the organization struggles with funding. The sense of losing financial support produces fear to challenge an organizational structure that works to fill a gap in services. At what cost does an organization fill a gap instead of challenge the root of oppressive practices, which leads to an increase in services needed? Individuals hired in leadership positions often make decisions without consulting board members, volunteers, and community members. At times, ideas are proposed by individuals that are overlooked or are not capitalized. Sometimes, ideas are proposed and acted on, yet credit is not given for the ideas. With limited staff, the organization also must spend time raising funds to continue paying employees or justifying the work conducted in communities instead of challenging institutional oppressive practices.^{cxiii}

Nonprofit organizations pursuing social justice with community members can be difficult to distinguish from an organization pursuing funding opportunities and expansion based on its work conducted on behalf of community members. Amara H. Pérez wrote, “For organizers looking at the structures that house the movement, it becomes difficult to distinguish the difference between a social justice non-profit and a small non-profit with a business pursuit.”^{cxiv} As mentioned earlier, TGRCNM operates within a corporate model and accepted contributions from funding entities required to follow federal regulations. The regulations are a driving force of how nonprofit organizations operate. Jones de Almeida wrote, “We as activists are no longer accountable to our constituents or members because we don’t depend on them for our existence. Instead, we’ve become primarily accountable to public and private foundations as we try to prove to them that we are still relevant and efficient and thus worthy of continued funding.”^{cxv} A challenge in pursuing funding opportunities is determining how to navigate foundations or grant requirements and yet remain accountable to the community.

Also, the rise of neoliberalism contributes to the maintenance of a status quo for the maldistribution of resources. The term neoliberalism addresses the interaction between an owning-class agenda and organizations participating in raising awareness about transgender issues. Neoliberalism produces conditions where self-esteem becomes connected with personal responsibility and reinforces an individualistic framework. Lisa Duggan addresses how neoliberal politics is understood as a conflicting and shifting relation of power.^{cxvi} She discusses a naturalization process in becoming recognized as domesticated and depoliticized. Homonormativity implies that one is equipped with a narrow perspective on equality, access

to institutions, and a right to privacy.^{cxvii} Susan Stryker addresses how homonormativity attempts to articulate the marginalization within transgender politics.^{cxviii}

Aihwa Ong wrote about the ways individuals internalize neoliberal traits, which produces technologies of subjectification, which means individual responsibility.^{cxix} She argues, “Neoliberalism is merely the most recent development of such techniques that govern human life, that is, a governmentality that relies on market knowledge and calculations for a politics of subjection and subject making that continually places in question the political existence of modern human beings.”^{cxx} Neoliberal perspectives have influenced transgender organizations and advocacy practices through the prioritization of a medicalized transgender body where responsibility is placed on the individual. TGRCNM works to legitimize transgender bodies through its educational and advocacy efforts. Its work to gain public recognition generates a subtle message that transgender individuals are productive citizens who contribute to a political economy. By naturalizing transgender bodies in a medical framework and an emphasis of a viable productive body, a dominant social and political economy becomes reinforced through organizational practices.^{cxxi}

The policing of transgender individuals are practiced through regulating and monitoring nonprofit organizations.^{cxxii} For instance, boards of directors and staff members are regulated by the rules associated with nonprofit categories. Community members are regulated through organizational priority areas. Rodríguez wrote about nonprofit organizations becoming tethered to a nationalist ideology through financial and political accountability. Even though nonprofit transgender organizations emerged to resist national oppressive practices, state and federal institutions have the power to control the direction of an organization. Unfortunately, the nonprofit industrial complex reproduces oppressive

practices and bypasses addressing the ways that power, dominance, and violence structure society.^{cxxiii}

TGRCNM also operates as a nonprofit organization with a corporate framework to ensure transgender individuals are presented as productive citizens. Jones de Almeida wrote, “After all, capitalism is not only around us in the society we live in -- it is also within us in terms of what we value, how we live, and what we believe is possible.”^{cxxiv} Capitalism is a systematic way to co-opt peoples’ experiences that become repackaged within a profit-driven logic even though the lead in sharing experiences is a nonprofit organization.^{cxxv} Capitalism contributes to the possessive individualism of transgender lived experiences put forth in nonprofit organizations. A possessive individualism framework encourages nonprofits to not address the number of people encountering multiple forms of discrimination primarily through institutions. Kivel wrote, “At the same time, by pointing to those few who succeed, they provide a social rationale for blaming those who didn’t make it because they did not work or study hard enough.”^{cxxvi} This also perpetuates a personal responsibility mentality that relates to the influence of neoliberalism. The lack of community accountability, a survival mentality, and unjust resource distribution has become normalized within fiscally struggling nonprofit organizations, which makes it difficult to challenge structural oppressive practices.^{cxxvii}

Dan Irving addressed how notions of normal and healthy productive bodies are utilized in educating people about transgender individuals. He wrote about transgender voices reinforcing a hegemonic socioeconomic and political discourse grounded in concepts of labor productivity.^{cxxviii} Irving wrote, “They grounded this hormonally and surgically assisted transformation in a social context framed in part by conceptualizing the national

value ascribed to individuals in terms of their productive capacity.^{»cxxxix} Medical professionals strengthened a discourse on labor productivity and citizenship, which contributes to a national economic framework. Irving also addressed the ways that doctors have internalized an upper- and middle-class labor productivity discourse in which hormone therapy and gender confirmation surgeries related to transgender individuals are intertwined with the economic vitality of the nation.^{cxxx}

Irvin provides a useful way to think about transgender issues framed in economic productivity as well as in how a notion of human rights is put forth, which I will elaborate more in Chapter 3. However, Mananzala and Spade write about the narrow focus on individual rights and the relation to property and responsibility.^{cxxxix} They wrote, “To build trans liberation organizations or a trans movement that does not meaningfully resist capitalism and racism, or, worse yet, is co-opted to become an arm of racist and capitalist state building, is unsustainable, unjust, and inexcusable.”^{cxxxix} The transgender community achieved social recognition by individuals proclaiming a normal productive labor body and participating in a capitalist society.^{cxxxix} In moving forward with considering the structure and priorities of nonprofit organizations working with a transgender community, the elements of what constitutes a productive human body should be more fully explored.

In conclusion, nonprofit organizations working with a transgender community have an opportunity to develop a vibrant and active political force by building the capacity of community members. Challenges with funding resources should not hinder an organization from pursuing community-based mobilization efforts to create social change. I attempted to address how particular mentalities, such as survival mechanisms or being fear based, are connected to a dominant social order to distract organizations from addressing the underlying

causes of inequities. I also addressed how subtly organizations such as TGRCNM are reproducing a dominant transgender narrative through their organizational priorities and public education efforts. The next chapter builds on what was briefly discussed about a nationalist ideology and how this ideology reinforces the above mentalities and a dominant transgender narrative.

Chapter 3

Influences of a Nationalist Ideology and Human Rights Framework

Transgender lived experiences have predominately been flattened in the public sphere-instead of allowing for the complexity of embodiment, affect, and locality to emerge.^{cxxxiv} Public knowledge about a transgender community has been mostly individualized and situated in a medical framework, given the minimal attention and critique to how a nationalist ideology influenced a transgender narrative. In this chapter, I argue that a United States nationalist ideology influences a transgender narrative because the nationalist ideology is connected to a sense of belonging, who is visually represented, and a discourse on human rights. I use the term nationalist ideology to mean a white, male, and heteronormative perspective that people consume. A transgender narrative engage with notions of diversity and pluralism based around identity politics created through social conditioning based on this nationalist ideology. Identity politics has become a way that transgender individuals engage with organizational or advocacy efforts; it also has become a mechanism to interrupt the perceived isolation and individualism of systematic oppression toward marginalized communities.

A transgender social movement has advocated for the community's rights, yet it has subtly focused on advancing individuals instead of advancing the complexity of transgender lived experiences. For instance, the educational and visual information shared publicly does not capture the multiple aspects and cultural differences within a transgender community. Miranda Joseph wrote, "Cultural pluralism is a discourse of assimilation, articulating a process whereby 'community' members become individual American citizens."^{cxxxv} In the

following pages, I elaborate on how assimilation practices, such as the use of restrooms, are intertwined with a nationalist ideology around what constitutes a human body and gender expression. I explore the concepts of a transgender community and collective political efforts regarding transgender, especially keeping in mind a nationalist ideology. I also look at how a human rights framework has influenced advocacy efforts for transgender people who navigate bureaucratic systems and institutional practices.

A nationalist ideology is connected to the human body of individuals, which constitutes a notion of citizenship within a state. Aihwa Ong wrote, “The elements that we think of as coming together to create citizenship—rights, entitlements, territoriality, a nation—are becoming disarticulated and rearticulated with forces set into motion by market forces.”^{cxxxvi} Both a notion of citizenship as well as of equality have a market force that assists with developing laws to protect individuals. The market forces are connected not only to terms such as citizenship and equality, but to a medical profession that contributes to a public understanding about a transgender identity. A nationalist ideology has been created through individuals’ existence and interactions with the judicial system, which interrelates with the medical profession.^{cxxxvii} Judith Butler wrote, “And it is not just that there are laws that govern our intelligibility, but ways of knowing, modes of truth, that forcibly define intelligibility.”^{cxxxviii} The human body also relates to a sense of truth, which becomes reinforced through a nationalist ideology and dominant transgender narrative.

If transgender individuals align with a dominant national narrative, their personal intelligibility and organizational operations rarely are called into question. However, for transgender individuals who do not articulate a dominant national narrative about

transgender individuals specifically in this case about physically transitioning, contemplation of suicide, or family struggles, their stories often are dismissed. Unknowingly, at times, transgender individuals and organizations practice self-regulating one another in order to be recognized within a dominant society. A nationalist ideology has created discourses about a stigmatized group of people. The stigmatization of transgender people has been modeled after historical public understandings of gay and lesbian individuals. For example, transgender individuals have been pathologized or deemed unable to be productive members of society, which was addressed in Chapter 1 around the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* and standards of care. Iris Marion Young wrote, “A social group is a collective of persons differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices or way of life.”^{cxxxix} Because of being a stigmatized group, transgender community has made spaces available to come together and express their distinct concerns from other groups of people. Even though transgender is connected to a gay and lesbian movement, community leaders have been working to clarify the distinctions between these two identities and social movements.

A transgender identity has created a space for people to connect with one another, share personal and community struggles, and advocate for policy change. Paisley Currah, Richard Juang, and Shannon Minter wrote, “Ultimately, transgender refers to a collective political identity.”^{cxl} In their article that addresses the term transgender, they wrote, “The term can, at times, mask the differences among gender nonconforming people and risks implying a common identity that outweighs differences along racial and class lines.”^{cxli} This mask of a common identity has dismissed the historical impacts of discrimination

particularly toward people of color and individuals from a working-class background. A challenge with the term transgender has been to keep the intersection of gender, race, and class at the center of the social movement or organizational priorities. Yet, the common or collective political identity provided a connection among community members and offers a sense of familiarity, which became a mechanism to bring people together and put forth transgender organizations and social services.

Transgender individuals grasp onto a sense of belonging and pride based on a common identity in order to contradict feelings of shame and to create a distance from public stereotypes about being a deviant.^{cxlii} The concept of “coming out” or disclosing one’s identity is meant to enhance individuals’ sense of self-confidence and move toward a sense of pride with their identity. Organizations such as the Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico (TGRCNM) have capitalized and developed their programs around a sense of transgender pride. I do not discount the importance of embodying self-confidence and internalized power-although I am cautious about how a sense of transgender pride potentially dismisses intersectional understandings about the self and lived experiences.

As Chapter 2 addressed, TGRCNM’s concept is to provide support to community members and offer a space for people to express their gender identity openly. Other organizations, such as the Human Rights Campaign, have an entire section on their webpage dedicated as a “Coming Out Center.”^{cxliii} Organizations may take a different approach to utilizing a coming-out framework to offer a space to claim one’s identity and contradict stereotypes circulating in a dominant national narrative. Through TGRCNM, one-way people disclose their identity is participating on the speakers’ bureau and sharing their

personal stories about physically transitioning or being a supportive parent or partner. The TGRCNM speakers' bureau was one of the first structured activities implemented within the organization. Members of the bureau sometimes are invited to speak at various meetings, educational settings, and other venues. For instance, I invited the TGRCNM speakers' panel to a social work course I taught for graduate students to expand their understandings about transgender people. Many of the speakers provided information about their medical procedures and physically transitioning process, although they did not delve into the complexity of their relationships and everyday experiences. Again by sharing their stories publicly, it interrupts any feelings of shame and re-emphasizes a sense of pride in their identity. I do not fully delve into the history of coming out and a notion of shame here, although these concepts also have been a way to reinforce internalized and systematic oppressive practices. These concepts also distract advocates and community members from keeping the intersection of race, class, and gender at the center of all organizational efforts because of the primary focus of disclosing a transgender identity or relation to a transgender person.

Within a national narrative about transgender people, gender and sex become prioritized as a way to gain legitimacy for community members. Isaac West wrote, "That is, in spite of increasingly fluid notions of gender, the binary logic of sex remains the dominant ideology of corporal legibility, which is defined primarily by visual cues."^{cxiv} When the general public can visually identify someone based on familiar understandings of masculinity and femininity, transgender individuals potentially feel a sense of safety and belonging. In Chapter 4, I fully elaborate on the influence of visual representations related

to transgender. However, cultural and corporal legibility reinforce a biopolitics of gender in which cultural anxiety punishes individuals for not aligning with a dominant nationalist ideology. For instance, transgender individuals have encountered discrimination when using the restroom of their preference and have experienced harassment because their legal documents, such as a drivers' license, does not match their preferred name. Restrooms are divided by gender, which is one way a binary sex framework is reinforced and cultural assumptions about naturalized sexed bodies circulate, which have become regulated by law.^{cxlv}

In *Transforming Citizenship*, West wrote about the work of People in Search of Safe and Accessible Restrooms (PISSAR), which provides a model to consider in moving forward with transgender advocacy efforts. PISSAR was a campaign and advocacy collaboration between transgender individuals and people with disabilities, which had challenged not only the binary logic of sex but the hegemonic framework embraced by white gay and lesbian advocacy efforts situated within notions of shame. West wrote, "The undoing of the privatization logics of public bathrooms may be one of the most exciting and productive sites for queer coalitional politics as it opens up the potential for linking the everyday concerns of a LGBT community and people with disabilities."^{cxlvi} The above example provides a way to think about how to collaborate within New Mexico around transgender concerns, because many efforts put forth are based within a white hegemonic framework and are centralized in an urban environment.

Restrooms have been one of the primary sites for transgender advocates and allies to concentrate on making institutional and policy changes as well as to develop a collective

approach to building community. Restrooms are a familiar space to decision makers, which creates an opportunity for a campaign to develop a message that resonates with them and the general public. In April 2015, the city of Santa Fe passed an ordinance that created a new section within the city's existing laws requiring that public single-occupancy and employee restrooms become gender neutral. This city ordinance, led by the current mayor, had been received fairly well by the public. TGRCNM could pursue modeling this resolution in other city governments, and doing so would be a way to engage local community members to become active in making policy changes. Recall that in Chapter 2, I discussed how TGRCNM's organizational priorities have not been historically engaged with changing policies in this manner. Restrooms are a space that subtly creates a sense of belonging and acknowledgement within the legal framework of a city, region, state, or nation. If the concept of restrooms becomes framed as an architectural privilege and a space taken for granted, the general public is more likely to comprehend the importance of such ordinances as the one in Santa Fe.^{cxlvii}

Given the example of PISSAR and the city ordinance in Santa Fe, an intersectional approach to discussing a transgender identity becomes critical to implement in advocacy efforts and organizational development. Because the intersections of race, class, and gender are mostly invisible, the lack of attention to this intersection provides a space for gender to become elevated and visible.^{cxlviii} Gender symbols play a significant role in this visibility and in producing a national public image about human bodies. Gender symbols are utilized to mark spaces, such as public restrooms, identification on driver's licenses, and birth certificates. West wrote, "Yet, from a very young age, we learn the rules and etiquette

of public bathroom usage and generally follow these unwritten codes without much thought.”^{cxlix} Restrooms are a space where a nationalist ideology about what constitutes a legitimate human body and public gender presence are made known. Gender symbols also are a way to mark publicly binary spaces. They also have been used as logos to express feelings of pride for lesbian, gay, and transgender people. TGRCNM uses partial aspects of the male and female symbols for its logo. These gender symbols subtly reproduce what constitutes male or female from a dominant nationalist ideological perspective.

As previously mentioned, whiteness and the medical profession have influenced a transgender narrative. Jasbir Puar wrote about the rise of a gay rights movement and how it aligns with as well as reinforces binary subjects. She wrote, “We have less understanding of queerness as a biopolitical project, one that both parallels and intersects with that of multiculturalism, the ascendancy of whiteness, and may collude with or collapse into liberationist paradigms.”^{cl} Even though she addresses queerness, a dominant transgender narrative colludes with a white dominant narrative while attempting to resist national cultural understandings about gender and binary sex subjects. In the process of challenging a national perspective about gendered bodies, transgender advocacy efforts have also used a discourse on human rights, which has become intimately intertwined with a white dominant narrative based on individualism.^{cli}

At this time, I address the impact of nationalism and an imagined community as a way to think through how transgender subjects are controlled. Carl Stychia addressed how nationalism functioned to control women, how motherhood was prioritized as a form of respectability, and the ways racial constructions contribute to the rise of nationalism.^{clii} A

nation is considered to be a community and conceived of as comradeship. Yet, a transgender community has not always been welcomed within national discourses, and some transgender people do not want to participate in this national comradeship. Benedict Anderson wrote, “It is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”^{ciii} This imagined community reinforces national identities as connected to a bourgeois morality and aesthetic representation that becomes constituted as a sense of normal. Anderson also addressed how three institutions of power- the census, map, and museum- shaped colonial practices. These three aspects of power were used to determine the nature of a human being, the geography of domain, and the legitimacy of people.^{civ} Anderson wrote, “Why this transformation should be so important for the birth of the imagined community of the nation can best be seen if we consider the basic structure of two forms of imagining which first flowered in Europe in the eighteenth century: the novel and the newspaper.”^{civ} These two forms of imagining provided a technical way to articulate and represent an imagined community or nation. These two forms of public documents also were a mechanism to raise visibility and educate people about transgender individuals. Newspapers have been a formalized way to inform the public about a transgender community. As mentioned in Chapter 1, novels and personal stories shared in books were another way transgender people shared lived experiences and increased public knowledge about the community. TGRCNM has used a newsletter to inform people about its work and the community, on which I addressed in Chapter 2.

I want to briefly point out that in New Mexico, the newspapers drew on stories across the nation about patriarchy, dominant gender relations, and bolstered notions of an

ideal white home.^{clvi} Pablo Mitchell wrote about how New Mexico could not escape the relationship between one's body configuration and notions of citizenship based on a nationalist ideology. White educators strictly emphasized throughout the state white notions of femininity and masculinity instead of the complex relations with gender, which existed within indigenous populations.^{clvii} New Mexico has an extremely diverse population. Racial and ethnic identities are not necessarily unified and do not have the same meaning throughout the state. However, many economic development and educational projects within the state situated Native and Hispanic communities as socially inferior. This was partially shaped through the rise of the medical profession and to the beginning of institutionalized public health. Mitchell wrote, "The elevation in status and authority of the medical profession, for instance, is for several scholars integral to modernity."^{clviii} I bring attention to this history of race within New Mexico because it is linked to modernity and the influence of the medical profession regarding notions of gender, race, and class. As I have argued, a dominant transgender narrative emerged and is linked to how individuals and communities of color are situated in society.

With the emergence of a transgender collective political identity, I am concerned with how a notion of a transgender community exists within a nation. Partha Chatterjee wrote, "If the nation is an imagined community, and if nation must also take the form of states, then our theoretical language must allow us to talk about community and state at the same time."^{clix} This theoretical language is emerging more within a national context when discussing a transgender identity. Yet, the language used in New Mexico to discuss the relationship between a transgender community and forms of state is lacking. I raise the

following question as an example: How are organizations speaking about the transgender undocumented individuals within our cities and communities? Historically, transgender individuals have struggled to be recognized within a nationalist ideology and imagination, yet how people speak, especially advocates, about transgender concerns must expand to interrupt a dominant perspective related to this identity. The nationalist ideology in the United States has a liberal framework, which means people believe in and use language associated with principles such as democracy, equal opportunity, and self-determination. This nationalist ideology generates a sense of possibility that social change, equality, and a notion of human rights can be achieved based on the systems of laws within a state and federally. It also puts forth language articulating that individuals have a sense of freedom. Yet, this nationalist ideology has generated limited opportunities for people to engage in conversations and actions that challenge a liberal framework, which has influenced nonprofit organizations such as TGRCNM.

Liberalism is connected to notions of equality that produce a positive frame of incorporation into society.^{clx} A notion of equality often refers to implementing and putting forth inclusive practices within an institution. The concept of equal rights emerged from a civil rights philosophy that all humans are created equal and should be recognized as the same under the law, yet this concept assimilates people into a particular favored form.^{clxi} As an example of how these terms are used within a transgender movement, TGRCNM, at times, uses the language of access to services or protecting individuals, which reiterates a liberal equal rights mentality. West wrote, "Equality, in its liberal incarnation as the equality of opportunity or in its more democratic form as the equality of outcome, informs concepts

of fairness that even three-year olds quickly learn to manipulate to their own ends.”^{clxii} The benefits of using the language of equality are minimal because of this terms broad meaning. An equal rights framework has become intertwined with a nationalist ideology, which contributes to social ordering and disciplinary practices. This framework is reinforced through self-regulation practices that align with a dominant cultural framework. Identity politics and nonprofit organizational structures often are created through a production of social relations based on the above philosophy of equality.^{clxiii}

However, the above framework has created an avenue for transgender advocates navigating legal regulations of human bodies and understandings of citizenship in order to gain official state recognition.^{clxiv} For example, TGRCNM was part of a small group of people in Albuquerque who provided feedback to the New Mexico Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) on developing a simple form to change an individual’s gender or name on their driver’s licenses. Medical and legal discourses are increasingly being used to make systematic changes such as the one above. The MVD form has a section for a health-care provider to sign off, stating permission is granted for the department to make the changes being requested by the individual. West wrote, “Still, gender identity protections, both the struggle to get them into law and their efforts in culture, may continue to provide a center of gravity to unite trans people in common cause.”^{clxv} This common cause consistently bumps up against a dominant white narrative situated in heteronormativity. Transgender individuals are embedded and socially conditioned through a national framework that has been produced primarily by elite white heterosexual men. Through the emergence of transgender stories, the notion of ‘I’ has been emphasized, which reinforces the

individualization within a nationalist framework that influences transgender advocacy efforts as well as encourages a human rights approach.

I argue that limited conversations have been generated publicly about the interrelatedness of the social temporality, which is used here to express how an identity arises within a social context. Butler wrote, “When the ‘I’ seeks to give an account of itself, it can start with itself, but it will find that this self is already implicated in a social temporality that exceeds its own capacities for narration; indeed, when the ‘I’ seeks to give an account of itself, an account that must include the conditions of its own emergence, it must, as a matter of necessity, become a social theorist.”^{clxvi} With transgender organizational focus on social justice, this approach should incorporate social temporality that addresses institutional oppression.^{clxvii} Young wrote, “Our society enacts the oppression of cultural imperialism to a large degree through feelings and reactions, and in that respect oppression is beyond the reach of law and policy to remedy.”^{clxviii} Dominant white narratives have produced oppressive practices that shape injustices people encounter. If these dominant narratives are not addressed in developing an organization, the act of putting forth programs, support groups, or advocacy efforts potentially will replicate the practices associated with this narrative. Organizations and advocates looking beyond the laws and medicalization of transgender people begin to open a space for conversations to emerge that contradict a dominant oppressive force. For instance, organizations examining notions of normalcy and a process of naturalization within programs, support groups, and advocacy efforts begin to expose how deeply integrated these concepts influence organizational priorities and are interconnected to a nationalist ideology. West wrote, “Rather than a call

to abandon politics, this is a call to recognize the ways in which norms, recognition, identity, and agency operate in our everyday lives.”^{clxix} Bringing attention to the ways normality and naturalization impact public recognition can shift the ways in which organizations approach working with and advocating for transgender people.

Transgender nonprofit organizations have engaged in politics primarily through raising awareness of this marginalized constituency’s experiences based on human rights violations. The visibility of these violations has been connected to hierarchical structures of public recognition.^{clxx} For instance, the attention to transgender homicides and a national day dedicated to those violations is connected to garnering media stories, fighting for legal protections, and desiring national recognition for the violence encountered. Because of the tendencies of a capitalist society and market forces, the nonprofit organizational hierarchal structures are based on social suffering and the violations experienced. This approach to public recognition creates potential friction within and among communities working for social justice because of how institutional oppressive practices operate.^{clxxi} A transgender movement has utilized this hierarchical structure and human rights framework to raise public awareness about the community on a national level, which offers possibilities and pitfalls.

A human rights framework includes providing basic protections for individuals and protections for international stability.^{clxxii} The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was conceived in 1948 after World War II. This declaration provided a framework for the development of international practices related to human rights. In looking at the history of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the terms sovereignty and citizenship are critical

components within the document. A legal framework was used to develop the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provided a way to address social struggles and to create a universal language that resonated in legal arenas about a notion of human rights.^{clxxiii} With this universal language, the laws put forth articulate concepts of respect and dignity that have been useful in local politics and in the transgender movement. However, language about civilization and culture rarely are articulated within a human rights framework.^{clxxiv} Often people advocating for transgender individuals use the term human rights without integrating a cultural aspect to the situation; such advocates also may have minimal understandings of the individualism reinforced in public realms when using these words. West wrote, “We also need a richer theory of subject formation and rights assertion to avoid equating the demand to be recognized as a citizen with an uncritical adoption of norms.”^{clxxv}

Transgender individuals are expected to align with society’s norms, which constrains people’s exploration of self and understandings about human rights. As previously mentioned, a notion of human rights has been circumscribed through legal discourses, such as using the terms sovereignty and citizenship, where a nationalist ideology is reinforced and influences a sense of self. Helen M. Stacey wrote, “The conceptual starting points for sovereignty and human rights differ, however: ideas about sovereignty derive from an analysis of the power and legitimacy of governments evidenced in a government’s relationship with its citizens, whereas ideas about human rights proceed from an analysis of the rights and entitlements of citizens.”^{clxxvi} Citizenship is primarily linked with statutes and case laws that reproduce a public understanding about who has rights and privileges.^{clxxvii}

Butler wrote about the ways a subject is not always individualized, so sovereign power is integral to examining concepts related to human existence.^{clxxviii} If certain lives and bodies are not considered human and encounter significant acts of violence, the public message conveys dehumanization. Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Jean Moore posed a critical question about the notion of trans that is useful to consider at this juncture. They wrote, “But what if we think instead of ‘trans’ along a vertical axis, one that moves between the concrete biomateriality of individual living bodies and the biopolitical realm of aggregate populations that serve as resource for sovereign power?”^{clxxix}

A transgender person can pursue and feel a personal sense of autonomy and self-determination, yet social and political structures can constrain these feelings and public recognition. To be clear, a notion of self or the ‘I’ has been socially conditioned by society, and a nationalist ideology has encouraged self-regulating practices within social, legal, and medical structures. The human body implies a site of morality, vulnerability, and agency, although a person’s physical body is not their own.^{clxxx} The human body emerges through a process of subjectivity that involves an individual objectifying their sense of self, which becomes bound to external state power and mechanisms of control. The public status of a human body is based on knowledge about national sovereignty and citizenship. When an individual encounters acts of violence, they are linked to a nationalist ideology situated in notions of suffering, helplessness, and vulnerability. Often, people claim a violation of their human right.^{clxxxi} A community-affective process can disrupt a merely individualized nationalist ideology about the experience and can articulate the significance of creating visibility around violations associated with gendered bodies.

These violations are acts of domination. Michel Foucault wrote, "As I see it, we have to bypass or get around the problem of sovereignty-which is central to theory of right-and the obedience of individuals who submit to it, and to reveal the problem of domination and subjugation instead of sovereignty and obedience." In thinking about what Foucault wrote, I briefly examine how domination and subjugation operate within individuals, organizations, and state structures. For instance, the medical profession was influential in determining a dominant transgender narrative, whether intentionally or unintentionally. This narrative has been a form of domination where transgender individuals began self-regulating their stories to align with the professional narrative. Organizations and state structures also aligned with this narrative. Transgender people were pathologized in the early medical narrative, which was the primary way to control peoples' decision to identify and express their gender differently given what constituted the social norm, yet they still operate within professional and community structures.

In the past 40 years, the pathologization and psychological regulation practice, known as the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care, has shifted, where individuals do not have to proceed with the same requirements established within the original guidelines. Yet, a dominant transgender narrative subtly reinforces a self-regulating practice situated in the standards of care. When I decided to pursue medical procedures associated with my transgender identity, I was asked specific questions about my psychological health and the extent of a support system. These questions have been part of the standards of care, although the questioning process by my doctor was not as rigorous as many people may have experienced. However, a more informal and subtle approach was presented from my

perspective. I voluntarily pursued getting a letter of support from a therapist that I had seen in previous years regarding my decision to pursue medical treatment. The guidelines and requirements have changed over the years.

The medicalized narrative manifested in the public through individuals sharing their stories and organizations advocating for access to health care, which influenced the ways people understand a transgender community in New Mexico. As mentioned earlier, most of the speaking engagements with a panel of transgender individuals and advocates speak of physically transitioning and are located in urban environments, which limits the opportunity for audience members to hear about rural transgender lived experiences. Also, legal systems rely on medical information in which transgender people must abide by the dominant narrative in order to have legal documents changed with limited questions. Recall, the New Mexico Motor Vehicle Division created a simplified form to change one's name and sex-although a health-care provider's signature is required. Often, legal changes for transgender people require medical approval or paperwork to demonstrate the psychological stability of individuals requesting the changes.

Social, legal, and medical systems support race and class hierarchies, so white middle class to upper class transgender people will have an easier time navigating these bureaucratic systems than working class individuals and people of color. Legal and medical systems reinforce domination and subjugation by determining what constitutes a legitimate human or citizen based on racial and class hierarchies. Dean Spade wrote, "The history of gender rights litigation seems to be progressing with increasing recognition of membership in the 'new' gender category, but only for those transgender people who have undergone

medical intervention.”^{clxxxii} In returning to the notions of domination and subjugation, the hierarchical structures and oppressive practices will not end because it is challenging for society to change historical practices.^{clxxxiii} More importantly, transgender advocates can significantly raise attention about how practices of domination and subjugation operate systematically, organizationally, and become internalized.

Transgender individuals experience systematic and state violence through coercing citizens to align with a dominant society and a nationalist ideology. However, coercion is experienced not only through systematic and state violence. Human-rights discourses have been a way to persuade people to enact cultural transformation, yet the notion of human rights also subtly reinforces dominant cultural practices.^{clxxxiv} Discourses on human rights and citizenship provide a means to reproduce exclusionary practices and enhance a nationalist ideology. A human rights framework has been perceived as a tool to move an identity forward within public spheres and a nationalist ideology.^{clxxxv} Kendall Thomas wrote, “The transgender rights movement thus faces the daunting challenge of raising the question of human rights under conditions in which the simple humanity of transgender publics is continually being called into question.”^{clxxxvi} Thomas suggested considering a way to expand a public imagination about transgender that re-examines how a notion of human rights is deployed.

A human rights framework often does not include transgender people, yet advocates have been diligently working to integrate the community into this public discourse, which has been successful. By working to include a marginalized constituency, this action generates contention within social ordering, a legal regime, and self-regulating

practices.^{clxxxvii} Butler wrote about how a struggle for rights is not simply about the individual but is a struggle to be conceived as persons.^{clxxxviii} I propose that this is one reason a transgender community has utilized a human rights framework-because of the desire to be publicly acknowledged as persons. I do not discount the social and political efforts put forth by advocates to pursue legal protections for transgender people. In a relatively short period of time, transgender advocates have made tremendous strides to gain legal protections, raise the visual presence of their community, and advance public knowledge about transgender struggles. I am pleased that the state of New Mexico protects transgender people, or as classified within various statues' gender identity and expression.

I raise the point about a human rights discourse to challenge how advocates use convenient language based in a national framework. At this time, I expand on the conversation here to look at how institutional practices, such as the ones put into practice by TGRCNM, universities, and other nonprofit organizations, reproduce a nationalist ideology of liberalism and reinforce individualism. Stychia wrote, "Social movements also deploy the language of nation as a means of constituting and reinforcing their own identities."^{clxxxix} A transgender movement has emphasized a medical perspective that reinforces individualism as a way to create space for negotiation between a state structure and a sense of self. Individuals have assumed ownership of a transgender identity, which is entitled to state protection.^{cxc} A transgender identity also is connected to a notion of citizenship, which is considered partial property of a nationalist ideology and public imagination.^{cxc} Transgender identities have become bound in national understandings of citizenship, productive labor, and democracy through efforts to raise awareness and change

public policies.^{cxcii} Nancy Fraser wrote, “Overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalized obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction.”^{cxciii}

In looking at the institutional challenges, I consider how cultural memory and traumatic events intersect with a nationalist ideology and a notion of human rights. Cultural memory is a political force that intertwines with modes of representation through various means of communication, such as photographs, images, and cinema.^{cxciv} Again in Chapter 4, I elaborate on the visual representation and look more closely at cultural meanings related to transgender. However, Wendy Hesford wrote, “Thus, to focus on the visual economy of human rights is to examine the potential of neoliberal politics and human rights politics to jointly incorporate victim subjects into social relations that support the logic of a global morality market that privileges Westerners as world citizens.”^{cxcv} A national imagination, affective processes, and acts of representation are central to defining a social, political, and a national identity.^{cxcvi} Traumatic events have been documented through forms of violence toward a marginalized constituency, as mentioned earlier about violent encounters transgender people experience. These traumatic events have assisted in shaping a dominant transgender narrative and informed a public perspective about the community. Gwendolyn Foster wrote, “Both viewer and subject are captives and captors, both are involved in mediating the image of self between known and unknown, both are co-performing a narrative of selfhood.”^{cxcvii} A captive spectator, such as a transgender person, is confronted with social and political understandings of self and societal norms that may be modified by the subject. When personal transgender stories circulate, especially around

violent encounters, the public witnesses a person's suffering, and these stories are consumed as trauma narratives in which the audience can sympathize.^{cxviii} Yet, I suggest these narratives become embedded in cultural memory that challenges and contributes to a dominant transgender narrative.

State and structural violence are mechanisms utilized in producing traumatic encounters. When violence toward transgender people is publicly disclosed, the lived experience, story, and public documentation become a universal representation of violence experienced in the community. The universalization of transgender experiences contributes to reinforcing fear and anxiety within a transgender community that becomes imprinted in a national imagination and acts as a form of domination.^{cxix} David Valentine wrote, "My concern is with the power of categories-their power to enable action in the world, to describe ourselves to ourselves and others, but also their power to restrict possibilities."^{cc} As traumatic events become attached to a transgender identity or category, actions to address these situations become embedded in a dominant cultural framework that may limit the possibilities of bringing attention to the complexity of embodiment.

Valentine also addresses how a notion of rights is situated within a consumer society in the United States.^{cci} The lived experiences of transgender individuals have informed a human rights framework that become utilized in a negotiation process between fighting for individual rights and influencing a national imagination to consume a public understanding about community members' experiences. As a discourse on human rights emerged in a context of human suffering and deprivation such as the violence mentioned, these concepts expand on liberal normative understandings about personhood.^{ccii} Transgender stories

about traumatic events and suffering are based on a psychoanalytic model, which has generated public recognition and critical awareness. However, the story becomes a commodity.^{cciii} Violence has been a primary area where the transgender movement has focused attention for social change, and this narrative has been influential in shaping a sense of self and a transgender identity. If transgender individuals and a national narrative encourage people to live with a perpetual threat or assumed possibility of violence, they may live in a constant state of fear.^{cciv} This constant state of fear is encouraged by a nationalist ideology to reinforce dominating marginalized communities.

A dominant transgender narrative has encouraged transgender individuals to disappear and assimilate within a dominant society, which creates difficulty in politically mobilizing a constituency for social justice.^{ccv} Transgender individual's struggles have been considered the only relevant and legitimate form of a political struggle.^{ccvi} A nationalist ideology contributed to developing a status of victimization within marginalized constituencies that fuels a sense of powerlessness and inability for self-determination within a dominant society. This may be one reason TGRCNM has prioritized support groups and offered a space for people to drop in and spend time at the center. Recall from Chapter 2, TGRCNM is engaged with a Safe Schools initiative to protect primarily young transgender people from being bullied for their identity. The organization is seeking state protections by advocating for the implementation of a Safe Schools law. As the Safe School initiative emerges, I would be interested in following TGRCNM's process of engaging community members in creating this policy. Shifting power relations within actions to advance

transgender concerns is recognizing power emerges from collective action where individuals feel connected and willing to take action that contradicts a dominant practice.

Vulnerability can be an asset, yet should not persistently dominate a perspective about a transgender movement. Because vulnerability has been linked with a status of victimization, transgender organizations have reacted to address this victimization status through programs and organizational priorities. Sally Merry wrote, “The conception of vulnerability hinges on the idea of agency. The vulnerable person has little choice or capacity to escape pain or injury.”^{ccvii} Some transgender individuals have experienced this concept of vulnerability, which limits the possibility of living a vibrant life. The space of victimization has reinforced a savior mentality within the state that trickles into health-care professions, nonprofit organizations, and individuals who want to assist community members. This savior mentality also connects to a human-rights framework through Western liberalism and jurisprudence, so the actions associated with human rights often re-emphasizes a sense of victimization and powerlessness. A universalization of human rights has hindered the potential for shifting power relations and effectively confronting unjust systems. Sharon Zukin wrote, “Historically, power over a space (or over a body or a social group) determines the ability to impose a vision of that space.”^{ccviii} A national dialogue has created transgender individuals as victims of their violent circumstances, and the possibility to emerge from this status is perceived to entail medical and social support.

Transgender advocates may not overtly state individuals are victims or situated in a state of suffering. However, Makau Mutua wrote, “The metaphor of the victim is the giant engine that drives the human rights movement.”^{ccix} As documented above, some

transgender individuals have engaged with a notion of vulnerability and victimization that has encouraged the use of a human rights framework within the movement. Butler wrote, “That means that the discourse of rights avows our dependency, the mode of our being in the hands of others, a mode of being with and for others without which we cannot be.”^{ccx} By emphasizing a discourse on human rights, transgender advocates subtly have become dependent on a national and global phenomenon and emphasize the metaphor of a victim, which has benefited and hindered the community.

In thinking about the statement by Thomas earlier, the human body has become a central component within a national imagination to determine whose lives and struggles matter. A transgender body is assumed to have potential agency, so the human body either participates or resists cultural forms of normalcy. A person’s body image arises from relations with other people.^{ccxi} The human body is an indicator of one’s personal understanding of their sense of self, and they have the capacity to negotiate society at large. Butler wrote, “As bodies, we are always for something more than, and other than, ourselves.”^{ccxii} Behaviors, gestures, and speech acts have been regulated by social systems in order to control subjects. For instance, the medical profession has aligned with a dominant social system, which encourages transgender individuals to abide by gender symbols and behaviors. In looking at gestures, movement, and speech acts, a human body can be a site of coercing spectators to confront how they are situated within a national imagination.^{ccxiii} A human body is not really one’s own and has a public dimension that is influenced by a nationalist ideology and state structure. A transgender movement in New Mexico has limited public dialogues about the impacts of a national imagination and state

structure. TGRCNM provides a support system for transgender individuals confronting the reality of their personal circumstances. As this chapter demonstrated, I question how a nationalist ideology may influence transgender individuals' thought process about their physical bodies and how are these conversations integrated into transgender support systems. The lack of a public dialogue about the human body being a site of coercion reinforces a dominant transgender narrative, which is manifested within state and national systems.

With gender creating a symbolic boundary that is incorporated into a nationalist ideology, the transgender movement is in a position to expand and deepen cultural understandings about human bodies and a human rights framework. By utilizing an intersectional analysis, a conversation about transgender with gender, race and class at the center can offer a way to rethink how human bodies are perceived in public spheres. Richard Juang addressed using a multicultural ethnic frame as a way to avoid imperializing the politics of recognition. He wrote, "This separation misrepresents how oppressive forces intersect in practice: racism is frequently gendered, while gender discrimination is often shaped by racism."^{CCXIV} By centering the intersection of gender, race and class within transgender issues, this practice would interrupt the oppressive forces and silencing of whiteness. Jean Bobby Noble wrote, "To create strategic interventions then means stepping into whiteness with the goal of fully, intentionally, and with an understanding of the consequences of our actions, create as much race trouble as gender."^{CCXV} This can be challenging for individuals or organizations working to become publicly recognized. Addressing whiteness especially within a nationalist ideology and connected to human

bodies can manifest tensions amongst organizations pursuing public recognition and legitimization.

Some transgender advocates grasp onto a concept of liberalism, left legalism, or a particular political imagination.^{ccxvi} Left legalism is a concept that narrows political questions into a legal framework based particularly on an individuals' right. West wrote, "For [Wendy] Brown and [Janet] Halley, transgender rights advocacy serves as an example of the tight grip that left legalism has on our political imaginaries."^{ccxvii} For example, the Sylvia Rivera Law Project is a well-known organization on the East Coast that was established to advocate for the legal protections of transgender individuals. Even though the organization challenges a nonprofit structure, I question the limitations of its creativity in shifting power relations through a focus on legal concerns and its approach to politically mobilizing community members, especially those who are not living in urban environments.

Hesford also wrote about the significance of critically challenging normative frameworks that construct human rights laws and shape the process in which individuals become legally recognized.^{ccxviii} The history of human rights has prioritized particular human bodies, populations, and nations as sites of recognition, yet this history is deeply connected to nationalism within the United States of America. Individuals invested in accessing a notion of human rights often share a narrative about the truth through legal, social, and literary practices.^{ccxix} Hesford wrote, "Human rights can be considered a discourse of public persuasion that envisions certain scenes of rhetorical address and normative notions of subject formation."^{ccxx} She also wrote, "Self-representation is an important form of rhetorical agency."^{ccxxi} Transgender individuals and its movement have advocated for a

space of becoming oneself through rhetorical practice. In thinking about agency, West wrote, “First, agency is a product of performative repertoires, embodied practices of movement, action, emotionality, and culturally negotiated productions of identity.”^{ccxxii}

When legal protections are denied to transgender individuals, one may articulate their sense of self and belonging through a rhetorical agency, such as a notion of citizenship. In obtaining legal recognition, transgender individuals often feel the need to pass, assimilate, and embody a heteronormative framework, which is produced through dominant national ideologies.^{ccxxiii}

In conclusion, Paisley Currah wrote, “Transgender poses a similar risk, but to the extent that transgender activism can distinguish itself from homonormative neoliberalism, it can help create a different set of openings for resisting the homogenizing forces of global capital than those that have circulated through the categories lesbian, gay or homosexual.”^{ccxxiv} By analyzing how a nationalist ideology intertwines with public understandings of transgender, a space is created to explore the potential limitations in advocating for this community. A human rights discourse has been effective to moving forward transgender concerns, although transgender studies could offer a way to expand on notions of human and gendered bodies through this discourse.

Chapter 4

Visual Representation of Transgender Bodies

In the late 20th century, visual representation of transgender individuals was a turning point for this community. The word transgender gained a prominent presence and became the preferred term used by advocates, public officials, health-care providers, and community members. Films such as *Boys Don't Cry*, which was based on a true story about Brandon Teena, who was violently beaten for being transgender, won multiple awards in 2000, television series aired transgender actors, and an online presence of a transgender community was bolstered as a result of the dot.com boom. More than a decade later and over the course of these public emergencies, new photographic documentation of people's lived transgender experiences emerged, which allowed the general public to become more familiar with the community. The year 2014 became another turning point for the visual presence of transgender individuals. Laverne Cox, a transgender woman, whose role as a transgender person in the Netflix series, *Orange Is the New Black*, brought attention to the transgender community through her presence in this hit series. Cox also was pictured on the cover of *Time* magazine due to the visibility of the show and has become a prominent figure within the transgender community.

Even at this historical moment, the short video online that accompanies her *Time* article has her speaking about race, gender, and sexism, although it is framed as her posing for the camera much like a model in a photo shoot.^{ccxxv} This visual representation perpetuates a national image of sensationalizing and objectifying women, especially women of color. This objectification is part of the lived experiences of transgender women. Objectification of one's body among transgender men is not the same because of the dominant presence of

masculinity in society. For instance, Chaz Bono, the child of famous entertainers Sonny and Cher, publicly announced in 2008 that he was transgender. Bono did not receive the same form of public attention as Cox even though an article in *Time* in 2011 described his medical transition.^{ccxxvi} The article did not reference race, class, and sexism nor did a short video accompany his interview. He did receive a great deal of public attention through his personal documentary, his participation on the hit TV show *Dancing with the Stars*, and through his participation on talk shows. Given Cox's and Bono's racial and gender identifiers, they are portrayed differently in public.

I argue that the public presence discussed above is one way in which whiteness becomes invisible and normalized within dominant cultural perspectives and within the transgender community. By whiteness, I refer to the racial hierarchies embedded in structures, the sense of freedom, and ideologies reinforcing oppressive practices. As George Lipsitz wrote, "Yet, whiteness never works in isolation; it functions as part of a broader dynamic grid created through intersections of race, gender, class, and sexuality."^{ccxxvii} This grid in the United States is situated in a binary gender system that is familiar to a public audience. This is critical to understand. The gender binary system creates a perspective that gender is male/female or masculine/feminine. Institutions and public systems utilize this gender system to document an individual's identity, such as with driver's licenses. Minimal flexibility exists within this gender binary system, which impacts people's perspective about gendered bodies. The difference between Cox and Bono is based on Bono being a white male, which is considered the norm. Cox is a transgender woman of color and therefore encounters systematic barriers, such as access to resources, because her identity is positioned outside of the dominant cultural framework. As Wan-Hsiu Sunny Tsai wrote, "The media are unable to

sensationalize trans men in the same manner as trans women without questioning the concepts of masculinity and patriarchy.^{”ccxxviii} If white transgender men were sensationalized in a similar manner as are transgender women, this act of sensationalism would disrupt the investment in a white-male dominated and oppressive system.

In this chapter, I demonstrate how a dominant transgender narrative discussed in Chapter 1 and the reproduction of whiteness are reinforced publicly through visual representation of the community. Visual representations of transgender publicly emerged over the last few decades, and they are examined in the following pages. In 1996, Loren Cameron’s book, *Body Alchemy: Transsexual Portraits*, is one of the first photographic documentations of transgender men. In 2001, the documentary *Southern Comfort* addressed the experience of a transgender man living in rural Arkansas and struggling with cancer. In 2006, the documentary *Beautiful Daughters* follows the production of the *Vagina Monologues* produced by Eve Ensler with the first all transgender woman cast. The photographic book and documentaries provide a historical perspective about the visual, public presence of transgender lived experiences.

In the following pages, I explore the social and economic value in sharing these three visual representations of transgender. What are the ways transgender representations situated in a gender binary system hinder the visual disclosure of complex, transgender, lived experiences? Transgender images were deeply situated in a gender binary system to advance public knowledge about this marginalized community. A transgender public presence also was advanced through the lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) movement as addressed in previous chapters. Recall, the LGB movement was a productive way to raise awareness, yet it created tension among community members. For the LGB movement, coming out or

publicly disclosing one's sexual orientation has been significant to developing a national public understanding of sexuality. Richard Meyers wrote about visual strategies of coming out that were practiced during the 1970s as an avenue to raise visibility of different gender expressions. The act of coming out was to bring public attention and address the injustices experienced by the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.^{ccxxix}

Marketing and advertising materials have been a productive way to elevate the visual presence about transgender individuals in a capitalist society. By using marketing materials based in a familiar gender binary framework, transgender stories are more likely to circulate in public spaces and reach a broad audience. Advertising has not been significantly utilized around a transgender identity, yet this approach could be a mechanism that appeals to a general audience.^{ccxxx} For instance, the photographs of Cox on the cover of *Time* were created to be comprehensible to an audience based on a dominant cultural framework. This dominant cultural framework is embedded in heteronormativity where transgender individuals then are assumed to be heterosexual and desire to align with the gender binary roles. As mentioned earlier, transgender women become sensationalized especially given the dominant cultural framework. One way sensationalism arises is through a marketing mechanism, which portrays transgender women through putting on makeup, doing their hair, seeing their fashion attire and talking about medical procedures.^{ccxxxi} The book and documentaries attempt to disrupt this sensationalism. However, I argue in the following pages that this sensationalism becomes replicated at times.

Cameron published his book to document a personal experience of transitioning, which turned into a project documenting other transgender men's journey. He wrote, "What was initially a crude documentation of my own personal journey gradually evolved into an

impassioned mission. Impulsively, I began to photograph other transsexuals that I knew, feeling compelled to make images of their emotional and physical triumphs. I was fueled by my need to be validated, and wanted, in turn, to validate them. I wanted the world to see us, I mean, really see us.^{»ccxxxii} Cameron created a space where visual images of transgender individuals became a way to be seen and to connect with other transgender persons experiencing a similar struggle. In addressing his decision to take other transgender men's photos, he wrote, "I know they have labored to arrive at the place where I've found them. They tell me about losing jobs and friends while going through transition, and how they fought to keep them. They talk about the people who love them and how difficult it is to make them understand."^{»ccxxxiii} By taking photos of these men, Cameron became the conduit for their struggle to publicly emerge. At times, transgender individuals are looking for validation regarding their struggles in publicly claiming this identity. Melanie Taylor wrote, "In this light, the emergence of Cameron's visualization of unconventional masculinities in the course of the 1990s is particularly significant."^{»ccxxxiv} Historically, white transgender women have been the public image of the social movement, so Cameron's book begins to expand the visual representation of the transgender community.

Cameron's photographs primarily show his physical transition experience. The photographs of himself capture the texture of his body, such as his muscle formations, which is a familiar masculine image in a heteronormative society. His naked photographs trigger a biological perspective to be enhanced where his body is assumed to be "natural." However, his muscles are not natural but are achieved much like those of bodybuilders. The photography of his naked body where he is posing like a bodybuilder often is associated with misogyny.^{ccxxxv} Even though he is expanding the visual representation of transgender

individuals, he also sensationalizes his body through various poses. These photos are one way transgender masculinity circulates.^{ccxxxvi} Even though Cameron is challenging normative social and cultural understandings of masculinity, the visual focus on his muscles potentially articulates feelings of instability with his masculine identity. The photographic poses similar to that of a bodybuilder stance, such as his clenched fists and facial expressions, express his sense of manliness. Many photographs are of him shirtless. Another photo of him is sitting in a lounge chair and looking into the distance with only a joker's hat on. Cameron shares these familiar visual images of his masculinity as a way to appeal to an audience. The photographs potentially express a form of insecurity about his masculinity because the naked or shirtless photographs are overcompensated in order to fill in feelings of a lack of manliness.^{ccxxxvii} From my experience, I attempted to model masculine images based in athletics and obtaining a muscular body structure. When I first saw Cameron's book, I was drawn to the hyper masculine aspects of his photographs because muscles are a cultural signifier of masculinity. Limited discussions exist about the meaning of masculinity, which I do not fully address in this chapter.

Visual images are a way to introduce new concepts into the world and began to change people's mind about a community's struggle.^{ccxxxviii} For Cameron, photography was a way to share his and other transgender men experiences. Photographs allowed him to comprehend other people's struggles. He wrote, "It has been the most powerful teaching tool for me to date, and I feel the message in my work isn't different from Lange's or Evan's: it is a vision about strength and will and everyday people."^{ccxxxix} Cameron addresses the context of these artists in the book. He wrote about Walker Evan's, who was a photographer that captured the advancement of modern America, and Dorothea Lange, who was an American

documentary photographer that primarily focused on the impact of the Great Depression. Visual images create a powerful force and communicate a strong message about transgender lived experiences. The photographs also provide a sense of value to the community.^{ccxi} Marita Sturken talks about how photographic images are a way to retell the past.^{ccxli} Many transgender people do not disclose historical aspects of their lives, yet photographic documentation, such as Cameron's, shares the visual, historical representation of individuals before they pursue medical treatment. He positions previous photographs of transgender individuals alongside current snapshots of the individual to create a visual about physically transitioning. Again, Cameron's use of realist portraiture attempts to visually challenge normative understandings of masculinity, even though it reproduces a dominant transgender narrative.^{ccxlii}

Cameron uses a shutter release-bulb technique, which means that he solely presses the button to take the photos. In looking closely at the photographic images of him, the shutter-release button is located in his hand. This is significant because he does not allow others to engage with him in the process of taking the photos. For me, this technique addresses his level of comfort in being fully naked with another person present. He addressed pursuing the technique of a shutter-release button as part of this photographic documentation. He wrote, "Its presence serves as a metaphor: I am creating my own image alone, an act that reflects the transsexual experience as well."^{ccxliii} However, this is an example of how individualism and isolation operate within public understandings about transgender. Often, transgender individuals express during their transition process personal experiences of losing loved ones or losing a community. Recall in Chapter 1, the discussion about the tensions between a lesbian community and transgender men. Since about the early twenty-first

century, a transgender narrative of loss is beginning to shift as more stories emerge publicly about the struggles of partners and family members regarding a loved one identifying as transgender. What unexpectedly emerged in documenting Cameron's own photographic journey was the inclusion of a story about his partner.

Even though Cameron disrupts the invisibility of transgender men and a partner story, the issues of race and class are not addressed, which contributes to a dominant transgender narrative. He does disclose the experience about being uncomfortable with his body at a young age, identifying as a lesbian for a particular time and being enticed to move to an urban environment to find a community. He wrote about working in Arkansas where he met and connected with women from San Francisco who convinced him that an urban environment would be more appealing than the rural atmosphere. This part in the book is a missed opportunity to document the class differences between Arkansas and San Francisco. He wrote, "With a few hours of friendly conversation, these seemingly sophisticated dykes convinced me that my fame and fortune were to be found in a city by the ocean [San Francisco]."^{ccxliiv} Not only was class dismissed, he also did not address in depth the differences of living in a rural environment as transgender person and moving to an urban area where resources are located and a sense of economic security can be found. I expand on locality in the next chapter, yet I wanted to note this as an example of how transgender individuals are encouraged to migrate to urban environments.

Before medical treatment was available, visual images of transgender people were limited. Medical treatment has contributed to more images being circulated publicly, and transgender individuals are more comfortable disclosing personal experiences. Taylor wrote, "The challenge that these images represent to personal beliefs and values and to the stability

of the spectator's own sense of identity is direct and unmistakable; there is nowhere for the subject of the image, or the spectator, to hide from the realness of the transsexual masculinity on display.^{»ccxlv} Cameron wrote about the struggle to be open about being transgender with others, until he receives positive feedback from them. Once he receives a positive response, he begins to divulge in-depth the details of his transition journey. He wrote, "By revealing myself, I have consensually invited their voyeurism; they can't help but watch as I make a spectacle of myself."^{»ccxlv} A cultural assumption exists that transgender individuals invite voyeurism of their bodies because they disclose a personal story. I argue that individuals who speak on panels and primarily focus on the medicalization of their transition process contribute to this cultural assumption that hinders the social movement. As addressed in previous chapters, TGRCNM has a speaker's bureau and often speaker's share about their medical transition process. At this time, audience members tend to become voyeuristic towards individuals sharing their story. For example, audience members may ask for details of a person gender confirmation surgery especially around their genitalia. Cameron addresses a critical perspective about retracting from people after sharing details about his transition process because he believes too much information was disclosed. For many transgender people, a constant struggle emerges about when, how much, and to whom does one disclose their identity, their story, and transition process if any. One might wonder who will provide a positive or negative reaction to disclosing their transgender identity.

Cameron has captured photographically his own emotional struggle about people's responses by including an image with a gun to his head. Alongside this image, he writes about the experience of his first exhibition regarding these photographs. This exhibition was located in a gay and lesbian part of the city, and a cultural assumption exists that a gay and

lesbian location would be a place that would accept Cameron, especially images of his naked body. He wrote, “After a little while, working the crowded street, I realized that it wasn’t as safe a place as I had thought. While many people were receptive, there were nearly as many who were indifferent or actively hostile.”^{ccxlvii} This scenario is an excellent example of cultural assumptions regarding marginalized communities supporting one another for social justice. On a national level, transgender has become included in the lesbian, gay, and bisexual movement, yet few people understand the historical tensions and oppressive practices among the community members.

As noted in Cameron’s book, identity or categorical bonds do not automatically preclude safety or a sense of community. Visual representation of transgender can be a struggle within contemporary social and cultural understandings of this particular identity, even amongst assumed supporters.^{ccxlviii} Cameron’s photographic images create a space where a practice of looking and a way of being seen interact, which touches on the importance of how transgender individuals are situated in images. The images become connected to a national dialogue about transgender lived experiences as addressed in Chapter 3. Diana Taylor wrote, “‘I’ and ‘you’ are products of each other’s experiences and memories, of historical trauma, of enacted space, of sociopolitical crisis. But what is embodied knowledge/memory, and how is it transmitted?”^{ccxlix} When looking at transgender images, an individual viewing the images must critically think about their personal positionality in society. One’s positionality plays a part in how visual images are consumed. Some transgender individuals and the general public consume the photographic images in Cameron’s book as “truth” for all transgender people, which can universalize lived experiences. The universalization of transgender experiences is how a dominant transgender

narrative emerged. As Richard Dyer wrote, "... the way in which such small details of an image can so quickly and assuredly summon up such a breadth of social implication, can condense such a wealth of meaning and knowledge."^{cc1} Visual images of transgender people are publicly circulating, and critical attention needs to be given to the potential social implications of these images.

Photographs create cultural meanings that can be interpreted differently. When photographing transgender individuals, the images are often consumed from a dominant perspective, which can lead to universalizing the image or experience being witnessed. With limited public understandings about transgender lived experiences, people tend to assume the image reflects transgender people broadly. Cameron's photographic documentary provides written text addressing the historical trauma related to embodying one's pride in one's identity as a way to guide people through his personal journey of being transgender. He wrote about learning to control his emotions on testosterone as well as how to navigate social and cultural understandings of gendered clothing. This written text assists people with comprehending his experience. One section in the book is a short series of photos of a shirtless Cameron in picture frames. The borders of the picture frames are filled with discriminating comments directed toward him throughout his life. Photographic images and accompanying text such as the one just mentioned become consumed by a public audience and produce a social and cultural meaning about transgender people.^{cc1}

Sturken addresses how boundaries are blurred between historical images and how images create history.^{cc1ii} These photographic images may not produce historical images or meaning, yet Sturken provides a way to think about how transgender images contribute to cultural assumptions about a transgender community. For example, the negative comments in

the picture frame borders on Cameron's shirtless photo becomes embedded in viewers mind and linked with the narrative about transgender violence mentioned in previous chapters. These images contribute to a national narrative and public assumptions about transgender lived experiences, which become universalized, as noted earlier. I do not disregard his experience although want to note that these images are connected to a dominant transgender narrative. When race is not publicly acknowledged, the intersection of a person's identity and struggles are overlooked. This silence about race dismisses the complexity of lived experiences. For example, some transgender people may prioritize their transgender identity and not their racial identity or may feel tension about which identity to prioritize. As discussed in Chapter 3, a nationalist ideology encourages a sense of belonging, which is connected to whiteness. With white transgender images primarily circulating in public, the silence surrounding this component contributes to a dominant national image and narrative. Cox has been one of a few public figures to begin publicly addressing the intersection of race and gender.

Another example in Cameron's book is the section titled "New Man Series." This section has a series of photographs, and I perceive them to be primarily white men, which sends a subtle message about transgender men who strive toward the image of white masculinity. The photos in this series do not have identifiers regarding one's race or ethnicity. Recall that whiteness operates in society and becomes reinforced through silence as the norm. The transgender social movement's limited acknowledgement of the racial and ethnic significance of people's lived experiences prevents an open and honest conversation about how whiteness operates within the community and organizations.^{ccliii} Few photographs of transgender men of color and their written journey are offered in Cameron's book. Only

information about class status and struggles as a parent of a man named Chris was included with his photo. Cameron wrote alongside his photo, "... a skilled blue-collar worker. Struggling as a single parent, he works two shifts a day at two different factories."^{ccliv} Many transgender people struggle economically, which is important to address. Yet rarely is the economic status of transgender individuals discussed within written documents about the community.

Given the lack of attention to addressing race, ethnicity, and class, Cameron reinforces a narrative about whiteness within public knowledge about the community. He decided to write about hormone replacement therapy and gender confirmation surgery in relation to the photographs shared, both of which connect to the medicalization of transgender lived experiences. He also incorporates a photographic and written section focused on genital confirmation surgery, ranging from metoidioplasty to phalloplasty, which is rarely disclosed in books about transgender individuals. Images of genital confirmation surgery are more likely to be shared online. However, I appreciate him for integrating images of genital confirmation surgeries that provide a different aspect about this process. A dialogue about access to various gender confirmation surgeries also is lacking in the written text of Cameron's book. The costs of procedures are paid by transgender individuals and are available in limited urban environments, a situation that creates additional barriers for individuals.

Given my analysis of Cameron's book, I now want to examine the documentary *Beautiful Daughters*. Cameron's book provides an example about transgender men's experiences with transitioning where this documentary offers a perspective about transgender women. Made in 2006, this documentary follows the production of the *Vagina Monologues*,

which casts exclusively transgender women. Eve Ensler, who was an original cast member in the mid-1990s, decided to launch V-Day, which is a global movement to raise money for women's anti-violence organizations. As discussed in Chapter 1, Transgender Day of Remembrance is a national day to recognize the violence, often resulting in death, experienced by transgender individuals. Transgender women of color experience the highest rates of violence within the community, although anti-violence organizations historically have struggled with integrating services for a transgender community. With this in mind, Ensler produces the *Vagina Monologues* as a way for transgender women to express how violence has impacted their lives and to challenge anti-violence organizations to embrace the transgender community. However, the documentary does not address how race and class impact the cast members, which dismisses the complexity of lived experiences. The documentary also does not visually disrupt whiteness, which then re-emphasizes how transgender people of color become marginalized publicly within this movement. For example, viewers hear from and visually see predominately white transgender women throughout the documentary.

The first personal story viewed in the documentary is a white transgender woman discussing her experience of running away from home, most likely in a small town, to an urban environment. Viewers hear about her desire to move to an urban environment where a sense of community, resources, and safety might be found. In the documentary, white transgender women are situated as the lead cast members. In thinking about the work of George Lipsitz, he addresses the significance of film viewers learning about the ways an individual's perspectives are influenced by images and for what purpose.^{cclv} For instance, white people have been the dominant image viewed in films, which is beginning to shift. If

white transgender women are the first people witnessed in this documentary, it influences peoples' perspectives about transgender women and the broader community. Because this documentary focuses on violence toward transgender women, race and privilege play an important part in the statistical rates and forms of violence which transgender women of color experience. However, the intersection of race and gender are not foregrounded from the onset of the documentary. Structural violence would be another useful perspective to incorporate into how violence impacts the community. Structural violence means the systematic ways social and economic structures create harm and disparities for individuals or a marginalized community such as anti-violence organizations historically struggling with including services for transgender people. This documentary works to expand the approach of anti-violence organizations to ending violence. However, anti-violence organizations often focus on the individual's experience, which dismisses the multiple layers of violence and intersections of oppression experienced by transgender individuals.

In the following pages, I provide an overview of the documentary and the prioritization of stories shared. This is an example of how whiteness operates, individualism reinforced, and a dominant transgender narrative influences the perspectives about transgender experiences. Immediately in the documentary, viewers watch a white transgender woman discuss her stealth living for many years until deciding to publicly "come out" as transgender. As noted earlier, the notion of coming out has been a strategy to raise awareness and demand public visibility, yet I argue the demand for public visibility in the transgender social movement has been based on a white, transgender women's perspective. After this scene, viewers witness Ensler interview another white transgender woman who talks about her medical procedures. Initially in both interviews, Ensler asks questions about the women's

parents. Transgender individuals are assumed to be people rejected by family members as briefly mentioned in Chapter 1. In thinking beyond transgender individuals, the documentary could capture the experiences of these women's parents to expand the dialogue about a transgender community. I propose people consider how parents face a grieving process when their child identifies as transgender because of the cultural expectations of the gender binary system and dominant nationalist ideology. For instance, my mother had cultural expectations of raising a daughter, which she had to let go or grieve when I transitioned. She has a different perspective today although she did not have many resources, visual images, or support through her process. I suggest more research be conducted about parents' experiences with a transgender child. This is also a way in which whiteness operates where the individual is prioritized.

After watching four anecdotes of white transgender women, the next scene is a group cast conversation with Enslar, which documents how whiteness is prioritized. In this scene, she talks about the struggles in relationships with men and in disclosing their transgender identity. As mentioned earlier with Cameron's work, transgender people often struggle with when and to whom does one share their identity. One of the speaker's was a 6-foot tall African American transgender woman who talks about men feeling "tricked" when she has sexual relations with them. She articulates how some men are interested in sex during the evening, yet than do not disclose their sexual relations during the day because of a heteronormative atmosphere. The following scene is the same African American transgender woman talking about her personal story about being transgender. The setting for the scene is her engaging with friends and family in a home environment. She talks about the strength she finds daily in her faith and family, which viewers do not hear in the previous stories. She

notes, “If your mother knows and accepts you, the world can go to hell.”^{ccclvi} She offers a different perspective about the relationship transgender people have with their family members. Often times, the public narrative about transgender individuals and their family includes them being asked to leave their families homes. This transgender woman is illuminating the significance of family although we do not hear about her mother’s process of accepting her child’s transgender identity. One possibility would be to incorporate the value of a transgender individual’s family into the documentary or other public conversations about transgender identity. The act of speaking about their family could disrupt the individualism within a transgender narrative. I documented the difference between the first couple of speakers talking about their parents and this womans perspective because I think it speaks to different cultural backgrounds. However, I am cautious not to universalize this example due to situations are different for everyone.

The documentary does not contextualize the difference between transgender women of color and white transgender women. I argue the documentary subtly reinforces whiteness and the sensationalization of women through the prioritization of stories and juxtaposition of images with transgender women of color. For example, viewers watch the audition of a transgender woman of color, who talks about her desire to be like her mother, and she says, “I ache to be pretty.”^{ccclvii} Her statement is juxtaposed with clips of professional photographs of a white transgender woman. The transgender woman of color’s ache to be pretty like her mother and her culture were visually dismissed by the producers because of the immediate photographic representations of white transgender women. The white transgender woman in the photographs followed this visual scene and she spoke about working in the sex industry as a way to support her basic needs. Her basic needs included medical treatment as well as

portraying a dominant cultural understanding about femininity. The other public message to viewers from these scenes suggest that transgender women lack employment opportunities and that to be considered “pretty” means undergoing medical procedures. The example demonstrates how a dominant transgender narrative situated in whiteness influence visual representations of the transgender community. Little research has been conducted about the ways transgender people are visually represented, especially in relation to race and class.

Most often, viewers witness stories through a lens based on society’s understanding of “normal.” Given this primary lens, I address the practice of looking at and how transgender people are seen within a broad, national image related to masculinity and femininity.^{cclviii} Because a dominant transgender narrative can influence the approach a producer takes to documenting transgender experiences, I address briefly the ways humans participate in shaping social and political values and systems, which create cultural identities. In this case, transgender is the identity created and the identity that emerged visually.^{cclix} Visual representations of transgender individuals are part of developing a cultural understanding of the community. The social and political value associated with an image may be affection and fear, which also influence a cultural understanding associated with an identity.^{cclx} I analyze *Beautiful Daughters* to address how a documentary that shares experiences of transgender individuals contributes to the reproduction of a dominant nationalist ideology through visual representation. During 1968, before the Compton Café Riot and Stonewall, visual representations of transgender people were very limited. Historical events, such as the ones cited above, documentaries over the last few decades on transgender people and Cameron’s book, become a turning point for increasing public visibility and awareness about the community.

At this time, I look at another documentary that captures the experience primarily of a white transgender man although incorporates aspects of his engagement with the community in his area. In 2001, the documentary *Southern Comfort* relates the story of Robert Eads, a transgender man dying of cancer. The documentary was the first to address a transgender man's experience, even though a transgender public presence had increased during the mid 20th century. In the opening scene, Eads is sitting in a chair outside as the sun rises, a moment that captures the beauty of the rural environment. He is talking about his struggle with cancer, which is different from the opening scenes in *Beautiful Daughters*. The producers establish a tone about the complexity of his story through the scenery and discussion of his physical illness. *Southern Comfort* also frames the story about medical procedures differently than *Beautiful Daughters* and Cameron's book. Medical procedures are based in a lack of adequate healthcare and the unjust system as opposed to the individual's experience with transitioning. After this opening scene, the camera provides the feeling for viewers that they are travelling with Eads in his vehicle. The scene takes viewers through a small town in Arkansas where he talks about the town's history, which provides one context for the racial and class backgrounds of people within the film. He discloses meeting a few of the "good old boys" and being invited to participate in a local group, which was part of the Ku Klux Klan in the area. The Ku Klux Klan has a history of violence predominately against people of color, immigrants, gays, and lesbians. The Klan began during the Civil War and was mobilized primarily to intimidate southern African Americans.^{cclxi} Eads declined to join the group, yet appreciated being asked to participate. This aspect of his story and the invitation are an example of his ability to live a stealth life. Even though this documentary focuses on

Eads' experience with cancer as a transgender individual, the director addresses immediately his white identity.

However, Eads has to navigate being stealth and coming out as transgender to his health-care providers. With his health condition, he must disclose being transgender to his doctors to receive adequate treatment. Given the opening scenes of sharing the beautiful landscape where he lives and addressing his white identity, Eads found it difficult to find adequate healthcare services in a rural environment. As previously mentioned about the silence of whiteness, this documentary breaks the silence about his racial identity, which intervenes on the ways whiteness operates. Lipsitz wrote about a possessive investment of whiteness: "I use the adjective possessive to stress the relationship between whiteness and asset accumulation in our society, to connect attitudes to interests to demonstrate that white supremacy is usually less a matter of direct, referential and snarling contempt and more a system for protecting the privileges of whites by denying communities of color opportunities for asset accumulation and upward mobility."^{cclxii} The subtleness of whiteness can be challenging to document. Yet, I address this subtleness in my analysis of Cameron's book. Both documentaries could more directly address the investment in whiteness within a transgender community by simply challenging the dominant lens with a visual representation of predominately people of color. However, *Southern Comfort* does attempt to interrupt the investment in whiteness by disclosing peoples experiences with race relations.

Another example of race addressed in the film includes a cisgender woman in a relationship with a white transgender man, who talks about her "Southern" upbringing. She says that she did not speak to an African American person until she was 26 years old because she was not allowed to. Viewers are left to wonder exactly why and who forbid it, yet this

scene briefly documents the history of race in the Southern part of the United States. The opportunity was missed to articulate the racial context of the U.S. South. Chaz, this woman's transgender partner, had proposed the idea to her of speaking with everyone. However, he never articulated his white identity in the film, which demonstrates how whiteness subtly operates. I argue the conversations about race within the documentary can expand a discourse about transgender lived experiences. Because a dominant transgender narrative exists, the brief references in the documentary on race relations hint to addressing the complexity of transgender lived experience.^{cclxiii} Again, the conversations based in the intersection of gender, race and class would disrupt the silence about whiteness and would interrupt an individualistic public perspective about transgender. Overall, the documentary is primarily about white transgender people, which aligns with the dominant nationalist perspective about whose stories were publicly shared during this time period.

The documentary also addresses constructing one's chosen family from a positive light. Within the LGBT movement, people learned about constructing one's chosen family based on their friendships. For example, viewers watch Eads grocery shop and cook for a gathering with his "brothers." He is considered by everyone except Maxwell to be the "grandpa" to the transgender men in the community. To Maxwell, Eads is more like a father figure. Eads talks about their father and son relationship, which provides another perspective on family than do *Beautiful Daughters* or Cameron's photographs.

With the film providing some context about race and focusing on challenges to access health-care services in a rural environment, the following pages provide insight into barriers with accessing services and notions of a transgender community. Again, the documentary opens with Eads' story of terminal cancer in the cervix, ovaries, and uterus, which are not

related to his transgender identity. Instead of focusing on his medical transition, the producers shared his story from a perspective that could resonate with a general audience. Eads says, “The last part of me that is really female is killing me.”^{cclxiv} This statement represents the complexity of transgender bodies and challenges notions of masculinity and femininity. The documentary addresses the barriers encountered and fears by transgender individuals needing general health-care services. The visual representation of transgender people experiencing discrimination from institutions is minimal. However, stories about these experiences would expose the structural violence mentioned earlier. The producers integrate the perspectives of Eads’ friends about their experience calling the local hospitals and doctors to find someone to discuss treatment options, which begins to document this structural violence. Rural environments typically have a dearth of medical services, which creates challenges for transgender individuals. I expand on this aspect more in the next chapter.

Along with a community’s perspective at encountering unjust health-care systems, the film shifts away from the individualism of transgender experiences by incorporating Eads personal relationship with his partner. However, the scenes with them together subtly reinforce whiteness and the individualism of transgender experiences. The documentary includes his relationship with Lola, a transgender woman who is his partner although viewers are not provided the racial context as with the other partner mentioned earlier. Viewers witness Lola and Eads sitting on the couch looking at photos of him as a young person, which shifts the focus back on the individual transgender story. Eads talks about different transgender medical procedures he pursued and shares his thoughts about what it means to be a man. For him, a man is in your heart and mind, not your genitalia. This statement

contradicts a dominant national image and cultural understandings about masculinity in comparison to Cameron's book, which I addressed how the bodybuilding poses and the images contribute to cultural understandings of masculinity. In *Beautiful Daughters*, the images of femininity were expressed through the beautification of the photographs.

This documentary also addresses Eads participation at the Southern Comfort conference where he and Lola were part of a panel talking about their relationship. As the camera scanned the panel and audience, participants appeared primarily to be white, which was not addressed, and race is not revisited for discussion. One of the panels discussed socioeconomics and the differences between transgender men and women, although the conversation centered on paying for medical procedures. In this scene, the visual images accompanying the dialogue included transgender men's chest confirmation surgery, which reemphasizes a dominant transgender narrative. The scene also contributes to the voyeurism of transgender bodies. The racial and economic makeup of the panels and visual images shared during a presentation impact how people consume the materials and questions regarding transitioning. Given that this documentary and conference were based in a rural, southern community, what challenges might exist for a transgender person of color?

Southern Comfort attempts to raise attention around racial dynamics and general health-care challenges experienced by transgender people living in the United States South. Even though the film documents these different components, the visual representation throughout the film was white people. The documentary closes with viewers seeing a rural landscape, revisiting Ead's trailer, and the dirt road leading to his home. This imagery re-emphasizes a sense of isolation and lack of resources in rural communities that transgender individuals may experience. The documentary visually captured a rural perspective about

transgender people and the challenges encountered in this environment, which is rarely shared. Yet, I propose expanding on this visual representation of transgender people and challenge a dominant perspective about the community.

Visual representations of a transgender community provide an analysis of how local and national images circulate and create cultural understandings about this identity. Visual images based on personal stories are part of how public knowledge increased and representation of transgender emerged. As mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, Christine Jorgenson was prominently featured in the media, and her public presence contributed to shaping this identity and cultural understandings about transgender lived experiences. Jorgenson's story was a catalyst for other transgender individuals becoming more visible. This visibility of transgender people created a national dialogue about the identity and community. In thinking through Sturken's work, the national attention Jorgenson gained allowed for a space to be created that began challenging concepts of masculinity and femininity. I do not elaborate of her story, yet she captured the attention of a broad public audience through her visual representation. Sturken wrote, "The image plays a central role in shaping the desire for cultural memory, specifically the need to share personal experiences."^{cclxv} A notion of transgender was produced through the sharing of personal stories, and the images accompanying these stories. A community's memory is partially shaped by the images publicly presented. As I mentioned earlier at the beginning of the chapter, both Cox and Bono have contributed to this community memory along with Jorgenson. The public presentation of their stories has slightly shifted a national imagination about transgender, yet perpetuates a dominant transgender narrative. A camera creates a sense of shared perceptions and experiences with the general public about this identity.^{cclxvi}

With the increase use of the Internet, the relationship between technology and production of visual images must be considered. Visual images become linked with concepts of reality, a development that contributes to the historical meaning about transgender people and how they are perceived.^{cclxvii} When a person can touch or view an object, such as a picture, the person may consider how they are situated in relation to this image. By provoking personal sensations such as touch, the image generates a reciprocal process with a viewer regarding the cultural understanding of the particular image.^{cclxviii} This can influence how a similar image becomes perceived in a future encounter. The reality of the situation presented may be more complicated than what the image represents. Significant consequences may emerge from how an image is perceived. For instance, the Internet created a space where an individual may disclose personal struggles or relate to others about their experiences without concern about their physical presence.

The Internet has become a mechanism for communication among members of the transgender community and has increased the transgender visual presence in public spaces.^{cclxix} For example, the webpage Transpassing is a forum where people comment on how well one might pass.^{cclxx} Rules of interacting with posts exist and include providing constructive feedback; voyeuristic comments are not permitted. On the website, the creator state the purpose of the site which reads: “This is a community that is meant for you to post a picture of yourself so that you can get other people’s opinions on how well you pass. This is a place so that you can see if you pass, how well, and, if you don’t, what you could change so that you do pass.”^{cclxxi} Besides books, documentaries, and media coverage, this website allows for the display of photographic images to be posted that reinforce dominant notions of masculinity and femininity. The concept of the site and comments shared are an example of

how a dominant transgender narrative circulates and emphasizes dominant cultural understandings about human bodies.

Transpassing is an example of how transgender visual representation is expanding and impacting public and internalized understandings about this identity. The site also reproduces a sense of desire within transgender people to pursue medical treatment because of the visual images people are posting. For instance, a transgender woman asked about passing and what she might consider improving on her looks after one year of hormone replacement therapy. She posted only a facial picture and the comments primarily included reactions to the thickness of her eyebrows. Another transgender woman posted a facial picture with her partner, who is also transgender, and they have been on hormone replacement therapy for almost a year. Her partner had facial feminization surgery, which she plans to pursue as well. Comments about this couple included positive reactions about their ability to pass; some viewers to the website asked for information about the surgeon. This example demonstrates how their experience reiterated a need for medical procedures, which align with dominant cultural understandings of femininity. Costs of the surgery are not discussed, which are often paid by the individual. Recall, some medical professionals have capitalized on a dominant transgender narrative. Since 2004, Dr. Jeffrey Spiegel, who was mentioned in a comment, has performed surgeries and benefited from transgender women desiring a particular feminized face. On his website, he provides examples of before-and-after photos as well as videos of individual's experiences. The photos and videos appear to be white people who likely underwent facial feminization surgeries. This also is an example of how class status matters regarding access to such procedures.

The different mechanisms of visual representation may alter the way people conceptualize and form an opinion about transgender bodies. Depending on how these mechanisms are utilized, this could be a way to shift public understandings and a national imagination about this identity. The online images introduce new forms of social and political value and threaten existing ones.^{cclxxii} Images also reside in one's memory, even though they may appear insignificant. With multiple photographic images of transgender individuals online, the images articulate a story about identity formation and a history of reaching people on an individual basis within a social movement.^{cclxxiii} Transgender photographs online are often of individuals who are physically transitioning with limited visual representations of a broader community atmosphere. This online visual representation reinforces an individualistic perspective within public understandings about the community. Even though online spaces have reached many transgender individuals and present a sense of community atmosphere, individuals are physically and verbally disconnected from one another.

Images also interact with stereotypes, which are a form of social and political ordering that categorize people.^{cclxxiv} Stereotypes maintain distinct boundaries and definitions of bodies that map out what are acceptable as well as what is legitimate behavior for a transgender identity. Richard Dyer wrote, "This is the most important function of the stereotype: to maintain sharp boundary definitions, to define clearly where the pale ends and thus who is clearly within and who clearly beyond it."^{cclxxv} Stereotypes are a way to make the invisible visible, especially in a dominant cultural norm such as a gender binary. Stereotypes are a way to make sense of society through generalities and patterns.^{cclxxvi} Some transgender individuals may disidentify with public images because of perpetual stereotyping in public

spheres and within a national imagination. Disidentification is a way to interrupt stereotypes that mark an image and universalize a constituency.^{cclxxvii} Transgender stereotypes have been interwoven with state apparatuses and a medical framework. Talal Asad wrote, “Human life is sacred, but only in particular contexts that the state defines.”^{cclxxviii} As previously addressed in Chapter 3, the medical profession is interrelated with state apparatuses and plays a significant role in determining the legitimacy and acceptability of transgender bodies. By examining visual representations of transgender, the analysis provides a way to critically think about the political-agency transgender narratives present for public consumption.^{cclxxix}

A spectator, such as a film viewer or someone looking at photographs, consumes a dominant transgender narrative through the camera lens. The camera creates a space, much like a human eye, for spectators to position their sense of self in relation to images about transgender experiences.^{cclxxx} Spectators practice looking at differently gendered bodies. An individual looking at a transgender image has a particular perception of what is being witnessed, what can be brought into reach and consumed with the assistance of a camera. The camera produces photographs or cinematic images as a form of a speech act, and thus, a meaning is imposed instantaneously.^{cclxxxi} Speech acts are a mode of representation that communicates a message about an identity through a relationship between the performer and spectator. In the documentary, Eads talks about his experience of living in a Southern state, living with cancer, and being in a relationship with a transgender woman, which is a speech act. His speech act is intended to captivate audience members and spectators so they have a better understanding about being transgender and experiencing the challenges in accessing a health-care system. Speech acts provide a space for the public to feel as though they are participating in making history. The speech acts provide insight into how alternative

perspectives emerge about social and political identities as well as how they re-enact an event that creates a historical archive.^{cclxxxii} Another example would be Brandon Teena, a transgender man who became a historical figure through the re-enactment of his traumatic event in the movie *Boys Don't Cry*. This film gained national attention because it was featured in mainstream theaters and was connected to a real lived experience. *Boys Don't Cry* is one example of how a transgender experience emerges and is re-enacted through a traumatic event. Recall, Wendy Hesford wrote about trauma and she addresses how spectators frame a moral response to the visual images associated with the situation.^{cclxxxiii} In this case, viewers generated a moral response to the visual images portrayed about the lived experience of Teena, which contributed to framing a cultural understanding about transgender experiences.^{cclxxxiv}

Images are active participants in changing historical meaning. W. J. T. Mitchell wrote about images being like living organisms that have desires and come alive. The images continue to live on as narratives and as a site of remembrance.^{cclxxxv} The intended and unintended focus of images on transgender bodies provided a means to communicate publicly about different gender expressions. In looking at different visual subjects, power and pleasure emerge, which contributes to a narrative about lived experiences situated differently within social and political systems. Mitchell wrote, “We need to account for not just the power of images but their powerlessness, their impotence, their abjection. We need, in other words, to grasp both sides of the paradox of the image: that it is alive—but also dead; powerful—but also weak; meaningful—but also meaningless.”^{cclxxxvi} Transgender images carry a wealth of knowledge and replicate, often unintentionally, a dominant narrative about masculinity and femininity. Spectators view movies and transgender characters on television

today, creating a way for viewers to engage from a distance with transgender lived experiences. This distance allows for avoidance of the immediate return look from a transgender person.^{cclxxxvii} This return gaze can challenge a viewer's perspective and understanding of their own gender identity.

In conclusion, transgender visual representation has become more pronounced through films, cast members in television shows, online circulation of transgender stories and images especially in social media, and the attention on prominent public figures in mainstream media. The historical voyeurism of transgender bodies is continuously being critiqued although is challenging to interrupt given a dominant transgender narrative and national imagination about gendered bodies.^{cclxxxviii} At this moment in history, transgender communities of color are not adequately represented in the public sphere even though more conversations about race and transgender are emerging. Again, Lavern Cox has been the primary public figure visually representing transgender women of color. However, transgender men of color are not publicly represented in a similar manner. As Dyer addressed, white power obtains dominance by not being anything at all. The representation of whiteness often remains quiet and revealed as a space of emptiness.^{cclxxxix} To effectively begin shifting the visual representation of transgender bodies, openness and honesty about how the intersection of gender, race, and class could impact public knowledge about the transgender community and shift a dominant transgender narrative about lived experiences.

Chapter 5

Rurality within a Transgender Movement

A transgender social movement has emerged chiefly in an urban context, which has influenced a public understanding about this community's identity and a transgender individual's sense of self. Rarely has the transgender movement closely engaged with or examined rural lived experiences. With a lack of attention on rurality, the narrative surrounding transgender identity formations contributes to the shaping of public knowledge about this constituency's struggles. In the following pages, I address how advocacy efforts about transgender need to explore more in depth rural lived experiences. How might rurality influence the social construction of transgender identities and potentially shift public perspectives about the emergence of this identity? This chapter examines the ways geographical location, space, and urban economic development practices have influenced the social movement and organizations working with transgender people, yet more importantly it incorporates the organizational development of the Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico (TGRCNM). Through critically analyzing the impact of urbanism a transgender identity, I am concerned with the ways in which urbanism operates within a transgender advocacy efforts and how the focus on major cities hinders identity formation, impacts regional narratives, and influences organizational priorities when working with transgender individuals.

Because limited discussions about rurality exist around transgender, I utilize Doreen Massey, David Harvey, Jasbir Puar, Scott Herring, and Mary Gray to think through how geographical locations, space, and economic development operate in relation to transgender and in the development of transgender organizations. I consider

this a beginning of future conversations on ruralism and transgender experiences. As a way to examine the urban and rural dynamic, I look at gay and lesbian urban influences to support my argument about how urbanism has influenced public knowledge and organizational development regarding transgender. I also highlight the ways in which a symbolic economy and urban development practices contribute to influencing transgender organizational development and reinforces a dominant transgender narrative, which expands on the discussion from Chapter 2. Urban environments have contributed to the production of social and cultural assumptions about transgender lived experiences, which have shaped how organizations prioritize their focus areas when working with transgender communities.

As discussed in Chapter 1, a dominant transgender narrative emerged predominantly through an urban lens that fabricated ideas about transgender people's livelihood. Different transgender lived experiences exist between urban and rural environments, so it is critical that geographical location be examined when advocating for transgender concerns. In this chapter, I employ the term symbolic economy to speak about how location matters because of the scope and scale of selling particularly gender and racial images on a national and global level.^{ccxc} The general public has come to understand transgender experiences through symbolic images, film, and stories situated in a dominant transgender narrative. Transgender individuals and the general public have been consuming messages about transgender lived experiences, such as one can pursue a productive social and economic life by living in an urban environment. Transgender individuals in rural areas live a productive life. Given the historical structure of social and political systems, urban environments tend to have more

established infrastructure, such as employment opportunities and transportation systems. Yet, what are the ways transgender individuals find support in urban locations? Images and a dominant transgender narrative seduce a community to feel that a sense of freedom and support exist in urban environments. A symbolic economy contributes to this sense of freedom because a capital investment can be identified in communicating the notion that an urban environment enhances one's livelihood. However, Dean Spade the importance of examining more intensely how spaces or systems administer life chances because they often reproduce racism, classism, sexism, etc.^{ccxci}

Health-care providers and nonprofit organizations benefit from encouraging transgender community members to move to an urban environment. Large cities have capitalized on the perceived priorities related to this community. San Francisco and New York have been spaces, or large cities, that have and continue to offer a plethora of health-care related resources, which feeds into a national image about public recognition of transgender individuals. These two cities have emerged within the transgender community and general population as geographical locations where a transgender individual can find support and resources. Large cities have doctors who specialize in hormone replacement therapy and gender confirmation surgery because of an increase in demand for services. In Albuquerque, two medical doctors have been the primary physicians providing hormone replacement therapy to individuals until more recently. Making an appointment with them was extremely difficult. Because of the limited services provided, other doctors became more knowledgeable about hormone replacement therapy and other concerns related to transgender people. Now,

Albuquerque has a surgeon available to perform gender confirmation surgery primarily for transgender men. This surgeon recognized a demand for services in the area and an opportunity to expand his practice for community members. The visual and social representations of San Francisco and New York have been influenced by modernization, which means a change toward more-current ways of operating. Modernization also connects to power and wealth, which contributes to a sense of freedom and generates a higher standard of living. A symbolic economy juxtaposed with transgender rurality creates a way to consider how power, class, and racial dynamics play out within cultural understandings about transgender.

Scott Herring examines the *Advocate's* influence, one of the oldest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) publications, and a counter effort, the *Rural Fairy Digest*, to understand urban and rural spaces for LGBT individuals. During the 1960s and 1970s, New York and San Francisco became known as a final destination for gay and lesbian individuals. These cities were highlighted in publications such as the *Advocate*. During the 1950s and 1960s and prior to gay and lesbian destination sites, transgender images replicated a similar idealization of large cities, yet as a place to access medical treatment. Information about urban environments offering health-care services was not located in a transgender-specific print publication. Transgender resources have circulated primarily via word of mouth and now through an online presence. With a lack of printed informational materials or advertisement, a counter effort, such as *Rural Fairy Digest*, to the dominant transgender narrative has not been available. To this day, limited publications exist that represent rural transgender experiences. The personal stories discussed in Chapter 1 were the primary means of

information being circulated within the community. Along with images emerging about New York and San Francisco, notions of whiteness were reproduced through advertising, photos, or other printed materials. Particular images were considered normal print advertising for the *Advocate*, and this act contributed to a dominant transgender narrative.^{ccxcii} As mentioned in Chapter 4, white transgender people have been the primary visual representation of the transgender community in print, online, and in the media.

Rural Fairy Digest was one of the first printed newspapers to offer a rural perspective in which the editors imagined themselves being outside of the urban gay formation.^{ccxciii} A distinct effort was offered through this publication to share an alternative perspective about gay and lesbian lived experiences. With print publications dwindling, today online might be a mechanism for sharing alternative stories about transgender experiences. Sharon Zukin addressed how public culture is a process of negotiating images that become accepted by a large number of people. She wrote, “Yet, culture is a powerful means of controlling cities. As a source of images and memories, it symbolizes ‘who belongs’ in specific places.”^{ccxciv} The historical gay, lesbian, and transgender images circulating consistently shared a message about what was considered a normal life and who belonged in particular spaces. These images, such as those in the *Advocate*, generated a narrative that shaped the current social, political, and economic life of LGBT people.

Chapter 4 also discussed in depth the power of visual culture and the ways transgender experiences and information become shared with public audiences. Visual representation of a city or community is a mechanism to fuel urban growth and create

cities such as San Francisco into monuments for transgender people. Zukin wrote, “The aestheticization of modern spaces that begins with the City Beautiful movement of the 19th and early 20th century, and continues with the elaboration of office campuses and business parks in the suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s, contributes to the framing of cities as culture centers.”^{ccxcv} New York and San Francisco became cultural centers for transgender individuals during the 1960s and beyond. I argue that Albuquerque is in a similar position in becoming a cultural center for transgender individuals. These cities are perceived as a resource system, which has been carefully put forth by urban development professionals as well as transgender organizations.^{ccxcvi}

A dominant transgender narrative is circulating opportunities for people, businesses and organizations based in urban environments to capitalize on the transgender community’s struggles. Zukin wrote, “Who occupies public space is often decided by negotiations over physical security, cultural identity, and social and geographical community.”^{ccxcvii} For instance, Albuquerque has public spaces that are occupied more regularly by transgender individuals. The physical location of the TGRCNM is based in an area frequented by transgender individuals, although the center has moved multiple times over the course of one year. The constant moving within the first couple years of having a physical space makes branding the center and building trust with community members difficult. Location is an important factor in organizational development, and it can give community members a sense of safety and a welcome feeling to the center.

Most often transgender organizations are located in urban environments. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the LGBT movement crafted a narrative of an urban-based

identity, which supported the development of organizations in urban environments. This narrative of migrating to urban environments was reinforced through mechanisms such as the *Advocate*. Zukin wrote, "Culture is intertwined with capital and identity in the city's production systems."^{ccxcviii} Monumental cities such as Albuquerque have developed an image of their transgender culture that coincided with the emergence of the TGRCNM being a nonprofit organization offering services for the community. The 1970s spawned a public message about an LGBT identity predicated on opportunities offered in an urban environment. In conjunction with a emphasis on urban spaces and the emergence of transgender cultural centers, a public shift occurred from prioritizing the perception of factory workers to media stars, which advanced social and cultural identities within a symbolic economy.^{ccxcix} The LGBT public message was a narrative filled with visual imagery based in urban spaces that focused on the physical body and identity politics. As a dominant transgender narrative manifested, health-care professionals and a cultural center have capitalized on the community by using techniques associated with a consumer mentality.

I explore how symbolic images are a mechanism to produce a perception about a transgender identity based in urban spaces. Zukin wrote, "We are led to assume the importance of consumption to the public culture of modern cities--consumption of a specific kind, in which the eye monopolizes sensory appetite and people sample among superficial sensations, the better to hide the stark loneliness and misery of the city under a façade of novelty, luxury and neon lights."^{ccc} Urban environments are not the glamorous and constantly supportive atmospheres they are assumed to be or put forth within the transgender community. They are complex and powerful spaces that need to

be critiqued. Symbolic images and cultural understandings about transgender experiences were produced to generate a sense of community within major cities. For instance, New York and San Francisco developed an image based on a welcoming transgender culture and on resources being available, which allowed the cities to become a central site for transgender individuals. Albuquerque is generating a similar symbolic image, which is supported through the work of TGRCNM.

As mentioned in previous chapters, Harry Benjamin was well known to transgender individuals in the early to mid-1900s for his work with community members. He provided emotional support and access to medical treatment for individuals interested in physically transitioning; he was primarily located in New York and San Francisco. His location was significant to the development of the symbolic images of these cities. JoAnne Meyerowitz wrote, "Would-be patients traveled to meet Benjamin in his offices in New York and San Francisco. He examined them, counseled them, and prescribed hormones, and he also engaged in voluminous correspondence with patients and non-patients who asked for his help."^{ccci} He was a leader in providing health-care services in the United States for transgender people; previously, individuals would travel internationally to pursue medical procedures. The visits with Benjamin and services available were an opportunity for transgender individuals to travel or relocate to San Francisco and New York. However, these services were available only to people who could afford the extensive costs from their personal funds; sometimes, the medical procedures were related to physically transitioning, and sometimes, the costs were related to changing legal documents. Today, transgender people travel to

Albuquerque to meet with various medical professionals, because rural environments have limited doctors knowledgeable in transgender health care.

By overlooking a pattern of migration to urban environments within a transgender community, a primary symbolic image about transgender is based in the cities of San Francisco and New York and centralized around access to medical procedures. Benjamin's interest in working with community members drew attention to San Francisco and New York, which connects with Herring's discussion about the influence of what he referred to as bicoastality. He wrote, "By bicoastality, I refer to an idealizing metropolitan scenario akin to 'the flight to the city' that constructs intranational, national, and transcontinental lesbian and gay identities by imagining the evacuation of the regional and the rural into global cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco."^{ccci} The 1950's and 1960's progression of transgender health-care services nationally and internationally intensified through an emphasis on urban environments and subtle dismissal of rural lived experiences. The concept of fleeing a rural environment continues to circulate within the broader transgender community as well as within general public knowledge about transgender concerns. If transgender individuals decide to stay in a rural environment, they often are not taken into consideration when advocacy efforts are pursued on behalf of the community by urban organizations, such as the example mentioned in Chapter 2. Further analysis about a symbolic economy in relation to a transgender identity would be a project to consider.

Transnormativity is another concept to consider here. Transnormativity is a term that means that a normalized perspective of transgender exists. This term can strengthen a deeply ingrained dominant social order. In Chapter 2, I discussed briefly

how homonormativity manifested with the rise of the gay and lesbian movement and is connected to neoliberal capitalism as well as to other modes of governmentality.^{ccciii} Eithne Luibhéid wrote, “National heteronormativity is thus a regime of power that all migrants must negotiate, making them differentially vulnerable to exclusion at the border or deportation after entry while also racializing, (re)gendering, (de)nationalizing, and unequally positioning them within the symbolic economy, the public sphere, and the labor market.”^{ccciv} Transnormativity produces a similar regime of power that largely has been unanalyzed. Urban spaces have become a site of market-oriented economic growth and consumption practices, which continues to control and secure a marginalized population.^{cccv} In this case, transgender individuals are the marginalized population who are encouraged to migrate to urban environments to become part of a dominant social order.

As mentioned earlier, major cities were marked as areas where a sense of freedom and community could be found. This sense of freedom was compounded by individualism and a notion of human rights. Jaspir Puar, author of *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, wrote, “Individual freedom becomes the barometer of choice in the valuation, and ultimately, regulation of queerness.”^{cccvi} Transgender individuals may be searching for validation of their identities and a sense of freedom, which have become monitored in some respects by medical professionals and nonprofit organizations. Universities and medical facilities were the most frequent avenues where professionals engaged in conversations about a transgender identity. I think conversations about a transgender identity have shifted to a community-based

perspective. Although public knowledge about transgender rural lived experiences are minimal and could begin to expand and complicate a dominant transgender narrative.

Given the historical influence of urban environments, health-care professions, and assimilation practices within a transgender movement, nonprofit organizations working with the community may find it challenging to shift a conversation about transgender identity to include more rural perspectives and outreach efforts. For instance, public service outreach and funding strategies are primarily linked with reaching the most amount of people with the funds provided. As mentioned in Chapter 2, transgender outreach and funding efforts could begin to consider focusing on a need-based approach instead of on a population-based strategy. Need-based approach may include traveling to rural areas to connect with transgender individuals and rural communities have a high need for fiscal support as opposed to urban environments. Philanthropic opportunities are made available to organizations in urban locations and are led primarily by white staff, which clearly demonstrates the power that funders have in deciding the location of community struggles. This narrow focus of many philanthropists contributes to the low prioritization and minimal expansion of education and advocacy efforts in rural settings. Funding opportunities can be allocated differently. Inadequate funds are available for building a community based approach around education and advocacy about transgender concerns. With organizations influenced by neoliberal practices, competitive and isolated funding opportunities are encouraged to nonprofit organizations. Even though funders most often require collaboration, urban organizations are the primary ones connecting with each other for these opportunities.

In the early to mid-1990s, few community-based organizations focused on working with transgender individuals. Because of this gap in services, major cities and institutions such as health-care providers previously mentioned were leading the conversation and shaped a national imagination about transgender lived experiences. These cities and health-care providers were situated in dominant systems that potentially marginalized individuals, even though these systems elevated transgender concerns. Transgender issues were focused on individuals pursuing medical procedures and displayed minimal analysis of the systems providing the services and of the developing discourse about the community. A transgender discourse was documented for public interest in the personal stories of individuals who were physically transitioning, which was discussed in Chapter 1. Limited efforts were made to integrate transgender rural experiences into the initial discourse about a transgender identity except for a notion to migrate to the city for services. Two of the first public transgender advocates working directly with community members were Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, who began working in a New York community through Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR). However, their community-based outreach focused on assisting people living in New York. They did not have the capacity or resources to reach beyond that area. Because few organizations operate in rural areas, the mere presence and emergence of urban-based organizations influenced how other community-based organizations began working with the transgender community. Whether the community-based organization, institutions, or health-care providers offered services, the alignment with a dominant social order was not fully critiqued, nor were how the organizations, institutions, or health-care providers worked with rural

communities. With Albuquerque becoming a centralized location for transgender individuals and organizations working with the community, I briefly provide a background of New Mexico. New Mexico is the fifth largest state of land area in the United States, which means a tremendous amount of geographical distance between locations. The most populated areas in the state are in an area called the Rio Grande corridor, which consists of Albuquerque, Las Cruces, Santa Fe, and Rio Rancho. Any area outside of this corridor is considered to be a rural environment. A little more than 2 million people live in the state, many of whom reside in rural environments and experience multijurisdictional issues.^{cccvii} I consider New Mexico a rural state with a culturally diverse population.

Even though the state overall is struggling socioeconomically, transgender people have moved to New Mexico or stay for various reasons. The state Legislature has passed significant laws, such as the Hate Crimes Act and Employment Discrimination statute, which include the terms gender identity and expression. These laws contribute to a symbolic image of New Mexico as a supportive state for transgender individuals, which attracts people from outside the state to the populated areas of Albuquerque and Santa Fe. The legal language in New Mexico statutes produced an image within the transgender community regarding available resources or services and created an economic opportunity for the major cities in the Rio Grande corridor.

As mentioned earlier, New Mexico has a diverse racial, ethnic and cultural background, which speaks to the significant percentage of Native Americans and Hispanics living throughout the state. In 1999, I moved from Minnesota. Upon arriving, I can remember hearing people who identify as native New Mexicans with a tremendous

amount of pride. For me, this means people who were born and raised within the state. These native New Mexicans also have a different relationship with the land, culture, and history than people who have moved here from another location. When developing a new nonprofit organization such as TGRCNM, the history of colonization is a critical factor to consider. I mention this component because incorporating more rural lived experiences into an organizational development process or public education efforts about transgender can provide diverse perspectives about transgender lived experiences.

Native New Mexican transgender people living in Albuquerque may travel back to the area where they were born and raised to spend time with family and friends, so they may not be immersed in urban perspectives. Many transgender individuals may travel to Albuquerque, attend support groups or go to events although their home is where they were raised and their family lives. I argue transgender individuals want to feel like they belong to a community, which is why the discussion of home may not arise in meetings. Transgender people move to Albuquerque to live, yet I would be interested in exploring more at a later date what compels one to not consider it “home.” TGRCNM makes the statement that the organization is “New Mexico’s Home for Transgender Support,” an issue on which I elaborate later in the chapter.

With Albuquerque becoming a cultural center and the location for TGRCNM, I address a few ways this impacts transgender issues within the state. For example, TGRCNM co-hosted an annual Transgender Day of Remembrance event, which called attention to the transgender individuals who have passed away due to transphobic acts of violence during the past year. Yet this national and local annual day of recognition

has been criticized for dismissing the racialization of transgender individuals.

Transgender women of color are encountering hate crimes or fatal violence more than white transgender women and men. Rarely do transgender day of remembrance events create a space to openly discuss how racism, classism, rurality, and sexism impact the community. Instead, the annual gathering in New Mexico reiterates a narrative about the importance of aligning with the dominant social order and reminds transgender people to live in fear. The Transgender Day of Remembrance event co-hosted by TGRCNM is one example of how urbanism and whiteness manifest themselves within the movement. Diné people do not discuss death of loved ones because of their cultural traditions. To the Diné, the ritual of a vigil is not culturally relevant nor is the memorialization of transgender individuals even though these acts are significant to other cultures.

TGRCNM held a week of events for this annual international day of remembrance. All of these events were in Albuquerque, a situation that re-emphasizes the urbanized focus of the New Mexico transgender community. The week started with the film *Valentine Road*, which documents a young Latina transgender individual who was murdered by a white male student during school hours. Historically, these documentaries have been created about a transgender person of color being murdered by a white person and minimal dialogue exists about the ways race operates in these films. The following day a candlelight vigil was held at the University of New Mexico duck pond to honor the lives of individuals who passed away due to violence. The candlelight vigil connected with a national protocol about what constitutes a transgender day of remembrance.

Representatives of Albuquerque organizations were invited to speak and were the primary representatives at the vigil. During the week prior to the vigil, an intergenerational panel shared lived experiences about transgender concerns. This panel provided a space to openly discuss racial differences and experiences of oppressive practices within the community. As the week came to an end, the closing gathering was an open house at the TGRCNM, and was followed by a fundraiser and live bands performing at a local restaurant. I acknowledge the importance of raising awareness about the violence transgender people encounter and honoring the work to address this concern. By incorporating a critical roundtable conversation around whiteness and the memorialization of transgender people of color, this component could begin to elevate the complexity of transgender lived experiences during the annual Transgender Day of Remembrance in the coming years and could subtly shift organizational priorities. Historically, white transgender women organized the annual event described above in New Mexico. When TGRCNM emerged, the previous organizers approached the staff of TGRCNM and other community leaders to take the lead in organizing the gathering. Recall from Chapter 2, the two white transgender men who founded TGRCNM had moved to Albuquerque from another state and the purpose of the center was to fill a gap in services along with educating people and professionals about working with transgender individuals. Ever since I can recall, the organizers of this annual event have been primarily white and people who live in urban environments.

The Transgender Day of Remembrance is one example of how transgender events are centralized around an urban perspective. As mentioned earlier, I moved to

New Mexico in 1999 from Minnesota. Currently, I reside in Gallup, which is a rural environment surrounded by the Navajo Nation and the Pueblo of Zuni. As a white transgender man, the rural environment in New Mexico was a change for me, because I had developed a network of support in Albuquerque. When I moved to Gallup, I experienced the disconnection from an Albuquerque community that I thought was supportive. I also witnessed rural transgender voices and their lived experiences dismissed within the community by statewide organizations. Living in a rural environment has made me think differently about how to conduct outreach and engage in community organizing practices. I attempted to create an LGBTQ supportive space in the Gallup area with a few local community members. We established the Rainbow Naatsiilid Center to host local gatherings and provide support for people trying to access resources. We decided to pursue creating a physical center because of interest from community members through the participation in local gatherings. However, local community members appeared unfamiliar with having a supportive environment available to them. We were unable to obtain the necessary funds and collaboration to maintain this community center. We reached out to TGRCNM, First Nations Community Health, Navajo AIDS Network, and the New Mexico Department of Health for assistance in moving this center forward.

Rural areas are less populated and usually have limited resources for social, cultural, and economic development. Funding opportunities from philanthropic organizations for nonprofits are rare in rural environments. Distribution of transgender resources primarily to urban spaces reproduces a sense of “us” and “them” with rural communities. This practice reiterates a sense of “other” to people living in a rural

environment. This sense of “othering” connects with a dominant transgender narrative and the prioritization of urban lived experiences put forth in the public realm. Mary Gray, author of *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America*, wrote, “Rural conditions are cast as inadequacies in need of urban outreach instead of a bellwether for the nationwide dismantlement of public services.”^{cccviii} Public resources are available in rural communities and people are interested in learning more about working with a transgender community. Leveraging current local services could offer the necessary support or access to resources for community members. By incorporating rural aspects into urban nonprofit organizations, this approach may alter dominant perspectives and practices providing services and resources. During the mid-1900s, transgender individuals living in remote areas came to understand that to access knowledge about medical procedures or emotional support, one had to connect with other community members in populated areas. Today, information is readily available via the Internet, which offers a different way to gather knowledge about transgender resources or to learn about the ways to pursue physically transitioning. While Internet access also is assumed to be available to everyone, the fact is that many remote areas do not have Internet access. And, the associated costs for the services may not be within one’s financial budget.

Given the popularity of Internet services, TGRCNM began with creating a virtual center by developing a website. This was an inexpensive way to create a presence as an organization and to provide knowledge about supportive health-care professionals. This decision replicated a urban cultural assumption that Internet services are accessible anywhere. Even though the Internet provides useful information to people

who might not have other resources, the decision about information available on TGRCNM's website reproduces a dominant transgender narrative because the focus is on health-care providers based primarily in Albuquerque. The website also reproduces an image of whiteness through including photos of only the staff. Photos of board members, volunteers, and gatherings are not available, which could enhance the public presence of the organization. The website portrays a message about the center being a safe space, a sense of a united community, and that resources are accessible if one contacts the organization or businesses listed.

The above example demonstrates the ways an urban lens limits connecting with transgender rural experiences and emphasizes a dominant transgender narrative. In thinking about Jack Halberstam's term "metronormativity," he wrote, "The metronormative narrative maps a story of migration onto the coming-out narrative." As I articulated in previous chapters, transgender individuals may struggle with coming out to people. For instance, rural transgender individuals may be more willing to disclose their identity in urban spaces. He continues, "... the metronormative story of migration from "country" to "town" is a spatial narrative within which the subject moves to a place of tolerance after enduring life in a place of suspicion, persecution, and secrecy."^{cccix} Again, the urban perception of rural environments implies a space of persecution and secrecy. Yet, transgender lived experiences may contradict this perception. With limited information and understanding about rural lived experiences and resources available in communities, nonprofit organizations may reinforce misunderstandings about rural environments. Transgender rural experiences also may be different based on where the individual lives. I do not want to universalize rural

environments because a vast difference in populations and values exist throughout the United States. Scott Herring discusses metronormativity as a force that consumes resources and psychic labor, which reproduces urbanism.^{cccx} Urban environments are deemed an area where a significant population of people live, a perceived acceptance for diverse cultures, and an advancing economy. Metronormativity encourages rural-identified individuals to assimilate to an urban way of living.^{cccxi} This notion provides a way to think about the seduction and assimilation practices associated with urban spaces and a transgender narrative.

Intervening on assimilation practices related to transgender may include elevating rural stories. However, the avenue to share rural transgender lived experiences may differ than urban environments. Speaker bureaus, such as the one put forth by TGRCNM, have not been a primary mechanism used in rural environments. The difference in the willingness of a transgender individual in a rural area to engage in a speaking engagement could be related to this person's reluctance to disclose their identity and share their lived experience. Also, in a rural area, the approach to educating health-care providers or educators through a panel may not be the best approach available. I encourage people to consider these options, yet suggest exploring alternative mechanisms to raising awareness about transgender concerns in rural areas. Because of a lack of training opportunities for employers or health-care providers about transgender concerns, transgender individuals encounter barriers to finding employment or access to medical services. Even though New Mexico has laws addressing gender identity and expression, these laws do not fully protect transgender individuals from experiencing discrimination. At times, transgender individuals may

feel this is the norm and not challenge the discrimination encountered. They may actually be grateful to have a job or access to health-care services. TGRCNM has attempted to assist individuals with finding employment opportunities by offering job search workshops at the center. This service is available only in Albuquerque and could be beneficial for members in rural communities even though employment opportunities may be different. One option to consider is partnering with the University of New Mexico Gallup Campus or another local university or organization to offer job search assistance such as creating a resume a few times during the year.

As previously mentioned, rural environments have an assumed public image for some people coming from an urban perspective. Conservatism and fear are the dominant public images about a rural environment. Lesly Marple wrote, "Rurality is a subject that is often broached only in the interest of discussing the horrific backwoods from which some urban queers flee."^{cccxi} One strategy to shift this image would be to offer different workshops in rural environments. Transgender individuals are assumed to flee rural environments because of the above images, which creates a sense of an unsupportive environment. Urban environments are cast as having access to an imagined unified community with accessibility to resources such as employment opportunities. In either environment, transgender individuals may need more support than what is readily available, such as assistance with how one navigates daily discrimination based on race or class issues alongside their transgender identity. I want to be clear that oppressive systems operate both in urban and rural environments, yet how people speak about these two spaces may be very different.

Gray provides a framework to think through how these oppressive systems have impacted a particular group of people. She looks at the ways rural queer youth often are considered to have mental health problems rather than looking at how individuals or families embrace their identity. With this particular framework, Gray discusses how the mental health image in public spheres limits the potential of rural queer youths to be exposed to or experience different educational, economic, or social opportunities. Transgender individuals have been perceived in a similar framework as discussed in previous chapters. In rural environments, the public image about this space consists of a quaint, traditional, and pre-modern atmosphere where this mental health framework may be more readily present.^{cccxiii} Urban spaces are perceived to be immersed in modern practices and to have moved beyond this mental health framework, which is a reason transgender community members migrate to these environments. Even though a tremendous amount of education and advocacy efforts have shifted this mental health framework for both rural queer youth and transgender individuals, the public perspective continues to circulate within urban and rural contexts about the emotional and psychological instability of individuals as opposed to listening to their lived experience. TGRCNM unintentionally contributes to this framework by prioritizing clinical health-care providers on the resource list on its website. One option to contradict a mental health framework and still provide resources would be to put forth different stories about transgender lived experiences from throughout the state on the website. Because stories have been a mechanism to change public perception of the community, highlighting them on their website can offer a different way to approach working with the transgender community.

Gray also discusses a notion of boundary publics, which becomes critical to examine in rural environments. She wrote, "I define boundary publics as iterative, ephemeral experiences of belonging that happen both on the outskirts and at the center(s) of more traditionally recognized and validated public spheres of civic deliberation."^{cccxiv} The concept of a boundary public related to the identity of an individual does not matter because they are consuming dominant ideologies through marketing techniques. For example, Walmart is a boundary public because any consumers of products distributed are accepted. In thinking of Gray's work, the sense of acceptance at sites such as Walmart for queer youth or transgender people here produces a sense of security and normalcy within their local status.^{cccxv}

Walmart often is a marker of class difference and a space frequently visited by many transgender community members and the general public in Gallup. This region in New Mexico has limited spaces available to garner basic daily essentials and reasonably priced food products. Individuals utilize stores that are accessible and affordable. Walmart is a space where transgender individuals have been hired, although most likely as part-time employees. The mere presence of transgender employees at Walmart creates an environment where transgender consumers are acknowledged and creates a familiar environment for accessing basic essentials within the community at large. As mentioned earlier, limited employment opportunities produce challenges, yet Walmart provides a sense of being inclusive to the transgender community. Further research could be conducted about Walmart's marketing strategy juxtaposed with a transgender symbolic economy and boundary public.

I raise the above example about boundary public as a way to think through how a false image regarding a sense of freedom and opportunity are provided.^{cccxvi} Transgender individuals may still experience discrimination although not address this concern. If transgender individuals desire to not be seen as having a mental health problem, individuals may either deeply engage with these boundary publics such as Walmart or may move to an urban environment. Where one lives plays a significant part in how an individual embodies gender expression, so looking at the connection between symbolism and space is critical. These concepts can influence identity formation, social order, and affective processes.^{cccxvii} Harvey wrote, "We must recognize that once a particular spatial form is created it tends to institutionalize and, in some respects, to determine the future development of social process."^{cccxviii} Because transgender individuals have been publicly acknowledged locally and nationally, a transgender identity has become institutionalized within urban environments and organizational practices.

Institutionalization means an act of establishing something as a common practice. Doreen Massey wrote, "It is that the mobility and control of some groups can actively weaken other people. Differential mobility can weaken the leverage of the already weak."^{cccxix} With rural transgender experiences shared and embedded in violence, feelings of isolation, and lack of resources, the institutionalization of transgender in urban environments and organizational practices reinforces a sense of weakness or lack of support in rural areas. This is another way a sense of "us" and "them" emerges. With establishing this common practice, it produces power relations, in which transgender organizations should carefully analyze how their priorities

manifest and potentially contribute to historical colonizing practices. With limited funding opportunities and to expand staff, I recommend new nonprofit organizations be cautious of how people take a lead and make decisions about the organizational priorities of the entity. By incorporating geographical location and values of diverse community members, this could enhance any nonprofit organization's work and sustainability. Massey wrote, "The question is how to hold on to that notion of geographical difference, of uniqueness, even of rootedness if people want that, without it being reactionary."^{cccxx}

Often times, nonprofit organizations are reacting to a situation without pausing to consider the most effective response to address the circumstances. For instance, TGRCNM was founded because of a gap in services for transgender community members and a need to provide education to people about this identity. Transgender organizations can potentially shift the institutionalization of a transgender identity from an urban-based perspective through conscious and proactive mechanisms integrating rural lived experiences. Organizations could simply begin by asking questions, such as how does a comprehensive approach to discussing notions of transgender struggles, cultural differences, and social relations emerge within geographical locations? With a proactive approach, a dialogue about nonprofit organization reacting to crisis such as violence or hate crimes in urban and rural areas could shift to integrating everyday lived experiences from various geographical locations into the overall narrative about transgender. This shift in perspective may emerge by expanding educational and advocacy practices thoughtfully through strategic community partnerships. The shift from reacting to crisis to a well thought out

plan will take time; however, I argue that this is what builds a sustainable organization. The process for social change includes developing trusting and effective relationships from multiple backgrounds within the community.

I want to return the concept of the institutionalization of transgender, which means the physical body and affectiveness of community members become a site of economic domination and power. Given a national fear of reducing a spatial distance between “us” and “them,” urban organizational practices engaged with transgender issues unconsciously may employ a mechanism to reassert social, political, and economic order.^{cccxxi} With transgender narratives consistently emerging in urban contexts through organizations, media, or other dominant systematic practices, this public speech act reinforces biopolitical practices. For example, TGRCNM offers space for different support groups, yet these groups are part of defining the overall public image related to the center. One group is called the Rainbow Friends, and the website has posted, “This is our organizational building group. In addition to building community, we look at the needs of the community and how we can further work to advocate and support the transgender and gender variant populations.”^{cccxxii} These meetings are scheduled for Monday evenings, which makes them difficult to attend if an individual works during the week and must travel from a distance. For instance, the distance from Gallup to Albuquerque is 2 hours one-way. These meetings could be a space to raise concerns about biopolitical practices and the reproduction of oppressive structures, which means challenging nonprofit organizational structures and confronting the dominant transgender narrative being circulated. One way to consider

shifting social practices connected to gatherings such as the Rainbow Friends meeting is to meet bimonthly at different locations throughout the state.

Again, transgender individuals may relocate to an urban setting and participate in various groups, yet they likely are experiencing a rearrangement of inequalities such as racism and are not sharing these experiences.^{cccxxiii} These experiences would be beneficial to share at a Rainbow Friends meeting, especially in rural areas. Along with the institutionalization of transgender, fear was manifested institutionally in urban environments during the 1960s and 1970s. Individuals lived with a fear to be open about their transgender identity, such as in their work environment, because they feared being fired from their job. For some people, this fear exists today and has been enhanced for individuals living in rural areas, especially with a narrative and public image circulating about violence in these environments. Fear often is based on a lack of public education and visibility about transgender issues in different environments. In order to contradict this institutional fear, urban spaces and transgender-friendly organizations have worked to provide a sense of protection for individuals although this subtly contributes to producing a privatized and individualistic aspect about transgender.^{cccxxiv} This act of protecting community members also has contributed to a historical social and political system invested in devaluing rural identities and privileging the recognition of certain identities at the cost of others.^{cccxxv} The practice of devaluing rural lived experiences bolstered urban development opportunities around a transgender community and in the process reinforced a focus on the individual, which connects to the rise of modernity.

Without seriously taking into consideration the individualism of a transgender identity and geographical aspects, nonprofit organizations such as TGRCNM unconsciously privilege dominant cultural frameworks, a stance that advances a symbolic economy and reproduces ineffective practices for social change. Dominant cultural frameworks contribute to feelings of isolation and marginalize individuals, even within an organization's own community. TGRCNM programs and support groups based in Albuquerque or Santa Fe marginalize community members living outside of those geographical boundaries, even though the organizations' intent is to validate transgender individual's identity by offering a supportive environment. I have attended a few groups, which tend to be predominately white transgender people, even though their website states they are New Mexico's Home for Transgender Support. This statement is complicated because the message casts a broad net by using the word New Mexico. Again, individuals are expected to travel to their location, which provides a welcoming and home-like atmosphere. As mentioned earlier, for transgender people born and raised in other areas of New Mexico, an individual's "home" may not be Albuquerque.

Traveling to an urban setting creates an unfamiliar environment for some individuals. The validation and support for one's transgender identity in rural areas may look differently from that of an urban politics of recognition. A person living in a rural area may rely on being known within their community, as discussed earlier about a local store or park being a familiar environment. For a transgender individual known within one's community, a sense of familiarity is created not only to oneself but also to those around them.^{cccxxvi} Even though people may be spread out geographically in rural

communities, they typically are aware of knowing people living in one's area. Many people are familiar with who is related to whom, a situation that can generate struggles with maintaining confidentiality or with not disclosing one's identity. Often, multiple generations are living in a particular land area, which speaks to the value of familial relationships and the value of one's identity.

A national and historical narrative exists around family struggles within an LGBT movement. This narrative has consisted of LGBT people being rejected or disowned by their family members. I acknowledge that this still happens today, yet familial relationships have been a solid foundation for many people, especially in rural environments or from different cultural backgrounds. As previously mentioned, an area to consider expanding on regarding transgender would be to explore family members experiences when someone discloses their transgender identity. Familial relations and familiar environments are a safety net for transgender individuals living in rural areas. Yet, few opportunities are available for individuals related to transgender people to hear from or share with other families their experiences. Lesley Marple wrote, "Rural life is characterized by increased community interrelatedness, where there is a great dependence on those around you for survival."^{cccxxvii} TGRCNM does have a support group for family and allies, although it is based at the center's location.

Along with looking at the significance of geographical locations and institutionalization of transgender, I analyze how whiteness interacts with urban spaces. In the previous chapters, I raised the significance of paying attention to how whiteness operates within organizational development, a nationalist ideology, and visual representations of a transgender community. Gray wrote, "A politics of visibility

needs the rural (or some otherness, some place) languishing in its shadow to sustain its status as an unquestionable achievement rather than a strategy that privileges the view of some by eliding the vantage point of others.”^{cccxxviii} By integrating rural experiences of a transgender community into public education efforts, it would intervene on how whiteness operates within public understandings about transgender beyond the historical violent narratives circulating to shift a politics of recognition and become more attentive with supporting and advocating for rural transgender communities. This shift in a politics of recognition would also expose urban development practices within the movement and how health-care professionals, businesses, and city governments are capitalizing on a marginalized community, which is a common practice within whiteness. Massey wrote, “That cosmology of ‘only one narrative’ obliterates the multiplicities, the contemporaneous heterogeneities of space.”^{cccxxix} With a dominant transgender narrative being “one narrative,” it dismisses different transgender perspectives and the complexity of lived experiences that may assist in advancing a transgender movement. The single story surrounding transgender experiences also creates limitations for imagining organizational development differently.

A rural dominant narrative exists about transgender and is based on individuals experiencing discrimination and violence. A rural dominant narrative is necessary for an urban-based context to operate and strengthen a consumer mentality. The consumption of goods in this situation is primarily medical services. This rural dominant narrative feeds into the public imagination that transgender individuals must migrate to urban environments. The act of migrating speaks to how power operates through a narrative and the way transgender individuals internalize this dominant

narrative about fearing violence and finding a sense of freedom in urban contexts.

Barbara Perry addresses the impact of hate crimes and how the individual is immaterial.

Hate crimes are primarily about those witnessing the act.^{cccxxx} If we think about how

this applies to the dominant urban and rural transgender narrative, the audience is primarily those engaged in these particular narratives and acts of marginalization while

attempting to expand their knowledge about transgender people. Perry wrote, "It is

implicated not merely in the relationship between the direct 'participants,' but also in

the relationship between the different communities in which they belong."^{cccxxxi} A public

perception about urban and rural transgender experiences influences how people

comprehend this identity.

Keeping these narratives in mind, rural nonprofit organizations or direct-service providers tend to be broadly grounded in working with various community members and addressing the struggles in their area or region. Yet, these organizations or service providers are overextended, which impacts their capacity to offer effective services. For instance, the Silver Regional Sexual Assault Support Services in Silver City, N.M. has encountered transgender clients, yet the organization is limited in its scope of work. It recognizes a need to have a general foundation in working with the community because many rural transgender individuals may utilize unconventional support and allies in their communities. Even with limited access to resources in their areas, rural nonprofit organizations have a different essence in providing services for the community at large.^{cccxxxi} Rural-based nonprofit organizations and service providers ask questions and look for guidance on how to best support transgender individuals living in their communities.

Rural community members and nonprofit organizations often recognize a gap in services and work to provide the necessary support. In October 2013, a group of individuals in Silver City opened an LGBTQ Center called Rainbow Village. Gray addressed how local and national organizations have provided limited support and investment in rural communities. She wrote, “The politics of LGBT visibility are literally built into the counter public landmarks that demarcate gay and lesbian urban community spaces.”^{cccxxxiii} For instance, most LGBTQ national organizations are located in major cities along the East Coast and West Coast. Rural gay and lesbian communities have relied on urban environments as an outlet for accessing necessary support, resources, or social and economic opportunities. This is prevalent today for a transgender community in New Mexico because individuals in rural environments rely on Albuquerque-based organizations. I understand that most New Mexico organizations are minimally staffed and have limited funding, which creates an additional challenge to extend support for organizations in rural communities. However, I argue that urban organizations must challenge and rethink how they reproduce oppressive practices and have become complacent in perpetuating a dominant cultural framework.

Pablo Mitchell provided a framework to think through here because human bodies and personal testimonies about transitioning have become a primary focus for the transgender movement. Bodies and personal experiences also have become compartmentalized through different environmental perspectives. As discussed in Chapter 3, historically in New Mexico, the body was vital in a process of structuring society, particularly through racial and sexual differences.^{cccxxxiv} Mitchell wrote, “The legitimate body appears as a coherent, uniform body, while the dangerous body is a

hybrid, made up of mixed and disparate parts.”^{cccxxxv} The legitimacy of transgender bodies has become connected to urban environments and medical procedures. After obtaining medical treatment, an individual’s body aligns with a dominant cultural framework about gendered bodies, which maintains a sense of normalcy within a national imagination. Harvey wrote, “Urbanization has always been, therefore, a class phenomenon, since surpluses are extracted from somewhere and from somebody, while the control over their disbursement typically lies in a few hands. This general situation persists under capitalism, of course; but since urbanization depends on the mobilization of a surplus product, an intimate connection emerges between the development of capitalism and urbanization.”^{cccxxxvi} For a transgender community, medical procedures, along with a process of subjectification, which produces a sense of social reality, are the surplus products that have generated the notion of migrating to urban environments. The urbanization of transgender resources is central to shifting social and political gender structures. However, urban environments have reinforced capitalist practices, and minimal questions are being asked about how social and political structures are strengthened in prioritizing transgender urban identities and resources.^{cccxxxvii}

Recalling the conversation earlier about cultural centers, the San Francisco Bay area was a national site for progressive nonprofit organizations primarily from 1995-2001.^{cccxxxviii} With the rise of a transgender movement around a similar time period, many nonprofit organizations emerged and attempted to become a part of this imaginary progressive nonprofit organization framework. Questions were not elevated about a nonprofit industrial complex formulating and perpetuating a bureaucratized

management of fear. Fear existed not only about disclosing one's identity. Nonprofit organizations' fear was based in breaking from the owning class, where funders resided, so the hegemonic practices continued.^{cccxxxix} For nonprofit organizations, the practice of common sense became interconnected with a notion of freedom that essentially influenced organizations to align with a white heteronormative framework. The notion of freedom upheld whiteness and was designed to maintain inequalities.^{cccxi}

Herring provided another way to think about rurality in relation to identity formation and a process of "othering." He discussed how urban settings encourage homogenized spaces situated in aspects of leisure, economic security, and consumerism. This was marked as a metropolis during the 1960s and 1970s.^{cccxli} He addressed how fashion is a mechanism to indicate one's relationship with urban atmospheres. When a person is outside of the most current fashion realm, they are considered outdated and stigmatized as archaic or "other".^{cccxlii} For transgender individuals, the message about fashion reinforces a dominant transgender narrative through a need to access the most current fashion trends to belong or be publicly recognized. The current fashion available complements the social and political order of gender bodies. Herring wrote, "To the racial and corporeal norms of such privileged Whiteness, we could add the socioeconomic norms of the middle-classes and the aesthetic norms of urbanity, sophistication, and cosmopolitanism or what is often referred to as 'trendy fashion,' 'chic,' 'style,' or 'lifestyle'."^{cccxlili} This is another example of the way urban environments become glamorized in the transgender community especially regarding access to medical services. Urban environments offer access to fashion, medical services, and employment opportunities, all of which generate a sense of belonging.

Modernity created conflicting forms of belonging and a belief exists that a community's loyalty means it is loyal to the nation state. Inderpal Grewa wrote, "In fact, it was the promise of wholeness for a fragmented self that was at the center of the modern subject and continues to be so."^{cccxliv} A transgender subject can become whole within urban environments because cities provide the means to fulfill individual needs. This sense of fulfillment or wholeness was generated with the rise of modernity, contributing to a transgender identity formation, which shaped public understandings about the community. Modernity also contributed to state regulatory practices and a consumer culture that is immersed in selfhood or individualism.^{cccxlv} Grewal wrote, "We can understand gendered and racialized subjects not as autonomous projects of resistance but as subjects that develop in relation to modern regulative and disciplinary institutions."^{cccxlvi}

Even when nonprofit organizations work to expand or resist strict understandings of gender, they participate in consuming a dominant culture and regulatory practices. A United States discourse has produced cultural understandings about subjects and identity formations, which produced a space where transgender subjects have been able to emerge within the nationalist ideology. When one does not align with a dominant ideology, it generates tension within disciplinary practices. As discussed in Chapter 3, a dominant social and political order has been utilized as a way to monitor a social movement's progress and keep a narrative in alignment with a nationalist ideology. Grewal wrote, "America functioned as a discourse of neoliberalism making possible struggles for rights through consumer practices and imaginaries that came to be used both inside and outside the territorial boundary of the United

States.”^{cccxlvi} Recall from previous chapters that a transgender subject also used a human rights framework to become situated in a national discourse. This framework has become consumed and territorially marked by individuals, organizations, and the social movement through a symbolic economy. For example, a transgender human rights discourse has been connected with consuming a particular narrative based in urban environments, social identity, and branding it within the mass media and other public outlets.^{cccxlvi}

A consumer culture functions by interacting with liberal values based on a notion of equality and progress. Grewal wrote, “As social movements created new identities in the United States, marketing practices were designed to understand these communities and to diversify and differentiate them to sell more and different products.”^{cccxlix} Through heightened awareness and visibility, a transgender community has increased its market value, although this market value has simultaneously strengthened a dominant white culture. Massey discussed the need to think about places as open and absorbent opportunities regarding social relations.^{ccccl}

In conclusion, space and identity have a close relationship that must be considered when distributing educational materials, advocacy practices, and marketing efforts related to transgender. For instance, Gray looks at the impact of documentaries regarding a gay identity. She wrote, “To carry out this shift towards legitimacy, confessional documentaries must naturalize gay identity--binding it to the logic of sameness and distancing it from pathologizing medical discourses. These confessional documentaries must align gayness to other social identities, like race or gender, and position the audience to see themselves reflected in the “healthy and normal”

individuals on display.”^{cccli} The disclosure of a particular narrative engages a public audience with a sense of normalcy. Sharing a personalized transgender narrative, in essence, a confessional story, offers a space where a public audience can connect with a concept of transgender. Whether it is a documentary or panel discussion, people who share stories become “normalized” and feed into a social and political dynamic that reinforces aligning with a dominant cultural perspective as well as with an urban and rural dichotomy. As Herring wrote, “Though dismissals of the rural are routine in urbanized lesbian, gay, and queer studies, rurality can be and has been deployed to promote a critical form of queer anti-urbanism.”^{ccclii} This chapter is the beginning of a further exploration of the politics of rurality in relation to transgender.

Coda

The chapters in my dissertation offered a way to think through the emergence of a transgender identity, how personal stories elevated the public presence of the community members, and addressed ways in which advocates have been putting forth transgender concerns such as access to health-care services and using a human rights framework. The medical profession, configured as it has been through ideologies of whiteness and nationalism, has contributed in complex ways to how transgender lived experiences are publicly shared and the terms through which this visibility is understood. The medical profession has generated a space for transgender individuals to embody a sense of sense, yet simultaneously produced a dominant framework from which public knowledge about transgender. With the field of transgender studies rapidly producing different ways to think about transgender, my dissertation worked to complicate this identity and point to how it is linked with a dominant cultural framework in the United States.

Partially shaped by medical discourse, a dominant transgender narrative emerged that allowed a public audience to comprehend how an individual came to decide to embody their gender identity and possibly physically transition. Because of the need to create space and legitimacy in a public realm, advocates for transgender people grasped on to the medical aspects of being transgender. When transgender personal stories began to become more publicly pronounced, the medicalized narrative allowed in public spaces and in print such as books and the media was one around the gendered body and physically transition. Throughout the chapters, I encourage people to start challenging the ways a transgender identity is put forth and consider how personal stories are shared publicly. I argue a medicalized focus on body limits the opportunity to elevate the complexity of transgender

bodies expressions of self and lived experiences. Even though someone might embody a transgender identity, they may not necessarily align with a dominant cultural understanding about masculinity and femininity.

My hope is that this research provides an opening to more fully understand the impacts of whiteness, privilege and oppressive practices regarding how public knowledge is put forth about transgender. Whiteness has become an invasive mechanism that deters people from building and mobilizing collective power for social justice. Because nonprofit organizations are connected with governmental structures and primarily operating from a white and urban dominant perspective, leaders working within these entities potentially absorb a dominant cultural framework put forth about how an organization operates. Some nonprofit organizations have navigated these dominant systems and pursued funding opportunities to advance their work in advocating for a transgender community. However, I addressed how a nonprofit organization, with intentions of advancing a transgender communities concerns, may limit the possibilities of expanding on transgender and sharing the complexity of lived experiences because of not challenging a dominant transgender narrative.

As I have emphasized throughout this dissertation, I do not discount the advocacy and educational efforts for a transgender community that has emerged over the last several decades. I am invested in challenging how dominant cultural frameworks and nationalist ideology contribute to organizational priorities and advancing public knowledge about transgender. I am concerned with the influence of urban perspectives about transgender and how these stories are primarily shared in public education gatherings, which minimalizes rural perspectives and the intersection of gender, race and class. Nonprofit organizations are

also located within urban spaces, which subtly encourages transgender individuals to migrate to an urban environment to find support, access health-care services, or employment opportunities. Throughout the dissertation, I address how urbanism is linked to a dominant transgender narrative. I propose rural lived experiences would expand public knowledge about transgender and offer a different perspective about the priorities within social justice efforts for the community.

With transgender individuals and concerns gaining a more pronounced public presence, my dissertation demonstrated how visual images of transgender people are connected to a dominant transgender narrative and situated within whiteness. A plethora of opportunities exist to elaborate on how transgender individuals are visually represented in public spheres along with how this impacts public understandings about the community. Visual images are consumed and often universalized with limited questions put forth about whose being presented and how are they representing the community. I foresee future of conversations about the recent visual representations of transgender ranging from Caitlyn Jenner's public appearances, the Showtime Documentary *The Opposite Sex*, and other visual images of transgender people.

In closing, I hope the chapters offered an alternative perspective to think through how notions of transgender are circulating along with the ways in which advocacy efforts are generated. The language around transgender is critical to analyze and consider when speaking out against the injustices transgender people encounter. The language, analysis, and public presence must integrate an intersectional approach particularly around gender, race and class to disrupt the pervasive dominant forces pressing down on individuals and attempting to distract people from addressing the underlying inequities experienced. Multiple

possibilities exist to explore future research and expand on how a notion of transgender circulates in public spaces.

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