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Exploring trans people's lives in Britain, trans studies, geography and beyond: A review of research progress

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Abstract

In this paper, I explore how trans people's lives have been conceptualised and researched in human geography. I begin by contextualising trans people's lived experiences in Britain, before recognising trans studies as a distinct field that must continue to shape geographies of trans lives and ontologies. I then consider more recent research in queer geographies which foregrounds trans lives under the 'trans geographies' banner. I examine how space has been conceptualised in such research and demonstrate the methodological and conceptual absences and failings and problematic approaches that geographical research often perpetuates, arguing that work remains to ensure our research works with and is responsive to or developed by trans people. The paper concludes by calling upon geographers to recognise the diversities and potentialities of trans people's everyday lives and develop intersectionally-attentive and reciprocal geographical research around trans lives, bodies, and spaces.

KEYWORDS

intersectionality, queer geography, trans geographies, trans people, trans people in Britain, trans studies, transgender

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1 | INTRODUCTION: TRANS SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH AND TRANS LIVES GLOBALLY AND IN BRITAIN

This paper examines how geographers have explored trans people's¹ lived experiences, bodies, subjectivities, and encounters, and encourages geographical researchers committed to trans liberation to undertake intersectionally-attentive² research around trans lives. This research, I argue, should not focus solely on discourses and spaces of hostility and discrimination, but should also explore affirming and even mundane experiences and spaces that reflect trans people's everyday lived realities. Geographers should also work with a diversity of trans folk and communities including trans men and women, non-binary, genderqueer, gender fluid and agender folk, Black and Indigenous trans folk and trans people of colour, trans folk of sexual minorities, disabled trans people, trans people who do not have 'passing privilege' (Ritchie, 2018), folk at different stages of 'trans time' (Pearce, 2018a), neurodiverse trans people, trans sex workers, and others. These concerns are critical in social science research which largely remains premised on problematic approaches to trans experiences. Indeed, cisgender (cis) social scientists have often conducted research on (rather than *with*) trans people without tailoring their ethics, recruitment, and researching practices to the specificities of trans communities or particular trans people (Humphrey et al., 2020; Pearce, 2018b; Vincent, 2018a). Indeed, although understandings of trans and queer lives, subjectivities, identities, ontologies, and epistemologies have developed rapidly in the past two decades, social science analyses have often (a) been spatially and contextually limited, (b) used problematic, uniformed or outdated language, and/or (c) extrapolated trans experiences from cisgender lesbian and gay people (*Ibid.*). Trans communities are subject to ill-conceived requests for participants and may feel wariness and fatigue when interacting with underinformed cisgender academics (*Ibid.*).

Throughout this paper, I identify the strengths and failings of existing geographical research exploring trans lives. I trace early attempts to geographically engage with gender diversity in the discipline and its geographies of sexualities sub-discipline, and examine how space has been conceptualised in geographically minded research around trans lives. I then turn to recent, more intersectional research attentive to trans bodies, voices, and lived experiences—often designed, conducted, and written by trans people—that has contributed to the emergence of 'trans geographies'. I then consider methodological and conceptual absences and failings and problematic approaches that geographical researchers have often perpetuated. I conclude by recognising geographers' progress in developing rigorous trans geographies, before identifying key work that remains to diversify and expand the field. I call upon geographers to recognise and draw upon the political potential of our research to counter hostile discourses and policy impacting trans people across myriad spatial scales and contexts. Before doing so, I want to establish the urgency and necessity of geographical engagements with trans lives by briefly contextualising trans people's lived experiences globally and in Britain, acknowledging that differences in policy, attitudes, and experiences vary according to (inter)national, local, and individual contexts. Globally, 'transgender people's daily experience across much of the world is one in which rights are denied' (Winter et al., 2016, p. 395), and trans people are consequently often 'exposed worldwide to dynamics of stigmatisation, discrimination, social exclusion and transphobic violence' (Suess et al., 2014, p. 73). As such, trans people in recent years 'have been both hyper-visible and hyper-vulnerable in many parts of the world' (Pearce et al., 2020, p. 2). Indeed, as trans voices have reached a greater cultural prominence, so have trans-hostile movements, such that those contesting trans people and their lived realities—including gender conservative and 'gender critical' campaigners—have been able to discern more about trans folk and how to strategise against them (Jacques, 2018; Stryker & Currah, 2014). Indeed, arguably a global *regression* in trans people's rights, alongside increasing hostile discourse and societal transphobia, is underway. The election of right-wing, populist governments globally has both spurned this regression and sparked global trans rights movements and feminist/queer solidarities. However, in words resonant with the continual emergence and flourishing of trans people and communities globally, Stryker (2017, p. 231) states, 'if there is a lesson to be learned from transgender history at [this] dispiriting moment, it is that trans people have a long record of survival in a world that is often hostile to us'.

In Britain more specifically, trans people face increasing challenges to their rights and ability to live comfortably and visibly. Trans rights legislation, including the Gender Recognition Act 2004 (GRA) and Equalities Act 2010 is now outdated. For example, despite multiple periods of government consultation on reform exposing trans people to unnecessary hostility and 'debate', the GRA will remain pathologising and intrusive, will not allow for gender self-determination and self-identification models, will continue to set standards of gender performance by requiring a Gender Recognition Panel to assess 'gender identity disorder' diagnoses, and will continue prohibiting trans youth aged under 18 or non-binary folk from applying (Cowan, 2009; Hines, 2010a; Hines & Santos, 2018; Lawrence & Taylor, 2019; Nirta, 2017; UK GEO, 2020). By requiring that trans folk who achieve recognition 'live in the[ir] acquired gender until death', the GRA reinforces a 'solidity of [binary, historically uncontaminated] gender that [cisgender] individuals are not expected to engage with and produce' (Nirta, 2017, p. 203). Elsewhere, trans people have been asked to 'prove' their trans status when claiming asylum and have been confronted with detention and deportation (Lawrence & Taylor, 2019). Successive right-wing governments' failures to update and reform the GRA or to advance a trans equalities agenda that responds to the needs and desires of trans communities represents a stagnation in trans people's legal rights. This stagnation (and threatened deterioration) has opened trans people to hostile discourse and social discrimination at a time when discursive challenges to trans people's right to *exist as trans* are increasing. Indeed, for example, the UK Parliament's Women and Equalities Committee (2016) understood that discrimination for many gender diverse people had become everyday, whilst UK Home Office (2019) data shows that, despite under-reporting, recorded hate crimes against transgender people in England and Wales have risen year-on-year since 2011/12.

Elsewhere, prominent statistics concerning trans suicidality have both influenced discursive 'debates' around trans lives and informed government policy and trans healthcare practice in Britain (e.g., Public Health England, 2015), and have served (not entirely unproblematically) as resistive tools to contest trans exclusionary and transphobic discourse.³ Much-cited statistics regarding suicidality include the 84% of respondents to a Scottish Government-funded study who had contemplated suicide (McNeil et al., 2012, p. 59). A Stonewall (2018) survey found that 46% of trans respondents (rising to 50% of non-binary participants) had contemplated suicide in the survey's preceding year, compared to 31% of cisgender LGB+ respondents. Other statistics also illustrate that trans folk might experience difficulties and barriers within and around many everyday spaces and services. Reinforcing that everyday spaces privilege cisgender folk and potentially marginalise, exclude, or invisibilise trans people and bodies, 66.5% of trans respondents to the under-analysed National LGBT Survey (UK GEO, 2018) reported avoiding expressing their gender identity 'for fear of a negative reaction from others'. This statistic reflects how trans people's *anticipation* of cis people's hostile reactions may limit their ability to encounter and move through particular spaces authentically and comfortably. In a finding repeated internationally (see e.g., EUAFR, 2014; European Commission, 2019), such figures illustrate that trans liberation and equality in Britain remains noticeably behind that experienced by many cisgender LGB+ people.

Other studies illuminate the spatial specificity of trans people's experiences of marginalisation and exclusion in Britain. For example, in healthcare spaces, austerity, centralisation and increased waiting times for trans healthcare have left many 'trans people facing down years of anxiety, depression and suicidal tendencies' (Gleeson & Hoad, 2019, p. 178). Average waiting times for Gender Identity Clinics (GICs) breach the English National Health Service constitution requiring treatment within 18 weeks (BBC, 2020), whilst deadnaming and misgendering are widespread even in trans healthcare spaces (Gleeson & Hoad, 2019; Vincent, 2018b). Inadequate healthcare regimes expose trans people not only to 'cognitive impairment, spikes of dysphoria, [and] continual hot flushes, but [also] violence on the streets' (Gleeson & Hoad, 2019, p. 193).

Phenomena that restrict or impede certain trans people's spatial encounters are reflected in studies of conditions experienced by specific demographics of trans communities in certain regions. For instance, the Scottish Trans Equality Network reported that many non-binary people avoid overtly binary-gendered spaces (V. Valentine, 2015). Such impacts might be felt more acutely by trans people facing multiple, intersecting oppressions. For example, in the National LGBT Survey (UK GEO, 2018) 62.0% of Asian/Asian British and 53.9% of Black/

African/Caribbean/Black British trans respondents reported avoid expressing their gender in the home, compared to 43% of white trans respondents. Statistics quantifying trans youth experiences are similarly bleak. In a UK-wide survey reaching 956 trans youth, 83% of respondents had experienced verbal abuse, whilst 35% had experienced physical assault (METRO, 2014). 60% had experienced threats or intimidation; 27% of trans youth had attempted suicide, whilst 89% had 'thought about it' (*Ibid.*). These figures are corroborated internationally (see e.g., The Trevor Project [2019] for the US context). National LGBT Survey (UK GEO, 2018) data underscores these troubling statistics, indicating that young trans people (aged 16–24) experience acute difficulties in being open about their gender/transness across almost all everyday spatial categories covered by the survey.

In recent years, international and British media coverage of trans lives has been characterised by misinformation and moral panic. As Pearce et al. (2020, p. 3) tell us, 'trans people are frequently portrayed as *monstrous*: a freakish threat to children, to lesbians, to women, to [...] womanhood and/or to the fixity of sex itself'. In Britain, trans exclusionary academic feminisms have seeped into prominent media and social media fora, causing 'an escalating struggle over public speech' (Stryker & Bettcher, 2016, p. 6). Indeed, demonstrating their current reach and influence, such trans-hostile feminisms have been platformed by the UK Parliament's Women and Equalities Committee inquiry into the UK Government's limited and insubstantial GRA reform in late 2020 (UK Parliament, 2020). As Jacques (2020) notes, trans-hostile narratives can be categorised into two 'types of British transphobia'. The first, typically perpetuated by the right-wing, argues that gender is congruent with biological traits identified at birth, whilst the second, typically propagated by the left, argues that trans women seeking gender recognition conflict with cis women's rights in/to 'single-sex spaces' (*Ibid.*). Through these discourses, the *everyday encounters and activities* of trans women in particular become repositioned as 'invested with malign and rapacious intent' (Phipps, 2020, p. 105). Indeed, the prominence of trans exclusionary feminist voices in Britain leads geographer Lewis (2019, n.p.) to argue that British trans-exclusionary and gender conservative feminists have 'succeeded in framing the question of trans rights entirely around [...] how these rights for others could contribute to female erasure'. Hines (2019c) links conditions enabling trans-exclusionary politics to the improving visibility and legal status of trans people and movements, trans-exclusionary feminists' cultural prominence, and the advent of social media. However, trans and LGBTQIA+ communities and their allies have also increased trans people's visibility, positive representation, and access to 'safe' and affirming environments. A new 'trans culture' of affinity and activism has emerged in response to societal hostility and discrimination and trans spaces, communities, charities, solidarities, and social movements continue to flourish and expand (see e.g., McNamara, 2018).

In summary, trans people's experiences in Britain call into question a linear 'getting better' narrative that persists around trans people and LGBTQIA+ folk (Lawrence & Taylor, 2019) and demonstrate the political necessity of expansive social science research that works *with* trans folk and attends to their spatial encounters. In the following section I continue this conversation by recognising that trans studies and trans scholars must continue to shape geographical examinations of trans lives and ontologies.

2 | SITUATING TRANS GEOGRAPHIES IN RELATION TO TRANS STUDIES

Trans theory and transgender studies emerged in the 1990s⁴ (with limited institutional support) in response to 'epistemic disconnect' with feminist studies and an increasing recognition that queer and feminist studies lacked conceptual tools to explore the lived realities of gender beyond the 'dominant binary sex/gender ideology of Eurocentric modernity' (Stryker, 2006, p. 3; see Bettcher & Garry, 2009; Kunzel, 2014; Stryker & Currah, 2014; Stryker et al., 2008; Suess et al., 2014; D. Valentine, 2007). Prosser (1998), for example, argued that feminist and queer theories/theorists problematically used trans bodies as 'tropes' to challenge binaries and develop gender theories. In the 1990s and 2000s, the term 'transgender' entered widespread use, the *International Journal of Transgenderism* was founded, and universities began teachings on transgender studies. During this period, trans studies emerged and became a diverse body of work straddling multiple disciplines including the social and medical

sciences, arts and humanities, and beyond (Kunzel, 2014; Stryker, 2006). As Stryker (2006, p. 3) describes, early trans studies work, led by trans people themselves, helped to move conversations around trans lives, both academic and otherwise, from pathologised analyses to intersectionally-informed conversations around trans people's everyday lived experiences, embodiments, and identities (while maintaining that the gendered body remains where biopower is concentrated; Stryker et al., 2008). Geographers are now following this turn to exploring the specificities of particular trans people's embodied experiences. As Stryker and Currah (2014) explain, trans studies is now a largely autonomous field concerned with the operation, mechanisms, experience and embodiments of trans people's *everyday lives* without being exclusively grounded in LGBTQIA+ spaces. Largely researched, theorised, and written by trans people, the field develops intersectional understandings that reflect the realities of trans bodies, genders, identities, and *lives* as multiple and continually emerging (Pearce et al., 2020). Personal narratives and experiences are shared 'not only to bring the dire social conditions of trans people to light, but also to explore the autonomous means with which [they] have achieved survival despite the state' and its violences (Gleeson & Hoad, 2019, p. 178).

Others, however, have controversially argued for 'the end of trans studies' due to its supposed failure to 'establish a robust, compelling set of theories, methods and concepts [distinguishable] from gender studies or queer studies', with 'trans' and 'queer' used as interchangeable ontological categories (Chu & Harsin Drager, 2019, p. 103). Furthermore, trans studies work has not avoided problematic approaches that marginalise or exclude particular trans people and bodies. For example, despite drawing on postcolonial, feminist, queer, and critical race theories (Stryker & Currah, 2014), trans studies remains saturated by whiteness with the lives of trans people of colour often incorporated as an addendum, whilst much of its research remains concentrated in the North Atlantic (*Ibid.*; Ellison et al., 2017; Vidal-Ortiz, 2014). These failings lead Ellison et al. (2017, p. 163) to question how the field 'always already depend[s] on an abstraction of the racialisation of space as foundational to the production of gender and sexuality'.

Importantly, trans studies scholars have examined the position of cisgender academics researching trans lives. For instance, Chu and Harsin Drager (2019, p. 104; also Prosser, 1998) argue that when cis scholars enter the field 'arguments for bodily autonomy, the radical potential of body modification or even worse, arguments from cis folks as to why social transition is as meaningful and transformative as medical transition' arise. Indeed, although it remains ethically and methodologically difficult and contested to align particular identities and embodied subjectivities with particular forms of knowledge production around trans lives, following trans scholars' lead, I agree that it is not the role of cis scholars without trans lived experience to develop theories of trans people's genders and identities, nor to present their autonomies as always-already 'transformative' merely because they exist. However, I argue that geographers, both trans and cis, can be well-placed to explore trans lives, voices, and stories through geographical analyses and methodologies that do not focus solely on debating trans identities and embodiments and their existence but instead draw on trans people's expertise and directives.

Trans studies' conceptual framings have rarely permeated geographical enquiry, despite trans studies tracking the *spatialities* of trans people's lives and lived experiences. Indeed, trans studies scholars have conceptualised queer and trans spaces in their specificities (Crawford, 2015) and have examined how trans subjects and bodies are surveilled, restricted, othered, oppressed, enabled, and augmented across, between, and within particular spaces by multiple actors, mechanisms, and (other) bodies. For example, trans studies academics have highlighted that public/state space constitutes 'a series of architectures [...] designed to keep others vigilant in their surveillance of [trans] bodies' (Crawford, 2015, p. 19). Meanwhile, the term 'trans' has been considered inherently spatial, as a verb which *does* something to, and *receives* something from, space (although others have problematised the 'verbing' of trans; see Chu & Drager, 2019), with 'transing' being 'a practice that takes place within, as well as across or between, gendered spaces' (Stryker et al., 2008, p. 12). Furthermore, certain work in trans studies has committed to spatially interrogating the 'locality and specificity' of trans lives and spaces (Crawford, 2015, p. 20). However, certain trans studies publications have '[set] up a false dichotomy between space and subjectivity wherein space is passive and subjects are active and in control of their world[; one] apparently not shaped by architectural traces of old and new

ideologies' (*Ibid.*, p. 21). I argue that this understanding, highlighting certain trans studies scholars' relative failure to account for the *agency embedded in, or exerted by, space over how trans lives are lived*, illustrates the value of geographical conceptual approaches—particularly those attentive to socio-materialities—in their potential ability to enliven existing work around trans people's experiences within, across, and between the spaces (and indeed the temporalities) they encounter.

In the following sections, I consider how geographers have examined trans people's spatial experiences. I then explore the 'trans geographies' sub-discipline and its contributions and absences.

3 | TRANS PEOPLE, GENDER DIVERSITY, AND GEOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

Although geographers have explored trans subjectivities and bodies as they are (re)formed through their everyday spatial interactions (e.g., Anderson, 2019; Browne, 2007; Browne et al., 2010; Johnston, 2016, 2018; Rosenberg & Oswin, 2015), similarly to most academic disciplines (Hines et al., 2018), trans lives and voices have been largely absent from (or marginal within) geographical research. Indeed, geographers have often approached trans lives through an 'assumed lived experience that does not actually engage with trans people themselves' (Browne & Nash, 2010, p. 6). Historically, geographical work understood trans lives through frameworks co-opted from studies exploring cisgender LGB+ people's lived experiences, without recognising the specificity and diversity of trans people's experiences, knowledges, and spatial encounters. Here, I demonstrate that these absences have often subjugated trans people's voices and agency and in turn limited understandings of the geographies of trans people's lives and lived experiences.

3.1 | Trans people and the geographies of sexualities

Until recently, the geographies of sexualities (GoS)⁵ literature was premised upon cis lesbian women's and gay men's experiences and subject positions in queer spaces perceived as exclusively for cisgender lesbian or gay people (Brown, 2012; Casey, 2007; Nash, 2010, 2011; Rosenberg & Oswin, 2015; Weier, 2020). This literature, which prioritised examining the spatialities of homophobia (Binnie & Valentine, 1999) and the 'heterosexualisation' of space (Oswin, 2008), has been intersectionally uneven (Brown, 2012). Indeed, although geographers have understood everyday spaces as underpinned by heterosexuality, binary-gendered expectations, and normative femininities and masculinities (Browne & Brown, 2016), GoS' focus has been located in urban 'gayborhoods' (Ghaziani, 2019; see e.g., Bain et al., 2015) and implicitly white spaces (Oswin, 2008; Rosenberg, 2015). As such, GoS has understood 'the hetero/homo binary as the primary defining spatial moment' (Nash, 2010, p. 584). These foci have led geographers to explore sexuality (rather than gender diversity) as a 'multi-scalar activity for developing meaning, power and politics in the most intimate and public of settings around the world' (Wright, 2010, p. 57). In all, the GoS literature has not focussed on trans people's experiences or indeed those of queer folk who experience life beyond binaries or are marginalised according to such intersecting axes of difference as race, class, and disability.

GoS have rarely considered trans people's experiences within everyday spaces dominated by cisgender, cisnormative, or trans-hostile norms, expectations, and ideals. Only deep searches of queer geographical literature will find mention of trans people, with most studies being premised upon problematic approaches, such as a desire to include trans experiences in future work, or the inclusion of very few research encounters with trans folk. In this literature, trans people have often been problematically grouped under the 'sexualities' umbrella. This failing presumes a universality of queer experiences and has subjugated or erased trans voices within a wider LGBTQIA+ nexus. Meanwhile, certain efforts to expand on trans lives have depicted trans people's genders as 'fluid and ethereal' by referencing performativity (Browne et al., 2010, p. 574). Crucially, despite constituting an estimated

majority of the trans population in the United Kingdom (51.7% of 14,320 trans respondents to the UK Government's National LGBT Survey were non-binary; UK GEO, 2018), the lives and experiences of non-binary and genderqueer people, and other trans folk who live beyond gender binaries are almost non-existent within geography (Anderson, 2019; see also March, 2020).

3.2 | Early geographically-informed work attentive to trans experiences

Despite GoS' reluctance to reflect upon trans experiences and engage trans folk, some geographically informed scholars historically attended to trans experiences. For example, trans academic-activist Namaste (1996) coined the term 'genderbashing' to explore violences and assaults made against queer folk self-presenting outside of gendered norms. Namaste (1996, p. 228) recognised that trans people *must* present and 'live as' a binary-gendered person—that is, *pass* as cisgender—'in order to avoid verbal and physical harassment' across multiple spatial contexts. Namaste's (1996) work also pioneered by contemplating of trans experiences of public spaces and explicitly *trans spaces*. Namaste's (2000) later work *Invisible Lives* considered trans people's everyday lives across myriad social settings. Throughout, Namaste (2000) draws out the erasure of trans people and their lives through language and marginalisation within public services and healthcare, and even such phenomena as nationalism, which limits associations between trans folk and citizenship (indeed, citizenship remains reliant on the bodily/embodied politics of gender recognition; Hines, 2010a; Hines & Santos, 2018). This work remains instructional to current scholarship by arguing against objectivist approaches positioning trans people as 'object[s] of academic discourse' and a uniform, homogenous community and by calling for a diversity of trans people and communities to be *actively engaged* in research (Namaste, 2000, p. 22).

Two decades on, Johnston's (2018) work illustrates that trans folk still experience such everyday contestations and struggles: many face difficulty encountering exceptional spaces including borders and are subjected to state control of bodily autonomy, healthcare, and health rights. As geographers Rosenberg and Oswin (2015) and DasGupta (2018, 2019) argue, trans refugees receive state-sanctioned violence through carceral power and spaces and hostile, cisgender, and gender binary-expectant asylum/immigration regimes. Elsewhere, Knopp (2007, p. 24) argues *queer geography* is well-placed to 'help with understandings of spatialities of resistance to gender regimes', citing virtual spaces and activism as productive research loci. Indeed a body of work has considered the relative inclusivity of queer/LGBTQIA+ spaces to trans people (Browne, 2009; Doan, 2007; Nash, 2010, 2011; Nash & Bain, 2007; Rosenberg, 2015). This work tracks such sites' 'essentialist expectations' (Nash, 2011, p. 203), and their often racialised, cisnormative and trans-hostile tendencies productive of a *lack* of safety for some trans people. The following section reflects on the emergence of 'trans geographies' as a distinct body of work within geography which has explicitly explored the spatialities of trans lives.

4 | BURGEONING TRANS GEOGRAPHIES

A growing body of work focusses on the spatialities of trans exclusion and marginalisation: trans geographies (Brown, 2012; Hopkins, 2020). Doan's (2010, p. 635) autoethnographies, telling us that '[f]or the gender variant, the tyranny of gender intrudes on every aspect of the spaces in which we [trans people] live and constrains the behaviours that we display', provide an impetus for this work (see also e.g. Brice's [2020] autoethnographic work). Describing the inscription and embeddedness of gender norms within all everyday sites as 'gender tyranny' allows Doan (2010) to counter assumptions around everyday environments such as the home, which she demonstrates can be infiltrated, constructed, or even *defined* by gender tyranny. Her narratives also demonstrate how and where gender performance does not, or cannot, emerge authentically because of particular spaces' norms and constraints, but instead must be altered to maintain personal safety or avoid disrupting cisgender peoples' comfort (see also

Namaste, 1996). Doan illustrates both the perils of visibility in trans-hostile society and the personal embodied resilience that emerges in response to this (trans)gender violence, (re)positioning her belonging, and that of gender diverse people more broadly, in everyday spaces.

Elsewhere, trans geographies work is centred in particular spaces and landscapes (although this work remains concentrated in the North Atlantic; Browne et al., 2010), including binary-gendered spaces including bathroom and changing rooms⁶ (Anderson, 2019; Browne, 2004; Bender-Baird, 2016; Cavanagh, 2018; Ridley, forthcoming). This work explores how such sites are felt as exclusionary and violent spaces wherein trans people are 'blamed for the violence enacted upon them when the farce of [the binary] system [they are policed and produced through] is unveiled' (Bender-Baird, 2016, p. 987). Cavanagh (2018, p. 181) explores how trans folk become viewed as potential sources of 'child molestation, rape and paedophilia' and thus experience the worried or fearful gazes and transphobic reactions of cis people in bathroom spaces. Consequently, to avoid micro-aggressions and other transphobic violence many trans folk judge the relative safety of such exclusionary 'risky spaces', use alternatives, or avoid binary-gendered spaces altogether (Anderson, 2019). Such experiences are embodied by trans people and others who feel their affects and are (re)inscribed within binary-gendered sites and their architectures and bodies. This emotional embeddedness demonstrates how the sociomaterial composition of certain everyday spaces come to hold affective presences through which particular emotions or expectations, for many trans people, emerge and become stickily attached (Todd, forthcoming). As a result, hostile or cisnormative encounters and atmospheres embedded in or emergent from particular spaces result in certain trans folk developing emotional or affective anticipatory relationships to particular everyday sites (*Ibid.*).

Geographers have also examined trans people's experiences of other urban and public spaces, including spaces read uncritically as inclusive for all LGBTQIA+ folk (Doan, 2007). In this literature, Misgav and Johnston (2014) expand upon the relationships between embodiments, bodily fluids, disgust, and performances of gender in queer spaces, whilst others have explored how trans sex workers navigate urban spaces (Fernández Romero, 2020a; Sullivan, 2018). Elsewhere, in a rallying call, Doan's (2017) consolidates trans women's experiences in women's spaces and, again, demonstrates a need for geographical publications to *actively* raise and platform trans voices. Mearns et al. (2020) centralise these concerns by exploring trans people's university campus experiences, expanding on geographical inequalities which trans people must negotiate within higher education spaces (see also Nicolazzo, 2016a, 2016b, 2017). These publications have centralised trans people's stories within literature exploring queer urban lives.

Although 'relatively little [is] said about the specific operation of transphobia and the work it does in terms of people's everyday lives and negotiations of specific places' (Hopkins, 2020, p. 588), trans geographies work is situated in more 'everyday' environments (Johnston, 2018) or has explored the practices of trans people's daily lives across multiple spaces and spatiotemporal scales. This expanding literature has considered older trans women's experiences of workplaces and community support (Hines, 2010b), trans people's 'coming out' stories in Britain and Portugal relative to their social positions (Marques, 2019), and intersectional analyses of trans representations in media (Vine & Cupples, 2016). Geographers have also considered transfeminine people's experiences in carceral spaces (Rosenberg & Oswin, 2015), and trans men's subjectivities and experiences relative to masculinities, race and racism in the rural United States (Abelson, 2016). This work, focussed on the *specificity* of certain trans people's experiences, is further enlivened by Gorman-Murray et al. (2018) examination of trans people's lived experiences of disasters and their specific vulnerabilities and capacities relative to, for example, 'gender tyranny' (Doan, 2010) and access to trans and queer support networks. Their work helpfully advocates for 'understanding trans lives [and] listen[ing to] and learn[ing] from trans voices' over 'discuss[ing] abstract ideas of trans identity' (Gorman-Murray et al. 2018, p. 182). Meanwhile, DasGupta's (2018, 2019) work situates trans bodies and experiences within transnational political geographies of asylum immigration detention, highlighting how gender binaries are simultaneously violently enforced at (trans)national and bodily scales. By calling for 'understanding[s] [of] how transgender bodies are traumatised and often pushed toward death within the detention cell', DasGupta (2019, p. 14) explores how immigration detention reinforces sex and gender binaries, whilst arguing

that 'trauma endured by the transgender body holds potential for disrupting the national security state'. This understanding, examining *potentialities* emergent through trans people's experiences is developed in work exploring both the consequences of, and potentialities (e.g. for resistance, resilience, and spatial [re]organisation) made possible through/despite, young trans people's everyday exhaustions (Todd, forthcoming).

A small body of work explores trans people's home experiences: this literature has considered trans men and transmasculine people's homemaking practices and embodied experiences in home spaces (Andrucki & Kaplan, 2018; Marshall, 2017), and has considered the emotional significance of the home for trans people more broadly (Doan, 2010; Johnston, 2018; Schroeder, 2015). This work expands GoS literature by (re)emphasising that homes can be both 'space(s) of relentless gender policing and the re-inforc[ing] of heteronormative gender binarism' and sites for queering normative home practices (Choi, 2013, p. 118; Wright, 2010). Browne and Lim (2010, p. 628) describe even liberal urban environments as Brighton as both 'accepting, easy and relaxing' and at others prejudicial, unsafe, and disempowering for trans people. This is a nuanced spatial framing which the authors construct by moving beyond 'oppositional positionings' of queer and more cisnormative, heterosexualised spaces (*Ibid.*). Geographers should further examine how everyday spaces can therefore both 'materially, socially and symbolically anchor identities, values, relationships and emotional attachments [... and] offer protection, belonging and safety' and produce 'insecurity, vulnerability and alienation' for trans people (Marshall, 2017, p. 183).

Lubitow et al. (2017, pp. 1414 and 1415) develop trans urban geographies by developing 'transmobilities' to illuminate both 'how gender minorities' routine utilisation of public transit may be altered or constrained due to broader cissexist attitudes' and how 'negative experiences related to mobility and movement may in turn shape one's gender performance or gender presentation'. The authors also attend to the experiences of trans folk particularly vulnerable to harassment and transphobia, namely people of colour, disabled trans people, trans women, and non-binary people. As Campkin and Marshall (2017, p. 31) expose, trans people who 'experience overlapping and intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination (including homophobia, transphobia, racism and sexism) [are] most adversely effected by a lack of access to community-specific spaces'. Trans and non-binary people are therefore more acutely impacted by venue closures and absences, despite popular attention focussed on the closure of queer spaces for relatively privileged cisgender, white, and gay men (*Ibid.*). These publications highlight the importance of intersectional approaches to expanding on the geographies of trans lives. Fernández Romero (2020a) examines such intersections by exploring trans and disability activisms in Buenos Aires. A prominent strand within Fernández Romero's work involves examining the social movements of trans women, *travesti*,⁷ and transfeminine people in the 1980s and 90s, to consider their embodied activisms for inclusion in urban public space (see also Di Pietro [2016] on *travesti* people's experiences). Fernández Romero emphasises the importance of analysing the materialities of certain sites as holding influence over how particular trans people can encounter everyday spaces with relative embodied freedom. Conversely to work focussed on trans activisms, geographers have also explored heteroactivisms, a term which captures co-ordinated ideological movements that aim to privilege and uphold cisgender, heterosexual, and monogamy norms including by opposing so-termed 'gender ideologies' and/or contesting trans visibilities and presences in particular spaces such as schools (Browne et al., 2018; Nash & Browne, 2019, 2021). This work has expanded on how LGBTQIA+ rights opponents have organised locally, regionally, (trans)nationally and through strategic use of social media platforms to promote particular heteronormativities and cisnormativities (*Ibid.*).

Young trans voices often form only a small aspect of queer geographical work (see e.g., Schroeder, 2015). In the limited geographical work exploring trans youth experiences, Jenzen (2017) expands upon trans young people's 'digital cultural strategies' that resist cisnormative internet practices and spaces and everyday transphobia. In work that engages deeply with trans youth, Rooke (2010a, p. 664) reflects on a participatory art project to consider 'what a transgendered [*sic*] space might feel like', grounding several themes related to the experiences, subjectivities, and spatialities of young trans people. Rooke (2010a) also develops understandings of the spatial organisation, maintenance and experience of trans 'safe spaces' (see The Roestone Collective, 2014), particularly by emphasising bodily freedoms they offer in contrast to most everyday spaces. Rooke (2010a) demonstrates such freedoms by describing how their participants began to move with greater ease, and gradually take up more space when in the presence of

other trans people, and whilst immersed in carefully and purposefully constructed, trans-affirming affects (also Todd, forthcoming). Rooke (2010b) builds on this work by reflecting on how their young trans participants come to understand their transness through virtual trans spaces such as forums, message boards, and chat spaces (see also Todd, forthcoming on the catalytic nature of trans 'safe spaces'). The artistic methodological practices and spaces offered by Rooke (2010b, p. 76) also countered the 'apparent certainties of science' that govern trans youth lives, and thus represented resistive spaces that exist in opposition to everyday cisnormativity and medicalised oppressions. Despite these advancements, it seems that, unlike in geographies of trans adult lives, much must still be done to draw attention to trans young people's stories, experiences, and voices. For example, geographers have not yet considered trans youth experiences in terms of 'trans years', which describe that because of the varying ages at which trans people 'come out' or (are able to) live authentically, 'chronologically younger trans individuals may be considerably *older* in trans years than chronologically older trans people' (Pearce, 2018a, 2018b).

Other key publications in trans geographies include those which adopt theoretical approaches weaving together bodies, materials, and sociopolitical forces at multiple spatial and temporal scales. For instance, Andrucki and Kaplan (2018, p. 794) focus on materialities present in trans men and trans masculine people's homes (specifically photographs and décor) to demonstrate how particular objects contribute to their participants' making-sense of, and making-meaning out of, their 'emergent simultaneous multiplicities and [the] queer temporalities of trans identities'. The authors (*Ibid.*) further reflect upon the queerness of the 'constitutive role' which more-than-human objects play in the continual unfolding of trans people's subjectivities, bodies, and identities relative to space and spatial encounters (Todd, forthcoming). My own work (*Ibid.*) develops a similar conceptual thread attentive to how young trans people both encounter and experience particular (socio-)materialities as producing them as 'out of place', an exhausting experience which trans youth alleviate partially by drawing upon particular materialities to develop forms of embodied resilience, resistance, and restoration.

Johnston's (2018, ch. x) volume *Transforming Gender* also elucidates relations between trans bodies and particular spaces, as she explores trans folk's 'identities, subjectivities, bodily senses, moods, sensations and feeling of being in and/or out of place' in Aotearoa New Zealand. Significantly, Johnston (2018) offers space to both trans people's experience of alienation *and* belonging in their everyday lives, highlighting the importance of reflecting the full complexity of trans live as often joyful and empowering, in addition to, at various times, exhausting and anxiety-ridden. Moreover, Johnston's work continues to bring Indigenous trans people's voices into the discipline. Others have importantly made similar interventions (see e.g., Sullivan [2018] on the experiences of an Aboriginal sex worker). However, Johnston's work is emblematic of certain trans geographies in its focus on trans experiences of spaces of exception (including borders and airports), use of outdated terminologies, and limited reflection on (cisgender) researcher positionalities (Todd, 2020). Johnston constructs trans people and bodies as 'resistive' or 'activist' through their existence in cisnormative spaces. I argue that such framings risk positioning trans folk as always-already transgressive or disruptive, and as responsible for contesting oppressions and educating cisgender people about gender diversities and expansiveness. Johnston (2018, p. 98) also questions whether 'gender variant activism' has 'become respectable and perhaps devoid of radical disruptive change'. I argue that geographers should notice that trans movements and spaces, whether physical or virtual, collective or individual, permanent or fleeting, are *always radical* and powerful in their offering of life-saving and life-enriching spaces that can enable resilience within, resistance to, and recovery from, cisnormativity and transphobic societal contexts (Todd, forthcoming).

5 | CONCLUSIONS: ADVANCING TRANS GEOGRAPHIES

In this article, I have demonstrated that geographical conceptual thinking and methodological praxis hold radical, under-used potential to illuminate the lives, spatial encounters, and embodied experiences of trans people. Indeed, geographers' theoretical and methodological toolkits can allow us to explore spaces and times that trans people live through and the movements and experiences of trans subjectivities and bodies in such sites and temporalities. Such

work holds the potential to produce important and necessary interventions that contest dominant, hostile discourses around trans lives. For example, as March (2020, p. 10) notes, trans geographies could identify such embodied experiences as dysphoria as intricate phenomena 'triggered' by socio-spatial gendered regimes and registers of cisnormativity, exclusion, and trans hostility. Crucially, geographical approaches can augment trans studies by meeting Chu and Drager's (2019, p. 113) call for work 'more tuned in to the ways in which [trans people's] ordinary life fails to measure up to the political analyses [theorists] thrust upon it'. To this end, I call for further geographical research to turn to the minutiae of trans people's everyday lives in their full diversity and complexity, and continue to move beyond representations of trans lived experience as marginal and solely traumatic.

To continue moving trans people's lived experiences and voices from the discipline's margins, geographical researchers must grapple with their existing, intersectionally-uneven approaches to trans lives. Geographical research must move beyond its lack of representativeness of, and low engagement with, the full diversity of trans communities, its problematic language uses, and often superficial engagement with trans spaces and social movements. Work remains to highlight and uphold the voices and narratives of non-binary people, BIPOC trans folk, and other trans people who experience multiple marginalities in geographical analyses, whilst geographers must become more attentive how categories of difference, age, terminology, and space operate in relation to trans lives. We should also look to challenge the field of trans geographies as dominated by cisgender researchers and should more deeply integrate trans researchers' work and expertise into geographical study. In order to respond to and inform the work of those contesting hostilities toward trans people that are increasingly embedded within our societies, geographers must continue this work with urgency.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ 'Trans' and 'transgender' encompass a 'wide repertoire of identities, experiences and modes of gender presentation' (Pearce, 2018b, p. 4). I use 'trans' to refer to trans(gender) men and women, non-binary people and others whose gender is beyond binary genders and as a term that constitutes 'an overarching but open-ended means to describe bodies, identities and experiences [...] encompassing (potentially) all individuals whose gender identity and/or physical body differs in any way from that they were assigned at birth' (Pearce et al., 2020, p. 2). I also avoid separating trans and non-binary when referring to trans as a collective term, or using such terms as 'trans and non-binary' or 'binary and non-binary trans' as these potentially risk positioning non-binary folk as 'fundamentally separate' to trans people (Vincent, 2019; 2020).
- ² Throughout this article, I employ the language of intersectionality, a term which refers to how social oppressions interact and co-constitute one another. Intersectionality originates in Black feminist thought and is widely credited as having been introduced to academia by Crenshaw (1991). For a discussion on how geographers have engaged with intersectionality, see Hopkins (2019).
- ³ Following trans scholarship, I argue that avoiding trans suicidality cannot be the sole focus of efforts to contest societal transphobia; celebrating and affirming the diversity of trans lives must also be prioritised.

- ⁴ D. Valentine (2007) and Stryker and Currah (2014) trace the development of trans studies to the publication of Stone's (1992) 'Posttranssexual Manifesto'.
- ⁵ There is an often messy distinction between geographies of sexualities (GoS) and *queer geographies*. As Knopp (2007, p. 22) expresses, although queer geographies emerged out of GoS the 'project' of queer geography has been more explicitly 'deconstructive and critical, and suspicious of certainties, universal truths and ontological imaginations about the way the world works that are mechanistic or instrumental'.
- ⁶ Bathrooms and bathroom politics are a topic that many trans people and scholars might consider to be exhausting or to have been exhausted (White, 2018). Nevertheless, geographical explorations of the spatialities of bathrooms as experienced by trans people are relatively recent and under-examined when compared to bathroom spaces in the lives of cisgender gay men, for example.
- ⁷ In the South American context, *travesti* constitutes a gender expression, role or identity that transfeminine people (who typically, but not exclusively, do not identify as trans women) embody (Di Pietro, 2016; Fernández Romero, 2020a, 2020b).

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James D. Todd's PhD thesis, entitled Exploring the everyday lives of young trans people, was examined at the Department of Geography, Durham University. James collaborates with Gendered Intelligence, a community interest group supporting trans young people in the UK, and hopes to encourage an increase in the presence and voice of trans youth in social science research. James is now working as a Research Fellow at the University of Stirling.

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