Transporting in Place: Locating Trans Care in Atlanta

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by

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Under the Direction of Katherine Hankins, PhD

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the relationship between access to places of trans care and flourishing in trans adults in Atlanta, Georgia in 2022. Building on feminist care geographies and trans studies, I engaged trans adults in Atlanta through participant observation and in-depth interviews to understand where and how trans care surfaces in the region. By attending trans-centered events, I observed trans care in a variety of settings. After these events, I interviewed attendees and organizers to explore gendered embodiment and relationships across differing spaces. By combining this in-depth, place-based research with theoretical concerns of ethics, symbolism, and affinities, this project explores the potential of trans care networks to enable flourishing in Atlanta. I contend that a t4t (trans for trans) ethic produces expansive opportunities for trans embodiment and affinities and is practiced through a variety of placemaking endeavors that create impermanent yet long-lasting infrastructures of care.

INDEX WORDS: Trans care, T4t, Placemaking, Case study, Atlanta, Care ethics

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DEDICATION

To my dear friend Tortuguita, who taught me so much about care of all kinds: may I one day have the words for all that you were + continue to be. May we all care for ourselves, each other, and the land with your disciplined hope + steadfastness. Que la lucha siga siempre.

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The researcher would also like to acknowledge the many anonymous trans people who contributed to this project by consenting to an interview or a site visit. Ze is in awe of their capacity for care and can only hope that hir work might one day come close to capturing their brilliance. Ze holds their gifts, their words, and their achievements close as a guiding compass towards the future we all hope to see.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

t4t: trans for trans

1 INTRODUCTION

Despite continued trans-antagonism, trans people across time and space utilize a variety of strategies to encourage each other's survival and flourishing. T4t, or trans for trans, is a set of norms that guides many intracommunity interactions, orienting many trans people towards each other. These norms include trans-for-trans resource sharing, prioritizing relationships with each other, and celebrating each other's desirability. In my research, I set out to examine the relationships of t4t care and well-being in the context of anti-trans state and interpersonal violence. I sought to uncover the relationship between access to places of trans care and flourishing in trans adults in Atlanta, frequently referred to as the gay mecca (occasionally the Black gay mecca) of the South (Andrews, 2019; Stephens, 2018; Queer in the World). Drawing on trans studies and queer and feminist geographies, this thesis research examines places of trans care and their effects on trans people who access them. Focusing attention on places of trans care has the potential to refocus trans geographies on trans-led world-building, rather than cis-led erasure and violence. Furthermore, documenting how organizers and participants sustain such places can teach us valuable lessons about the potential of building power networks despite affective and material disinvestment.

In this thesis, I make two distinct contributions to existing literature on care work, practices of t4t, and placemaking. First, I contend that t4t practice in Atlanta in 2022 spurs collective ontologies, responsibilities, and political orientations that spawn spatially and temporally specific affinities that are highly dependent on local political geographies. Secondly, t4t placemaking in this space-time is an impermanent project that creates long-lasting infrastructures of care in response to material deprivation and precarity. These projects are not without their failures, fissures, or faults. In these pages, I explore the limitations, successes, and

complications of how trans people in Atlanta are caring for each other in the face of trans-antagonism.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Both trans scholars and feminist geographers have extensively grappled with how to define, locate, and understand care. In this review, I trace throughlines and divergences between geography and trans scholarship on care places, spaces, and networks. First, I examine how feminist geographers and trans scholars understand care, where care surfaces, and who practices care. Then, I explore feminist and trans understandings of futurity, asking why care is practiced and how care has the potential to sustain communities. Finally, I examine how trans scholars and geographers engage with ontology and subject formation. By putting trans, queer, and feminist geographers into conversation, this literature review examines multiple approaches to care and its political and personal implications.

First, however, a note on language: terminology for experiences of sexuality and gender varies greatly among the sources discussed here. In summarizing their stances, I have generally used the terms that the authors do, believing that this approach captures their research best. However, when I attempt to compare or expand on their work, I generally use these terms as follows. “Trans” does not always refer solely to self-identified transgender or transsexual people; I use it to mean people, activities, or epistemologies which in some way expose or challenge the mutability and fallacies of a bioessentialist sex/gender binary. Similarly, “queer” refers to people, activities, or epistemologies which challenge dominant normativities, particularly pertaining to sexuality, gender, racial capitalism, and/or the nation state. “LGBT” refers to people who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender, or the broader coalition of sexual and gender variance that has arisen in the neoliberal politicalscape of the 2000s-2010s. I draw on the work of Cathy Cohen (1997), Dean Spade (2015), Jasbir Puar (2007), and Lisa Duggan (2002) when thinking through these discursive choices, but my language will inevitably

prove outdated or imprecise at points. I thank you, my reader, for your continued grace as we grapple with the complexity of gendered experience. In addition, though this will be explored further in my methods section where I discuss positionality, I will clarify here briefly: I am trans, and any attempts to discuss transness will be inextricable from my own experience as a trans person. As a result, I frequently use first-person plural pronouns such as "we" or "us" to describe the trans community. This is an attempt to be honest about my role in this research.

2.1 Care: Who is Practicing it and Where?

Feminist geographers have made valuable interventions on care and its topological relations. Hanrahan and Smith (2020) argue that care relations assume multiple meanings, come into being through various processes, and have widespread social and geographical impacts. Importantly, they conclude that "ways of being and caring" are dynamic, socially constructed, and "acutely open to transformation" (Hanrahan & Smith, 2020, p. 233). This understanding of care serves my research as I seek to evaluate when, where, and how relations of care produce places where trans people gather. Viewing care as relation allows geographers to understand spatial and temporal unevenness in care (Atkinson et al., 2011; Hanrahan, 2020). The unevenness in care impacts access to resources and services that make life more livable; this framework for understanding care is useful, as I explore how trans people, disenfranchised from many traditional relations and sites of care, use t4t praxis to create places to be—and to flourish.

Beyond conceptual understandings of care, feminist geographers have explored the material impacts of disparately gendered care labor. For example, Hall (2018) points out that austerity policies in the United Kingdom resulted in women shouldering more of the burden of care labor. The impact of market relations on care-based relationships is a prominent feature of feminist work on the topic (e.g., Lawson, 2007). Feminist geographers like Hall (2018) and

Lawson (2007) have drawn clear connections between political and economic conditions and personal experiences of care. However, while women face most of the burden of care labor in dominant (cis-heteronormative) society, this scholarship largely fails to grapple with trans experiences. Current feminist interventions do not explore whether trans people are collectively impacted similarly by austerity measures or interpersonal conflict due to their shared gender-based marginalization, or if differing trans gender modalities face different expectations of care. Much of feminist geography work on care also locates care either in the workplace or in the home (Conradson, 2003). Though these interventions are valuable, they may not ring true for trans people who form alternative familial kinship networks or who do not engage in paid care labor. In my research, I expand scholarship in geography that explores the material impacts and geographies of care and care burdens by examining differently gendered populations than that of cisgender men and women.

In contrast to feminist understandings of gendered care, trans communities have been developing a distinct ethos of care for the last two decades based on t4t (Malatino, 2019). Aizura & Malatino (2019) contend that trans care work takes place outside of traditional locations of care—the home, the hospital, the nursery—and painstakingly pieces together family units that traditional care literature often assumes a priori. These processes are a response to cis indifference or outright opposition to trans life. Here, I explore the evolution of trans care ethics that undergird communal understandings of care. In subsequent sections, I explore why this matters in regards to collective trans marginalization and/or traumatization but will spend time here summarizing current understandings of care in trans studies to provide necessary context to later discussions of acute moments of violence and their responses.

In their book *Trans Care,* Hil Malatino (2020) comes to the titular concept from t4t through appropriately gendered recognition, which bolsters trans people's security, safety, and self-esteem. "One asks for [an appropriate gender recognition], one relies on the other to grant it" (Malatino, 2020, p. 36). Gender is not just a matter of one's felt sense of self—we are not in control of how others perceive us or how those perceptions influence how we are treated. As supplicants, we have "minimal agency," constructing semaphores of various cues to craft an assemblage that can be seen as the gender we would like to be recognized as (Malatino, 2020, p. 36).

To understand how trans people's experiences of gendered rejection impact their understandings of care, Malatino (2020) differentiates between relationships of recognition and interdependence and more casual interactions. In the former, we know and owe each other appropriate recognition and we usually get what we want. In the latter, such as in interactions with a stranger, this ethic has not yet been crafted—they owe us nothing, and often we do not have the intimacy for them to even know what we want. Each of us comes to gender asking for recognition, and many of us who do not meet its white, thin, abled cisheternormative standards are turned away. Despite the pain of this rejection, this experience leads trans people to a unique understanding of the interdependent web of care that we all live in (Malatino, 2020). Malatino rejects liberal myths of fully atomized individuals in this understanding of recognition. Rather, when recognition is withheld, trans people become intimately aware of how their attempts at exerting agency are merely part of an assemblage of norms, actions, and discourses (Malatino, 2020).

In *Trans Care*, Malatino asks what ethos springs from this process of recognition. First, he notes that his conception of a trans care ethos is "collective ways of doing and the norms and

principles that emerge from such ways of doing," rather than abstract principles that are enacted by an individual agent with maximum choice (Malatino, 2020, p. 40). They draw on María Puig de la Bellacasa's (2017) conception of the ethical obligations of care. She argues that these obligations are commitments that intervene in a dominant ethos that does not enable life beyond normative ontologies (p. 154). These stabilizing commitments to care are not "a priori universal," nor are they indicative of some natural social morality. Rather, these ongoing acts—such as resource sharing or attention to demands for recognition discussed thus far—constitute life-sustaining relations that flourish despite normativities that would close off such "relating" (de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 154). This conceptualization of care helps Malatino (and his readers) think through t4t's "fraught, imperfect, and ongoing" nature and consider how trans communities create and act out norms that create trans life-sustaining relations (Malatino & Awkward-Rich, 2022). Trans care is practiced by the trans community as a response to dominant normativities of cissexism and transphobia that limit their flourishing, producing intra-community norms that orient us towards each other. These relations guide trans communities towards a world where trans futures are not just livable but celebrated and actively desired.

T4t, or trans for trans, attachments are a critical part of actualizing this future for many trans people, so I turn to trans scholars on the topic to sketch out a brief history of how t4t practices enable a broader network of norms and ethics. T4t originally emerged in Craigslist personal ads, used as a signifier that one was a trans person seeking out other trans people to meet, date, and/or engage in sex. This usage is radical in and of itself—gender identity and modality guide sexual orientation, nonnormative bodies are cast as specifically desirable, and cisheterosexual relationship structures are rejected—but scholars argue that the use of t4t indicates a broader communal norm (Adair & Aizura, 2022; Malatino, 2019). T4t practitioners

are severing “ties to cissexist modes of interpellating trans bodies” and strategically deploying a separatist politics that guides them “toward cultivating self-love, self-regard, and self-care” (Malatino, 2019, p. 654). Both fictional and nonfictional narratives by trans authors examine how t4t relationships sustain trans life and trans futures, both by calling people into greater security and affirmation of their transness and serving as a conduit of valuable material aid (Adair & Aizura, 2022; Malatino, 2020; Peters, 2017). The bulk of research on place-based t4t focuses on Internet spaces, such as afore-mentioned personal ads, crowdfunding (Barcelos, 2022) and transition vlogs (Malatino, 2019). My project utilizes this well-researched framework for practices of trans care to understand how they might inform placemaking practices in Atlanta in 2022. This is a valuable application of the theoretical interventions described thus far which expands on scholarly understandings of trans strategies of survival and care.

2.2 Futures: Why Practice Care?

Geographers have engaged seriously with changemaking practices and futurity, arguing that futures are shaped through a myriad of caring acts, relations, and sites. Embracing this iterative understanding of place, queer geographers examine places as “elusive, ephemeral, and always in the process of both becoming and disintegrating” (Knopp, 2007, p. 50; Thrift, 1998). The practices that enable such places produce a myriad of intentional and unintentional consequences that shape what kinds of interactions and ways of being are possible (Knopp, 2007). According to Knopp (2007), queer placemaking is an endlessly unfolding process that occurs within and simultaneously produces a network of human and nonhuman forces such as people, space(s), cultural norms surrounding sex and gender, and/or technologies of queer sexuality. Similarly, feminist epistemology deployed in geography notes that “the nature of the present and the different entities and categories that exist within the present are simultaneously

shaped by the past and future" (Grosz, 2005; MacLeavy et al., 2021, p. 1563). Grosz (2005) argues that one must consider critically both the past and the future to understand how to proliferate new discourses, norms, and paradigms for the future. Hankins (2017) and Askins (2014) discuss quiet politics, or mundane interactions and relationships that co-constitute "a set of mutually caring practices" (Askins, 2014, p. 3). Wilhoit Larson (2018) and Ewalt (2016) contend that feminist placemaking, or "placing, arranging, and naming" a space for "rest, care, pause, safety, community, and authenticity" is a form of relational ontology that becomes worldmaking (Wilhoit Larson, 2018, p. 397). These geographical interventions argue that the future can be shaped at multiple scales by acts of care that produce new social relations and meaningful sites of engagement.

Trans scholars argue that t4t shapes the future while remaining anti-utopian in their attempts to do so (Malatino, 2019). Spade's (2015) work demonstrated that the U.S. government erases trans lives through administrative categorizations predicated on a bioessentialist gender binary that expose non-normatively gendered people to violence and death. For example, Spade (2015) discusses at lengths the difficulties that trans and gender-nonconforming populations experience when accessing welfare services that are more easily available to those whose identification documents align across jurisdiction and type. A crucial role of the U.S. government's systems of population-level intervention—public health, criminal punishment, education, social safety nets, etc.—is the administration of gender as a binary inextricably tied to one's assigned (binary) sex at birth (Spade 2015). Under this regime, trans attempts at survival resemble "crabs in a barrel" more than a utopia, as a character in Torrey Peters' 2017 t4t fantasy *Infect Your Friends and Loved Ones* quips (p. 54). For example, Marvin (2022) explores how trans care failed when transplanted into a workplace setting, as her employers exploited and

mistreated their trans employees by demanding unpaid labor and facilitating unsafe working conditions in the name of creating a community space but notes that bars and restaurants remain a common "trans scene." Rosenberg (2016), a critical geographer based in Edinburgh, explores how accessing spaces designed to provide care can result in surveillance and criminalization for queer youth of color. T4t often fails, with particularly violent consequences for Black, brown, working-class, disabled, and/or otherwise marginalized trans folks (Marvin, 2022, Awkward-Rich & Malatino, 2022). Trans care is not about launching a foolproof plan for crafting a mythical trans paradise, but about the mundane attempts to "survive in the interregnum" and intervene in trans death (Malatino, 2019).

In contrast to these failed interventions, some scholars have highlighted more successful efforts at enabling trans futures. Rooke (2010) explores how trans places contribute to trans youth's ontological security, enabling them to navigate an oppressively gendered world. Even small, temporary spaces had long-term effects on trans youth's well-being, as evidenced by follow-up contacts with the participants and some of their parents. Rooke (2010) clearly states the necessity of having places of trans world-building. Adair and Aizura (2022) emphasize how t4t's sexual roots continue into the 2020s, exploring how trans masculine eroticisms produce identity and practices that center transness and trans pleasure. Most scholars who analyze where trans care surfaces operate on the assumption that trans care is a complex web of "recognition, attraction, solidarity, and support" that can erupt in unexpected relationships and places (Malatino, 2019, p. 652). As I visited different sites of trans care across Atlanta, this tendency also arose in my own research.

2.3 Ontology: How Does One Be(come) in a Place?

In thinking through trans ontological security and flourishing, I turned to queer, feminist, and trans understandings of ontology and subject formation in place. Wilhoit Larson (2018), feminist geographer, argues for relational ontology in the context of feminist placemaking, suggesting that places and subjects come into being through mutual relation. For example, she argues that organizations in general are the product of ongoing communication between humans and non-humans (e.g., a series of rooms arranged into an office building or a mission statement that communicates its purpose). MacLeavy et al. (2021) argue that feminist geographers can and should investigate the "nature and potential of bodies beyond their ideological articulations and discursive inscriptions" (p. 1564). They also contend that geographical ontological imaginations must view subjects relationally and topologically (MacLeavy et al., 2021). That is, scholars who understand that actions and experiences are constituted alongside other subjects should explore the embodied implications of social and discursive constructions (such as gender). Queer scholar and sometimes-geographer, Jasbir Puar (2005), utilizes her framework of a queer assemblage to think through how bodies "transmit affects" to each other and become through spatially and temporally contingent phenomenon (p. 121). Several feminist scholars agree that this relational ontology is better suited to grappling with issues of placemaking, futurity, and care than approaches that rely on essentialist tropes (Grosz, 2005; Hanrahan & Smith, 2020; Macleavy et al., 2021; Wilhoit Larson, 2018).

Trans scholars understand subject formation similarly, borrowing heavily from Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) work on becoming. Malatino (2019) argues that ontological shifts in trans subjects are not always accompanied by identity changes— "rather, becoming undermines the fixed, stable terms that give shape and sense to the taxonomies of identity" (p. 643). They argue

that viewing trans subjects as becoming instead of being allows one to emphasize aspects of transition and trans experiences that do not prioritize "representation, identity, and social legibility" (Malatino, 2019, p. 643). Stryker et al. (2008) agree, asserting that they "understand genders as potentially porous and permeable spatial territories (arguably numbering more than two), each capable of supporting rich and rapidly proliferating ecologies of embodied difference" (p. 12). Through these trans scholars' work, the connections between queer and feminist relational ontology and trans subject formation become clear. Rather than transness or transition being based on an impermeable sense of self, certain places and networks make it possible for a person to become trans. Once a person is becoming trans, they may be interested in stabilizing the places and networks that enabled the pre-existing ontological shift(s). My research picks up at this point as I question how trans subjects in Atlanta access places of trans care and the subsequent impacts on their sense of selfhood and subject formation.

2.4 Research Questions

Current research on care and t4t address the material implications of locating care and grappling with its fluidity. As such, I am led to my most general question: what constitutes places of trans care in Atlanta? Though some examples exist in the literature, they are primarily focused on virtual networks or physical spaces where trans care fails. Though it is not important to definitively map out trans care—doing so would counteract its ongoing, relational nature and quickly prove useless as t4t dynamics naturally shift—understanding what interactions constitute a place of trans care in the minds of participants advances theorizations of where trans care is possible. Likewise, I am not interested in creating a definitive checklist of where trans care is located; answering this question is a matter of expanding understanding of the ways in which t4t spaces are produced, even momentarily.

In addition to expanding understanding of places of trans care, in this thesis I explore a series of relationships. I ask, what is the relationship between places of trans care in Atlanta and the political context of the region? What is the relationship between access to places of trans care and participants' abilities to flourish? These questions explore the context of trans care and the role trans care plays in a broader web of relationships. Though the city of Atlanta and many of its suburbs are usually more socially accepting than more conservative ex-urban and rural areas, the state of Georgia and the southeastern region continues to employ legislative, administrative, and discursive tools to ostracize and eliminate queer and trans populations. For example, at the time of writing this thesis, Georgia lawmakers entertain multiple bills that would ban trans children from accessing gender-affirming healthcare. More broadly, a lack of a social safety net in the region exposes poor trans folks to increased precarity, particularly those who cannot access what limited welfare services are available due to documentation issues (Spade, 2015). Though trans people thrive and flourish in Atlanta, Georgia, and the Southeast, the landscape presents complex and varied challenges that are unique to the region. In answering these questions, I uncovered the relationship between an inhospitable political climate and trans adults' devotion to organizing and sustaining places of trans care. I ultimately find that access to places of trans care sustains trans life, allowing participants to navigate other arenas with increased feelings of security and continuity. Furthermore, networks and relations of trans care enabled trans people to build political power that expanded beyond trans-specific issues and to develop a collective sense of purpose as they cultivated meaningful relationships with each other.

3 METHODOLOGY & METHODS

3.1 Positionality

My approach to this research is heavily informed by my prior engagement with trans community in Atlanta. At the time of this writing, I have spent about four and a half years openly identifying as trans in this region. Trans people in Atlanta enabled me to envision a future that I could live in and showed me how to practice for that future in the present. I would not be asking these questions without the relations that have produced me as I am today: personally and politically committed to the autonomy, self-determination, and joy of gender expansive people everywhere. My research is motivated by love for trans people, for Atlanta, and for the possibilities that we produce for each other in this place every day.

My experience of my transness and of the educational institutions that have granted me the ability to conduct this research is heavily influenced by factors of race, class, ability, and gender modality. As a white, physically abled trans masculine person with college-educated parents, my body-mind has often fit easily into spaces that offer resources to enable survival or academic success. As I navigate discussions of trans care, I continually reflect on how my experiences of care—often abundant, graceful, or unneeded due to independent resources—are affected by broader logics of what forms of embodiment are useful, disposable, or welcome in our relationships and communities. This discussion of my methodology and methods is intended to provide clarity as to how I endeavored to engage with care without universalizing my experiences or falsely removing myself from systems of misogyny, white supremacy, and capital accumulation that partially enable my access to this work.

3.2 Methodology

In this study I drew from trans and assemblage theory, which enabled me to respond to temporally and spatially contingent phenomena and resist the urge to view transness as more stable than it is. I utilized the epistemological commitments of trans geographies, aiming to create "new and innovative understandings not only of the spatializing of gender and the creation of gender through socio-spatial relations, but also the challenges and resistances trans people experience in the spaces and places they use, create and reject" (Browne et al., 2010, p. 573). Alongside other trans and feminist geographers, I posit that all human relations are gendered, reproducing dominant power relations, that embodied experiences are gendered, and gendered politics and space are important sites of interrogation (Nash, 2010). These commitments drove my decisions to engage in how trans care produces new ethics and norms in trans communities through the intentionally fractured lens of assemblage geographies.

Thinking in assemblages impacted my choice of methods and my analysis, as throughout my research process, I engaged with unstable and highly spatiotemporally specific gendered practices of being and becoming. Robbins and Marks (2010) explore how an assemblage approach to geography, drawn from Deleuze and Guattari's work, draws connections between the world, its representations, and its mediators. This framework understands realities as "semi-stable" and highly temporally and spatially specific (Robbins & Marks, 2010, p. 181). Robbins and Marks (2010) contend that, in practice, an assemblage analysis draws attention to the relationships between humans and non-humans, differing trajectories and flight-lines, and "spatially heterogeneous forms and effects" (p. 182). There are significant connections between this framework and Jasbir Puar's (2005) work on queer assemblages. She contends that "a queer assemblage… resists queerness-as-sexual-identity (or anti-identity)—in other words,

intersectional and identitarian paradigms—in favor of spatial, temporal, and corporeal convergences, implosions, and rearrangements" (Puar, 2005, p. 121). Puar (2005) contends that viewing queerness as an assemblage "enables ontology in tandem with epistemology, affect in conjunction with representational economies, within which bodies… interpenetrate, swirl together, and transmit affects to each other" (p. 122). Trans and assemblage geographies align epistemologically and are particularly well-suited to my project. Other methodologies that rely on an uncomplicated "I" or "you" are not compatible with the lived experience of trans people who move through different spaces. As I have attempted to understand how trans people develop a sense of continuity through shifting gendered interactions, places, and relationships, trans assemblage thinking has guided me to a more robust analysis than identity-centered paradigms.

As such, I relied on qualitative methods to conduct a case study of trans care in the Atlanta region. Using a case study approach was most fitting as I considered trans care in its context through a variety of methods that explored the interactions between the Atlanta trans community and me (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Hyett et al., 2014; Stake, 1995). I was interested in looking at a series of particular moments—places where trans care is practiced or otherwise made possible—to uncover how that space-time impacts participants who co-construct places of trans care. To answer my primary research question, I had to understand what constitutes a place of trans care and how such places impact flourishing in participants. Qualitative methods are the best tool for this because my emphasis is on the experience of participants in these places. I wanted to know about the subjective feelings of (in)stability, (in)security, and/or gender eu/dysphoria that are present (or absent) in these places.

However, to conduct a thorough case study of these issues, I must also consider the socio-political context of Atlanta and local histories and practices of transness and queerness,

which significantly factor into how and why I chose this site of inquiry (Stake, 1998). I center my research on Atlanta because the city is a regional center for queer, trans, and LGBTQ+ tourism and organizing in the midst of anti-LGBT sentiment throughout the state and region (Andrews, 2019; Stephens, 2018; Queer in the World). Atlanta has a rich history of queer activism that most publicly began in 1969 with the forming of the Georgia Gay Liberation Front shortly after the Ansley Mall Mini-Cinema raid (Waters, 2019). Queer Atlantans would produce their own newspapers, the *Atlanta Barb* and *Gay Times*, and build a thriving social scene in the city's Midtown area, which attracted queer tourists and locals from across the region (Gerrard et al., 2022). The eruption of the HIV/AIDS pandemic forced queer Atlantans to shift tactics from creating places of acceptance and cultural production to survival, which was most saliently marked by the founding of AID Atlanta in 1982 (Raimondo, 1997). As case numbers waned, the militant organization that the AIDS pandemic produced enabled queer and trans Atlantans to protest Southern activist Anita Bryant's anti-gay agenda (Hallerman, 2021). They successfully stopped the 1996 Olympics from holding events in Cobb County, which enforced an anti-gay ordinance against its employees (Hallerman, 2021). This history of queer activism helped secure Atlanta's reputation as a regional haven for LGBT Southerners, especially Black residents.

Well into the 21st century, Atlanta remained the site of queer and trans struggle and resistance. In 2000, Atlanta became the first city in Georgia to adopt an ordinance that bars business owners from discriminating based on sexual orientation. However, as late as 2009, the Atlanta Police Department was conducting anti-gay bar raids, and the landmark anti-discrimination case *Bostock v. Clayton County* stemmed from the unlawful termination of a gay man in the Atlanta area (Hallerman, 2021). In the last three years, the Georgia state legislative bodies have brought forward eleven anti-trans bills, including one that passed the senate in

February 2022 and one that passed the house in March 2023. The region has followed suit, with every southeastern U.S. state proposing at least one anti-trans bill in the last year (Freedom for All Americans, 2021-2022). Notably, 35% of the U.S. LGBT+ population calls southeastern states home, making the area the largest concentration of queer folks in the country (The Williams Institute, 2014). With this context in mind, Atlanta was a unique and particularly robust place for me to explore how trans people use trans care to sustain their community in the face of political instability.

3.3 Methods

To position myself to understand the assemblages that are places of trans care, I first engaged in participant observation at a number of trans-centered events in Atlanta from June to December 2022. Watson & Till (2010) note that "observations of, and interactions with, others highlight how bodies interact, meld, and constitute social spaces, and thereby create inclusions and exclusions," which aligned with my goal of understanding how trans communities create trans4trans spaces (p. 4). Participant observation allowed me to explore from my own perspective what constitutes trans care, how trans care functions in varying spaces, and the impact of trans care on my own flourishing as a participant in the space. This method was useful for answering my question(s) because I aim to understand what a place of trans care is; in order to do so I must enter such possible places and catalog what I see as indicative of trans care. I initially limited my participant observation to events centered on trans people because t4t is, by nature, between trans people and within trans communities. I found my interviews particularly useful in identifying places that were not explicitly advertised as trans-only, as participants frequently asked me if I had been to some event or spoken to some organizer. If a participant explicitly identified a public event in or near Atlanta as a place where they accessed trans care, I

did my best to attend it, though there were a few cases where this was not possible due to complicating factors like scheduling. I attended a wide variety of events in terms of location, audience, and theme. Overall, I conducted participant observation at 15 distinct events during my data collection. Though I will not disclose the details of each particular gathering as they varied in publicity and safety, they generally fell across a few major categories: resource (re)distribution, social groups, political strategizing, and entertainment. Many gatherings, such as a few DIY pride festivals, blurred the lines of these categories as they facilitated multiple kinds of spaces or featured multiple hours of programming.

Ethical concerns were a critical factor in my selection of participant observation sites. Obviously, my lived experience and identity as a trans person was salient to how I entered and moved through different spaces. Sharing this orientation with my research participants certainly afforded me access to these places, but I was also aware of how other factors (openness about my transness, position as a researcher, race, education level, ability, citizenship status, housing status) impacted my interactions with others in these spaces. To mitigate the possibility of intruding in a space where my function as a researcher may be unwanted or do harm, I contacted the organizer(s) to inform them of my intentions and answer any questions for events where I believed there may be a reasonable expectation of privacy. I applied that protocol to events with less than 15 attendees, events that required registration and/or were not advertised publicly, and events with a potentially sensitive subject matter or reasonable expectation of privacy (such as support groups).

I did not take videos, photos, or audio recordings at these events. Though some scholars discussing participant observation methods (e.g., Watson & Till, 2010) discuss the benefits of recording observation sites through audio, video, or photography, the privacy of my research

participants was more important than the benefits I would receive from documenting the event in this way. It was important that I not "out" my participants who may have been relying on assumed anonymity and/or privacy in a trans-only space. Instead, I utilized written notes created during or shortly after the event, as Lareau (2021) discusses as a useful strategy to avoid becoming obtrusive in one's observation. I also occasionally recorded voice notes on my phone when leaving an event, which I deleted after returning home and transcribing them. I never recorded the exact location or any identifying information about participants.

Once I selected the events I planned to attend, I conducted observations at the site. While in the space, I sought out visual markers of trans care or failures of trans care by looking for the absence or presence of gatekeepers, embodied diversity, spatial accessibility, trans bodies, and available resources. Gatekeepers or gatekeeping practices include programs that require paid admission or submission of some documentation to attend or receive benefits. Embodied diversity includes the presence of varied race, ability, and size of the participants and organizers. Accessibility includes the presence of ramps, seating, gender-neutral restrooms, and other marks of architectural attention to differing bodily needs. Beyond the makeup of the space, I gave more sustained attention to practices of care and how they are enacted in the space. Factors like the purpose of the event, the presence of gender affirming interactions, or the practice of skill or resource sharing helped identify a place of trans care for these purposes.

To supplement my observations, I conducted six follow-up in-depth interviews with participants who were present at an event I attended. I had an additional two interviews scheduled, but participants withdrew their consent prior to the meeting. I chose not to interview a separate person from each event that I attended because I frequently saw the same people at each event of similar types. Additionally, at some events, especially more informal and small

gatherings, I was given the chance to discuss my research topic candidly and participants shared with me their thoughts on trans care and their experiences of Atlanta's trans spaces. In those situations, I would offer them the chance to do a formal interview; they frequently declined due to a lack of desire to be recorded or a busy schedule but told me that I could use anything I heard from them in that space. I also deliberately chose not to interview anyone under the age of 18. This decision was partially to easily adhere to institutional review board standards about vulnerable populations and also an attempt to honor the creativity and brilliance of trans children. I believe that children are capable of sustaining their own networks of care and asserting their own agency in a myriad of ways (see Gill-Peterson, 2018, for more on this topic) and thus felt strongly that the care networks of trans adults and trans children should be examined separately.

Despite having fewer interview participants than instances of participant observation, using this method allowed me to gain a robust understanding of the experiences of other trans people in the same places. Contrary to some scholars' approaches to interviews (e.g., Cochrane's, 2014, discussion of Webb and Cloke, p. 40), I was not seeking out a mythical singular truth about places of trans care or places that cater to trans audiences. Rather, my interviews focused on providing an opportunity for my participants to articulate how they understood their participation in trans placemaking and how differing settings impacted their experience of their own gendered embodiment (Cochrane, 2014, 41). By moving from participant observation to interviews, I decentered myself and my own perceptions in the research process. Although my observations were central to my analysis, I could not possibly meaningfully examine the full range of experiences with t4t from my own position. Interviews with other trans people who shared space with me helped me gain a broader understanding of

how participants practice trans care. Thus, these in-depth interviews were essential to developing a robust perspective of the events I observe. These interviews emphasized the relational piece of my research questions, as an in-depth interview gave me the opportunity to explore my participants' perception of how trans care moved within and outside of particular spaces and places and the relative importance of other trans people and care work to their sense of security and alignment more broadly.

To prepare for these interviews, I developed a semi-structured interview guide (see appendices A & B). However, as my research progressed and I developed greater ease with the interview process, I frequently rephrased or rearranged these questions, but remaining focused on three major themes: the interviewees' experience of their own gendered embodiment in the place we shared, the interviewees' perception of what constitutes trans care, and the interviewees' perception of the impact of trans care on their lives. I asked participants to discuss their experiences in trans-centered places, including how long and why they have engaged in them. Rather than framing the majority of my questions in terms of "trans care," given that the term is somewhat vague at first encounter, I instead relied on frameworks of "t4t" "community" or "care between trans people." I asked them about the differences between their relationships with trans people and cis people and the relative importance in their lives of access to trans-centered places. These interviews were completed in a location of the participant's choosing; these included their home(s), coffee shops, and parks. All but one were conducted in-person, with one participant choosing to do an interview over a video conferencing platform due to transportation and scheduling issues. My focus was on event attendees—that is, those who only came to the event we shared as participants—but I also spoke to a few event organizers. As will be discussed at length later, there were also several moments where the lines between these categories were

blurred due to collective organization of a space. I recorded the interview audio for transcription shortly afterwards and deleted the audio after completion of this process.

Once I completed my participant observation and interviews, I analyzed the data alongside existing academic literature on trans care to answer my research questions. As my interview guide is already structured around broad themes that pertain to my research questions, coding the audio recordings was relatively simple. Though I intermittently engaged in analysis to varying levels throughout the research process by transcribing and occasionally referencing earlier interviews before completing my data collection completely, I identified six themes that showed up across my data. These codes were: Identity, Recognition, Place/Organization of Interest (POI), Active Participation at POI, Impermanence, and Practices of Care. Grouping excerpts of my notes and transcriptions in this way allowed me to look for similarities and differences across different interviews to understand what different factors influence where participants accessed trans care. Ultimately, as I participated in the production of trans places in Atlanta and built relationships with other participants, I gained a better understanding of how these places are sustained and the impacts they have on trans people's lives.

4 T4T PRAXIS OF LOVE DOWN SOUTH

In this section, I explore the kinds of commitments and norms that t4t produces in Atlanta. First, I analyze the ways that a shared experience impact how participants experience a place, gesturing to a particular ethic of mutually constituted ontologies, responsibilities, and political frameworks. Though these may not be exclusive to Atlanta, my research illuminated the very particular ways that they occur in Atlanta. In the subsequent section, I zero in on the local political geography of this city to better understand the unexpected impacts of the ethic described above. I found that t4t praxis in Atlanta enables participants to contribute to other social causes and influences the makeup of organizing groups outside of trans-specific issues.

4.1 T4T In the Mundane

Across my interviews and participant observation, three important factors to the success of regular practices of trans care emerged. When discussing how participants know a place is safe, the expected calculations of cis/trans ratios, recognizably queer aesthetics, physical and financial accessibility, and reputation were discussed in interviews by organizers in their spoken or unspoken considerations in setting up a space for use by trans communities. However, participants also gestured at concepts that lay beyond considerations of individual safety or accessing particular resources. In this section, I explore the importance of collective ontologies, organization, and orientation to many iterations of t4t that I saw enacted.

4.1.1 Collective Ontology

Becoming trans is often embedded in collective experiences of trans care. A participant gestured humorously at the connection between trans communities and trans identity in her experience, laughing as she shared “meeting trans people and coming out [as trans] all kind of happened at the same time.” Many participants echoed similar feelings, acknowledging that their

understanding of what could be possible in transness was inextricable with their exposure to trans communities. A facilitator of a non-binary support group shared with me that their work was rooted in allowing their participants, many of whom were still exploring the possibilities of trans subject formation, to envision a future beyond the narratives provided to them by dominant gendered norms. Though seemingly obvious—seeing others who share one's experiences flourishing enables one to envision one's own flourishing and emboldens shared identification with those experiences—the impacts of accessing spaces where trans people lived out a variety of paths was no less profound for my participants.

Beyond gaining a more solid grasp of one's own desires for recognition, embodiment, and identity, practices of t4t also build participants' capacity for affinities within the trans community. One interviewee who organizes with a local queer and trans kink group but has also spent years in local queer and trans scenes, mentioned, "[organizing places for trans people to meet] really shifted my perspective on how we can care for each other… It's expanded my view of that side of being trans as well…" When asked directly in a follow-up question if cultivating relationships with trans people changed his understanding of being trans, he nodded resolutely, "yes, absolutely… It's always like shifting, the sphere, the galaxy, whatever it is…" In this exchange, the ability to be trans is positioned as something enabled by one's relationships, and, importantly, as a "galaxy." This galaxy of potential trans ontologies that t4t unlocked for this person is more than just a powerful visual—it emphasizes for me how t4t allows trans people to group ourselves into a collective without losing the powerful complexities and shifting positionalities within that group. Though this aligns with Malatino's (2019) discussion of a t4t praxis of love that is attuned to intra-community differences, it also has profound implications

for not just dispersal of material resources but an understanding of diverse trans ontology and subject formation.

This expansive view of trans ontology works to build trans resiliency, shoring up participants' ability to identify and navigate varying circumstances and shifting labels. One participant, "Owen," discussed how their 12-year history of trans identity, beginning in middle school, had been shaped at multiple points by the medical technologies and formalized sites of care that they had access to. They shared multiple stories of well-meaning cis professionals attempting to influence their desires for their own transness by enforcing cis-normative standards of presentation—sometimes known in the trans community as "passing"—on their teenage body. As someone with medical trauma surrounding the way that cis people attempted to "care" for them, Owen's understanding of their non-binary transness was not allowed to fully expand until they surrounded themselves with trans people, beyond a cis gaze. For this participant, their current inhabitation of transness is rooted in spaces and relationships they identify as t4t by their diversity and commitment to trans autonomy.

4.1.2 Collective Organization

Concerns of safety and accessibility were reflected by the practices and norms that I saw cultivated across different trans-centered places. Several organizers reflected on the difficulty in identifying locations that were safe and accessible and made efforts to transform a space through temporary signposting, assigning a liaison or two to navigate potential problems with outsiders, or circulating accessibility information ahead of time to ensure that participants knew what they could expect. Entering such places felt sacred—both to me and to several of those I interviewed—in no small part because of the obvious care that went into them. The labor that produced these events was never obscured. As an attendee, I frequently assisted in set-up or take-

down for a variety of events, partaking in rituals of care and safety that transformed both the organization or arrangement of a space and its symbolism. For example, at one brunch ritual devoted to embracing abundance in the Virgo season, I was dispatched to track down vegetable oil in a communal kitchen. By enlisting volunteers and remaining adaptable to the skills offered by participants, many of the organizers with whom I interacted fostered collective organization and connection to their work in those they invited into a shared space.

4.1.3 Collective Orientation

Most trans-oriented events I attended took the form of workshops, art exhibits, or festivals, with a handful of support groups and panel discussions. Almost every program was held outdoors. Organizers shared with me their top concerns of financial accessibility for working class attendees, physical safety of the venue and potential other clientele, and political mobilization of attendees. Though the first two objectives seem somewhat intuitive for gatherings of marginalized populations, the final concern of cultivating a shared political orientation and commitment to(wards) each other brought up interesting connections with other struggles—a characteristic that will be elaborated on in the next section. Although not every event had a stated political aim—e.g., workshopping decolonial education models or developing strategies for unionization, as some of those I attended did—those involved in creating trans-only spaces saw their work as serving a greater goal of enabling trans life in the southeastern U.S. and building affinity across difference.

Participants in trans social scenes also noted the importance of political orientation. One participant mused, “And it’s like it’s really about empowerment, it’s not just about getting drunk and shaking ass, which is a lot of fun, too.” This comment highlights the importance of a political orientation in safe party spaces. As an observer, I noted the somewhat scattered feeling

of social scenes that failed to unite participants towards a particular aim. Though the identities of participants might be similar, it was uncertain whether one could rely on a t4t practice of care in spaces that were solely connected by leisure. However, leisure spaces were frequently the site of political mobilization: enjoying oneself and accessing care or partaking in a collective orientation towards something were hardly mutually exclusive. Instead, organizers often opted to provide a material resource or hand out political literature at events that also incorporated more traditional leisure activities.

4.2 Unexpected Affinities

As I began to get a sense of how trans places are oriented in Atlanta and better learned how participants identified them, unexpected affinities and spaces became clear. In particular, trans care was mapped quite explicitly for me as being routed through the ongoing struggle to occupy and defend the Weelaunee Forest, a contested greenspace in southeast Atlanta. At one trans-led festival dedicated to knowledge and resource sharing, representatives of Defend the Forest ran a table where they informed attendees about how to receive action alerts and distributed zines and supplies requests to support forest defenders. When I attended a participant observation event wearing a Defend the Forest t-shirt, a group of trans people began excitedly discussing their next trip to the forest. In one interview, a participant shared, “There are so many trans folks organized with Defend the Forest that you have to include that [in discussions of trans care]. Even though it’s not a[n explicitly named] trans space. It has become this radical abolitionist space in the forest that is mostly populated by queers. I think that’s everything.” This explicit acknowledgement of how trans liberation interacts with local political geographies offers great insight into how spatially and temporally specific power struggles are impacted by trans care networks.

In September 2021, the Atlanta City Council voted to lease 381 acres of the Weelaunee Forest, also known as the South River Forest, to the Atlanta Police Foundation to build a "public safety training facility." Local activists quickly dubbed the facility "Cop City," criticizing the plan's proposed destruction of old-growth forest and introduction and further entrenchment of new carceral technologies to a majority Black neighborhood. In what would be the largest domestic police and fire training facility in the U.S., these technologies include a mock city for riot suppression and raid drills, large capacity shooting ranges, and a bomb testing site (Arnold, 2021). Those who oppose the plan have been steadily mounting resistance since its proposal, employing a range of tactics and slowly becoming known as the Defend the Forest or Stop Cop City movement. Those members who have attracted the most media attention are known as "forest defenders," and they occupy an autonomous zone in the forest made up of tent and treehouse camps (Jordan, 2022). Forest defenders are supported through online fundraising and mutual aid efforts conducted by community groups and individuals across the U.S., though most groups are based in Atlanta. The Defend the Forest movement and the forest defenders are actively shaping local and regional politics through creative resistance to anti-Black, carceral, environmentally-destructive, and capitalist attempts to devastate the forest.

Coming to the Forest through trans care as I did begins to offer an explanation for why trans relationships in Atlanta circulate through Weelaunee and how they foster expansive affinities. For many trans people in Atlanta, care for each other includes care for the forest—and trans care and forest care constitute care for a shared future. Gathered under a supply tent dedicated to applying anti-capitalist economic models in and around Weelaunee, a trans organizer laughed lightly when I said I was thinking about the connections of trans and forest care, stating, "well, yeah, cis-het men aren't holding it down out here!" before pausing and

continuing seriously, “I think probably two-thirds of tree sitters are trans.” In this section, I explore how theorizations of t4t and trans care help us understand why so many trans folks are drawn to the forest and what allegiances are produced as a result.

One reason that trans folks are drawn to Weelaunee is simply due to the high concentration of trans people who are already there. On one occasion, I sat under the loblolly pine trees at a concert during a Week of Action and waved at a friend I had made over the course of my research process. She wandered over and exclaimed, “I’ve never been here before, but I feel so safe. I had no idea there were so many queer and trans people out here… I’m definitely coming back.” Existing theorizations of t4t explore its strategically separatist element (Malatino, 2019), emphasizing that, for many, trans life is enabled among other trans people. This becomes clear in Weelaunee—heavy presence of trans and gender non-conforming people has caused even more trans Atlantans to feel comfortable engaging on the ground, which in turn pulls their spheres of trans folks closer to forest networks.

For Malatino (2019) t4t is one way that trans folks “survive in the interregnum,” and for the trans folks working to defend the Weelaunee Forest, their care relations operate similarly. Malatino (2020) discusses at length how trans care is a response to “affective and practical disinvestment” by individuals and institutions, as well as intentional antagonism and violence (2). As trans people on the ground in Weelaunee and those throughout Atlanta who support them practice care for each other, working to make trans life more livable in the face of trans-antagonistic social and material conditions, their efforts come to resemble Malatino’s (2019) t4t praxis of love that enables attention to the differences between trans folks. At a covert supply drop-off, a trans woman waves away offers of payment and says, “I don’t make trans people pay for this. Especially not trans people out here [in the Forest],” displaying the special attention paid

to the material circumstances of defenders. For trans Atlantans who have become more integrated socially and politically with the Forest attempt to give each other the nuance and care we deserve, care for the land that trans forest defenders live on becomes an extension of care for the trans forest defenders.

Through these care webs, a t4t love praxis enables trans care relations in Atlanta to become aligned with the myriad of other issues that the struggle to defend Weelaunee encapsulates. “Bradford,” a forest defender I interviewed, discussed how zey saw zer care work for zer (mostly trans and/or queer) comrades and the land as staving off the end of the world, adding, “I wanna save the land, save ourselves, save all the creatures in it… If we really care about each other, we’re gonna go hard.” Here, Bradford emphasizes for us that the struggle to stop Cop City and the project of saving each other encompasses more than just trans-identified human subjects. Elsewhere, zey discuss how zer comrades are majority queer and trans, and zey often practice care for younger queer and trans folks in movement spaces who zey see as having been through similar trauma. Bradford’s care web allows these trans subjects the space to be understood complexly and to process their trauma to move beyond the cis interpellations Malatino (2019) discusses, and zey see saving the land as allowing zem to do that more completely.

For trans forest defenders, combatting the destruction of Weelaunee is integral to trans flourishing. *Defend the Atlanta Forest* describes the movement as “anti-harm,” and locates harm in policing, resident displacement, and ecological collapse caused by climate change (“FAQ”). They claim that forest defenders are fighting “for a life worth living,” and “opening up a different path forward” (“FAQ”). From the perspective of trans forest defenders, the construction of Cop City is literally the end of some forms of life and their world(s). These life forms include

some of the different trans experiences that a t4t love praxis enables, motivating many trans Atlantans to move beyond identity-based issues to real solidarity with efforts in the Forest that seek to enable life. Because Weelaunee is filled with trans and queer defenders who see their relationships with the land and each other as integral to their trans experiences, their care webs encompass the concerns of all actors that struggle against the forces threatening the land.

This example of how trans care enables new forms of embodiment and affinities is certainly not the only case that one could identify. As a t4t praxis requires a nuanced attunement to differences in trans experiences, many seemingly unrelated social and political issues can quickly become relevant to trans care networks. However, in the specific context of Atlanta in 2022, efforts to defend Weelaunee represent a microcosm of many interests, and trans circles have been deeply intertwined with that struggle. This is not a coincidence but speaks to the importance of trans-led organizing across issues and the impacts of care networks in shaping political orientations and affinities.

5 ECHOES OF CARE THROUGH SPACE

As I began to trace networks of trans care that define and create important spaces, I became aware of what practices enabled this process. Placemaking, or the process of instilling cultural meaning and importance to a space, was frequently employed by trans organizers who attempted to transform a temporary space for their own purposes to provide safety and sociality to participants. In this section, I explore how trans people engaged in the process of imbuing a space with a t4t symbolism, the pitfalls and obstacles they faced, and the impacts that these efforts have on individuals and their understandings of the geography of Atlanta.

5.1 Tactics & Constraints of T4t Placemaking

Care between trans people in Atlanta frequently operates through placemaking, wherein t4t practitioners transform a space for their purposes. Geographers have already pointed to the importance of relationality and re-iteration in placemaking processes, making it easy to identify trans care as such a practice. Massey (1991) argues that places should be conceptualized "in terms of the social interactions which they tie together" and that "these interactions themselves are not motionless things, frozen in time. They are processes" (p. 29). Decades later, Pierce et al. (2010) affirm that "all places are relational, and are always produced through networked politics," drawing a clear line between the processes of personal sociality and the political work that they produce (p. 67). Both of these perspectives position t4t as a placemaking practice grounded in relationality and shifting positions, ontologies, and spaces.

Feminist geographers have argued that placemaking has both immediate and more dispersed effects on care relations. Wilhoit Larson (2018) and Ewalt (2016) contend that feminist placemaking, or "placing, arranging, and naming" a space for "rest, care, pause, safety, community, and authenticity" is a form of relational ontology that becomes worldmaking

(Wilhoit Larson, 2018, p. 397). These geographical interventions argue that the future can be shaped at multiple scales by acts of care that produce new social relations and meaningful sites of engagement. Hanrahan and Smith (2020) argue that care relations assume multiple meanings, come into being through various processes, and have widespread social and geographical impacts. Importantly, they conclude that "ways of being and caring" are dynamic, socially constructed, and "acutely open to transformation" (Hanrahan & Smith, 2020, p. 233). For trans people, ways of be(com)ing are perpetually in transformation—sometimes transition—and the flexibility of care relations are integral to supporting continued survival through these stages of embodiment and identity.

Understanding care as a flexible and socially constructed relation unveils the spatial and temporal unevenness in care replicated across our dominant culture (Hanrahan, 2020). Atkinson et al. (2011) discuss how many discourses on the geography of care make invisible the sites where those who do not receive access to state-sponsored services frequently receive care. Recognizing the spatial arrangement of these resources is useful for understanding care between groups that have been excluded by traditional care relations. For my research participants, care operates outside of official channels. Care is passed through campsites and pop-up markets and forged in familial relations that are foreign to the nuclear family model. Care can be concentrated and dispersed as necessary.

5.1.1 How We Make Magic

In the section T4t in the Mundane, I explore the principles and ideals that practices of t4t enable, produce, and rely on. These efforts were described as sacred or magical by more than one participant. In this section, I begin to parse through the practical workings of how participants fostered the collectivity and safety that was felt so clearly by many of them.

As discussed broadly in the section on t4t's practical workings through collective organization, organizers frequently utilized participant labor and skills to sustain their spaces. The boundaries between observer, participant, and facilitator were frequently blurred. I will stress in this observation that I do not say this to devalue the labor that organizers put in to make a particular event happen. Rather than devaluing their expertise or abilities, I read this pattern as a shrewd and realistic tactic that encourages everyone present in a space to take responsibility for what happens and their own experience.

Another tactic that was frequently employed by groups, particularly those meeting in public spaces, was attempts to build separation in some way. One organization which holds monthly meet-ups in restaurants throughout Atlanta, works hard to build security and safety for participants within a semi-public space. They accomplished this by bringing temporary decorations, like table centerpieces and banners, that signaled that their space was different than the surrounding patrons. They also created and enforced different norms with the staff, requesting that they avoid using the names listed on credit cards to call out orders and use gender neutral language when addressing the group. They reported that the (presumably cis) people who worked there were amenable to these efforts. Creating a place that allowed for trans sociality and connection required acknowledgement of the need for differential treatment and strategic deployment of separation, rather than attempting to obscure transness or settle for the same norms to be applied across groups.

Across a variety of settings, attention to physical accessibility frequently surfaced. One support group that I attended met outdoors throughout the heat of the Georgia summer to maintain common-sense COVID protocols for their attendees. They sent out information about stairsteps and path material, and informally reserved parking spaces for those with mobility

impairments. Another organizer noted that his group originally met at a gay bar but decided to move due to the sensory obstacles that such a busy environment presented to some of their participants. Others stressed the importance of attention to parking and transit proximity, an important consideration in a city with heavily car-dependent infrastructure.

5.1.2 "Queer People Don't Own Shit"

The trans placemaking observed in Atlanta is a response to trans-antagonism and ignorance. For example, at one event I attended, a trans organizer noted that trans people and needs are frequently left out of mainstream LGB advocacy and expressed that they hoped their event would help address some of that disparity. One organizer of a non-binary support group shared with me that, without such a group, many participants felt that there was no roadmap for navigating common life experiences such as dating, school enrollment, or job interviews outside of the gender binary due to a lack of representation or acceptance in media, families of origin, or workplaces. The ramifications of trans care work are intentional and an integral part of the process by which participants set aside, name, and use a space for temporary togetherness. Atlanta trans placemaking is temporary in two ways—it pops up in bursts of hours and days, though it is carried on by participants in echoes for weeks afterwards, and it serves a political purpose of survival facilitation that becomes most salient when survival is threatened. For the time being, trans care is a temporary intervention that seeks to make trans lives more livable.

For myself, as a participant in this research, the impermanence of the places I engaged became quickly clear. By the time I was wrapping up my data collection, the West End home where I conducted my first interview had been emptied by white landlords to be converted into secondary housing for their parents, unhousing its queer and trans inhabitants, several of whom were people of color. A Discord server that one participant referenced as a crucial part of his

organization's infrastructure was shut down just a few months after we spoke, as organizers cited their own inability to moderate such a large platform and their desire to focus their limited energy on in-person events. The Weelaunee gazebo and encampments where I sat for hours that summer, watching trans people trade stick-and-poke tattoos, hormones, and songs, was destroyed by police and private contractors in December 2022. This research process was watching a series of apocalypses and creation myths unfold as worlds collapsed and were reborn.

5.2 No Matter What Happens Next, It Was Worth It

Atlanta serves as a useful case study for understanding how geographies of care outside of dominant economic, political, or social systems interact with each other. The places where trans care function are often temporary—a single facet of a multipronged response to a threat—but intended to maximize trans people's chances at a future where life that is now threatened may be allowed to flourish. Understanding trans-centered events in Atlanta as temporary placemaking endeavors invites us to consider the importance of such tactics in creating places dedicated to care without long-term resources. The places where care surfaces are brought into being through relations; when asked about how they recognize a place of trans care, my participants discuss trusting a specific organization or organizer, not necessarily the material location or trappings of the gathering. To set aside a specific space and name it as a site for pause, care, and resistance cultivates relations between people, space, and non-human species predicated on the same values (Wilhoit Larson, 2018). These relations sustain life in the face of crises that threaten our communities, even when the places that they originate from slip out of our present.

In this section, I take a dual approach to understanding the impacts of these impermanent placemaking projects. First, I explore the individual impacts of access to places of trans care,

attempting to understand how particular research subjects experience t4t across time and space. Secondly, I focus on the broader context of these projects, better understanding the relationship between trans care and the local landscape. Specifically, I touch on housing, healthcare, and activist spaces to explore how trans people remap Atlanta for each other through relations of care.

5.2.1 Individual Experiences

Trans care operates through time and space by being carried by its participants as comfort through trans-antagonistic places. When my participants discuss the effects of trans care, it is unanimously positive. “It brings me joy in a way that nothing else really does,” stated one woman, while another participant commented, “it’s just so life-giving and soul-nourishing.” Being around trans people created positive feelings in the moment, but this effect lasted beyond one’s involvement in a single location or event.

Even as a temporary place, like a pop-up festival, ceases to exist, it has an effect on the future of its participants by easing the burden of facing both implicit and explicit transphobia in other times and places. All of those I interviewed reported improved feelings of security and overall well-being for several days or weeks after leaving a place they had identified as a site of trans care, echoing the work of Rooke (2010). One woman shared, “it’s all I can think about for days, and it keeps a smile on my face. Like, it’s always done that since the very first one I went to.” Though they weren’t explicitly asked to, participants regularly compared their feelings in trans-centered places to other sites. One participant who was careful to note that their two workplaces were mostly cis, commented, “When I’m interacting with other trans people, there’s like this sense of ease that comes with it, that for me, I don’t get in a lot of my life.” Another commented, “As much as I try to remove all the transphobia from my life, it’s still going to be

there. I'm still going to have to deal with it.… I can laugh about that stuff with my friends, but if I didn't have a trans community it would get a lot more scary."

Access to trans care builds resilience in subjects who navigate trans-antagonism elsewhere. By setting aside a space and time that turns trans participants towards each other, trans placemakers in Atlanta are utilizing the strategically separatist politic that Malatino (2019) identifies as integral to t4t. Trans spaces that orient us towards each other become places that breed trans survival, flourishing, and proliferation.

5.2.2 Broader Context

One participant, a self-identified Latina/Latinx woman of trans experience, connected trans ingenuity to broader struggles against capitalism and colonialism. She credits trans care work that enables trans life beyond cis interpellations as teaching her that, "if we were to break away [from systems of exploitation], if we put the intention in, we could figure out ways to live." She continued to list particular "small ways" that queer and trans people have been learning how to move beyond these systems she struggles against: "Whether it be sharing clothes, makeup, hormones, binders, making binders before they existed, getting hormones off the black market… We've always found ways to survive communally and with each other. Because that's the only way we would be able to, whether we like it or not." In the midst of a direct act of care I observed, a longtime activist gestured to the large presence of trans people on the ground in the struggle while articulating, "all this stuff works for them [cisgender, heterosexual people]. We—trans folks, trans people of color, poor queers—we need something new. We don't fit in society as it is. We are fighting for something where we can live, too."

As trans people attempt to meet each other's material needs, many of them become intimately aware—if they weren't already—of the ways in which dominant structures of power

are designed to expose trans folks, particularly those of us most marginalized by other forms of precarity, to death. For many of those I spoke to, this lived reality spurred a radical political critique and orientation. The strategies that they employed to meet each other's needs became windows to a new world. Processes of trans care enabled broader mutual aid projects. A pair of trans roommates I ran into repeatedly in my participant observation were key players in an informal network that routed medication to those who couldn't seek formal medical care due to factors like outstanding warrants or medical trauma. This project had spawned from an effort to get hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to transient activists for their stay in the area and was obviously necessarily limited to trans people. However, as they forged relations of care with these people, the two began shuttling eye drops, antibiotics, and other basics to meet other needs that arose. The care infrastructure of a t4t endeavor spawned a broader project that was not exclusive to trans people, demonstrating the potential of trans-centered efforts to model ways of being beyond false scarcity and precarity.

As t4t relations become a portal to a different kind of world, they are also actively remapping the ways trans subjects experience Atlanta. Collectively produced relationships between places that are not spatially adjacent creates an intra-community understanding of the geography of Atlanta that is not reflected in cis, or more mainstream, experiences of the city. Houses where groups of trans people live are frequently referred to by their circles as "the [insert street name] house," or have their own nickname. Specific public spaces, such as greenspaces or empty lots, that are known to be available for gatherings are mentally categorized as places of interest when specific people are expected to be there. Simultaneously, trans people are using and producing space in ways that are outside of their intended purpose. Groups of young trans people squat in abandoned houses in South Atlanta and paint the walls with murals of trees and

wildlife, pagan symbols, and political slogans that align with their visions for trans liberation. Festival-goers in East Atlanta relieve themselves in park bushes, rejecting the gendered and capital-driven space of nearby stores' dual restrooms that require a purchase for entry. A small park halfway between a North Atlanta suburb and the Weelaunee Forest becomes a critical drop-off point for shuttling supplies. Trans care networks shift the way Atlanta is experienced by trans people in the present and expand their visions of what is possible in the future.

6 FINALLY, FAILURES

"No matter what happens next, it was worth it!" is scrawled across the Weelaunee People's Park gazebo, dotted with "RIP Scout Schultz" stickers commemorating the death of the Atlanta trans and intersex activist. A white trans person with a mullet and a nose ring grins wryly at me as they drill a pallet into the wall of a community kitchen, remarking, "when they bulldoze this, I'm gonna hide glitter bombs in the walls. So at least the destruction will be cinematic." A trans woman with long, perfectly cylindrical dreadlocks and slim arms sits across from me on the porch of her Southwest Atlanta home, confiding, "I'm actually constantly terrified existing (sic) in the world. Whether it's of other random people, whether it's of police, whether it's of random gun violence, … the pandemic…, whatever." My thesis research has revealed one rather obvious fact: trans people are intimately aware of our own precarity.

The impermanence of our lives, our political projects, and our efforts to care for each other—not that there is any truly meaningful separation between these for most of us—is ever-present, throbbing behind one's eyes like the low hum at the onset of a migraine. Some, like the amateur kitchen constructor, see this contingent temporality as full of opportunity. Others, like my porchfront interviewee, experience paralysis in the face of it. I am curious about what our responses to this reality tell us about the futures we are attached to. This chapter is an attempt to think through the potential pitfalls of a trans for trans (t4t) attachments, which are frequently put forward by trans scholars (myself included) as a generative alternative to cis interpellations of gendered subjectivity that fuel trans death. Lauren Berlant's (2011) theorization of cruel optimism and Aniruddha Dutta and Raina Roy's (2014) critical work on the colonial work that "trans" can do, as well as Hil Malatino's (2019) discussions of t4t ethics and praxis, reveal that t4t can quickly reinscribe the categories of normativity it would, at its best, seek to uproot.

Particularly, this chapter explores the settler colonial hierarchies that t4t often fails to challenge, concluding that t4t is limited by its reliance on the category of "trans" and must remain open to affinities across lines of difference to spur futures of mutually expansive flourishing.

6.1 Failures of Transnormative Futures

Lauren Berlant's (2011) theorization of cruel optimism explores how our attachments can detach us from realistic appraisals of our futures and presents. Berlant describes optimism as manifesting as attachments to "what counts as life," and argues that sometimes these attachments fail to make sense with the world around us. When one desires something that is actually an obstacle to their flourishing, Berlant argues that this is a cruel optimism. Berlant draws heavily on affect theory, exploring aesthetic responses to historical events that help them make sense of processes of precarity, withdrawal, and crisis. Specifically, they explore how the withdrawal of the state within neoliberal economic and political policies has gutted the promises that once guided American life, and how people do or do not display a commitment to attempting to reach for those promises. They ask us to consider: how are people attached to different forms of life, and how do those attachments tether us to ways of being? Importantly, how do those attachments close off or open up other forms of life?

Trans studies scholars have already engaged with Berlant's theorizations to make sense of trans cruel optimism. Hil Malatino (2019) discusses trans-hegemonic narratives of transition and time as generative of these kinds of attachments that wear their adherents down and out while promising something better. Specifically, they examine trans vloggers who discuss their transition and provide resources to others for pursuing trans healthcare. In many ways, this genre is indicative of immense care labor by trans people for trans people. However, it replicates dominant norms about transness and medicalization, emphasizing for viewers that trans lives

become more livable once one attains access to medical technologies through doctors. Malatino is careful to acknowledge that this care labor is crucial and life-giving, while examining its limits. He, along with scholars such as Snorton (2017) and and Horak (2014) criticize this "hormone time" that reifies "transnormative teleologies," establishing a utopian horizon where medically transitioned subjects can arrive and achieve full alignment between their felt self, embodiment, *and* external corporal perception (Malatino, 2019, p. 639).

This horizon is unreachable for many, if not all, trans people, however, and constitutes a form of cruel optimism as theorized by Berlant. First, if, as Berlant states, "recognition is the misrecognition we can bear," then the promise of a world where all people are truly seen by all they encounter is a false one (2011, p. 26). Even in a world where a trans person is perceived as their "true" gender, they are rarely seen for the specific modality of that gender that they inhabit. The labor, relationships, and technologies that have produced a seemingly normatively gendered subject are obscured by being cis-assumed. Furthermore, as Malatino explores at length, it is inadequate and unwieldy for legibility to be conferred solely by one's perceiver(s). Though this concern cuts across gendered experiences, they contend that it is impossible for all trans people to have their full trans experiences dignified by a universal gaze of (mis)recognition. For this discussion of teleological narratives of transition, Berlant helps us understand the harm of these ideals. Not only is the idea of a point of arrival to gendered recognition inappropriate for most people's lived realities, it is promoted and disseminated through most dominant discussions of transition technologies by both medically transitioning trans people and doctors (Malatino, 2019). Developing an attachment to this idea becomes a form of cruel optimism as trans people aspire for a usually unattainable state of cis-assumed ease and alignment that denies the messy realities of trans embodiment.

In contrast to this understanding of trans time, Malatino posits that a t4t praxis of love might intervene in the lag time that trans people often inhabit. They argue that it

> enables and elicits more finely grained attention to differences between and among trans folk, with all the dissonance and difficulty engaging such differences entails. In this movement toward one another, this contingent separatism, space is made to signify and be understood differently, in greater complexity, in excess of reductive cis- and transnormative interpellations of trans subjects. Ultimately, what a t4t praxis of love does is offer a blueprint for surviving lag time, for getting by in the interregnum, which may end up being the only time we have (Malatino, 2019, p. 657).

T4t's strength is its ability to attend to the differences *between* trans people, rather than obscuring these differential experiences through the invocation of a monolithic "trans community." This praxis rejects utopian visions of the future that other trans scholars call cruelly optimistic.

6.2 T4t Commitments

I want to trouble this appraisal of t4t, however, by exploring more critically what kind of attachments a trans-for-trans practice produces and what kinds of attachments it might close off. This effort is not intended to disparage the radical and life-giving potential of t4t, but rather, to honestly reckon with how it plays out and to recognize that, even when it mimics trans apathy or disinterest in explicit futurity, practices of trans care do enable certain kinds of trans futures. That is, while we work through the interregnum, we are always working *toward* something, even if we do not know what that is. In fact, the kinds of expectations for what we have next are more often revealed in moments of implicit withdrawal or extension, rather than proclamations. No matter what happens next, I believe that the project of enabling trans life in lag time will have been worth it. However, in this section, I explore whether t4t actually promises significantly less cruel attachments than the teleological narratives of transition disparaged by other scholars.

In modern iterations, t4t is strategically deployed by trans people as a mode of oppositional consciousness (Malatino, 2019; Sandoval, 1991). Specifically, it is a form of separatism, which is marked by a political purpose "to protect and nurture the differences that define its practitioners through their complete separation from the dominant social order" (Sandoval, 1991, p. 13). T4t turns its practitioners towards each other, creating attachments between trans subjects that are intended to enable their continued survival. Though t4t is not specifically future-oriented, it is intended to proliferate trans ontologies. As a result, t4t implicitly creates futures where there can be more transness, more trans subjects, and more trans life.

In a separatist framework, the lynchpin of one's political orientation is "the differences [from the dominant social order] that define" one's group (Sandoval, 1991, p. 13). In t4t, the differences are a trans identification. However, decolonial scholars have troubled the usefulness of trans to meaningfully engage with gender non-normativity, especially across lines of settler colonialism and racial hierarchies. In their article "Decolonizing Transgender in India: Some Reflections," Aniruddha Dutta and Raina Roy (2014) recount a brief gender-variant history through Western development categorizations in India. They trace the (re)classification of groups like Hijra and Kothi through colonial categories like "eunuch," "MSM" (men who have sex with men) and, finally, "transgender." These classifications occur on a global scale, which is positioned above regional or local identifications or practices (Dutta & Roy, 2014, p. 328). By restructuring and incorporating Indian gender practices into "transgender," transnational philanthropy privileges those who can identify within the Western understandings of transness. Dutta and Roy contend that, for South Asia's most vulnerable populations, this process produces "a constrained rubric of representation for gaining funds and recognition, without much freedom

to negotiate or alter its usages at higher levels of activism or funding" (p. 323). Rather than "transgender" offering an opportunity for varied iterations of gender and sexuality to participate in global resource allocation, the term—and the Western understandings of gender/sex that undergird it—becomes a rubric that governs regional organizations of gender (Dutta & Roy, 2014, p. 328).

Dutta and Roy's basic arguments align with other authors who have criticized the universalizing and biologically essentialist tendencies of Western feminisms. Oyèrónkí Oyèyùmi (1997) discusses how Western frameworks are always already biologically essentialist because of how society and social order are mediated through the body in the West. Similarly, Dutta and Roy argue that the transnational deployment of transgender "is restrictively defined in biologically essentialist terms" (p. 328). Ultimately, the authors are criticizing how transgender is seen as applicable across cultures in an imperialist move. Tuhiwai Smith (2021) also discussed how Orientalism allows white people to believe that their methods of knowledge production and categorization are universally superior to indigenous practices and identifications. These interventions trouble the revolutionary potential of trans identification. While there are significant marginalizing differences between trans subjects and the dominant social gendered order, the category of "trans" can still reify racial and colonial hierarchies within a white supremacist settler social order.

Understanding trans as simultaneously subordinate and dominant allows a more nuanced appraisal of the attachments that t4t produces. Though trans for trans connections allow us to think more expansively about "what counts as life," could the turning towards those who identify within a Western gender framework (even a transgressive one) also constitute a turning away from those who experience differing forms of gendered marginalizations? Does t4t always

already proliferate new gendered ontologies, or can its reliance on the category of "trans" be used to collapse diverse practices into one "community" with little in common? Most importantly, what do these attachments or collapses tell us about the kinds of futures enabled by t4t? In this next section, I explore a specific interaction in a trans activist community to understand micro-failures of t4t.

6.3 Turning Towards Each Other

In the Weelaunee Forest autonomous zone, discussed more at length earlier in this paper, norms around gender are decidedly divergent from dominant expectations, and mostly-trans forest defenders frequently espouse a separatist politic. One of those activists confided during one of my visits to the forest: "I've spent time at other land defense projects, mostly [in more Northern states]. This was the first place where I saw people like me, and it was like, oh, I don't have to worry about being misgendered or, ya know, people who are supposed to be comrades not accepting me. So I stuck around." A genderfluid tree sitter with connections to Indigenous land defense projects in the Midwestern United States shared, "at other places I've been to [do land defense], there's like a cis warrior vibe," contrasted with the distinctly genderqueer "vibe" of Weelaunee. Across my research, trans forest defenders find a home for their activism within a mostly-trans community and are able to expand more fully into themselves.

However, this is met with violence from the dominant social order, cementing the need for trans people to meet each other's needs through trans-for-trans relations and social networks. After discussing the differences between more cis-led land defense projects and the Weelaunee Autonomous Zone, one interviewee remarked, "here, the cishet folks are the ones fucking with us." This identity-based difference leads trans people on the ground to draw closer to one another and build infrastructures of care that are attentive to both their precarity as land defenders and

their experiences as trans people. However, this interviewee added, “when the cops are here, fucking with a sit or something, it messes with our ability to care for each other.” State repression both necessitates expansive networks of care while making this project more difficult. T4t within the forest is an intensified form of ensuring survival in the interregnum. While Weelaunee’s fate hangs in the balance, trans defenders are filling lag time by staving off attempts to eliminate life within the forest.

While Bradford, one of my interviewees in the forest, understands the separatist urge that zey see within those same younger folks discussed above, zey also shared a particularly troubling anecdote of how these attachments can go wrong. This story was also shared with me, with slightly fewer details, by several other forest defenders over the course of my participant observation. At some point in the last year, residents of Atlanta fundraised to help an informal group of Indigenous land defenders from a particularly rural reservation travel to Weelaunee. Upon arrival, one person in particular, a cishet man, confided in Bradford that he had rarely encountered queer or trans people. He shared that he was open to learning but did not know the appropriate language or way to interact with visibly queer and trans folks on the ground at Weelaunee. No one who shared this story with me recalls any of the people from this delegation ever saying anything inappropriate or that would express anti- queer or trans beliefs. However, this person shared with Bradford that he felt like white trans people were continually “testing” him to try to draw out what they saw as inevitable transphobia because of his rural background. Ultimately, the group felt excluded to a point where they left the autonomous zone and returned to their reservation. Bradford remarked “it just makes me sad. That’s such a missed opportunity.”

In this case, (mostly white) trans people turned towards each other but turned away from potentially transformative affinities. They also turned away from a more expansive

understanding of trans that might have encompassed the types of transgressively gendered embodiment experienced by colonized peoples in the U.S. empire, favoring an understanding of transness that is more aligned with the biological essentialism and racial hierarchy that Dutta and Roy and Oyèyùmi critique. Protecting their existing normativities around trans inclusion enabled racial exclusion and subordinated Indigenous presence on the ground.

6.4 Troubling Attachments

Trans-for-trans attachments has been posited by scholars as an alternative to transnormative narratives that are reliant on medical technologies and cis interpellations that have been criticized for producing cruel optimism for less privileged trans folks. However, I am hesitant about what kinds of attachments tend to be enabled under the guise of t4t. When t4t becomes about creating relations that center those who are able to gather under the Western umbrella of trans identification rooted in biological technologies of embodiment, t4t closes off relations that might create futures where people of all genders can flourish. In a Weelaunee Forest where trans-identified people who do not feel more complicated affinities with non-settler groups are practicing care to enable life like their own to flourish, the possibility of a future place where settler colonialism is confronted and routed out is foreclosed. In this sense, t4t becomes an equally cruel optimism as other transnormative narratives that rely on a utopian future of recognition because it still relies on an attachment to a future where trans embodiments are limited to those legible to a Western sex/gender binary.

This attachment is an obstacle to trans flourishing because it turns us away from affinities with other modes of gendered embodiment that are still threatened under a colonial gender binary. Practically, this separatist politic threatens our political efficacy in the interregnum, wherein trans people struggle to meet their material needs and are unable to rely on other

relations for care—and vice versa, where subjects from other communities feel unable to turn to trans groups for care. Ethically, this attachment subordinates other relations to the Western sex/gender binary that do not take place within a trans framework, reiterating the colonizing effects that Dutta and Roy explore. Ultimately, though the project of t4t is integral for enabling trans lives during this lag time, its practitioners must remain mindful of potentially cruel deployments of trans that exclude those who may have a place within care relations intended to encompass people marginalized by the Western sex/gender binary.

7 CONCLUSION

In this project I have attempted to answer the question of what constitutes a place of trans care and explore the impacts of such places. Though I began with explicitly trans-focused places—e.g., pride festivals, drag shows, etc.—this project quickly expanded to a variety of places where trans people were informally gathering. These places emerged in connection with each other through the relations that brought them into salience, aligned through sociality and political efficacy. Trans communities in Atlanta rely on a shifting network of places that are constantly (re)made by collective efforts to create a future of possibility and flourishing.

When viewed as a tactic of placemaking, trans care networks become flexible and adaptable tools of resource distribution that respond productively to conditions of material deprivation. Across observation and interviews, participants reported the positive affective impacts of t4t practices. Places where trans adults in Atlanta can access trans care contribute to trans subject formation by enabling trans life and visions of trans futurity. Engagement with trans care networks empowers subjects to become trans and expand their understandings of transness, building powerful affinities with other trans subjects that may have differing gender modalities. At its best, places of t4t care also enable expansive affinities with causes and populations that have been ignored in dominant LGBTQ+ activism. T4t care webs expand beyond trans-identified human subjects and begin to encompass a variety of actors and concerns, such as policing, the environment, and healthcare, that affect the ability of all trans people to flourish.

Furthermore, they remake participants' understandings of Atlanta's geography. Places that are not connected spatially are knit together through social connection, and new names are (re)made for locations that are sustained through care work. Places on the periphery of dominant spaces, such as abandoned houses, empty lots, and contested parks, are rendered desirable,

exciting, and full of potential. Though these projects are often impermanent, they form real, effective responses to trans-antagonism and disinvestment.

When viewed as a tactic of future-making, trans care networks trouble notions of linear time by echoing beyond our presents. They open futures of promise and expansion, wherein trans life can be sustained beyond the crises of today. Trans care networks in Atlanta dispute dominant understandings of sustainable care labor that is predicated on stability and permanency. Here, its anti-utopian commitments become most salient. Practicing t4t may be riddled with failures, but trans communities in Atlanta do not have any illusions about their futures. We are aware of our own precarity, but are also deeply committed to proliferating more trans life and enabling a world, even for a moment, where that becomes possible. By responding realistically to precarity, trans care becomes better suited to addressing crises that impact those most at-risk of violence in a neoliberal regime of disinvestment and policing.

Furthermore, the infrastructure created by trans care networks is easily adapted to serve broader projects of flourishing. Trans care transports us, even temporarily, to other worlds where non-normative subject formation is enabled. It is possible to be(come) trans—broadly construed—in these places. It is possible to cultivate relations of autonomy outside of economic and racial orders that marginalize many forms of life. Perhaps it is even possible to apply those places more permanently, at different scales, and in different spaces. These efforts have affective and material implications for trans adults in Atlanta who arrive at these places with a variety of needs, desires, and embodiments.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Guide: Event Attendee

- background
  - What name would you like for me to use for you in my notes? What pronouns would you like for me to use for you in my notes? How would you describe your gender?
  - How long have you identified as trans? How long have you been gathering with other trans people, either virtually or in-person?
- experience of their own gendered embodiment in the place we shared
  - Can you talk a little about the event we both attended at [location] on [date]? How did you hear about it?
    - If need be, follow-up questions like: did you know anyone there? Have you ever been to this event before?
  - Can you walk me through what you did when you arrived?
    - If need be, follow-up questions like: what time did you arrive? What did you do when you got there? What did you do next? ←
  - How did you feel in the space as the event continued?
    - If need be, follow-up questions like: Did you feel safe at [event]? Did you feel recognized as your gender? Did you feel like you fit in/stood out? What practices or norms made you feel this way?
- perception of what constitutes trans care
  - Where do you feel recognized for how you know yourself to be?
    - If need be, follow-up questions like: Where do you feel secure? How often are you able to access these spaces? Where do you feel unrecognized or insecure? Why/what about those places make you feel that way?
  - When you hear the word "t4t", what do you think of?
    - If need be, follow-up questions like: does t4t solely describe a relationship dynamic to you? What kind of impact does t4t have on your actions? Is t4t something that you think other trans people you know practice? Do you or anyone you know ever fail at t4t?
  - How would you describe your relationships with other trans people?
    - If need be, follow-up questions like: do you think that your relationships with trans people are different than with cis people? Why/why not? Do you feel safer with other trans people than cis people?
  - How do you decide to engage in trans-centered spaces like [event]?
    - If need be, follow-up questions like: is this a frequent engagement? Why do you think it's important/not important? What kind of events do you prefer?
  - When you hear the words "trans care", what do you think of?
    - If need be, follow-up questions like: I'm thinking of trans care in this way [insert brief description]. Does that resonate with how you see trans people caring for each other in your communities?
- perception of the impact of trans care on their lives

- Is it important to you to have relationships with other trans people?
  - If need be, follow-up questions like: are there differences in what kinds of trans relationships you value (e.g., transfem4transfem, tpoc4tpoc)?
- What impact does spending time with trans people have on your life?
  - If need be, follow-up questions like: do you notice that impact when you leave majority-trans spaces? How so? How long do the impacts last? Do you notice different effects based on what kinds of things you do with trans people (e.g., activism vs cruising vs social gatherings)?
- What do you receive from spending time with trans people that leads you to prioritize those relationships? (or, not prioritize those relationships)

Appendix B

Interview Guide for Event Organizer

- background
  - What name would you like for me to use for you in my notes? What pronouns would you like for me to use for you in my notes? How would you describe your gender?
  - How long have you identified as trans? How long have you been gathering with other trans people, either virtually or in-person? How long have you been organizing events for trans people?
- experience of their own gendered embodiment in the place we shared
  - Can you talk a little about the event we both attended at [location] on [date]? Why did you organize this event?
    - If need be, follow-up questions like: How did you get involved with this group? Have you put on a similar event in the past?
  - Can you talk to me about what factors you take into consideration when planning trans-centered events?
    - If need be, ask follow-up questions about: location, pricing, gatekeepers or lack thereof, norms-setting, security
  - How do you experience an event like this as an organizer?
    - If need be, follow-up questions like: Did you feel safe at [event]? Did you feel recognized as your gender? Did you feel like you fit in/stood out? What practices or norms made you feel this way?
- perception of what constitutes trans care
  - Where do you feel recognized for how you know yourself to be?
    - If need be, follow-up questions like: Where do you feel secure? How often are you able to access these spaces? Do you organize such spaces? Where do you feel unrecognized or insecure? Why/what about those places make you feel that way?
  - When you hear the word “t4t”, what do you think of?
    - If need be, follow-up questions like: does t4t solely describe a relationship dynamic to you? What kind of impact does t4t have on your actions? Is t4t something that you think other trans people you know practice? Do you or anyone you know ever fail at t4t?

    - How would you describe your relationships with other trans people?
        - If need be, follow-up questions like: do you think that your relationships with trans people are different than with cis people? Why/why not? Do you feel safer with other trans people than cis people?
    - How do you decide to engage in trans-centered spaces like [event]?
        - If need be, follow-up questions like: is this a frequent engagement? Why do you think it's important/not important? What kind of events do you prefer?
    - When you hear the words "trans care", what do you think of?
        - If need be, follow-up questions like: I'm thinking of trans care in this way [insert brief description]. Does that resonate with how you see trans people caring for each other in your communities?
- perception of the impact of trans care on their lives
    - Is it important to you to have relationships with other trans people?
        - If need be, follow-up questions like: are there differences in what kinds of trans relationships you value (e.g., transfem4transfem, tpoc4tpoc)?
    - What impact does spending time with trans people have on your life?
        - If need be, follow-up questions like: do you notice that impact when you leave majority-trans spaces? How so? How long do the impacts last? Do you notice different effects based on what kinds of things you do with trans people (e.g., activism vs cruising vs social gatherings)?
    - What do you receive from spending time with trans people that leads you to prioritize those relationships? (or, not prioritize those relationships)