

**T
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P A S S I N G
T**

Volume 1

Technology Gives You Freedom

This work was supported by a Societal Impact Seed Grant from the Office of the Vice-President, Research, McMaster University.

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How to cite this zine

Trustpassing. Volume 1: Technology Gives You Freedom. [Zine]. Data analysis, curation and design, Andrea Zeffiro. McMaster University. Hamilton, Ontario, 2025.

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not matter what your level of education is or where you are in life! Everyone matters. Participants passed their trust when they allowed their personal experiences to be curated into a collective narrative to be shared publicly. *I want all of Hamilton to read this, and maybe they will really understand how much we need more people to support our community.*

As communicated through the zines, the stories and insights about digital vulnerabilities are inseparable from access to material forms of security and safety. The zines provide insights rooted in the local context of Hamilton, Ontario, regarding how digital (in)securities and vulnerabilities are interconnected with material ones, including but not limited to emergency housing, sex workers' rights, job security, food security, childcare, services for migrants, newcomers and immigrants, access to mental health care and services, substance abuse and addiction support, policing and law enforcement, and access to safe spaces.

Trustpassing provides a starting point for formulating crucial questions about how end-users who already face social stigmas are included in digital security and safety frameworks, while also acknowledging how these folks become targets of invasive and unwarranted surveillance, often under the guise of security. The zines advocate for a community-centred approach to understanding and documenting (digital) risks, threats and harms as contextual, local and inseparable from material (in)securities.

To this end, *Trustpassing* amplifies the voices that are often excluded from or overlooked in dominant discussions that shape the criteria for digital harms, as experts equipped with the knowledge to reshape mainstream digital safety and security frameworks. *We are all survivors, surviving together. We are the life force.*

We extend our deep gratitude to the project participants for generously sharing their time, perspectives and experiences with us. Your contributions were invaluable, and this project would not have been possible without you. Thank you for your collaboration, insights and trust.

- Andrea Zeffiro

Trustpassing, as a concept, conveys the intricate interplay between safety and security that unfolds when determining whether to place trust in a person or entity. Often, we pass our trust to others knowingly and with active, ongoing consent. At other times, passing trust becomes necessary for participating in or accessing services. In such situations, we may find ourselves taking a leap of faith, as is often the case with social services and big tech companies. *How can you keep yourself safe from something you cannot see?* When we pass trust to someone or something, ideally, we are met with a sense of confidence and reliability. That person or entity will uphold a certain standard, remain dependable and act as expected. Trust-passing, in this sense, enables us to feel safe and secure even when we are vulnerable.

At the same time, trustpassing is a play on ‘trespassing’. It signifies committing an offence against trust, breaking someone’s trust. *I don’t understand how security and safety work because they have never worked for me.* When our trust is broken, it can be a profoundly emotional experience. We can feel betrayed, powerless, angry, disappointed, and doubtful. *I worry that if the readers of the zines know the participants are accessing the YWCA then maybe they will respect the content less.* A breach of trust can impact our willingness to trust again. How do we collectively regain and repair trust? *These kinds of projects are important because I believe that everyone has a right to be heard, accepted, understood, recognized and treated with respect.*

In the context of this project, trustpassing carries several meanings. In the workshops, being together in a shared space and feeling comfortable in the company of others requires a certain level of trust. *Community is important. We feel connected to one another in this space.* Trust was exchanged among the participants and the research team through the sharing of individual narratives and experiences of negotiating safety and security in digital spaces. *I think it’s important for people to hear honest truths that not everyone is aware of.* How do researchers establish and sustain trust with research participants? How can researchers balance data collection with fostering spaces of mutual care and aid? *It does*

Trustpassing is the culmination of a year-long research partnership between researchers at McMaster University and the Sex Workers’ Action Program (SWAP) Hamilton. The aim of the project was to develop a zine-based workshop model to document and share insights from equity-deserving communities frequently left out of dominant discussions about digital harms and vulnerabilities.

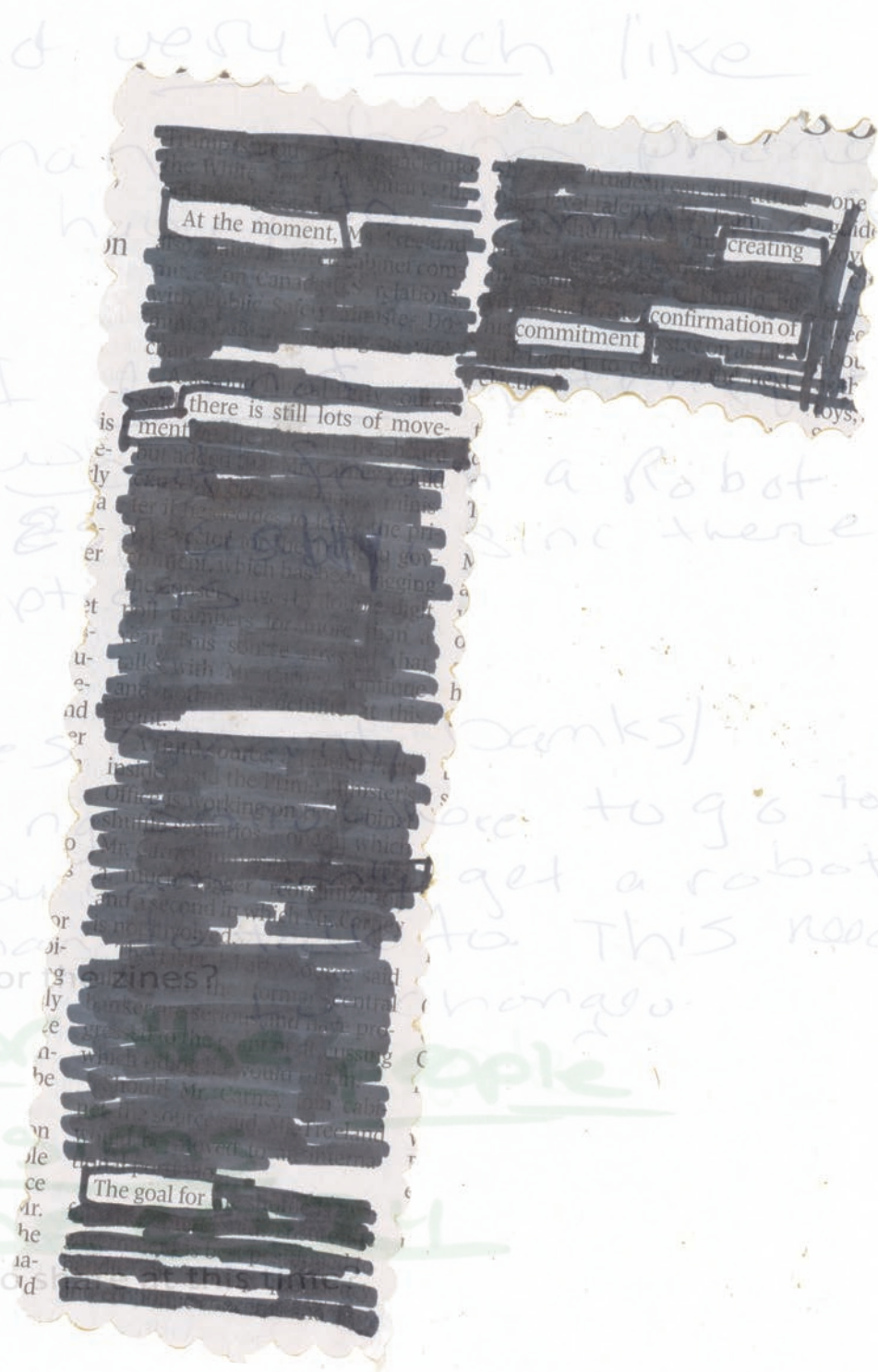
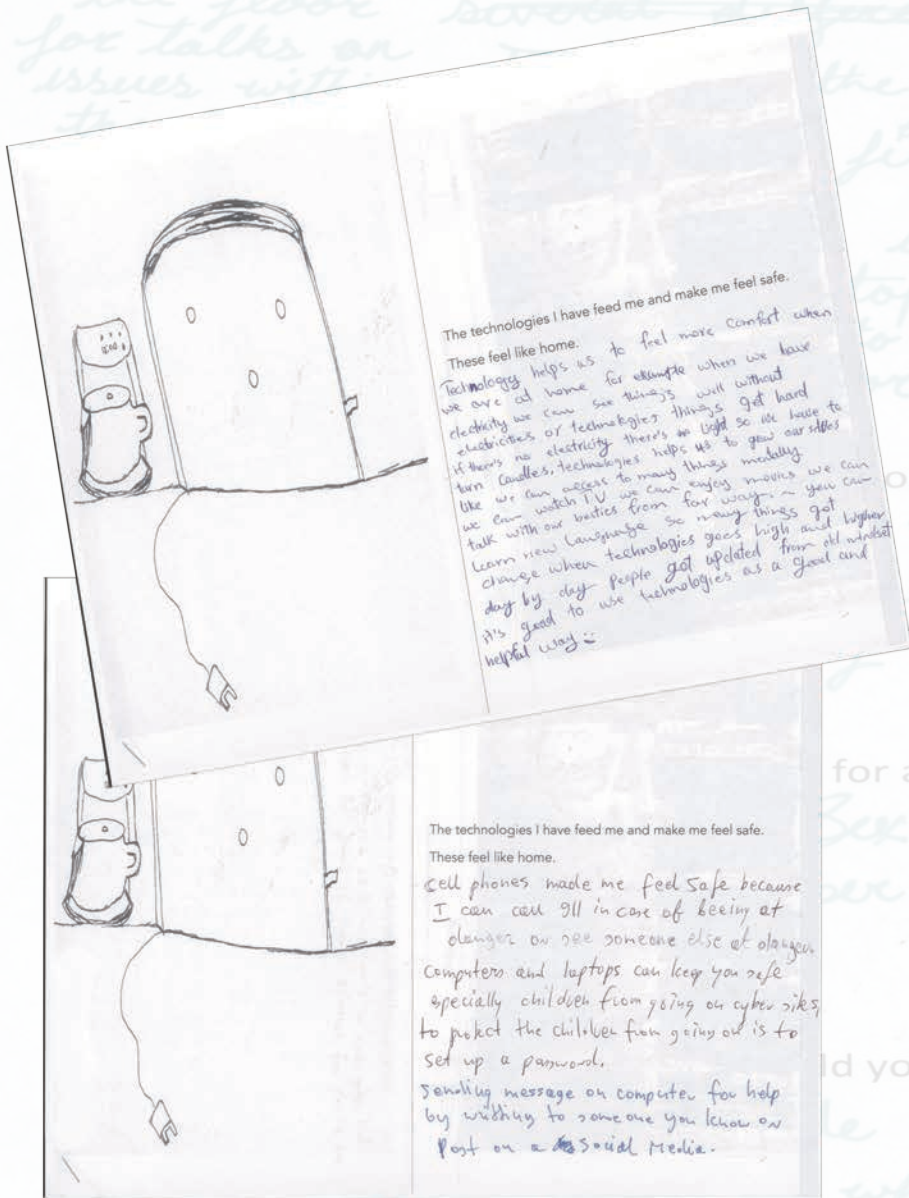
Mainstream cybersecurity frameworks often perceive end-users in a generic way. We all encounter common threats, risks, and harms. By maintaining good ‘cyber hygiene’ we strengthen that first line of defence and ensure our safety. In this model, digital risks and threats are often framed as individual choices, placing the burden on end-users. You either failed to protect yourself adequately, made a mistake, were a willing participant, or deserved the exploitation.

This project takes a step back from viewing cybersecurity as a universal resource that benefits everyone equally, aiming to examine the cyber insecurities that are overlooked by mainstream models. How do cybersecurity frameworks identify and account for end-users who experience social stigmas? What are the varied impacts of digital safety and security across different social contexts? In what ways are digital (in)securities related to material security and access to basic necessities?

From January to May 2025, we hosted 11 workshops on Thursday evenings at the YWCA in downtown Hamilton, attracting around 220 participants. Most participants were accessing services at the YWCA for diverse personal needs. The first set of workshops concentrated on content generation through techniques such as collage and block-out poetry. In the second set, we worked with rough drafts of the zines, soliciting participants’ feedback on content and other essential aspects, including intended audiences, outreach strategies, and dissemination plans.

This collaborative effort led to the creation of *Trustpassing*, a series of four zines that remix and curate personal reflections into collective narratives exploring the intersection of digital security, safety and broader social issues. The zines strive to make this shared knowledge more recognized, widely circulated, and integrated into mainstream discussions that shape our understanding of digital harms and vulnerabilities.

1. What do you like?



What is security and safety?

- * Having a clean place to visit where there are not many people.
- * Happiness, friendliness, good conversation.
- * Laughter, healthy gatherings, group talks.
- * Feeling relaxed and comfortable. Feeling open to sharing thoughts without judgement and being comfortable with others.
- * Where there is no violence, people feel heard and everyone shows mutual respect.
- * Escaping how crowded other spaces are.
- * Having a safe place to go and being with people is priceless.
- * People need people; that's the meaning of life.

The digital may go by the wayside and be given less priority as we recognize our values—less digital and more actual experiences. Eventually, there may be less need for digital safety as we all try to give, listen, and learn more. We'll be more evolved in these ways, and we'll have less need for digital safety because common sense will take over.

I have used the internet to be safe.

To access women's shelters and counselling services online. Searching for helplines and housing resources online keeps me safe.

Access to support services and advancements in mental health technology can keep us healthy and safe, even when mental health isn't openly discussed. These technological advancements ensure that we don't feel alone or helpless.

With access to computers, we can easily find information and resources to get the help we need, even when we aren't sure where to go or whom to call.

1. What do you like?

2. What don't you like?

Technology has kept me safe.

Advances in medicine, in terms of both physical and mental health, and the unlimited amount of help it provides.

3. What would you change if you could?

For myself, the advances in mental health have allowed me to not feel alone or helpless. For my father, advances in medicine reassured me that he wasn't in pain at the end.

Phones and all they are capable of doing are extremely readily accessible. Knowing you can call for help anywhere you are is comforting to say the least

5. What other suggestions would you like to see?

Digital Safety and Security

- * Use technology frequently and with caution.
- * Learn to enjoy nature to stop being dominated by the dopamine (immediate response) that social networks provide. Dopamine fasting will become difficult to achieve, just as it is now to eat healthy.
- * Remember, technology can be an opener.
- * Spend time without a cell phone. It can be a way to protect ourselves from the amount of information that the digital world offers us.
- * Stop while you're ahead!
- * Teach our kids about online safety, help them become more aware of potential risks, and teach them how to protect themselves for a safer online experience, so that we, as parents, don't have to worry so much when they are on the computer.
- * If it isn't broken, don't fix it.
- * Relax, be true to yourself, and don't depend on technology, but depend on other people.
- * Don't stare at screens and light rays too long.



1. What do you like?

Technology gives you freedom.

New technology can provide amusement and spaces for enjoyment. Technology helps us experience things. Now I talk with ChatGPT for hours and I'm surprised at the things it can tell me.

I just started receiving calls because I didn't have credit to make them. I can communicate with my family in **** and **** thanks to my new cell phone.

I use Instagram to see videos and photos of my children. I also like to use Facebook to meet people. I love TikTok because I watch funny videos when I eat alone.

Using technology, such as social media, also offers freedom. You can be whoever you wish to be.

5. What other suggestions would you share at this time?

At the same time, the internet has changed how we connect. People fight all the time, and I can't tell who is telling the truth. The internet can be cruel. Tech is in the wrong hands.

We can't trust what we see on social media. They sell us a tiny slice of their perfect life. That's what most influencers do. Then, the world looks at them with the frustration it deserves, because we can't have the perfect life they sell us, no matter how much we'd like it.

It sometimes feels like life is becoming a game. It sometimes feels like we have fewer connections to the real world. Now, we don't talk.

We want to talk to real people. AI chatbots aren't the same. We miss real people. Let me speak to a real person!

Was technology more straightforward and more accessible when it was analog? Yes it was
there's videos, photos, books
workshops

Workshops

We want to talk to real people. AI chatbots aren't the same. We, there's lots of scams with voices on calls, pretending to be someone else.

Now, we don't talk. Robots talk but

We miss real people

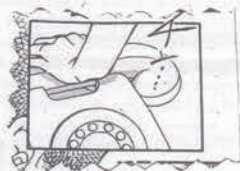
Let me speak to a real person!
Not a computer
or a robot voice.

More Human
Less Robots
chatbots



Sometimes technology leads to isolation and loneliness.

yes it sometimes does.



With digital technologies, it sometimes feels like we have fewer connections to the real world.

true, some use
their
phones & tech
this way

Coffee at the push of a button

Set a computerized timer

Read books & magazines on your phone

Best a trip online

Live online

Polaroid Camera Computerized Cameras

Technology gives you freedom

Can you Succeed?

YES Of course you can!

It's all about the perfect marriage of smart saving and smart spending.

Efficiency

Planning...

Savings...

Work EVERY DAY.

Vacations!!!

Everything Falls In Place

ware.

ware has become almost synonymous with

What Is Spyware?

the problem spyware

takes information about you and makes that information available to someone else via the Internet.

spyware can truly harm keyloggers can steal valuable information like passwords and credit card numbers or trade secrets. spy software is readily available for sale on the Internet, and it can be easily installed by anyone with physical access to your computer, especially if your system isn't password-protected. It is also spread via e-mail, disguised Trojan-horse-style as a legitimate program.

spyware makers don't want to steal your information and destroy your life—they just want to make some money, and they don't care what methods they use to do it.

* You see, the key to making money through online advertising is targeting.*

display untargeted ads randomly to people, they are unlikely to be effective. Instead, the ad, and make a sale. However, if you can determine what someone is interested in and target an ad to that specific interest, you have a better chance of closing a sale. For instance, if someone is looking for plane tickets and you show him an ad for an online travel service, he is likely to click the ad and use the service.

That's what makes spyware so lucrative. The spyware makers get as many people as possible to install their software as possible, using whatever methods are required, and then sell advertising space to them. That is not a particularly high-pressure sales pitch, is it? They then