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**Safe Spaces and Good Places:  
The contribution of safety to community sites and  
social change**

**Molly Grace Drummond**

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## Abstract

This project explores the contribution of considerations of safety to communities and sites of social change. In this thesis, the concept of safety is grounded in contemporary conceptualizations and ongoing debates about safety found in discussions of safe space practices in universities. In these debates, understandings and definitions of safety are frequently displaced in favour of further discussion of violence and freedom, to which safety is often defined as the absence or opposite of these concepts. However, contemporary practices and demands for safety are often rooted in longer histories and broader contexts of LGBT+, antiracist, and feminist grassroots activism. Furthermore, forms of safety that are frequently under-interrogated include normalized and mundane practices such as health, hygiene, and safety, which also have histories grounded in radical social movements. To discuss contemporary forms of safety contextualised by these longer histories, I turn to two case studies of communities who share a participatory ethics and a pursuit of social change: a community bakery/café and zine community and culture. These communities' work is situated within and understood through a broader political context of their ongoing contestations with forms of socio-economic inequality which are, in this thesis, focused on barriers to cultural democracy, political agency, and basic material needs: art, work, and food. Using a combination of participatory observation and textual-material analysis, I focus on modes of community and spatial formation in these sites, and the tensions that emerge here. Through discussions of community representation, temporality, and labour, this project makes visible overlooked and underexamined forms of vulnerability and practices of safety in everyday activities and community contexts. These practices are then used to intervene in and re-evaluate limited conceptualizations of safety in contemporary debates about safe space practices. Developed through a combination of ethnographic fieldwork and a broader theoretical framework that draws upon utopian theories, particularly theories of utopia in the everyday, the case studies demonstrate how contemporary practices of safety can be understood as prefigurative practices that contribute to demands for social change and the transformation of the everyday.

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## Introduction:

In a bookshop in California in 2015, I sat reading a copy of Issue 10 of *High on Burning Photographs* by Ocean Capewell, a zinester living in Oakland. At the time I was in between homes, with very little money, one train ticket to Portland, Oregon and a plane ticket to the UK, both dated a few weeks in advance. The clerks at the bookshop allowed me to read as much as I liked and to use the bathroom when I needed it. Surrounded by too many bags and a few of the bookshop's cats, I stayed there for a couple of hours and left without knowing where next to go. I bought that copy of the zine, in which Capewell states 'I will not feel safe until the world is completely different' (*HBP10*: NP). This statement, as well as the circumstances leading me to read it, has recurringly provided focus to this project.

Capewell indicates in this zine that, rather than being a fixed or predetermined condition, safety is conditional. Safety depends on who and what is being kept from harm – whether physical or psychological (Kern 2020; Popowich 2021; Houston Grey 2017; Taylor 2017; The Roestone Collective [Roestone] 2014; Hanhardt 2013; Tyner 2012; Coyle 2004). Safety is not a pre-existing category of public, domestic, or intimate spaces and situations. It cannot be relied upon to spontaneously emerge; it is socially produced (Kern 2020; Roestone 2014; Tyner 2012). Safety is not understood in the same way to the same people in the same place, and to seek safety for some is, in some cases, to threaten others (Phipps 2021; Roestone 2014; Hanhardt 2013; Knox ed. 2017). To bring attention to the contradictions and difficulties of defining safety is to begin to interrogate ongoing debates about public and community safety, and the threat it seemingly poses to individual freedoms.

In this thesis, I draw upon ongoing discussions of safety in scholarship to argue that understandings of safety are limited where they conceptualize safety as the opposite of violence or as a top-down imposition of state and legal policy that limits the individual

(Furedi 2017; Taylor 2017; Knox 2017; Hota 2017; Tyner 2012; Boutellier 2004). To develop these arguments further, this project employs a multidisciplinary and multi-method approach to discuss, challenge, and reconceptualize limited understandings and circular debates about public, community, and individual safety. Drawing initially from ongoing public debates about safe space practices in universities and the broader political and theoretical context informing these debates, the project then turns to everyday practices of safety found in two case studies: a community bakery/café, part of a participatory arts company, and in zine community and culture. In these sites, participatory culture and the pursuit of social change inform the way safety – including health, hygiene, and safety, public safety, and the use of signs, stickers, and warnings – is practiced and discussed in the interests of the communities these sites represent.

The focus on the everyday, overlooked, and mundane practices through which insights about community and individual safety can be developed is informed by the approach of cultural studies, in which field this project is situated. Primarily, this approach stipulates that the discussion of everyday sites, knowledges, and behaviours can generate rich understandings about previously accepted and normalised knowledge; an ignorance of or disengagement from the world “outside of” the university severely hampers the ability to critically challenge institutionalized hierarchies of power and knowledge (Littler 2019, 2017; Atton 2002; Duncombe ed. 2002 *see also* Pink 2012; Mason 2011; Massey 2005).

Both the theoretical and empirical strands of the project were informed by a multidisciplinary approach, drawing from a range of analytical methods to engage with and draw insights from the two case studies primarily through participatory observation, photographs, and the analysis of zines. As a researcher already working in and familiar to the communities in these sites, the research conducted there draws upon autoethnographic and sociological methods to develop situated and reflexive knowledges (*see* Mason 2011;

Stephens-Griffin and Griffin 2019), in addition to methods of semiotic and textual analysis more familiar to cultural studies (*see* Barthes 2009; Hebdige 1988). The reflexive and multidisciplinary approach to researching safety in these sites was informed by an emerging methodology in sociology – facet methodology – which advocates for a multi-methods engagement to inform challenging research into everyday life and normalised knowledges and behaviours (*see* Mason 2011; Davis and Heaphy 2011, *discussed below*). The aims of this project are to build a situated understanding of safety practiced by communities pursuing social change, to demonstrate how these understandings of safety complicate existing assumptions and conceptualizations of safety in debates about safe space politics and practices, and to show how the understanding of safety developed in this thesis contributes to theories of utopian spatial and community production, particularly in the everyday.

This chapter will provide an overview of the thesis, summarising the main discussion of each chapter in turn. Firstly, I will provide more detail on the development and discussions of safety in the thesis, before moving on to the broader political and theoretical context through which these discussions can be understood; this overview covers the subsequent two chapters of the thesis. I will conclude this chapter by summarizing the discussion of safety drawn from empirical research into the bakery/café and zine community and culture in relation to the research questions:

### 1.1. The research questions

These questions were developed in response to the existing scholarship on safe space practices and the conceptualizations of safety found there. Through reviewing this scholarship and ongoing debates about safe space practices, the thesis developed to engage with the concept of safety more broadly, as its conceptualization in these debates remained limited. Additionally, the contribution of a broader socio-political context was needed to develop conceptual links between different forms and desires for safety discussed in

scholarship. Finally, the broader context and longer histories contextualising demands for safety often drew upon ongoing grassroots coalitions between LGBT+, anti-racist, and feminist activism. With this context in mind, the discussion of safety in the thesis is framed by a broader interpretive lens of prefigurative and utopian politics and theories, a development that contributed to the third research question.

1. How are safe spaces formed, maintained, and employed?
2. How are safe space practices used to engage with broader debates about security, safety, freedom, and violence in a contemporary political context?
3. How does a consideration of safety contribute to, or expand upon, theories of everyday utopia?

Before discussing how these questions were addressed in the research, it is important to examine the key concepts framing the approach to safety in the thesis. These concepts and my uses of them contributed to the development and framing of the research questions, as I will discuss below.

### 1.2. What is safety?

To address some of the difficulties of defining safety, this project grounds the concept of safety in the specific term ‘safe space,’ and the debates and practices through which safe spaces are understood. Scholarship and debates about safe spaces, in other words, provide a jumping off point through which to examine safety more broadly. Additionally, this approach is helpful because discussions of safe space practices are inflected with some of the wider problems of defining safety; in these debates there are ongoing disagreements over which practices, which communities, and which spaces need safety or are already safe. Moreover, conceptualizations of safe space practices reinforce limiting definitions of safety as the opposite or absence of either violence or freedom. These understandings and the review of existing literature on safety, violence, and safe space practices is the focus of the literature

review, Chapter 2 of the thesis. However, before turning to these arguments in-depth it is necessary to establish some context by summarizing ongoing debates about safe space practices and their relationship to broader politics and discussions of safety.

In scholarship, safe space practices are frequently characterized as a contemporary phenomenon largely found in universities across the U.S. and the U.K. which draw attention to and inhibit homophobia, transphobia, racism, misogyny, and ableism in institutional sites (*see* Riley ed. 2021; Knox ed. 2017; Thompson 2017; Roestone 2014). The term safe space can include a broad range of practices, but most discussions commonly refer to no-platforming, trigger warnings and content warnings, community-specific discussion groups, and opt-out approaches to class discussion of troubling topics (*see* Riley ed. 2021; Knox ed. 2017; Furedi 2017; Byron 2017). No-platforming is usually part of university policy, and means that the university will not host (i.e. provide a platform to) speakers with offensive or discriminatory views (*for further discussion see* Ginsberg 2021; Popwicz 2020; Furedi 2017). Trigger and content warnings are essentially two terms for the same practice: the categorisation of a text, verbally or on a syllabus, as containing troubling content, usually specifying what that content may be (e.g. homophobic violence) (*see* Knox ed. 2017 *throughout, also* Byron 2017). These practices are often implemented differently in different contexts. For example, community-specific groups negotiate with inclusionary and exclusionary practices to enable the in-depth discussion of a topic particular to a community, or to ensure that discrimination is not present in the discussion; in university practices they often refer to student societies and reading groups specifically (*see* Popowich 2021; Bell 2017; Ahmed 2004). An opt-out classroom policy means a student may withdraw from a discussion or skip a class if they feel the discussion is causing them distress or discomfort; they will not be counted as absent if this is the case (MacFarland 2017; Furedi 2017). In debates about safe space practices in universities, opponents of safe space practices argue that

restrictive, exclusionary, and text-based tools are limiting to discussion and harbingers of censorship (Ginsberg 2021; Knox 2017; Jones 2017; Furedi 2017; Schroeder 2017).

Conversely, proponents of safe spaces argue that these practices allow considered discussion of sensitive topics to flourish, by developing an environment in which participants are informed, voluntary, and prepared (Taylor 2017; Byron 2017; MacFarland 2017; Thompson 2017).

Broader conceptualizations of safe space practices in scholarship, however, relate contemporary university safe spaces to longer histories and multiple contexts. For example, critical geographers The Roestone Collective point out that the term ‘safe space’ originated in women’s liberation groups, and is represented by a sign (a pink triangle surrounded by a green circle) that connects LGBT+ and feminist activism (Roestone 2014). Others have discussed the origin of content and trigger warnings in online community forums, and their connections to developing understandings of trauma and PTSD, well before their use in universities (Colbert 2017; Houston Grey 2017; Taylor 2017). Still others have likened community-specific discussion groups to consciousness-raising spaces in liberation activist contexts (Wallin-Rushman and Patka 2016). By looking at spatial production in broader contexts, critical scholarship on ‘safe spaces’ outside of academic sites also includes discussions of borders with varying degrees of permeability, and tactical practices such as trespass and protest (Bell 2017; Hanhardt 2013). These discussions correlate political desires with debates about safe space practices, linking contemporary practices with anti-racist, feminist, class, and LGBT+ politics and the pursuit of social change (*see in addition to above* Katz et al. 2016; Byron 2017; Bairstow 2007). Bringing in these discussions, safe space practices today can be understood as a combination of broader histories of the pursuit and demand for civil rights with contemporary tools founded in activist, online, and community spaces of discussion.

Ongoing work into safety, violence, and trauma provides much of the context for discussions of safe space practices, particularly the arguments which promote their use. For example, while trigger warnings originated in online forums, the term builds on decades of scholarship into PTSD – where the use of trigger comes from (Taylor 2017; Colbert 2017). This body of work explores not only violence outside of the limitations of spectacular events, but also asks important questions about who can experience violence, and how the effects of violence can last long after physical injuries have healed (*see also* Tyner 2012). For example, the term trigger initially applied to the psychological aftermath of violence for combatants and ex-combatants, but the diagnostic framework for PTSD was expanded to include civilians because of activist-oriented research into domestic and sexual violence, primarily against women (*see* Taylor 2017; Colbert 2017; *see also* Roestone 2014; Fraser 1990).

By discussing grassroots community desires for safe streets, neighbourhoods, homes, and communities, this scholarship incorporates a much broader set of practices of and demands for safety, some of which have been overlooked in safe space debates. Included in these discussions are marches and patrols, such as Take Back/Reclaim the Night – a march for women’s safety in public spaces – and the work of the Lavender Panthers – an armed anti-homophobic violence patrol in LGBT+ neighbourhoods, whose name pays homage to antiracist civil rights activism (*see* Roestone 2014; Hanhardt 2013). Additionally, however, contemporary and everyday practices of safety that are overlooked in most scholarship on safe space debates include safe sex activism and health and safety (*see, for exceptions,* Garcia et al. 2015; Bairstow 2007). Often considered mundane or normalized practices, these forms of safety both emerged from grassroots coalitional activism, and are in some ways not yet fully realized (*see* Giraud 2019; Garcia et al. 2015; Cooper 2014; Bairstow 2007).

On the one hand, these more expansive discussions inform the ways that safety is discussed in the thesis and additionally draw the focus away from the limiting circularity of

safe spaces debates in university contexts. On the other, this thesis challenges existing ways in which safety is conceptualized overall, meaning that the discussions of safety found here can contribute to unpicking and re-examining the limitations of these contemporary, ongoing debates about university safe spaces. As I will discuss below, this thesis situates discussions of practices of safety in the case studies in relation to broader political and community contexts, with particular attention to overlooked forms of safety and underexamined relationships to theorizations of violence and freedom.

### 1.3. Utopia and social change: the conceptual and theoretical framework for the project

Drawing from the broader political context of discussions about safe space practices and safety, including the ways in which these demands are continually being revisited, in this project, practices of and demands for safety are framed as part of a prefigurative politics of social change; this framing is discussed through the lens of utopian theory. Utopia combines the concepts of good/no/place, and is generally used to imply a non-existent, even unfeasible, alternative to the present (*see* Duncombe 2008; Harvey 2000 *for this tendency*; Jendrysik 2020 *for summary*; Bloch and Adorno 1988 *for critique*). These implications are strongly contested by utopian theorists who have sought to reclaim the concept of utopianism as a form of critical, future-facing engagement with the present (*see* Bell 2017; Bloch 1988, 1986). Utopia, like the future, is an unstable and unrealizable concept and can be more accurately thought of as an ongoing pursuit, or a horizon (*see* Bell 2017; Muñoz 2009; Bloch 1988; 1986). Writing about utopia also requires a level of responsibility without which potentially utopian or “good” concepts like home, community, freedom, and happiness can be deployed to harm, exclude, and disenfranchise vulnerable communities (*see* Bell 2017; Featherstone 2017; Bloch 1988 *see also* Ahmed 2004); the original use of Utopia in More’s text, for example, contains overt colonialist and imperialist desires (Jendrysik 2020; Bell 2017; More [1999]).

Two strands of utopian theory inform the project's theoretical approach: Blochian utopian theory (Bloch 1988, 1986; Muñoz 2009), and Davina Cooper's theories of 'everyday utopia' (Cooper 2014). Ernst Bloch's utopian theory is informed dually by his connections to the Frankfurt School, applying Marxist methods of analysis and socio-economic critique to cultural products, and the then new Freudian theories of the unconscious (*see* Bloch 1988, 1986; Daniel and Moylan eds. 1997; Löwy 1992). Bloch argues that the desire for and pursuit of utopia exists in latent form in our unconscious, but is expressed in works of art, music, and literature, which is where he looks for understandings of hope and desires for new and better societies (Bloch 1988, 1986). Throughout the thesis, Bloch's theories are supplemented by contemporary applications of his terminology and methods of analysis: José Esteban Muñoz (2009), for example, discusses how queer futures can be imagined and enacted by drawing on queer expression in forms of art, including drag, punk, poetry, and independent publishing. Whereas Bloch's approach is theoretical, Cooper (2014) combines empirical and theoretical methods to discuss sites of 'everyday utopia,' drawing from contemporary sites in which everyday practices of trade, debate, and work are experimented with and reconceptualized (*see also* Moore et al. 2014).

In this project, the development, implementation, and study of 'viable alternatives' – Cooper's term to describe the exploration of different approaches to everyday practices – requires a continued theoretical engagement with the broader political context surrounding both demands for safety, and debates about safe space practices. The theoretical framework for the project, which is discussed in detail Chapter 3 of the thesis, incorporates three interrelated considerations of firstly, utopia, as summarized above, secondly, theorizations of neoliberalism and, thirdly, spatial production. These three considerations, which I will continue to define below, form an interpretive theoretical framework through which to

identify and situate utopian demands for safety as working critically within and against a contemporary political context.

#### 1.4. Broader political context for change: neoliberalism and neoconservatism

Building upon tensions identified in existing scholarship of safety and safe space practices, theorizations of neoliberalism offered a broader socio-political context for demands for safety. Neoliberal economic and social policy and practice is based on the theory that an environment in which basic needs are offered to individuals by competing markets engenders an increasing quality of that provision, and increasingly better quality of life overall (Cooper 2017; Featherstone 2017; Bagelman and Bagelman 2016; Brown 2011; Harvey 2005). This pursuit of a better quality of life is critiqued by Mark Featherstone (2017), who explores the utopian impulses latent in the rhetoric of neoliberal theory and policy. In practice, neoliberal economic policy began to be implemented around the 1970s, firstly in the U.S., to protect the financial assets of elite classes during an unprecedented period of stagflation (inflation in a period of low economic activity) (Cooper 2017; Harvey 2005). David Harvey (2005) and Melinda Cooper (2017) discuss how a coalition of neoconservative and neoliberal economic and social policy strove to maintain those interests, ultimately leading to increasing inequality between classes particularly stratified by ethnicity and gender. Other studies explore the transformation of working communities and everyday life (*see also* Komlosy 2018; Duncombe 2008), as well as the additional effect on LGBT+ communities, specifically the activist communities that resisted these policies (Hanhardt 2013). Although neoconservative policies are comparatively focused on the control of individuals and populations, primarily through increased policing and militarization and the maintenance of traditional nationalist values and economic units (*see* Cooper 2017; Harvey 2005), such as the nuclear family (*see* Cooper 2017; *also* Tyner 2012), scholars argue that these policies maintained order in an increasingly individualised society and culture (*see also* Featherstone 2017; Brown 2011).

Additionally, further scholarship discusses how this unequal system is maintained through a combination of ideological rhetoric (Littler 2018) and the foreclosure of alternatives (Featherstone 2017; Gibson-Graham 2008, 1996).

The diversified impact of strategic coalition between neoliberalism and neoconservatism has been drawn upon to explicate more recent events and contemporary culture. These include the election of Donald Trump, the Brexit referendum, the ongoing use of austerity policies since the 2007 financial crash and subsequent recession, the social and environmental effects of climate change, and the rise of far-right populist politics (Fraser 2019; Brown 2018; Bell 2017; Featherstone 2017). In the project, these theories and their applications are useful to make sense of the broader socio-economic inequalities, forms of state, interpersonal, physical, and psychological violence, and normalised cultural logics and everyday behaviours that contextualise and make coherent demands and desires for safety. To point to neoliberal politics to contextualise and make sense of such a broad range of contemporary events and discussions has been criticized as a vague and all-encompassing gesture (*see* Pettinger 2019). However, theories of neoliberalism, neoconservatism, and new forms of authoritarian and capitalist ideology and their effects are still being developed; these theories are also useful for the exploration of both complex, global phenomena and everyday social life and behaviour. In the following section, I discuss the contribution of theories of spatial production to the project, which have been used in part to address some of the limitations suggested above by offering approaches to ground understandings of socio-economic relations in material phenomena.

### 1.5.Space and Spatial production

In the project, I primarily make use of discussions of the production and navigation of space, often through mundane and normalized behaviours, by drawing upon the theories of Doreen Massey (2005), Henri Lefebvre (*see* 2008; 2004; 2003; 1991), and Michel de Certeau

(2000). Massey and Lefebvre both offer materialist critiques of the production of space; Massey, for example, analyzes the spaces of specific institutional sites to argue that the distancing and isolation of these sites, such as universities, can contribute to theorizations of socio-economic distance (2005). Both Massey and Lefebvre take a critical approach to popular understandings of space, how these understandings are reproduced, and challenge abstract conceptualizations of space that are not based in material evidence. Whereas Massey's theories critique the prioritization of Eurocentric knowledges of space and geography (2005; *see also* Harvey 2000), Lefebvre's focus is how everyday public sites reproduce cultural logics of capitalism (2008, 1991; *see also* Harvey 2005, 2001). In comparison, de Certeau discusses how mundane and small-scale acts of trespass and protest can challenge these forms of reproduction (2000).

The theories of Massey, Lefebvre, and de Certeau have been useful to understand critiques of utopian thought and theories, most of which accurately point out the colonialist origins of the term and how these origins can be uncritically reproduced (*see* Jendrysik 2020; Bell 2017), but some of which dismiss the uses of utopia as unfeasible (*see above*) despite ongoing work to evidence and ground theories of utopia in the everyday (*for example* Cooper 2014). Moreover, Massey's discussion of knowledge production has provided a useful theoretical and political context to discussions of safe space practices in universities, where the challenge to traditional modes of knowledge production recurs as a strong theme (Massey 2005). Additionally, their approaches have provided guidance to the interpretation of the sites and community practices in my case studies, a bakery/café in a participatory arts company, and zine community and culture

Throughout this thesis, I will be examining practices of safety in these two case studies, and these examinations will be situated in longer histories of grassroots activism and demands for safety, as well as a broader contemporary political context developed through an

engagement with theorizations of neoliberalism. Additionally I will be drawing upon theories of spatial and utopian production to provide material evidence of these communities' politics and practices, and the broader socio-economic inequalities that these practices contest. These politics and practices of safety will be grounded in the case studies' community sites and their prefigurative potential will be conceptualized through their resistance to or negotiation with a broader contemporary socio-political context. Below, I will provide an overview of these sites and the approach of the empirical research in the project, which is the focus of Chapter 4 of the thesis.

### 1.6. Methodology

The project combines empirical and theoretical approaches to develop understandings of safety, and to situate these understandings within broader contexts and longer histories of coalitional antiracist, feminist, and LGBT+ grassroots activism. Two case studies are used to evidence this work in forms of community and individual safety in public space. Working with a community bakery/café and zine community and culture, practices of safety found in these sites are discussed as both intrinsic to these sites' formation and maintenance, as well as demonstrable indicators of safety's contribution to communities and politics of social change.

#### 1.6.1. *Facet Methodology*

Though primarily grounded in theoretical frameworks and methodologies from cultural studies, this project combines these approaches with an emerging methodology grounded in sociological research. This approach, 'facet methodology,' was developed in projects using multiple small-scale studies to investigate and challenge normative understandings of everyday practices (*for example, friendship – see Davis and Heaphy 2011; Mason 2011*). Facet methodology is named for the visual metaphor employed to explain its approach to research, developed to contest understandings in traditional modes of sociological research that different questions can be answered in the same ways, and that these ways are found in

pre-set approaches. These assumptions often limit which methods (such as interviews, or focus groups) can be used as well as for how long a study can be conducted, rather than considering what is appropriate for the project itself, particularly one that is developing complex findings. Facets are the lines cut into a gemstone to bring form and light to the object; in the development of the methodology, Mason (2011) argues that there are multiple ‘lines of inquiry’ to illuminate one ‘object of concern,’ and explain the multi-methods, and multi-dimensional, approach as a way of acknowledging the subjectivity of social studies research and the import of reflexive, creative, and situated approaches to knowledge production (*see also* Stephens-Griffin and Griffin 2019; Pacheco-Vega and Parizeau 2018; Wolf 1992).

#### *1.6.2. The case studies*

The arguments justifying the development of facet methodology resonate with the ethical and methodological considerations of researching in sites in which I was already familiar to the communities there; I will return to this discussion below after providing an overview of these sites to provide context to my approach. My first case study, the bakery/café, is a community project run by a participatory arts company; situated in the company building, an ex-industrial space, it is the physical and figurative “front door” of company involvement and is usually host to community events. The bakery is an artisan bread company and part of the “real bread” movement, using organic and carefully sourced ingredients, with no additives and preservatives. The café is a community space hosting pay-as-you-feel lunch weekly, with meals made partly from food sourced from a national food waste scheme. The bakery/café and the arts company aim to promote and prioritize inclusivity and accessibility in community and cultural events; their pursuit of social change is oriented around green, anti-capitalist politics, increased community engagement, and the support and training of artists living and working in the area.

The second case study is the zine community and culture. The zine is a form of independent publishing, often handmade using found materials with a personal and idiosyncratic content and aesthetic (*see* Duncombe 2008; Piepmeier 2008). Traded for other zines, sold for the cost of production or postage, or given away for free, zine making and distributing practices are financially accessible (*see* Atton 2002). There are no discernible limitations to the subject matter, style, size, or production methods of a zine, and anyone can make one and be included in the community (*see* Hays 2017; Clark-Parsons 2017; Bagelman and Bagelman 2016; Licona 2012; Duncombe 2008; Peipmeier 2008). Whilst many zines, particularly perzines (personal zines), deal with sensitive topics and progressive politics, zine content can range from the mundane, to the obscene, to extremist and fringe politics (*see* Hays 2017; Ramdarshan Bold 2017; Honma 2016; Atton 2015, 2010, 2002; Licona 2012; Duncombe 2008; Zobl 2004). Zine cultural and community politics of social change focus on the pursuit of authentic personal expression, the use of participatory and DIY modes of production, and the accessibility of cultural production and expression (Clark-Parsons 2017; Hays 2017; Honma 2016; Bagelman and Bagelman 2016; Atton 2015, 2010, 2002; Duncombe 2008; Kempson 2015; Licona 2012). Furthermore, much of zine culture overlaps with DIY culture, particularly punk, and therefore engagement with countercultural expression, anti-mainstream politics, and the taboo are a strong, while not homogenous, theme in the culture (*see* Hays 2017; Duncombe 2008 *see also* Bell 1998).

### *1.6.3. Methods, ethics, and positionality*

The necessity for a reflexive research methodology engendered a multi-methods approach; for the project I used participatory observation, taking photographs and notes at the bakery/café, and the textual-material analysis of zine objects, grounded in understandings of the making and trading practices of the zine community. However, over the course of the project these methods, initially portioned to each site, began to influence my approach to both

case studies. My use of photographs as prompts to draw out reflections in the observations then turned to close readings of those photographs. Comparatively, to supplement existing scholarship on zine culture and my own collection of zines I visited zine community spaces such as archives and libraries throughout the project. To document these visits I began to take photographs of these spaces, which then become data used directly in the project's discussion of the case studies.

This kind of reflexive approach called for a sustained consideration of consent and ethics. At the bakery/café, for example, I had acquired the consent of key gatekeepers at the site to conduct the study. However, attendees at the site continually fluctuate, including the volunteers I was directly working with in the bakery/café. Therefore, it was continually necessary to re-introduce myself as both a volunteer and a researcher at the site, to let people know I was taking notes and photographs, even though those photographs did not include people. Additionally, while no one is referred to by name in the study, I would check with participants before quoting them or discussing conversations which would later become part of the study. For the zine community case study, most of the insights are found by combining existing understandings of zine culture in scholarship with close textual analysis of zines themselves. Throughout the project, I use only the details provided by zine makers themselves to identify the zines. For example, whereas above, Ocean Capewell provides a name and address on the copy of *High on Burning Photographs*, other zine makers are anonymous. For that reason, all zines are cited using the name and issue of the zine, and makers are referred to only if they provide their name or a pseudonym in the zine. Research ethics in DIY and zine communities are developing through ongoing discussions, usually by participants in that community who then become academic researchers (*see for example* Ramdarshan Bold 2017; Browner and Licona 2016; Berthoud 2017; Lynn 2013). To acknowledge these discussions and considerations, I would discuss my position as a

researcher with many of the people I met and spoke to at zinefests, although I did not take down any notes of those events. However, I did take photographs of zine libraries and zines for reference purposes, some of which became incorporated as findings in the discussion; as a prescient precaution I only took photographs in empty rooms, and only of the zines found there.

Both the arts company and zine community share a politics of social change and participatory methods of cultural production, and both utilise multiple practices of safety crucial to the formation and maintenance of their community sites. However, my discussion of these case studies is not limited to their practices of safety in isolation of the workings of each site. My discussions of the case studies focus in turn on community formation, spatial production, and then safe space practices. This is a necessary approach and one that is largely neglected in conceptualizations of safety and understandings of safe space production. Specifically, I chose to approach the discussion of safety in this way to address limitations of conceptualizations of safe space practices that I will discuss in the literature review, in which debates about safety and safe space practices fail to adequately situate specific practices of and demands for safety in the context of the communities developing them. The discussion section of the thesis works to ground the ongoing discussion of safety and safe space practices firstly within the context of the case studies, and then secondly within broader debates and existing discussions of safety. Therefore, to conclude this chapter, I will provide an overview of the discussion of the case studies, which will summarize Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of the thesis and my overall approach to the discussion and reconceptualization of safety in the project.

## 1.7. Discussion of the case studies and thesis structure:

### 1.7.1. *Chapter 5: Community*

My first discussion chapter concerns the formation and maintenance of community in the case studies, which is closely linked to the alternative economic practices observed in these sites. This theme emerged during the initial review of the materials gathered from both case studies as a shared concern and ongoing discussion in the case studies in a way that suggested the concept of community itself required interrogation. Specifically, community was framed as a contradictory concept that lent coherence to the people, activities, and structures of the sites, as well as a way to discuss the shared ethics and politics found there. However, the broader cultural contexts surrounding these sites, people, and activities developed specific tensions over the representation of these communities to the extent that these sites had to actively intervene in and re-sculpt these representations.

To summarise, Chapter 4 argues that community formation is a constituent factor in both economies of the bakery/café and the zine community. Zine distribution and circulation practices, according to the DIY and accessible ethics of the community, show clear links between communication and trade through, for example, zine swaps and the inclusion of contact details on zine objects. In the bakery/café, pay-as-you-feel lunches and the site itself draws engagement and support from the local community for the company as a whole, which enables it to support local artists who then contribute to the cultural life of the community, usually using participatory methods as well as developing their own skills and pursuits. Overall, the alternative economies of the bakery/café and the zine community prioritize community over capital. However, the formation and maintenance of community in these sites according to the politics of participatory culture and social change develop tensions both within and outside of the sites. Community formation requires a negotiation between inclusion and exclusion, and the ethics and politics of each case study are sites of contestation and contradiction. These contradictions are particularly concentrated in an aim to develop as

inclusive a community as possible, a desire which necessarily incorporates an ethical exclusion of that which would prevent such a community to exist.

In the bakery/café, this means methods of food and art production in the context of the eco-socialist and participatory politics of the company are further contextualised by normalised and elitist representations of art and cultural production. These broader contexts create bourgeois misdirectives, such as food pricing and existing barriers to cultural production, that must be (and are) actively overridden and contested by the company practices. In zine culture, commodification of the zine form and aesthetic without community or political engagement means that zine community can be exclusionary to a fault, suspecting not only new methods of zine production and distribution and popular zines, but also questioning the membership of zine makers who are outside of a white, masculinist idea of DIY and anti-mainstream politics. In this chapter, I draw upon encounters with people, publications, and signs in the bakery/café, close readings of zine articles, and new developments in zine archival and librarianship practice to discuss the formation and maintenance of communities and the contradictions contained therein. Specifically, I discuss how these sites negotiate with and resolve tensions between, on the one hand, their priorities of making material needs accessible with, on the other, broader misrepresentations and ongoing contestations both within and outside of their communities that can be understood through the broader cultural, social, and political context within which these sites operate.

Throughout this chapter and its discussion of the structure and practices of each case study, I point to specific forms of safety practiced and negotiated with in the bakery/café and the zine community which will be revisited in Chapter 6. The priorities of this chapter, however, lie in addressing broader contextual discussions of safety and safe space reviewed in Chapter 2 and the wider theoretical context discussed in Chapter 3, which draw together the needs of specific communities with conceptualizations of safety as a political demand. In

beginning with a discussion of community, I will begin to elucidate in whose interests safety is practiced in these sites, as well as the broader context and societal pressures that these practices are negotiating with. Moreover, I frame the idea of community as itself an ongoing, utopian pursuit, one that is in constant negotiation with the pursuit of social change that informs these sites as well as with existing limitations to its ideal actualization in the present.

### 1.7.2. *Chapter 6: Spatial production and Time*

Continuing the theme of combining the politics of social change with the reconstitution of socio-economic practices, the next chapter discusses spatial formation and the reconstitution of temporal constructs with a focus on practices of labour and production. This chapter focuses on the zine object as a material community site and the bakery/café as the front door of the arts company, both ways of discussing routes into and the navigation of these communities – not just the spaces that they occupy, but the broader cultural contexts in which they operate. For the former, in both its DIY and accessible methods of production and distribution, the zine object becomes a site in which maker and reader contribute to the making and remaking of the zine, through handwriting, the communicative address, and through wear and tear. In the bakery/café, food production and meal sharing are a method through which the arts company develops its community of professional and non-professional artists.

In this chapter I discuss the permeability and shiftability of borders, using the bakery/café counters and the zine object to discuss how the participatory ethics and practices of these communities come to be reflected in material spaces that help create and support hopeful communities. Here, time and temporality are vital considerations in the reconstitution of labour and work practices in the site of social change, reflected in the material spaces, and articulate tensions and critical knowledges of cultural production's role in capitalism. In zine culture, zine makers use the communicative, personal, and critical address of zines to discuss

their production methods in temporal terms, which destabilises assumptions about zine making and distributing (and amateur cultural production in general) that relegates it to a sphere of unpaid, and therefore undervalued work. In the bakery/café, the relationship between unpaid labour and flexible temporalities are complex and multiple, where voluntary work leads to skill-sharing as well as insecurity and tension between workers and visitors. In both case studies, lived experience of cultural production, voluntary and unpaid work, and community labour contributes to a broader integrated understanding of the necessity and alterity of these community sites in the broader socio-political context of changing work patterns, deregulated labour, and the upheaval of working populations.

As with the previous chapter, here again I point to specific practices of safety in both sites, discussed as part and parcel of the structure and activities of these sites. However, the main purpose of this chapter is to serve as a bridge between the critical engagement with the concept of community in the fourth chapter, and the themes of negotiation, inclusion, and exclusion introduced there, and the focused discussion of safety in these sites in Chapter 6. Through an in-depth discussion of spatial production in this chapter, I aim to ground the understandings of the ethics, politics, and practices discussed previously in material evidence of the communities discussed in the case studies. The intentions of this chapter are thus two-fold: the first is to address the first research question of the thesis by discussing in detail the production and maintenance of safe spaces and of spaces of social change. The second intention is to foreground not just how safety is practiced in these sites according to the priorities of these communities, but moreover how safety actually enables these sites to exist; this is a crucial component argument of Chapter 7, which draws together theorizations and practices of safety to discuss its overall contribution to the desire and pursuit of social change.

### *1.7.3. Chapter 7: Types of safety*

Where both discussions in Chapters 5 and 6 exemplify certain practices of safety, the in-depth discussion and reconceptualization of safety and its contribution to utopian theory and politics of social change is the focus of the final discussion chapter. Building on the two previous chapters, Chapter 7 discusses and specifies types of safety present and inherent to community formation, food production, expression and communication, and the production of space and of social change in the bakery/café and the zine community. These include practices of health and safety, safe space signage, the use of content warnings and trigger warnings, and discussions of experiencing safety and unsafety in public space. These analyses are contextualised by the discussions of community formation and spatial production in the previous chapters, which provide the roots, logic, and potential of safety's contribution to the formation and maintenance of these sites and to everyday pursuits of social change. Furthermore, the discussions in this chapter draw upon the broader theoretical and political context discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, challenging limiting conceptualizations of individualised safety, and forging conceptual links between contemporary practices of safety and their roots in workers', feminist, LGBT+, and antiracist civil rights activism.

By contesting understandings of safety that define it in opposition to violence and/or freedom, this discussion focuses on conceptualizing practices of safety in relation to these concepts. In the bakery/café and the zine community, considerations of safety are practiced in the production and maintenance of community, in negotiations of inclusivity, exclusivity, and vulnerability, and in the dynamic spatial production evidenced by the shifting and permeable borders of these sites. Safety manifests in health, hygiene, and worker safety, in the production of archives and libraries, in the ongoing production of community cultural identity, and in the pursuit and articulation of radical social change. The broader implications for this focused discussion of types of safety, particular to certain sites, are drawn out further in the concluding chapter, Chapter 8, which reflects on the contribution of safety to

understand desires for and pursuits of social change, and the radical histories and futures of these modest demands.

# **What is safety, and who is it for?: from safe space practices to community demands**

## 2.1 Introduction

This project intervenes in safe space debates by drawing on a range of definitions and practices of safety and examining their contribution to sites of everyday utopia. The broader conceptual context to these debates and the conceptualizations of safety discussed here are developed in the theoretical framework following this chapter, which overviews scholarship on theorizations of neoliberalism, utopian theory, and theories of spatial production and everyday life. This literature review can therefore be considered as split into two sections: the first covers the theme of safety and ongoing discussions of safe space practice. The second situates safety and safe space practices within broader debates about security, safety, freedom, and violence, develops the theory and practice of space and place production, and articulates the connection between these discussions, and theories and practices of prefigurative politics and social change. In this first section of the literature review, I will provide an overview of critical scholarship on safe space practices, focusing in turn on these spaces' relationships to broader debates about free speech and individual freedoms, and definitions of violence, thereby developing an understanding of safe space within a longer history of these practices.

## 2.2 Safety and freedom

Critical engagement with the concept and practices of “safe space” have been continually circulating in public debates, particularly after a tipping point circa 2015, wherefrom they emerged alongside, or have been thematically linked to, a much broader

contemporary political context (*see* Ahmed 2004; Furedi 2017; Knox ed. 2017; Riley ed. 2021). These themes are complex and interrelated, and include an environment of rising support for far-right populist movements, including extreme nationalist, racist, and neo-conservative border policies in the Global North (Ahmed 2004; Butler 2004; Andrejevic 2011; Bell 2017; Brown 2018; Fraser 2019), the ongoing use of austerity measures after the 2007 financial crash (Featherstone 2017; Fraser 2019), recurrent discrimination against LGBT+ communities, particularly targeted towards transgender people, women, and youth (*see* Phipps 2021; Moore et al. 2014; Riley ed. 2021; Tyner 2012; Hanhardt 2013), and ongoing systematic violence against black communities (Phipps 2021; Butler 2020; Riley ed. 2021; Garcia et al. 2015; Ahmed 2004). Generally, the phrase “safe spaces” refer to sites enabling critical community discussion that engages with and/or seeks to exclude racism, misogyny, classism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia (Knox ed. 2017; The Roestone Collective 2014; Hanhardt 2013; Thompson 2017). More precisely, the “safe space” has been defined as a set of practices designed to produce a site of community discussion by engaging critically with exclusionary, hostile, and violent forms of discrimination against vulnerable communities (Thompson 2017; Wallin-Ruschman and Patka 2016; *also* Knox ed. 2017, etc.).

In debates about safe space practices, discussion focuses on particular practices and, increasingly, the U.S. or U.K. university setting (*see* Knox ed. 2017; Furedi 2017). Those safe space practices that are focused on in these debates include the use of inclusion/exclusion, for example elective and selective participation in a reading group (*see* Ahmed 2004; Bell 2017), the use of trigger/content warnings (notes on texts indicating troubling content) (*see* Knox ed. 2017), the adjustment of syllabi which can result in the removal of other texts (*see* Macfarland 2017), and the option for any participant to withdraw from discussion (*see* Furedi 2017). Safe space practices are also sometimes referred to as “safe space culture,” where they are linked in discussion to a wide range of student and

popular political movements, including the Black Lives Matter movement, Rhodes Must Fall and Decolonize the University movements, conversations about mental health and wellbeing, and no-platforming policies in student unions (Byron 2017; Furedi 2017; Ahmed 2004; Thompson 2017; Riley ed. 2021). In these contemporary understandings of practices and politics of safety, safe spaces are sometimes characterized as defensive university policy, and sometimes as the demands of a paying “customer” (the student). These arguments draw on generational and demographic shifts in the student population, as well as the financialization of higher education and research, particularly embodied by the figure of the “student-consumer” and the quasi-physical site of the “corporate university,” (Tyner 2012; Brown 2011; Harvey 2001; Furedi 2017).

In these debates, the focus on educational settings informs (and often limits) many of the ways safe space practices are characterized and, correspondingly, how the contemporary university environment is depicted as both symptom of and actor in safe space culture. To develop this understanding more explicitly, the first section of this chapter begins to explore the various ways in which safety is conceptualized in these discussions of contemporary safe space practices in universities, focusing on the development of an antagonistic relationship between safety and freedom of speech. To do so I will overview broader contextual discussions and representations of the university to discuss how tensions arising from a marketized academic environment and shifting relationships between students and staff have contributed to ongoing debates about safe space practices, their uses, and their effectiveness. In doing so this section of the chapter will contextualise understandings of safety in *these* debates about safe space practices, while acknowledging the limitations of this context to conceptualisations of safety more broadly, and ultimately seeks to develop understandings of safety’s relationship to theorizations of individual freedoms, particularly freedom of speech

and expression, by drawing from longer histories and safety's role in sites other than U.S. and U.K. universities.

To summarise, I trace how critics of “safe spaces” often focus on particular practices found in universities, and they argue that trigger/content warnings, the removal/replacement of texts, and the characterization of certain communities as oppressed or vulnerable are not only contentious and divisive strategies, but rendered ambiguous and ineffective by overuse and misuse (Schroeder 2017; Furedi 2017; Houston Grey 2017; Jones 2017; Ginsberg 2021). These arguments posit that sites of discussion (such as the university classroom) require a broad range of differing opinions, including those deemed offensive, to be shared in order to allow free speech, and thereby academic freedom, to flourish (*see* Riley ed. 2021; Knox 2017; Furedi 2017; Schroeder 2017). In making these arguments, on the one hand, these critics disparage the concept of safety, by defining it in opposition to risk or danger, and characterize users of safe spaces as coddled and oversensitive (*see* Tyner 2012; Furedi 2017; *see* Knox 2017). On the other, many of the same critics suggest that safe space *practices* are harbingers of censorship, particularly in university settings, where they argue the use of these practices inhibits or prevents the possibility of unfettered, critical discussion, and disrupts modes of knowledge production in the university (*see* Jones 2017; Furedi 2017; Ginsberg 2021; Waterhouse 2016; *for counter* MacFarland 2017). Therefore, in these critiques, a contradiction arises wherein safe spaces are dismissed as ineffectual and pandering, while also being powerful censorship strategies.

This contradiction comes about through differing perspectives on power relationships in the university, as well as particular characterizations of the student in a marketized university environment (*see* MacFarland 2017; Tyner 2012). This environment is broadly referred to in scholarship as the quasi-physical ‘corporate university,’ and relates theories of neoliberal ideology to the production of knowledge (*see* Tyner 2012; Brown 2011; Massey

2005; Harvey 2001). To resolve these tensions and ambiguities associated with the demand for and use of safe space practices in the contemporary university environment, these critics advocate for methods of open platform debate with the goal of realizing shared interests (*see* Schroeder 2017; Furedi 2017; Ginsberg 2021). However, to do so, these critics often draw upon either a nostalgic characterization of late 1960s coalitional activism, or a particular triangulation of free speech, academic freedom, and objective reasoning, which have been problematized by scholars working more directly with these potential solutions in longer histories and broader contexts (*see* Hanhardt 2013; Bairstow 2007; Sultana 2018). In this section, starting with understandings of free speech and academic freedom in the contemporary university, I unpack the development of the definition of safety as a challenge to different understandings of freedom, particularly free speech, in these debates and critiques.

### *2.2.1 The 'corporate university' theory*

The concept of the 'corporate university' is a critical theorization of the contemporary university as a neoliberal institution (Brown 2011; Harvey 2001). Although it is not a universally accepted representation of universities, to explore this concept provides an important political context for understanding debates surrounding safe space practices. This theory is a way of articulating tensions between state and private funding of higher education, and explaining how these tensions impact the authorized production of knowledge, bringing together neoliberal strategies of individualisation, flexibilization of labour, marketisation, and a competitive environment to the structure and practices of higher education (Harvey 2001, 2005; *see also* Lefebvre 2003; Featherstone 2017, discussed in more detail in the next chapter). The 'corporate university' theory argues that the university is marketized across all sectors, although analyses usually focus on research and teaching (Harvey 2001; Tyner 2012).

In this environment, the concept of safety itself (and safe space practices by extension) has come under fire by scholars applying understandings of the contemporary university environment to their own experiences of research and teaching. For example, while he focuses on the discipline of geography, Tyner (2012) argues that “safe privilege” is present in the authorized production of knowledge in general. Tyner uses the concept of safety not to refer to specific safe space practices, but to a growing adoption of the rhetoric of safety in the university that he sees as largely characterizing a restrictive research environment. He believes that “safe privilege” results in understandings of violence that prioritize the spectacular, the out-of-the-ordinary, and violent situations as one-off interactions between strangers. Tyner’s argument slightly overgeneralizes and homogenizes academic culture and communities, but he draws on understandings of the ‘corporate university’ to explain how ‘safe privilege’ is actively perpetuated by institutions of authorized knowledge (2012: 166). In the competitiveness over funding allocation, in the selection and cultivation of postgraduate students who will participate in the university norms, and in the neglect of certain avenues of research that will not attract funding or that may challenge normalised understandings of violence, Tyner theorizes that university culture is becoming homogenized (*see also* Harvey 2001, 2005; Brown 2011; Massey 2005). Later in this chapter, I will be engaging with definitions of violence in more depth. However, Tyner’s argument serves to demonstrate here how scholars have linked the marketisation of the university environment to pressing concerns about academic freedom, which is distinct from, though related to, free speech.

Much of the scholarship on neoliberal and corporate university theories focus on U.S. and U.K. higher education, as does scholarship on safe space practices in the university. Discussing universities in the U.S., Wendy Brown outlines the process of neoliberalizing (or, ‘privatizing’) public goods and services beginning with ‘outsourc[ing],’ where any and all

‘public goods [are] hence submitted to calculations of profit rather than public benefit’ (Brown 2011: 118). In the case of public universities, this does not necessarily entail literal and complete privatization ‘oriented to an elite segment of the population’ (120). Instead, the missions and research of public universities are made ‘entrepreneurial’ and ‘state funding is replaced by a combination of corporate support and skyrocketing tuition and indebtedness in “public” higher education’ (121). These calculations of value, oriented away from ‘public benefit,’ are repurposed as ‘individual consumer [...] goods’ (119). In this individualised and marketised way, ‘education becomes [...] something an individual may or may not choose to invest in’ (119).

Brown argues that in this process, ‘academic freedom is subtly challenged by the constriction of free-ranging scholarly imagination and innovation’ (2011: 122). In the opening of the article, Brown recognizes the problems of ‘hyperspecialization and professionalization, tenure, narrow modes of recognition and the need for a graduate student labo[u]r force’ (115) as particular ways in which the social and economic relations of the academic are neoliberalized, and whose precarious position must be maintained to ensure a healthy, competitive environment (*see also* Featherstone 2017). In this environment, the university- and researcher-as-entrepreneur must look to make strategic investments through their research, which ‘induces all to ask: “What can we study that will sell?”’ and which sets limitations on the kinds of research that someone can be interested in (122).

More recently, due to an influx of students from increasingly diverse backgrounds, the instability of the post-2007 job market, and competitiveness with other universities to recruit and retain students, pressures to develop financially lucrative courses (or, highly “employable” and “transferable” skills) engenders an academic institution in which not all knowledge pursuits are equally valued (Brown 2011; Tyner 2012). Furthermore, students’ relationship to the university has developed in response to the increased reliance on loans and debt to access

higher education (*see also* Featherstone 2017 *on debt and foreclosure*). This means that many students argue that ‘value for money’ is an important consideration when choosing universities; students themselves, university management, and academics often draw upon the character (or caricature) of the student-consumer when addressing the concerns of the contemporary student population (Furedi 2017; Jones 2017).

Whether scholars are critical or supportive of safe space practices in university classrooms, engagement with the ‘corporate university’ theory provides a much-needed background to the ongoing debates over safe spaces. In the next chapter, I will discuss the theoretical and ideological dimensions of neoliberalism in relation to the politics of demands for safety in order to further develop this connection. However, this summary acts more to ground the following overview of safe space debates in a more detailed context, and particularly to draw attention to the divisive impact of neoliberal policies in academic communities, to further examine how safety is conceptualized as an antagonist in these specific debates.

### *2.2.2 Free speech and Academic Freedom*

Debates over ‘safe space’ practices, used increasingly in classrooms throughout U.S. and U.K. universities in particular, contain inflections of the still-developing marketized education theory and student-consumer figure. Farhana Sultana (2018) brings the distinction between academic freedom and free speech to the fore, drawing from increasing tensions in U.K. and U.S. universities over safe space culture and associated tools, particularly no-platforming policies (*see also* Riley ed. 2021). Sultana shows how freedom of speech and expression and academic freedom are mutually dependent in the university. She maintains that, while free speech is protected under (U.S.) law, this does not protect what is expressed from being debated, challenged, or dismissed. Drawing on legal precedent, she argues that some forms of speech may be nonsensical, violent, hateful, or incorrect, and that these forms are

*more likely* to be challenged than others. In comparison, she describes academic freedom as ‘founded on principles of scholarly rigor, which involves engaging with theories and methodologies, and demonstrating competency of ideas that have been debated’ (Sultana 2018: 232).

Academic freedom ‘enables free speech that is both informed and with reasoned argument’ to flourish in a university context. Sultana emphasises ‘rigor,’ ‘competency,’ and ‘informed and reasoned’ debate when defining free speech and academic freedom in the university, because she argues that recently the ‘spreading [of] random ideas or opinions’ have been passed off as worthy of debate in the name of academic freedom (232). She argues that her intervention in debates about free speech and academic freedom in the university are timely, drawing upon the example of ongoing tensions between efforts by the Decolonize the University movement and a reactionary colonial and white supremacist nostalgia amongst white scholars. By using this example Sultana draws attention to the broader political context surrounding debates about safe space practices, a necessity that I mentioned above. In doing so she maintains that the way rights to free speech are currently mobilized often divorce these rights from practical considerations that permit expressions of all kinds, but particularly those harmful, violent, and nonsensical, to be challenged – distinguishing censure from censorship. However, she also relates this mobilization of free speech to weaponization, drawing attention to the broader and more serious ramifications in contemporary debates in which previously unacceptable racist and colonial ideas are being rehashed in the name of freedom of speech and, particularly, its misconceived conflation with academic freedom.

Additionally, Sultana’s focus draws attention to concerns about open-platform alternatives to safe space practices. For example, Frank Furedi’s critique of safe spaces consistently argues that academic freedom is reliant on an absolutely egalitarian environment of free speech and tolerance which, through the lens of Sultana’s distinction between the two

concepts, continues to conflate them. Furedi (2017) draws on a concept of ‘free speech’ similar to Jodie Ginsberg (2021), former CEO of the Index for Freedom, a charity founded during the Cold War period as a Western response to censorship in Soviet states. Conceptualizing the West less as a geographical than ideological signifier, both Ginsberg and Furedi imbue this concept with the values of individualism, self-determination, and an absolute egalitarian conception of ‘tolerance’ and ‘diversity of views’ (Furedi 2017; Ginsberg 2021). Ginsberg particularly criticizes the use of no-platforming to challenge the transphobic feminism of scholars like Julie Bindel, and both Furedi and Ginsberg suggest the no-platforming of Maryam Namazie for her contentious views on the Islamic religion is concerning. Both Bindel and Namazie discuss womens’ liberation politics, yet both also weaponize this rhetoric against, respectively, transgender and Muslim communities, suggesting that these communities pose a threat to a homogenized conceptualization of women’s rights and safety (*see Phipps 2021 for further discussion of reactionary feminism*).

With these examples, Furedi and Ginsberg both imply that these speakers’ identities (rather than their views) constitute a diversity of unheard voices, despite their reproduction of discriminatory opinions, and through this implication further their argument that safe space practices are about silencing differing perspectives (Furedi 2017; Ginsberg 2021; *see also Phipps 2021 for critique*). Furedi and Ginsberg’s arguments are examples of one extreme of an overall criticism of safe space practices in university classrooms and academic environments, generally referred to as a “chilling effect” on discussion. What this unquantifiable term refers to is largely found in popular and public debate but is also touched upon in scholarship (*see Shroeder 2015; Furedi 2017, Sultana 2018 for allusion to*). This term is used to suggest that safe space practices restrict debate because participants feel too uncomfortable to express opinions that could be criticised or dismissed outright and is essentially what most scholarship in support of safe space practices attempt to disprove. For example, this argument is alluded to

by Sultana, as one way that academic freedom and free speech are conflation, but specifically where free speech is misconstrued to mean unchallengeable speech (*see also* Katz et al. 2016 and MacFarland 2017).

To summarise, in the broader context of critiques of safe space practices, scholars suggest that free speech should enable differing opinions to be shared and challenged on an open-platform basis (*see* Riley ed 2021; Furedi 2017; Schroeder 2017; *for critique* Ahmed 2004, Sultana 2018). They argue that in some cases, no-platform and safe space policies have had a silencing effect on minority and vulnerable groups who hold challenging ideas (Furedi 2017; Ginsberg 2021). Scholars are attuned to a threat to academic freedom on university campuses, and many draw upon a broader context of a marketized university environment with competitive limitations to research, as well as the figure and needs of the student-consumer. Specifically, however, critics of safe space practices argue that they are a top-down imposition of policies which actively harm academic freedom, and have therefore become strategies of censorship (Knox 2017; Jones 2017; Tyner 2012).

Challenges to these perspectives and arguments emphasise that, firstly, these scholars fail to take seriously the more concerning possibilities of an academic environment of absolute freedom of speech that would also tolerate discrimination and hate speech and perpetuate disenfranchisement of marginalized voices (Sultana 2018; Popowich 2021). For example, Furedi and Ginsberg's arguments are pertinent to tensions identified by Sultana (2018), who concentrates on 'ideologies that reproduce discrimination and difference, especially along gender, race, class, religious, and ethnic lines' that are being tolerated on university campuses under the protection of a misuse of free speech rhetoric (Sultana 2018: 233).

By relating the practices of safe spaces to broader political demands and movements like Decolonize the University, secondly, these counter-arguments in favour of university safe space practices posit that these practices are predicated on and developed through the

understanding that, historically, ideas, voices, and communities were wholly excluded from academic discussion, and access to universities is still not necessarily equal for all (*see* Byron 2017; Katz et al. 2016; Harless 2018). This differs from the approach taken by Ginsberg, Furedi, and others above, who prioritize less those ideas being debated which reproduce discriminatory arguments and more the implied diversity of women's voices – Namazie and Bindel, in the examples given – or, in other words, less the substance of the debate than the act of debating itself. Sultana (2018) identifies the problem with this priority by drawing from ongoing debates about the resurgence of racist and far-right arguments to challenge the threat posed to white supremacy in U.S. and U.K. universities, syllabi, and classrooms. She argues that the misuse of free speech to promote the tolerance of reactionary arguments actually undermines demands for the right to free speech by shutting down opportunities through which structural inequalities could be challenged and dismantled.

Thirdly, proponents of safe space practices often draw upon the reasoning of accessibility, arguing that the use of trigger and content warnings, and the safe space environment (which promotes elective participation), is a “reasonable adjustment” that universities can make to students (*see* Byron 2017; Taylor 2017; Doll 2017; *for critique* Washick 2017). In the next section, I will focus on one specific safe space tool: trigger warnings, as an example of how these debates play out in practice. In doing so, I will begin to broaden the context of safe space practices beyond the university environment, as well as addressing some of the issues about researching safe space practices and how these issues have contributed to the circular nature of many existing debates.

### *2.2.3 Trigger and Content Warnings*

Trigger warnings (also called content warnings or content notes) are used on texts to indicate troubling or sensitive content (*see* Knox ed. 2017). They are a practice which emerged from online support forums for people with eating disorders or who have experienced sexual

assault (Taylor 2017; Colbert 2017; Houston Grey 2017). In these community forums, triggers are included in tags (also a way to organise and filter content) or preceding the troubling content itself (Taylor 2017; Colbert 2017). While scholarship sometimes establishes this precedent, a lot of attention is paid to their use in university classrooms, as the concentration of debate over their use focuses on academic settings. In universities, trigger warnings are used on class syllabi or verbally preceding a set text or a class discussion (*see* MacFarland 2017). In addition, readers can request a trigger warning be added to a text if the writer or discussion leader has not previously identified sensitive content (*see* Houston Grey 2017; MacFarland 2017). Trigger warnings, in practice, are similar to a “heads-up” or other forms of mediated interaction – for example, announcements used in broadcasting prior to the showing of storylines featuring sensitive issues (*see* Riley 2021), or a content-specific, intentional ‘spoiler’ (such as doesthedogdie.com, a collective resource). However, they are frequently criticised as an overused practice where the intended effect is ambiguous and unquantifiable (*see* Houston Grey 2017; Martin and Frisby 2017; Furedi 2017). In addition, critics argue that the flexibility afforded to participation in discussion, as well as the act of labelling texts as troubling or even obscene, is continuous with censorship strategies (*see* Furedi 2017; Jones 2017).

As Sultana (2018) observes, racist, misogynistic, and anti-LGBT groups are using the accusation of threats to freedom of speech in order to have their opinions heard. These groups, as Wendy Brown suggests, have strengthened their foothold in spaces of public discussion using a ‘combined emphasis on (non-democratic) liberty and authority; on both statism and the right to say, feel and do whatever one wants’ (Brown 2018: 15). Sultana is clear that ‘free speech is not some disembodied idea but rather is often rooted in anti-racist and anti-fascist movements’ (Sultana 2018: 234), and points out that ‘there is no equality in the “marketplace of ideas” when some ideas are backed by intellectual and scholarly rigor, while others are opinions that are not backed by any evidence,’ nor are these ideas ‘debated or reworked by

other intellectuals' (2018: 235). However, Furedi (2017) equates the priorities of 'social justice' groups and 'alt-right' groups, and also equates safe space priorities with a form of top-down authoritarian censorship (2017: 11). As Furedi observes, '[h]istorically, the call for censorship was advocated by elites who sought to limit people's access to literature that they deemed subversive or immoral' (11). In this context, he invokes censorship to introduce the discussion of safe space practices, specifically trigger warnings. He notes that 'the advocacy of trigger warnings presents itself as a movement from below,' as one of the tools developed by safe space movements in universities in particular (11). Here, Furedi suggests that top-down policies are masked as grassroots politics, indicated by his use of 'presents.' In doing so, Furedi identifies that demands for safe space policies and critiques of university institutions are often coming from students, even though he ultimately argues that they are powerful challenges to academic freedom and freedom of speech that weaponize progressive rhetoric.

Yet, by acknowledging that the potential for censorship comes from below, rather than above, Furedi inadvertently pinpoints a possible way that trigger warnings have troubled university environments: the disruption of hierarchies in the classroom. To elucidate this, Jami MacFarland's (2017) autoethnographic case study both demonstrates this disruption and offers an interpretive framework intended to resolve circular debates over the uses of trigger warnings. MacFarland examines a case study of the dynamics between a professor and a student (herself, at the time) when she requested the professor to consider using trigger warnings on her course. MacFarland specifies that '[she] did not demand that a text be *removed*; rather, [she] asked if trigger warnings, additional text, could be *added*' (MacFarland 2017: 169). Here MacFarland addresses concerns that trigger warnings limit either the freedom of the professor, critical and focused discussion in the classroom, or academic freedoms in general, which is largely where the accusations of censorship take root: this is the argument that trigger warnings are *subtractive*. Instead, MacFarland suggests the

trigger warning is a new practice (in name, *see* Tolman 2017: 200), and also indicates that it is a practice that is open to interpretation and discussion, promoting conversation rather than inhibiting it, and therefore she argues that it is *additive*.

MacFarland, and Furedi to some extent, liken the removal of texts to the ‘subtractive’ potential of trigger warnings and discussions of potential censorship (*see, for example*, Knox 2017; Popowich 2021). However, the removal of a text from the syllabus – which critics suggest is a potential consequence of the use of trigger warnings – is not the same as the use or application of a trigger warnings. It is where Furedi goes further to suggest that practices of self-censorship are produced by the ‘safe space’ classroom environment, and where other scholars have suggested that the requests for trigger warnings challenges professorial power in the classroom (*see also* Doll 2017: 61) that the ‘subtractive’ potential of trigger warnings is located. Simply put, it is within the context of discussions and concerns about censorship of free speech and academic freedom in higher education that the use of trigger warning is arguably subtractive; this is because of how it affects the site of discussion. However, the subtractive potential of trigger warnings in university classrooms could also apply to their potential to disturb hierarchical structures in ‘authorized sites of knowledge production’ (Massey 2005).

This term is used by critical spatial theorist Doreen Massey (2005) to conceptualize both the sites and practices of the university – how it is produced, and what it produces. Massey interprets these sites, of ‘authorized knowledge production,’ as spatialized relationships of power which make acutely material the distance between the ‘knowing subject’ and the ‘object of study’ (2005: 144). In other words, in Massey’s theory, activities conducted in a physical place like a campus university or a science park produces forms of knowledge through specific, self-regulating standards, achieved via access to particular resources, and these forms of knowledge are then seen to be more legitimate than other forms of knowledge (*see also*

Bagelman and Bagelman 2016; Licona 2012). Massey uses these particular examples because they are often physically separate and isolated in relation to other activities happening within the same locality, or nearby, and therefore demonstrate how socio-economic distance is maintained through material spatial production; here, she relates these understandings to specific activities and sites of knowledge production. Additionally, critical theorizations of the production of space, such as Massey's, are useful when discussing safe space practices because they assist with understanding the reproductive ideological capacities of institutions such as the university. In MacFarland's case study, she implies that trigger warnings disrupt or obstruct the production of knowledge wherein certain hierarchies are reproduced, but in doing so open up possibilities for new modes of knowledge production, critical knowledge production, or co-production.

These possibilities are advanced further by other proponents of safe space practices, particularly Katie Byron (2017), who presents a counter-argument to scholars such as Tyner by suggesting that safe space practices are produced to challenge, not by, the neoliberal or 'corporate' university. Byron brings together theories of the university as neoliberal and reproductive to argue that academic space favours access for "normalized" bodies, which necessitates the need for the production of safe (counter-)spaces (*also* Harless 2018; Coyle 2004). Specifically, she draws on queer theories of embodiment to challenge normalized understandings of trauma and recovery, which she builds through connecting the notion of a traumatized subject and neoliberalized concepts of personal responsibility for personal health (2017).

Byron's (2017) contribution introduces the notion of 'trauma' to this overview of safe space debates, which means this discussion begins to ebb into the next oppositional definition of safety: safety as the opposite, or avoidance, of violence, which is the topic of the next section. To round off this section on trigger warnings, I will briefly provide an overview of Martin and

Frisby's (2017) theory which connects understandings of trauma, PTSD (*see also* Colbert 2017; Taylor 2017), and trigger warnings' efficacy as a communication tool. These connections form the basis for scholars' arguments who purport that trigger warnings, and safe space practices more generally, to be reasonable adjustments. They advance the arguments defending the use of safe space practices by arguing that they make academic spaces more accessible to vulnerable and marginalized communities (*see also* Harless 2018; Katz et al. 2016) However, other critics of trigger warnings draw from their initial uses and the communities that they have emerged, as well as communicative ambiguities that Martin and Frisby indicate, to criticize the overuse and misuse of safe space practices (*see* Houston Grey 2017). This latter critique will form the introduction of the next section, where I focus the discussion of scholarship on how safety and safe space practices contribute to definitions of violence.

As I will explicate, research into trigger warnings is limited due to their highly subjective efficacy; debates about what trigger warnings are, who they are for, and whether they are effective (*see* Washick 2017: 98-99) largely hypothesise about an individual student's needs and their concept of violence, partly because the term "trigger" originated through research into the psychological aftermath of violence. For example, MacFarland conducted her research around the impact that trigger warnings had on hierarchies in the university *after* having judged that a trigger warning was necessary to make her ability to partake in classroom discussion more accessible and productive (MacFarland 2017). Furthermore, the alternative terms for trigger warning – content warning and content note – emerged from the tool's original community uses due to ambiguity over who was being triggered, poster or reader (Colbert 2017; Houston Grey 2017; Washick 2017). Scholarship has therefore focused around the connection between 'trigger warning' and 'trigger,' a term used as part of diagnostic framework for PTSD.

Yet, the ambiguity of TWs emerges again in these discussions, and forms the focus for Martin and Frisby (2017), who contextualise their analysis through the relationship between research into PTSD, the practice of trigger warnings, and theories of mis/communication. Martin and Frisby argue that although trigger warnings and experiences of being triggered ‘do not fit neatly into any existing communication theories,’ they can be understood through theories of cognitive dissonance (Martin and Frisby 2017: 155). To demonstrate this dissonance, in the context of PTSD, they argue that there is a contradiction when someone is triggered, wherein the person experiences ‘competing simultaneous notions such as “I am well/I am unwell”’ (155). Martin and Frisby have a less specific, but not unhelpful, understanding of the communicative capacity of triggers and trigger warnings themselves, stating that ‘potentially triggering information must be communicated in order to trigger others, to issue a trigger warning is to communicate, and even the response of the triggered individual sends messages’ (Martin and Frisby 2017: 155). They, in fact, argue that the trigger warning is an ‘avoidance behaviour,’ which suggests that the use of trigger warnings is a *symptom of*, not a treatment for, PTSD and traumatic experiences (155 *see also* Taylor 2017: 27).

This suggestion from Martin and Frisby is useful for both criticism of and support for the use of trigger warnings – it potentially strengthens the idea furthered by critics who argue that trigger warnings shield students from the discussion of sensitive topics (*see* Knox ed. 2017; Furedi 2016; Ginsberg 2021). However, Martin and Frisby also strengthen the link between trauma and trigger warnings that all discussions of trigger warnings are contextualised by, suggesting that the very use of or desire for trigger warnings indicates experiences of violence that have happened, and that have happened outside of the classroom (Martin and Frisby 2017). This is in contrast to, for example, Furedi who argues that students *want* trigger warnings because they are being traumatized directly by the topics in classroom texts (Furedi 2017).

To reiterate, Furedi's interpretation of "what students want" has considerable rhetorical force in these debates, relating debates about safe spaces to those of the marketisation of education and the figure of the student-consumer. For example, Chicago University's statement (included as part of prospectus materials and as a response to heightening debates about safe spaces) rejected all practices associated with the contemporary concept of "safe spaces", which includes trigger warnings, treating these practices as a threat to academic freedom, discussion, and community (Colbert 2017; Jones 2017). Specifically, the University statement argued that rejecting these practices acted in the best interest of the student (Jones 2017), framing safe space practices as a threat to the quality of education available to the prospective student. Chicago University's policy is the representation of one institutional stance, although a broader-reaching statement from the American Association of University Professors approaches the use of trigger warnings in a similar way (Jones 2017). In policy, the attitude that trigger warnings coddle students and can hinder or limit class discussion is currently dominant, framed as in the best interests of the individual student and the ideal academic environment, and is reflected in a cautious approach to trigger warnings that culminates in the general recommendation that trigger warnings are *not* used in classrooms (Jones 2017).

#### *2.2.4 Conclusion: Safe space vs. free speech becomes safe space vs. violence*

To summarise, connected to other practices and broader political movements, safe space practices are perceived as fairly powerful indicators of a developing political voice amongst activists, mostly university students, challenging traditional modes of knowledge production. However, debates about safe space practices become side-lined within more contentious and ongoing understandings of the relationship between free speech and academic freedom, and whether or not safe space practices promote or inhibit either this relationship or either of these concepts. Surrounding this discussion, the relationships between student, teacher, researcher, and university management in an increasingly marketized academic

environment provides an additional source of tension wherein relationships to knowledge production and to these roles are perceived as inhibited or limited through university policy, of which safe space tools can be viewed as an extension of or a challenge to these limitations on knowledge production.

As one example of an extremely well-known and oft-discussed practice of safe spaces, the trigger warning reflects much of the pitfalls of these circular debates. Arguing that trigger warnings are a tool of accessibility is potentially a device in these debates through which proponents of safe space practices can reframe these practices as in-keeping with other institutional policies, as well as progressive and inclusive politics (*see* Colbert 2017; *for critical discussion of the institution* Byron 2017). However, this framing comes with its own problems which will be explicated in the next section, where I turn the focus away from free speech and the university and towards definitions of violence. The critiques surrounding trigger warnings and their link to the medicalization of trauma, via growing understandings of what is now known as PTSD, centres on the pathologisation and individualisation of the aftermath of violence, and whether everyday experiences (that is, experiences which are “normalized” and mundane) can be called or likened to violence (Furedi 2017 *for critique* Tyner 2012).

While scholars acknowledge that the terms ‘trigger’ and ‘trigger warning’ are connected through a shared history of research into PTSD, these terms are distinguishable because the former is more grounded in this history and the latter emerged from its use in online community forums, a potential de-institutionalisation of the term which is also used to refer to a much broader range of phenomena and which can challenge perceptions of violence, as I discuss further below. However, critical discussion also problematizes the *trigger* of the trigger warning, arguing that this word choice can displace the potential critical value that trigger warnings (as practice) offer in favour of aligning with the values of institutionalised medical

knowledge, and the possible pitfalls of individualising and pathologizing trauma (Harless 2018; Washick 2017; Gavin-Herbert 2017; Taylor 2017; MacFarland 2017; Byron 2017).

In other words, firstly, debates about safe space practices become overridden by debates about free speech and academic freedom. Secondly, these understandings of safe space practices (in opposition to free speech) have developed beyond sites of community discussion, only to again be displaced by (other) debates about definitions of violence. Finally, by framing safe space practices as potential extensions of university accessibility and inclusivity policies, the critiques of socioeconomic and institutional inequalities that safe space politics offers is side-lined for a more palatable, individualistic, and institutional framing.

To explicate these frustrating limitations, the next section focuses on safety and violence to more directly examine the progression of debates about safe space practices, and because the relationship between safety and violence offers further clarifying context for the radical implications of demands and desires for safety. This following section explores the connections between definitions of violence, and how safety has often been positioned as the absence of violence, in order to pursue a relational reframing of these debates. Exploring understandings of violence *in relation to* understandings of safety (instead of positioning these concepts as diametrically opposed) further elucidates both the broader political contexts for demands for safe space practices as well as engaging with the histories of these demands.

### 2.3 Safety and violence

The trigger warning as ‘symptom’ or mediator of the relationship between trauma and violence draws attention to both the distance between mundane and academic spaces problematized by Massey (2005), and the potential of safe space practices to transform or produce alternative spaces of discussion (*see* Taylor 2017; Wallin-Rushman and Patka 2016). For example, the alternative argument linking trigger warnings to accessibility draws the focus

away from individual needs and responsibility and suggests that trigger warnings contribute to or produce a particular kind of social environment (Taylor 2017). In the university, trigger warnings facilitate access to the course texts and to class discussion, where ‘the triggering content may be contextualised in terms of its relevance to the course objectives, and problematic themes can ideally be deconstructed and analysed in a safe and productive environment’ (Taylor 2017: 31). As safe space scholarship has demonstrated, however, tools like trigger warnings emerged from other sites of community discussion, broadening the sites where understandings of safe space practices can be developed and researched, as well as moving away from reductive attempts to determine their in/efficacy, a discussion that is usually focused on academic sites. Typifying this, in an argument that focuses less on the individual, Taylor suggests that trigger warnings produce an *everyday* social environment in which *all* have broader access to discussion of difficult topics such as ‘trauma and violence’ in a sympathetic ‘community setting’ (31).

Therefore, through directly engaging with the practice of trigger warnings, safe space practices are argued to offer a transformative potential to community sites of discussion in which concepts like violence can be dissected and challenged in spaces that seek (through safe space practices) to remove the potential for violence to happen. Violence, in the context of these debates, includes discrimination against vulnerable groups, which is why safe spaces tend to be defined through anti-racist, feminist, and LGBT+ inclusivity and positivity (*see* Roestone 2014; Byron 2017; Katz et al. 2016; Harless 2018; Sultana 2018). However, within these debates, the definitions of violence and violent acts themselves are challenged by critics of safe space practices, who sometimes limit understandings of violence to physical, direct events to undermine demands for safe spaces (Furedi 2017; Schroeder 2017; *see* Tyner 2012 *for challenges to these definitions*). These critics argue that safe spaces use too broad and general definitions of violence which inherently harm the potential for productive discussion to happen,

and end up breeding divisiveness instead of inclusion and solidarity across groups with similar progressive interests and causes (*see* Ginsberg 2021; Furedi 2017, Schroeder 2017).

However, definitions of violence as entirely physical have been subject to revision, largely as a result of liberation work to understand domestic and sexualised violence and to protect vulnerable members of the family (particularly in a legal context), including both partners and children (Tyner 2012; Fraser 1992; Roestone 2014). In addition, developments in understanding the psychological *aftermath* of violence, particularly research into the medicalization of trauma and the diagnostic criteria for PTSD, contributes further and broader-reaching implications for not only what violence is, but who can lay claim to experiencing violence (Byron 2017; Harless 2018; Knox 2017; Waterhouse 2016). These definitions and debates are in turn used to discuss safe space practices, their efficacy, and their necessity, as safe spaces rely on a broader definition of violence including hate speech, state violence, and the causes of prejudicial violence (Roestone 2014; Hanhardt 2013; Byron 2017; Knox 2017; Garcia et al. 2015; Harless 2018).

Exemplifying the progression of these debates is the relationship between the term “trigger” and the practice of trigger warnings. In this context of scholarship on PTSD, the term “trigger” is generally related to experiences of warfare, concentrating mostly on the experiences of veterans and active soldiers (*see* Colbert 2017). Here, “trigger” does not necessarily mean a word, phrase, or text-based description; it can refer to a range of sensory cues including smell, noise, or behavioural activity (*see* Colbert 2017; Taylor 2017).

Understanding that survivors of gendered violence, as well as other forms of prejudicial violence, can and do show symptoms of PTSD supported the use of “trigger” to refer to broader contexts but, more importantly in this discussion, broader demographics (Colbert 2017; Taylor 2017; Gavin-Herbert 2017). Sarah Colbert, for example, traces the various medicalized terms associated with the symptoms that eventually became indicative of a

PTSD diagnosis, including ‘nostalgia,’ ‘shell-shock,’ and even ‘hysteria’ (Colbert 2017: 5; 9). Associated largely with shame, weakness, or a degenerate disposition, the acceptance of PTSD as a diagnosable condition came after the Vietnam War, in 1980, as a condition linked to military service (Colbert 2017; Jones 2017). It was expanded to include the possibility of ‘civilians’ largely due to work by the women’s liberation, particularly in relation to research on ‘rape trauma syndrome’ (Colbert 2017: 9). Despite this ongoing research, and due to the fact that PTSD is often identified using diagnostic ‘clusters’ of symptoms, it is still difficult to access a diagnosis of PTSD or find recognition and treatment for the condition (*see* Colbert 2017).

To reflect on the broader context of these discussions, this section focuses on the concept of everyday violence developed by Tyner (2012), who approaches the definition of violence through a framework of critical geography, arguing that place- and space- making are conceptually connected to definitions of violence. Although Tyner, overall, positions safety in opposition to violence, his theories relate to arguments made by proponents of safe space practices working to connect broader understandings of violence to the critical and transformative potential of safe space practices. For example, The Roestone Collective, also critical geographers, argue that safety is subjective and relational (2014). They also draw from theories of spatial production, this time to demonstrate how places such as parks, the home, and the university can be both safe and unsafe. In the discussion below, theories from both Roestone and Tyner form the basis for understandings of everyday safety and violence. This following section will focus on these theories to further explicate the relationship between violence, safety, and everyday life, and to demonstrate how their critical approach to normalised conceptualizations of violence are intimately connected to how proponents of safe space practices demonstrate these practices’ necessity and effectiveness.

### 2.3.1 Violence, space, and the everyday

Understandings of violence in the everyday take into account cultural norms and ideological roots of violence and vulnerability, as well as broadening definitions of violence to include state violence, hate speech, and unconscious prejudice (Tyner 2012; Knox 2017; Butler 1997). For example, Judith Butler has explored at length the legal implications of considering hate speech an act of violence, specifically the extra-legal and/or violent capacity of the performative utterance and gesture (Butler 1997). More recently, as a further development to their theories of violence and the performative, they have examined the contradiction between the prefigurative and immediate capacities of nonviolence. Drawing on the broader theoretical context of state and extra-legal violence, by theorizing that both nonviolence and violence are potential acts, Butler suggests that nonviolence is dependent on a hopeful and emancipatory critical knowledge of interdependency, vulnerability, and the value of lives: an ongoing practice that reconstitutes the everyday (Butler 2020, *see also* Moylan 2015).

The development of possibilities for the reconstitution of the everyday are necessary as violence, Tyner argues, is (made) mundane (2012). By examining the domestic, institutional, and the public space such as homes, schools, and parks, Tyner draws understandings of violence away from the spectacular to look at the cultural logics which normalise certain forms of everyday violence, and which can both expand and inhibit our ability to conceptualize violence (Tyner 2012). This means that forms of violence are made somewhat invisible by historical, social, and cultural constructs of power and privilege, such as patriarchy, white supremacy, and heteronormativity, that form contemporary institutions such as the family, or spaces where authorized knowledge are produced and disseminated, like schools and universities (Tyner 2012, *see also* Foucault 1979; Massey 2005; Roestone 2014; Hanhardt 2013; Cooper 2017; Phipps 2021). In turn, this means that forms of trauma,

or the aftermath of violence, are rendered invalid, go unrecognized, or are disproportionately disputed in comparison to popular perceptions of violence as aggression, violence as event, or violence as physical, intentional attack (Knox ed 2017; Tyner 2012; Harless 2018; *for critiques* Schroeder 2017). Most importantly, Tyner connects understandings of everyday and often overlooked forms of violence to the reproductive capacities of institutions such as homes and schools, arguing that violence is both accepted and constitutive to certain environments, where it goes on to permeate other public spaces, such as parks and streets (2012). These latter examples of violence are usually harassment and discrimination, come in both verbal and physical forms, and are sometimes referred to as “microaggressions” or a ‘low grade threat,’ a background noise with physical and psychological effects on vulnerable communities (*see also* Knox ed. 2017; Kern 2020: 14).

Scholarship on violence using these broader definitions abound and enrich each other. For example, Tyner demonstrates how forms of violence are mitigated even by those experiencing it, drawing upon research with women experiencing drive-by harassment, who admit to feeling threatened or unsafe by the behaviour while at the same time undermining their experiences because it did not involve physical assault or injury (Tyner 2012). Comparatively, Kern’s focus (2020) draws from theorizations of urban, suburban, domestic, and public spatial production to make sense of her personal experiences of safety and unsafety. She points out that, while frustrating or unjust, these experiences were largely under-interrogated until her shifting relationship to safety, dependent on her whiteness, gender presentation, and motherhood status – from when she is not a mother, to when she is in a partnership, to when she is a single mother – provided clarity to these experiences (Kern 2020). These two brief examples demonstrate that forms of ‘low grade’ violence and discrimination, as well as normalized conceptualizations of violence as extreme, physically

injurious, or life-threatening, work dually to cloud understandings of everyday life and social behaviour, and particularly to limit possibilities for critique and change.

Therefore, Tyner's reconstitution of violent events, places, and people from popular and normalized perceptions to mundane cultural logics, reproduced by everyday institutions, is useful to arguments defending the use of safe space practices because he demonstrates the ubiquity of violence that is suggested by practices like trigger warnings (2012). Tyner's own arguments about safety, however, are quite limited. His closing reflections on the need for further critical research into violence are markedly critical of a form of safety that he locates in a marketized, stratified academic environment. Although he does not directly refer to safe space debates, his use of the term safety to indicate withdrawal from discussion and the limitation of academic freedom resonates strongly with the critical scholarship on safe space practices. To summarise, he argues that safety is endemic to the university and particularly to a refusal to produce challenging research, partly because (he argues) academic communities do not themselves experience much of the kinds of violence he discusses. Unfortunately, in generating this critique, he conceptualizes safety as a concept and practice wherein violence does not happen, and neither does anything even abstractly related to violence, such as the discussions of violence which can contribute to research and policy that can help vulnerable people.

As Tyner is developing definitions of violence, not safety, this does not undermine his theories, but his reflections on safety are disappointingly limited to academic sites and to positioning the concept of safety firmly against his own developments of theorizations of violence, as well as the possibilities for change. These limitations posit safety as an opposite to violence and as an *absence*, in contrast to, for example, Butler's nonviolence, which is an act as well as an alternative to violence (2020). In addition, the characterization of safety as absence (of, for example, discussion) contributes to criticisms, referred to above, of safe

space practices as ‘chilling’ or curbing freedom of speech, non-participation, and indicative of censorship (*see* Schroeder 2017; Ginsberg 2021). It is therefore useful to combine the understandings of violence as mundane and ubiquitous discussed above with theories that view safety as something active, or even as an act (*for example* Hanhardt 2013).

Despite these issues, Tyner’s approach is useful because the political and historical framework for sites like the home and the school is paramount to theorists writing about safety, violence, and space (Tyner 2012; Muñoz 2009). For example, Tyner draws on theories of the criminalization of certain demographics, particularly the young, the poor, the queer, and people of colour, to argue that institutions maintain a disciplinary ethos where ideal citizens are formed and undesirables are separated and excluded (2012). In comparison, Roestone’s (2014) theories of safety and space suggests the repurposing of space as a result of the criminalization and stigmatization of certain communities necessitates a relational approach to space and safety. In other words, understanding how violent places and people are politically and culturally constructed can also be reflective of latent needs and demands for safe community spaces.

In some cases, this means rethinking and reconstituting popular cultural portrayals of safe space. For example, like Tyner, the Roestone Collective exemplify the home as a site commonly assumed and idealized as a safe space (2014; Tyner 2012). Both theorists counter this assumption by arguing that for partners and children living with an abuser, closeted and out LGBT+ youth in homophobic and transphobic families, and for other vulnerable people (Tyner, for example, focuses on domestic abuse towards “mail-order brides,” or trafficked women), the normative, heteropatriarchal home is far from safe (Tyner 2012; Roestone 2014; *see* Colbert 2017; Moore et al. 2014). In other cases, this means drawing attention to forms of harassment and discrimination that are dismissed as mundane. For example, elaborating on his approach which draws away from spectacular and popular depictions of school violence,

which he exemplifies through the event of the school shooting, Tyner instead focuses on the social stratification and exclusion of children through academic achievement and attendance, and particularly on the mundane reinforcement of cis-hetero-patriarchal norms through bullying.

Tyner's theories are supported evocatively by Muñoz (2009), a queer utopian theorist explored in more depth in the following chapter, who draws on personal experiences of being "straightened up" as a child by his family and his peers. In one example, men in his family tease and berate him for how he walks, which they view as too feminine, whereas at school, a fellow queer, though discrete, student takes him aside to inform him that he carries his books like a girl, making him vulnerable to bullies. Muñoz's example diverges from Tyner in a key way, however, by demonstrating the complexities of these homophobic experiences. On the one hand, like Tyner's case studies, some of these interactions are overtly punitive and humiliating. In others, Muñoz suggests that queer students protected him in the potentially violent space of the school. From these latter examples, he draws a hopeful, if unmet, desire to reconnect with this covert community as a 'survivor' (Muñoz 2009: 69). This comparison demonstrates how the complexity of safety can be eclipsed by a focus on violence, where understandings of safety are viewed as detrimental to this focus. However, Roestone's theories on safety as relational and subjective illuminate the theories of mundane violence that Tyner develops and, furthermore, their work complements theories that focus on the intersecting complexities of safety, violence, space, and privilege.

### *2.3.2 Safety and Public Space*

Roestone's example of the public park effectively demonstrates these intersections and how theories of everyday violence contribute to understandings of safety. For example, the public park as an inclusive site of play and community also serves as an example of sites associated in popular imagination as places of dangerous and subversive activity. Integral to

these associations are not only cultural logics underpinning vulnerable and criminalized demographics, but also the correspondence between space, place, *and* temporality (2014; *see also* Massey 2005; Lefebvre 1991). During the daytime, for example, the park is a public place oriented around the needs and safety of families and children. After dark, however, the public park becomes a site associated with unsafety and criminal activity where, although women are foregrounded as the most vulnerable, young people become both the target and instigator of potential violence (Roestone 2014; Tyner 2012). Roestone, however, complicates this mirror of safety and unsafety by drawing on Gandy's 'queer ecology' to argue that this site can also function as a queer space, in which the example of the 'derelict cemetery-become-public-park' becomes an example of a public space which is 'a safer space for gay men cruising than enclosed, explicitly private spaces such as households' (Roestone 2014; 1349). In the example of the public park, Roestone points out that uses of the space reflect potentially conflicting desires for safe spaces shared by communities who are generally denied safety in public space and, while otherwise vulnerable communities become stigmatized as potentially violent or criminal actors, women's safety is overall prioritized.

Women's safety in public space is intensely debated in safe space politics and is a potent demonstration of these conflicts. On the one hand, violence against women is upheld as the endemic condition of both domestic and public spaces, and includes most definitions of violence (in fact, gendered violence has often been the impetus to redefine violence from stranger-based, always physical, and as isolated event) (*see* Colbert 2017; Houston Grey 2017; Cooper 2014; Roestone 2014; Tyner 2012; Hota 2017; Kern 2020). On the other, repurposing and policing women's spaces in the interests of their safety has been criticized as an extension of patriarchal policing of women's bodies, voices, and mobility (*see* Roestone 2014; Kern 2020). Furthermore, as Leslie Kern (2020) reflects on her own experiences as a woman in urban space, bourgeois, white, cis, and straight femininity is prioritized, and often

those interests of safety lead to increased policing and state violence of poor people and people of colour, including women (*see also* Hanhardt 2013; Phipps 2021). These discussions make visible how potentially radical demands for safety can neglect relational approaches and become counterproductive, either by prioritizing *certain* women's access to safe public space and resources (often by demonizing other women and communities), or by limiting women's rights to public space wholesale.

However, the concentration on women's safety elicits useful contributions to understandings of safety, space, and bodily harm even though, in some cases, scholarship on safety has been overlooked until safe space debates have brought these discussions to the fore. For example, Fiona Coyle's (2004) research into environmental illness reconstitutes themes of hypersensitivity, the safe space as empty space, and women's bodies as sites of increased vulnerability. She explains that chronic symptoms of environmental illness, or sensitivity to supposedly 'safe' levels of everyday chemicals, are more likely to affect women because of a higher likelihood that women are in contact with cosmetics and cleaning products. Not only does she argue that the production of 'safe space' is more achievable in domestic than public space, where it is nearly impossible to avoid allergens and toxins, but that this achievement is itself contingent on the woman's financial status – for example, her ability to live alone, work from home, and afford products like organic foods and air purifiers. Coyle associates safe space in this specific context with the absence of, for example, chemicals, cigarette smoke, and allergens, but goes further to suggest that safety itself is 'concerned with stability, predictability, a sense of control over space and bodies, and the establishment of supportive communications networks' (Coyle 2004: 72).

Coyle's specificity about the properties and capacities of safety is useful and relevant to understandings of safe space in two ways – firstly, she characterizes safety as a 'response' *and* a 'negotiation,' alleviating associations between safe space and empty space by

providing a communicative and community framework to understand the production of safe space (2004: 72). Secondly, she extends this specificity further by complicating the relationship between space and the body. She argues that the boundaries of the body are permeable and vulnerable, and that safe space is an extension of that boundary to permit the negotiation of risks without the immediate promise of harm. The control and design that some women with environmental illnesses are able to access in Coyle's research suggests a small-scale 'counterspace' to scholarship on trespassing and navigating cities, where scholars are more likely to focus on unsafety and policing of communities in so-called public space (2004; *see also* Kern 2020; Hanhardt 2013).

### *2.3.3 Conclusion: Turning the focus to community needs*

Although bringing safety more clearly into focus can deflect the discussion of communities' safety away from violence altogether, as Coyle's research (2004) demonstrates, the socio-economic impact of *who* feels safe remains remarkably intact. Themes of conflicting community desires for safety in public space as well as the impact of existing socio-economic stratifications coalesce in Hanhardt's (2013) case studies of two very different political coalitions in San Francisco and New York City in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In Hanhardt's critique, neoliberalism and neoconservatism, and grassroots anti-racist, feminist, and queer liberatory activism are the main actors in a historical narrative of urban space and public safety. From this broader perspective, Hanhardt is able to portray the external pressures of political and geographical development contributing to the formation, or disintegration, of the community and its "safety" (Hanhardt 2013).

Hanhardt analyzes the practices of anti-brutality, homophile, and anti-racist organizations in the Castro and Tenderloin in San Francisco, and the Pier and Greenwich Village in New York City. By exploring the tensions between class, race, gender and sexuality expression in these spaces and organizations, she develops a history of the cross-community

practices of maintaining queer populations in specific urban spaces, both private and public. This narrative is contextualised alongside the emerging neoliberal ideology in the US political landscape and the popularization of criminological theory in political practice (*see also* Featherstone 2017; Cooper 2017). Hanhardt explains how these pressures, which strongly affected the cohesion of multiple communities and their attempts to create and maintain safe spaces, have contributed not only to understandings of gentrification in these sites, but also elucidate ongoing tensions and debates within the contemporary LGBT political platform (*see also* Muñoz 2009).

Two particular aspects of Hanhardt's broad study are fruitful lenses through which to view the politicisation of safety and space. The first is her analysis of community feeling and belonging in a coalitional context: how interests aligned and diverged based on individual, community, and cross-community activism and political gains. The second is the specific tools and strategies developed and practiced by these community activists, which I will explore in the next section to demonstrate the broad and ongoing ways that safe space demands can manifest as political demands and actions.

#### 2.4 Community and safety

Hanhardt (2013) explores how, in developing and maintaining safe spaces, LGBT activists in San Francisco and New York City sought to engage multiple communities to challenge 'the coalition of interests' emerging in political institutions (2013: 119). These activist groups, like DARE (Dykes Against Racism Everywhere), LAPV, (Lesbians Against Police Violence) and the Coalition Against Racism, Anti-Semitism, Sexism, and Heterosexism, 'organized systematic attacks on Reagan's policies as they crafted critiques of a dominant gay political agenda that they felt presented too limited a vision' (119). Alongside the tools of organization and resistance, internal social relations continued to impact the structuring of

LGBT communities in urban space ‘that was economically and racially stratified’ and where ‘only some were privileged in gay space, and those who were limited by other social and economic restrictions were not’ (222).

For example, San Francisco is one of Hanhardt’s case study cities, and she focuses on its Central City (containing the Tenderloin) and neighbouring Castro. From the late-60s through the period her study covers, the Tenderloin area is characterised as having a ‘broad matrix of marginality’ (Hanhardt 2013: 97) as a largely LGBT population within Central City, whose population on the whole was predominantly working-class people of colour and new immigrants. Central City and the Tenderloin within it were widely characterized as hotspots of criminal activity and low economic growth (42-43), and the Castro ‘was modeled in many ways in opposition to the deviances associated with the Tenderloin’ (97). In comparison, the Tenderloin was more at risk of ongoing threats of ‘police violence and entrapment’ than the Castro, which developed as a visible gay community space and became more vulnerable to homophobic violence from ‘people other than the police’ (81-82).

As Handhardt explains, some members of the LGBT communities in her case studies regarded pragmatic political gains, such as those specifically protecting LGBT (mainly LGB) communities or repealing homophobic laws, as overall successes. Other LGBT groups criticized a stratified political movement and the harmful impact of limited political gains on the more vulnerable members of a community. These latter groups preferred broader, cross-community efforts to develop safer spaces and safer visibility for people structurally marginalized through class, race, gender, and sexuality. These internal divisions meant that cross-community focused movements felt alienated from the dominant, yet limited, political platform of the more economically and socially secure members of the community (2013).

Hanhardt looks to the polarized reaction within the LGBT community to the results of the 1978 California statewide ballot to illustrate how tensions between the need for protections

for specific communities and the necessity to maintain broader, cross-community resistance efforts became open conflicts that created internal divisions in the community. In these elections, Proposition 6, a measure that would ‘ban lesbians and gay men, and their supporters, from teaching in the public schools’ was defeated. In the same election Proposition 7, which ‘cemented the reinstatement of California’s death penalty,’ passed (2013: 118). The ‘formal’ LGBT platform would later orient their efforts around anti-violence legislation such as sensitivity training and hate crime laws, and viewed the election as an overall success. However, this came into conflict with cross-community activist work which was developed in the more diversified and disenfranchised populations seen, for example, in the Tenderloin. By the end of that decade, the practices of maintaining LGBT safe space, claimed through cross-community grassroots activism, ‘would increasingly call for urban policies such as street cleanups and heightened policing’ (83). In other words, members of the community who felt secure that their interests had been recognized in the defeat of Proposition 6 later called for increased policing of their spaces, identifying with the sentiments of Proposition 7. At the same time, others created new coalitional groups that fought for wider, cross-community safe space interests without the approval of or support for a ‘regime of law and order’ (119).

In Hanhardt’s study, the intersectional nature of the communities in these spaces was exploited to divide the community into interest groups and to further emerging neoliberal policies which would exacerbate existing problems, particularly for the most vulnerable members of the community. Largely, unequal power relations within these communities led to unequal political gains, especially where cross-community solidarity work was neglected. Hanhardt looks to specific events, like the 1978 vote, to illustrate the social and spatial impact of institutional policy on community and cross-community interests and alliances. However, most of her findings come from stepping back and contextualising these events as ongoing histories of urban space and community politics, an approach which lends itself well to

understanding safe space politics. As I have explained, a fault of many safe space debates is a focus on the efficacy of popular, contemporary terminology and practices in small-scale environments, like trigger warnings in the syllabus of a US or UK university classroom. Therefore, in the next section, I discuss a variety of sites that discuss, in multiple ways, the production of safety and space (although they may not explicitly invoke the term “safe space” at all), oriented to specific community needs and informed by the context of conflicting tensions suggested by Hanhardt (2013), Kern (2020), Roestone (2014), and others above.

#### *2.4.1 Community needs and the uses of safety*

As Hanhardt (2013) explains, the work towards safe spaces builds on histories of radical organizing that contributed valuable tools of ongoing resistance which gained visibility and increased tolerance. For example, safe streets patrols, which were sometimes armed, sometimes loud, and often temporary, are characterised by Hanhardt as practices of ‘militant publicity’ as the aims of ‘safety merged with the goal of visibility’ (Hanhardt 2013: 82). In addition, many of the LGBT community’s safe space goals, tools, and representatives at the beginning of the 1970s emerged from earlier homophile movements (38) and participated and learned from anti-racist and human rights activists in the civil rights movement. Not only were the safe space practices of LGBT groups around this time modelled on these earlier groups and their relationships with visibility (for example, one of the LGBT safe-streets patrols was called the Lavender Panthers), but these practices and tools are also still used today, and are recognizably oriented around a demand for safety. For example, they can be seen in Reclaim/Take Back the Night patrols, Critical Mass, and the similar feminist-focused Clitoral Mass movement (*see* Roestone 2014). However, as a result of the push for legislating safety, which has partly led to the increased policing of spaces (*see* Hanhardt 2013, Tyner 2012, Cooper 2017, Featherstone 2017), these tools have also been turned back on the communities that helped develop them. Hanhardt describes how, in 2002, ‘safe streets patrols and community watch efforts’ were

promoted by Greenwich Village residents to ward specifically against the ‘LGBT youth and adult transgender women of colour’ who were threats to, ironically, the Stonewall Historic District (2013: 2; *see also* Phipps 2021 *for critiques of transphobic feminism*).

Although LGBT+ neighbourhoods, assisted by safe streets patrols and community organizing, characterize the shared interests of safety and visibility by drawing attention to the specific needs of vulnerable and harassed communities, visibility itself is often fraught with risks. In contrast to the militancy of many of the groups in Hanhardt’s research, other scholarship draws away from the hyper-public site of the street to illuminate other ways in which everyday sites negotiate with these risks. An example of a such a space is a young women’s allotment, a cross-community site in Manchester, UK oriented around the needs of queer young people, particularly women and girls (Moore et al. 2014). While the safe streets patrols intended to be loud and visible, this is not a realistic expectation of the young people working in the allotment, as ‘not all the group members are “out”, either at home, or at the allotment’ (Moore et al. 2014: 333). Not all of the members of the allotment can march, and the researchers employ the word ‘risky’ to characterise the necessity to avoid ‘be[ing] seen at Pride’ (333).

The allotment is conceptualized as a site that works, firstly, as an extension of multiple radical histories connecting communities with land and, secondly, to meet the needs of multiple, overlapping communities (2014). These conceptualizations are connected to each other to elucidate how the allotment accommodates and diverges from existing understandings of public spaces associated with either queer communities, young people, and women (*see* Muñoz 2009; Cooper 2014; Roestone 2014). For example, connecting the site to queer communities, Moore et al. suggest the allotment-garden is a contribution to ‘queer culture building,’ and draw from Berlant’s and Warner’s work on ““public sex”” (2014: 331). This relationship between the queer and the public relates to ‘the publicness of queer venues such

as bars, saunas and clubs' (331) as it also invokes Roestone's (2014) use of Gandy's "'queer ecology'" to navigate and problematize understandings of public space. The allotment-garden is both an extension and complication of these representations of queer community and culture, which can overlook the needs of younger people by prioritizing spaces to which young people would have limited, if any, access, as well as (potentially problematically) orienting much of queer culture and communities to sexual activity and public spaces. Yet, as Moore et al.'s study importantly responds to a lack of research that does not prioritize sexual behaviour, so too does research into this behaviour work to challenge the stigmatization of queer sexuality. Such research offers and enriches understandings of queer communities, as well often opening up possibilities for clarity, critique, and change in terms of how communities resist and negotiate heteronormative public spaces and society.

For example, the simultaneous hyper-sexualisation and stigmatization of sexual activity for both queer communities and women is addressed in Davina Cooper's case study of a trans-inclusive women's bathhouse in Toronto as a potential 'everyday utopia' (Cooper 2014), as well as efforts to implement and sustain 'safe spaces' for black gay and bisexual men in New York City (Garcia et al. 2015). 'Everyday utopia' is a concept coined by Cooper through her exploration of specific sites and familiar practices (such as trade, property, debate, and belonging) done in unfamiliar, potentially utopian ways, and this will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter. The latter study is focused on men's relationships with institutional and community-based facilities for HIV prevention and control, and the contribution 'safe spaces' can make to overlapping medical and social support initiatives. This community experiences racist and homophobic violence in their communities that is impacted by institutions such as the home, the church, and the police, are increasingly targeted by gentrification processes in their city, and find both "risky" and "safe" sexual activity to be stigmatized by both discriminatory and harmful gaps in resources and knowledge (Garcia et al.

2015). Not only does this community distrust institutions like church and home as sources of social support because of their discriminatory experiences, but they also find specific community spaces are constantly under threat of closure or are unreliable resources due to lack of funding.

This case study draws attention to the additional and specific needs of queer communities which are often overlooked; Garcia et al. make clear that housing is substantially lacking for LGBT communities, a need particularly affecting younger people and poor people (*see also* Moore et al. 2014). They also suggest that cross-community needs are cross-cultural; despite discriminatory attitudes of religious organizations, many of these men need a place to pray, which can be found at specific community facilities which recognize the multiple needs required of community spaces. Finally, Garcia et al. (2015) are revisiting an important contribution to politicized needs for safety – safe sex activism and sexual education – which continues to be resisted by anti-LGBT and conservative institutions and communities (*see also* Hanhardt 2013). This is demonstrated in their case study through the possession of condoms, as interviewees reported that being found with condoms by police, or even knowing that somebody keeps condoms in their house is heavily stigmatized by members of the community or could be grounds for arrest due to the violent policing of sex workers (Garcia et al. 2015; *see also* Phipps 2021).

Garcia et al. (2015) use the term ‘safe space’ to refer to varied and specific resources that are rooted in, but not always directly related to, community-based HIV prevention and control, which emerges from intersecting, overlapping, and unmet needs they refer to as ‘socio-spatial context’ (Garcia et al. 2015: 6). In contrast to tools, practices, or even physical sites, their use of ‘safe space’ refers to categories of unmet needs – ‘leisure,’ ‘skill-building,’ and ‘peer-based social support’ (6). Therefore, their analysis of community-based interventions and support reconfigures the focus *away* from sexual activity, with its propensity to allocate

individual responsibility (heavily laden with homophobic and anti-sex discrimination), and towards a more complex, lived understanding of how these men are *made* vulnerable without these safe space resources (that, notably, other members of their geographical community do have access to dependent on their sexuality, financial and housing status, etc.).

This study's approach can be compared to more complex understandings of trigger warnings as a resource which enables the production of a social environment (Taylor 2017), or which make visible the ubiquity of mundane violence (*see* Tyner 2012), rather than a singular tool with contested efficacy whose use must be consistently advocated for by individuals on a case-by-case basis (*see* MacFarland 2017). In addition, this approach is also reflected outside of sites oriented to specific communities, namely, doctors and student support offices, where Katz et al's study into the use of safe space signage which simultaneously acknowledges the role of institutions in the reproduction of discriminatory violence, as well as moving the onus from individual and vulnerable communities' advocacy towards institutional transformation (albeit, through small steps) (*see* Katz et al. 2016).

In the scholarship discussed in this section, demands and desires for safety are therefore not tied to particular practices, although in many cases the reconstitution, reclamation, or simply marking of space is connected to an underlying need for community safety. However, the affixing of progressive attributes or achievements, such as community safety, to particular practices like patrols, occupations, and exclusive neighbourhoods are limiting and often backfire – particularly for those whose needs for safety are multiple, flexible, and sometimes conflicting (*see* Hanhardt 2013; Roestone 2014; Garcia et al. 2015; Kern 2020). In comparison, the allotment-garden is part of a broader set of facilities set up to specifically address the needs of LGBT youth denied access to their city, community spaces, and homes (Moore et al. 2014). Although in some ways a realization of the approach of community sites in Garcia et al.'s study, the allotment-garden is *not* characterized as a safe space. Instead, to characterize the

conflicting needs of the community that the site addresses, Moore et al. use the Haraway-esque neologism ‘privatepublic’ (Moore et al. 2014), which is also used to invoke the fluctuating boundaries of the site.

One of the ways that this flux is demonstrated is through the shifting forms of engagement with the space, largely associated with the young women’s group (Moore et al. 2014). For example, Moore et al. link the privatepublicness of the garden and the (primarily) young women who maintain it to ‘histories of lesbian land, of lesbian separatist communities, of efforts to make space for women and a relationship with land’ (336). However, there are no definitive limits to who the space is for, as other LGBT youth groups also occasionally join the project, and the allotment may also organically become a ‘transgenerational’ effort (339) while it prioritizes young people’s needs for spaces of their own (332). This prioritization remains critical to the site and its connections to queer community histories, in addition to histories of urban space and counter-narratives of land use. Moore et al. suggest that allotments are ‘the “illegitimate offspring” of the enclosures,’ and by eschewing the often financialised ‘regeneration’ of urban space in favour of reclamation (332), they position the YWG allotment in contention with the city’s inaccessibility to younger people, compounded moreover through the commercialisation of urban space, the criminalization of younger people, and the alienation of LGBT youth from public and domestic spaces. Moore et al. do not use the term “safe space” to discuss the allotment-garden, as they are situating the site within specific histories of allotment gardening and the concept of the ‘privatepublic’ (Moore et al. 2014). They do, however, connect the site to Cooper’s ‘everyday utopia,’ whose case studies inform their conceptualizations of both property and culture building in queer and youth communities (*see* Cooper 2014). Of her case studies, these two sites, the Summerhill School in Suffolk, UK, and the Toronto Women’s and Trans Bathhouse (TWTB) explicitly discuss safety.

As expansions on queer culture building, both the allotment garden and the TWTB are examples of spaces built in response to unmet needs found within existing community cultures. The allotment garden is focused on LGBT youth, particularly queer young women, whereas the Toronto Bathhouse is a space forged through unmet needs for sites in which women's sexuality can be explored in a destigmatized, safe environment. As opposed to being a counter-space or counterpublic, which would typically describe a community culture emerging in opposition to an often homogenised and normalized popular culture and public, both of these spaces are extensions of existing counter-publics and countercultural sites (*see* Warner 2002). Specifically, they draw attention to overlapping forms of vulnerability in their communities; in the case of the TWTB, this causes tensions both within and outwith the bathhouse and its participants (Cooper 2014).

These tensions are evident in the bathhouse's work to be inclusive. This work centred around preventing transphobic and racist practices, and working on the accessibility of the space for disabled participants. In particular, evidence of racist practices in the bathhouse created strong tensions as white participants felt this 'challeng[ed] their identities as feminists' (Cooper 2014: 110). The organizers responded by developing strict rules about volunteers' and participants' behaviour, creating specific spaces for women and trans people of colour, and working on reflecting the bathhouse's ethos by representing diversity in publicity material. However, some of the tensions arising in the space are linked to external forms of disruption. The lack of men's bathhouses willing to accommodate women's nights at the beginning of the organization left the TWTB limited to a multi storey house with limited accessibility. The inclusion of trans men in the bathhouse supports the TWTB's diverse ethos, but indicates that there are issues with transphobia and unsafety in men's bathhouses and spaces for queer, gay, and bisexual men in general.

Focusing on ‘desiring communities’ to foreground the utopian potential of her case studies, Cooper describes the bathhouse site as ‘multilingual’ in its desire to ‘forge an inclusive and diverse community event,’ and to ‘communicate erotically with (often unknown) others’ (Cooper 2014: 128). While the internal and external pressures that threaten and help to form the site are strongly comparable to research on safe spaces, what is more specifically related to safety are practices concerning hygiene, intimacy, and anonymity. Although, above, I have already discussed scholarship relating to safety, sexuality, and the risks of visibility (*see* Moore et al 2014; Garcia et al 2015; Hanhardt 2013), Cooper’s site hints at an extremely mundane manifestation of safety which is rarely mentioned by safe space scholarship and debates: health and safety. In the following section, I will briefly overview why these kinds of safety practices are important to consider when developing understandings of everyday and community practices of safety, before concluding with an overview of scholarship on safety’s prefigurative political capacities.

#### 2.4.2. *Health and Safety*

Workplace safety contributes an overlooked dimension to safe space debates, and conversations about safety in general; it is often hinted at but rarely discussed, although it fits neatly into understandings of safety here. Safe space signage, like stickers and signs that declare a space to be LGBT+ inclusive, can be viewed as an extension of health and safety signage – ways of marking and bordering spaces designed to assure, remind, and advise on the uses of a space in the interests of the users’ wellbeing (*see* Katz 2016). Proponents of safe space practices who build on medicalised connections between safe spaces and mental illness explore the notion of ‘accessibility’ and its applications to safe space as institutional policy, using existing knowledges of health and illness to advocate for students’ needs (*see* Byron 2017; Knox ed. 2017). In comparison, critics frequently characterize safe space practices as top-down, bureaucratic impositions of policy, a common way of disparaging forms of health,

hygiene, safety, and accessibility practices (and, in fact, the notion of utopia in Boutellier 2004). Although occupational health and safety policy incorporates an incredibly broad range of practices, it includes both the prevention of harm in the workplace as well as access to breaks and holidays, with specific implications and applications for temporary, migrant, and disabled workers. In this way, as a manifestation of ongoing workers' rights activism, it also connects to grassroots social and community histories explored in relation to LGBT+ and coalitional activism discussed above (*see* Hanhardt 2013; Roestone 2014). A history of workers' rights activism is far too expansive to be covered in this literature review. However, I am going to overview an example of how understandings of health and safety connect cogently to the *rhetoric* of safe space debates, in order to demonstrate the relationship between safe space debates, understandings of safety, and the topic of workplace health and safety.

This example is found in Giraud's (2019) discussion of McDonald's largely successful legal strategy in the McLibel case. Suing the makers of a pamphlet containing critical information about worker's exploitation, environmental destruction, and animal cruelty in McDonald's practices, McDonald's specifically mobilized a notion of freedom – that of customers, workers, and individuals – to counter and *shut down* these and further possibility of criticism. Particularly significant in this rhetoric was that McDonald's was, firstly, building on dominant cultural logics of skilled and service labour, food consumption, and consumer-worker relationships that, secondly, they had helped to form. Specifically, Giraud draws attention to the rhetoric of 'industry standards' and 'liberal individual choice' used by McDonalds to defend their food, worker, and environmental practices, while simultaneously 'eliding their role in setting these standards' (Giraud 2019: 41). More broadly, Giraud discusses the reliance on 'socio-technical norms' to articulate the normalized cultural logics of customer and worker interactions, which shored up the company's practices against

the more complex critique used by the defence who posed a radical, interrelated set of contentions suitably challenging the nature of a multinational entity (2019: 32). This rhetoric connects and subverts previous understandings of safety covered here by foregrounding ways that elite corporate interests utilize mundane practices of safety to their own ends. Workers' safety is in fact so enmeshed to the culture of exploitation in the examples that Giraud explores that it resurfaces in efforts to reinforce corporations' security against possible future forms of this prefigurative activism (2019: 39). In subsequent examples of 'greenwashing,' Giraud draws attention to the use of health, hygiene, and safety symbolism – cows in hard hats and hi-vis vests – used to rearticulate animals as part of the labour force, consequently addressing the kinds of complex critique found in the McLibel case.

Although there is little mention of the political histories underpinning contemporary practices of health and safety and its relationship to some of the other politicized forms of safety discussed in this chapter, workers' safety and the safety of vulnerable and minority communities can be compared due to their shared roots in grassroots activism; additionally, scholarship on women's safety bolsters understandings that cultural logics of vulnerability are rooted in institutional and socio-economic inequalities (*see* Coyle 2004; Hanhardt 2013; Roestone 2014). There is room for fruitful and potentially politically generative discussion here; Tyner (2012), for example, eschews engagement with the safety of sex workers as denied rights to worker's health, hygiene, and safety, preferring to frame his case study in the limiting context of violence against women (2012; *see* Phipps 2021 *for critique*).

Comparatively, Cooper (2014), for example, finds prefigurative merit in the feminist care ethics developed and practiced by voluntary sex workers in the Toronto Bathhouse, where these workers negotiate with and challenge the risks inherent to this site. However, generally, worker's safety is overlooked despite it providing, even simply in quantitative measures, an accessibly quotidian example which resonates with debates about safety discussed above. The

example of the McLibel case above may not explicitly discuss workers safety, or safety in general, but it does suggest that safety is an embedded and unrealized contribution to prefigurative critiques of the present (Giraud 2019). For example, it demonstrates that demands for safety antagonize existing cultural logics, and shows how these demands must negotiate with these logics in complex, multifaceted ways, and how ultimately the demands, logics, and practices of safety can be purposed to harm communities who developed and formed them (Giraud 2019; *see* Hanhardt 2013).

## 2.5 Safety and prefigurative politics

To summarise and conclude this chapter, I am going to provide an overview of scholarship on the prefigurative and transformative understandings of safety in the context of safe space practices. Engaging with some of this work touches upon contemporary theorizations of utopia, which I develop in the next chapter, and foregrounds the approach to safety practices in the thesis.

A sense that safe spaces, safety, or safe(r) spaces might be fruitfully paired with utopian politics and critique has been touched upon by David Bell (2017), Marie Thompson (2017), Sara Ahmed (2004), and Jennifer Wallin-Ruschman and Mazna Patka (2016). In these discussions, the concept of the ‘safe space’ is renamed to distance it from the popular debates that have come to dominate understandings of safe space practices. The act of renaming safe space as safe(r) space or critical-collective space is arguably counter-productive, because it may abstract these kinds of sites from ongoing discussion of safe space practices, but in practice it often serves to allow these theorists to emphasise a specific potential of safe space. For example, Thompson clarifies that the (r) is intended to show that ‘there is not a point where one can sit back and declare a space unquestionably safe’ (Thompson 2017: NP).

Wallin-Ruschman and Patka re-name safe spaces as ‘critical-collective spaces,’ acknowledging that the term safe space ‘promises a false sense of security’ (Wallin Ruschman

and Patka 2016: 326). However, their primary argument is that safe spaces are a form of ‘prefigurative politics,’ where participants ‘engage in consciousness raising, community building, and political mobilization’ (318). Unfortunately, this argument is undermined by the rejection of the term ‘safe spaces.’ Renaming safe spaces as ‘critical-collective spaces’ may assist in articulating the prefigurative and political potential of these spaces, but distances this potential from communities developing and using safe space practices under the more common and recognizable term.

Bell and Thompson argue that ‘safe(r) spaces,’ in which a community is separated from, and also critiques, external threats can be necessary for the community and the critique ‘to survive - or even thrive’ (Bell 2017: 122). Bell’s example of safe(r) space is particularly concerned with separatism. Drawing on Sara Ahmed, he employs the example of using a safe(r) space to discuss racism, where white people are excluded from that space to avoid the discussion revolving around white people’s experiences and feelings about racism, especially their defensive response to a discussion about racism. In this example, the safe(r) space is necessary to avoid a space that simply recreates the prioritization of white people (122). Thompson’s argument assumes that the safe(r) space has looser boundaries but a stricter inner structure, where internal accountability and challenge is key to discussion. Thompson argues that, by bringing ‘particular tensions and conflicts’ and ‘unarticulated power dynamics and hierarchies’ to the forefront of how a space can be created and maintained, safe(r) spaces challenge participants to rethink their everyday encounters and experiences (Thompson 2017: NP).

To discuss safe space, Bell negotiates with the potential of borders for utopian politics, drawing from the example of Indigenous communities ‘seek[ing] separation’ from ‘settler colonialism and capitalism’ (Bell 2017: 122). For Bell, the place-making of utopianism is critically overlooked, especially in post- and anti-utopian discourse. He argues that it is the

making and remaking of place which explores and energises utopian discourse (7), an argument which is similar to Ernst Bloch's exploration of the interaction of cultural products which creates new expressions of utopian longing. By pointing out that the border is vital to place making, 'facilitat[ing] such disconnection and exclusion through which place is produced' (121), Bell argues that the border can be useful when used 'strategically' (122).

The theoretical engagement with safe space here is useful because these contemporary understandings of the limits and potential of safe space practices will be fruitfully paired with Bloch's discussions of hope and utopian expression in this project. As I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, Bloch highlights the necessity to bring in everyday expressions of desire when articulating a utopian consciousness, and he characterises hope as a force that negates and negotiates with surrounding dangers. In comparison, Bell, Thompson, and Wallin-Ruschman and Patka characterise these spaces that are informed by community safety needs as critical and perpetually unfinished, and situate the utopian politics of safe spaces in everyday encounters. Bell emphasises that the border or boundary that makes a safe space should not fix or stifle the process of place production, but it should advocate for the protection of vulnerable communities and cultures, and allow possibilities to counteract, diminish, or eradicate threats.

The work of these theorists is useful to foreground the exploration of practices of safety in sites pursuing and developing social change, which in the thesis is informed by public perceptions and popular debates about safe space practices as well as broader debates about security, safety, and fear. Beginning with safe space practices, the concept of safety appears to be mobilized in multiple ways to assist classroom discussion in US and UK university sites, and to tackle forms of (mostly verbal) discrimination and harassment against vulnerable communities. This concept and use of safety has been subject to criticism for its effects on sites of community discussion and for its disturbance of hierarchical modes of knowledge production. These critics build on their understandings and experiences of a restrictive research

and teaching environment to suggest that a student-consumer figure is the unwitting harbinger of censorship to the university through their desire to protect themselves from potential forms of discrimination and trauma. Challenging these critics, proponents of safe space practices draw attention to the capacities of institutions to reproduce violent, harmful, and discriminatory ideologies, and argue that safe space practices increase accessibility and, in fact, *foster* discussion in increasingly accessible and diverse sites of authorized knowledge production.

While these for and against arguments are fairly simple, they are also circular and ongoing, as it is difficult to resolve the subjectivity of experiences of violence and trauma to ascertain the effectiveness of safe space practices. Due to this issue, debates about safe space practices become increasingly abstracted from the practices and the pursuit of safety and more often about the nature of freedom – of individuals and of expression – and of conflicting definitions of violence. Therefore, it is necessary to understand what informs these conceptualizations of safe space practices and the critiques and defences of their use by drawing the focus away from universities to discuss demands for safety in broader contexts and longer histories.

However, although this approach leads to multiple and complex examples of the ways that safety has been demanded, by who, and why, it does not really help to define safety itself. Although this expansive framing explores the development of these connections between safety, freedom, and violence, they contribute little to the definition of safety, instead helping to broaden the category of safety as an ongoing demand of vulnerable communities. Complicating even this common thread, safety is also weaponized against these same communities who often manifested this demand into practice, to claim spaces where these practices can be enacted and fostered. In these cases, safety is again a powerful demand, but one wielded by privileged groups, multinational entities, and violent institutions, as is demonstrated not only by Hanhardt's case studies of LGBT community patrols' evolution into

police patrols of LGBT communities in gentrified neighbourhoods, but also in many ways by the work of Kern (2020), Roestone (2014), and Coyle (2004) on whose safety is prioritized, and on what conditions. As Bell, Thompson, and Taylor, amongst others argue, however, this is indicative of safety's transformative potential to community sites and everyday knowledges.

My contribution to understandings of safety is rooted in the impetus to focus committedly on safety itself, as in this overview I have identified that many discussions of safety are displaced by other concepts, such as violence, risk, security, and freedom. In the next chapter, I develop the theoretical framework that further situates understandings of safety by rooting these practices in a contextualised framing of these broader contexts and longer histories. I focus specifically on theorizations of neoliberalism, utopia, and space, as these inform the political and theoretical context for my discussion of safety in the case studies that form the central chapters of my thesis. While this review of the scholarship has broadened the purview of safe space to engage with the more expansive concept of safety, I am resisting an attempt to redefine or rename the term 'safe space,' as others have experimented with above. This is in order to discuss the utopian possibilities of safety in particular spaces, and to ground this discussion in the term currently under debate; these possibilities will be explored through my case studies of lived and multiple practices of safety found in the zine community and a community bakery/café.

# Theoretical Framework

## 3.1 Introduction

The first section of the literature review, the chapter above, focused on understandings of safety. By beginning with scholarship covering ongoing debates about safe space practices in the university, the previous chapter reviewed how safety was understood and used in these debates. In doing so, I argued that understandings of safety are often displaced in favour of discussions of violence and individual freedoms, particularly freedom of speech. Although critical conceptualizations of everyday violence helped to develop understandings of the supporting arguments for safe space practices, this displacement meant that safety was under-theorized. Therefore, to explore safety in more depth, I then moved on to broader understandings of the concept and practice, exploring the political implications and applications of safety in public space, the workplace, and as a radical demand of vulnerable communities.

To remedy overcomplicated and under-defined conceptualisations of safety, I seek to discuss safety *in relation to*, rather than *in opposition to*, broader socio-political contexts. Underpinning this thesis are engagements with prefigurative, ecosocialist, and anti-capitalist theory and politics, which collectively I relate to the use of utopian theory (*see* Bloch 1986, 1988; Muñoz 2009; Bell 2017; Featherstone 2017; Cooper 2014). In particular, my use of utopian theory predominantly draws on two strands of thought: Blochian utopian theory (1986, 1988; *also* Muñoz 2009; Bell 2017) and Davina Cooper's theory of 'everyday utopia' (2014). Furthermore, I situate my discussion and use of utopian and prefigurative politics and thought in relation to the concepts of neoliberal, and to an extent, neoconservative, politics and theory as contemporary iterations of capitalism, which to some extent my case studies work in contestation with (Harvey 2005; Featherstone 2017).

Therefore, this second section of the overview of the literature discusses the dominant concepts and terminology of the project's theoretical framework. This overview works in conversation with the previous chapter's overview of relevant existing scholarship on safety and safe space practices. However, this chapter focuses on how the broader themes of security, safety, freedom, and violence, theorizations of space and place production, and the lens of utopian theory contribute to the critical discussion of safety in the case studies.

### 3.2 Theories of Neoliberalism

In this first section of the framework, I draw from a wide range of multidisciplinary sources to position understandings of 'safety' in a contemporary social and political context, focusing firstly on critical theories of neoliberalism. Throughout this thesis, I am exploring the utopian potential of safety, through the concept of safe space practices, in relation to ongoing debates about security, freedom, and fear. As I will discuss below, the potential for the state, or a form of institutionalized power, to limit freedom(s) is the most pressing concern highlighted in discussions of both security *and* safety, leading to clear comparisons between these discussions in a broader context, yet the position of safe space practices in these discussions is not quite as clear cut. In the previous chapter, I was able to articulate how debates about safe space practices in universities related to broader community tensions that developed as a result of the marketisation of the university environment. However, broadening the scope of the thesis to look at practices and demands for safety in wider contexts, including in my case studies, requires a more in-depth overview of neoliberal theory, politics, and practices to develop understandings of how normalised understandings of security, safety, and freedom inform the discussion of hopeful and community safety practices in the thesis.

Throughout, I will be drawing from various sources to understand neoliberalism in its political, economic, and social impact. For example, David Harvey maintains that

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that

proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. (Harvey 2005: 2)

Harvey is largely concerned (in *Brief History*) with examining how neoliberalism essentially upholds elite class interests, employing neoconservative strategies in certain cases. He characterizes militaristic and securitization elements as neoconservative in their overall aim to preserve and maintain the state and elite class interests through the construction and mobilization of moral and social norms. This is distinguished from neoliberalism, which purports to advance all human endeavour through a competitive environment developed from processes of individualisation and financialization.

To summarise, Harvey argues that the competitive environment of neoliberal freedom engenders conflict between individual freedoms and market process, and so neoconservative elements are necessary to maintain cohesion and order in the ‘chaos of individual interests’ (Harvey 2005: 82). One of these elements is a strong and coherent national identity, in which the culture and values of the elite classes and those in power are mobilized to uphold their interests and status, and also to justify the surveillance, policing, and control of individuals. The form of nationalism in the neoliberal state, taking in elements of neoconservative militarism, demonstrates competing and contradictory manifestations of neoliberal individuality. As a corporation is treated as an individual in a legal framework, so too is the neoliberal state ‘forced to operate as a competitive agent in the world market’ (84) and develops a form of the materialisation of social norms through the construction and normalisation of a national identity.

This summary introduces key themes of neoliberal ideology – the promotion of individual freedom, the curtailment of social and public relations and services, the pragmatic use of neoconservative strategies – which I have already touched upon while overviewing

discussions of the ‘corporate university’ theory (*see* Brown 2011) and which I will draw on in the rest of this overview. However, what these themes would benefit from is further understanding into the material effects of neoliberal ideology on particular communities – how the punitive methodology of the neoliberal and neoconservative coalition disproportionately affects some communities more than others. For example, Melinda Cooper (2017) is more specific in her analysis of how patriarchy and white supremacy contributed to the embodied particularities of a protected ‘elite’ in the Global North. In addition, although she focuses primarily on U.S. welfare and social policy, her arguments resonate with the political tensions explored in this thesis more broadly. By specifically addressing the cultural logics informing the production of ‘threats,’ and how these threats are embodied by certain people, I will develop a framework that is revisited in the next chapter by looking at which communities demand safety, and why.

### *3.2.1 Neoliberalism and security*

Discussions of security in the context of neoliberalism often draw heavily upon a specific atmosphere of post-9/11 fear and precarity (Andrejevic 2011; Ahmed 2004; Butler 2004). However, Cooper (2017), Featherstone (2017), and Harvey (2005) have argued that neoliberal and neoconservative security strategies are rooted in the ideological and theoretical origins of this political coalition. Both Cooper (2017) and Harvey (2005) suggest that the “Volcker Shock,” a manipulation of interest rates used to detonate stagflation and regarded as the kick-off for Reaganomics and neoliberalism in the Global North, was intended to resolve the untenable combination of military and social welfare funding marking the post-war years. In other words, when faced with the choice between indexed social welfare and nationalist militarism, those in power chose the latter, paving the way for increased socio-economic stratifications, precarity, and inequality for decades to come (*see also* Hanhardt 2013).

As these theorists point out, neoliberals and neoconservatives seem diametrically opposed on many points, but they often converge ideologically on certain issues, and generally lean on each other to carry out a shared societal vision. Harvey traces a narrative in which ‘elite class and business interests intent on restoring their class power’ mobilize ‘moral values centred on cultural nationalism, moral righteousness, Christianity, [and] family values...’ (Harvey 2005: 84) to construct social norms. The neoliberal state ‘is depicted as besieged and threatened by enemies from within and without’ which results in a ‘vested interest in permanent militarization’ (82-83) and ‘stronger surveillance and policing’ (83). Neoconservative strategies, including heightened militarization, surveillance of threats, and policing of risky bodies and behaviour, offer a means of control to the individualistic freedoms purported by neoliberal policy (Harvey 2005). Harvey argues that acknowledging neoconservative elements in neoliberal policy, especially foreign policy, helps to make sense of the methods of control used to maintain neoliberal strategy and inequality under neoliberalism. In comparison, Cooper (2017) focuses on how white supremacist and hetero-patriarchal constructions of the family-as-*oikos* complemented neo-conservative values as well as neo-liberal pursuits of financial freedom, to the ultimate benefit of capitalist accumulation. In summary, by demonstrating how neoconservative and neoliberal strategies serve to uphold elite class interests, Cooper (2017) and Harvey (2005) elucidate the contribution that these strategies make, both to each other and to the continuity of capitalism.

The evidence of neoconservatism that these theorists identify in the neoliberal economic process largely helps to elucidate the presence of coercive methods to preserve the neoliberal ‘order.’ In addition, it helps to contextualise the elements of right-wing, populist nationalism which have become more visible nearly two decades after Harvey’s writing, with the Brexit movement and later referendum in the UK, and Trump’s election and presidency in the US, contributing to the broader social and political context of the emergence of safe space

practices. Wendy Brown (2018) simultaneously draws upon these more recent events as she also relates them to the mobilization of conservative values, particularly how these values are weaponized to pit diverse working- and middle- class populations against each other in an environment of increased financial precarity and diminished social support from welfare institutions.

Brown elucidates the social impact of neoliberalism by evidencing the ‘promo[tion of] a libertarian notion of freedom,’ the ‘dismantling of the welfare state,’ and the weakening of ‘social bonds’ as well as the presence of misogyny, racism, and homophobia in the recent rise of right-wing populism (Brown 2018: 14). She, like others above, observes the pursuit of an egalitarian ideal filtered through ‘neoliberal rationality’ that, on the one hand, emphasises individual liberty and entrepreneurial competition, and on the other hand violently counters the social, public, or community structures that would enable ‘equal access, shared power, and a common good’ (Brown 2011: 119). Although Harvey finds an authoritarian necessity in the pragmatic use of neoconservative strategies to maintain the logic of competing, contradictory individual freedoms, Brown considers the authoritarian sentiment of neoliberalism as a current iteration of what has ‘never been one cogent, coherent doctrine’ (Brown 2018: 15). She, too, identifies a ‘need for strong authority to secure order [and] to secure boundaries’ due to the disintegration of the social. However, she characterises the emergent iteration of contemporary neoliberalism as a form of ‘libertarian authoritarianism’ in the rhetoric of Trump, Le Pen, and Farage (Brown 2018: 14-15). She distinguishes this from ‘older forms of authoritarianism, populism or fascism,’ to emphasise its distinctly neoliberal qualities. Brown recognizes the necessity:

to secure against what a declining middle and working class experiences as ravaged ways of life for which it blames “others”: immigrants, minority races, “external” predators and attackers ranging from terrorists to refugees (15).

But this necessity for national security *from* is intrinsic to an individual freedom *to be* ‘a racist, a sexist, a homophobe or Muslim hater’ (2018: 17). In this case, white working-class and middle-class precarity is exploited to justify the security measures and neoconservative strategies employed to protect elite class interests.

Although these specific forms of division and the rhetoric of freedom that accompany them are not restricted to the present, Brown is using understandings of neoconservative and neoliberal rhetoric to unpack very recent examples. However, she eschews the language of neoconservatism, favouring authoritarianism to emphasise how these specific far-right platforms employ fascist signifiers, rhetoric, and extremist politics in a unique but familiar way. Overall, Brown’s preference for the term ‘libertarian authoritarianism’ is to emphasise the social implications of neoconservative and neoliberal economic strategy, and this terminological experimentation touches upon a broader point that is explored in the thesis.

In the previous chapter, I argued that scholarship that experiments with the term “safe space” can enable scholars to critique and problematize characteristics of the pursuit or practices of safe space, although this experimentation can be counter-productive because it can abstract the discussion from the debates in which the research intends to intervene in or contribute to (*see* ‘safe(r) space’ *from* Thompson 2017; ‘critical-collective space’ *from* Wallin-Ruschman and Patka 2016, *in previous chapter*). In comparison, here Brown employs the term ‘liberal authoritarianism’ to critique ongoing debates emerging directly from neoliberal and neoconservative coalitional politics, but does not directly engage with the term ‘neoconservative’ or associate practices with this theory. In this chapter, the scholarship employs the terminology of capitalism and neoliberalism in broad and diverse ways, or it may otherwise refer to contemporary iterations of capitalist logics that only resonate in specific historical, geographical, or cultural contexts (*see* Harvey 2005; Bloch 1986, 1988; Lefebvre 2003, 1991; Komlosy 2019; Pettinger 2019). The capitalist society that Bloch discusses, for

example, is very different to the one that Brown refers to but, as I will discuss, both theorists have shared concerns over fascist political rhetoric. It is therefore helpful to describe neoliberal and neoconservative coalitional politics as a contemporary iteration of capitalist ideology, one that revisits and repurposes nationalist and racist sentiment to maintain class stratification, in the contemporary context of financial capitalism. Theorists have focused directly on this iterative quality and applied it to different contexts, particularly in scholarship on space and temporal rhythms (Bloch 1988; 1977), and Marxist critiques of uneven development (*see* Harvey 2005; 2000; Bloch 1977).

This clarification addresses a problem that Lynne Pettinger points out, when the term ‘neoliberalism’ is so broadly used to explain a range of attitudes, practices, and social and economic processes that it can be practically rendered meaningless (*see also* Gibson-Graham 2008). On the one hand, it is important to draw attention to terminological experimentation as well as the different contexts in which these theorists are writing from. On the other, not being able to define the ideology, politics, and practices, as well as the socio-economic impact, of neoliberal capitalism coherently can make it difficult to articulate what, in this thesis, the case studies of communities are working against. By engaging with alternative economic practices in the case studies I discuss the production and distribution of, mainly, food and art, in ways that contend with the cultural logics of neoliberalism and its attendance to material needs. To do so, I contextualise the case studies with understandings of prefigurative theory and practice that are critical of capitalist economic practices, often through negotiating with, resisting, and reconstituting dominant practices and logics of exchange that I have summarised above.

Much of the difficulty of critique and negotiation found in prefigurative and anti-capitalist politics arises from the seemingly total and encompassing effect of capitalist logics in everyday life; this problem is touched upon in the previous chapter (*see* Giraud 2019; *also* Bloch 1988). By being difficult to coherently articulate and target such logics and their effects,

possibilities for change, particularly for other forms of trade and exchange, are then constrained and foreclosed. However, exploring foreclosure as a fundamental quality of neoliberal rhetoric, policy, and practice, Mark Featherstone (2017) argues the shutting down of alternatives – even imaginary ones – is intentional, and inherent to the development and maintenance of an increasingly abstracted and unstable financial capitalism (*see also* Bell 2017; Gibson-Graham 2008). Featherstone’s theory, which explores the ‘neoliberal utopia’ through discussion of this rhetoric of individual and unlimited freedoms, particularly the ability to make money, has also informed the theoretical framework of this thesis in two main ways. Firstly, this theory articulates specific financial processes and their material effects, informing a contemporary understanding of neoliberalism, and secondly it foregrounds the use of utopian theory in offering alternatives (discussed further below), particularly the impetus to be specific and responsible in engagements with the troubling potentials of utopianism.

Featherstone’s theory of neoliberal utopia (2017) argues that the concepts of individual and total freedom, and the necessity for security (which is used in both a financial and a neoconservative sense) are mobilized in pursuit of infinite growth, abstracted from material consequences. Building on the financial terminology of securities and futures, Featherstone argues that, in neoliberal economic systems, debt is commodified and circulated in an increasingly precarious mode of exchange as a seemingly infinite way of accumulating financial capital. Correspondingly, he refers to security in the sense of control and surveillance to further understandings, covered above, of how neoconservative strategies are mobilized to maintain this economic logic in an unstable and unequal world (*see also* Harvey 2005; Cooper 2017). From a neoliberal perspective, the individualisation and financialization of human life is necessary to maintain a competitive environment that enables people to flourish – this is the “good” of the neoliberal good place (Featherstone 2017; *see also* Brown 2011).

However, the diversified social impact of this process depends upon the more coercive methods neoliberal states utilize to maintain this environment. The neoliberal utopia is riddled with contradictions found on the ground, where Featherstone argues the idea of individual freedom is weaponized and that indebtedness, precarity, and fear are used to secure the future of neoliberal utopia and prevent the possibility of alternative futures. Featherstone characterizes neoliberal utopia as a hypercompetitive, atomised, urban environment, a “no-place” in which the appearance that ‘there is no limit to the ability to make money’ is continually founded and perpetuated in and through the investment in debt (2017: 127). The myth of infinite growth relies on the continual denial of the materiality of the world, production, and the body, ‘because the financial market seems to have no connection to the real productivity of bodies, but instead orbits around the real economy in a kind of zero-gravity environment’ (127). Here space works passively and objectively, while the onus of financial and personal security is on the individual to maintain. If the individual transgresses this responsibility, they risk the stability and security of themselves and/or their environment in the competitive terrain of the urbanized, abstract space of neoliberal utopia. Therefore, conditions that contradict the purported freedoms of neoliberal economic and social policy – poverty and inequality – arise from irresponsible individual choice in an otherwise objective environment. Along these lines, Featherstone explicates how the rhetoric of individual freedoms also becomes a way of securing neoliberal futures, where it is used punitively *and* coercively to shut off possibilities of alternatives.

By employing the concept of utopia to discuss neoliberal rhetoric, policy, and practice, Featherstone is able to critically unpack the contradictory logics of this economic strategy, which purports to promote freedom and equality whilst developing radical levels of the opposite for select communities. Furthermore, he is exploring the troubling capacities of utopia by applying its component parts (no/good/place) to an overtly un-utopian project; he explicitly

maintains that the inequality, misery, and precarity of material conditions render this utopia not ‘worthy of the name’ (2017). In the next section, I begin with Bell (2017) to elucidate the productive and subjective capacities of this approach to utopia, foregrounded by Featherstone’s engagement with the concept, along with his cautionary stance against the overly permissive, counter-productive use of the term utopia. This section has summarized the dominant cultural logics of neoliberal economic and social policy and practice, which bear on understandings of safety developed in the literature review, and whose effects are negotiated with by both the theorists of utopian and prefigurative politics below, and the case studies that I develop in the thesis. This discussion of theorizations of neoliberalism are here firstly because they situate understandings of safety in a broader political and theoretical context, explored specifically in the literature review on safety. Secondly, these logics and material effects serve as the backdrop for much of the community work and discussions in the case studies of the thesis. By discussing theories of neoliberalism and relating them to existing socio-economic inequalities and specific events in popular and political arenas, I seek to contextualise the practices and politics of the communities I have worked with and to situate their critical and transformative potentiality in a contemporary and specific political context.

### 3.3 Utopian Theory

In this thesis utopian theory is used to draw out the connections between alternative modes of trade and exchange; community, art, and food production; and the contribution of safety to communities informed by and pursuing social change. This section provides an overview of utopian theorists who have informed my understanding of utopian theory and how it is used in the thesis. Engagements with utopia have expanded beyond the initial use of the term, in Thomas More’s book, as the name of a particular, non-existent place in which an ideal society has been formed (Jendrysik 2020; Bell 2017; Moore [1999]). This name combines no,

good, and place (eu, u, and topos) to connote both perfection and impossibility/unreachability; as a result, utopianism is often disparaged as being unrealistic, unfeasible, and (most damagingly) useless (Jendrysik 2020; Bell 2017; *see also* Bloch and Adorno 1988). David Bell (2017) makes use of these criticisms, and the etymology of utopia, to demonstrate the productive capacity embedded in forms of social and cultural experimentation and the pursuit of universal betterment. Bell's theory unpacks the circulation and utilization of utopia and utopianism in a contemporary context, particularly examining the utopian sentiment or expression of utopia in debates around Universal Basic Income, Fully Automated Luxury Communism, and far-right white supremacist groups (2017). Moreover, he explores anti-utopian sentiment, the misuse of utopia to disparage the pursuit of alternatives, and the possibilities of paying 'subversive fidelity' to the implications of utopia. By drawing on Barad's concept of 'intra-actions,' Bell develops the understanding of utopia as 'constituted by "ambiguous" oscillatory intra-actions between its three constituent terms': no, good, and place (Bell 2017: 7; *see also* Barad 2003). This ambiguity is produced by the relationship between the no and the good, and the production and re-production of the place in dialogue with these terms. He notes that the ambiguity produced between the no and the good in turn produces an ambiguity inherent in any claim of utopia, and noting these ambiguities produces greater understanding and conscious knowledge of utopia and the workings of utopianism (7), an understanding found also in Bloch's term *docta spes* (educated hope).

In other words, he argues that the ongoing social development of a collective 'good place' means that, inherently, we are always in pursuit of it while we are also refusing it; the 'no' connotes both a spatially-productive refusal (of a subjective good) and the absence and avoidance of fixing utopia (in place, or as good) (Bell 2017). This refusal and its productive potential are vital to the ongoing experimentation and engagement with the utopian, as we continually outgrow utopias. Further to this, Bell maintains the importance of avoiding

‘topophobia,’ wherein the possibilities of the no and the good are discursively prioritized over the possibilities of siting and sighting utopia (2017: 5). With this in mind, Bell uses subversive fidelity to further his argument that engaging with utopia’s specificity – no-good-place – does not have to end in ‘placeless utopia-as-process’ or ‘place-bound dystopia’ (5).

Bell’s deconstruction and reimagining of how utopia can be put together and mobilized is useful because the case studies I discuss do not purport to be utopias or utopian; his theories open up the possibilities of exploring the no-good-place of communities, practices, and politics that may not overtly or directly engage with utopia. His impetus to eschew pointless and unproductive dreaming, or rather to precisely identify what is productive about the dream, means his discussion of contemporary and popular politics of social change and mis/uses of utopia negotiate with, interrogate, and inform what utopia can mean and what it can do. He also stresses that critical specificity is required in the engagement with utopia; informed by Bell’s arguments and the potential pitfalls of an overuse or misuse of utopia, I make an effort to discuss the problems inherent to particular theorists’ politics and critiques of their present, retaining and developing that part of their theory that informs my own approach.

While the research topic is contextualized by debates about safe space practices and through theorizations of neoliberalism that I have explored above, in comparison, I use the terminology of utopia to discuss the critical and transformative practices and politics of both the case studies and of the concept of safety. In particular, I utilize Blochian utopian terminology to discuss the practices produced by the spatial and community configurations of the bakery/café and zine culture. Bloch’s use of Marxist terminology to articulate the production of utopian ideas will be explored in this overview, and along with his own vocabulary have been particularly useful to approach modes of production and distribution in the case studies. However, the communities discussed in the case studies would point to a participatory and DIY ethics and politics to articulate their politics of social change. While my

interpretations of the case studies rely on a utopian theoretical framing, they are also informed by the prefigurative and radical politics of participatory cultural production as well as rooted in everyday practices (*see* Bloch 1988; 1986; Materasso 2019; Licona 2012; Stewart 2011). Therefore, in addition to Bloch's Marxist utopian theory, my theoretical framework also makes use of Davina Cooper's theory of everyday utopia (2014), which presents a useful approach to engaging with everyday practices done differently.

### *3.3.1 Ernst Bloch's theory and terminology*

Ernst Bloch was a prolific utopian scholar associated with, though not part of, the Frankfurt School. Bloch's overall project, although eschewing empirical methods, highlights the political, social, quotidian, and vital dimensions of utopian consciousness. He develops his theory through a vast array of examples, including fairy tales, Ancient Greek and Roman aesthetics, music, detective novels, and the Bible (Bloch 1986; 1988; 2000). Through these examples, and many others, he introduces his concepts of Anticipatory Illumination, the No-Longer-Conscious, and the Not-Yet-Conscious (Bloch 1988; 1986; 2000). He uses these concepts to explain and describe how a desire for a better world is articulated and expressed, and how these expressions interact with and build upon each other, creating a heritage of utopian ideas, which is especially accessible through cultural products. In this section, I will briefly provide an overview Blochian thought, with a focus on the uses of his terminology.

By turning to Marxism (after associating briefly with anarchism and messianism, whose influences remain apparent in his theories), Bloch reveals and emphasises the conscious hope of a better world apparent in socialist and communist politics (1986; *see also* Geoghegan 1987). In doing so, he builds on well-trodden ground of prior scholars working with ideas combining socialist politics with perfect(ed) worlds, including More (who coined the term utopia), Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Morris, as well as critical social practitioners and activists as broad ranging as the Diggers to Robert Lanark (Jendrysik 2000; Geoghegan 1987; Engels 1996; Hill 2002).

However, in contrast to understandings that draw a direct connection between socialist politics and utopianism, Bloch grounds his utopian theories in Marxist understandings of cultural production, as well as then ground-breaking theories of the unconscious (Bloch 1986; 1988). In his work, Bloch adopted Freudian concepts to formulate a theory that the pursuit of utopia was a latent knowledge which emerged in works of art, music, and literature and, in some cases, evidence could be gleaned from everyday behaviour.

Key to Bloch's approach is his exploration of the 'utopian function' of select phenomena. The utopian function - Bloch uses 'utopian' to mean that which is 'containing future' (Bloch: 1986) - refers to the aspects of cultural production that are a 'critique of the present' (1988: 12) and that thereby contribute to the 'utopian surplus' of 'cultural heritage.' Bloch describes the workings of the utopian function between gathering cultural heritage and producing anticipatory illumination as a negotiation between the 'no-longer-conscious' and the 'not-yet-conscious.' The terms 'no-longer-conscious' and 'not-yet-conscious' are used to describe a fluctuating awareness of the totality, a subjective positioning within it, and indicate the back-and-forth between 'no' and 'good' and 'place' (Bloch 1988; *see also* Bell 2017). Explaining these terms in his writing, Bloch describes a state of conscious dreaming in which the material conditions of the present, understandings drawn from knowledge of the past, and desires for the future can engender radical forms of hope that can be acted upon. In addition, these terms are used more broadly to articulate a latent utopian consciousness, which is how Bloch is able to discuss more expansive theories of unconscious desire and expression of communities and societies.

The utopian function manifests in art as 'anticipatory illumination,' a disruptive and creative realisation or materialisation of a potential *Novum*, that is, something completely new. While it is impossible to predict what form anticipatory illumination may take, it is recognizable as critical, transformative, and productive. Anticipatory illuminatory moments,

products, or visions critique the present, produce the possibility of another world, and furthermore contribute to the cultural heritage and the utopian surplus contained within this heritage. Anticipatory illumination and the utopian function are ways for Bloch to explain why people return to cultural products like art, music, and literature that ‘ha[ve] a continual impact’ (Bloch 1988: 38), and why people continue to produce art. His emphasis and prioritization of certain “works” of art and certain ideological connotations of aesthetics (particularly Expressionism), however, caused severe disagreements and rifts in his circle (see Adorno et al. 1980). Despite this, he continues to be associated closely with the work of the Frankfurt School and related theorists, including Adorno, Benjamin, and Lukacs (*see* Adorno et al. 1980; Löwy 2017).

Although connected to the Frankfurt School through his intellectual circle, Bloch also shared the diasporic experience of many of its associated theorists as a German and Jewish scholar escaping fascism in Germany and throughout Europe (Löwy 2017; Jay 1973). Importantly, Bloch diverges from previous socialist and communist politics and utopian spatial production by troubling the connection drawn between them, instead pointing to the unpredictable nature and implementations of the utopian function (*see* eds. Daniel and Moylan 1997). In particular, he critiqued the tendency to prioritize socialist thought in utopian writing as it overlooked the manifestations of utopianism in reactionary conservative politics (*see* eds. Daniel and Moylan 1997). In short, access to culture enabled the ongoing production of utopian visions and cultural heritage, but cultural production was as much a voice of the state as it was of latent utopian consciousness. Bloch argued that utopian thought could be weaponized in the interests of violent traditionalism, nationalism, and expansionism, and to dismiss the mobilization of latent utopian consciousness was to disengage from the affective utopian potential of both propaganda and popular culture. Therefore, it was necessary to consciously

and critically follow the utopian function to enable purposeful and actionable knowledges of the future.

Informed by the urgency to reclaim utopian thought from the populist building blocks of fascism, Bloch found Marxism useful not only in method but in socio-economic critique. Bloch argues that Marx's dialectical materialist method is the scientific contribution to cultural heritage (1986; *see* Geoghegan 1987: 93) and reworks a Marxist understanding of surplus to articulate and clarify how cultural products and expressions of utopia are passed along and how they interact with each other (1986; *see also* Muñoz 2009; Marx 1990). These interactions are expressed through new art, music, and literature, although Bloch explicitly holds up quotidian and personal daydreams as equal expressions of utopian consciousness and hope (1986). However, as much as Bloch's theory foregrounded the utopian as a field of enquiry, his own politics left much to be desired; critics of Bloch hold him to account for his poor initial judgement of Stalin, his prioritization of high cultural expression, and his ignorant views of women and queer people (*see* Muñoz 2009; *see* eds Daniel and Moylan 1997). These faults have harmed Bloch's emphasis on the potential of cultural surplus to transcend social and individual contexts and orientate us toward the future. Yet, it may be pertinent to note that the limitations and stumbling blocks of his purview can be laid alongside, for example, More's colonialism and misogyny (*see* Bell 2017; Jendrysik 2020). With these limitations in mind, I will now turn to ways of engaging with utopian and later spatial theory with a critically reflexive framing.

### *3.3.2 Queer, Community, and Everyday Utopias*

Critical engagements with Bloch's theory expand upon his project, rather than his thoughts and findings, making use of his terminology to locate possibilities in sites and communities that his project neglected, affronted, or dismissed. For example, José Esteban Muñoz (2009) draws extensively from Bloch to develop his theory of the queer utopian

performative. Muñoz draws on forms of expression, such as drag and punk, as well as particular people, like dancer Fred Herko and poet Frank O' Hara, to theorize queer expression as futuristic gesture. The performative in Muñoz's theory is therefore used to refer to gesture, text, and speech, as well as with the advancement of the term in queer and feminist theories of gender, which make use of the metaphor of performance to explore countercultural and counter-public forms of expression, in addition to theories of community and *communitas* in scholarship on utopia and theatre (*see* Warner 2002; Butler 2006; Dolan 2005; 2011). However, Muñoz *also* uses Blochian terminology, specifically the no-longer-conscious, the not-yet-conscious, and cultural surplus as it is both cogent to the theoretical work of utopian and cultural expression *and* because of the underlying urgency to reclaim utopian expression from populist platforms (Muñoz 2009). In Muñoz's case, his interpretations of cultural forms and his applications of Blochian theory also work to critique of limited and assimilatory LGBT political platforms, which largely benefit a small, socio-economically privileged part of the community (*discussed in the previous chapter, see* Hanhardt 2013). Muñoz argues that we are not-yet queer, and nor are we yet utopian, complicating progressive political narratives through a non-linear approach which necessitates discussion of already lost people, places, and encounters (Muñoz 2009; *see also* Bloch 1977). Like Bloch, in exploring the non-linear relationship between the no-longer-conscious and the not-yet-conscious, much of Muñoz's theory is permeated with loss (Muñoz 2009). Through his critical engagement with queer expression, he explores the decimation and estrangement of communities, and the impact of stigma and discrimination against, and interruption and death of, queer art and artists. Therefore, in his work hope finds power not only in the future but in the past, through survival, memory, and desires for reunification and living encounters.

By demonstrating that communities producing punk gigs, drag shows, independent journals, and Off-Off Broadway are examples of queer utopian expression, Muñoz's case

studies support and inform my approach to participatory and counter-cultural expression. Although the radical, prefigurative, and transformative potential of these forms of expression have been stated and explored (Licona 2012; Duncombe 2008; Materasso 2019), scholars have avoided committing them to the concept of utopia due to its connotations with naivety and unfeasibility (*see* Duncombe 2008). For example, on zines, Stephen Duncombe (2008) has paired a critique of alienated labour with the alternative that zine making and distributing can offer, whereas Adela C. Licona (2012) focuses on anti-racist, feminist, and queer zines, and their capacity to develop radical, political community knowledges and coalitions. Whereas Duncombe makes use of Marxist theories and socialist politics, he explicitly distances his theories about zines from utopia, which he uses to indicate unfeasibility. In comparison, although Licona is often discussing prefigurative politics, a reference to utopia is incompatible with her use of Anzaldúan Borderlands theory (*see* Anzaldúa 2007 [1987]). Licona's analysis of zine community and culture, which will be discussed further in the following section, develops understandings of geographically disparate countercultural and border space. Her framework combines Chicana@ feminist borderlands theory and anti-colonial critique in zine culture, as well as terminology that is rooted in Mexico-US borderlands and culture (Licona 2012). In the case study on zines in this thesis, Licona's work has helped develop and expand upon understandings of zine community and culture, but I avoid either integrating the specificities of her approach into my own analysis, or mapping utopia over her existing framework and findings. In the thesis I touch upon utopia's roots in imperialistic and colonialist texts, which has necessitated my engagement with critical geographers and spatial theorists that will be discussed in the final part of this chapter.

Shaped by Muñoz's engagements with Bloch, the thesis critically analyzes specific art-objects, as well as signs, and spatial configurations to ground the understandings of practices and behaviour observed in the sites. Informing this approach, however, is specific work on

everyday utopia and intentional communities. Coining the term ‘everyday utopia,’ Davina Cooper (2014) discusses specific everyday practices – including trade, work, and care – in community sites. These practices can be both specific to these sites (which include Speakers’ Corner, a nudist community, Local Exchange Trading Schemes/Systems, and Summerhill School) and offer ways of reimagining these familiar practices more broadly (Cooper 2014). Cooper’s work argues that mundane practices reimagined or reconstituted in non-normative contexts can offer ‘viable alternatives’ to either these practices or the logics that inform them; for example, these practices can be used to develop ways of critically reimagining understandings of temporality, property, and belonging outside of normalized logics of capitalism (Cooper 2014). In comparison, Lucy Sargisson (2000) studies iterations of public/private, property, and self/other in multiple, comparative ‘intentional communities’ in both rural and urban locations. Sargisson’s theories and findings develop an approach I have found useful in the discussion of the case studies, to thoroughly outline the communities’ work in a comparative structure. Both Sargisson (2000) and Cooper (2014) also problematize these alternative community practices by elucidating not only their negotiations with normative and normalised practices, but also the internal contradictions and contestations that emerge from experimentation in lived, community contexts. In addition, both of these theorists and Muñoz (2009) work with sites and communities that are thematically relevant to the ethics and practices of the bakery/café and the zine community that are discussed in my case study chapters; their developments and use of utopian theory I have found specific, helpful, and illuminating as contextual and theoretical backgrounds to the case studies.

Engagement with and use of utopian theoretical terminology contributes to the articulation of how and why the case studies implement and practice prefigurative politics, which is informed and situated by a broader social and political context developed through theorizations of neoliberalism. However, the specific use of everyday, critical, and

countercultural community practices to locate the possibilities of present utopias – exemplified by the work of Muñoz (2009), Cooper (2014), and Sargisson (2000) have also helped to guide and frame the theoretical approach to the case studies. The final section discusses spatial theorists who have, additionally, contributed to an informed engagement with both utopian theory (particularly that of Bell [2017], who deals specifically with utopian place and spatial production), as well as having informed the interpretive approach to the data gathered from the research. This following section discusses the framework for the uses and critical discussions of space in the thesis.

### 3.4 Space

In this thesis theories of spatial production have contributed an important dimension to the analysis of the data. This theoretical framework has developed from the initial research into theories and debates on safe spaces, where many criticisms and misconceptions of the term “safe space” derive from an understanding of space as a vacuum, rather than produced (*see Massey 2005; Lefebvre 1991 for critiques of this spatial representation*). In effect, the thesis asks what safety contributes to the production of space, by looking at specific practices of safety in community sites formed through the pursuit of social change. While definitions and practices of safety in scholarship are explored in the overview of safety, here I summarise the scholarship of spatial theorists that have influenced my understanding and interpretations of the case studies.

The two case studies are zine community and culture and a community bakery/café within a participatory arts company; mentioned twice here and fundamental to the necessity for a socio-spatial theoretical framework is the production of *community* space. Zines are a form of independent publishing shared by a community that is geographically disparate and ‘internally heterogeneous,’ meaning the zine form is shared by multiple communities often

with radically different interests and ways of using, producing, and distributing the form (Kempson 2015: 1083). Geographic spaces of zine community are distros, zinefests, and bookshops, although these are largely trading and distributive sites, are often temporary, and are usually found in urban areas (Kempson 2015; Duncombe 2008). Alongside these sites are archives and libraries, where zines are exhibited online or in-person (sometimes on a short-term basis) in spaces where the zines serve as an exhibit of the general ethics and community of that site or as part of broader DIY archival efforts (Licona and Brouwer 2015; Ramdarshan Bold 2017; Berthoud 2017). Overall, there is no permanent, geographical community site in which zines can be found – other than the zine object itself, which is the material site of the community making and distributing practices (Piepmeier 2008).

In comparison to the first case study, the second – the bakery/café – is found in a physical geographical space, within an industrial building used for workshops, community events, a real bread bakery, a community café, theatre and sculpture productions, the running of an arts company, and the storage of an archive containing records of the company's work. In addition, the work of the company is found across the city, in collaboration with other local and national community and arts groups; the building is shared with other arts organizations, and the company also hosts community and arts groups in the building. Like the zine community, the activities in the site can equally be described as internally heterogeneous, and evidence of the community and their activity is also geographically disparate, if more localized than the zine community.

My theoretical framework is informed by theorists that conceptualize space as material, relational, and reproductive. Exemplifying this approach is Alison Piepmeier's (2008) material-textual approach to reading zine form and community in the zine object. Piepmeier (2008) explains that the DIY and participatory ethics of zine culture are reflected in the handmade and not-for-profit making and trading practices of zines, and that these

practices can be evidenced in the materiality of the zine object – through the handwriting, hand-binding, idiosyncrasies, and wear and tear of individual zine objects – on a collective scale. She goes on to argue, as other zine scholars have, that contact with the accessibility of participatory cultural production through the distribution, trading, and reading of zines inspires emulation, which enables the ongoing production of zines and community (Piepmeier 2008; *see also* Duncombe 2008; Bagelman and Bagelman 2016; Berthoud 2017).

In the thesis I have elaborated on Piepmeier’s approach to read the extensive ephemera of community activity in the case studies, including handwritten and typed signs in archives, libraries, and in the bakery/café, as well as postcards, sketches, and stickers. In addition, spatial organization has contributed to my interpretations: the placement and proximity of one object to another lends further understanding to the observations of the case studies. I have argued that the way space is organized in the sites is informed, intentional, and reflexive; building from Piepmeier’s theories, I have engaged fruitfully with understandings that space is both produced and contains a reproductive capacity. Primarily, these understandings emerged from critical spatial theorists and theories of everyday life developed by Doreen Massey, Henri Lefebvre, and Michel de Certeau.

#### *3.4.1 Massey, Lefebvre, and de Certeau*

Critical geographer Doreen Massey draws together theoretical and philosophical discussions of space to challenge the ways understandings and knowledges of space are produced through particular attention to multiplicities, materialist approaches, and the concepts of “place,” the “local,” and the “global” (Massey 2005). Her theory, like Lefebvre’s, critiques problematic theorizations of space and spatial production that conceptualize space as a vacuum and/or fixed, immaterial and abstract representations of space (for example, theorizations of psychological or metaphorical space), as well as Eurocentric geographical notions of spatial production – i.e. those which centre Western Europe and the Global North. In addition,

previously discussed above, Massey's observations of the 'spaces of knowledge production,' from science parks to universities, reveal that these spaces are largely (and prefer to be) distanced from quotidian spaces, as are financial spaces (Massey 2005). The implications of this distancing are enforced and reinforced by structural inequalities embodied in gender, race, and class, which includes important observations of Eurocentric conceptions of space (*see for example* Massey 2005: 63).

Massey's arguments point to the dangers inherent in the conceptualization of space as representational, as well as attempts to represent space. By developing a materialist framework through which to conceptualize space, Massey argues that space is produced and can reproduce cultural and ideological logics (2005; *see also* Lefebvre 1991). This bears implications also for utopian space and place. The reproduction of cultural logics in utopian imaginaries suggests that, insofar as utopias may share progressive reimaginings of property, wealth, and labour deriving from More's inception of the term, its possibilities are consistently limited and therefore necessitate ongoing critique and social reimagining; I have discussed this above by, for example, drawing on how Bloch's contemporary politics and tastes have limited his theories. Therefore, in ongoing conceptualizations of utopia and utopian impulses, some theorists critique utopia for its counter-productive, totalitarian, and/or unfeasible potential (Bloch 1988; Featherstone 2017; Harvey 2000), whereas others seek to include feminist, anti-racist and anti-colonial, and queer visionary critique to reimagine and reconstitute the parameters of the utopian (Bell 2017; Muñoz 2009; Cooper 2014). In any case, resistance to depicting and representing hope and utopia is itself an almost self-reflexive approach that utopian theorists consistently further, often characterizing the act of siting/sighting utopia as the production of a horizon, or a constantly shifting point in space and/or time (Bloch 1988; Bell 2017; Muñoz 2009).

In addition, Massey's attention to science parks and universities bear on my own understandings of sites of knowledge production in the thesis. Drawing from Licona's (2012) analyses of zine objects, community, and culture, I argue that zines are both a site of knowledge production and, formed through the DIY ethics and coalitional politics of the community, critical of those inaccessible and privileged sites of knowledge production (Licona 2012). The implications are, mainly, two-fold. Firstly, Massey's critique of institutions of knowledge production and of the prioritization of the knowledge they produce has provided a jumping off point for expanding conceptualizations of safe spaces beyond universities, where they are commonly situated, and to analyse the production of safe spaces through the lens of practices – this approach is supported further by theorists of everyday life, discussed below. Secondly, influenced by Massey, Licona, and Cooper's theories as well as the terminology of Bloch, I have engaged with the case studies as sites and communities producing knowledges that are often in negotiation with, or in contestation to, existing cultural logics of everyday forms of violence as well as safe community spaces.

Massey's critical geography foregrounded my understandings of and approach to both theories of utopia and spatial production, pressing a feminist and anti-colonial critique and providing an accessible materialist approach to understanding space (2005). The second theorist contributing to the theoretical framework on space, Henri Lefebvre, employs a Marxist and socio-economic critique of spatial production, spatial representation, and everyday life (Lefebvre 1991). Like Massey, Lefebvre also calls for materiality and specificity in spatial theories and foregrounds discussion on the reproductive capacity of space. However, to compare the two, Massey calls attention to how ideology is reproduced through institutional knowledge production and reflected in the spatial production and theories of local, global, place, and space (i.e. who/what/where is centred and produces) (2005), whereas Lefebvre's focus is on how contemporary and mundane social practices, relations, and cultural logics come

to produce space with the capacity to reproduce (Lefebvre 1991). Specifically, Lefebvre's critique of everyday life focuses on the development of contemporary consumer-capitalism which, he argues, can be evidenced in the production and use of sites and spaces that both iterate and veil the (re)production of ideology (Lefebvre 1991; *see also* Bloch 1988). Lefebvre's criticism of fragmenting and abstracting space, his analysis of spatial practice, organization, and use, and his socio-economic critique have been useful to foreground understandings of the community sites developed as case studies in the thesis, particularly contributing to my focus on borders and boundaries as porous sites of negotiation and resistance (Lefebvre 1991; *see also* Bell 2017). In addition, although he lacks the specific vocabulary of utopian critique that I find so useful in Bloch, I find his analyses of contradictions and contestations, alongside his concept and mobilization of the "moment," contains a productive and hopeful rhetoric.

Alongside Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau's work on everyday life has also been useful, particularly for discussions of activities like cooking and making as ways of 'diverting' time to one's own ends (de Certeau 2000). However, my engagement with specific kinds of community cultures, practices, and sites has necessitated a more complicated approach to strategies and tactics; this approach is evoked by Licona's assertion that zines are both tactical *and* strategic. For example, de Certeau's terminology does not overtly refer to counter-cultural communities, rather suggesting the radical and subversive capacities of counter-actions and counter-practices (de Certeau 2000). Contextualised by discussions of infrastructures of power and its unequal distribution, de Certeau's theories deal in the small, often intimate, scale, to suggest the potentially accumulative capacity of these diversions and counter-practices (de Certeau 2000). However, following Licona as well as Cooper's theories of everyday utopias, I focus on both established and long-term prefigurative politics and practices embedded in the ethics and culture of the communities I work with. In addition, I pinpoint specific forms of

reflexive counter-practice, and the reconstitution or reconfiguration of mundane objects or processes to suggest that the maintenance of these sites and communities are ongoing.

Critical theories of spatial production and practice have contributed to the theoretical and methodological framework, discussed in the next chapter, by providing interpretive and conceptual guidance through which to approach the discussion of the production of utopian space. By engaging with these theories I am able to offer grounded understandings of how the prefigurative politics and ethics of social change are materialized in shared practices, spatial organization, and community sites, even when, in some cases, the communities and spaces that are produced are temporary. In addition to theories of spatial production, however, the utopian theories discussed above have both complicated and elucidated the understandings of space and community production in the thesis. The impetus not to fix or fragment space discussed here connects theorizations of utopian and material spatial production and becomes even more pertinent in the context of safe space debates, particularly the challenge I pose to popular conceptions of safe spaces as exclusionary, censorious, and stifling. Jumping off from Licona's theoretical and interpretive framework on zines, which uses Anzalduan Borderlands theory, the final spatial term I will discuss in this chapter is borders, my engagement with them, and their uses in the context of theorizing utopia in the everyday.

### *3.4.2 Borders*

By engaging with borders as conceptually “useful,” I am not overlooking their use and the treatment of land as property to reify and violently reinforce forms of nationalism and socio-economic inequality. Borders are also a spatial phenomenon that can produce distinct multiplicities and experiments, that can allow the cultivation and coexistence of difference, and that can engender safe and specific environments for communities to survive (*see* Bell 2017). They can be negotiated, undermined, contested, and crossed, and they exist in many and often mundane and necessary forms. Working to challenge the colonialist origins of utopia and its

manifestation in spatial and technological wish-dreams of new, empty lands, Bell discusses the necessity of borders and exclusion for Indigenous communities. He critiques the ‘blanket’ problematization of borders and boundaries, suggesting both that their violation ‘dispossess[es]’ communities of their language, culture, and home, and that their maintenance can enable communities to ‘survive, or even thrive’ (Bell 2017: 122). In the previous chapter, I have also discussed the uses of borders and boundaries to enable bodily safety and, following Bell, their uses in the taking and making of safe space and place.

In addition, Anzaldúa prompts us to think of borders as places in of themselves. Situated within Chicano/Chicana criticism and theory, Anzalduan theory uses the site of the ‘border’ to conceptualize coercively enforced dichotomies in gender, sexuality, culture, language, and geography (Anzaldúa 2007 [1987]; *see also* Licona 2012: 5). Drawing from the political and cultural geography of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, Gloria Anzaldúa posits that identity is a site that is categorized and stratified. Not only is one category prioritized over another, such as through gendered dichotomies, but this dichotomic structure is prioritized over hybridity, diversity, and mixed identity (Anzaldúa 2007 [1987]). Making these dichotomies visible, Anzaldúa simultaneously employs the concept of ‘Borderlands’ – “third” spaces created by these dichotomies but belonging to/with neither – in order to destabilize the ideological, hierarchical, and/or oppressive roots of these divisions.

Licona applies Anzalduan theory to critical readings of zines about languages and [il]literacy, including languages lost through colonial and racist institutional educational practices, and languages reclaimed, embedded and embodied through the zinester’s lived experience (Licona 2012: 80); she relates to each a sense of ‘familiarity’ (Licona 2012: 4). Here, the Anzalduan focus of Licona’s writing becomes pertinent, specifically the fundamental and specific terms that Anzaldúa employs in her work which reflect the lived linguistic and cultural roots of her theory. Licona pays particular emphasis to *napanitla*, mestiza-

consciousness, and *la facultad*. These concepts evoke the lived experience and political practice of third space possibilities, grounded in the specific context that Anzaldúa is writing in.

For example, *la facultad* describes an ability, or way of knowing, of vulnerable communities – those who ‘do not feel psychologically or physically safe’ – to predict and negotiate with the lived dangers and risks, particularly those of prejudicial violence. Anzaldúa describes *la facultad* as ‘latent in all of us’ but acute in certain communities (it is also negotiable that the ‘us’ she addresses is universal) (Anzaldúa 2007 [1987]: 60-61). *La facultad* is what Licona would describe as lived, embodied ways of knowing (e.g. Licona 2012: 37, 45). These kinds of knowledges are produced outside of authorized sites of knowledge production; for example, they can be ‘traditional practices and indigenous knowledges’ (37).

However, the reception and applications of Anzalduan theory have been criticized for ‘erasing [the] specificity’ of Anzalduan concepts (Licona 2012: 4), engaging with these concepts as universal, rather than as ‘painstakingly’ rooted in specific lived experiences and sites (Yarbro-Bejarano 1994: 7). Yarbro-Bejarano emphasises this latter critique, arguing that Anzaldúa’s writing has been used by white scholars, particularly women, in a way that dislocates it from the writer’s lived experiences, and isolates the concepts, symbols, and references that Anzaldúa draws upon from coexisting scholarship (Yarbro-Bejarano 1994).

Too often, Borderlands theory is applied liberally and abstractly, eclipsing its ties to its cultural, geographical, and political context (Licona 2012; Yarbro-Bejarano 1994). In the analyses of, respectively, the conceptual and material borders of the bakery/café/arts company, and the production of unauthorized knowledges in zines, Anzalduan concepts should not be confused or conflated with utopian ones. In particular, I often employ the concept of transformative surplus, which relies on the productive capacity of dialectics and is therefore incompatible with Anzalduan theory. Despite this, I have found the dynamic nature of

Anzaldúa's theory to be extremely helpful when critically discussing space and identity, and Licona's arguments to be in accord with and detail my understandings of zine culture.

Borderlands theories offer ways of engaging with the productive capacity of borders and boundaries that Bell (2017) alludes to, informed additionally by critical materialist spatial theories of Massey and Lefebvre. Overall, in comparison to the informative contextual framework of theorizations of neoliberalism, as well as the lens of utopian theory which is employed in the discussion of the case studies, critical geographers and spatial theorists do not make up the main theoretical framing of my engagement with the case studies (with the exception of zine scholarship). Instead, these theorists have strongly influenced the way I discuss both the case studies and the surrounding socio-political context. They have provided ways of engaging with and evidencing my findings, by providing a connection between the textual, the material, and the social, and this influence can be found in the discussion of the case studies.

### 3.5. Conclusion

This theoretical overview and the previous literature review provide the background and context for the formation of the project's research questions. These questions seek to explore safety as both a mundane, ambiguous concept and as a potentially prefigurative demand of communities, and to understand what safety is and how it is practiced in communities pursuing social change. In the development of these questions, I wanted to situate safety in broader contexts and longer histories than as solely manifested in contemporary safe space practices. This approach necessitated a framework engaging with both theorizations of neoliberalism and of spatial production, in addition to the overall use of utopian theory as the main interpretive path of the thesis. In the next section, I discuss the methodology and methods used to answer these research questions, which refers back to the theoretical scholarship discussed here, and the specific research design used to develop the case studies.

# Methodology

## 4.1 Introduction

This project explores the critical and transformative functions, and the utopian potential, of collective practices of safety by engaging with contemporary understandings of safe space practices. In response to a lack of in-depth discussion and consideration of safety in utopian scholarship as well as limited conceptualizations of safety itself in contemporary debates, I explore the potential for safety to be an important aspect of utopian critique and possibility. To ground these arguments and to focus the discussion of safety, I examine community practices of safety in the context of contemporary safe space practices. As I discussed in the literature review, safe spaces serve as an example of contemporary understandings and public perceptions of safety and are characterised by ongoing debates about their histories, uses, and relevance to broader political contexts. However, understandings of safety in discussions about safe spaces are often displaced by discussions of violence and freedom and overlook the radical social histories of safe space practices in working-class, anti-racist, LGBT+, and feminist grassroots political coalitions.

While discussions of safety in the literature review were drawn initially from debates about safe space practices in U.K. and U.S. universities, it is by building upon and expanding the contexts and histories of these discussions that understandings of safety – as well as where these understandings are limited, lacking, or displaced – can be demonstrated. As debates and discussions of safety take place in both academic and non-academic public and community sites, so too are practices, knowledges, and forms of safety developed in everyday spaces and through everyday forms of vulnerability, as the broader scholarship on safety, violence, and space demonstrates. Therefore, to investigate and intervene in discussions of safety, as this

project intends to do, the research is grounded firstly in cultural studies and the field's multidisciplinary approach to producing knowledges about everyday life and cultural practices.

Cultural studies uses academic resources to produce knowledges about everyday life through the critical engagement with those mediated forms by which everyday life is produced, documented, and expressed (*see* Atton 2002, Duncombe ed. 2002, Hebdige 1988, Littler 2017, 2019; Williams 1962). The field draws practices from multiple disciplines, in addition to texts and other forms that are neither strictly literary or academic, in order to study and develop understandings about complex and mundane knowledges and practices (Littler 2017, 2019; Hebdige 1988, Williams 1962). The multidisciplinary approach to this research project combined sociological and ethnographic methods with the textual analysis of cultural objects and social behaviour related to practices of safety, which were primarily drawn from two case studies: firstly, a community bakery/café, which is part of an arts company, and secondly zine community and culture. Informed by 'facet methodology,' discussed below, I used multiple small-scale methods to develop insights from these sites (*see* Mason 2011, Davis and Heaphy 2011, Threadgold 2017). The main methods used to gather data were multiple participatory observations sessions, taking photographs and notes during the research period at the sites, collection and textual analysis of these photographs as well as zines from my own collection and from archives/libraries visited over the course of the research project.

To make sense of this primary data, the discussion and understandings of community practices of safety and safety's prefigurative political potential were contextualized by broader contemporary theories about security, safety, and violence, grounded in theorizations of neoliberal ideology and policy, theories of spatial production, and utopian studies, as discussed in the previous chapter. By situating the observed practices of safety within broader conceptual and political discussions, in addition to contemporary debates and conceptualizations of safety, this research continues the project of cultural and utopian studies to engage with and produce

knowledge about popular and prefigurative cultural and political practices and knowledges of everyday life.

This chapter's focus is clarifying how I engaged with the two case studies – a community bakery/café and zine community and culture – which were identified primarily as sites informed by prefigurative politics and an ethics of participatory cultural production, rather than immediately fitting into contemporary and popular understandings of safe spaces in current debates. Their potential as research sites lay in how everyday practices of production and distribution were reconfigured by these ethics and politics, and particularly how community practices of safety and safeguarding contributed to their formation and maintenance. Beginning with an explanation of 'facet methodology,' through which the project developed, I will then discuss each case study in turn and the specifics of how the research was conducted in these sites.

#### 4.2. Facet Methodology

Through initially reviewing contemporary scholarship on safe space practices, the project's focus developed to explore safety more broadly as a potential category of utopia and prefigurative politics. However, existing research into safety often relied heavily on theoretical discussions that positioned safety in opposition to theorizations of violence, security, and risk, whereas understandings of and empirical research into safe space practices were often limited to university settings. Notable exceptions to this were Hanhardt's (2013) study into the development of LGBT+ neighbourhoods and political platforms in New York City and San Francisco, Roestone's (2014) approach to safe space debates which argues for a 'relational' definition of safety, and Bell's (2017) reference to safe space politics to subvert limited theorizations of borders and utopian place-making. Despite these developments, little research had committed safety to a prefigurative politics of social change, and even less had

offered definitions or characteristics to give form to the category or practice of safety (one exception being Coyle 2004). To address this lack, and to explore the contribution of safety to everyday sites and communities pursuing social change, the project required a combination of theoretical engagement with empirical field work to build on the existing, if limited, connections between safety, prefigurative politics, and everyday life.

To inform this approach and the research questions, the project draws upon ‘facet methodology,’ which employs the visual metaphor of a gemstone and its facets ‘which cast and refract light in a variety of ways’ (Mason 2011: 77). This methodology and its applications were both accessible and complementary to the aims and questions of the research project, as they enable mixed-methods, multidisciplinary, and reflexive approaches. ‘Facet methodology’ aims to develop an approach to ‘generating knowledge’ through research that embraces ‘different lines of enquiry’ (78) used to ‘define the overall object of concern’ (77), and was developed through projects researching personal ‘relationships and relationalities,’ specifically friendship and family (Mason 2011; Davies and Heaphy 2011). For these projects, the research design and approach developed ‘a set of mini-studies using different clusters of methods’ (Mason 2011: 76). Using multiple small-scale methods rather than one large-scale method for the projects, the findings from each method supported each other to develop an overall understanding of the relationalities, resemblances, and associations researched in the projects.

Facet methodology emerged from sociological research projects designed to complicate and interrogate popular and unambiguous understandings of everyday phenomena, and its development challenged normalised approaches to sociological research that were unsuitable for the kinds of phenomena being interrogated. For example, one of these projects involved three ‘mini studies’ that led to ‘multidimensional’ research findings on friendship. This research on friendship and other ‘informal’ relationships was in response

to a prioritization of ‘blood and legal ties’ in previous research, and an uncritically idealistic and ‘voluntaristic’ perception of friendship (Davies and Heaphy 2011: 5). The three mini-studies all used different methods – a one-off group Era Memory Workshop, multiple Situated Interview participants, and a Mass Observation directive – in which participants in each singular study had shared experiences, but each study (considered separately) focused on different participant demographics. The complexity of the research topic, friendship, generated the multifaceted methodology to approach this research area, which in turn generated a set of ‘critical narratives’ about friendship. These ‘critical narratives,’ that avoided prescribing or replicating idealised understandings of friendship, developed richer and more nuanced insights by generating lived, multidimensional, and conflicting understandings of friendship (14).

Additionally, approaches informed by facet methodology also include research into DIY youth subculture in Australia; as a ‘trans-local’ scene, multiple methods were employed to highlight the multiple facets of interaction with/in the community (Threadgold 2017). These methods were employed specifically to develop understandings of the community’s self-definition, organization, and attitudes to labour and belonging. A multifaceted approach was necessary due to the heterogeneous practices encompassed through the community’s ‘DIY’ ethos and culture, and by the niche but widely dispersed nature of the community. The researchers used semi-structured interviews, with participants gathered through snowball sampling, multi-sited ethnography, and digital ethnography to engage with the culture and activity of the members on an individual, national, and online scale.

The development and uses of facet methodology in these studies – reconceptualizing popular narratives of everyday phenomena, conducting research into heterogeneous communities, and using reflexive, small-scale approaches – developed and refined my project’s focus after limitations and gaps in existing scholarship had been explored. Discussed below,

however, the broader theoretical and conceptual framework for the project additionally contributed to my approach to the research, primarily by informing how the empirical research into safety could be situated within existing scholarship on safe space practices and safety, as well as the broader theoretical and political concepts that contextualised discussions of safety.

#### 4.3. Utopian studies and cultural studies: researching everyday life

The development of facet methodology was informed by a critical approach to knowledges of everyday life, while presupposing that the work of knowledge production is itself part of everyday life. While the explicitly sociological body of work through which facet methodology has been produced and is part of differs slightly from that which has informed my own research design, this presupposition is shared by tenets of cultural studies, particularly those projects using qualitative and participatory methods. While not being part of the specific field of cultural studies, the theories of spatial production and everyday life – the work of Massey, de Certeau, and Lefebvre – which I discuss in the previous chapter engage critically and seriously with mundane phenomena and social behaviours as worthy of study and generative of understanding of broader political and social events. In addition to this, my approach has also been informed by theorists of cultural production, including the work of the Frankfurt School (*see* Adorno and Horkheimer 1999; Marcuse 2013 [1964]), Dick Hebdige's (1988) work on counterculture, and scholarship on queer culture and counterculture (for example, Warner 2002; and Muñoz 2009). Semiotic analysis, the treatment of culture as text, and the analysis of texts as speaking to a particular cultural moment has been assisted by Barthes' (2009) work on the meaning of cultural forms and commonplace knowledges, in addition to Littler's analytical approach to the mediated political and cultural meaning of a single photograph (2019), as well as Piepmeier's (2008)

methods of material-textual analysis, that I will explain in more detail below as one of the methods employed in the project.

Blochian utopian theory, discussed in the previous chapter, establishes a strong connection between the cultural theorists of the Frankfurt School and the development of utopian studies. This is partly due to Ernst Bloch's close relationship to the Frankfurt circle (*see* Lowy 2017, Zipes 1988, Jay 1973), in addition to his influence on utopian thought and the terminology of utopian critique (*see* Muñoz 2009, Levitas 2013). Bloch's methods of analysis, while heavily theoretical, have contributed to the way that the project's data was handled, as I will discuss further below. In particular, his work established that both popular and elite cultural production could develop understandings of utopian impulses in everyday life (*see* Daniel and Moylan ed. 1997, Muñoz 2009). Furthermore, his theories embrace the ambiguity of utopian impulses, a discussion developed by Bell (2017) and Featherstone (2017) in the previous chapter. However, in addition to Bloch, the approaches of contemporary utopian theorists including Muñoz (2009), Bell (2017), Cooper (2014), and Sargisson (2000) have guided much of the approach to developing case studies of utopia in the everyday. Specifically, the latter two theorists used interviews and observations of participants in multiple case studies which, rather than presenting the sites as utopian blueprints, developed understandings of how participants' relationships to everyday practices and concepts such as trade, debate, chores, belonging, and community can be transformed or reimagined in communities pursuing ideas of social change, freedom, or simply alternatives to the present.

This theoretical background is reflected in my use of terms like everyday and mundane life, behaviours, and knowledges, as well as references to culture and the cultural (including popular culture, counterculture, and subculture), in addition to the prefigurative, utopian, and politics of social change as key points of investigation in the project. I regard

these terms as inter-related rather than interchangeable, and I drew from reflexive and participatory research methodologies to supplement my understanding of facet methodology, and to develop the specific methods used for each case study.

For example, engagement with autoethnographical and sociological methods helped to inform my approach to the research questions once the bakery/café and zine community were identified as potential research sites. Specifically formative to the project design was scholarship exploring positionality (e.g. Wolf 1992; Pacheco-Vega and Parizeau 2018; Stephens-Griffin and Griffin 2019), reflexivity (e.g. Smith 1994; Markham and Couldry 2007; Stephens-Griffin and Griffin 2019), and the import of qualitative, creative, and participatory methods (Hall 2009; Kusenbach 2003). Reading specific examples of studies using ethnographic methods, particularly participatory observation, developed my understandings of the practices of this form of research, helped to negotiate discomfort, and guided the project by providing hints and ideas on what could be included. For example, although my focus was largely on visual data, sounds, smells (in the bakery especially), and attention to movement and activity, enriched the observations, in addition to developing my ability to focus on and record seemingly circumstantial details which then formed points of discussion later on.

Moreover, the scholarship referred to above helped to address potential issues of representing both the case studies and the findings as exceptional or limited, or conversely as typical and universal (particularly regarding representations of zines/the zine community and the practice and pursuit of social change, as I will discuss further below), because the researchers advocated for in-depth and participatory approaches to research in ways that furthered, rather than inhibited, the scope and significance of the findings (*see* Wolf 1992; Markham and Couldry 2007; Davis and Heaphy 2011; Stephens-Griffin and Griffin 2019). In the project, this meant that researching practices of safety, situated and contextualised by the

sites in which they are practiced, elevated and reformed the project by illuminating ways in which contemporary theorizations of safety are currently limited. This is reflected in how, over the course of the research period, I adjusted the project's focus from looking at contemporary safe space practices in sites other than universities specifically, to looking for safety in more complex and ambiguous ways as a potentially prefigurative, everyday knowledge and practice.

#### 4.4. Adjustments and changes: choosing sites and methods

In the first year of the project the framing of the research questions developed from focusing explicitly on contemporary safe space practices in and outside of universities to engaging with safety more generally, largely as a result of gaps identified in existing literature on both safe spaces and safety. During this first year I began research training at Manchester and Keele University, in addition to preparation for ethical approval which developed in tandem with the selection of suitable potential research sites. I had already chosen to continue my Master's research into zine community and culture, and I had a broad and growing personal collection of zines to sample for this case study. Over the course of the project, I supplemented this collection with visits to zinefests in Birmingham and Manchester, as well as libraries and archives found in these cities, and independent shops and distros (independent distributors and in-house publishers) in Brighton and London, in addition to loans and gifts from friends and fellow zine makers and collectors. While the idea for the research project came out of my Master's research, I found zine culture and community an appropriate choice for a study on safe spaces because they challenged emerging debates characterizing safe spaces as exclusive sites that chilled discussion. In comparison, the zine community has made use of contemporary safe space tools, like trigger and content warnings, whilst also being known as a form and culture regularly engaging with the taboo in pursuit of authentic expression.

Initially, I had also intended to work with an on-campus postgraduate group who employed explicit safe space rules to run a workshop space. Although this site closed during the ethical approval process, during this time I began working more closely with the bakery/café and arts company and found that their practices, although not traditionally associated with contemporary safe spaces, would in fact contribute historical and everyday practices of safety which would develop understandings of contemporary safe space politics further. Specifically, the bakery/café employed practices relating to food production and reuse, and health and safety. Reflecting on the use of facet methodology in the research design of Davies and Heaphy (2011), I found both of these sites challenged and problematized both idealized understandings of safety, as well as disparaging characterizations of safety found in contemporary debates about safe space practices. By the second year, the two potential research sites – the bakery/café and zine community and culture – had been chosen, which developed alongside the re-orientation of the project to safety more broadly. A supplementary case study of a university group, chosen to replace the initial on-campus site, was additionally included in the project for a small interview-based study, but due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and because data from the other two case studies was sufficient for the project, this case study was dropped.

While the approach to each case study was equally informed by a combination of creative and participatory methodologies, with a particular emphasis on approaches appropriate to a cultural studies project, the nature of the two chosen research sites called for multiple and reflexive approaches to conducting research. I had initially intended to use participatory observation at the bakery/café and textual-material analysis of zines for the zine community case study but, as the research project developed, the comparative benefits of these approaches began to influence each other. To summarise, at the bakery/café I used a combination of ethnographic and textual analysis methods, in addition to scholarship as well as non-academic

texts discussing the ethos and practices of participatory art, to make sense of data gathered through participatory observation, supplemented by photographs taken at the site. In contrast, for the zine community and culture I built on existing scholarship on zines through the collection and textual analysis of zine objects, supplemented by visits to zine libraries and zinefests across England, at which I took photographs of zines and zine libraries which later became relevant to broader understandings of zine culture. In the next section I provide an overview of the case studies in more depth and the specifics of the research in each site.

#### 4.5. The Bakery/Café:

The first case study is a community bakery and café open weekly and based in a local participatory arts company in Stoke on Trent. Initially a touring company which was founded in 1985, the company began to focus on local arts work and moved into the current location in 2014. The company's mission is to develop the cultural infrastructure in the local area through employing a network of artists and encouraging community engagement in the arts, thereby diversifying and developing Stoke's community cultural identity overall. Their work is largely performance-based, including carnival and theatre, and also includes lantern parades, installation, and workshops. From 2014, the company set about researching food histories and stories from local community members; the bakery is one of the products of this project. A Real Bread bakery, the site bakes from recipes inspired by company projects from throughout their tenure, and uses no preservatives or artificial ingredients. Whereas the bakery has been open weekly for sales, the café is a more recent addition and led to the refurbishment of part of the downstairs space, including the installation of windows and customer toilets. Due to the success of the café, the space is now often used in addition to the community space upstairs as a place to meet and plan events, and to host workshops and community events.

In the bakery/café, I was initially a volunteer at the site, and was drawn to its potential as a case study for the project due to its ethos of the pursuit of social change through multiple methods of community outreach and engagement rather than its explicit employment of the concept of safe space. Moreover, I was interested in the possibilities for health, hygiene, and safety practices to become a point of exploration in the discussion of safety, where it has been somewhat overlooked, and in the context of alternative food economies, such as the bakery/café uses. Throughout my time there as a volunteer and researcher, my role in the site has developed (which demonstrates an example of the way the company develops and engages with community participants); at this time, I have been a volunteer at the bakery/café and community events, I have been employed as an associate artist at the site, I am a member of a community advisory board, and I have attended events, including workshops and theatre productions, as a visitor. This overview will summarize the workings of the bakery/café within the broader context of the arts company, and detail the roles of volunteers and workers, before moving on to my own work as a researcher in the site.

#### *4.5.1 Building*

The current building housing the company is one of a cluster of industrial buildings on the edge of Stoke town centre, close to the high street, a public park, and the YMCA. The arts company shares the building with other cultural organizations, and parts of the site including the workshops and meeting spaces often host arts and community organizations for different projects. The company employs a network of artists as well as its connections to other arts organizations across the country to fund, support, and employ artists and cultural projects. The productions and projects that the company supports are vocal about social commentary and change, and the company's aims include diversifying arts and cultural spaces twofold by, firstly, supporting artists from many social, economic, and professional spaces and, secondly, by situating arts and culture outside of the institutional gallery space –

for example, theatre productions and exhibitions have been hosted by ex-industrial buildings, in forests, and in empty high-street shops, including the arts company building itself.

The somewhat maze-like nature of the arts company building affects how different working roles and activities cross over in the site. While the bakery/café is found on the ground floor of the building, it shares this floor with the reception and two workshop spaces used for storage, community events, and building large structures. Additionally, the whole floor has been repurposed for productions, turning the site into large, immersive stage sets. The bakery/café itself is divided using counters, shelves, and architecture into the café, kitchen and bakery, and food storage space. Via the latter, the first archive (containing costumes, structures, props, and other surviving proof of past projects) can be accessed, whereas the majority of the second floor can be accessed through the café or the reception, and is used for administrative work, project planning and rehearsal, and as a bookable meeting space for community groups. It also contains a second archive/library of publications associated with the past work of the company. In the building, particularly when the kitchen and café are running, there may be company staff, including artists, managers, producers, and support workers, as well as bakery volunteers, visitors and customers, board members, local community groups, and visiting artists using these various spaces. While these spaces are loosely activity specific, they are right next to each other and often we run into each other: for example, artists have shown off different costumes from the archives to people working in the bakery and café, and I have interrupted staff meetings to find the keys to the bakery doors, or use the upstairs microwave, or find paintbrushes for workshops. In addition, as I discuss later in the thesis, multiple workers in the space have multiple roles, and different commitments and cross-overs of activity are both part of the working rhythms of the site, as well as facilitated by the physical building itself.

#### *4.5.2 People*

To demonstrate some of the ways these overlapping activities are woven into the structure of the site, I will summarize here some of the main roles of people working at the company. Loosely hierarchical, the bakery and arts company has a set cast of employed roles including the company director, producers, building manager, chef, cleaner, kitchen manager, and engagement officer, as well as the aforementioned network of artists and engagement workers, and company decisions are made with the input of the board of trustees. The roles of these workers include, as part of but often overlooked aspects of art and cultural production, commission and project development, workshops, rehearsals, peer review, budget and proposal writing, set-up and closing, and advertising in addition to their work as artists. The work of commissioning, engaging, and skill-sharing that the company invests in means that the company's output is co-produced with local professional and non-professional artists as well as the surrounding community, wherein work and roles are often shared, particularly through training. This adheres to the participatory ethos of the company's work, developing practices that often stand in critical contention to institutional and elitist forms of cultural production, without undermining the skills and knowledges of artists themselves (*see* Materasso 2019).

Skill-sharing and overlapping roles are also demonstrated by the three people who enabled me to research at the site. The first, a bakery volunteer and associate artist at the company, introduced me to the site as a volunteer at the bakery. The second, the bakery manager and art company director, and the third, building manager and artist, manage activities and people in the bakery/café and building activities more generally. After gaining ethical approval from the university, having been introduced to and worked with those in the bakery/café, I asked the latter two for permission to advertise and conduct the project before mentioning the work to other people in the bakery/café. The bakery/café workers include the bakery manager/company director, the chef (who is also an artist), and volunteers – who may

also be artists or who are connected to the company through community and outreach work. Overall, many volunteers frequent week-by-week, but the group changes depending on commitments. They are local, long-term residents of Stoke on Trent and the surrounding area, but apart from that commonality the group is a diverse and often fluctuating range of ages, ethnicities, genders, and skills.

The bakery is open every week on a Friday for sales – baking usually starts late the Thursday prior with the chef and the bakery manager. The bakery also sells on markets in the surrounding area; depending on the day of the market, the bread is made within 24 hours of the market. Bread and items not sold on the day will be frozen and sold for a reduced price, or used by the company for lunches and events. Additionally, workers at the bakery may take products, which are also used for Pay As You Feel lunches in the café. Many of the ingredients for the bakery/café lunches are sourced from a national food charity, which ‘intercepts’ surplus food from local supermarkets before it is spoiled or thrown away, and which is also used to support charitable food sharing groups hosted and supported by the company. These latter activities developed further over the COVID-19 pandemic period, when the building was closed to visitors, volunteers, and customers, during which time the bakery adapted their pre-ordering system for baking and delivering bread to customers in the local area. Volunteers, on an average working day, usually start work during the morning, before the café opens at noon. Jobs include preparing, cooking, and baking bakery and café products, setting up and closing down the café area, washing up, serving customers, and preparing bakery orders, which all workers share, although some volunteers may return to the same roles each week depending on preference. Whereas at certain times – when the café is busy, or just before opening – the atmosphere can be stressful, most of the time volunteers can work at their own pace as the bakery, much like the rest of the company’s work, is modelled on opportunities for skill-gaining in addition to qualification-recognized skills.

Work in the bakery/café can also include opportunities within other parts of the company, as skills are identified and developed.

My participatory observation in the bakery lasted from 24/05/2019 until 14/12/2019, during which time the community café was refurbished and the company's surplus food project developed into a twice-weekly café, as well as hosting community network events and supporting local food sharing charities. In the next section, I discuss the specifics of the research at the bakery/café, before moving onto the zine community case study.

#### *4.5.3 Research Ethics*

I was first introduced to the bakery and arts company by a friend who had volunteered and worked with the company for a number of years, including conducting research there. Initially, I volunteered sporadically at the bakery/café before considering it for the project, so by the time I applied for ethical approval I already knew key gatekeepers at the site. I applied for ethical approval for research at the bakery/café on 14/03/2019 and received approval on 16/04/2019 (Application number HU190010; with Amendments HU190018 *see Appendix*).

After receiving approval, I spoke to the bakery manager and building manager to explain the project and ask permission to advertise and begin the research. This was necessary as these people are responsible for volunteer activities and projects happening at the site. Both gave permission to continue with the project. I distributed information sheets and consent forms to bakery/café workers on 26/04/2019 and followed up by explaining the information and questions on the sheets verbally. These sheets were distributed with the understanding that potential participants could take them home for a two-week period of reflection. However, I also carried spare sheets to subsequent visits to the bakery/café in case people needed a spare or replacement copy.

In the bakery/café, between 3 and 10 staff were present at each observation: workers fluctuate each week due to prior or other commitments, in addition to the fact that others may

start working before or after I had arrived or left the bakery. While I had informed and gained consent for a core group who would be present each week, during the research period, 1 participant/bakery volunteer had to leave due to other commitments, not every participant was present every week, and other volunteers joined the bakery. Therefore, although I did not continue recruiting participants after the research period had started, I did inform new and non-participating workers that I was doing research at the site. To maintain the anonymity of all working at the site, I have not used any names and refer only to the roles of research participants. Additionally, I would follow up with research participants by asking permission before including a quotation or specific conversation in the thesis.

The research period at the bakery/café lasted 7 months (24/05/2019-14/12/2019). Although the bakery/café is open weekly, this includes some periods of closure during this time. Additionally, I was not always able to attend every week. At times when I was at the site, approximately fortnightly, I would spend between 2-5 hours working there. I used a combination of participatory observation approaches during my time at the site. In some sessions, I would write down, correct, or clarify understandings about the structure and activities of the bakery/café and arts company. During other sessions, I would note down everything that I observed and write up the whole session afterwards; this latter, more thorough approach was spaced out across the research period.

This approach was appropriate for multiple reasons. Firstly, the routine of the bakery/café is relatively stable week-by-week, so a detailed participatory observation session would yield very repetitive findings over a short period of time, or an overwhelming (and still very repetitive) data set over a longer period of time. In comparison, a longer research period, in which detailed sessions are further set apart, illuminates differences in the site, particularly experimentations with the layout and activities, as well as the uses of different foods across the seasons. However, so as to not overlook important clarifications and understandings from

sessions outside of these particular observations, I incorporated notes and useful information from sessions across the whole research period.

During a typical detailed participatory observation session, I would carry out jobs as a volunteer and make notes on what happened during that time. Typically, these notes would be when others arrived and left, jobs that I did and others did, how busy the bakery was and how busy the café was during opening times, what was on the menu that day, and other activities happening in the building, such as preparation for community events and art or festival projects. In addition, I would take photographs of the bread counter, the bakery and café area, and other parts of the building including the archive, outside of the building, and the food and storage area. These notes and photographs would serve initially as prompts; during my lunch break, I would handwrite a sketch of the activities of the day, and any notable conversations. After leaving the bakery/café for the day, I would type up a more detailed account of the session; I learned some of the style and approaches for writing field notes from a combination of ethnographic and sociological research, but additionally from research in utopian studies (Wolf 1992; Evans 2014; Sargisson 2000)

The research period lasted from:

24-05-2019-14/12/2019

During the research period, I produced:

- 16 photographs,
- 15 handwritten pages of notes, which I compiled and elaborated on to produce
- 31 pages of typed observations, which compiled the photographs, observations, photograph descriptions, and contextual information on the building and people in the research study

#### *4.5.4 Processing the data and beginning analysis*

At the end of the research period (14/12/2019) I notified participants and other workers in the company that I had completed the data gathering stage. Handwritten notes were stored in a secure site in the university, whereas typed notes and photographs were stored securely on a password-protected USB. To process the data I began by elaborating on and providing further context to the observations using my further experiences at the bakery/café and arts company outside of my role as a volunteer and researcher. Additionally, I used both the observations and my experiences at the site to provide an overview of the layout of the site, including the activities and roles of workers there, supplemented by the photographs I had taken throughout the research period.

During this process, themes emerged that later became the key focus of each of the discussion chapters: community, spatial production and temporal structure, and safety. For the topic of safety, I began by sorting practices I had observed in the bakery/café and the arts company into types of safety that aligned with existing understandings of safe space practices, and other types of safety that current scholarship had not really discussed. A commonality between these two types of safety was the use of signs and stickers in the bakery – for example, the use of stickers to advertise the site as an LGBT+ safe space, and the use of signs to ensure health, hygiene, and safety practices, in addition to the use of signs and posters which hinted at the politics of social change in the site. The initial analysis of the data primarily used these signs and key observations at the bakery/café as prompts to orient the discussion of the themes that had come out of the first write up. As, during this process, the methods of analysing the data from the two case studies began to overlap and influence each other, I will discuss in more detail at the end of this chapter the overall approach to the data.

#### 4.6. Zine community and culture:

The second case study was formed through research into and analysis of zine objects and zine community spaces. Zines are a form of independent publishing traded, given away, or sold for the cost of production by makers, readers, and distributors (distros, usually a small independent press). The name zine is a shortening of fanzine, which is a play on the suffix of magazine, and incorporates the origins of the form in science fiction and fantasy fan communities around the 1930s (*see* Duncombe 2008). Fanzines are, in contemporary zine culture, a subgenre of the overall form and can discuss anything from science fiction TV series *The Mandalorian*, to pop music, to Freddie Mercury's cats.

Although the emergence of the form in fan communities is reflected in contemporary zine publications, the form has been additionally influenced by its origins in countercultural and independent publishing, particularly feminist and anti-racist presses, and shares these histories with personal forms like chapbooks, as well as more politicized ones like pamphlets (Licona 2012, Piepmeier 2008; Ramdarshan Bold 2017). These origins are now reflected in the expression of zines exploring experiences of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, and class, where communities make and find spaces to discuss the personal and political; these kinds of zines are often referred to as perzines (personal zines), but these topics are also well-suited to collectively produced zines.

The form is most well-known for its connections to punk subcultural expression (Hebdige 1988; Bell 1998; Duncombe 2008); these zines may be referred to as either fanzines or punk zines. Scholarship on zines directs the cut-and-paste aesthetics, political expression, and DIY ethics of independent publishing found in the form to punk culture and expression. However, this is contested by Licona (2012), and additionally scholarship on independent publishing demonstrates that these characteristics of zines emerged from a combination of

historical factors (*see above, also*, Honma 2016). Yet, the influence of punk on the zine form should also not be understated, not least because it is in contact with this and related DIY cultural spheres that the form is accessed and understood by many zine makers, readers, and scholars.

Defining zines is a complicated task, particularly due to the commercialization of the form, connotations between the words ‘zine’ and ‘magazine’ due to inexperience with the culture, and the broad application of their dominant characteristics, which I will explain in more detail below. Zine scholars such as Duncombe, Licona, and Piepmeier all acknowledge the difficulties and potentially exclusionary pitfalls of defining the form, although they agree that the definition of a zine is often as personal and idiosyncratic as the form itself, and usually developed through direct experience with zine objects. Further complicating this approach, however, is the emergence of ‘e-zines;’ there is often some confusion over whether an e-zine is an online zine, an online magazine, or a digitized paper zine (Atton 2002, Licona and Brouwer 2015). This confusion is typified by Atton (2002), who discusses whether or not a personal blog can be considered a kind of (e-)zine, regardless of whether the author has actually heard of zines or not. Yet, while there are no hard and fast rules on what a zine may look like or what it may contain, a familiarity with the form, culture, and community of zines contributes a better understanding and ability to distinguish a zine from other forms of independent publishing, and even publications which are called zines but are considered outliers or pretenders (*see* Duncombe 2008). In the process of collecting, working with, and researching zines, I have found that certain criteria, discussed below, are useful to increase accessibility to the form in light of both their commercialization and with their increased presence in academic and arts institutional spaces, as well as to draw attention to overlooked and underrepresented aspects of zine culture.

#### 4.6.1 Finding zines: on style, content, cost, and context

My own approach to identifying a zine requires a combined inference of style, content, cost, and context, which I will discuss in turn in relation to the use of zines in this project. Firstly, style: zines are handmade objects. Whether a zine has been assembled on a desk or a desktop, they incorporate both image and text including found objects/texts, handwriting and -drawing, and collage. Often, they include mistakes which can lend additional meaning to the zine; Hays (2017) refers to crossed-out words as evidence of learning and self-critique. Overall, the style I look for in a zine is what Piepmeier and Duncombe refer to as the ‘hand of the author.’ When analysing zine content, the visibility of this ‘hand’ means that the analysis of a zine object can be developed to discuss broader expression of shared community ethics and practices in zine culture. Piepmeier (2008) refers to this as ‘material evidence of community’, which enables scholars to develop readings of zine objects that ground and evidence understandings of the shared histories, politics, and ethics of communities that use the zine as a form of expression, and which I will explain in more detail below.

The second criteria, content, poses some complexities for a zine case study. Whereas individual zine content differs vastly, the presence of genres and subgenres in the form suggests there are certain ways of grouping zines together, although most overlap – for example, a queer zine or a feminist zine (fem zine) may be considered subgenres of perzines, but fem zines themselves can be considered a genre, of which riot grrrl zines could be a subgenre of either fem zines or punk zines. Genres and subgenres have been useful for distro/distribution zines (another genre), like *Factsheet Five* and *Behind the Zines*, which have used these distinctions to organize their practice. However, for my own collection as well as sampling for this project, I have preferred to use zines of different, or unclear, genres

discussing varying topics. Along with the analysis of individual zines, this approach enables the demonstration of shared community practices across a range of both topics and zines, and addresses issues referred to by Licona (2012). She argues that the focus on punk zines in scholarship has presented a limited purview of zine culture, and largely omits or limits the presence of queer, feminist, and anti-racist zines, which she seeks to rectify in her own work.

However, for this project, some exclusion has been necessary. In different ways, exclusion of zines in this project has been unavoidable, circumstantial, or intentional. For example, most of the zines I have found or have been given have been from the U.K., the U.S., Canada, and Germany. With the few exceptions of some German and Spanish phrases, all of these zines are English-language which, while unintentional, presents a limited view of global zine culture in general. In contrast, one example of exclusionary practice in this project is wholly intentional, and addresses my third criteria, which is cost. The price of a zine is indicative of its connection to the broader culture; this is because of the popularization and subsequent commercialisation of the zine in the 1990s. As Duncombe (2008) discusses in interviews with zinesters, the zine's connection to counterculture made it a desirable, marketable, and easily reproducible object. The cut-and-paste, DIY aesthetics meant the zine could be produced cheaply and for profit, against the general not-for-profit ethos of DIY culture. This commercialization meant that a zine could be a zine in name only, and this name's similarity to magazine has meant that, in the context of independent publishing, an independent magazine is sometimes referred to as a zine for short, or to imply independent production, without much reference to the aesthetics or history of the form. This commercialization or confusion is often discernible through pricing: as Atton (2002: 59) states, a zine is 'invariably cheap.' While I have traded zines, been loaned, or given them, in financial terms this selectivity means I will not pay more than £10 (or equivalent) for a single zine. When buying a zine, I also take into consideration the production costs, as the price

should generally reflect this, but most zines will sell for about £5 or less, or equivalent in different currencies.

A further, intentional form of exclusion also necessitates reflections on the fourth and final criteria: context. By context I mean how and where the zine has been found, which bears relevance to broader understandings of zine community and culture. For example, sites where zines are commonly found reflect broader community practices, including DIY, participatory, and non-hierarchical ethics. Zines can be found for sale or trade, as discussed above, at independent bookshops and small presses, as well as at zinefests: temporary conventions/markets where zines are made, traded, and sold alongside other events. Kempson (2015) uses the site of the zinefest to discuss the structure of the zine community, pointing to the variation of style and content found in zines and the concentration of this difference at zinefests to argue that the zine community is ‘internally heterogeneous,’ with no centrality or permanent community site. She uses this term to demonstrate the lack of hierarchy in zine culture, represented spatially in the market at zinefests, although her research accommodates the presence of ‘zine stars’ in the community, well-known zinesters who are treated with some hesitation by the community due to a shared desire for a lack of hierarchy and suspicion of commercialization. Additionally, zines are also found in archives and libraries dedicated to the form and open to the public, which are generally more permanent than zinefests, and the use of online community forums and archives has, as discussed, presented contradictions to understandings that the zine form is supposedly inherently transient and in transit, and additionally complicates understandings of the post-commercialization zine community as inaccessible, coded, and exclusive (*see* Hebdige 1988, Duncombe 2008).

Yet, while zines from my collection have been found at distros, independent shops, and at zinefests, I have also stumbled across zines in the backrooms and the counters of record shops, on makers’ markets, in art galleries, as well as a large collection of Stoke City

FC's fanzine *The Oatcake* in the local charity shop, meaning that the location and context of zines sometimes overlaps with communities outside of those that directly participate in the making and trading of the form. Both the practices of stumbling across and seeking out zines, as well as these understandings of where and how zines can be found is relevant to the exclusion of the specific content of certain zines – most notably, far-right/extremist/fascist zines – that have not been featured or considered for the project. Whether or not I will discuss these kinds of zines has been a recurrent inquiry throughout the project – one which I had previously dismissed out of hand – but which has ultimately engendered my own reflections on the community spaces of zines that I have worked with. This form of exclusion is specifically related to context, not content, as context elucidates why the exclusion of far-right and fascist zines has been, simultaneously, unavoidable, circumstantial, *and* intentional. To explain, although the scope and intentions of the project did not include engaging with these zines, and although their presence has been documented (*see* Duncombe 2008, Licona 2012), which adheres to the subcultural and anti-censorship possibilities of communities which make and distribute zines, I have simply not come across any of them either incidentally or by browsing places where zines can explicitly be found, like a library or an archive. Licona's analysis of zines touches on why this may be – she points to one zine which includes a condition to potential zine traders that any trades which include racist, homophobic, or transphobic zines will end up in the local recycling bin – which suggests that there are general community conditions on zine distribution which have made zines like this scarce or difficult to locate publicly, a suggestion which I explore in more depth in the discussion of the zine community in the subsequent chapters on the case studies.

#### 4.6.2. *Ethical considerations*

For the zine community and culture case study, I mostly focused on textual analysis of the zines sampled from my own collection, and from online and physical distros, archives, and

libraries. Most zines are anti- or non-copyright, but in addition all zines used in the thesis were made for distribution; all identifying details of the zines are provided by the zines themselves (for example, pseudonyms are used where provided, anonymously written zines are identified using the zine title and issue number). Zines, stickers, and signs found and accessed at libraries and archives were photographed without the inclusion of people – usually in empty rooms, in fact – and zines were later accessed online, if available. Understandings of zine community practices have developed throughout my own participation in the community as a collector, zine maker, and workshop facilitator, in addition to attendance out of personal interest. I did, however, self-describe as a researcher working with zines when talking to zinemakers at zinefests during the project. My approach to researching zines aligns with growing and ongoing understandings of DIY and independent archival work and ethics, a still-developing archival and research practice (which are often discussed and disseminated in zines themselves). In addition, personal knowledge and experience with the zine community has been developed and informed through existing scholarship on zines and DIY communities, discussed in the theoretical framework.

#### *4.6.3. Data summary*

During the project I attended 3 zinefests (Brum Zine Fest 2018, Birmingham UK; North West Zine Fest 2017, 2018, Manchester UK), visited 2 zine libraries (Salford Zine Library; Birmingham Zine Library), and 2 zine exhibitions (Staffordshire University 2018; People's History Museum Manchester 2019). I documented these visits by taking photographs, mostly of zines found at the sites. I would use these photographs for reference or, in the case of visits to libraries, to revisit the zine online (if available) at archive sites such as [isuu.com](http://isuu.com) and [archive.org](http://archive.org).

My personal zine collection, including the ones acquired through trade and purchase at zine fests, contains over 200 zines located from Glasgow, Manchester, Stoke-on-Trent,

Birmingham, London, and Brighton UK; Seattle WA, Portland OR, and San Francisco, Oakland, and Berkeley CA; Toronto, Canada; Berlin, Germany, and three on loan from Sheffield, UK.

Of these zines I have used 14 for direct textual analysis in the thesis, scanning and cropping relevant pages or sections to visually aid and evidence the discussion. Additionally, I have referenced 2 zines sourced from online digitised archives. The thesis also includes the analysis of 2 photographs of zine libraries. Of the overall 16 zines used in the thesis, including the two sourced from online archives, 6 of the zines included were two issues produced by the same three zine makers (e.g. *Chisel Tip #4* and *#5*), 15 had a single editor, although this includes zine makers/editors collating and editing articles of different authors, and one was collectively produced. Of these zines, 2 discussed music and politics, 4 were zines collating information and articles on a specific topic, 6 were perzines, 3 were collections of personal stories from different authors on a particular topic, 1 was a distribution zine. 12 of the overall 16 zines were produced by women, nonbinary, or feminine-identified people, including one zine by multiple authors, exclusively women and girls; 2 were by men; 1 was unclear; and 1 was collectively produced. Of the 16 zines, 5 explicitly mentioned ethnicity: 4 of these zines were by people of colour, including the zine by multiple authors, 1 by a white person. Finally, of the 16 zines, 1 contains articles that explicitly refer to safety, and 3 make use of content/trigger warning practices.

These zines were chosen for analysis primarily because, through initial readings, they enhanced or challenged understandings of the zine community and culture found in existing scholarship. Although I intentionally chose not to analyse zines which specifically discuss contemporary safe space practices to avoid limiting the representation of zines, some of the zines used for direct textual analysis either discuss safety or make use of contemporary safe space practices (i.e. trigger/content warnings). The inclusion of these zines was purposeful to

challenge and enrich existing understandings of community safeguarding practices in the zine community, as well as understandings of safe space practices in different community contexts. These analyses were informed and practiced with cultural studies methodologies and approaches in mind: specifically, the analysis of visual data was informed by Barthes' (2009) approach to semiotic analysis of everyday phenomena and cultural object, and Littler's (2019) analysis of a photograph of Trump (and friends) and in their broader cultural and socio-political context. The specific textual-material analysis method, however, was drawn from Alison Piepmeier's (2008) method of zine analysis and is discussed below.

#### *4.6.4. Initial analysis of the data*

As explained above, acquiring zines involves negotiating with existing understandings of the culture and form, while acknowledging the idiosyncrasies and uniqueness of each zine object, produced due to the flexibility and DIY methods of independent publishing. Standardizing or generalizing zine objects, culture, or the community is therefore difficult due to the resistance to conformity or structure. However, while acknowledging these conditions, zine scholars have developed methods to analyse and discuss zine culture and zines themselves that unite a shared sense of ethics and practices in the zine community with the non-hierarchical, flexibly structured, and heterogeneous spaces and objects that this community produces. For example, as discussed above, Kempson (2015) combines interviews and observations to develop insights into the ways the temporary organizations of shared community sites are more generally reflected in the ethics of DIY and independent publishing, but also how these understandings are challenged by zinesters' personal feelings of belonging to the community.

In the project, I found Piepmeier's (2008) textual-material method of analysing zine objects formative for the zine community case study and additionally influential on the analysis of signs in the bakery/café. Both Piepmeier (2008) and Kempson (2015) maintain that the zine

community shares the form, which has emerged from certain communities of activist and independent cultural production, but Piepmeier goes further to demonstrate that the close reading of zine objects can illuminate understandings not only of individual zine makers, but of wider community practices. Her method can be broken down into three essential arguments. The first is that zines are handmade objects and, as I discuss above, the ‘hand of the author’ can be seen in the making of the zine – this means that understandings from both the form *and* content, including both writing and image, of the zine must be incorporated throughout the discussion in order to make and develop understandings about the object, culture, and community.

The second argument involves the trading practices of zines, including anonymous gifting and personal touches to packages. Piepmeier argues that whether or not the zine was exchanged or given away, both the handmade aesthetic and personal content of zines produce a ‘giftlike quality,’ which affects both makers and readers in the community (Piepmeier 2008). This second argument means that zines have been produced to be financially accessible, as they are often traded for other zines or for the cost of production, but additionally they are accessible forms of expression, by which she explains that handling zines encourages emulation: people interacting with zine objects often end up producing zines themselves. This second point draws on both the DIY making practices of zine culture, as well as the modes of trade and exchange common to independent cultural production practices. The third argument builds upon the previous two to suggest that zine making and trading are combined practices, and zine maker and reader overlap. Through the practices of making and trading zines, the zine object bears evidence of the hands it passes through, until it eventually breaks down. Piepmeier argues that therefore the zine object comes to embody the disparately structured community, as well as its values and practices.

Bearing these arguments in mind, I initially began to summarise existing scholarship on zines and the zine community, through which I used close textual analysis of zines themselves to evidence and challenge these arguments. This is in accord with ‘hands-on’ approaches advocated by zine scholars, including Duncombe (2008) and Piepmeier (2008). However, the limitations of this approach are overviewed by Adela C. Licona (2012), whose work demonstrates the vastly different demographics of the zine community that are represented in scholarship through this method and who, in later work with Daniel Brouwer (*see* Licona and Brouwer 2015), challenges the neglect or dismissal of online and digitized zines.

Despite these limitations, close reading techniques of analysis are practical for the study of zine objects, as although archiving and digitising zines are ongoing efforts, and some zines I found in libraries could later be accessed online, a broader scale study of zine content is still currently unfeasible, not least because the nearly century-old form has, up until recently, been known for its tendency to disintegrate mid-circulation (*see* Piepmeier 2008; Duncombe 2008; Licona and Brouwer 2015). Therefore, close textual analysis combined with Piepmeier’s arguments about material evidence of community, in addition to other studies on zines that expand the purview of my own collection (*see* Duncombe 2008; Licona 2012; Bell 1998; Piepmeier 2009), and visits to archives and libraries has enabled and enriched my broader understandings and observations about zine culture discussed in the case study chapters.

Throughout this initial approach, I began to take note of discussions of safety as well as the presence of contemporary safe space practices – including content and trigger warnings – which aligned with current scholarship on safe spaces, but often undercut standardized ideas about these practices in both popular and academic debate. From this point, and discussed in the next section, the data from the participatory observations in the bakery/café led to a

restructuring of the initial thesis approach from discussing the case studies in turn, to developing a comparative analysis of each case study focused around their shared themes.

#### 4.7. Restructuring the discussion

Influenced by the lack of consensus over representation of the zine community and by the resurgence in popularity of zines, evidenced by the increase and return of zine fests and libraries, the initial approach to the research into zine culture and community identified tensions between community representation and zine making practice, which I developed from combining understandings in existing scholarship with evidence found in zines. In comparison, from the bakery/café data themes – of community formation and maintenance, and spatial and temporal production – emerged from initially looking at the data from the participatory observations, but also bore relevance to the discussion of zine community and culture.

Prior to these initial findings, the structure of the thesis was strictly comparative of the bakery/café and zine community and culture; these case studies would be explored in turn, focusing on the practices of safety particular to each. However, after completing most of the empirical work, the thesis structure evolved to discuss, in turn, community, spatial production and temporality, and then types of safety where both sets of data would speak to each other. As Ragin points out, the framing and handling of a single set of data enables multiple possibilities for what how the case is defined (Ragin and Becker 1992). At this point in the project, some confusion could arise: are the case studies a bakery/café and zine community and culture, or are they community, spatial production, and safety as practiced in these sites? To address this, I will refer back to the research questions (discussed in the Introduction), below:

1. How are safe spaces formed, maintained, and employed?
2. How are safe space practices used to engage with broader debates about security, safety, violence, and freedom in a contemporary political context?

3. How does a consideration of safety contribute to, or expand upon, theories of ‘everyday utopia’?

The final research question most informs how a case study is defined in the project. The bakery/café and the zine community can be considered case studies of ‘everyday utopia,’ a term coined by Cooper, which in my project is also more broadly contextualised by theories of utopia and spatial production discussed in the previous chapter (*see* Cooper 2014; *see also* Bloch, 1988, 1986; Sargisson 2000; Muñoz 2009; Lefebvre 1991). As comparisons, the two case studies are both characterized by the development of alternative economies, informed by a DIY and participatory ethics of accessible modes of cultural production, and a shared pursuit of social change. Both additionally utilize practices of safety that are commonly associated with contemporary safe space practices, as well as community-specific forms of safeguarding. The focus on utopia, however, is informed by the project’s aim to rethink understandings of safety by building on discussions of safe space practices, the broader political contexts that these discussions are a part of, and the pursuit of social change shared by the communities I was researching. In the next section, I detail how the broader scholarship, theoretical framework, and political context informed the analysis of the data and the development of the thesis structure, before finally summarising the research design.

#### 4.8. Broader analytical context

The structure of the thesis emerged fully during the analysis stage, to draw out and make sense of tensions and themes identified in the data and the existing scholarship, to compare and contrast the case studies’ shared practices of participatory and DIY ethos, and to develop understandings of safety that built upon and expanded existing scholarship on safety and safe space practices. Key to the structure of the thesis was the influence of both existing literature on safety and safe spaces, as well as the broader political context drawn out from this

literature which developed the theoretical framework, and popular debates and ongoing events influencing the focus of the thesis on the politics of public and community safety.

For example, during my first year overviewing contemporary scholarship on safe space, I found that discussion and scholarship about safe space practices began to snowball post-2015 in response to heightened media debates over the impact of safe spaces in UK and US universities. This corresponded specifically to a rise of far-right populism in these countries, including Donald Trump's US presidential election and the Brexit Referendum in the UK, as well as being around the time that activist movements like Black Lives Matter and, later, #MeToo were becoming more widespread and well-known. The specific rhetorical relationship between safety, security, and freedom in public space and debate was a well-established pattern by the time the COVID-19 pandemic caused national shutdowns, responsive protests, and the comparatively heavy and often violent policing of protests against ongoing police brutality against women and, specifically, black communities.

This context, and the limited conceptualizations of safety that I mention above, necessitated a broader theoretical and political context that examined links between understandings of safe space and ongoing debates about security and safety. I particularly focused on debates about security and safety conceptualized through theories of neoliberalism (Harvey 2005; Featherstone 2017) and in a post-9/11 context (Ahmed 2004; Butler 2004). While these links were initially forged through theoretical discussions of freedom and fear, as well as discussions of bodies and identities politicized through gender, race, and sexuality (Ahmed 2004; Butler 2004; Hanhardt 2013; Brown 2018), the strategic contributions of neoconservative policies and the material effects of austerity policies informed much of the desire for social change that the communities I was researching were in pursuit of. Specifically, I found these discussions helpful to elucidate the transformative potential of alternative economic practices discussed in the case studies, as well as the

critiques of food waste and the DIY approach to everyday practices (such as cleaning, cooking, and healthcare) that these sites offered.

Therefore, these theoretical links between safety, security, freedom, and fear have been supported by scholarship discussing the material effects of neoliberal policy and practice, which have been used to situate the case studies within a broader socio-political context. In turn, I have used the data from the case studies to ground the understandings developed in theoretical framework, allowing me to interpret everyday practices of safety as potentially transformative critiques of dominant, reductive, and circular debates about safe space activism, specifically by drawing attention to lived, material, and everyday practices of safe space production.

Finally, the use of utopian theory is prevalent and forms the main critical theoretical lens through which the case studies are analysed. This critical lens was formed through a combination of utopian theorists – most notably Bloch, Muñoz, and Cooper, who have been discussed in previous chapters. These theorists and others have taken multiple approaches to discuss the production of utopia – whereas some use interviews and observation (Cooper 2014, Sargisson 2000), others have used forms of textual analysis (Bloch 1986; 1988; Muñoz 2009), and still others have taken critical theoretical approaches to the concept of utopia itself (Bell 2017, Featherstone 2017). Whereas Blochian theory has developed some of the terminology of utopian theory that is used in the thesis, and to which I interpret and draw out the significance of observations in the case studies, the work of Cooper and Muñoz has provided most guidance in the treatment of empirical, textual, and visual data gathered during the research.

The structure of the thesis reflects the overall intention that engagements with safety should be specific and well-grounded in order to improve conceptualisations and understandings of safety and its relationship to broader political and theoretical discussions of

security, freedom, risk, violence, and trauma. I have chosen to discuss my findings from the data in a particular way that spends time engaging with the ethics, practices, and communities of each case study, with the final analysis chapter focusing explicitly on discussions of safety foregrounded by observations in previous chapters. The forms and practices of safety observed in the sites are grounded by analysis of material spatial production, where I adapted Piepmeier's theory of interpretation of zine objects and community and applied it to the broader contexts of the two case studies, including archives and libraries, sales counters and architecture, signs and stickers, as well as digitised zines and online libraries. These observed forms of safety, contextualised and situated in the communities that practice them, are then subject to an analysis of the contribution that they make to producing transformative and critical community spaces, insofar as these forms of safety are themselves produced and practiced by these communities.

#### 4.9. Summary

This project has combined empirical and theoretical methods, drawing from 'facet methodology' which was developed using multi-methods, small-scale approaches through which complex knowledges of mundane phenomena can be generated to challenge and illuminate popular, normative, and often oblique everyday knowledges. Where the visual metaphor of this methodology is a gemstone, those developing this methodology are careful to point out that certain characteristics of this metaphor, like its rigid structure, do not carry over as usefully as others, such as allowing different lines of inquiry to illuminate and bring form to the object in question.

On the one hand, facet methodology has been useful because its grounding in sociological and ethnographical methods provided multiple ways to engage with the two case studies, and its emphasis on reflexivity and explicit allowance of flexibility meant that the methods 'assigned' to each case study began to influence each other. On the other, the

methodology is grounded in a specific lineage of sociological research into everyday life that, in this project, I adapted to fit within the designs of a cultural studies project, employing methods of textual analysis to cultural objects and to draw out the significance of everyday behaviours of the communities in the case studies. These case studies illustrate complex examples of everyday knowledges and practices because many of the activities – cleaning and cooking – are often, in research, situated in domestic contexts (*see* de Certeau 2000; Evans 2014), whereas others – intercepting food, making art, and enacting social change – are found in research related directly to activism (Sbicca 2015; Sargisson 2000; Materasso 2019). Both of these contexts, and most of these activities, are largely neglected in existing empirical research into safety, where they are somewhat acknowledged (by Roestone 2014, for example) in theoretical calls for reimaginings and reconceptualizations of safety. In practice, the use of ethnographic methods to generate observations and understandings of these everyday behaviours inherently adapted the focus of the project and what kinds of data I found in the case studies. Most notably, my use of textual analysis in both case studies demonstrates that the work of cultural production is not always found in the art object itself, but often in peripheral texts and ephemera that demonstrate what is illustrated by, but often left out of, critical engagement with cultural products.

In the next, and subsequent two chapters, the discussion focuses on the two case studies, analysing how community, spatial production and time, and types of safety are practiced in the two sites. By combining the analysis of texts – including zines, signs, stickers, and notices – with ethnographic methods, the project focuses on the quotidian, even bureaucratic, elements of change-making. In doing so, the project conceptualizes safety as complicit in the production of the quotidian as well as potentially transformative to everyday life, finding practices of safety, community safeguarding, and safe space production embedded, as well as experimented with, evidenced throughout the case studies. These

understandings come to bear upon existing research into safety and safe spaces and to generate additional ways of engaging with the politics of safety in the context of contemporary discussions of safe space practices. Although an aim implicit in each of the communities I worked with is to develop community spaces in which forms of structural violence and threats of physical violence are potentially not a part of everyday existence, the case studies additionally demonstrate overlooked dimensions of safety in practices of production and trade, as well as in community formation and engagement. Throughout the project, all observations and understandings of safety in these sites are related to a broader theoretical and ideological context through which existing discussions about safety have been produced, and through which problems and limitations with the way safety is discussed has emerged that the project attempts to address.

# Community

## 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, and the following one, I will focus each discussion on dominant themes that emerged from the fieldwork. This chapter uses community as its dominant theme, and the first theme of this project, to explicate the already existing structure and practices of the two groups: a bakery/café, which is a community-focused outreach project of a participatory arts company, and zine culture, where I focus on the making and distributing practices of the zine community. In the following chapter I will be focusing on spatial production through alternative economies and forms of creative labour in these sites.

This approach to the discussion is informed by, firstly, the initial analysis of the data gathered through textual analysis, participatory observation, and photographs taken at the sites, explained in more detail in the previous chapter. Secondly, this approach is designed to address and rectify some of the limiting characterizations of safe spaces discussed in the literature review. In the review, in order to refocus the discussion of safe spaces in ways that did not position safety in opposition to violence and/or freedom, I drew from broader conceptual and theoretical approaches to safety that worked with histories of grassroots community activism, the broader political context within which these activist communities were formed, and theories of relational and subjective spatial production. This chapter, and the following one, will continue this work and build on it by grounding these discussions in the ongoing work to produce community, and community spaces, in the case studies.

On the one hand, a desire for community, belonging, and social change serves as the impetus for these groups and informs a large amount of their critical and cultural output. On the other, zines and the bakery/café/arts company are internally critical and seek to improve their methods of trade, communication, and understandings of belonging and inclusion. I will be exploring the theme of “community” in this chapter to navigate the tensions between the

ethics and structure, the practices of trade and communication, and the desires and needs of these groups. From these discussions I will draw out forms and practices of safety evidenced by the fieldwork, but additionally informed by understandings of safety developed through the discussion of existing scholarship on safety in vulnerable and activist communities. These forms of safety will be revisited in Chapter 7, which focuses explicitly on how safety in the bakery/café and zine community and culture can challenge and develop current understandings and debates about safe space practices. Informing the discussion of community in this chapter are notions like *communitas*, desires for social change, and non-normative, critical practices of alternative economies that are used to frame understandings of the structures and practices of zine culture and the bakery/café. I argue that the critical engagement with the concept of the community in these groups produces a ‘transformative surplus’ (see Bloch 1988; 1986; Muñoz 2009) specifically, the formation and maintenance of a hopeful community. This broader theoretical discussion of the concept of community will help to build conceptual links between situated and contextualized understandings of safety and demands for social change.

Practically, the intentions of this chapter are three-fold. The first intention is to establish the workings of these two groups based on my role as a researcher in the bakery/café and zine culture, to introduce how the formative ethics of participatory and DIY culture are manifested in the structure and practices of these sites. The second intention is more reflexive and engages with existing scholarship on utopian communities, participatory culture, and my participation and roles within these communities. This second intention is where the application of the concept of *communitas* comes from, which emerged on reflection after attending two productions at the arts company (wherein the bakery/café is found) as an audience member, and in this thesis is an attempt to negotiate with and articulate understandings drawn specifically from the research with my encounters, existing

knowledges, multifaceted roles, and ongoing participation with the bakery/café and the zine community. The third intention is one which runs throughout each of the three discussion chapters, this is to challenge contemporary ways of discussing safety in debates about safe space practices. By developing an understanding of the communities and broader political contexts in which safe spaces are and can be created, I aim to challenge limiting characterizations of safety and safe space and, by drawing from empirical approaches, generate situated and reflexive understandings of contemporary and everyday safety practices.

### 5.1.1 *Community and communitas*

Used mainly in the context of theories of utopian performativity, *communitas* is a fleeting, collective, but tangible understanding wherein an audience, collective, or group feels not only closer to each other, but part of a larger whole (Dolan 2005; 2011; *see also* Muñoz 2009). Most of the time, this feeling is used to describe a sense of togetherness and collective hope for the future at an event, which can be loosely related to anything vaguely public and well-attended, but is most often applied to the site of the theatre (*see* Dolan 2005; *also* Turner 1974). *Communitas* is not the same as community, it is a term used to discuss and interpret a collective but temporary experience of hope, witnessing the possibility of a better world, and desire for social change (*see* Dolan 2005). Moreover, it is a technical theoretical term, and is sometimes used to engage critically with the concept of community itself. For example, *communitas* is used by Derrida to explore and challenge inherent properties of the word community, most importantly its exclusionary connotations (*see* Derrida 1995; Caputo 1996).

In case studies of utopia and community, the term community has been applied to a group of people sharing an experience and enacting, with degrees of success, an alternative or non-normative iteration of trade, production, time, sex, or work (Sargisson 2000; Cooper 2014; Muñoz 2009). On the one hand, potentially utopian communities' activities are framed

as hopeful or prefigurative, and contain critical anti-capitalist elements, for example, exploring alternative economies (Cooper 2014; Sargisson 2000). On the other, these studies rely on an understanding of community that is exclusive and often exclusionary (Bell 2017; Cooper 2014), where their non-normative or alternative practices are largely dependent on a “mainstream” capitalist society to oppose (Duncombe 2008; Sargisson 2000; Cooper 2014).

In addition, the presence of cultural, social, imaginary, and geographical borders, as David Bell (2017) points out, can be vital for the continued existence of communities (and utopias), particularly as a protective measure: the formation of a community is also the formation of a “safe space” in many senses (Bell 2017; Wallin-Ruschman and Patka 2016). The act of closure or exclusion can be vital to the continued existence of a vulnerable community, such as the examples of Indigenous community that Bell discusses, yet the closure of space, and the production of borders, necessarily resonates with the deeply colonial logic of More’s original text (More [1999]; Bell 2017). As I have drawn attention to in previous chapters, the production of borders is often necessary as much as it can also reproduce and reinforce potentially harmful and violent practices (*see* Coyle 2004; Bell 2017; Anzaldúa 2007 [1987]). Partly to address the risks of drawing necessary borders, it is important to reiterate that, as Bell also points out, utopianism is a productive *process*: it is ongoing. The production of safe spaces in universities (for example) engages critically with unequal stratifications by gender, ethnicity and race, and class (Knox [ed] 2017; Harless 2018; Katz 2016); the tools of safe space production, including the transformative reclamation of public space, transgresses and protests unsafety and inequality (Roestone 2014, Hanhardt 2013 *also* Featherstone 2017; Waterhouse 2016; Moore et al. 2014). Although borders contribute to the maintenance of certain communities, and the possibilities of utopian production, they are ultimately never static, and the necessity to continually

redraw and redefine borders is an important one that opens them up to challenge and negotiation, as well as new possibilities.

*Communitas* carries with it these connotations of production and ongoingness (Muñoz 2009; Dolan 2005). During the period of research at the bakery/café, I attended two separate theatrical productions at the arts company which both used participatory and immersive methods – one was described as a promenade – which sparked my existing familiarity with the term *communitas*, as used by Dolan (2005; 2011) and Muñoz (2009). The specific methods of engagement and participation to (literally) move a group of people to become closer, to action, or to contribute to ideas about social change helped to bring form to my understandings of the workings of zine culture and the bakery/café (*see also* Licona 2012 *and e-motion, later discussed*). I will be using this term *communitas* to articulate the collective production of potentialities and witnesses to possibilities of a better world, engaging with both my experiences in the bakery/café and with zines, as well as theory and practice of art and cultural co-production (Dolan 2005; *see also* Materasso 2019; Muñoz 2009, Bloch 1986, Bloch 1988, Kellner 1997).

In short, community is a vital, tangible, and productive form for hopeful and critical possibilities. However, these possibilities are fleeting and necessarily challenged, even as they are produced, and community itself as a utopian concept is highly questionable. Therefore, in this chapter the theme of community is a dominant but contestable site of hope in the two case studies, a bakery/café in an arts company, and zine cultural practices. I discuss community as a formative and desirable aspect of each case study, which presents a contradiction in which these sites are both seeking to form and maintain a sense of community, whilst presenting a critique to the communities in which they are situated, and to inherent problems existing within the concept of community itself. I argue that community can be identified through the kinds of hopeful critique that these sites present, which I will

characterize as a utopian transformative surplus, that relies on a strong participatory approach affecting and realized through the alternative trade practices in each group. In short, I will look at the utopian potentialities produced by the bakery/café and zine culture by understanding how their practices are informed ethically and politically, and by their critical engagement with the concept of community, in particular by unpacking their participatory forms of cultural production and alternative trade practices. Below, I will provide an overview of and summarise my approach to the case studies.

### *5.1.2 Overview of the case studies*

While I have summarised the case studies in full in the previous chapter, here I will provide an overview of specific understandings of community formation, and tensions therein, that I will be discussing in this chapter. Zines and zine culture are informed by an iteration of DIY practices and ethics that are specifically referred to as ‘zine ethics’ when they are challenged (Duncombe 2008; *see also* Bell 1998, Piepmeier 2009). Emerging as a form of independent cultural production in science fiction and fantasy fan communities around the 1930s, zine making and distributing come from an approach to independent cultural production and self-expression that is participatory, hands-on, and promotes ‘cultural democracy’ (Duncombe 2008; Licona 2012). Zine culture informed by these ethics helps to define a sense of “community” because they are reflected in shared practices of making and distributing, where participants in zine culture are rooted in similar ethical beliefs about self-expression and cultural production (Duncombe 2008; Licona 2012; Piepmeier 2008; Kempson 2015).

However, attempts to define zines lean heavily on understandings of DIY, participatory, and independent cultural expression that prioritizes a specific understanding of zine culture in form, content, and community (*see* Duncombe 2008; Bell 1998; Piepmeier 2008 for an example of this tendency; *see* Licona 2012; Licona and Brouwer 2015; Honma

2016; Hays 2017 for critiques). Broadly speaking, representations of zines in scholarship prioritize paper zines (Piepmeier 2008), a masculinized and white representation of the community (Duncombe 2008; Bell 1998; Atton 2002), particularly focusing on punk subculture, and zine distributive practices generally characterized as a ‘network,’ in which zines are traded internationally for other zines, or sold for the cost of production or postage (Duncombe 2008; Atton 2002). Challenges to zine cultural and community practices include external pressures, such as the commercialization of alternative culture, and the mass-production of zine aesthetics without participating in critical cultural production or the zine community (Duncombe 2008). However, challenges can also come from within the community, specifically the utilization of digital spaces and technologies to make and distribute paper zines and e-zines, and the creation of libraries and archives (Licona and Brouwer 2015; Ramdarshan Bold 2017). The use of digital spaces and technologies, and the production of e-zines and the digitisation of paper zines, trouble understandings of zine-making and distributing that rely on the trading network and prioritization of hands-on experience with paper zines to “know” what a zine is, or to define a zine. In addition, libraries and archives (both online and in person) are often used to prioritize zine makers of colour, as well as queer and feminist zines through bolstering representation and access. These latter challenges, I will argue, demonstrate a critical engagement within the zine community that primarily aims to rethink the possibilities of the form and reject homogenized, dominant, and inaccurate representations of zine makers and readers.

In many ways the beliefs and approaches found in zine culture are shared by the participatory arts company that the other case study, the bakery/café, is situated within. The bakery/café is informed by understandings of participatory culture, a desire for social change, and a fervent belief that art, work, and food should be available to everyone. To discuss this case study, I am drawing on scholarship about the ethics and practices of participatory art

specific to the arts company from which the bakery/café is formed. This approach is because the ethics of participatory art destabilise hierarchical boundaries of art production and consumption, for example, the inclusive and participatory nature of the company's projects blur the lines between artist and audience (*see* Muñoz 2009; Piepmeier 2008; Materasso 2019). As practitioner and scholar Francois Materasso points out, the vocabulary of participatory art indicates this: participatory art is produced by 'professional' and 'non-professional artists' (Materasso 2019). Indeed, part of the mission of the arts company seeks to promote agency through skill-sharing, skill-gaining, and cultural democracy. The café and the bakery are largely staffed by volunteers, which includes artists working in the area and with the company, as well as members of the local community who often become involved through outreach programmes. As the 'front door' of the arts company, the bakery/café contributes the company's work to challenge dominant representations and hierarchical understandings of what (literally) constitutes art, and by inviting potential involvement in the production of art in the area. However, informed by this broader context, my analysis is more focused around the immediate product of the bakery/café: food.

The bakery is part of the 'real bread' movement, using often locally sourced ingredients with no artificial ingredients (yeast, water, flour, salt, and sometimes natural flavourings). The café, which is a more recent addition, offers a Pay-As-You-Feel lunch every week with ingredients that repurpose food waste sourced through national schemes, foraging, and donations from the local community (*see* Fig.7). To unpack the bakery/café's practices, I will be engaging with understandings of food consumption, production, and food access. To begin with, understanding the production of meals through food waste necessitates a discussion of David Evans' (2014) work on the how food becomes food waste. Evans studies the production of food waste and reuse in domestic spaces to complicate linear and popular understandings of wastage and waste production (Evan 2014). Building on these

understandings, by engaging with alternative methods of public food distribution, particularly food access activism, I will elaborate on the bakery/café's politics and ethics which seeks to democratize access to food, work, and art.

My comparative discussions in scholarship will refer to two main forms of alternative food distribution: through charity, which is largely privatised, and food access activism, which is heavily politicized (Heynen 2010; Sbicca 2014, 2018). I will look at specific encounters and forms of exchange which have occurred in the bakery/café framed as both an extension of participatory art ethics and alternative economic practice of food production and distribution. In doing so, I argue that the bakery/café is both a project of the arts company and critically resists broader societal and institutional inequalities focused around access to work, art, and food (Gill 1998; *also* Sosenko et al. 2019; Loopstra et al. 2019; Trussell Trust 2019). Whereas the arts company as a whole creates critical production of broader societal inequality with the transformative aim of social change, the bakery/café in itself offers a potential to open up and democratize cultural production through its alternative and participatory approach to trade and exchange.

In both case studies, the critical engagement with community through reclamation of representation, critique of societal inequality, and cultural production is informed by participatory ethics and politics, and alternative practices of trade and distribution (Materasso 2019; Duncombe 2008; Licona 2012; Atton 2002; Sargisson 2000; Heynen 2010). Both case studies negotiate with the potentially problematic exclusionary practices of community formation, including access to cultural production and basic material needs, yet in themselves reject and exclude practices that do not uphold the ethics of participatory cultural production. The negotiation with refusal and production in the formation and maintenance of these communities, I argue, necessitates an ongoing acceptance and generative rejection of the concept of community itself by engaging with the forms and characteristics of this concept

that these sites want to bring forward. This negotiation, furthermore, implies an informed, hopeful knowledge of a concept of community much like *communitas*, in which community is co-produced, participatory, and witness to the possibilities of social change. The transformative surplus, in this case, is the production of *and movement toward* an informed idea of a hopeful community, existing both in the present and in possibilities of the future.

## 5.2 Participatory and DIY culture and ‘cultural democracy’

Shared by the bakery/café and the DIY culture of the zine community are an ethics of participatory art and culture, promoting and pursuing ‘cultural democracy’ and social change. Essentially, ‘cultural democracy,’ means that everyone should be able to take part in cultural production and, by extension, that this production should be treated as legitimate forms of artistic expression (Materasso 2019: 73). Underpinning participatory culture is a critique of dominant, hierarchical views about the relationship between artistic expression and broader society, specifically, what counts as art and who is allowed to access (create, experience, engage with) the arts. Participatory culture offers a critique of boundaries between art production and consumption, and between artist and audience, as well as a refusal to regard the artistic process as mysterious, untouchable, and only accessible (for both artist and audience) to a select few (Materasso 2019; Duncombe 2008). Access to the arts, to cultural production, and to forms of critical expression are ways that participatory culture is practiced by ‘professional’ and ‘non-professional’ artists. Informed by the pursuit of social change, participatory culture engenders vast possibilities for critical and creative expression, community representation, and public access to the arts (Materasso 2019). In the following section, I will discuss how the bakery/café and zine making and distributing are two possible examples of participatory cultural practices which offer contrasting insights into community

formation in a participatory context, as well as demonstrate the tensions and negotiations with the concept of community in this context.

### *5.2.1 Community formation in a participatory context*

Participatory culture is quickly discernible in both zine cultural practices and the bakery/café by looking at the formation of community in these groups. Both, for example, invite community engagement and consciously aim to make participation accessible.

Although there are many ways to stumble across the arts company's work, the bakery/café acts as a "front door" to the company activities, as well as being one of the entrances to the building itself: the option to share a Pay-As-You-Feel meal in the café brings people in.<sup>1</sup>

Comparatively, zine culture invites participation through financial accessibility, trade, and emulation, by being a free-form and low-cost method of expression and publishing, with a high degree of control afforded to the zine maker (Duncombe 2008; Piepmeier 2008; Atton 2002). They are handmade, often using cut-and-paste to repurpose found objects, and are distributed for free, through swaps, or for the cost of production (Atton 2002; Piepmeier 2008; Duncombe 2008; Kempson 2015).

Key to the ethics of participatory culture is a desire and pursuit of social change (Materasso 2019). "Social change" is a broad and general term, but as something pursued by participatory cultural practices this desire is a form of potentiality (Muñoz 2009) embedded in the practices of the bakery/café and zine makers and readers. To suggest something has or to imbue something with potentiality means to make room for possibilities and, used in this context, means that the pursuit of social change contributes a transformative directive to participatory practices and community formation in the bakery/café and the zine community. In other words, it means that these communities and practices neither will or are innately

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<sup>1</sup> The reference to the bakery/café as a "front door" was a frequent way that the community engagement officer explained the café's work to visitors, particularly at community events (Field diary notes, 2019).

capable of achieving the goal of social change, rather than the futuristic and hopeful desire for social change that has informed and gives meaning to these communities and practices.

Participatory culture in these sites is represented through a critical engagement with (and opposition to) social inequality and structural barriers to material necessities, to education, and to creative expression, and furthermore these groups endeavour to provide viable, informed alternatives to that which is denied in broader social contexts of austerity (particularly for the bakery/café) and material barriers to cultural production. In other words, these sites bring this desire for social change into practice through methods informed by their own participatory cultural practices. Participatory culture indicates this pursuit of social change through the critical methods of art and cultural production, as I have mentioned, as well as through *what* is produced – participatory arts can enable creative ways of political expression and critical negotiation with the conditions from which it is produced. In the following two sections, I will discuss specific ways in which participatory ethics and the pursuit of social change is materialised in the communities, work, and outputs of these groups, co-created by zine makers and readers (Piepmeier 2008; Licona 2012), or by arts company members, volunteers, professional and non-professional artists, and visitors, in the case of the bakery/café. To begin with, I will discuss the broader arts company of which the bakery/café is a part and its role in the development of and engagement with the local community, before moving onto zine culture and community. For both sites, I focus on modes of trade and exchange in the context of participatory cultural production and how the alternative economic practices of these groups contest with normative, profit-oriented economic practices, in addition to how these sites' work develop their own tensions in the pursuit of both a hopeful community and forms of social change.

### *5.2.2 Art, work, and food at the bakery/café*

Late 2019, the participatory arts company hosted a city-wide conference wherein the cultural work and representation of the city was discussed and celebrated. The conference itself was participatory in nature; a poetry installation had been commissioned from an international artist to respond to the city, and this in turn engendered a series of responsive commissions that materialized as art with explicitly interactive elements across the city. At this conference, the company director discussed the local and national socio-economic impacts of austerity policies on both cultural and arts activity and the life of the local community (which were not seen as especially separable). The work of the arts company is through this context politicized, and oriented towards the immediate need of the local community.<sup>2</sup>

Practices informed by the pursuit of social change through participatory methods are demonstrated by drawing attention to alternative economies at work in the bakery/café and in zine culture. In the bakery/café, alternative practices of food production and distribution are politicised and critically engaged with how the needs of the community are met. Both the Pay-As-You-Feel (PAYF) lunches in the café, and bakery products make use of ‘intercepted’ food: ingredients sourced through a national food waste scheme (*see fig 5*).<sup>3</sup> In addition, the bakery products (as mentioned above), are made with locally sourced, organic flour, and without preservatives or artificial ingredients. Whereas the PAYF lunches, self-evidently, accept any or no donation in return for food, the bakery’s prices are generally fixed, and higher than a similar product found in a supermarket (for example, an 800g white farmhouse loaf costs £2.80 in the bakery and £1.10 in the nearest supermarket [Sainsburys]); this is

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<sup>2</sup> I attended the conference as a visitor as it was after bakery/café hours; references to the event and preparation are in the fieldnotes (Field diary notes 04/10/2019; 11/10/2019)

<sup>3</sup> Food in the bakery/café is sourced through the national FareShare scheme. Fruit and vegetables are often used in the café lunches and as general ingredients; processed and prepared food (e.g. ready meals) are distributed at the café for visitors or to volunteers. Other ingredients required consistently (e.g. flour) are sourced from organic suppliers. (Field diary notes, 2019).

partly as a result of the sourcing of ingredients.<sup>4</sup> These practices differ from other forms of alternative food distribution, like food access activism, which is often outdoors and site-specific to the politics of the distributors (Heynen 2010; Sbicca 2014), and charities, which are often (if unwittingly) filling the gaps of social welfare cuts, stretched local governments, and national austerity policies (Sbicca 2014, *also* Sosenko et al. 2019). These latter forms are also *free* food, whereas the bakery/café makes use of multiple forms of exchange, developing possibilities for small-scale and local alternative economies (*see* Gibson-Graham 1998; 2008).

By discussing the case studies' alternative economic practices I aim to demonstrate how socio-economic barriers are challenged by participatory cultures, primarily through engaging with the multiple forms of access and exchange in these sites of production and distribution, whether these forms of access are to cultural production and expression or to a loaf of bread. However, evidenced by the prices of the bakery products, production and distribution practices are still in negotiation with business and profit-oriented economies. Although it is obvious to point out that spaces like the bakery/café make sense of and interact with a dominant capitalist economy and logics (while critical of capitalism's material effect on people's lives), the bakery/café and the zine community provide useful elucidations on existing challenges to the pursuit of social change, as well as to point out the simple fact that trade and exchange practices exist and flourish without a profit-oriented requirement (*see also* Cooper 2014; Gibson-Graham 1996, 2008).

### *5.2.3 Community and personal expression in the zine community*

Similar negotiations with dominant economic relations exist within the zine community, however in contrast to sharing a meal, attending a community event, or supporting local cultural activities, zine culture and community is geographically disparate

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<sup>4</sup> Prices come from the bakery and during visits to the supermarket (Field diary notes, October 2019)

and dependent on an exchange system that prioritizes communication (Atton 2002). Zines made with an explicit desire for social change make use of the personal and idiosyncratic to connect with readers (Piepmeier 2008), and can employ that communicative emphasis and the exchange of personal knowledges to engage makers and readers with possibilities for social change (Licona 2012; Honma 2016). Although both of these sites come under the umbrella of participatory cultural production, in the bakery/café, overlapping interests and contesting desires for community and access are generally politically aligned and coherent. In comparison, whereas zines share making and distributing practices, judged individually, zine objects are much more difficult to collectively define and the range of political expression in zines is much more difficult to encapsulate (Duncombe 2008; Licona 2012; Piepmeier 2008). However, reflected in the zine form are governing principles of DIY and participatory culture: accessible, authentic expression and knowledge production, and an inherently critical approach to forms of authorized knowledge production and structural barriers to cultural production.

In zine culture, the practices of zine making and distributing are easier to discern (through participation) than defining what a zine object is or will be. Specifically, making zines involves the use and repurposing of text (Duncombe 2008; Bell 1998), a focus on the thoughts and personal experiences of the zine maker (Hays 2017; Licona 2012; Piepmeier 2009), and often a critical reflection on the topic of discussion (whether political, personal, and/or cultural). Distributing zines, as I have mentioned, involves trading them for other zines, selling them for a low price, or giving them away for free. Sometimes zines are acquired at zinefests (community events, like a market), they can be bought or viewed online, found at independent bookshops and distros (distributors, often a small press), sought from a catalogue (such as the now defunct *Factsheet Five*), and simply found by chance (or design; see Piepemeier 2008).

Alison Piepmeier (2008; 2009) argues that through distribution and circulation, zine readers contribute to the zine making process and are already zine makers themselves, even before they decide to make and share their own zines. The DIY and participatory ethos is circulated and practiced by the community through these distribution practices and (at least in theory) everyone who participates has a stake in the zine community and the representation of the culture. Piepmeier's textual-materialist method of reading zines can be summarised in three combined steps. Firstly, the reader of the zine is constantly reminded of the hand of the author (Piepmeier 2008; Duncombe 2008). This is evident in handwriting, rough edges, cut-off words and images. Second, drawing from her experiences with teaching about zines, Piepmeier unpacks the link between her students reading and handling zines, and becoming zine makers themselves. She argues, like Duncombe, that handling zines themselves is crucial to understanding what zines are (Piepmeier 2008; Duncombe 2008). However, in her argument, she emphasises the link between the imperfect, handmade, and personal form of the zine, the evocation of 'vulnerability, affection, and pleasure' (Piepmeier 2008: 215) that arises from making and receiving zines, and the sense that her students feel 'personally invited' (214) to make zines after handling them. In short, like Duncombe, she argues that emulation is the primary way that people begin to engage with the zine community as producers. Where Duncombe focuses on developing a coherent sense of style and content of the zine form to articulate a sense of community, Piepmeier looks directly at the not-for-profit trading practices of zines, specifically the zine as a gift (231; *see also* Atton 2002), communication with zinesters, and the emulation arising from direct contact with 'actual' zines themselves, which here means in paper form (Piepmeier 2008: 214).



**Figure 1** *Chisel Tip #4*, Madeleine, 2016.

Thirdly, Piepmeier argues that in circulation, the zine will ‘get “dirty and ratty and torn” [...] although the text will stay the same, the artefact itself will change in subtle ways, like a body itself’ (Piepmeier 2008: 235; *see also* Fig. 1). This concluding argument builds on the exchange practices of the zine community and the ‘vulnerability and durability’ of the zine object, a contradiction reflecting the changing/static state of the zine form and content (Piepmeier 2008: 235). In short, the

circulation of zines builds a community whilst affecting the physical form of the zine itself, often through breaking it down. Piepmeier argues that the changing form of the zine object is material evidence of community that grows through trade and communication practices. The image above, for instance, shows a tear in a copy of *Chisel Tip #4* that I brought to a zine workshop, where people learned and talked about zines, made some, and spilled Coca-Cola on others (*see* Fig 1).

In both the bakery/café and the zine community, an overview with understandings of participatory culture is necessary to discuss and contextualise the use of alternative economies to establish and meet the needs of the community. Both of these sites share a participatory and DIY ethics discerned in their modes of community production and engagement which promote accessibility, agency, and expression, as well as the desire for and production of communities in pursuit of social change. To reflect back on the understanding of social change as a potentiality, I maintained that the pursuit of social change was not a guarantee of its actualization. These sites’ differences demonstrate that it is not the practices themselves – the production of bread or of zines – that guarantees social change, but rather the pursuit of social

change which alters and potentially transforms these practices to suit the needs of the communities who do them.

The pursuit of social change is often in negotiation with existing conditions – a combination of what the community wants and needs, what is reasonably possible to do for these groups to do, and what can be done to ensure the continued existence of the group. In the discussion above, the politics of social change that informs participatory cultural practices makes visible and contests with broader socio-economic contexts and cultural logics *to which* these practices suggest an alternative. Most visibly, modes of production and exchange in the zine community and the bakery café result in unavoidable clashes with a profit-oriented economy, and the unmet cultural and material needs of the community that this dominant economic practice both creates and neglects. This broader context will inform both the specific practices of community formation in these groups, and some of the tensions that arise from community formation over shared ethics.

Additionally, this context bears upon understanding how community demands of and for safety come to be formed through specific, shared, unmet needs. In other words, a community that is formed to meet specific needs is developed through unmet needs and vulnerabilities that can be critiqued and potentially changed more effectively through collective action (*see* Chapter 2, *also* Hanhardt 2013; Cooper 2014; Garcia et al. 2015). These needs and ways of meeting them can be complex and multiple, which is realized as tensions threatening the formation of communities as well as inter-community tensions over multiple potential solutions to these problems (*see* Chapter 2, *also* Cooper 2014; Sargisson 2000). The next section will discuss both of these kinds of tensions in more detail, drawing from examples in the case studies. Yet, moreover, I am using these understandings to build from when I discuss specific forms of and demands for safety in these spaces. In Chapter 7, the practices of safety

found in the case studies will be situated within the broader and emerging scholarship on safety and safe space debates, initially reviewed in Chapter 2.

To demonstrate what I mean, I will be using the bakery/café and zine culture as examples of alternative economic and community practices that make visible and challenge capitalist cultural logics while pursuing social change within their own communities. While above I imply some of these tensions and contestations in the discussion, in the following section I will draw more explicit attention to the bakery/café's engagement with inequality related to art, work, and food and the problems arising from this engagement. Following that, my discussion of zine community politics will problematize modes of engagement with zines that have relied on paper zine objects and the hands-on approach, such as Piepmeier's outlined above. I will discuss how this approach, which attempts to maintain the integrity of the DIY ethics in opposition to the zine form's commercialization, and *is* a useful way to evidence shared community practices and ethics, has contributed to the oversight of ways of making and sharing zines and particular community efforts to contest a white and masculinized representation of the culture. In engaging with the largely external pressures on the bakery/café's practices, and the internal clashes over zines in the zine community, I hope to generate understandings of ongoing, reflexive, and critical community production in sites informed by the pursuit of social change.

### 5.3 Production and distribution as an expression of politics

At the bakery/café, existing socio-economic barriers to art, work, and food are challenged by in-site practices that seek to democratize and enable access to the production of these cultural, social, and material needs. Informed by participatory ethics, including the pursuit of social change, the work of the bakery/café and the arts company of which it is a part

addresses community lacks and needs by developing local and community-based sites, outreach, and engagement, and directly by the specific provision of food and art.

The modes of food production and distribution in the bakery/café further the pursuit of social change in ways that are particular to community engagement in this site as much as they are in accord with the broader work of the company. At the bakery/café, contestations with unequal distribution of material and cultural needs manifest additionally as eco-socialist politics that contend with mass-produced, low quality food and the consequent production of food waste; in practice, the use of ‘intercepted’ food for PAYF lunches and the production of bread according to Real Bread movement standards. In turn, this means the bread prices of the bakery, through the ethical sourcing of their ingredients, are generally higher than the cost of an equivalent loaf from the local supermarket (*see above*).

Yet, the (in)formative participatory ethics of these modes of production and distribution and the pursuit of the horizon of social change means that, for sites like the bakery/café, more complex, dominant ‘cultural logics’ – about unequal access to material needs, and about who gets to make and engage with the arts – requires radical reconstitution. As a result, the arts company draws specific connections between the deprivation of material needs in the community and the corresponding unmet cultural needs: austerity policies and rolled back social welfare funding means these areas lack the ability to support their communities and the cultural life of these communities suffers as a result.

The impacted effect of this broader context ends up materialising as low levels of cultural engagement and difficult to reach demographics in the area local to the company which, as the company argues, does not mean that art does not or will not come from these communities.<sup>5</sup> Instead, it demonstrates the effects of classist, homogenous, and inaccessible

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<sup>5</sup> Noted from ongoing projects around the arts company, and a focal point of the director’s opening remarks at the 2019 conference.

understandings of art and cultural production – who makes art and who art is for – that contribute to the formation and maintenance of classist, inaccessible, and homogenous cultural institutions, which participatory modes of cultural production contest with. As I will explore below, the politics of the bakery/café are informed by a critique of these logics, representations of cultural production and a dedication to challenging these representations, an understanding of the needs of the community, and ongoing efforts to meet, advocate, and support the pursuit of these needs.

In this section of the chapter, I discuss tensions and contestations that the broad directive of social change can engender when it is in negotiation with the present; the discussions of the two case studies are loosely connected around the theme of struggles over community representation. The understandings of shared participatory and DIY practices in zine culture, explored above in Piepmeier's theories of the zine community's ongoing formation between makers and readers, can create an impression of a coherent, likeminded creative community snowballing towards a better world. However, Michelle Kempson complicates understandings of zine culture and community formation by also discussing contested and often contradictory feelings of belonging in the zine community (Kempson 2015).

For example, in Kempson's study, participants in the community who are not well-known zine makers, or who live outside of urban areas where zinefests usually take place feel that they are disconnected from the community or less active (2015: 1086). Feelings of instability and disconnectedness are also present for 'zine stars,' or well-known zinesters, who occupy a precarious and suspect position in the community as potential sell-outs, or people who do not participate in the DIY politics of the community and simply make zines for profit (1092, *see also* Duncombe 2008). The commercialization of zines as part of 'alternative' culture around the 1990s, and the generalised suspicion of capital wealth and profit, share traits

in which the appearance of DIY culture and aesthetic is used without engagement with the ethos of communities and practices of production from which this culture and aesthetic emerged (Duncombe 2008; *see also* Honma 2016). This, in turn, has resulted in a temptation to broadly homogenize the characterization and representation of the zine community, limiting the possibilities of the form and having knock-on effects across counter-cultural expression and communities.

Discussing community and *communitas* at the beginning of this chapter, I drew attention to the temporary nature of *communitas* feeling, where a group is fleetingly witness to and engaging with the possibilities of other, better futures. Distinguishing between community and *communitas*, however, neglects their common root, which is criticised for its ‘exclusionary’ capabilities (Dolan 2011: 185; *see* Caputo 1996; *see also* Dolan 2009; Turner 1974, Derrida 1995). These alternate interpretations and uses of ideas about community and *communitas* all negotiate with inherent risks of closure, boundaries, and divisions. However, when these terms are used in the sense of critical utopian theories like Dolan and Muñoz, these theorists take care to explore the implications of temporality (transience), deconstruction (porosity), and performativity (becoming) (Dolan 2009, 2011; Muñoz 2009; *see also* Caputo 1996). Building these implications into critical theorizations of community are ways of engaging with the tensions between inclusion and exclusion, and the uses of borders and boundaries as either porous and changeable or, if fixed, requiring ongoing maintenance and reinforcement. In these discussions, these theorists translate the properties of community into the terminology of *communitas*, as a category of utopia; this allows us to explore the textual politics of the concept of community, both its shortcomings and its potentiality.

In the following section I will elaborate on the politics implicitly and explicitly practiced in zine culture and at the bakery/café and suggest ways in which the participatory

context that frames these practices can problematize these sites' politics of production and distribution and the formation and maintenance of communities. To distinguish these terms community and *communitas*: I use the word community in a more immediate and everyday sense to talk collectively about who participates in the bakery/café and the zine community. In comparison, the concept of *communitas* is useful to provide a name to the “what” that these groups are in pursuit of when they adapt their own politics and practices in response to challenges emerging both within and outside of these groups, occasionally as a built-in problematic to the development and maintenance of a coherent community itself. Below, I will demonstrate in turn specific ways in which the bakery/café and the zine community have both recognized and sought to counter the potential for exclusion or the challenge to participatory ethics and politics that these problems threaten. In doing so, these sites are addressing the immediate needs of their communities, while working within or against existing socio-economic constraints, and whilst pursuing and practicing an informed, reflexive, and hopeful approach to their own politics and community formation.

### 5.3.1 *How much is a loaf of bread?*

To demonstrate the politics of the bakery/café I am using firstly *Recipes for Pandæmonium*, a 1998 publication produced by a founding member of the arts company, quotations from which are sourced from a research study conducted locally and are prominent in the building, particularly around the bakery/café.<sup>6</sup> *Recipes* is a book of quotations, recipes (both real and imaginary), and anecdotes that are focused around memories of and relationships with food, place, and people. Included in the book are shifting relationships with food consumption and production, and commentary on new/unfamiliar eating and cooking practices related to mass production, national attitude to food, health, and nutrition, and changing local demographics (particularly age and ethnicity). This starting

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<sup>6</sup> Observations from fieldnotes, 2019, *see also* fig. 28.

point demonstrates the bakery/café's engagement with community needs to inform the site's approach to food production and distribution.

Secondly, I will discuss how the production and distribution of food in the bakery/café makes use of multiple, co-existing, and negotiable economies that bring into play the politicized nature of food waste production and alternative modes of food distribution. From the point of raw ingredients, bakery/café food is made using 'intercepted' food repurposing food waste, and bakery products are made from locally sourced, including foraged, ingredients. Discussing the ways food becomes waste, David Evans pays close attention to how emotions relating to food production *and* to waste, particularly anxiety and distaste, conduct behaviour (Evans 2014). By first linking food waste to understandings of waste in general, including the desire to dispose of, hide, or forget about waste, Evans suggests (immediately to complicate) a linear narrative wherein food that is edible becomes food that is not edible. Inedibility may occur because, Evans argues, the food is out-of-date, replaceable through routine shopping habits, or simply not viewed as an edible part of the product (for example, a broccoli stem, *see* 2014: xi), deconstructing this linear structure and suggesting multiple ways through which food becomes food waste, and thereby opening up possibilities for reuse.

Whereas Evans emphasises the site of the home as a critically overlooked area of research into waste, particularly food waste, the bakery/café site clearly differs from this study by distributing and selling food in a space open to the public. Evans points out the close relationship between overproduction of food and the production of food waste, and his focus on domestic sites successfully complicates popular narratives that the food waste/food inequality crisis is the sole responsibility of individual households and consumers (Evans 2014: 5, 10). In comparison, what alternative economies, specifically of food production and distribution, make visible is the production of food waste *via* the overproduction of food in

sites outside of the home. In contrast to Evans' multiple ways in which food may become waste in domestic settings, what I am referring to is the commercial production of food waste, wherein food is made spoiled and losses covered rather than excess being redistributed to hungry people who cannot afford it. This is why the food at the bakery/café is referred to as 'intercepted,' because the loss of food as waste is an inbuilt, extra-linear part of food production process on a mass scale (Boarder Giles 2021; Evans 2014).

In contrast to the domestic setting of Evans' study, the bakery/café's distribution of food in a public space with an ethos of social change bears more similarity to the aims of food access activism. While, in its use of multiple alternative economies, the café shares similarities with food access projects like 'food and skill-sharing barter economies' (Sbicca 2014: 818; *see also* Cooper 2014 on LETs), it can also be compared with the act of public, free food distribution as direct action and civil disobedience whose actors make use of a supportive eco-nomy of alternative modes of food distribution. For example, Joshua Sbicca and Nik Heynen focus on direct action groups like Food Not Bombs, who repurpose public sites such as parks, plazas, and streets as sites of food distribution, often using ingredients 'gleaned' from grocery stores and farms, and distributed by the local food bank (Boarder Giles 2021; Heynen 2010: 1228; *also* Sbicca 2014).

Food Not Bombs' 'sharings' combine activist initiatives including the interception of food from wastage, building solidarity through sharing meals and inviting participants to take part, disseminating anarchist politics with participants, and providing food to hungry people. However, their main aim is to draw attention to material needs, particularly in urban populations, focusing on food and the lack of institutional welfare and support for vulnerable and struggling people, especially homeless people, and where this government money has been redistributed. In part, Food Not Bombs do this by drawing attention to gentrification and the commodification of land and living space in urban space by repurposing centrally-located

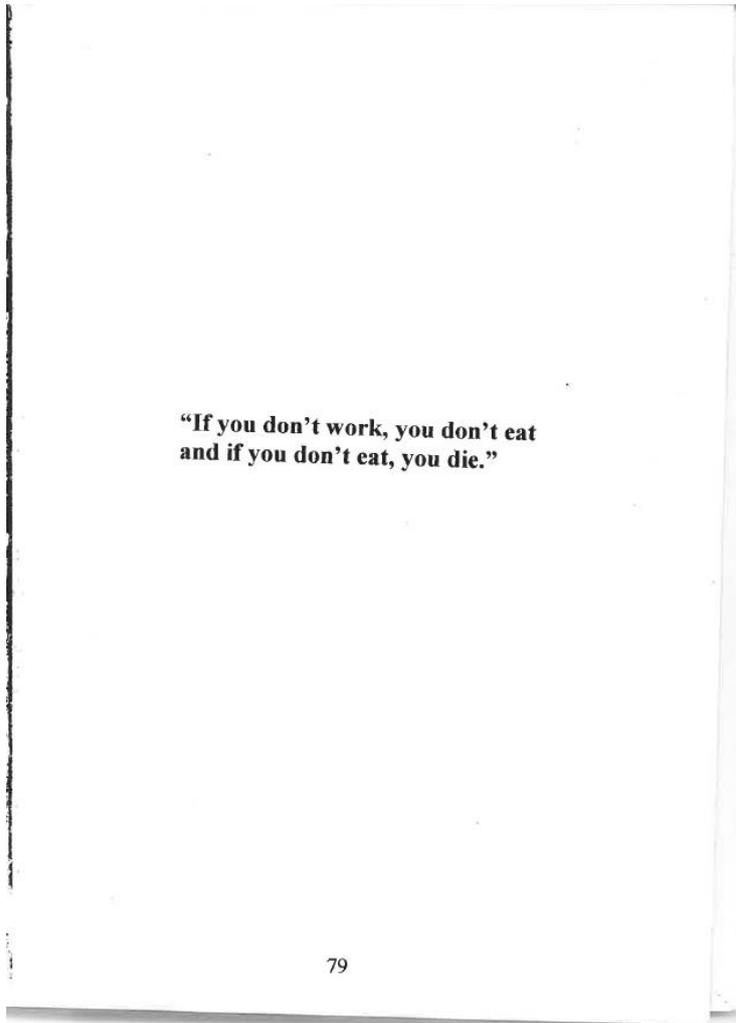
sites in cities near unaffordable, private housing developments and leisure sites (like parks), making inequality glaring (Sbicca 2014: 824; *also* Heynen 2010).

In doing so, ‘sharings’ events become a series of acts as part of a broader political play (*see* Giraud 2019). Sbicca and Heynen both describe the back-and-forth between the activists and local city councils, where laws were retroactively altered (rather than introduced) to prevent sharings, and permits became required to distribute food in public spaces according to standards, despite no previous need for permits before FNB began using the sites for ‘sharings’ (Heynen 2010; Sbicca 2014: 824). By developing the broader context of business and profit-oriented government institutions around their descriptions of the specific ways the sharings were shut down, their work suggests that the use of legal powers to implement food safety regulations on intercepted food commercially destined to be waste complements understandings of excess food being *made* spoiled rather than redistributed. To demonstrate that the condition of the food itself had little to do with meeting the standards of public food distribution, Sbicca evidences one case in which the struggles over permits, public space, and food activism becomes solely an issue of free speech. In this example, the case acknowledged that FNB’s direct action carries an allowable and clear ‘political message,’ but ultimately institutional powers to ‘regulate freedom of speech and assembly in public space’ are prioritized (Sbicca 2014: 825).

In FNB actions, understandings of health, hygiene, and safety are employed by authorities to hinder and prevent the distribution of food. In contrast, in the bakery/café, food safety and hygiene are one of the ways that people are organized in the site and in the arts company, as I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, as well as being an example of the knowledges and skills shared by the bakery/café that can be repurposed to access further, paid work (whether arts-based or not). Furthermore, if self-evident, food safety and hygiene

are used not to shut down alternative forms of food production and distribution at the bakery/café, but to enable it to continue.

The last relevant comparison between work on alternative food distribution and the bakery/café, relates directly to communities' negotiations with representation and to the third, final part of my discussion of community in the bakery/café. Bearing in mind the 'possible tensions between the political goals of FNB and the needs of hungry people who share food with FNB,' the visibility of FNB's tactics coupled with the attempts to criminalize their actions means that the goal of visibility lies in tension with the undesirable attention of authorities, putting community members and FNB workers at risk of state violence (Heynen 2010: 1230). Whilst the bakery/café may avoid this problem by distributing food in a sheltered, explicitly purposed site, this may impact the level of openness and participation that they receive in turn. Where there are exceptions to the outdoors sites of food distribution discussed, such as indoor soup kitchens, the bakery/café is distinct in that it is public, indoor/sheltered, and that its distribution practices are influenced by food activism ethics in a less conspicuous way to the customer, visitors, and passers-by. Furthermore, the public site of the bakery/café is complicated by its position as an artisan bread company that also operates within an arts company, which suggest categorically middle-class cultural barriers. To conclude the following discussion, I will draw from encounters and signs in the site itself to detail the specifics of the alternative economy at work there, a result of the arts company and the bakery/café's use of participatory methods and community work to destabilise and challenge pre-existing understandings of barriers to cultural production and the potential for these barriers to be reconstituted in the site.



*Recipes for Pandæmonium* is a publication produced through research for a show of the same name. Interviews conducted across the city and wider local area are included in the publication and throughout the bakery/café. This publication bears similarity to research conducted at the beginning of the bakery, informing the basis for some of the recipes and the ethos of the Pay As You Feel café. In the *Recipes*, and also displayed on glass dividing the bakery from the workshop space (where much of the preparation for company events takes place), are the words: “If you don’t work, you don’t eat / and if you don’t eat, you die” (*Recipes*

*for Pandæmonium*, 1998, 79, see fig 2).

Statements contained in the *Recipes*, like “If you don’t work...,” ‘There’s nobody need starve in England today,’ and commentary linking freedom of choice to food (see figs. 3 and 4) seem non-negotiable, yet they resonate strongly with the current climate of access to food, work, and welfare in the UK. Evans’s study of food waste and consumption in UK homes in 2014 used Trussell Trust figures to explain that the number of food parcels provided to families had doubled in the years between 2011 and 2012 (Evans 2014:10). Evans positions these figures in comparison to food loss in UK households, expressed in means of capital value. The issue with discussing food waste in terms of quantity, particularly

in terms of how much lost capital value this waste represents, creates what Evans describes as an ‘alarmist’ discourse of ‘perversity,’ ignorance, and/or conscious dissonance in which one of the basic requirements of life (i.e. food) is positioned against a massive overproduction of food, and then food waste (2014: 5, 10).

you know, or dripping. We had dripping off the meat that was cooked on a Sunday, on toast.

When I was called up in the army, that's the only time I ever left Sneyd Street.

### There's nobody need starve in England today

#### VINEGAR FOR TRAVEL

“Dry vinegar to carrie in your pocket! Take the bladder of green corn, either wheat or rye, and beat it in a mortar with the strongest vinegar you can get, till it is a paste. Roll it into balls, drie them in the sun, and when you need vinegar, cut a piece, and dissolve it in wine, or water to make vinegar.”

1615.

“In the olden days we had more plain basic cooking - for one thing we didn't use spices, did we? They used herbs, my mum always used herbs, but not spices, not so much.”

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Barry Scatchens  
Shapley Frey's

### COOKED SAFETY PINS

“You need a Ph.D to work out what you can eat these days. The government says it's up to the public to educate themselves...If you ask any normal person, feeding meat to a herbivore is bound to cause problems...I like meat, it's about freedom of choice, I mean you can grill it, fry it, marinade it, cover it in sauces. I'd miss the texture of it if I had to give it up.”

#### CHAUCER'S PRESSURE COOKER

The pot to broketh! farewell al is go!  
... In helle, where that the foend is Lord and sire,  
Nis there more woe, no more rancour ne ire  
Tan when our pot is broke. . . .  
Every man chit . . . and halts him evil afraid—  
Some sayne, “ It was too long on the fire making.”  
Some seyde, “ Nay! it was on the blowing!”  
“ Sirwe!” quoth the thridde, “ Ye been lewed and myce!  
It was not tempered as it oughte be.”  
“ Nay,” quoth the forth, “ Stent, and harken me,  
Because the fire ne was nat made of beech,  
That is the cause . . . ”

CHAUCER.

ARE SCRUMMY

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Since Evans' study, the Trussell Trust has reported an increase every year in the amount of food parcels handed out by their food bank network, which accounts for about two thirds of UK food banks (Sosenko et al. 2019; Loopstra et al. 2019). A survey-based research study into food bank use shows correlations between incomes far below low-income households, loss of benefits and benefit insecurity, and homelessness and housing insecurity (Sosenko et al. 2019). The same research states that lone parents and their children are the largest household type using food banks, although lone men are the most common; people with disabilities and long-term health problems make up the majority of food bank users. The Trussell Trust provides 3-day emergency supply food packages, however the conditions affecting people's need to use food banks are 'chronic,' frequently occurring throughout the year and exacerbated by changes to benefits (Trussell Trust 2019; Sosenko et al 2019). In particular, the Trust's campaign against benefit switches to Universal Credit focuses the criticism of the scheme on the delay in support provided to vulnerable and struggling households. The Trust again cite the delay in income as a major factor in the need for emergency food, in addition to other payments that food banks cannot directly help with, like heating, electricity, basic toiletries, and shelter (Sosenko et al. 2019).

This context is not obscure to the bakery/café and the arts company, the surrounding impetus for the company's creative projects, and the research for the bakery that decorates the walls of the site. However, although the arts company is critical of austerity policies and social inequality, and seeks to support vulnerable groups, the bakery/café is not a charity. Despite being a much more formal arrangement than public food activism, the bakery/café does share more similarities with the politicised distribution of food than the privatised welfare provision of, generally, apolitical charities that Sbicca and Heynen contrast with food activism work (2010). Mainly, their comparisons between FNB 'sharings' and food access charity are two-fold and relate to the broader socio-political context informing different

modes of food distribution. Heynen and Sbicca argue that charities, firstly, are a privatised mode of social welfare and support whose limited resources are co-opted by governments seeking to role back state welfare provision (Heynen 2010; Sbicca 2014). They explain that the dissolution and weakening of government-run social welfare provision for vulnerable and struggling populations redirects publicly-obtained funds to the investment and development of neoconservative and neoliberal policy (as broad-ranging as nuclear arms funding to selling land to private condominium developers), which depends on third-sector, private charity organizations to pick up the slack (Sbicca 2014: 824; Heynen 2010, throughout) – including food banks (*see above*). They, secondly, point out that these private organizations are often religious – particularly in the U.S. context they draw from – and that the usually Christian-centric conservative morality of these sites can alienate vulnerable communities (Heynen 2010, Sbicca 2014, *see also discussion of Garcia et al. 2015 in the Chapter 2*). This perspective of alternative forms of distribution as a kind of economy, or give-and-take, can effect alienation on communities by implying a conditionality to food access. Sbicca and Heynen additionally point out that the dissemination of anarchist politics at FNB ‘sharings’ can *also* alienate participants by drawing unwanted police attention to the site, by feeding into this perspective of conditional food access, or by simply not being in the immediate interests of hungry people.

Sbicca, Heynen, and others here demonstrate that food insecurity and inequality can be challenged through the development of community spaces, even temporarily, and the use of alternative forms of exchange to enable access to food. Additionally, however, they draw attention to the riskiness of these sites and particularly the possibility of police harassment and the tensions arising from conflicting needs in the site – the immediate needs of food, compared to broader, long-term possibilities for collective action and social change, for example. Below, I will be discussing tensions in more detail specific to the bakery/café’s

modes of food production and exchange. However, I will revisit these points in Chapter 7 to discuss how the bakery/café contends with the potential riskiness of accessible food distribution through their provision of a safe, community space where people can eat and rest without necessarily exchanging money or being challenged for their presence there. In particular, I will discuss this provision as both formation and practice of safe space in a way that challenges and broadens existing conceptualizations of safe spaces which are limited to academic sites.

For now, however, by drawing from an encounter with a visitor at the bakery/café, I am going to explore the ways that popular understandings of art production, combined with these tensions created by the implications of conditional access in alternative economies of food production and distribution, affect the ways visitors may engage with the site. In this example, while I was running a workshop as a volunteer at the site, a first-time visitor was visibly unsure of how to navigate the Pay-As-You-Feel lunch process, staying close to the entrance. He had to verbally check with me which counter to go to, as well as check that he didn't have to do 'art therapy' (i.e. participate in my workshop) in order to access the food.<sup>7</sup> On the one hand, the visitor clearly identified that the site worked with an alternative economy and that he did not necessarily need to exchange a certain amount of money for food. On the other, it was unclear to him how the PAYF lunch worked, if I had a decisive role in whether or not he could have lunch, and how much of a choice he had to participate in the activities offered by the space. By asking, the visitor affirmed that he had a say in the practices of the bakery/café, but people less willing or able to check in this way, or even enter the building, may be deterred by these physical and social barriers that are less explicit, or not present at all in the public distribution of food demonstrated through food access activism.

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<sup>7</sup> On some days I was asked to run workshops in the café area, particularly on quieter days, which later led to my involvement in a community engagement project. This conversation occurred during the research period (specifically, during June 2019) but not on a specific day that I was working in the bakery.

Heynen and Sbicca's points about charity-based food distribution calls particular attention to the 'proselytization' of religious charities and how this can cause discomfort (*see* Sbicca 2014: 824), which resonates in this encounter in the broader context of alternative food distribution and exchange, which in this local area is usually charity-based. I felt that this particular visitor was concerned that the bakery/café was similar to privatised, charitable food distribution and was attuned to the conditional, often patronising, limitations to accessing food and other basic services that these charities can employ. However, as both Heynen and Sbicca point out, 'assumptions about [...] political ideologies' can cause discomfort in exchanges of anarchist politics and food at FNB's sharings (Heynen 2010: 1228). Additionally, while this was an overall innocuous conversation that was resolved quickly, I was discomforted by my brief position as arbiter of lunch and particularly concerned with how potentially patronising this position made me seem. I am going to discuss these multiple forms of discomfort by unpacking the understandings at work in this interaction and why they felt familiar, but out of place in the bakery/café.

The visitor's reading of the activities in the space implied both an awareness of the food distribution practices in the context of alternative exchange, and a familiarity with aid institutions that promoted and prioritized individual lifestyle changes in order to access the services. This reading suggests that the bakery/café is visibly successful in its aims to portray itself as a community space employing accessible modes of food distribution. Yet additionally, as part of a broader context of cultural and community spaces, the bakery/café simultaneously negotiates with the existing socio-economic barriers to and the conditional connotations of cultural production and food distribution which, as Heynen and Sbicca point out, are not limited to charitable aid institutions. In my conversation with the café visitor, he made it clear that he wasn't interested in the workshop I was doing, but seemed concerned that his participation in my activity was connected to his ability to have lunch. This tension

indicates a broader context, that I have discussed, of vulnerabilities associated with food inequality and insecurity, and which I will draw upon to elucidate how the bakery/café's modes of food production and distribution are situated within and speak to broader political contexts of food access activism and the production of community safe space. The following discussion draws from understandings of consent and participation in participatory arts practice to develop this observation further, particularly to explicate how the bakery/café connects to community engagement in the arts and the broader ethics of the company.

As a point of access to the work and activities of the arts company, the bakery/café attempts to balance the political and material priorities of the community, which includes professional artists and non-professional artists, company members, non-company members, volunteers, customers, and visitors. Included in this balance is a conscientious approach to meaningful levels of participation. Speaking specifically about participatory art, Materasso (2019) acknowledges the necessity of participatory modes of art production to challenge social relationships to the production and consumption of art, but also the necessity for consent for all participants, and the need for a meaningful way to engage with art production. He points out that consent can be partial, when someone may want to do some activities but not others, or when someone may simply want to observe as a form of participation. He uses a model of citizenship participation (from Arnstein 1969) to discuss how, when someone may be taking part in an activity, this does not always constitute meaningful participation because they have little say in how power is shared and how decisions are made (Materasso 2019: 106).

The relationship between professional and non-professional artists in participatory arts production needs to involve a sharing of power and develop meaningful engagement and communication with communities in order to challenge elitist modes of arts production (Materasso 2019). In the interaction in the bakery/café, existing understandings of conditional and limited access to both art and food go hand in hand. In other words: tensions do not altogether go away with the often secular, politicized distribution of food in the bakery/café and the FNB's distribution of anarchist politics, but exist as implicit cultural barriers that these sites are conscious of and who view the act of meal sharing as a potential breakdown of these barriers. As they are informed by this broader context, the bakery/café have various methods of exchange, working to make food accessible and suggesting possibilities for alternative,

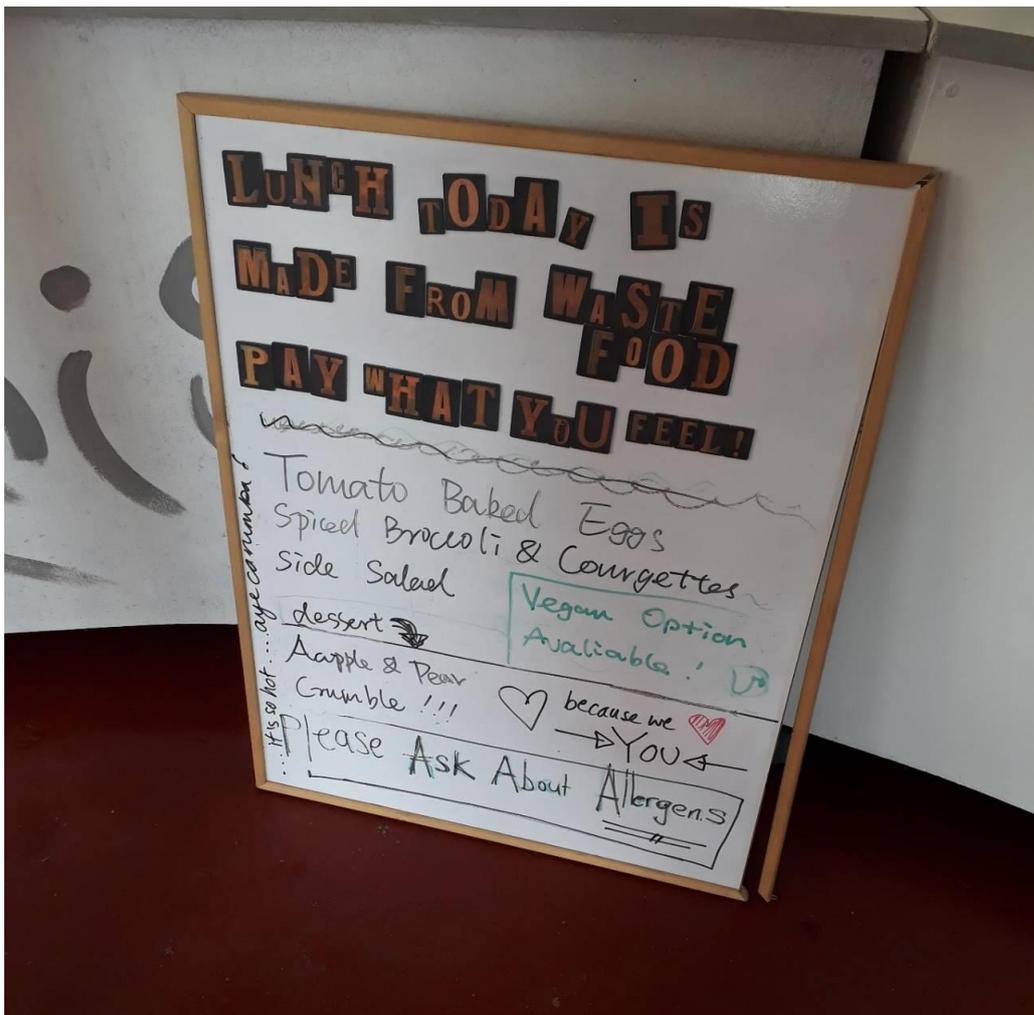


Figure 5, Menu Board

participatory-informed economies in which the needs of the community frame the terms of trade and exchange (*see* Gibson-Graham 2008; Cooper 2014).

To illustrate, the menu board used at the bakery/café during Pay-As-You-Feel meals alters week-by-week except for the part that is not handwritten: “Lunch today is made from waste food!” (*see* fig. 5). The Pay-As-You-Feel “price” of food is in connection with the food source (waste), offering/implying a choice to visitors that they may choose what to pay based on the quality of and information about the food. While the bakery/café requests money for food, there is no suggested donation, and actually visiting the café during opening hours requires (in theory and practice) no actual exchange of money for food. Payment is discreet and largely goes unobserved. In some cases, visitors have put their donation in a cardboard box which requests feedback and comments because they haven’t seen the donation tin and, conversely, because no one working at the bakery/café was actually observing the tin and whether or not people donate.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, the bread for the bakery has set prices and set choices to order; although the cost of bakery products can’t compete with supermarkets in terms of prices, there is more than one way to get lunch. Volunteers may exchange their labour for a loaf of bread, as well as access to the intercepted food that is not used by the bakery/café, which is also available to visitors to take with them.<sup>9</sup> In addition, unsold bread is frozen on the day it is made and may be used at company events and meetings, but may also be sold for a reduced price at a later date (presumably because it can’t be refrozen and therefore has a shorter expiry date).<sup>10</sup>

Framing the bakery/café within the politics of participatory culture *and* of alternative economies elucidates the nature of existing barriers and challenges with which the

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<sup>8</sup> Observations from fieldnotes – e.g. July 2019, after a rush, volunteers noticed that visitors were putting donations in a feedback box (Field diary notes, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> I usually also would be given lunch during or just after café opening hours, and had been “told off” for offering to pay (Field diary notes, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> This information came from a bakery worker who covered the market stalls at local artisan events.

bakery/café contends, as well as opening up new contestations to negotiate with. Informed by the succinct understandings seen in *Recipes*: that food is a basic necessity, as well as relationship to between work, food, inequality, and social responsibility, the arts company and the bakery/café are challenging social inequalities made visible by overproduction and unequal distribution of food, and the relationship between this and the production of food waste. However, the practices of alternative, socially responsible and conscientious food production and distribution within a broader context of profit-oriented economies produce further challenges: the accessibility and affordability of food. A pay as you feel café offers a space for people with various incomes to get a substantial meal (servings are a good size, and can be taken away), although this is limited by the choice available (hence the information of where the food comes from). Although the high prices of the bakery products could potentially be off-putting to potential café patrons, the bakery/café employs multiple, seemingly negotiable economies to reflexively challenge problems arising from the ethics informing the production and distribution of food in the space.

By beginning with a comparative context of participatory cultural production, I have discussed how a shared ethics of participation and a pursuit of social change can be practiced by very different groups in specific ways – namely, the production and distribution of food and zines. By choosing two examples of how tensions can arise through communities formed to meet specific, unmet needs, I am aiming to draw out broader shared demands for community safety in ways that haven't been discussed in detail in existing scholarship, but in ways that can speak *to* existing scholarship and ongoing debates. In the first example, above, I have discussed how unmet material needs for food are being challenged through collective action that can make visible less obvious vulnerabilities such as insecurities arising from a lack of affordable public spaces to eat, which can particularly harm people who can only eat in public spaces. Additionally, I aim to explain how the continual and increased awareness of

vulnerabilities is facilitated by the production of these community spaces, but largely also through this production, where a growing and diverse community means that community demands become more complex, multiple, and specific. In Chapter 7 I will revisit these points to draw out how these ideas contribute to, and can also develop, ongoing debates about community safety and individual freedoms, and their close connection to theories about violence and vulnerability. In this chapter I aim to provide the basis for an approach to safety and safe space formation that is situated, specific, and focused, and by moving away from oppositional comparisons to freedom and violence and more towards a relational and social approach that engages with community politics and, in the next chapter, spatial production.

Both the bakery/café and zine culture face problems and negotiations raised by their participatory context. For the bakery, the politics of their food production and distribution can be in tension with the desire to meet immediate material needs of the community and the critique of social inequality from which these politics are formed. However, in zine culture, it is instead a consistent and dominant representation of ‘authentic’ community, arising in resistance to commercialization and through limitations in zine trade and exchange methods, that can stifle the diversity of zine community representation. Zine writer Madeleine articulates, in issue 4 of *Chisel Tip*, both the interconnectedness of countercultural expression and the zine form, and the potentially stultifying and depoliticizing effects of homogenising participatory cultures and desires for social change. Drawing from *Chisel Tip*, and understandings of zine culture and the politics of the form’s aesthetics, in the following section I write about the reflexive and changing understandings of the zine form and its modes of distribution, looking at the use of archives and digital technologies to bolster underrepresented makers in the community. In the comparison of these two case studies, I aim to acknowledge that pressures can come from both within and outwith these communities

in order to explicate how the participatory ethics and pursuit of social change enable reflexive and critical approaches to community formation and maintenance.

### 5.3.2 *The Sugababes and the problem of universal subculture*

Where Francois Materasso's key point about participatory art is 'cultural democratization' and focuses particularly on the *production* of art, Stephen Duncombe, writing about zines, focuses on the 'democratization of consumption' (Duncombe 2008: 112; Materasso 2019: 47, *see also* 54). Participatory cultural production is evident between makers and readers of zines, as Piepmeier demonstrates, but it can also be extended to the production of and participation in social and cultural critique that the zine form is commonly used for. Duncombe draws special attention to zines discussing work, music and art, and politics, often together, and argues that the critical and countercultural expression of zines derives from its company in participatory culture, punk rock (2008). Expressed as a communication between practice and ethics, and demonstrated in the visual aesthetic of the form, the DIY ethos is neatly articulated through the links between punk and zine making (Bell 1998; Duncombe 2008). For example, Jonathan Bell's interpretations of the ethos of punk visuals (particularly album sleeves) implies that 'fanzines' are a natural (by-)product of punk culture, mainly an 'appropria[tion]' of the then 'new technology' of the photocopier (Bell 1998: 100). He argues that punk's employment of 'everyday imagery' and 'inexpensive materials,' 'raw immediacy,' and 'maximum outrage' creates a dizzying 'feedback loop' of critical and highly charged cultural production: outrage as the expression *of* punk and the reaction *to* punk (99-100). Duncombe's history of zines also often draws extensively on the influence of punk to discuss the zine form and culture as critical of broader society, particularly that which draws on understandings of social stratification and structural inequalities as derivations of capitalist ideology.

Much of Duncombe's discussion of zine makers and zine culture revolves around a theory of 'negative identity,' a counter-cultural refusal of whatever can be considered 'mainstream' (Duncombe 2008: 101). His focus on the consumption of culture positions zines as partially dependent on, and partially resistant to, that which is popular, straight, or mainstream. This approach generates a host of us-them dichotomies spanning temporality (zine time and straight time), work (zine work and straight work), and even zines themselves (zines, produced through zine ethics, and zines/zynes, produced through a commercialization of the form's aesthetics and DIY culture). Much like Bell, he explicitly credits zines' critical expression (in the form of negative identity) to punk culture; moreover, both argue that zine-making articulates an anti-capitalist stance. Cut-and-paste creates a 'scrappy, homemade visual aesthetic' that expresses a critical, 'anti-consumerist' ethos and destabilizes seemingly straightforward practices of property and ownership, where 'copyright and authorship were confused and devalued' (*see* Bell: 1998: 99).

However, Adela C. Licona argues that limiting understandings of zine ethics, aesthetics, and politics to a by-product of punk results in a glaring omission of feminist and of-colour presses (Licona 2012: 2). Illustrative of this argument, Todd Honma suggests that the cut-and-paste style of zines predates the influence of punk altogether. He points to earlier influences in publications such as *Gidra*, an independent newspaper produced by and for the Asian-American population of L.A., active during the 1960s and highly critical of the Vietnam War (Honma 2016). Sean Stewart also demonstrates the experimentation with printing technology and expression emerging from the 1960s underground press. Focusing on the U.S. press, Stewart's anecdotal history of independent publishing clearly indicates the prevalence of cut-and-paste as part of the 'underground' aesthetic that preceded punk (Stewart 2011; *see also* Duncombe 2008; Materasso 2019).

Approaching these contesting theories pragmatically, Michelle Kempson discusses the zine community as ‘internally heterogeneous,’ arguing that the zine is a shared form used across multiple, often countercultural, communities (Kempson 215: 1083). This conceptualization fits with the diversity of zines, specifically the different subtypes of zines (fanzines, grrrl zines, perzines, etc.), and with the understanding that the zine as a form and its cut-and-paste aesthetic emerges through a specific set of DIY making and distributing practices, with little to do with a prescribed content. Both Kempson and Piepmeier theorize how makers and readers are involved in the co-creation of zine objects, and zine culture, as the community itself is evidenced in the zine object (and vice versa). Adela C. Licona (2012) goes further than Piepmeier to argue that the zine form and community can materialize as radical anti-racist and feminist coalitions, unauthorized and alternative knowledges, and can create social change. A zine like *Agua Pura*, discussed in the next chapter, demonstrates the interconnectedness of these theories, showing how zine making and reading is created through networks of communities pursuing social change, informed by this pursuit and a desire to share with others.

*Chisel Tip #4*'s article on elitism in punk, DIY, and activist community culture, “Punk and the Problem of Universal Subculture,” discusses many of the issues raised by zine scholars challenging the punk-dominated representation of zine community. Specifically, however, Madeleine is actually talking about punk and DIY ethics more broadly. *Chisel Tip* is primarily a music zine, interviewing underground punk, alternative, and hip-hop artists, although some artists don't strictly fit into these categories. It is also explicitly a political zine, and focuses on music as political expression as well as discussing contemporary political events. *Chisel Tip #4 (CT4)*, put together shortly after the Leave result of the UK Brexit Referendum, contains interviews with artists forming or performing in and around Manchester UK, where the zine maker (Madeleine) is now based. “Punk and the problem of universal subculture” interrogates



**Figure 6.** *CT4*, Madeleine, 2016

the ‘superiority’ of punk, arguing that punk, alternative, and indie music are prioritized as indicators of sub- and counter-cultural community music tastes, over popular music, hip-hop, and grime (*CT4* 2016: 17). Madeleine’s article suggests that because these music genres are widely enjoyed by white men, especially those that are ‘anti-establishment,’ they are taken more seriously in critical contexts (17).

In the article, Madeleine takes issue with another music journalist rating a Sugababes’ album

as ‘punk’ because it challenges the mainstream (*see* fig. 6, left). She argues that dissociating punk by conceptually elevating it as the epitome of countercultural expression harms the political and critical capacities of cultural production in general, as well as punk and DIY communities. Madeleine associates punk, subculture, and counterculture with ‘equality for all, DIY, a not-for-profit ethos,’ but argues that these ‘ideals’ belong to and are practiced by no homogenous group:

Certain genres, subcultures, etc. (or certain people within them) might have a lot in common in terms of ethos. But in terms of sociological origins, demographics, etc. they are not identical (*CT4*, 2016: 18).

Like Licona, and other scholars of DIY cultures, Madeleine draws attention to the underrepresentation of artists of colour, specifically women, and argues through personal observation that there is a double standard at play in her community (*see also* Griffin 2012). She explains that being ‘female, multi-ethnic’ and raised ‘on all kinds of music’ placed her in the minority when she sought out a community with similar music taste to hers, mostly ‘white

guys listening to various kinds of alternative guitar music' (CT4 2016: 17). Furthermore, by relating her experiences of being mocked for her tastes, particularly by using a sarcastic interrogative, she points out that there are intersecting prejudices that contribute to a dismissive approach to pop music, hip-hop, and R&B:

I was laughed at for listening to Destiny's Child. I laughed at them for listening to the Velvet Underground and reading Jack Kerouac. Laughing at women of colour making pop music is fine though because why would anyone take that kind of thing seriously right?

Madeleine is 'amused' and 'irritat[ed]' by the dismissive mocking she finds in her community, primarily because she senses there is a lack of balance in these encounters (17). For example, her boyfriend 'didn't get' Michael Jackson and criticized him for his 'strained' voice; Madeleine is 'lost for words' because '[her boyfriend] just criticized him the very thing punk singers are praised for. For not sounding good' (17). Madeleine draws on the sign "punk" and related knowledges of punk, DIY, and activist communities to critique a sense of depoliticized homogeneity in punk culture, and expresses frustration that her community often prioritizes white and masculinized representations of punk and counterculture. 'Punk and the problem of universal subculture' aligns with the general mission of *Chisel Tip* to amplify bands that Madeleine sees as offering alternatives, 'politically, sonically, lyrically' (NP), and the use of the zine form to participate in critical and personal cultural production in opposition to the mainstream.

Building from personal experiences, Madeleine brings a broader argument forward: 'Why does the alternative establishment need to deem an artist "punk" to be considered politically and/or musically valid?' (18). Inherent in her critique of punk culture is an argument that there is a structural, societal hierarchy that is reflected in dominant understandings of radical, political, and critical expression. This phrase, 'alternative establishment' is key to

Madeleine's argument that, firstly, there are racist and misogynistic undertones to the prioritization of punk music as *the* radical counterculture. Supported by her use of anecdotes, she argues that 'punk' is used ubiquitously to mean critical, anti-establishment, or counter-cultural. Secondly, she argues that taste in punk, indie, and 'alternative' music can be used as a status symbol without any necessary engagement with what punk is supposed to criticise (or, at the very least, not replicate). Madeleine argues that using punk as a status symbol in this way inherently harms the community, by 'reduc[ing] punk to a label you can slap on anything remotely dissenting or angry' (18). In other words, she suggests that punk has become more associated with, and marketed as, vacuous dissent, rather than an expression of outrage directed at broader societal inequalities. In addition, because it is the mark of what is 'politically and/or musically valid,' punk becomes an exclusive, homogenous community. Belonging and meaningful engagement is difficult to maintain, and internal critique is not welcomed, even when members can identify forms of marginalization and discrimination that perpetuate social and economic stratification in the "mainstream" society punk aims to criticise.

While participatory and DIY ethics inform the production of zines, a generalised understanding of zine culture that associates it solely with a homogenized "punk" aesthetic overlooks the heterogeneity of the community at the expense of women, LGBT and queer zine makers, and people of colour. As Licona points out, this stems from overlooking zine culture's overlaps with histories of independent publishing (2012). Scholarship about zine culture often seeks to address the exclusionary result of a popularised representation, often drawing from their personal and hands-on experiences with zines themselves (Piepmier 2008, Licona, 2012; Bagelman and Bagelman 2016). For example, Licona (2012) criticizes Duncombe's (2008) focus on punk and middle class zinesters, characterizing these as 'Duncombesque' and typical of a masculinized and white representation of both punk and zine culture. Duncombe (2008) himself uses a representation of riot grrrl culture and zine making to demonstrate how this

subculture offered a strong resistance to popular media representations of zines and alternative culture in the 1990s, an unfortunately brief diversion into a feminist-focused, but still punk-dominated, section of zine history. However, Madeleine's arguments develop these understandings further by drawing attention to frustrating and dismissive conversations, and she makes a direct attempt to connect lived experiences, including experiences of racism and misogyny, with a limited representation of counterculture and a limiting understanding of politicized cultural expression.

Where Madeleine expresses her arguments in articles like this, more generally *Chisel Tip* is used to showcase underrepresented artists, whose interviews explicitly state the necessity to critically engage with the world and whose work is inseparable from their political expression. Madeleine is using her zine to remedy problems with representation that she sees in her own community but, as her article shows, there is a protective motive to this, in which she prioritizes a more accurate and involved understanding of her community over her own criticisms. In other words, she aims to actively challenge the elements of her own community which question her and others' sense of belonging by engaging directly with the ethics that inform the culture and practices of that community.

While Madeleine recognizes that she is vulnerable in her community as a woman of colour, she also makes clear that the zine, punk, and DIY communities of which she is a part are an important source of community and support for her, and are also vulnerable to misrepresentation and exploitation. She demonstrates an awareness of the tensions arising through individual and community needs through her critique of racism and misogyny in her encounters, but also offers her critique in reciprocity of the sense of belonging she has for the zine community, and what it needs from her (and particularly her position as an active zinester with an active, communicative audience of readers). In Chapter 7, I will be discussing in more detail how specific zinesters use their zines (as well as contemporary safe space practices such

as trigger warnings) to build understandings of shared vulnerabilities within their communities. I will also be building further on the idea that demands for safety are communicative and often reciprocal when those demands are formed through communities with complex and multiple forms of vulnerability. Specifically, I will be using the example of unofficial archives as community spaces that require the ongoing support of the people who have produced them and who continue to maintain them. Below, I am foregrounding this later discussion by engaging with zine community archival work, which develops some of the tensions and critiques that Madeleine suggests in her essay.

To demonstrate a broader effort to challenge the representation of zine culture, I am going to discuss the necessity to build and maintain specialist archives like the People Of Color Zine Project (POCZP), as well as queer, and feminist zine libraries. These efforts imply a critical engagement with the zine community that are developed through participation and belonging with communities that share zines as a form. Archives and libraries align with the general approach to accessibility that zine culture embraces, however, they differ from the traditional modes of distribution and circulation in the zine community. This presents a challenge to how knowledges about zine culture are produced, by making available zines made by oft-underrepresented communities, and stems from the activity of the zine community itself.

Zine makers and scholars have expressed concerns that zines may disappear in their physical form, in light of the emergence of e-zines and online archives (Duncombe 2008; Atton 2010; Piepmeier 2008). These concerns are rooted in the belief that e-zines are inadequate ‘simulacra’ of print zines (Atton 2002: 68). However, the zine community’s use of online spaces and digital technologies are often practical and adaptive decisions focused on communication between zine makers and readers, and production methods. Like punk zines and photocopiers, the zine form as a whole adapts to new cultural practices and ‘new technology’ (Bell 1998: 100) as opposed to simply being a unique product of a particular

subculture or counterculture. For example, in *Chisel Tip*'s fourth issue, Madeleine has used 'in-person' interviews in addition to interviews over email, which she includes in ways to contact her, and describes enjoying the challenge of that immediacy as well as the challenge of transcription, turning 'the spoken word [...] into the written word' (CT4 2016: NP). Most contemporary paper zines show a pragmatic inclusion of digital spaces in the community: emails in contact details, for example, or *Agua Pura*'s use of QR codes to learn more about the work of No More Deaths (see Chapter 6). *Chisel Tip*, whilst being a physical, paper zine made using cut-and-paste, is also online as of the fourth issue. Much of the introduction to *Chisel Tip #4* contends with the communicative capability of print and paper, as well as 'what *Chisel Tip* is about' (NP). As well as interviews and reviews, the zine also contains two explicitly personal and critical pieces about the Brexit referendum, and punk elitism, and she argues that 'what these artists have to say is too important to be confined to print versions' (CT4 2016: NP).

The concerns about digital technologies and online spaces largely resonate with the second and third aspects of Piepmeier's arguments about zines and community: why people make and read zines after handling them, and the material evidence of the community. Links between handling zines and writing about and defining zines and zine culture are closely related and often easily troubled by new developments in zine scholarship and zine community practices. Adela C. Licona and Daniel Brouwer (2015) have explored the 'trans(affective)mediation' of large-scale online zine archive projects such as the Queer Zine Archive Project and the People Of Color Zine Project (POCZP). Licona and Brouwer discuss the implications of what they term the 'loss of loss,' where preserving and digitising zines inhibits specific signs of the object 'being used well' (Licona and Brouwer 2015: 77): in other words, material evidence of the community.

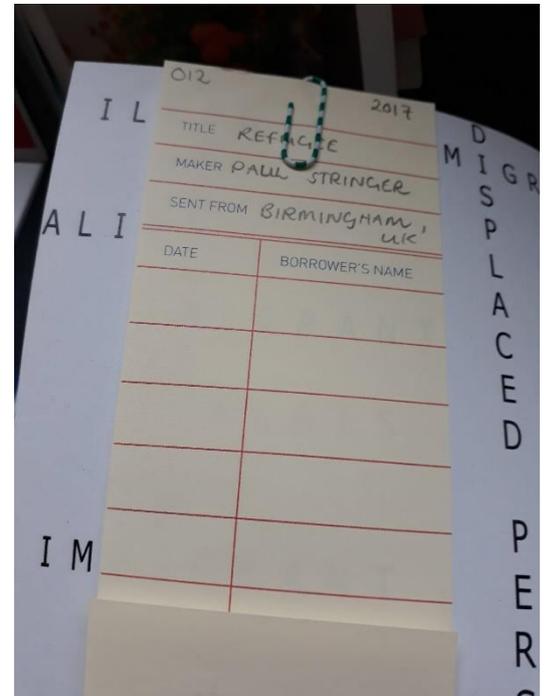
The loss of loss is not specific to digitisation. For example, figures 8 and 9 were taken at Brum Zine Fest 2019, Birmingham, at an in-house zine library.<sup>11</sup> The increasing appearance and visibility of zine libraries have developed a difficult position for librarians, who often have to negotiate with long-standing perspectives on zines and circulation, and their own duties and the intentions of a library. Heidi Berthoud, the zine librarian at Vassar College, advises informing the zinemaker that their zine will be put in a library before acquiring it, as ‘not all zinesters create work for a large audience’ (Berthoud 2017: 52). Berthoud’s line of work means that she has to consider ‘how best to protect zines from the wear and tear of usage’ (54), and emphasises in her communication with zinesters and distros that the zine is a ‘permanent acquisition’ for the library (52).

The zines in Birmingham were accompanied by rules dictating that the library was not a lending one (Fig. 7; rule 3), but catalogued using lending library materials (Fig. 8, note the columns for borrower’s name and date). The fourth rule, that zines were ‘an artwork in their own right,’ and needed ‘respect,’ legitimised the restrictions on handling or taking the zines, which included not eating or drinking around them (Fig. 7). However, I found this directive off-putting in its attitude to visitors, zines, and art; a concern for the welfare of zines (as art) for the art’s sake rather than, for example, Berthoud’s concern that enables the circulation of zines and zine ethics for a wider audience and potentially a longer time. Directives like this, an effort to recognize the value of zine making, and non-professional and independent cultural production, unfortunately reinforce the kinds of borders participatory and DIY cultural production attempt to destabilise (*see* Materasso 2019; Duncombe 2008). In fact, the very zines closest to these rules decry ideas about art, authorship, and ownership: one is a collectively

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<sup>11</sup> At this event (2019) I was attending as a researcher/visitor, interested in collecting zines for my personal collection and also for relevant information about zine culture for the project. At the time I would photograph zine libraries and archives to check if they were available elsewhere (e.g. digitized or online). I would tell zine makers that I was doing a research project and made sure not to include any other visitors in the photographs.

produced zine on an exhibition, the other contains self-confessed ‘Shit drawings of Theresa May’ (see fig. 7, bottom right and middle).



- 1. Read a zine or more**
- 2. No food or drinks near zines**
- 3. Zines stay within the hubs premises**
- 4. Respect zines as they are a piece of**

Figures 7, 8, Birmingham Zine Library

Although the conversations about zine archiving and digitising are ongoing, the loss of loss that Licona and Brouwer discuss is not in complete disagreement with what Piepmeier argues zines create (embodied communities). Licona and Brouwer note that zines are continually created and willingly donated to expand the POCZP (Licona and Brouwer 2015: 71), and as a result of the Vassar zine library, Berthoud presses, staff and students at the college

have been introduced to and participate in zine culture. The library has grown through donations from students ‘already producing zines on campus’ and through interested students and the zine making kits that the library provides (Berthoud 2017: 50). Furthermore, zinesters are also using zines to develop and disseminate information about cataloguing and zine librarianship.

The processes of digitising (which includes demonstrations on how architectural zines are folded and opened; *see* Licon and Brouwer 2015), and the process of cataloguing, covering, and labelling zines at the library (Berthoud 2017: 54), as well as the production of new zines are all new forms of evidence of the zine community. Although zine content and style are highly individual and personal, in practice the zine form is reliant on ongoing inter-community engagement and exchange (Atton 2002; Piepmeier 2008). This is demonstrated in the inclusion of contact details on zines, encouragement to send fan (or hate) mail, as well as the digitisation of paper zines to reach more people (Atton 2002; Duncombe 2008; *CT4* 2016). These forms of new and renewed involvement with, or expansion of, the zine community and its practices agree with Piepmeier that the community, as with the zine ‘artefact’ itself, is perpetually unfinished (Piepmeier 2008: 235).

Specifically, however, the creation of archives and libraries strongly promote and extend participatory culture’s ethics on accessibility. Online archives are largely digitisations of existing zine libraries, making zines accessible in digital space rather than through trading or purchase at a zine fest, and can also specialize in certain representations of zine culture and community. For example, the digitisation of existing queer zine libraries may call for submissions to bolster representation of queer and LGBT+ zines. The POCZP is another example of this, an entirely online library of zines which combines the function of digital platforms with the community-oriented practices of zine making and distribution to collate, share, and support zinemakers of colour (Ramdarshan Bold 2017). Further to this, the POCZP

links zines to histories of independent publishing by artists of colour, for example, making available *FIRE!!*, a publication c1920s disseminating artists' work central to the Harlem Renaissance. Additionally, access to zines through women's libraries merge products of feminist independent presses with zine makers, demonstrating a dialogue between these forms of cultural production which can be observed in *Silenced Feminisms*, a zine inspired by and created through research into *Spare Rib* magazine (*Silenced Feminisms* 2017).

Prior attempts to catalogue zines produced zines *about* zines, such as *Factsheet Five*, which were designed to facilitate trade and inter-community cultural criticism (reviews and recommendations), strengthening the network of zinesters. In comparison, in contemporary zine community practices, archival and library work with zines is more focused than before on expanding *knowledges* of the network and exploring ways to preserve what is inherently an ephemeral and temporary form while making it accessible to makers and readers. For example, specific libraries (such as the POCZP and some Women's Libraries) attempt to document, preserve, *and* share oft-overlooked producers of zines and zine culture. Comparing the intentions of a *Factsheet Five*-style publication to a project like the POCZP, for example, redefines how the community use and repurpose the zine network, where both attempt to bring zinesters together, but the latter prioritizes zines made and shared by people of colour.

These efforts to create zine libraries and archives have helped to redefine the communities in which zines circulate by expanding them or focusing on particular kinds of zines. Overall, through adaptive and reflexive practices, zine makers and readers have raised new concerns and hesitations about what a zine is, demonstrated in the (perhaps misguided) rules on art and engagement at Brum Zine Fest. In the exploration of and experimentation with new community sites and practices, and informed by a desire to challenge misrepresentations through meaningful inter-community critique, these new practices and ongoing conversations

have reinvigorated and rethought understandings that one can know what a zine is through handling zines and, by doing so, may become part of the zine community itself.

#### 5.4 Conclusion: Community and Transformative surplus

The community formation in the bakery/café and in zine culture meets resistance and challenges that can hinder the ability to practice the participatory ethics from which these communities are formed. In zine culture, the openness of the form led to imitative, mass-produced zine-like productions. The production of zine-like objects for profit led to a community resistance in which the history, ethics, and practices of zine-making and distributing were more vociferously defined, but this also bolstered a marketable history of “alternative” culture. In addition, the response to the commercialization of the zine form also engendered suspicion of successful zine-makers, limited representations of the zine community’s heterogeneity and diversity, and overlooked overlapping histories of independent cultural production and contemporary zinemakers who didn’t fit the mould.

I have used my own discomfort with Birmingham Zine Library rules to demonstrate that, although an attempt to challenge issues of accessibility, geographical disparity, and underrepresented voices, these community responses can raise their own problems related to the participatory ethics that inform them. The growing visibility of libraries and archives has led to DIY archivists such as Kirsty Fife, zine librarians like Heidi Berthoud, and zines produced by librarians on the being at the forefront of expertise on the ethics and practices of this turn. If anything, the exchange of critique and knowledge in zine distribution demonstrates the constantly developing zine cultural practice, which is as difficult to define succinctly as zine objects themselves.

In the case of the bakery/café, the multiple economies work to make food accessible but do not in themselves compete with corporate markets (except, perhaps, in terms of the quality of the food relative to the price). Even with the difference in price, the bakery/café does

not turn a profit, and at first glance, the bakery products seem marketed to a different demographic than the vulnerable communities they seek to help. All that said, the bakery/café is an artisan bread company, is also a Pay-As-You-Feel café, and is also part of an arts company that has, for several decades, been successfully hosting, supporting, and participating in local and nation-wide cultural and community engagement events, as well as financially accessible, socially engaged, and politically conscious productions. As a “front door,” the bakery/café works well to invite and welcome new people, and is also used to provide a free lunch to a series of successful engagement events, which host multiple artists and creators to develop taster sessions and workshops to visitors for free.<sup>12</sup>

I am therefore using the concept of ‘transformative surplus’ to begin to interpret the complexities and ongoing-ness of community formation in these two groups. A Blochian understanding of a transformative surplus uses the Marxist concept of surplus value and theorizes that cultural products and artistic expression carries a hopeful potentiality, an unpredictable and productive possibility for the future (*see* Bloch 1986, 1988; *also* Kellner 1997, Marx 1990). Muñoz’s theory, repurposing Blochian theory to queer utopian theoretical ends, presses that ‘surplus is both cultural and affective,’ and that following queer feeling through art produces queer potential futures (Muñoz 2009: 28).

Muñoz writes specifically on community-produced transformative surplus, focusing on punk and countercultural communities, informed in part by Jill Dolan’s theories on *communitas* and the utopian performative (2005). Dolan argues that a theatrical production has the potential to create a community of artists and audience, and together this community can be witness to possibilities for a better world, inspired by the production. Although the theoretical blurring of the performative and performance can lead to misreadings, in which the performative is characterised as pretence or ineffectual, what Dolan is actually pressing is, like Muñoz and

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<sup>12</sup> I have hosted a workshop and am one of the members of the advisory board for this recurring event.

Bloch, the utopian potentiality of cultural products. So, in the context of the theory of the utopian performative, Muñoz interprets punk and queerness as a ‘stage,’ playing on (hetero)normative assumptions about the temporality of queerness and teenage angst. Reading punk and drag venues and shows, he argues:

these stages are our actual utopian rehearsal rooms, where we work on a self that does not conform to the mandates of cultural logics such as late capitalism, heteronormativity, and, in some cases, white supremacy (2009: 111).

Although Muñoz is here talking about queerness and punk, he brings in other ‘cultural logics’ and intersecting ‘mandates’ that, he argues, punk can and does form in opposition to. Muñoz argues that ‘punk rock’s rejection of normative feelings stands as the most significant example of the emotional work of negative affect’ (Muñoz 2009: 97). Despite drawing on “negative” emotions - for example, ‘shame, disgust, hate’ - as forms of like-mindedness and sites where communities emerge, in other words, ‘emotions [that] bind people together,’ Muñoz’s primary focus is on expressions of hope (97).

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned the potentiality of the desire for social change. This desire, embedded in the practices of the bakery/café and in zine culture, motivates these communities and their adaptive practices. Social change is what these communities are witness to, and in being so, can appropriately be linked with the concept of *communitas*, to reflect their reflexive, forward-facing practices and their pursuit of viable alternatives to modes of production and distribution that engender social inequality. The site that is opened up by the critical expression of participatory ethics suggests a potentiality of something *else*, a potentiality that never closes. Zine makers and readers, and the community of the bakery/café and arts company make demands upon the desire for community, their community, and themselves, by holding these accountable to the ‘cultural logics’ through which (as well as in

opposition to which) these communities, and relationships are formed. In effect, these demands mean that these relationships are negotiable, open to critique and conditions of belonging.

On the potentiality of punk, identity, and stage, Muñoz states that ‘[t]his potentiality is always in the horizon and, like performance, never completely disappears but, instead, lingers, and serves as a conduit for knowing and feeling other people’ (Muñoz 2009: 113). Through the experimentation with expression and critique that DIY and participatory cultures allows, these groups can demand something *else* from the community they seek. Muñoz argues that this is an articulation of ‘potentiality.’ He defines potentiality to distance it from possibility, stating that ‘potentialities have a temporality that is not in the present but, more nearly, in the horizon, which we can understand as futurity’ (99). In essence, a potentiality [of something] is a way of articulating how a future can be contained in the present. Potentiality can prompt us to imagine futures where and when only one seems possible. Enacting the dialogue between what is possible in the present and what is hoped for in the future through experimentation, critique, and informed participatory practices creates a potentiality. This potentiality, for the bakery/café and for zine culture posits that there may be another way to unconditionally exist in, to belong with, a community, and that the pursuit of social change exists both in the present and in a hoped-for future.

The explorations of reflexive and ongoing community production in this chapter come to bear on the next, which discusses negotiations with material, spatial, and temporal borders and boundaries in the bakery/café and the zine community. Moreover, in this beginning of this chapter I likened the formation of community to the formation of safe space, and I have alluded to forms of safety and unsafety throughout including practices of health, hygiene, and safety in the bakery/café as well as forms of racism and misogyny in the zine community. In the final discussion on safety, I will directly discuss understandings and practices of safety, unsafety, and violence that are informed by the understandings drawn from this chapter and the next.

This will enable a situated and contextualised engagement with practices of safety in these communities, that come to resonate more broadly with the project's approach to defining and specifying the contribution of safety to communities in pursuit of social change.

# Labour, Time, and Space

## 6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I demonstrated how participatory ethics and practices contributed to the ongoing formation of community in the bakery/café and zine culture through informing alternative economies and modes of production and exchange. Drawing on the context of these community structures and practices, this chapter focuses on the spatial and temporal politics of these sites. These arguments lay the groundwork for the final chapter, where I will draw on understandings of community and spatial production that are discussed more broadly here. To understand the production of safe space in my case studies, and to engage with the different kinds of safety found in the bakery/café and the zine community, it is important to discuss more broadly the production of community (and) space in both sites. More specifically, in this chapter and the previous I draw upon processes of negotiation, refusal, and reconstitution evident in the case studies.

Bringing attention to these processes illustrates how these communities attempt to create inclusive, accessible, and welcoming community spaces, and how they attempt to pursue goals of social change, whilst working within and against external socioeconomic forces that try to undermine these spaces in a range of ways. These forms of community and spatial production, developed through and grounded in material and community-focused approaches, can generate situated and reflexive knowledges of safety. In the following chapter I will build on these points to develop understandings of safe space practices and ongoing debates about their usefulness, efficacy, and the potential challenges they pose to conceptualizations of violence and individual freedoms. In this chapter I concentrate on how ideas and intentions of social change come to be produced, enacted, and materialised in my case studies, in negotiation with broader social contexts of meeting community needs and limitations to participatory arts work.

The bakery/café, for example, is a part of the community outreach work of the arts company in which it is situated, outreach that is necessitated by a lack of social and cultural investment and low cultural engagement in the city. As the city rightfully contests a post-industrial or deindustrialised identity<sup>13</sup>, for institutions such as the arts company, the production of community cultural identity often has to navigate tensions between engaging with the city's cultural heritage, and the growth and future of a city facing continual economic and political upheaval.<sup>14</sup> In the bakery/café, supporting artists, building social change, and developing community cultural identity in Stoke on Trent informs the need for a space in which access to food, art, and community can be co-operatively developed. From the physical site of the building in which the arts company and the bakery/café are based, evidence of the company and community work is found across the city as installations and cultural events.<sup>15</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapter, both case studies I engage with in the thesis are similar in that they are a combination of exclusive and permeable community sites where the roles of artist and audience, maker and reader, and worker and visitor can be exchanged and negotiated. However, the zine community is geographically disparate, connected through networks of trade and communication, although some shared community sites such as the zine form, zinefests, and archives and libraries also exist, even if these sites are often temporary (Kempson 2015; Licona and Brouwer 2015; Ramdarshan Bold 2017). The two case studies here demonstrate contrasting relationships between community and space while

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<sup>13</sup> This contestation is largely inherent to the broad and vague applications of the terms post-industrial or de-industrial; though scaled down and diminishing, the city maintains an industrial presence which includes its most well-known export (ceramics). Furthermore, terms like post-industrial and de-industrial imply a cultural as well as economic malaise, bolstering stereotypes of deprivation, which the work of multiple organizations and individuals across the city (including the arts company) stand in direct counter to.

<sup>14</sup> See previous notes on the conference event, Oct 2019. Understandings like these have been enriched by working with community arts organizations throughout the project as well as conversations with artists.

<sup>15</sup> From references in the fieldnotes e.g. 24/05/2019; 14/07/2019; 11/10/2019 I discuss activities in the building and workshop including preparations for Pride, Green Man Festival, the Canals Festival, and Art City.

they share similar values on community production and maintenance: whereas the work of the bakery/café and the arts company is found across the city, it is generally more localized and bounded in comparison to the disparate and heterogeneous nature of the zine community.

Beginning as a term derived from magazine, the zine form and community has evolved in conjunction with DIY, punk, activist, and participatory cultures from a sci-fi and fantasy community mode of expression, critique, and communication to an independent publishing practice and form shared by multiple disparate communities (Kempson 2015, Piepmeier 2008; Duncombe 2008). Zine making and distributing has, by and large, subverted mainstream publishing practice, although co-option and commodification has caused issues in the community through the potential to homogenise and limit the form (Duncombe 2008). This evolution, subversion, and navigation is reflected in the methods and practices of production and distribution associated with the zine community; as creative labour, zine making and distributing is often unpaid work, done in spare time or “stolen” time (Duncombe 2008).

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the pursuit of social change contributed to my case studies’ critical negotiation with socio-economic barriers to material necessities, and how they have developed modes of trade and exchange that eschew monetary profit in favour of community networks. The previous chapter provided an overview of the politics and practices of each site, providing context to the discussion in this chapter. This chapter builds on the previous chapter’s discussion of community-building and participatory ethics to examine how the case studies’ negotiations with and discussion of mundane temporal constructs such as closing time, being late, labour time, and leisure time are rooted in participatory critiques of the delegitimization and devaluation of particular forms of work. Furthermore, this chapter discusses how participatory ethics are discernible in the material sites of the bakery/café and the zine community.

In scholarship about zines, utopian sites, and utopian critique, temporality and its connection to labour is a strong theme. More recently the theme of temporality has been related to changes in working practices, connecting a broader socio-political context of neoliberal economics, flexibility, post-industrialization, and digital spaces to experiences of both time and work (Duncombe 2008; Cooper 2014; Bastian 2014; Pettinger 2019). This theoretical context informs the overall discussion of safety in this thesis – the focus of Chapters 7 and the conclusion – by situating demands and practices for safety as part of longer histories of community activism and spatial reconstitution, and by developing understandings of contemporary practices of safety as resistant to and transformative of particular aspects of neoliberalism. Discussing temporality is a way of engaging with how neoliberal logics are brought *into* and contested and transformed *within* sites like the bakery/café and the zine community. In addition, in this chapter, I am interested in how these contestations and transformations are reflected *materially* in the production and navigation of space.

By drawing from critical engagements and interventions with temporal constructs in the bakery/café and the zine community, and by looking at the ways community sites are produced and negotiated in these case studies, this chapter explores the making of social change through the production of actionable, critical knowledges of the present. Throughout the chapter I am going to draw on the concept of *docta spes* to characterize the transformative potential of these knowledges. *Docta spes* is a Blochian term meaning educated hope, and it is a form of actionable knowledge necessary to the production of concrete utopias (Bloch 1986; Levitas 1997), as opposed to abstract utopias. Concrete and abstract utopias can be distinguished by degrees of volition. Concrete utopia ‘simultaneously anticipate[s] and effect[s] the future,’ whereas abstract utopia is like wishful thinking, a distraction with little effect on material reality (Levitas 1997:67). Although abstract utopias are useful, they are

premature and immaterial; *docta spes* can be extracted from abstract utopias and acted upon to create concrete utopias (Levitas 1997; Bloch 1986).

Although in this chapter I will be focusing on the mundane and potentially less-than-utopian encounters in the bakery/café and the zine community, including disagreements, apologies, piano playing, border crossings, and bread counters, in examining how these communities negotiate these tensions I aim to demonstrate that the bakery/café and the zine community are sites working with ideas about the future through critical engagement with the present. This chapter therefore foregrounds the final discussion of practices of safety and their contribution to conceptualizations of everyday utopia by understanding how the pursuit of social change and the production of transformative surplus, discussed in the previous chapter, are materialized and experienced in the spatial and temporal configurations of these sites.

## 6.2 Closing time

Towards the end of a community event at the arts company, whilst workers were cleaning up, some visitors stayed and chatted to arts company workers beyond closing time. The free event was part of a series of open days where artists held multiple workshops for visitors to try new skills including printing, crocheting, pottery, gardening, and painting, with lunch provided by the bakery/café. After over one hundred visitors had come to the space that day, people were quite worn out and wanted to finish up and have a rest. Alongside the closing activities of washing up, cleaning surfaces, and stacking chairs and tables, as well as workers and visitors saying goodbye, one volunteer began playing an “exit music”-like tune on a piano, as a way to signal that the area was closed.<sup>16</sup> I am inclined to compare experiences working in the bakery/café with my experiences working in a bar, where people

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<sup>16</sup> Diary notes from a community event in December 2019, at which I was a volunteer helping in the café and as a steward (Field diary notes 2019).

are also likely to stretch closing times, and where I would also not be paid for my time spent cleaning up. In this example, however, the space and people's behaviour in it is deeply un-businesslike. Whereas in a bar I would take people's drinks away from them and tell them to go home, in the bakery/café the purpose of the work in this space is to welcome, meet, and chat with members of the local community, and therefore a hard closing time method would be literally counter-productive.

A discussion of temporality helps to make sense of this and other somewhat un-utopian, or unremarkable, encounters in my project. For example, in the bakery/café, despite our position as volunteers I, and others, still felt a commitment to working hours and certain roles; in addition, during busy times people became frustrated with each other for taking over, forgetting, or performing a job badly.<sup>17</sup> Within these tensions, however, are insights into how concepts like unpaid, devalued, and creative labour, as well as the upheaval and/or flexibilization of working populations, are received and negotiated with in the bakery/café and in the zine community. Discussions of time in the bakery/café and the zine community actually contribute to understandings of contemporary creative labour in the context of the pursuit of social change. Furthermore, experiences of time and temporality are important and mundane ways to articulate both the radical and complete demands, as well as the community tensions, in utopian projects and the pursuit of social change.

In spaces like the bakery/café, the way people think and behave is closely connected to understanding temporalities, and beliefs about labour in community and cultural spaces. Here I will frame the scene above within a context of temporal theories and the connections theorists have made between temporality and human activity – specifically, labour.

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<sup>17</sup> Observations from fieldnotes, e.g. 24/05/2019 where during a rush a volunteer (who made dessert) believes that visitors are not being told there is a dessert option (due to lack of orders). This is exacerbated by a miscommunicated order, where someone expects a meal but hasn't told the volunteer on service. I mediated between the two volunteers to avoid an argument (Field diary notes, 2019).

Complicating these connections is that there are multiple forms of labour happening in the bakery/café anecdote, which include creative, unpaid, volunteer, and community work, with connections to service-sector and forms of emotional labour. However, all of these forms of labour are often, collectively, delegitimized and deprioritized in capitalist economies, where they are often not remunerated, or in favour of skills and jobs involving the large-scale management of capital (Pettinger 2019; Sargisson 2000; Licona 2012). Implicitly, some of these forms of labour are themselves, in popular assumptions and socio-economic realities, afforded their own temporality in a mundane temporal dichotomy that distinguishes “work time” from “leisure time” (Duncombe 2008; Cooper 2014). In other words: work and jobs that are low-paid are often perceived as low-skilled, and are consequently devalued culturally and materially through that perception (Giraud 2019). In addition, volunteer work and creative work are often seen as leisurely pursuits, and a luxury of those who will not or do not work. The bakery/café and the broader work of the arts company seeks to challenge the devaluing of community and creative labour using participatory methods of cultural production (Materasso 2019). However, anecdotes like the one above demonstrate ways in which the challenges posed by the arts company to broader cultural logics are brought into the site itself.

Discussing the labour/leisure dichotomy, Bloch specifically focuses on the role of cultural production in masking and maintaining capitalism (1988). He argues that the labour/leisure division is a co-dependent structure in which cultural production and consumption can be an accountable and necessary factor for its upkeep. In his analysis, Bloch reveals that leisure time is *seemingly* divided from labour time, but is simply a different set of activities because it is a reproductive temporality afforded to the worker that ‘only serves to regenerate labor power’ (1988: 19). In this way Bloch argues that both temporalities serve to produce the activities expected of the other and that this temporal structure does not enable an

emancipatory critique of capitalism. As Bloch points out, cultural products are accessed by most audiences during ‘leisure’ time in their finished form, and are employed to lend credence to the whole concept of leisure time. Therefore, this theoretical leisure/labour dichotomy causes harm two-fold when it is applied to real sites of creative and community work: on the one hand, cultural products serve as consumer distractions to the totality of capitalism and the possibility of alternatives (*see* Bloch 1988; Lefebvre 1991). On the other, the reproductive capacity of this temporality obscures the actual production of culture – relegated to the realm of leisure, creative work and the arts is devalued, a harm compounded in a participatory context by hierarchies of cultural production and limitations on the definitions of art (Materasso 2019). Primarily, Bloch insists that what is required is the un-‘veiling’ of the fragmentation of time, a recognition of the labour/leisure dichotomy as both false and useful to capitalist ideology; his critique centres on the function of cultural products under capitalism as distractions, and he argues that what is needed is a complete knowledge of the totality of capitalism, and a complete reconfiguration of social relationships demonstrated in his analysis of the arts, work, and time (1988: 19).

The way creative, unpaid labour is discussed in scholarship about zines elucidates how these problems are sometimes used in academic research to explore the radical properties of these forms of labour. For example, writing about zines, scholars argue that – despite the lack of money in zine making, the personal and difficult topics explored, and the care that goes production – zinemakers make zines out of love, for catharsis, and for the connection to the finished object and to subsequent readers and the wider community (Duncombe 2008; Piepmeier 2008). Specifically, Duncombe contrasts menial and ‘alienated’ labour in the workplace with zine work, separating “zine work” from “straight work” in order to differentiate feelings of control, power, and happiness in these forms of labour – which he explicitly connects to a discussion of temporality and feeling. He suggests that because time

is less felt in zine making, where the ‘hours rush by without notice,’ that zine making is a form of non-alienated labour (Duncombe 2008: 102). However, as is evident in the introductions below, time is definitely on the mind of many zine makers before, during, and in-between zine production.

In zine introductions, zinesters conventionally use the space to foreground the topic of the zine, but they also use the introduction to discuss their personal motivations for making it. This includes the conditions in which the zine was produced, communications with readers and others, and updates on their personal life, often bridging any previous publications to the current one, and sometimes foregrounding possible future work. In these excerpts from introductions, where zinesters acknowledge repeatedly that making zines is something they love doing, and in some cases something they feel compelled to do (*see* Duncombe 2008: 100)<sup>18</sup>, mentions of time feature heavily as a constraint, motivation, or brief consideration in zinemakers’ work process. For example, *High on Burning Photographs* maker, Ocean Capewell, states that she ‘usually do[es] zines like someone drowning, someone dying’ and though she may put out zines ‘once or twice a year,’ this does not feel like enough (*HBP10* 2014/15: NP).

From interviews with zinesters about how and why they make zines, Duncombe finds that zinemakers often steal and borrow materials and resources from their day jobs, including material goods as well as the use of office photocopiers to prepare zines for distribution. While he focuses on zines about sabotage to discuss workers’ activism, his examples of workers using tools and resources for their own ends evoke the radical potential of trespass and diversion in both spatial and temporal forms as explored by Michel de Certeau through the concept/practice of *la perruque*. Both de Certeau and Duncombe describe the repurposing

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<sup>18</sup> Also, almost all of the zines featured so far explicitly state that they enjoy producing and/or feel compelled to produce zines, often in the introductions, for example those quoted in Figs 9-16.

SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG TO GET HERE.

I've made four issues in 15 months which isn't too bad at all. But there won't be another Chisel Tip for a while. So make the most of this.

This issue took a lot longer than I anticipated but don't most things worth waiting for? I am trying to be

I was hoping to get this out last year, then I would be putting a Brown Girls zine out each year, but time went so fast and now we're halfway through this year!  
Whilst I was finally getting round to completing this zine,

Welcome to Chisel Tip #5! It feels like yesterday I was writing the fourth issue released a year ago. This zine has now been going for just over two years. The feedback I received from the previous issue was really encouraging so thank you to everyone who said some kind words. This issue was even longer in the making than the last one. I almost didn't do it as it takes a lot of energy and time for something that not many people are going to read. On one hand you want to cherish it, make out it's special because it's like a secret. But on the other hand, it can feel a bit futile.

 Zinefest? It seems I will always be making Radical Domesticity under time constraints. I guess it's my "thing." ANYWAY!

# INTRODUCTION

my "inspiration", originally, for putting together this collection of articles on gentrification was the almost frenzied campaign, which has manifested itself more than ever in the last two years, to "revitalize" the lower garden district and uptown magazine street in new orleans. within the last 2 1/2 years i've seen the corner where i've lived on (magazine and 8th) change from a sleepy street with a Goodwill

I decided to do this new issue--even though the ink has scarcely dried on the last one--for several reasons. Partially because I am not writing a lot anymore and I need a project to work on. My latest zine was a hit at my job (I work in crisis mental health, at a two-week program for homeless folks) and my friend

**Figure 9** *Radical Domesticity* #2. Emma Karin Eriksson. 2013-2014, NP.; **Figure 10** *Chisel Tip* #4. Madeleine. 2016, NP.; **Figure 11** *What to Keep What to Give Away* #2. Anon. c2014, NP.; **Figure 12** *Brown Girls* #3. Seleena Laverne Daye. 2017, NP.; **Figure 13** *Chisel Tip* #5. Madeleine. c2017, NP.; **Figure 14** *Radical Domesticity* #4. Emma Karin Eriksson. 2014, NP.; **Figure 15** *a gentrification reader*. SKOT!. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1998, NP.; **Figure 16** *High on Burning Photographs* 10. Ocean. 2014-2015, NP.

of working activity to the workers' ends, where de Certeau calls this an act of 'divert[ing] time' (de Certeau 2000: 25). Duncombe recognizes (like de Certeau) that the diversion of time through activity – specifically, forms of creative work – contains a negotiation with dominant capitalist logics which define what work is, and how we should spend our time.

Furthermore, negotiations and subsequent pressures on zine-making time can, accordingly, be seen in these introductions, where zinesters often address time using apologetic terms to their readers (Fig. 11), who are credited with the motivation for making many zines (e.g. Figs. 13, 16). Zinesters state that the duration between issues is 'longer than anticipated,' frequently indicating that the duration felt quicker than its actual length (*see* Figs. 11-13). However, Madeleine of *Chisel Tip* consistently warns that a potential *next* issue would take some time (e.g. Fig. 10; also *Chisel Tip* #5 c2017, the final issue of this zine). Capewell produces Issue 10 '*even though* the ink has scarcely dried on the last one' (Fig. 16, emphasis mine), a contrast that is noteworthy because she implies that it is exceptional, although she also indicates that zine-making is a rushed activity because she simply does not have enough time to say what she wants to say.

Despite the urgent impulse to create and distribute zines that these zinesters discuss with their readers, Duncombe (2008) maintains that zinemakers' potentially radical making and distributing practices are primarily small-scale and individualised, and cannot make a broad difference (or as Madeleine briefly despairs, 'it can feel a bit futile' [*see* Fig. 13]). Whereas de Certeau asks us to consider the substantial, disregarded build-up of small-scale acts of diversion and creativity in many work environments (de Certeau 2000: 26), Duncombe limits these acts to a countercultural psyche that he mostly attributes to middle-class, white, and male zine-makers (2008; *critiqued by* Licona 2012). Although he works to legitimize the labour of zine-making and distributing (as Piepmeier [2008] works to articulate the value of zine-making through drawing upon the circulation and creation of community),

within Duncombe's framework, it is unclear if zines would continue to be made if there was not alienated, hypocritical labour to oppose and capitalist temporal spheres to trespass on. However, in Figures 13 and 16, zinesters' introductions suggest that the distribution of zines amongst *and* outside of the zine community is partly a motivation for creating zines, as is an urge to do so that utilizes the creative and expressive potential of independent publishing more than an expression of negative identity.

While Duncombe explores the radical potential of alternative modes of production in countercultural, DIY settings, and discusses the importance and value of creative work that is not motivated by direct financial gain, the limitations of this line of argument are that it overlooks the exploitative or negative capacities of unpaid, creative labour to demonstrate non-alienated labour alternatives. References to time are also to other activities, or a general way of living that contributes to the zine being made (Figs. 14-15). For example, a *gentrification reader* editor SK⊙T! refers to the 'frenzied' campaign to gentrify ("revitalize") a local neighbourhood as the undesirable 'inspiration' for the zine (Fig. 15). Meanwhile, Emma Karin Eriksson, who produces *Radical Domesticity*, admits that 'time constraints' are just her "thing" (Fig. 14). Furthermore, the boundaries Duncombe draws around a particular notion of alternative counterculture, which I problematized in the previous chapter, end up foreclosing these alternatives by making them dependent on dominant, totalizing logics of capitalist time and spaces for work.

Diametrically opposed temporalities such as 'labour' and 'leisure' time (Duncombe 2008; Bloch 1988; Lefebvre 1991) articulate how time is felt through its relationship to human activity. Although the labour and leisure model demonstrates how behaviour relates not just to specific places but to specific understandings of time, it is a highly simplistic dichotomy that upholds (as it mystifies) socio-economic relations under capitalism, and does little to examine in detail the material consequences for DIY and participatory artists. In this

discussion, I will prioritize the implications of the more appropriate model of ‘community’ and ‘labour market’ time, drawing on Davina Cooper’s case studies of multiple, ‘nonnormative’ (Cooper 2014: 140) or simply ‘slower’ (141) temporalities as they correspond to trade practices in LETS. Local Exchange Trading Systems/Schemes, or LETS, are forms of alternative economies based around the exchange of skills and goods including garden work, food, and cleaning. In comparison to the bakery/café and the zine community, LETS are more localized communities with an official membership system: particularly useful to facilitate the exchange of specific skills and goods. Additionally, the skills exchanged are more differentiated and specific to individual members than the shared community practices of zine making and distributing, although they are comparable to the various ways that skill-gaining and skill-sharing are methods that the bakery/café and the broader work of the arts company provide opportunities and support to the people that work with them.

Cooper argues that ‘multiple temporalities coexist’ in what is experienced as ‘normative time,’ but what can be more effectively described as *normalised* (2014: 136), a distinction more clearly articulated in Bloch’s analysis of the reproductive capacities of temporalities. For Bloch and Cooper, the way that time is organized and experienced materializes in social interactions and ‘conduct’ (Cooper 2014: 136). In other words, there are expected activities, behaviours, and conduct associated with temporalities and normalised through social (and ideological) expectations. Cooper focuses on two specific kinds of temporality in her case study of LETS: ‘community time,’ a ‘relaxed, generous approach to time’s rhythms and duration,’ and ‘labor market time,’ which emphasises ‘efficiency, economy, and reliability’ (135). Labour market time is familiar in the sense that it is normalised under capitalism, and it worked in the context of LETS and exchange practices for those who prioritized the skills-exchange market. However, as an alternative economy, this temporality felt inappropriate to some participants,

who behaved according to a ‘community time,’ which seemed better suited to *their* expectations of LETS. Tensions arose when these behaviours clashed, largely due to the temporalities people worked in; for example, in one exchange one participant worked more slowly and took more breaks than the receiving participant felt they should, who ultimately felt that the trade was unequal because of the contrasting way the two LETS participants performed their tasks. Tensions like these are comparable to the scene in the bakery/café, where the relaxed approach required to welcome members of the community and invite them to take part in the activities of the space in turn affected the way temporality, and specific points in time like “closing time,” is felt by visitors and workers differently. Much like Cooper’s case study, the scene in the bakery/café was a consequence of (temporal) wires getting crossed: visitors and workers simply had different, mutually exclusive relationships to closing time in this context. In the previous chapter I discussed how modes of production and exchange continually generated and made visible individual vulnerabilities, which these two communities sought to challenge and rectify through reflexive approaches to community formation, alternative economies, and a participatory ethics of cultural production. However, in a broader framing, Belfiore (2021) argues that there are moral, emotional, and physical consequences for arts practitioners working in participatory and community contexts. Belfiore develops a theory of a ‘moral cultural economy’ through a framework of feminist care ethics, in which artists feel compelled to work unpaid and unstructured hours (2021: 2/3). She argues that the broader infrastructure of arts funding and development develops a quantitative, results-oriented, and value-for-money based environment in which artists and those they work with are pressured into short-term projects with hard deadlines. In other words, these deadlines purport to refer to the project and the work involved, but instead refer to the funding, whether or not the project has been completed to the satisfaction of participants. In order to pursue a goal of social change, and out of a sense of responsibility and connection to the communities they work with, artists

are put in an exploitative bind where they must work in “their own time” to achieve what externalised financial support will not or can not measure (e.g. 2021: 10). Belfiore’s study provides a much-needed contribution to understandings of work in sites like the zine community and the bakery/café – for example, it particularly explains the apologetic address of zine makers to their readers by engaging with the relationship between time, emotion, and activity, albeit in a way that problematizes idealistic notions about countercultural production and labour (Figs 9-16).

Although there are multiple ways to unpack discomfort and awkwardness in discussions about time in these sites, resolutions are much more difficult to come by. In part, this is reflective of the ongoing work of these communities to contest and negotiate with capitalist logics which seem, to scale, total and all-consuming (Giraud 2019; Gibson-Graham 2008); it is no wonder that *Chisel Tip* writer Madeleine employs ‘futile’ when considering her efforts. Overall, I have drawn from the case studies to contest popular perspectives on community, creative, and volunteer work, while I problematize idealistic notions about not-for-profit and countercultural labour. To do this, I approach the work of participatory cultural production and communities of social change in ways that accommodates for both the existing cultural logics and temporal rhythms that inform social understandings of time and labour, as well as observing how these are experimented with and reconstituted in these sites. In the following section, to explore resolutions and alternatives presented by the zine community and the bakery/café, I am going to consider the way critical engagement with capitalist temporal logics is communicated in these sites, focusing on concepts like flexibility, closing time, and alternative sites of knowledge production. To do this I will continue working along the themes of connections between temporality and labour, with the models of multiple temporalities that Cooper uses to discuss alternative economies, and contextualised by a need to consider the working conditions of artists and practitioners in participatory spaces.

### 6.3 Opening Hours

In this section I am exploring the reconstitution of flexible temporalities in the bakery/café primarily because flexibility (and ‘flexitime’) is a temporal-economic model used to exemplify neoliberal capitalist logics (Cooper 2014; Komlosy 2018), meaning that it is usually used to contrast completely with sites like the bakery/café and the zine community. This economic-temporal model that leans towards multiple, overlapping temporalities is used to explain increasingly self-employed, zero-hours, part-time and/or makeshift work, corporate globalisation, and the movement of social and consumer activities – including shopping, as well as going to the bank or post office – to digital spaces (Duncombe 2008; Cooper 2014; Komlosy 2018; Pettinger 2019). Theorizations of flexibilised labour in a neoliberal context are used by Duncombe to typify the environment of alienated work in direct contrast to how time is felt during zine-making, although he is not always consistent (2008). For example, whereas Cooper points out that the ‘flexitime’ temporality subsumes and encroaches upon the possibilities of alternative, creative, and non-alienated labour (Cooper 2014: 137), Duncombe argues that zine-making is a way of challenging the lack of control and connection to labour in the workplace. He suggests that, as with the physical materials that go into zines, time itself is often ‘borrowed’ from the sphere of “straight work” to prepare zines for distribution (*see* Duncombe 2008: 14; 86-87). However, his argument neglects that logics underpinning our perceptions of time can also be reproduced in different forms of activity.

As Cooper argues, discomfort indicates a heightened awareness of the ways certain normalised temporalities (for example, ‘labour market time’ or ‘straight work’ time) can dominate social relationships, even as – or especially because – these norms are being rejected. Discomfort therefore crops up in the zine introductions; even though there are no set rules for the production of zines and no deadlines (except self-imposed, or informal aims for certain events like zinefests), according to the zine makers, the finished product in the hands of the

reader is already “late” (*see figs 9-16*). In the bakery/café, workers are conscious of the necessity to be encouraging, helpful, and informative, and to extend to visitors a positive experience of creative work, cultural events, and the work of the arts company. However, Belfiore’s additional context of participatory arts work suggests that the work of welcoming, encouraging, engaging with, and *refusing to turn away* visitors, despite other jobs needing to be done, and despite tiredness, is a truer extension of workers’ roles in the bakery/café, and particularly at this community event; although it is not paid, it is part of the job in this context.

In the bakery/café, working hours are flexible and multiple, reflecting the multiple forms of labour practiced in the scene at closing time. This example does not explicitly include the multiple forms of labour practiced across the arts company more broadly – although it does overlap. For example, the person talking with visitors (the bakery manager) was in that moment alternating between overseeing bakery tasks and being called to a company meeting upstairs, and the person playing the piano had moments before been a volunteer doing the washing up.<sup>19</sup> However, a clearer example of flexibility in the space, along with feelings of discomfort that can transpire, comes from comments below made by volunteers and paid workers about working hours and roles.

In this encounter, when two volunteers arrived at the bakery, they apologised for being late as it was after the time that they usually arrived. The head of the bakery assured them that they had no need to apologise, because they were volunteers. The chef then quipped that he *could* be late, because he was paid to be there.<sup>20</sup> However, during another afternoon, when the bakery/café was open for lunch, the chef had to wait by the oven for a bread order while the director and volunteers were plating and serving lunches, working at the counter, and washing up. With one hand on the oven door handle, he described waiting for the timer to go off as the

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<sup>19</sup> *See above*, from fieldnotes Dec 2019

<sup>20</sup> Conversation from fieldnotes: 14/07/2019

“longest minute.”<sup>21</sup> In the first example, the chef observes a form of flexibility accessible to volunteers, an alternative to “flexitime” in which working hours really are on the (voluntary) workers’ terms. However, in the both examples, temporal pressures and discomfort go hand in hand; even though the chef is doing his job (with its hours), this sometimes involves waiting around on his responsibilities whilst other workers are rushing to get things done.

The heightened activity of these busier times, during lunch service, means that discomfort is more keenly felt. In contrast, at closing time, the building is comparatively empty. However, the community work of the event, coupled with the extent of the cleaning and closing jobs that needed doing, means that the overlap with community work, closing jobs, and company meetings lent an urgency to closing time and the necessity of wrapping up one set of jobs to, in the bakery manager’s case, move onto the next. Visitors perceived the lack of customers and other visitors in the space, as well as the winding down of the event activities, to imply a more relaxed, leisurely temporality, yet (as Belfiore explored above) the work of sites like the bakery/café is ongoing. In the former example, the piano player recognized both the needs of other workers, and the miscommunication at work in the temporal shift from open to closed within the context of community work, and experimented with different ways of communicating closing time to visitors in the space.

By drawing on multiple temporal models and discussions of (primarily) unpaid work here, I have explored how the bakery/café and the zine community, orienting economic practices around community building, complicate temporal models that divide labour and leisure time because of the context of participatory ethics and its particular links to cultural production and creative labour (Bloch 1988; Materasso 2019; Belfiore 2021). Popular perceptions of art production and creative labour as distinct from other forms of work delegitimizes and devalues cultural production that is not easily marketable, commodified, or

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<sup>21</sup> Conversation from fieldnotes: 24/05/2019

that is done around or borrowed from the time constraints of other paid labour (Materasso 2019; Duncombe 2008). These problems can be reconstituted in theories of unpaid, voluntary, and creative labour to elucidate critiques of alienated work and the radical properties of some forms of labour (de Certeau 2000; Duncombe 2008). For instance, Lucy Sargisson (2000) summarises the various debates around unpaid work (as well as addressing the category of voluntary labour). Like Duncombe, Sargisson argues that voluntary, unpaid work may represent a ‘transgression’ of alienated work and the exploitative production of surplus value, that the voluntary nature supports the ‘liberating’ potential of work (2000:99). However, she does not undermine her interviewees’ perspectives that ‘work should always be paid for,’ although she also points out that intentional communities require a ‘large input of labour’ which, much like the bakery/café, may require a voluntary element (2000: 99).

The work of sites like the bakery/café and the zine community also disrupts understandings of cultural production and associated popular knowledges of art and artists. In comparison to Bloch’s critique of labour/leisure temporalities, for example, the bakery/café and the arts company use meals and skills sharing as ways of engaging non-professionals and the local community in the arts; practicing participatory ethics, the arts company works to dismantle socio-economic barriers to, and the mystification and alienation of, cultural production (*see* Materasso 2019). Furthermore, the open discussion of time in zine introductions obstructs arguments that zine-making, and other forms of creative labour, are somehow exempt from the emotional and physical stresses of labour in general, lending first-hand contributions to understandings of art production (figs 9-16). Modes of participatory and community art production address the delegitimization of creative and community labour by working against conceptions of art and artist as individualised, inspired, and inaccessible, as opposed to skilled, and interdependent on others for time, resources, and training (Materasso 2019; Belfiore 2021). Interdependency is clearly indicated by the component parts of the

bakery/café and arts company, where art, work, and food are material factors of the production of community cultural identity. However, these forms of art production are made vulnerable by broader socio-economic realities as well as arts funding infrastructure, meaning that physical, emotional, and financial consequences of unpaid, voluntary, and flexibilized work are seen as an unavoidable consequence of participatory arts work, and sometimes exploited to adhere to a financialised cultural policy (Belfiore 2021).

While in the previous chapter I discussed individual vulnerabilities and reflexive modes of inclusive community formation through participatory ethics, here I am discussing a much broader reaching form of vulnerability – the precarity and risks facing community spaces working within and against dominant cultural logics informing how we view forms of creative and community labour. In theories of contemporary, multiple, temporalities, understandings of flexibility focus on paid work in a limiting neoliberal socio-economic context, and therefore overlook the reproduction of temporality in expression and discussion of unpaid and creative work (for example, zine introductions) (Duncombe 2008; Cooper 2014; Komlosy 2019 *see* figs 9-16). This reproduction is present in feelings of discomfort, guilt, or temporal pressure in the zine community and the bakery/café. Much like the zine makers, volunteers in the bakery/café feel it is necessary to apologise for being late, although in contrast to zinemakers their apology is instead an opportunity for other bakery/café workers to reconstitute normalised relationships between time and labour, and to address and resolve discomfort. In the bakery/café, workers find new ways of communicating time in a participatory temporal-economic model, reconstituting and articulating connections between labour and time. This provides tactical resolutions to tensions between workers and visitors, or paid and unpaid workers. In a broader context, however, the way the bakery/café and the zine community talk, practice, and reconstitute time suggests critical negotiation with and resistance to the reproduction of mundane capitalist logics in the spaces; in Blochian terms, an ‘unveiling’ of the mystification

of cultural production and its contribution to the maintenance of capitalist logics in everyday life (1988: 19).

I have used a discussion of temporality to draw attention to the vulnerabilities of community spaces and the precarity of working populations: in these examples, sites of participatory cultural production, and the work of producing participatory communities. In doing so, I am laying groundwork for further development in Chapter 7, and a return to these discussions in Chapter 8. In Chapter 7 I will return to the site of the community archive to discuss how mundane forms of safety, such as health and safety practices, are used to maintain community cultural memory and identity in material forms. In Chapter 8, I will be discussing the role of loss in the development of utopian theories about alternative communities and possibilities for the future; the threat of losing these spaces and communities, as I will discuss, is an urgent possibility informing many demands for support for community spaces. These demands and vulnerabilities contribute to the building of these spaces; they are ongoing efforts to maintain and develop physical sites and heterogeneous networks of communities through reflexive and transformative critiques of broader socio-economic conditions which may threaten the stability and continued existence of the community site.

To begin to draw out this transformative potential, in the next section, I am going to examine the spatial production and navigation in the bakery/café and the zine community. Above, zinesters discussing their work and the production of zines draw critical attention to temporal stressors, and I will continue in the next section to discuss these critiques, however, this time, I will be focusing on discussions of space and place, as well as how zinesters use the zine form to produce and navigate the multiple disparate community sites of zine culture. In addition, I will also be looking at the use of signs and borders in the bakery/café, how these are used to organize and navigate the space, and how the use of these borders and signs reflects the participatory context of spatial production in this case study. In this next section I develop the

argument that, influenced by the ethics and practices of the pursuit and practice of social change, these case studies enact critical and actionable knowledges in contention with mundane, but harmful, cultural logics. These ethics and practices are therefore discernible not only through small-scale interventions and temporary reconstitutions, but in the alterity of these sites reflected in material evidence of their work in the community. These arguments bear directly on the reconstitution and practice of safety in the context of social change, which is the focus of the final chapter.

#### 6.4 Spatial production and border crossing

In the discussion above, the transformative potential of critical engagements with temporal pressures can be considered in two main ways. The first is that these critical engagements are opportunities to address feelings of discomfort and guilt through spur-of-the-moment, tactical resolutions (such as piano playing), and the transformative act of diverting time can be viewed as cumulative (*see* Certeau 2000). However, in broader contexts of participatory labour conditions and external pressures on alternative economies, the radical potential of these acts can also be viewed as ‘futile,’ or issues circumvented by an exclusive countercultural sphere (*see* Duncombe 2008). In this section, I again focus on the productive capacities of emotion and expression, particularly their capacities for *spatial* production and transformation. To begin with, I will examine the ways zinesters critically contest with the politics of everyday sites, from washing dishes to crossing borders. These examples demonstrate the uses and engagements with space both in critique and in production of community sites, in addition to a close relationship with the production and dissemination of knowledges challenging these politics. I relate these arguments to the Blochian concept of *docta spes*, educated hope, or prefigurative and actionable knowledges through which ideas about social change are brought into being and action. I intend to root the reconstitution of relationships between art, work, and time discussed in the previous section in the conscious

discussion and uses of space in the bakery/café and the zine community, to develop understandings of how knowledges and pursuits of social change form and are informed by these communities' spatial production.

#### 6.4.1 *Agua Pura*, *Radical Domesticity*, and *urk!*

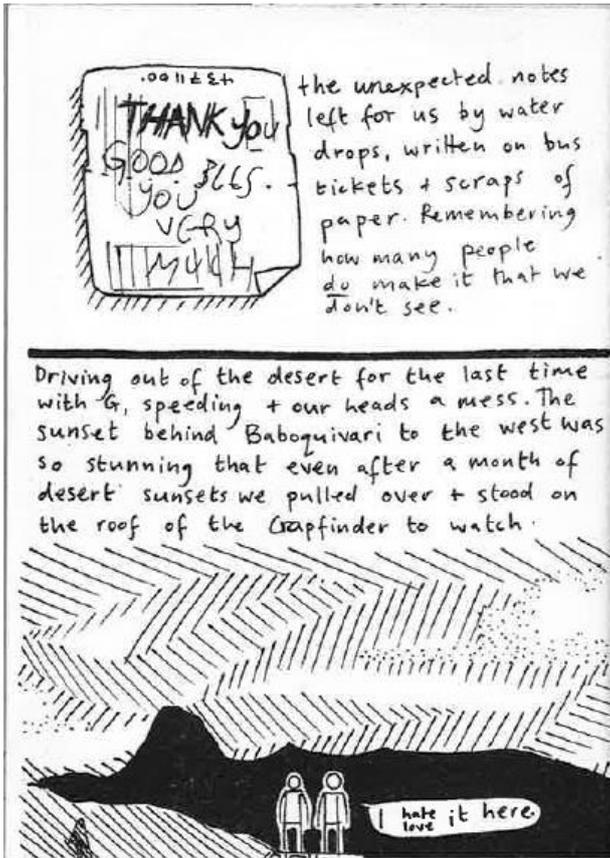
In the previous chapter, I used Alison Piepmeier's material-textual theories on zines to discuss community sites and formation in the zine community. To summarise, Piepmeier (2008) theorizes that the zine form is perpetually unfinished, and is made and remade collectively by zinemakers and readers through participatory modes of production and distribution (*see also* Hays 2017). Furthermore, the handling of zines and their handmade, personal aesthetics provides an impetus and inspiration for readers to make zines of their own (*see also* Duncombe 2008). In the absence of centrality and permanent community sites in zine culture, the zine object bears the marks of maker and reader and therefore becomes material evidence of a disparate, heterogeneous community (*see also* Licona 2012). *Agua Pura: A month on the US/Mexico border* (*AP*) and *urk!* are two one-shot (i.e. single issue) zines by Kathleen/Kaffleen, a paramedic and zinester. I will be using both as examples of the discussion and practice of space in zine culture, along with *Radical Domesticity* (*RD4*), by Emma Karin Eriksson, whose introductions feature in the section above. *Radical Domesticity*, *Agua Pura*, and *urk!* provide demonstrations of how zinemakers and readers engage critically with knowledge and spatial production in their discussions of specific sites such as the US/Mexico border, the home, and the doctor's office, as well as their participation in zine community methods of knowledge production and community navigation through online, physical, and communicative space.

*Agua Pura* describes a month spent volunteering on the north side of the U.S.-Mexico border with No More Deaths, a group that attempts to help people crossing north, especially those who are lost in the desert. No More Deaths provides food, water, and medical care at a

camp and along strategic drops on the foot trails. The group attempts to reach people before the U.S. Border Patrol does, but they are unable to prevent deportations and, often, deaths. *Agua Pura* reflects on the time spent in the desert and Kathleen's work as a paramedic in the North of England, particularly her ability to detach emotionally from the paramedic work and the way the work on the border and the desert itself affects her (*see figs.* 17, 19 below).

*Agua Pura* is a collection of hand-drawn comics and sketches, anecdotes, and quotations, throughout which Kathleen navigates between feelings of helplessness, fear, grief, and hope, reflected in both her writing and in the way the zine object is formed. Two motifs in the zine that reflect the overall theme of Kathleen's desire to inform and process her experience are personal anecdotes about walking, and the constant mentions of paper(s), drawing attention to the zine object itself. *Agua Pura* is a physical paper zine with the approximate dimensions and thickness of a passport, which Kathleen describes as one of the 'arbitrary' forms of paper 'entitling' people to be in the desert, and which often come to be the difference between life and death there (*AP* 2012: NP). The zine is both personal and purposeful; it is completely upfront about the consequences of border policies, explaining in the introduction how the use of low-flying helicopters scatters, isolates, and disorients walkers in the most dangerous parts of the desert by situating the reader as a typical example of a traveller's experience (NP). Throughout, the zine is punctuated with sketches of seven-day candles accompanied by anecdotes from travellers in Spanish and English about their encounters with the deaths of other travellers while heading north of the border (NP). Every one of these anecdotes, as well as the zine's introduction, emphasise the action of walking and, particularly, the vital necessity to do so in such isolated parts of the desert.

Throughout, Kathleen navigates between expressing the 'beauty' of the desert with the knowledge of what happens to people within it by drawing repeatedly on the potentially hopeful capacities of absence (NP). As well as passports and citizenship papers, the 'bits of



**Figure 17** Thank you notes from *Agua Pura: A month on the US/Mexico border*. 2012.

paper' and 'scraps of paper' that the zine continually dwells on are thank you notes found at water and food drops, and, as Piepmeier theorizes that handwriting is the material evidence of community, Kathleen evidences thank you notes (recreated in drawings in the zine) as opportunities to be hopeful about travellers she did not meet in the desert (see fig 17). Many of her anecdotes involve tip-offs and searching for those in need of help before they are found by border patrol, although mostly the team travels along the foot trails without much sense of when or where they may find someone. In the zine, Kathleen's descriptions of these on-foot searches and patrols elucidate the tense

navigation between loss and hope that she is trying to reconcile throughout the zine. Kathleen reflects on the act of walking as a doggedly hopeful practice, one where there is no other option but to hope, with poignantly utopian terminology; she describes one walk opening up into a valley and imbues the horizon with the potential experiences of travellers heading in the direction of safety, and she describes it as 'a good place' (NP).

Kathleen's emotional expression throughout *Agua Pura* connotes an important part of zine making that Piepmeier touches upon: the handmade, gift-like quality of zines which comes from the personal expression that the form allows. Furthermore, Licona (2012) elaborates on the potential of emotion as a form of spatial production in zines; to do so, she plays with the term 'e-motion' to capture a particular force of mobilisation and organisation.

E-motions such as anger and love are contributive forces to the creation of ‘third space’ zines, as practice/sites, but so is the madness (insanity and rage) caused by perceptions of injustice and discrimination (*see* Licona 2012: 71).

Licona’s understandings of zines, e-motion, and the production of third space evoke the formation of ‘stages:’ sites of experimentation with identity and community in Muñoz’s theory of the queer utopian performative (2009), as well as Duncombe’s answer to the question “why publish?” (2008), where zines are a site to experiment with ‘negative’ identity and refusal of the norm. Like Licona’s terminological practice, this experimentation is a ‘serious’ play (Licona 2012: 6), in which emotions (or, e-motions) such as love, anger, hate, shame, and disgust are productive and formative in the emergence of such sites. E-motion and third space are also comparable to the above exploration of alternative economies and diverse temporalities, where the experimentation, negotiation, and contestation with viable alternatives are evidenced through community feeling (Cooper 2014). Feelings of guilt and discomfort in the previous section, for example, correspond to both the broader necessities for change in socio-economic barriers to art and food, as well as the bakery/café and zine community’s experimentation with trade and labour practices in pursuit of social change; the concept of e-motion, furthermore, resonates with understandings I have developed about the pursuit and production of *communitas* (*see also* Muñoz 2009).

Whereas *Agua Pura* demonstrates a complex array and movement between emotions, most notably hope and despair, Kathleen’s expression and subject matter in *Agua Pura* are more focused and muted in comparison to the style and aesthetics of *urk!*, a zine which explores a broader expanse of Kathleen’s (in *urk!*, Kaffleen) personal life. *Urk!*’s critical focus is on knowledges around women’s health, drawing particularly on Kaffleen’s experiences navigating the healthcare system to obtain a treatment for thrush. Kaffleen’s discussion of thrush, its diagnosis, and its remedies is very no-nonsense, and the article is motivated by her

anger at both the attitude to and ‘euphemism-riddled’ mystification of sexual health as well as her own experience of being turned away at the chemists because ‘[she] hadn’t got some bloke to look up [her] cunt’ (*urk!* 2005: NP). Kaffleen’s attitude to the patriarchal figure of professional medicine – ‘some bloke’ – is indicative of her own indignant opinion of how knowledge about sexual health is simultaneously stifled and institutionalised, of the seemingly faceless power of authorized knowledge, and of the everyday encounters through which this power is reproduced and legitimised: in this case, at the chemists.

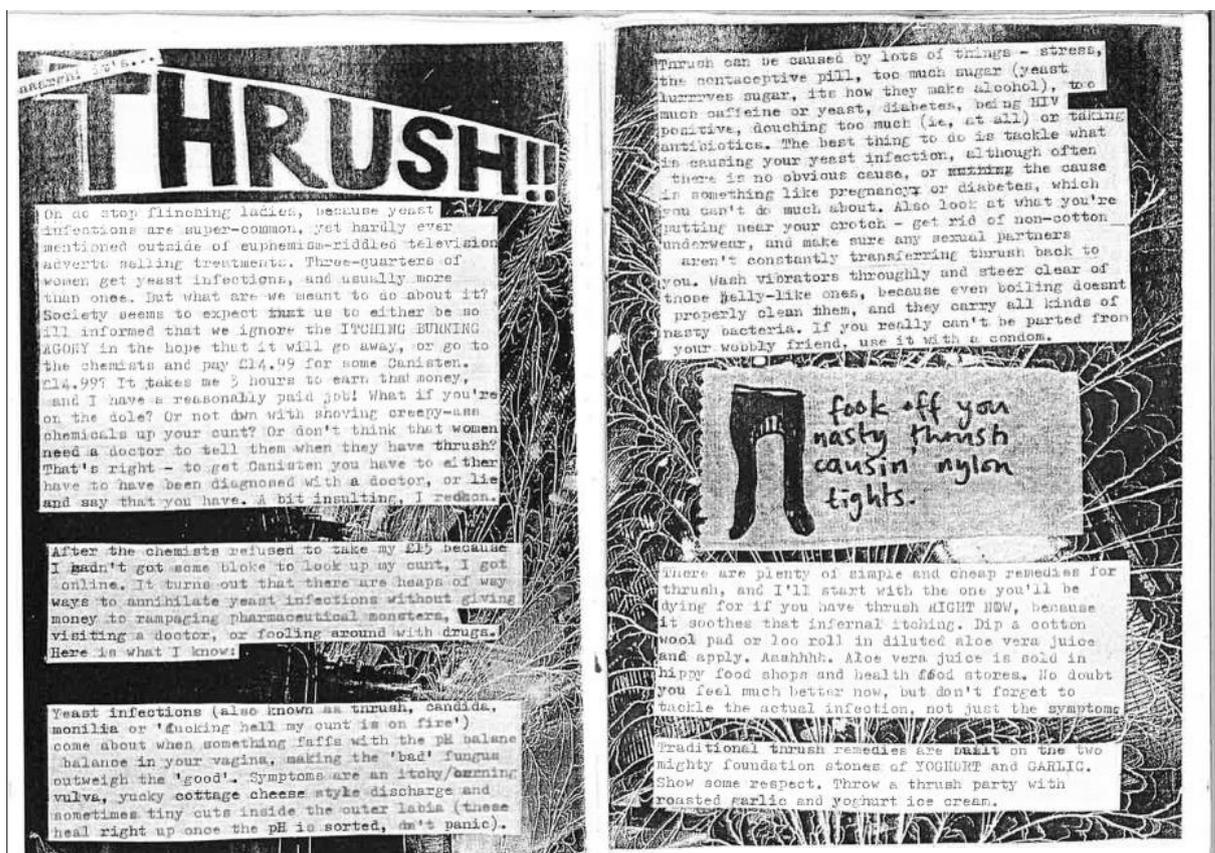


Figure 18 “aaargh! it’s THRUSH!!” from *urk! issue one & only*. Kaffleen. 2005. NP.

Communities of social change and political mobilization formed through e-motion are *practice*, in the sense of Duncombe’s and Muñoz’ ‘rehearsal,’ and as Anzaldúan consciousness-as-practice, which form part of Licona’s framework for her theories of third-space zines (Duncombe 2008; Muñoz 2009; Anzaldúa 2007 [1987]). However, in contrast to Duncombe’s arguments, in which zines are dependent on a negative relationship to capitalist

society, zines for Licona are part of everyday communities and coalitional political resistance. This perspective retains the critical engagement of zine work, but it does not limit it to a dependency on a coherent or homogenous normative cultural sphere. Licona looks at ‘third space’ zines through a theoretical lens influenced by Massey and Anzaldúa: she looks at the third space as relationally produced and political, but also producing potentially transformative space through political and critical practices (2012). In particular, she looks at co-produced zines that are anti-racist, feminist, and queer, as sites produced through and producing (un)authorized knowledge (2012). For Licona, the zine form and community can be conceptualized as a counter-site of knowledge production to more formal and authorized sites, such as the university or the science park that Massey dissects (*see* Massey 2005).

In contrast to these sites, the zine community’s critical and productive engagement with everyday spaces, normalized or institutional relationships of power, and the dissemination of information and knowledges are intimately characterized by a discernible zine cultural expression. In these examples, zinesters are not only sharing their knowledges, they are also explicitly taking sites of authorized knowledge to task. In doing so, they politicize space and place, drawing attention to how capitalist logics are reproduced in everyday sites. In Chapter 7, I will be explicitly connecting these discussions to contemporary safe space signage. Similar to the use of symbols and signs I have previously discussed in the literature review (*see* Katz et al. 2016; Roestone 2014), I will be using zinesters’ critiques of everyday spaces and practices to inform debates about the efficacy, as well as the limitations, of signs and symbols that designate borders between safe and unsafe space.

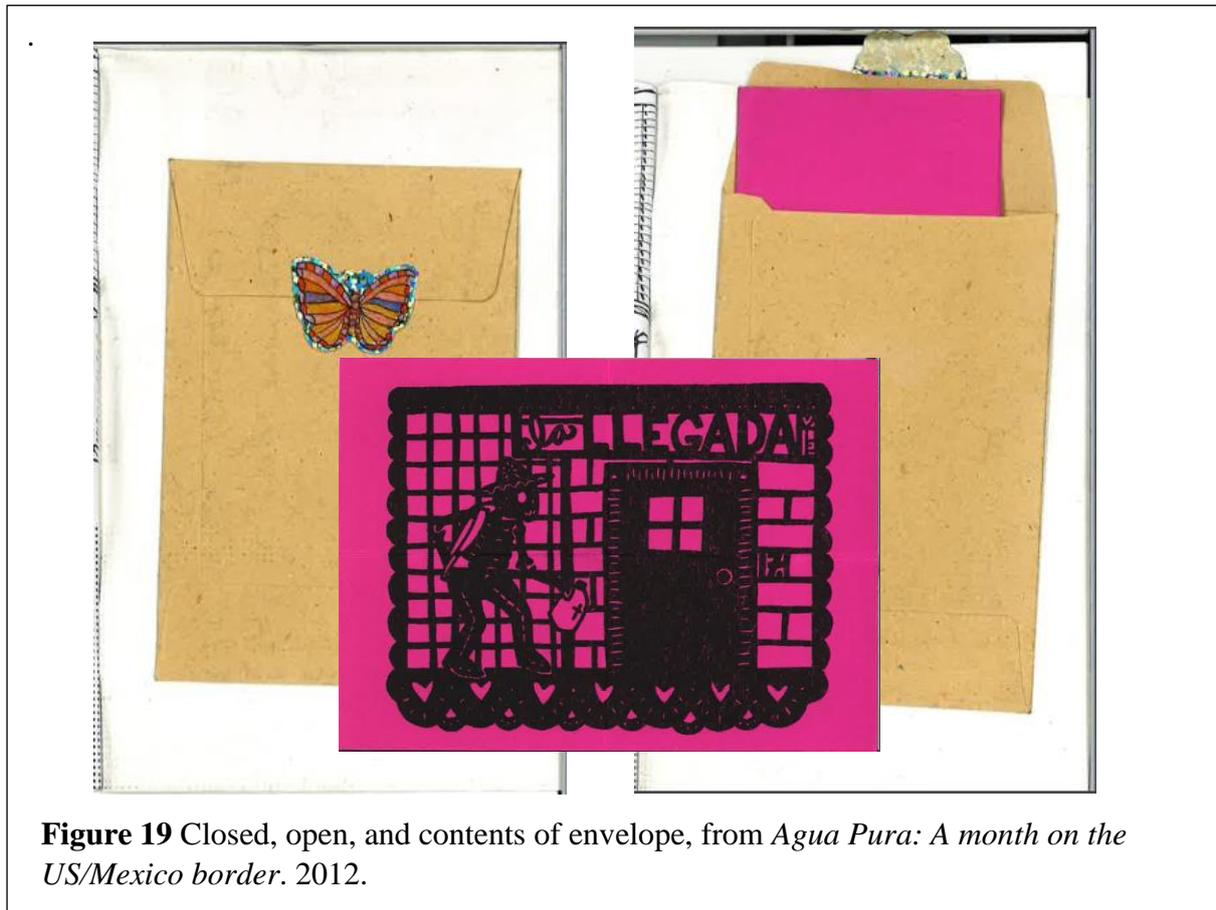
Here, typically, these zinesters argue that these acts of making and sharing zines oppose a ‘capitalist dependency’ on monetized, authorized knowledge (RD4 2014: NP). For example, Kaffleen’s research into and information about treatments for thrush are motivated primarily by the price of Canisten (in pounds, ‘£14.99,’ or in time, ‘3 hours’ of earnings) and a criticism

of the institutionalized and patriarchal world of medical knowledge (*urk!* 2005: NP; *see throughout* Fig. 18). In fact, she attempts to buy Canisten but is prevented because ‘you have to either have to have been diagnosed with a doctor, or lie and say that you have’ (*urk* 2005: NP). Throughout, zines like *Radical Domesticity* and *urk!* argue that the dissemination of information about keeping your house warm and clean, making bird feeders, home remedies, pilfering food from skips, and mending clothes are political acts (*RD #4* 2014; *urk!* 2005; *see* Fig. 18).

As Piepmeier and Licona theorize, the productive capacity of personal expression is reflected in the disparate community sites of zines (Piepmeier 2008; Licona 2012; *also* Hays 2017). Also indicative of Kempson’s heterogeneous community structure (2015), Kathleen’s writing in *Agua Pura* overlaps critiques of violent neoconservative border policies with humanitarian politics, in addition to her equally personal identifications with fantasy, fan, and punk cultural expression, as the zine contains numerous references to Harry Potter, as well as a fantasy ‘camp wishlist’ that includes magic carpets, dragons, and a never-ending bottle of fresh water (NP). *Agua Pura* demonstrates a fascinating microcosm of zine community identification in this way and particularly in the material form of the zine object itself.

Reflective of these multiple, overlapping sites of community identification are the multiple communicative strategies utilised by the zine to connect zine maker to zine reader. These include hands-on participation as well as both online and in-person communication between reader and zine maker. For example, inside the back page of the zine, a graphic of a skeleton approaching a door signposted “La Llegada” (Arrival) is stored in a brown envelope and sealed with a glittery butterfly sticker (Fig 19). This combination of morbid and multilingual imagery throughout the zine, the bureaucratic formality of a brown envelope, and the cutesy fragility of a butterfly sticker corroborates desires for catharsis that Kathleen expresses when describing her process of putting together the personal and troubling contents

of the zine, alongside her need to share this content with others. Through this feature, though subtly, Kathleen actively initiates readers' curiosity and engagement with the zine object, whilst adding elements of personal touch that are literally realized in the closing, exchange, and opening of the envelope.



**Figure 19** Closed, open, and contents of envelope, from *Agua Pura: A month on the US/Mexico border*. 2012.

Zine communicative and engagement strategies are as much about reaching out to the community as they are about drawing in. Both Kathleen and Eriksson argue that the dissemination of this knowledge continues a 'lineage', of knowledge produced and passed on primarily by women, particularly poor women (*urk!* 2005: NP; *RD4* 2014: NP). Eriksson characterizes this knowledge as unauthorized by referring to them as 'secrets,' passed down 'on a slip of paper,' and which can be trusted because they are 'tested and perfected' over generations (*RD4* 2014: NP). Here, again, zine practices of production and distribution, as well

as the zine form itself, are drawn attention to as an unofficial site of community production through mentions of materiality that overlap with the presence of a (physically absent) community. Eriksson suggests that past communities of women have authenticated the knowledges and resources she shares with her audience, and takes issue with critical feedback from some readers that characterize housework as ‘demeaning and challenging’ (*RD4* 2014: NP). This statement seems contradictory, and Eriksson unpacks and critiques the classist and misogynistic ideas about housework and handiwork behind it to make sense of it.

In comparison, Kaffleen thanks and references the sources of her remedies, acknowledging that some are not included because she hasn’t tried them herself, and requesting feedback and corrections from readers (2005: NP): her call out to her readers contrasts with Eriksson as she requests improvements and elaborations on the knowledge she disseminates. In *Agua Pura*, Kathleen suggests the work of learning and disseminating alternative knowledges is the responsibility of all; she makes use of online spaces for readers to contact her, including her email address in the zine, as well as to further disseminate critical knowledges informing her desire to make *Agua Pura*. On the final page of the zine is a block of QR codes directing readers to information about No More Deaths, interviews, and information about refugee camps in Calais and UK border policies, which Kathleen suggests she has become more informed of due to her work in Arizona.

These examples demonstrate how zinesters’ production and dissemination of knowledge correspond to existing community networks of trade and exchange, reflected in the critical politics of financially accessible, DIY knowledges that these zines contain. In researching, making, and putting out the alternative knowledges in their zines, Kaffleen/Kathleen and Eriksson work to legitimise this information and hold themselves accountable through their emphasis on feedback and ongoing communication. Even if Eriksson disagrees with some of the feedback to the purposes of her zine, she uses it to broaden her

critique of ‘capitalist dependency’ and motivations to oppose it (NP). This knowledge, furthermore, is readily available through genealogical, online, or casual, conversational sources. The zine form here works as a site of critical and informative discussion, a focal point for community-oriented and disseminated knowledges (as zines are not the only place these knowledges can be found) (Licona 2012). Eriksson offers her zine and the knowledge in it as a challenge and a necessity; she states that ‘D.I.Y. means you gotta do it’ (RD4 2014: NP) – in which DIY becomes the ‘ethic and aesthetic [*sic*]’ of community, anarchists, punks, zines, and ‘evenly stitched curtains’ (RD4 2014: NP).

In addition, by framing their knowledges within a critique of misguided ideas about domestic work, frustrations with the price of medicines and cleaning products, or simply lack of information about how to *do* stuff, zinesters hold to account the monetization and mystification of mundane knowledges like cleaning, cooking, and home remedies. Kaffleen’s and Eriksson’s zines are in opposition to the gendered and classist inaccessibility of sites of authorized knowledge, but they are not inherently opposed to the knowledge itself; they are not opposed to cleaning products and thrush treatments, but to the monetization of access to this knowledge, and where and how it is (re)produced. Demonstrated by these examples, the uses and production of space in zine cultural practice corresponds with the politicization of space and place through the production and dissemination of knowledges, motivated by both the community-oriented zine making practice as well as the coalitional and radical potentialities of e-motion (*see* Licona 2012). In other words, moved by the world around them, zinemakers utilise the zine form and cultural practices to make and share knowledges, critiques, and experiences (Licona 2012). Influenced by the participatory modes of production and exchange, as well as the heterogeneous zine community, zine objects (in content and form) reflect the overlapping, co-produced, and multiple sites of community participation *as well as* the editorial

control and personal, creative expression of the zine's maker (Piepmeier 2008; Hays 2017; Duncombe 2008).

By exploring the work of the zinesters above, I aimed to develop understandings that the zine community generates critical knowledges that can be acted upon to transform relationships to authorized and inaccessible sites of knowledge production. By analysing the communicative practices in zine objects, my intentions were to show how zinesters utilize and engage with multiple spaces as community sites as well as for personal expression. Overall, by building on the work of Piepmeier and Licona in the analyses above, I wanted to demonstrate zinesters' critical discussions of borders and boundaries in the content and practice of their zines. These ideas foreground the discussion of safe space debates and practices in the next chapter. There I will focus on zinesters' discussions of their experiences in streets, their homes, and (again) doctors' offices in ways that can be used to develop understandings of safe space practices limited to academic sites such as classrooms. By drawing upon the work of spatial theorists of safety and violence (*see* Tyner 2012; Roestone 2014) I will discuss how zinesters' critical approach to everyday sites and mundane practices (such as drinking alcohol, having sex, and walking home) can generate reflexive knowledges of and concrete demands for safety, rooted in specific needs of vulnerable communities.

With these understandings in mind, to return to the bakery/café, I will demonstrate how the navigation and uses of space reflect both the ethical and political practices of the company, in conjunction with contestations and negotiations explored in the previous chapter and in this one. By engaging directly with spatial organization in the bakery/café site, I will continue to discuss the theme of borders and boundaries which has been threaded through this chapter and the last.

#### 6.4.2 Counter Space

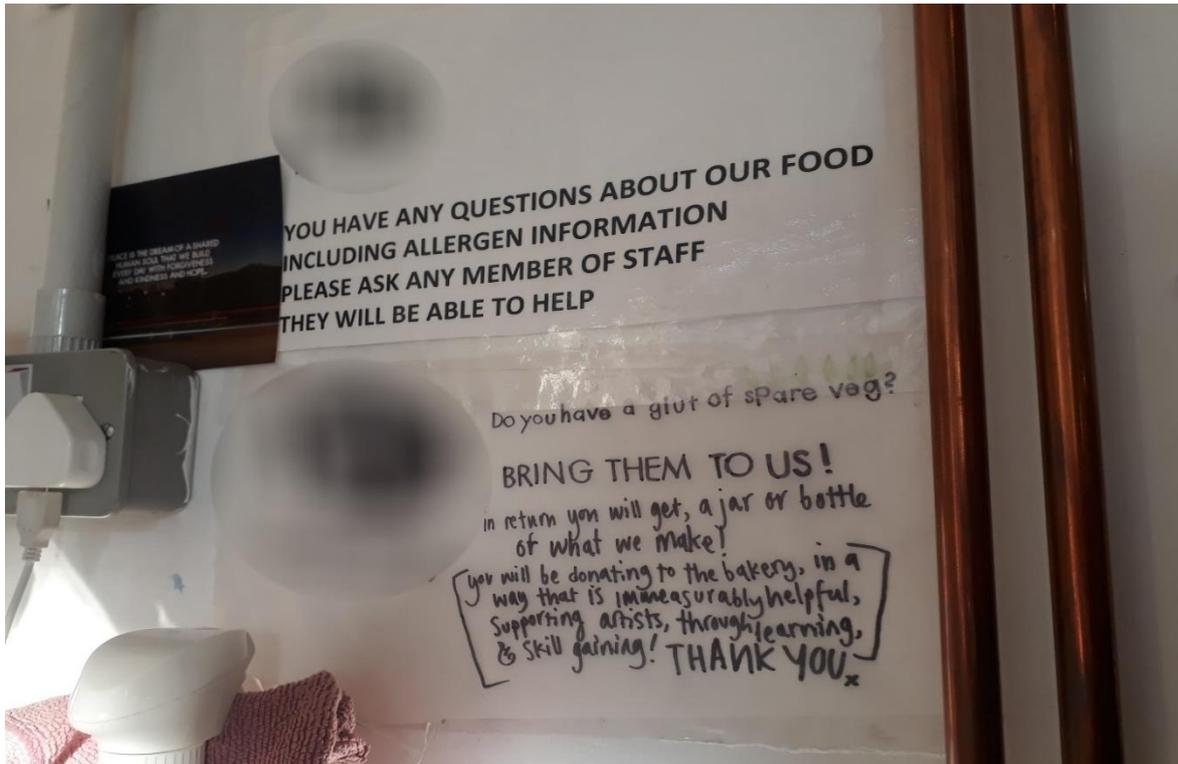
In the bakery/café, the visitor will primarily spend their time in the café section, where there are chairs, tables, books and games, the menu board, the piano, an accessible toilet, and two counters. At the first counter, bread is sold, and at the second, they can order lunch. Behind these counters is the kitchen, where the chef, bakery manager/art director, and volunteers work, and where there are three worktables, the dry store, the oven, and the proofing room. Beyond this is a large space where the bulk of the ‘intercepted’ food is kept, sorted, and stored, where coats and bags are hung up, where a set of stairs leads to the company archive, and which leads to the workshops: two hall-like spaces containing current and past projects. These spaces also often host productions using temporary, immersive, and sometimes maze-like sets, and passing through them leads right round to the reception of the building. The reception and the café are the two places to access the upstairs offices, where the running of the arts company happens, and which are also community spaces bookable for events.<sup>22</sup> The existing structure of this building is used to loosely divide up activities in the space into food production, art production, administrative work, and community spaces. Larger whole rooms, like the bakery/café, use architectural features (such as staircases and beams) and correspondent placement of furniture (like shelves, counters, and tables) to further splice up the space into sites of food storage, food production, and food distribution.

The way the bakery/café space is formed represents an apparent contradiction in participatory modes of cultural production, one I have touched upon in the discussion of community in the previous chapter. On the one hand, the site is intent on making visible and breaking down socio-economic barriers to art through participatory methods and community

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<sup>22</sup> Collated notes and observations from the fieldnotes May 2019-Dec 2019. During this time the café experimented with different activities including a C.D. and book exchange, workshops, and counter set up. Additionally, windows and an accessible toilet were added to the space just prior to the research period (mid-May 2019).

engagement; the bakery/café is described as the figurative ‘front door’ to the company’s work, which can be found throughout the city. However, borders are themselves necessary for the modes of production and organization happening in the space, particularly to enable work like food and art production to be carried out safely in the site.



**Figure 20: Signs at the counter, 2019**

An articulation of these practices is contained in the photograph (*fig. 20*) of the signs at the bread counter, where safety, community, and the food waste ethics of the bakery frame how questions are asked of and invited from those people reading the signs. In addition, the counter’s signs also demonstrate explicitly and implicitly the site’s practices of accessing and sharing skills and space related to art and food production. For example, the first sign, the one above, is slightly obscured by a postcard tucked against a socket; the postcard comes from an installation-based project on peace on which several arts companies across the country collaborated. This sign directs ‘any questions about our food’ from the reader, to ‘any member of staff’ in the bakery/café, offering ‘allergen information’ as a prompt. In the

bakery a very specific, explicit, and everyday conception of safety is dominated by health, hygiene, and safe work practices and adherence; this adherence assists the company's skill-trading and skill-gaining economy by developing different ways of accessing work, education, and food, opening up potential ways of trading as well as communication between existing staff and visitors.

The second sign, the one below, is handwritten and a little more informal, this sign asks: 'Do you have a glut of spare veg?' This sign hints at the alternative economic and labour practices of the bakery/café, the structure of the bakery and company network and community, and the dominant role that food plays in the transformative ethics and production in this space. A key practice in the bakery's volunteer labour economy is trading work directly for food, skills, and access into the company. Although, generally, a customer/visitor will trade cash for food, in the second sign's hypothetical transaction the customer trades surplus food for some of the end product (usually a pickle or a jam) *as well as* the labour of making their 'spare veg' into a 'jar or bottle of what we make.'<sup>23</sup> However, this fairly simple transaction is complicated by the bracketed message. The trading of surplus food, or food that is unlikely to be consumed, for surplus products made from that food is (literally) framed by the context of the bakery/café and company space in general. Finally, the counters in the bakery/café are moveable; they are often pushed back and away for company productions, or further apart for community events which still include food production.<sup>24</sup> The border which this counter represents is itself shifted through participation and community involvement: as visitors become more involved in production – through volunteering, skill-gaining and -

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<sup>23</sup> Observations from fieldnotes – pickles and jams were often on sale alongside bread products at the bakery counter, as well as seasonal options such as mincemeat (for mince pies) (Field diary notes 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Observation from attending events as a visitor (e.g. theatre shows) and as a steward and volunteer (e.g. at community events), (Field diary notes May 2019-Dec 2019).

sharing, as audience members in participatory productions, through taking commissions or positions in the company, or in other ways – they travel further into the building itself.

The bakery/café/art company's practices inherently criticise incorrect and popular understandings that art and cultural production are for individuals and elites, yet the counter literally marks a border between a customer/visitor and a worker in the company, and it is necessary for trade and exchange as much as for organization and safety reasons. Furthermore, it physically represents a barrier between those who produce food, and art, and those who consume it. Despite this, the signs at the counter and the counter's shift-ability point to the possibilities of reaching across this barrier, in accord with the participatory practices of the company.

In the second sign's scenario, firstly, someone has produced or bought too many vegetables for them to eat, store, or give away (*fig 20*). This surplus of food they bring to the bakery/café, who will take the vegetables and make something out of it (specifically, something that can be stored and used over a longer period of time than fresh vegetables). In return for the materials, secondly, the bakery will pay with 'a jar or a bottle' of their product, and keep the surplus product for use or to sell (*fig 20*). However, what this transaction itself is framed as is an 'immeasurably helpful' *donation* to the bakery. The third and transformative surplus comes from of the social and community interaction with the bakery/café space, and it is the support and maintenance of the space and the 'artists,' specifically 'through learning & skill gaining' (*fig 20*). Skill-based learning is one form of knowledge production in the bakery/café/arts company and exemplified in the zines here, as a reflection of broader zine community practices; the second is the knowledge produced through the pursuit of social change. The production of food, social relationships, and socially-conscious art are co-dependent factors in the company's pursuit of social change and, I would also argue, a form of *docta spes*.

My use of this term relates to both the production of knowledges and the engagement with borders that I have discussed throughout this chapter. By building on existing scholarship about community and knowledge production in zines and in the bakery/café I aimed to expand upon the understandings drawn from the last chapter, about ongoing community production, by suggesting that practices in the zine community and in the bakery/café are transformative. By this I mean these practices imply a critical awareness and refusal of harmful cultural logics, and work to challenge the reproduction of, negotiate with, or reconstitute these logics as they manifest in everyday activities. In this chapter, by focusing on material space (namely the zine object and the bread counter), I have repeatedly discussed the border as a spatial phenomenon and as a practice – one that can be used to violently reinforce nationalist ideologies and global inequalities (Harvey 2005; Bell 2017), and that can also be used to develop and maintain communities of social change, characterized by Bell as the formation and maintenance of safe spaces (Bell 2017; Licona 2012). In *Agua Pura*, the border is not the end of the journey, which is a constantly shifting horizon; the travellers in the zine occupy a vast site of both vital and lethal possibilities. In this zine, the knowledges shared by Kathleen are not contained entirely within the pages – they are cut off, or require physical unpicking by the reader, or the reader is invited to join the zinemaker in their ongoing pursuit of critical activist and actionable knowledges in digital spaces. Therefore, I am using the terminology of *docta spes* to engage with critical knowledges and communities produced in the bakery/café and the zine community as borders, like the bread counter, that enable the space to exist but are capable of shifting, and are shifted pragmatically to enable the continued production of the space.

#### 6.5 Conclusion: *docta spes*

At the bakery/café/arts company, small-scale and tactical interventions in attitudes about work, time, and art, funding-dependent community outreach projects (such as the community event which had taken place prior to the closing time scene above), and temporary,

immersive theatre productions and participatory installations found in the building and across the city are some material, cumulative demonstrations of the ongoing work of this arts company. The bakery/café is both a project and inherently part of the site itself – for example, artists and company workers using the building will also, naturally, come to the pay-as-you-feel lunches.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the ethics of the company are reflected in, and reproduced by, the very infrastructure of the bakery/café – of which the bread counter (and signs) is one example.

Throughout his utopian project, Bloch points out that art and cultural products may engender critical ideas and visions of better worlds, but they are not themselves a realization of these worlds, and may themselves constitute harmful (or harmless) distractions (Bloch 1986; 1988). However, the bakery/café/arts company and the zine community produce and share knowledges of cultural, artistic, and critical expression through participatory ethics and alternative economic practices. They also produce and share knowledges of anti-capitalist politics through everyday practices such as making food, reducing and reusing forms of waste, and medicine. They critically engage with cultural, political, and economic borders by making their knowledges accessible and by articulating how authorized and institutionalised knowledge is (re)produced in everyday encounters. In Chapter 7, I will be discussing the knowledge of safety as a kind of shared demand that can itself contribute, even temporarily, to the formation (and potentially disintegration, *see* Hanhardt 2013) of a community.

In addition, in the bakery/café and zines, there is not just negotiation with capitalism, but also modes of transformation contained in these sites' practices. For example, these sites show how everyday practices and sites can make visible, refuse, and negotiate with the (re)production of normalised temporal configurations, tensions, and pressures. Through these negotiations, they demonstrate how exploitative expectations produces flexible, unpaid, and

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<sup>25</sup> General observation from fieldnotes, particularly when preparation for festivals and shows are mentioned (e.g. 24/05/2019; 14/07/2019; 11/10/2019)

devalued labour, and how to critically negotiate with these expectations and repurpose understandings of labour to pursue social change. Specifically, this repurposing demonstrates how the sharing of skills, knowledges, and food can be practiced in opposition to capitalism, and the divisive structures that uphold it. These practices are why I use the notion of transformative surplus and *docta spes* to articulate the utopian potential of these sites – through practice, these sites transform normalised understandings of knowledge production, temporality, and labour to develop critical knowledges of the present and develop ongoing, reflexive practices of social change.

The previous chapter discussed how the community practices in the bakery/café and the zine community demonstrated negotiations with the concept of community itself – how contradictions and tensions arise when the production of inclusive and welcoming community, and the pursuit of social change, has to come into contestation with existing socioeconomic barriers and has to negotiate with dominant or counterproductive community representations. In this sixth chapter, I have explored more broadly how community spaces are produced in negotiation with these socioeconomic barriers and with their own, necessary forms of borders and boundaries. In both, I have alluded to forms of safety – including health and safety practices, forms of organization and signposting to enable community engagement, and forms of inter-community critique and negotiation with both external threats and internal tensions. This next chapter focuses explicitly on types of safety found in the bakery/café and the zine community, bringing forward the themes of negotiation, reconstitution, and ongoing production of community and of social change. In discussing situated and specific practices of safety as part of a more complex, interconnected set of community practices with shared values and demands for social change, I intend to conceptualize safety as something that is both familiar and mundane, found in everyday practices, alongside its potential to maintain and transform these everyday practices in communities of social change.

# Safety

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter draws out the utopian potential of safety through discussions and practices of safety in the bakery/café and in zine culture and community. In the bakery/café I will be discussing two dominant types of safety; the first type of safety is manifested in signs, stickers, and spatial organization used to visibly demarcate the space as a safe space for community members, and the second type of safety relates to food, health, and hygiene safety practices. In the context of the zine community I will be discussing a further three types of safety: community safeguarding practices enabling or inhibiting the circulation of zines, content and trigger warnings, and desires for safety expressed in zine content. By examining multiple practices of everyday safety in these sites I aim to develop understandings of safety more broadly as specific, informed community practices. This aim complicates and expands upon existing understandings of safety in scholarship, where it is often ill-defined and frequently displaced by discussions of violence and freedom. However, by engaging with the utopian potential of safety my aim is not to afford safety an embedded ethical or moral trajectory that is destined to produce “good places.” Instead I seek to discuss practices of safety in the bakery/café and the zine community as I have other practices in the case studies: informed by and enacting shared community values, focusing on this pursuit of social change.

Existing notions of safety are heavily associated with conceptions of violence, or relationships with bureaucratic red-tape, legal and governmental policy (Tyner 2017; Boutellier 2004; Butler 2020). These associations engender ongoing and often circular debates about contemporary safe space practices, which draw on contrasting conceptions of free speech, definitions of violence and trauma, and the disruptive capacities of safe space practices on power hierarchies, particularly in sites of community discussion and knowledge

production (Knox 2017; Thompson 2017; Sultana 2018; Furedi 2017; Riley ed. 2021). On the one hand, critics of safe spaces conceptualize safety as a ‘privilege’ and retreat from the ‘real world’ (Tyner 2012; Riley ed. 2021; Houston Grey 2017), or a threatening, top-down imposition of politics and policies that inhibit individual freedoms and expression (Furedi 2017; Schroeder 2017; Boutellier 2004). However, for proponents of safe space practices, safety is a necessary consideration for inclusive community sites (Roestone 2014; *see* Knox 2017; Thompson 2017; *see* Popowich 2021; Katz et al. 2016; Byron 2017). These latter arguments maintain that safety is relational and subjective, and that practices concerning the safety of community contest with existing, often mundane, forms of marginalization and discrimination (Roestone 2014, Hanhardt 2013).

Signs, stickers, spatial organization, and content warnings and trigger warnings are commonly associated with popular understandings of safe space practices and production, hence their use in the bakery/café suggests a fruitful way to engage with how safe space is demarcated and negotiated in practice (Katz 2016; Knox 2017). In addition, inter-community discussion of the safeguarding practices of the zine community shares similarities with debates about safe space practices, as they both involve the discussion of censorship, power, and privilege (Knox 2017; Furedi 2017; Riley ed. 2021). Throughout this chapter, the utopian potential of safety will be drawn out through examining the contribution to the desire and pursuit of social change that is shared by both the bakery/café and the zine community, which emerges in practices that articulate desires for and knowledges of safety. I use zine content and bakery/café spatial organization to discuss these forms of safety. One type of safety – food, health, and hygiene safety – seems to stick out from the rest, having a less obvious relationship to ongoing debates about safe space practices and their broader conceptual debates about violence and free speech. However, building on arguments made in the fifth chapter, in the bakery/café, for example, food safety practices exemplify how safety is

conceptualized and practiced through formative ideologies through comparison with other kinds of food distribution practices. Food and workplace safety in the bakery/café generates a counterpoint to arguments which suggest that safe space practices are detrimental to individual and worker rights and freedoms (Boutellier 2004; Furedi 2017; Schroeder 2017; *see* Knox 2017). Instead, these case studies illustrate that where safety *is* detrimental to individual freedoms, this is often a product of a co-option of these rights, demanded and developed by grassroots activism, in the form of corporate safeguarding (Sbicca 2014; Giraud 2019 *see Chapter two*).

In this chapter, this discussion of different types of safety found in the bakery/café and the zine community is used to generate definitions of safety in practice that reach toward what safety *is* without relying tangentially on categories of violence, or reifying particular practices and particular politics as intrinsically constitutive of safety. My intention is to move beyond what safety is not (the absence of violence, censorship, a specific place) in order to get closer to what it is and how it is practiced. However, as this definition of safety is informed by the types of safety found in the case studies, and as the purpose of the project is to understand the utopian potential of safety, the definition of safety developed in this chapter is subject to a utopian interpretation that accommodates and draws out its contribution to utopia in the everyday and pursuits of social change.

## 7.2 Safety vs the ‘Real World’

I have previously drawn attention to signs posted throughout the bakery/café. These include warnings and precautions, labels, and instructions which assist workers and visitors in food storage, preparation, and distribution.<sup>26</sup> For example, the signs at the counter (*see* fig 20)

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<sup>26</sup> General observations from the fieldnotes include permanent warning signs of hot water, danger of electrocution, temporary warning signs like wet floor signs, instructional signs labelling rinsing, soaking, and drying to streamline washing up, and labelling to organize stock and to distinguish vegan from vegetarian

prompt visitors to inquire about the food, to disclose allergens, and to exchange excess food for pickles, jams, and support the broader work of the company. Other signs, such as the quotations from *Recipes for Pandæmonium* (Gill 1998), link to other community projects outside of the bakery/café and hint at the politics of the company. In addition, on the front door and inside the bakery/café, stickers help visitors understand what kind of community space they are using. For example, signs are used to designate the space as LGBT+ inclusive, reflected in the broader company's work with local LGBT+ community groups and Pride (*see* Fig. 21, *below*), and another sign says that some tables in the café are simply for people to come in and talk if they don't want to eat or spend money. The layout and use of the café also reflect this; tables of varying sizes mean that groups and individuals sit together, even if they don't know each other, and the café is designed to be a walk-in situation, with options for takeaway (*see again* Fig.5).



**Figure 21** Signs on the front door

Spatial organization as well as explicit signage portray the bakery/café as an inclusive community space. These signs suggest a space where certain vulnerable groups can feel safe because people are encouraged to share a meal and their table with each other, and a space where discrimination will not be tolerated. Again, the norms and practices of the company stand in contention to what takes place outside of the door; these signs are a visible reminder

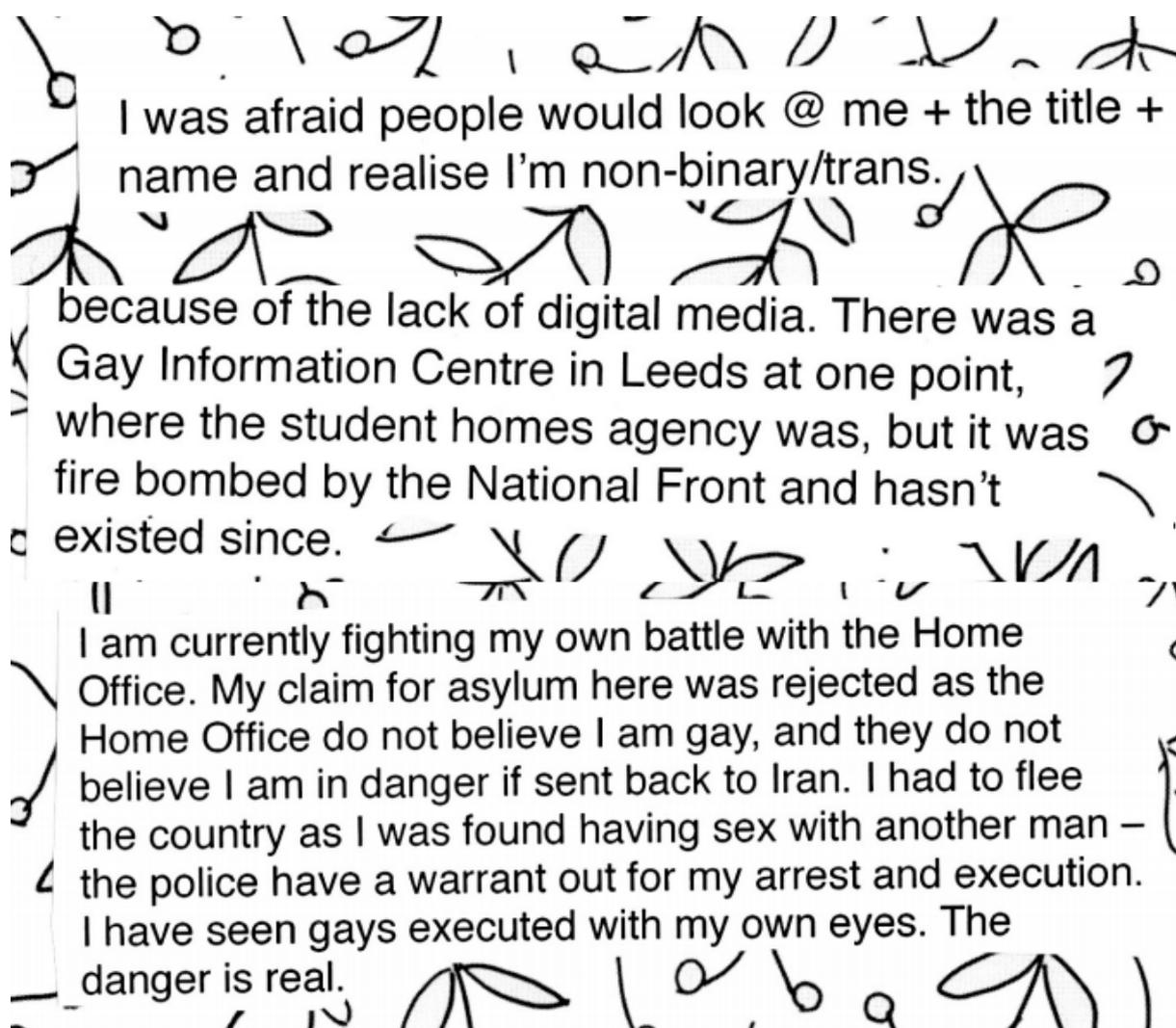
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foodstuffs. Additionally I have included instructional and community-oriented signs such as requests to visitors for surplus food (*see fig.* 20), leaflets informing people that the space is available to them even if they don't want lunch, and signs on the bakery/café door (*see Fig.* 21) (Field diary notes, 2019).

that minority groups face discrimination ranging from discomfort to explicit violence, as well as the fact that most indoor public and community spaces require some form of payment to access and use (Tyner 2012; Sbicca 2014; Hanhardt 2013). These signs, found on both the literal and figurative “front door” of the arts company, suggest a border between outside and inside, safe and unsafe, wherein safe space is not so much produced as marked off. However, this suggestion is one that contributes to ideas about safe space signage and practices as unnecessary, superficial, coddling, or potentially censorious, because it engages solely with the sign and not with the production of safe space through practices that contend with forms of everyday violence (*see* Katz 2016; Tyner 2012, *for critiques*). In the following discussion I aim to complicate this oppositional relationship between safe space and the “real world” by engaging with signs and boundaries as enacting, or making visible, tensions between community and public spaces by drawing attention to the potential unsafety of everyday spaces. In addition, in an approach that is similar to the last chapter, I relate the use of signs and boundaries as extensions the reconstitution of mundane, potentially harmful cultural logics practiced in the bakery/café and the zine community.

A referral to debates about the relationship between violence, safety, and spatial production contributes to my approach to definitions of safety, partly to complicate discussions that displace understandings of safety in favour of definitions of violence, as if a consensus on understandings of violence forms a definitive knowledge of safety (as its opposite). In the case studies, discussions of safety, unsafety, and violence are more appropriately framed by critical geographers The Roestone Collective (2014), who conceptualize safety as relational and subjective. For example, in the bakery/café, safe and unsafe space is explicitly bordered in the interests of specific communities, drawing attention to subjective experiences of vulnerability and visibly contesting with potential forms of violence in everyday settings.

To elucidate this argument further, I will draw from narratives of LGBT+ experience found in *Trailblazing Stories* zine (see fig. 22). These narratives develop understandings of how safety and unsafety in public space are subjectively experienced by articulating how public space is constituted through a normalization of everyday forms of violence (see Tyner 2012). Through these zinesters' lived experiences, a desire for safety emerges from their exploration of and resistance to realities of discomfort, discrimination, and fear in public space. These public spaces include sites where authorized knowledges are (re)produced and practiced, as demonstrated in *urk!*, such as the chemists and doctors' office (see figs. 18, 22).



**Figure 22.** *Trailblazing Stories*. Collective, 2018.

*Trailblazing Stories* (2018) is a collective zine in which young and elder members of the LGBT+ community around West Yorkshire discuss their experiences. In this zine, LGBT+ histories and identities are celebrated and shared, although this includes the relationship between LGBT+ identity and violence. Where one contributor discusses feeling unsafe in a doctor's office because other patients and staff might figure out they are trans (NP), another contributor explains that the Home Office 'don't believe' that he is gay, and so he may be deported to a country where he is at risk of execution (NP). Finally, another contributor discusses the National Front firebombing of the Gay Information Centre in Leeds, UK (NP). In the first example, the possibility of being outed puts the writer at risk of discrimination and hostility, whereas in the second, the writer needs to be out in some spaces and not others in order to keep himself safe, and to navigate a racist and homophobic immigration system. This second contributor needs to stay in a country where, as the first and third stories demonstrate, violence against the LGBT+ community is still present, but where he does not feel immediately in danger (NP).

In these narratives, LGBT+ identities are scrutinized and contested, in ways that show how the lives of LGBT+ people are threatened through explicit acts of violence in part made possible by the visibility that comes from this scrutiny. In the first narrative, a gendered power dynamic much like the one described in *urk!* is apparent, where both narrators/patients feel their knowledge of their bodies contested and superseded by others' in the site of institutional medicine (*fig 18; see also Licona 2012*). However, the narrator in *Trailblazing Stories* is in the waiting room with other patients; this experience comes even before they see any medical professional, in contrast to Kaffleen's navigation between male doctors and chemists discussed in the previous chapter. Furthermore, they are not concerned that people in general won't think they are non-binary, they are concerned that transphobic people will

know that they are, and that this potential knowledge puts them at risk of transphobic violence.

Concerns expressed in these zines reframe forms of violence and discrimination as not the result of a specific identity, of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, because these spaces are everyday sites open to the public. In public spaces like chemists and doctors' offices, zinesters identify that authority is embodied, and this body is normalised through specific, dominant cultural logics. In the context of medical institutions and knowledges, the distinction between normalized and non-normative bodies is especially heightened; these tensions are more felt because this is one site where these knowledges in particular are enacted and reproduced. To understand the significance of these articulations, it useful to turn to scholarship that has made explicit arguments about the unsafety of everyday life and public space for certain communities of people.

Writing about violence and everyday spaces, Tyner (2012) argues that domestic, educational, and medical institutions practice ideological violence that often manifest as physical and psychological harm. His analysis also indicates that space and place possess a *reproductive capacity* (in other words, they perpetuate particular social norms), particularly his analysis of schools (2012). Both Tyner and Muñoz provide concrete, sometimes lived, examples of the practice and rehearsal of heteronormative sexuality and gender (Tyner 2012; Muñoz 2009; Butler 2006). For example, Muñoz draws from experiences at school and at home, where his gestures were 'caution[ed]' and 'straighten[ed] up' by other boys, who he would like to reunite with as 'fellow survivors' (2009: 69). By drawing upon the histories of family and education as institutions of capitalism, Tyner elucidates how dominant ideology produces place and is there reproduced, often through violence. In fact, Tyner's analyses suggest that endemic violence is necessary for the maintenance of everyday life.

To do so, Tyner maintains that overlooking forms of violence because they are subjective and specific to marginalized actors and communities is itself a way that violent everyday sites and experiences are normalized and reproduced. To demonstrate this, he uses examples of women using mitigating language to discuss experiences of harassment and threats, dismissing verbal abuse because physical attacks are prioritized as definitive forms of violence. In doing so, his theories presuppose that violence comes in multiple forms – verbal, psychological, physical, and institutional – and that dominant understandings of violence both obscure other forms of harm *and* imbue public spaces with a sense of universal safety that they do not actually possess (Tyner 2012).

It is in order to draw attention to everyday and public forms of unsafety that common safe space practices include the use of signs and stickers in public and institutional spaces and places, which draw attention to sites where vulnerable people may be subject to discrimination (*see* Katz 2016). Proponents of safe space practices, such as the visible marking of space, point out that these practices make visible sites of discrimination, address concerns that vulnerable people may have about specific spaces and places, and make individuals' health and wellbeing a public concern and conversation (*see* Byron 2017; Katz 2016). For example, Katz et al. (2016) study a similar practice as the bakery/café's, in which stickers marking safe spaces for LGBT+ youth are noted by both the LGBT+ community and others, making the former feel more reassured and welcome, and the latter more attentive to previously invisible discrimination. The use of signs to demarcate safe space also aligns with understandings of safe space as a kind of place-making formed by and with specific minority and vulnerable groups in mind, which employ methods of exclusion to engage with advanced discussion of a topic or to avoid discrimination, for example, an anti-racist discussion group exclusively for people of colour (*see for examples* Bell 2017; Wallin-Ruschman and Patka 2016; Garcia 2015; Hanhardt 2014; Moore et al. 2014; Bairstow 2007; Ahmed 2004).

While I will later explore in more detail the use of safe space practices in community sites of discussion, opponents of the use of borders, boundaries, and exclusion as part of safe space practice often find themselves in a contradictory bind. These critics argue that safe spaces themselves are unrealistic and indulgent sites where discussion is censored and participants are in no real danger. Simultaneously they argue that practices of exclusion and bordering do not prepare participants for the real world (Furedi 2017; Schroeder 2017; *see* Knox 2017 *for critique see* Thompson 2017). These criticisms both reinforce the suspected boundary that safe space practices put in place, as well as acknowledge the ubiquity of mundane violence. In addition, they attribute to participants the dual characterization of being coddled and naïve, as well as powerful agents of censorship. In exploring conceptualizations of safety (*see Chapter two*), I have maintained that contradictions like these arise from ill-defined and muddled understandings of safety that rely, or are displaced by, competing notions of violence and freedom.

To summarise these discussions, the development of these arguments generates specific and contrasting understandings of violence, explored in more detail in Chapter two. Definitions of violence have been expanded from physical attacks and violent situations to include discrimination, harassment, and manipulation which include forms of speech and control (*see* Butler 1997; Tyner 2012). These expansions and complexities have largely been the result of liberation work by and for vulnerable members of the family, including partners and children, as well as to accommodate previously overlooked forms of physical violence, like physical domestic abuse, and overlooked or previously legally invisible communities (Tyner 2012; Fraser 1992; Roestone 2014). The social politics of this liberation work has given these definitions of violence a liberatory and political edge; this is reflected in the politics of contemporary safe space practices, which usually seek to challenge and resist

forms of misogyny, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism (Roestone 2014; Hanhardt 2013; Byron 2017; Knox 2017; Garcia 2015; Harless 2018).

More expansive understandings of violence do contribute to understandings of unsafety in seemingly mundane situations. They also help to explain both opposition to and support for safe space signage and practices in public spaces by demonstrating how violence toward and vulnerability of minority groups is often made invisible through the combination of limited conceptions of violence, cultural logics, and their reproduction in sites such as the doctor's office, the public street, the home, and the school (Tyner 2012; Katz 2016; Byron 2017; Muñoz 2009). However, what definitions of violence don't really do is explain why places like the bakery/café need safe space signage and organization. A lack of consideration of safety's necessity to communities of social change is often reflected in criticism of safe space practices, particularly that which likens them to lip service, coddling, and engages in critiques of their general ineffectiveness (*see* Knox 2017; Furedi 2017; Ginsberg 2021). As a result of conceptualizations of safety that rely on definitions of violence, even expanded ones, the possibilities of safety are foreclosed by limiting the demand of safety to unsafe environments and violent situations. Safety *can* be related to understandings of violence, but it may also stand on its own as a practice that contributes to the production of communities of social change.

For example, in complete contrast to the experiences in *Trailblazing Stories* and the institutions that Tyner and Muñoz discuss, the bakery/café/arts company is formed through participatory ethics and practices. This means the site negotiates with practices that stratify and harm the wider community, such as austerity policies, and work to challenge the reproduction of cultural and economic divisions in their methods of art and food production (Materasso 2019). Unlike Katz et al.'s (2016) study of the use of safe space signage, the stickers and signs in the bakery/café are seemingly not doing much more than reaffirming

what could be already be presumed about this site's relationship with LGBT+ communities. However, the signs and stickers in the bakery/café evidence both past and ongoing outreach with the wider community, as well as a commitment to further change and pursuit of social change within the bakery/café/arts company itself. For example, during attempts to register volunteers and workers for health and safety reasons, the forms were adapted in conversation between workers as they accommodated only two, binary genders. The staff member distributing and collecting the information questioned the relevance of including gender on the form, arguing that it was unnecessary, while recognizing the feelings of unsafety that outing and visibility can cause, also described in *Trailblazing Stories* (2018).<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, in the commodification and marketisation of space, the circulation (or possession) of capital comes to dominate the expectations of the uses of social space, particularly spaces of exchange (Fraser 1992; Komlosy 2017; Lefebvre 1991). Therefore, a community space that does not prioritize capitalist logics (such as the bakery/café and zine community) has to explicitly render itself otherwise, through signs, practices, and verbal communication, to avoid alienating some visitors (as argued previously in the discussion of community, *see also* Katz 2016). In spaces like the bakery/café, safety is exemplified as a tangible and contested agent of access. Used by public authorities to prevent access to food, public and food safety legislation becomes an extension and practice of inequality, insecurity, and poverty (Heynen 2010, Sbicca 2014). In the practices of the bakery/café, however, food and public safety are reconstituted through spatial organization, signs, and labour to promote and pursue inclusive community and knowledge production, as well as provide lunch.

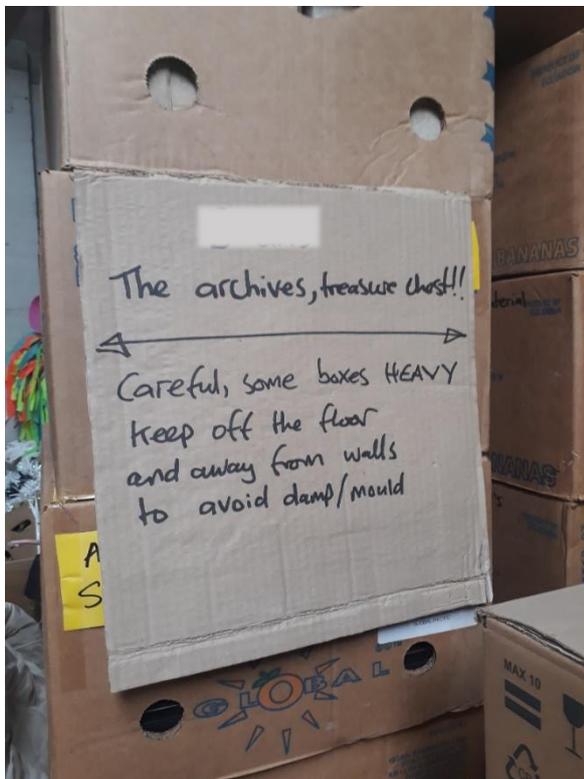
Through the pursuit of social change, the bakery/café and the zine community have developed actionable knowledges of exchange, labour, and community engagement focused around creative cultural production. Although the practices of safety I witnessed in the

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<sup>27</sup> Conversation recorded in fieldnotes (Field diary notes 23/08/2019).

bakery, and which are part of zine culture, do relate in some ways to violence and its definitions, one of safety's most important contributions – instead – is to the protection and cultivation of community (*see also* Bell 2017). To explicate this priority of safety, I return again to the archive – this time, I will use the example of the arts company's archive, which works as both a museum and a resource for the company. As both the company's and zine archives such as the POCZP demonstrate, safety (in the context of protection and preservation) are a vital consideration in community and participatory cultural production.

The contents of the archive are not entirely contained within one room, as many structures and works are found throughout the building, including ones reused as decoration. However, the bulk of costumes, materials, smaller structures, and other resources are stored in one large upstairs space. The archive is organized roughly into different projects over the years, where the spaces between different collections also work as paths to navigate the room.<sup>28</sup> In the centre is a large stack of boxes and this sign:



**The archives, treasure chest!!/  
Careful, some boxes HEAVY/  
Keep off the floor/  
and away from walls/  
to avoid damp/mould**

**Figure 23** Sign in the arts company archive

<sup>28</sup> I was given a short introductory tour through the building early in the research period, May 2019, although after bakery/café hours.

Here, the boxes become the agent through which physical, personal safety and the protection of “treasure” – documentation of decades of the company’s work and the cultural life of the community – are combined. The archives are heavy and potentially pose a danger to the reader, but also require protection themselves (much like the zines in Birmingham Zine Library, discussed in the Community chapter), because their necessity puts them in danger of degradation and rot. This sign is like many found in the bakery/café, used in conjunction with a protective border like the bread counter, or the demarcation of safety for LGBT+ communities. Both the sign and the border that it draws revisit the themes of ongoing community and cultural production, negotiating with potential threats at the same time as engaging with the reader as a potential contributor to the archives as well as to the space.

Spatially speaking, in this section of the discussion, sites of unsafety align roughly with prioritized identities: formative ideologies like heteronormativity, capitalism, and patriarchy, which produce the medical, legal, and educational institutions in everyday life, makes invisible the prioritization of certain identities, and normalizes violence and exclusion of “others” (Tyner 2012; Muñoz 2009; Fraser 1992; Roestone 2014; Hanhardt 2013). In discussions of safe space signage and visibility, furthermore, criticism of safe spaces’ exclusionary characteristics suggest they create a vacuum or echo chamber for discussion and knowledge production (*see* Knox 2017), or that their transformative capability is only applicable in small-scale acts of trespass (Katz et al. 2016), and their necessity and effectiveness is repeatedly challenged by those who hold conflicting definitions of violence (Furedi 2017; *for a critique, see* Tyner 2012).

In contrast, the particular way food safety and signs of safety are articulated in the bakery/café are not entirely reactive to a separate “real world,” as many critics of safe space practices argue, because the community formation and social engagement of the arts company’s work (including the bakery/café as outreach) means the border is neither

exclusionary nor impermeable. Contrary to ideas about exclusionary and separatist safe space production, the bakery/café signage demonstrates how all indications of a border are in flux, by design or through negotiation with contesting external forces. This has been reflected throughout my discussion of the site in previous chapters, most evidently in the bakery/café's use of counters as an agent of community formation and participatory art production (*see* Chapter 6). Explicit signage, politics, and spatial organization of a site such as the bakery/café attempt to counteract and challenge potential or actual forms of exclusion and violence through a combination of protective, preventative, and indeed exclusionary measures, which are applied both within and outside of the “front door.” Furthermore, the ethics and politics of social change, which act as formative components of the zine community and the bakery/café, as an extension of the arts company, inform the particular iterations of safety seen here. The bakery/café demonstrates that safety cannot simply be defined negatively against the presence or definition(s) of violence, as in, safety is the absence of violence. The above discussions of zine-content illustrates how safety is active within potentially violent spaces, as critique, and the bakery/café underlines its role in the formation and maintenance of knowledges and spaces of social change.

### 7.3 Safety vs. Free speech

The relationship between safety and individual freedoms, including freedom of speech and expression, is often articulated in a way that pits the concepts and practice of safety and freedom against each other (Sultana 2018; Riley ed. 2021; Furedi 2017; Boutellier 2004). This dichotomy between safety and freedom can appear in debates where safety is conceptualized as a top-down bureaucratic imposition (Boutellier 2004; Schroeder 2017; Furedi 2017 *for critique* Popowich 2021), and where a state of safety is conceptualized negatively against violence, risk, and danger (e.g. Tyner 2012). Common critiques of safe space politics and practices theorize that they may have a “chilling” effect on discussion, or that they may be akin

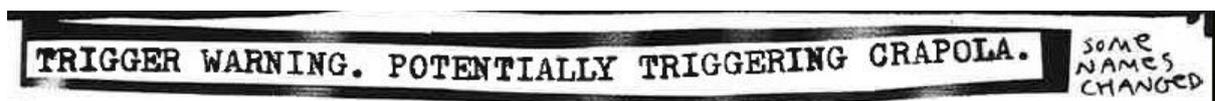
to censorship (Riley ed 2021; Knox ed 2017). In this light, zine culture and community offers a counterpoint as a form known for its counter-cultural origins and emphasis on creative control of the author (Duncombe 2008; Atton 2002). As forms of independent publishing, the zine form stands in critical opposition to mainstream forms of publishing, including hierarchical editorial structures, as well as being subject to censorship themselves (Duncombe 2008). As I will discuss below, despite the anti-censorship stance of the community and the exploration of free, authentic expression that the form and DIY ethics allows, zine community practices also encompass forms of community safeguarding that offers an interesting counterpoint to arguments that safe space practices and censorship practices are in any way alike.

In zine culture, the DIY mode of expression enables zinemakers to write and discuss almost anything, and the critical opposition to mainstream publishing means the zine form is often used to explore taboo topics (Duncombe 2008). As I have demonstrated in previous chapters, zinemakers often contest with the cultural logics of capitalism, heteronormativity, racism, and patriarchy; as Licona (2012) and many others argue, the zine community develops critical, actionable knowledges of coalitional social change (*see also* Honma 2016; Piepmeier 2009; Salvage 2016; Hays 2017; Ramdarshan Bold 2017). In other words, zine cultural practices and DIY ethics enable a protected site of free expression, a safe space for discussion that challenges normative values and lifestyles, which can also lead to collective action in pursuit of social change. As I will demonstrate, the primary ways that these seemingly contradictory forms of community safeguarding and community expression have developed is through this key factor: community, specifically the communicative emphasis of zine culture and use of the form.

This section is divided in two to address, in turn, zine making, and zine distribution as distinct practices with shared community values, and how free speech and expression alongside community safeguarding are navigated in these practices. Examples of safeguarding are used

to address concerns raised about safe space practices that suggest they inhibit discussion, but also to explicitly show how safe space practices interact with and foster community sites of discussion. In the first section, below, the use of trigger warnings and content warnings are comparable to the bakery/café signage, used to create and communicate with community, however, in this context they in fact demarcate *unsafe* space. Following this, in the second section, I discuss how zine trading ethics are used to both enable and inhibit the circulation of zines. By explicating these zine community practices I will focus on how they are concerned with the prioritization of vulnerable zinesters, as well as the effectiveness of safe space tools as a long-term communication and community engagement strategy. In doing so I intend to complicate oppositional relationships in which (a kind of) free speech is weaponized to inhibit potential sites for critical community discussion by eschewing community safeguarding and safe space practices over concerns about their ability to promote or threaten discussion (*see* Sultana 2018; Wallin-Ruschman and Patka 2016).

### 7.3.1 Discussion and expression



**Figure 24** *Doris #30*, Cindy Crabb, 2013

Writing about accountability processes and recovering from sexual assault, *Doris #30* includes this trigger warning at the beginning of the section. Content warnings (CWs) and trigger warnings (TWs) are brief notes indicating that the content that follows the warning may be harmful, disturbing, or difficult to read. They also serve as an indication that the content that follows is explicit, often detailed, and mature content. They are used to prepare the reader for what follows, and to draw attention to the possibility that the reader may not want to engage with specific topics depending on their experiences or any mental health issues (*see* Knox 2017 *throughout*; Byron 2017; *for critique* Furedi 2017). In *Doris #30*, the context of the trigger

warning is laid out in the preceding passages of the zine, which discusses methods of holding perpetrators accountable. Following that, the zine contains personal stories from Cindy Crabb, the zine maker; the trigger warning precedes this explicit content.

As discussed in the literature review, although TWs, CWs, and content notes serve the same purpose, the different terms emerged from community-based negotiation with the potential for miscommunication and ineffectiveness. The use of the terms “content warning,” “trigger warning,” and “content note” became popularized through their usages on forums such as BUS (Bodies Under Siege) and later through other social media/blogging platforms such as Tumblr, where the tags system is generally the most accessible and efficient system to organise and (importantly) filter content (Colbert 2017; Houston Grey 2017; Washick 2017). Scholars note that the term ‘content warning,’ or ‘content note’, was eventually favoured, as ‘trigger warning’ led to some confusion over who was being triggered – poster, or reader – and whether the tag constituted a trigger (Colbert 2017; Washick 2017). Essentially, the purpose of the trigger warning, content warning, or content note was to alert readers to any potential *content* that could *trigger* an adverse psychological reaction.

More focused and challenging criticisms of content and trigger warnings emerged around 2015 as the practices became more widespread, particularly as their popularization in online spaces led to calls for the practice to be used in university settings. Becoming a microcosm of “safe space” debates in universities, critics connected debates about violence, mental health, no-platforming, and student politics to the use of CWs and TWs on university texts, and ambiguity over the term “safe space.” They argued that TWs “shield” students from uncomfortable topics through non-participation or removal of texts out of concern that students may be ‘traumatized’ by discussion (Furedi 2017; *for critique* Thompson 2017). Conversely, others argue that the history, usages, and popular perceptions of trigger warnings have a distinctly gendered rhetoric that may be harmful, furthering a perspective that women

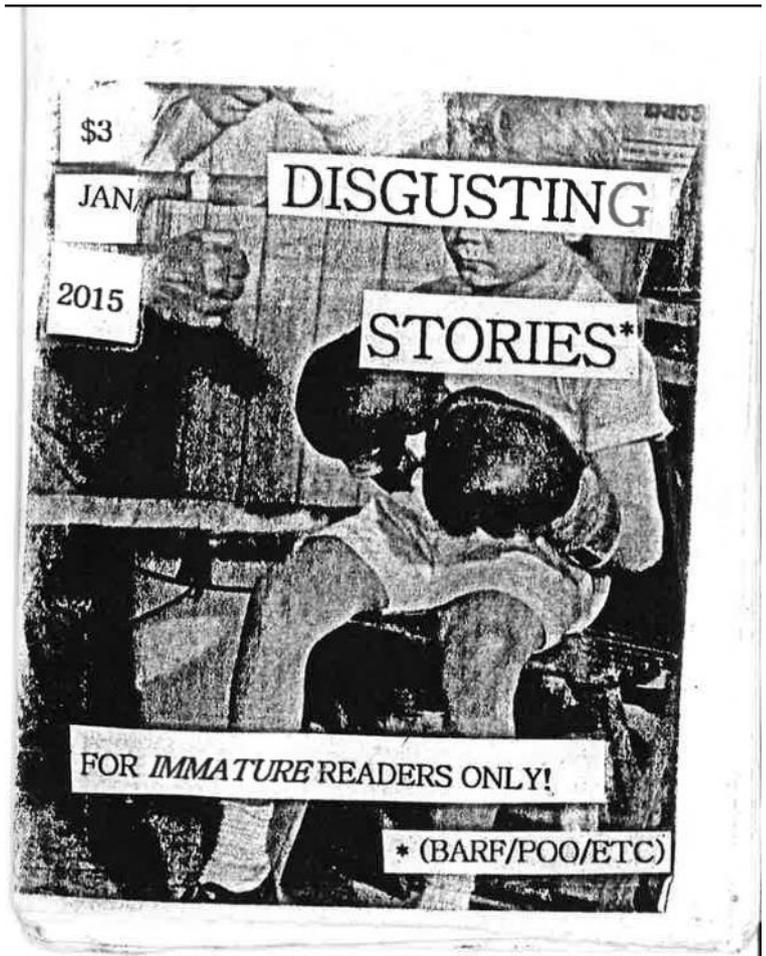
and girls *require* protection and shielding by feeding into stereotypes about emotional and physical weakness (*see also* Roestone 2014; Doll 2017). Finally, contextualised by increased student participation in political movements, critics suggest that TWs and other “safe space” practices have a (unquantifiable) ‘chilling’ effect on debate by punishing those who want to discuss difficult topics (Shroeder 2017; Furedi 2017; Jones 2017; *for critique* Thompson 2017). Essentially, these debates repeated the same issues with miscommunication, ineffectiveness, and ambiguity as had been raised in online spaces. However, these critics of TWs set the stakes much higher by suggesting that CWs and TWs had the potential to censor and inhibit free speech in spaces of authorized knowledge production (Jones 2017; Furedi 2017).

The *Doris* trigger warning counters some critical assumptions about trigger and content warnings, particularly those raised in debates about safe space practices in universities. Criticisms of trigger warnings in universities often lose sight of the origins of these practices and continually revisit old debates, while suggesting TWs are a new and threateningly unfamiliar practice. However, *Doris #30* predates these debates: by 2013, when the zine was published, the term ‘trigger warning’ had broadly become recognisable and understood in zines. In debates about safe spaces that centre the university, the practice of trigger warnings is also often taken out of its textual and social context in order to criticize it. For example, arguing that students are being traumatized by class texts directly is often a facetious claim against the use of content and trigger warnings which corresponds to characterizations of an oversensitive generation of student (Furedi 2017; Knox 2017; Riley ed. 2021). This ‘degenerate disposition’ characterization can be found across the history of the development of trigger warnings, which involves the development of knowledge around PTSD (where the term trigger comes from) and the psychological and physical aftermath of violence (Colbert 2017). Taken out of its context, the *Doris #30* trigger warning is brief,

vague, and quite flippant (where ‘crapola’ refers to experiences of sexual assault). However, this trigger warning comes from quite a substantial zine with multiple, chapter-like sections. These sections are separated by clear subtitles or boxed mini introductions, and the pages and text are styled differently from each other. This provides a clear visual cue to which section the trigger warning indicates, and when this section ends. Not only does Crabb’s use of the trigger warning predate much of the university-based furore over the practice, this particular trigger warning is thrown in – with assuredness and competence. In zines, trigger and content warnings are used consciously by the zinemaker with regard to the reader, the zine style, and the relevant content. When reading, it is clear what the triggering content may be.

Trigger and content warnings are somewhat similar to multiple public safety and wellbeing practices, for example those used in broadcasting, yet are criticized for their capacity to be used as an avoidance tactic by students and other audiences who refuse to engage with difficult topics and texts (Riley ed. 2021; Furedi 2017; Knox 2017). A demonstration of the ubiquity of trigger and content warnings in the context of zine-making practice is found in *Disgusting Stories* (2015), which is a collection of somewhat explicit anecdotes involving a variety of unwelcome bodily fluids in sexualised contexts. While this zine does not discuss safety or experiences of marginalized identity, it exemplifies how content warnings are used in a universal context for the general wellbeing of the audience. The zine content is candid, light-hearted, and gross, and contains multiple forewarnings on the cover page, the contents, the introduction, and some within the anecdotes themselves. Here, the approach prioritizes individual discretion, and the tone is explicitly silly. Dave, the editor, specifies the zine is for “*IMMATURE READERS ONLY!*” (DS 2015: Front; see Fig 25).

*Disgusting Stories'* use of content warnings evokes debates over safe space practices which argue that students may refuse to engage with or demand the removal of some topics, discussions, and texts because they have a specific aversion to them. However, proponents of trigger and content warnings argue that they contribute context and forethought to spaces of discussion. These arguments correspond to MacFarland's categorisation of the 'subtractive' and 'additive' capacities and characterizations of trigger warnings and other safe space tools (2017).



**Figure 25** Disgusting Stories. Dave, 2015. Front

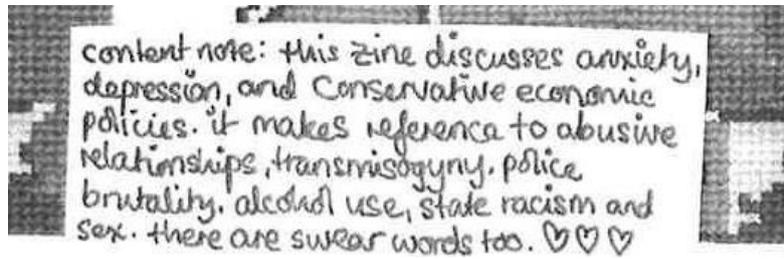
*Disgusting Stories* is an example which supports MacFarland's overall argument that debates about safe space practices and censorship are often hyperbolic, and more about the disturbance of hierarchies in the classroom and in the university by providing students a vocabulary to justify their discomfort or unwillingness to engage with some topics.

*Disgusting Stories* presents an irreverent counterpoint to accusations that warnings chill or censor free speech by providing students an opt-out clause; because the stories contained in the zine are purposefully off-putting to the general readership (particularly of a form which commonly and explicitly explores with the taboo), the editor himself discourages the audience. In other words, this zine overtly demonstrates that engagement and avoidance are always the options of the reader.

A comparative framework, in which trigger and content warnings are likened to other means of communication, is useful to tone down debates in which the stakes are increasingly raised in ways that liken the practice to censorship. These frameworks are useful because they explore the trigger warning in its many possible forms, rendering it neither universally appropriate nor irrevocably flawed. Proponents argue overall that meeting requests for trigger warnings encourages communication and agency between traditionally hierarchical structures such as those found, for example, in higher education, and are an easy and reasonable way of increasing accessibility (MacFarland 2017; Doll 2017; Taylor 2017). Despite this argument, supporters of the *intentions* of the trigger warning practice have critiqued its universal adoption, arguing that the ubiquity of phenomena that could be triggering renders the practice too general and ultimately ineffective. For example, drawing from the origins of the term in forums discussing eating disorders and sexual assault, Houston Grey (2017) points out that trigger warnings' potential to avoid triggers is deeply limited in this context, because food, eating, and dieting are referred to almost everywhere (*see also* Coyle 2004).

However, by linking eating disorders to cultural mandates relating to weight, health, beauty, and gendered ideals, in addition to her critique of trigger warnings' lasting or limited effects, Houston Grey (2017) strengthens the links others have made between the potential for trigger warnings to make visible the harmful, violent, and inhumane potentialities of capitalist cultural logics. This corresponds to the discussion above, demonstrated by the use of signs and stickers in the bakery/café, that safe space practices help to articulate how, for particular people and communities, the experience of everyday life is profoundly unsafe. To bolster these understandings, alongside discussions of safe space practices, the debates that surround trigger warnings, their use, and their effectiveness are contextualized within ongoing conversations about feminist, LGBT+ and queer, and anti-racist politics, as well as discussions of structural inequalities that correlate with prejudicial violence – including

sexualised violence and hate speech – that disproportionately affect marginalized communities (Colbert 2017; Taylor 2017; Butler 2012; Roestone 2014).



**Figure 26** *Scorpio Moon no. 2: the moving house edition*. Jade, 2016.

The final example of this practice is found in *Scorpio Moon #2*, which contains a handwritten ‘content note’ on the introductory page (*SM2*: 2; see Fig. 26). Often, the introduction of a zine is the space to gain an overview of what topics and themes the zine, especially a perzine, will cover. For smaller zines, such as this one, a content note is a succinct, direct, and clear way to do what a lengthy introduction for a larger zine (such as *Doris #30*) does. Therefore, this text serves as both warning *and* introduction, much like tags systems in online spaces that were originally used to just catalogue posts became a way to add trigger warnings. Despite misogynistic critiques that “feminize” trauma to disparage those dealing with the effects of violence and PTSD (see Colbert 2017), and conversely the concern that trigger warnings feed into gendered stereotypes of weakness that lead to increased social control over women and girls (see Doll 2017; Roestone 2014), trigger warnings themselves are not explicitly targeting a specific gender, ethnicity, or sexuality – they indicate shared experiences. However, their use may affect, or are more likely to circulate amongst, certain demographics that are more likely to experience trauma or prejudicial violence.

Efficiently and deftly, *scorpio moon no.2* links together themes of structural inequality, identity-based discrimination, violence, and mental health. Jade (the writer of *Scorpio Moon*) groups together ‘anxiety, depression, and Conservative economic policies’ (2016: 2). Along with ‘abusive relationships’ and ‘transmisogyny’ the zine will discuss ‘police brutality’ and

‘state racism’ (2). In the context of the note, ‘alcohol use’ and ‘sex’ are reconstituted as potential triggers rather than everyday activities (2). In that context, however, this seemingly random list of topics and themes become themselves quotidian, lived, and a communication of potentially risky topics: they are the everyday experiences of someone in particular, and potentially shared by readers.

In *scorpio moon no.2*, the content warning troubles assumptions that the practice is rendered meaningless by the ubiquity of mundane violence and its aftermath. Whereas *Disgusting Stories* (2015) engages with the obscene and the explicit in a knowing way by presenting (for example) the worst-case scenario of a one-night stand, *scorpio moon no. 2* (2016) works very differently in its evocation of the mundane. The content note implies a connection between economic and cultural logics which harm, physical and discriminatory violence, mental illness, and the self-destructive capacities of relatively mundane practices (*see also* Tyner 2012; Muñoz 2009). Another connection, revisiting understandings of zine community formation, is between zinemaker and reader, as the content note is handwritten and personalised with doodles (Piepmeier 2009; Hays 2017).

This latter connection is demonstrated additionally through the presence of a content note itself; as with all of these zines, it presumably could not have been written until after the zine content had been started. Unlike many publications, authorial and editorial control in zines is community-oriented (Licona 2012; Hays 2017; Piepmeier 2009), which can be interpreted through the handmade and DIY aesthetics of the form in individual zines such as these three examples. Content and trigger warnings disturb linear understandings of knowledge and cultural production that are somewhat masked in the aesthetics of other material-textual forms, for example, the class syllabus or the “social question” TV drama (*see* MacFarland 2017; Riley ed. 2021). In broader zine community practices, this orientation is seen again in the communicative requests of most zinesters for feedback and criticism, and ways of reaching out

to readers through introductions, handwriting, and visible edits (Hays 2017). Rather than undermining understandings of zine makers' ability to control the final product, practices like these demonstrate forms of co-production and community engagement. In addition, they suggest discernible and logical limitations and exceptions to interpretations of zine ethics that prioritize the individual zine maker. Building on understandings of zine trading and distribution, the next section extends this argument to look at practices of safeguarding that called upon a broader zine community effort, and community discussion that this call engendered.

### 7.3.2 *Inhibitions on circulation and distribution*

Catalogue and distributive zines such as *Broken Pencil*, *Behind the Zines*, and probably the most well-known, *Factsheet Five*, serve to review, compile, and facilitate the trade of zines. They were/are prominent sources for zine trading, especially before the widespread use of the internet (Duncombe 2008; Atton 2002). The categorisation of zines in these distributive zines has caused problems both for editors and for zinesters themselves. Zinesters, like other artists and writers, want their work to be visible – but they do not want it to be limited. The zine community, likewise, wants their network to be as fluid and accessible as possible. However, zinesters themselves also set limits on the acceptability and desirability of the nature of this accessible and creative expression. The categorisation of a zine raises issues and negotiations reflected more broadly in the zine community itself: that of inclusion, exclusion, and authenticity (see Licona 2012). In brief, zine ethics may be summarised as a pursuit for authentic and accessible creative expression, but there are certain literal ethical stipulations embedded within the practices of and toward individual zine makers. These practices, particularly those that limit or prohibit the circulation and dissemination of certain zines, may seem contradictory to zine ethics that stipulate both makers' and readers' accessibility to the form. These practices are primarily concerned with the safeguarding of young, vulnerable, or

new zine makers by the community, and for the self-protection from harmful, disturbing, or mature content.

Licona gives an example of these kind of restrictions upon distribution on an individual scale, describing a zine in which a zinester states that trading her zine for racist, homophobic, transphobic, or misogynistic zines will result in that trade being “recycled in the city dumpster” (Licona 2012: 112). This is an individual ethical act in both the sense that it reflects the personal ethics and politics of the zine maker, and is an individualised, case-by-case judgement on zine trading. However, it has never been the general stance of zine community to develop or practice safeguarding, an observation that makes sense for a heterogeneous community sharing a form of independent publishing that has emerged in its contemporary iteration over a period of 90 years. In other words, there are no founders or centrality to the zine community, only experimentation with the DIY ethics of independent publishing.

One such (failed) experiment to restrict distribution in the interests of readers requires the contrast between the laissez-faire editorial style of Mike Gunderloy and the comparatively controlling Seth Friedman, editors of *Factsheet Five* in its original and re-launched form. Funded by ads, Gunderloy’s original *Factsheet Five*, a catalogue in which all zines were basically lumped together, contained sexually explicit advertisements and reviews of some paedophilic content (see *FF44* 1991: 36). Attempts to restrict and/or screen zines in the Friedman-era *Factsheet Five* relaunch led to backlash and, among other editorial choices, contributed to the eventual folding of the zine (Duncombe 2008). The widespread community response to differing *Factsheet Five* approaches to publication, content, and control indicated a preference for individual judgement on a broader community basis rather than a top-down imposition of editorial discretion and interpretation of subcultural ethics.

Overall, the approach that the zine community has conventionally taken is to be upfront about the disturbing or potentially harmful content and members of their community. With

Gunderloy's *Factsheet Five*, this approach seems illustrative of the anti-mainstream stance of zine culture by attempting to turn off a potential audience with normative moral values. However, this shock-value based exclusionary measure, while weeding out the mainstream voyeurs, ends up normalizing disturbing content and putting more vulnerable active members of the zine community at risk. An alternative way of taking the upfront approach to potential risks in zine culture is exemplified by *Stolen Sharpie Revolution*, Alex Wreck's physical and online all-round zine resource. *Stolen Sharpie Revolution* contains advice on printing, binding, finding, and sharing zines and introductory information about zine culture. Within a section about writing to prisoners and how to use a PO Box address, Wreck includes a warning – itself taken from a *Xerox Dept* zine – about the zine maker Bill Price (Wreck 2005: 54).

Bill Price is a convicted child molester who started producing zines from prison. At the time of writing, understandings of Price are that he was convicted in 1984 and again in 1993, and released on parole in 2001. Available online is an archived documentation of zinesters' investigations into Price's zines, and alongside information about Price there is also a reference to the 'KoolMan' scandal, in which a man called Robert DuPree wrote to women as various fabricated characters in order to convince them to have sex with him (Duncombe 2008). DuPree's actions were documented and revealed by Sean Tejeratchi in a zine called *Kool Man*. In Price's zines, he pretended to be a young woman who had experienced sexual assault to facilitate zine trades on similar topics. In addition, he produced a catalogue zine about feminist zines focusing on these topics. Wreck gives an overview on Price's actions, situating it as part of a cautionary and informational perspective on writing to prisoners and anonymity practices in zines (Wreck 2005; *see also* Duncombe 2008 44-45). In addition, there were substantial, well-documented, and seemingly ongoing (*see* Duncombe 2008: 45) efforts within the zine community to stop the circulation of Price's zines, whilst also spread information about him.

Primarily, investigative work on Price was carried out by W. Sobchak and published in *Amusing Yourself To Death #16*, in the article “It’s just not punk as fuck to defend a child molester” (Sobchak 1999). This article was sent to Sean Guillory, a zinester and distributor, who provides an email address and PO Box address for people to get in contact with further information about Bill Price or volunteer for efforts to prevent the distribution of or response to his zines. Part of Guillory’s planned action against Price was to use Price’s catalogue zine, *Fem Zine*, against him. Having acquired the zine, the archived post invites volunteers to contact the email address so that they can collectively write warnings to the zine makers listed in *Fem Zine*. In Sobchak’s article, she describes encounters with zinemakers who dismiss her concerns and suggest that it is common knowledge to practice caution and use maildrops when sending zines to strangers, which she argues overlooks the needs of poorer, younger, and less experienced zinemakers. Additionally, she contends with defences of Price based on his status as a prisoner, where she is challenged for inhibiting his expression by using the privilege of her own nonincarcerated status. Quoting one encounter, she challenges criticism that her investigation contributes to a ‘general hysteria’ that ‘keeps us fighting each other instead of the man’ (Sobchak 1999). In her article, Sobchak maintains that prisoners and ex-prisoners are not a homogenous community, and that while some may not be harmful and may be imprisoned for unnecessary reasons, others may have committed more serious crimes and may pose a danger to vulnerable people. She argues that ‘This isn’t about “the man” it is about us as zinewriters protecting one another,’ an argument that ultimately informs the title and thrust of her article (Sobchak 1999). This inter-community negotiation, while quickly closed, demonstrates the critical and communicative activity of the zine community, even when zines are not being made and distributed (when, in fact, zinesters are doing the opposite).

Whereas trigger and content warnings can be ‘additive,’ the attempts to remove Bill Price’s zines from circulation correspond with the ‘subtractive’ capacity of safe space warnings

(MacFarland 2017). MacFarland points out that, in discussions of safe space practices, a perceived threat to remove texts or stifle discussion - regardless of the moralities of the reader, the social responsibility of the curator of texts, or the content of the text itself - very quickly becomes a discussion about censorship (*see also* Riley ed. 2021; Sultana 2018). In cases of potential censorship, texts are weighted by their cultural importance and prurient interest, rather than individual tastes or discretions, and on this basis historical cases of censorship, particularly of literature, have been overturned. The challenge to Sobchak and Guillory's actions is whether Sobchak and Guillory have, or should have, the authority to dictate what the zine community has access to, and who has access to that community. In contrast, Sobchak and Guillory question whether Price's practices of zine community making and trading ethics should be permitted to the extent to which they would harm and possibly inhibit other zine makers. Both sides of this discussion are oriented to the community's responsibility to its community.

What has been overlooked in these discussions is the productive capacity of subtraction. The removal of texts or the threat of removal, on the basis that this censors and stifles discussion, itself produces discussion. In zine culture, the use of archives and libraries, particularly in digital spaces, produced debates about loss and whether the 'loss of loss,' or the transformation of zine materiality and the preservation of the zine object, undermined zine making and distributing practices (*see* Licona and Brouwer 2014; Piepmeier 2009). Instead zine archival work has produced new forms of materiality in tools of categorisation, online spaces, and ways to engage with zine objects (Licona and Brouwer 2014; Berthoud 2017, Ramdarshan Bold 2017). Loss itself, whether of a text or its physical form, has a productive capacity which can be seen here in the removal of Price's zines from circulation and the archive, which generated ongoing community discussions about his zines, community safeguarding, and social responsibility. Challenging zine ethics of distribution and expression, Sobchak and Guillory mobilize safeguarding practices and *employ* zine ethics, using a

countercultural rhetoric, to defend their actions and beliefs. The politics of safety and safeguarding here become an extension *and expansion* of zine culture, primarily through the discussion engendered when the subtractive capacity of safe space tools is used to limit cultural production and the dissemination of certain texts.

The forms of safety considered here present a more complex understanding of free speech which can be used productively to discuss conceptualisations of safety more broadly, and in debates about safe space practices. In debates where safety is defined negatively against free speech and individual freedom, safety is again framed as one-dimensional, a kind of coercive silence, or censorship. This is because conceptions of free speech that prioritize the individual remove free speech and discussion from its social context. This removal of context is recognizable in safe space debate rhetoric, where free speech is not so much conflated with the right to say what one wants, but weaponized as the right to do so without consequence (Riley ed. 2021; Sultana 2018). What examples of community safeguarding practices, such as the one above, demonstrate and contribute to these debates is an impetus to situate and properly contextualise how restriction and exclusion operate in a community site of discussion. Sobchak and Guillory cannot unmake Price's zines, or undistributed them, and they cannot prevent Price or others manipulating vulnerable people through the zine community. However, they can express, validate, and distribute their concerns for vulnerable zine makers and readers in zine community spaces. This includes the category of prisoners and ex-prisoners in the community, as Sobchak takes time to acknowledge and unpack how their homogenisation leads to uninformed perspectives on zine community and practices overall, and how this can potentially harm vulnerable people, including those who may be incarcerated (Sobchak 1999).

The zine community is a site in which free speech and expression is highly valued, as it reflects the ethics and pursuit of authenticity. However, the zine community also uses safe space and safeguarding practices, which in some cases inhibit the circulation of zines to protect

vulnerable zinemakers. Sometimes, these practices are individual editorial expression; at other times they require the work and support of the community more generally. In the zine community, the use of safe space and safeguarding practices engender discussion of the taboo, connect speaker with audience, and are themselves open to critique and both community and individual assent. Racist zines may land in the recycling, sex offenders seeking to harm and retraumatize sexual assault victims will have their intentions made public and thereby inhibited, and sexual assault victims use signposting techniques to discuss their experiences in detail.

Considering safety as relative and potentially generative of free critical speech and expression, rather than in opposition to it, relies on engaging with safeguarding and expression in community contexts. Furthermore, this conception of safety – as relational, generative, present, and active – again contributes to (rather than is the opposite of) understandings of violence. Safety practiced here acknowledges the after-effects of violence, drawing understandings of violence away from the spectacular or the one-off event. Considerations of the safety of others draws attention to endemic and quotidian violence, can transform the mundane and unremarkable on the terms of the most vulnerable members of the community, and may result in the adaptation and interpretation of how free speech and expression are conceived, in order to prioritize the most vulnerable.

As evidenced through the multiple and contested modes of community safeguarding in zine making and distributing, the address and application of safe space practice can do productive work, offering a starting point for wider community discussions about how to prioritize the most vulnerable members of the community in the conscious recognition and reminder of the necessity to pursue social change. These community practices require an understanding of, firstly, the experiences of violence and risk which are made invisible or mundane to many. Secondly, it requires an understanding of and desire to transform these experiences, developing community coalitions based on lived experiences (*see* Licona 2012;

Honma 2015). In the next section, I further elucidate understandings of community safeguarding and safe space practices by drawing on essays discussing safety and violence in relation to feelings of community, focusing on how closely related desires for safety are with desires for social change.

#### 7.4 The knowledge of safety

Although previously I have portrayed the zine community as geographically disparate, it is given coherence through distributive networks, ongoing communication, and shared knowledges of zine community ethics and practices (*see* Piepmeier 2009; Kempson 2015). In comparison, Ocean Capewell's zine, *High on Burning Photographs TEN*, describes a much more disparate and loose sense of the concept of community through a series of reminders, betrayals, and recognition in momentary encounters with strangers. This section uses Capewell's reflections, alongside further discussion of the safeguarding practices of the zine community and the arts company archive, to discuss how desires for safety can themselves become an actionable knowledge or practice informed by the pursuit of social change.

In "Walking Alone at Night," Ocean Capewell recounts experiences in The Bronx, NY, and Oakland, CA and reflects on safety, violence, and identity (2014/15: NP). Capewell's gender nonconforming presentation places her at risk of both homophobia and misogyny; she describes being verbally harassed and threatened with sexual assault and murder for being seen as a woman, as queer, androgynous, and as a gay man (NP). She reflects on self-defence techniques that she and other women she knows have tried: avoidant ones including staying indoors at night, aggression, including fighting back and carrying weapons, and submission to sexualised violence to stay alive. Finding these options wanting, she explains, she must be seen as a straight boy in order to pass safely through a city at night. In doing so, she describes how she has, in turn, frightened others unintentionally. In one anecdote, the play of site and recognition disturbs the sense of safety Capewell's gender presentation (at night, in the city)

gives her, because it threatens another. An elderly black woman recognized Capewell as a ‘big young white dude, coming after her’ and moved to the side to let her pass, ‘holding her ground’ but afraid of leading the way home (NP). Despite a case of mistaken identity on her terms, Capewell sees her, recognizes her fear, and wants to reassure the woman ‘hey, this isn’t really me.’ She is unable to, and she doesn’t know if the woman ‘recognize[s]’ Capewell as she tries to amend the aggression expressed in her face and her walk (NP).

In both the content of *HOBP*, and the production and distribution of *Fem Zine*, knowledges connecting power, identity, and violence are employed and exploited to both intentionally and unintentionally harm or threaten vulnerable people. Both Ocean Capewell and Sobchak and Guillory repurpose these knowledges in pursuit of safety; for example, Capewell uses the safety of straight white boy armour to navigate the night-time city, sometimes making other vulnerable people feel unsafe around her. Meanwhile, Sobchak and Guillory used the distributive culture (that Price presumed would allow his zine to flourish) to both inhibit *Fem Zine*’s circulation and protect at-risk zinemakers through contacting them. At play in these practices of safety is a broader context, a critique of normative relationships of power. For example, where a respondent to Sobchak’s investigation cautions that Price is a prisoner and Sobchak is inhibiting his ability to make and distribute zines, her curt and critical defence is that, as a zinemaker, what Price is doing harms young and traumatized zinemakers, largely women and girls. She is not, she argues, participating in the censorship, social exclusion, and repression of prisoners, but standing against the further harm and traumatization of zinemakers who have used zines to work through sexual assault (Sobchak 1999).

In contrast, drawing from the moments before she is walking home alone at night, from saying good-bye to friends, Capewell finds a sense of bitterness in wishing others to be safe, admitting that no-one in her community ‘knows anything about safety’ (*HBP10*

2014/15: NP). Despite this, her essays frequently end on an ambiguously hopeful note. In her closing anecdote, Capewell describes ‘an endless feeling that something awful was about to go down’ (2014/15: NP), reflecting her opening comments on and experiences of extreme violence and harassment. However, this atmosphere actually prefigures a fleeting and powerful connection with another woman on a street corner, who smiles at her in another moment of recognition by “seeing-through” her ‘boy act’ (NP). In another essay in the same issue of *High on Burning Photographs*, mentioned in the Introduction, Capewell reflects more closely on her gender identity and presentation, and her body, which are not always in conflict with one another (except, sometimes, in a city, at night). Connecting again the experience of travel and navigating unsafety, space, and identity, Capewell states that ‘the road I need to take is not located in my body,’ and ‘I won’t ever feel safe until the world is completely different’ (NP). The knowledge of safety might not belong to Capewell and her friends, but it is accessible through the expression of a desire to be conditionally visible, for others to see her and know safety, and to be met with safety herself. The knowledge of safety is elusive through the experience of unsafety and violence, but it becomes viable only through the pursuit of, the conscious movement towards, radical social change.

Both of Capewell’s anecdotes draw on the encounters of women standing her ground, marking territory, and embodying a border between safe/unsafe. Capewell’s navigation of a city at night and in her own body pursues safety in the present but fails to find it until these connections are made, where she crosses paths with others. In the first anecdote, her pursuit of safety is realized imperfectly in the repurposing of an identity which has threatened her into a threat posed to others, but her reflection contains transformative potential. Capewell longs to call out to and to connect with the woman she scares, to identify herself to *and with* her. This is a desire informed both by a knowledge of everyday violence, of the awareness of that knowledge as shared, and fundamentally as a wish to alleviate that knowledge, or

reconstitute how that knowledge relates one to another; this desire appears to be realized in the second encounter.

In the use of trigger warnings (as described previously), the transformation of the everyday is more clearly articulated. This is primarily because the trigger warning expresses that readers are crossing into unsafe space, rather than the complex play of Capewell's encounters above. For example, the knitting together of topics in *scorpio moon* communicates a relationship between them; these triggers/phenomena are associated with each other, and moreover with the zinemaker's lived experiences and personal opinions, recounted and explored more broadly in the zine itself. The warnings are applied to familiar and everyday situations, contexts, or encounters in which these phenomena become risky, unfamiliar, or uncomfortable for the reader.

As discussed above, critiques that explicitly focus on trigger warnings' intentions suggest that the practice's transformative potential lie not in the ability to shield or protect people from everyday violence. It lies in their ability to *transform* what appears mundane, unremarkable, or even ignored into points of contention. That is, a trigger can be anything, anywhere, and at any time for anyone (Colbert 2017; Houston Grey 2017) – most likely, however, they apply to persons who have experienced or continue to experience trauma or violence that is inextricable from our present, lived reality (Taylor 2017; Colbert 2017; Gavin Herbert 2017; Houston Grey 2017). In other words, trigger warnings suggest that there are ways to discuss and confront everyday violence in community spaces. Trigger warnings draw a border around what could be unsafe or risky, enabling its discussion and navigation. By enabling an exploration of what constitutes a safe, clearly demarcated space of expression, trigger warnings advance knowledges of an unsafe everyday, often with a critical and purposeful engagement with the pursuit of social change.

Safety requires a reflexive approach to community and spatial formation; where the demand for safety engenders visions of social change, the demand of safety is an ongoing process demonstrated in the bakery/café's negotiations with external and internal logics that contend with their mission and intentions. Finally, safety enables the cultivation and protection of communities and knowledges; the sign in the company archive, for example, addresses us instructionally in the interests of our own safety and that of the company's work. The safe space comes to be formed through the reconstitution of the mundane in a community setting, where safety and space are produced both relationally and subjectively, shared through an ongoing exchange of communication in the context (here) of participatory cultural production. Informing this production of safe space is the pursuit and practice of social change which requires a knowledge of safety developed through holding self, community, and the everyday accountable.

### 7.5 Conclusion: safety and utopia

My discussion of safety in this chapter has used specific examples of everyday practices of safety in each of my case studies, framed by broader debates around safe space practices, and definitions of safety, violence, and freedom, particularly free speech and expression. I aimed to demonstrate through examples found in the case studies that safety is both familiar and ambiguous, and is often ill-defined in scholarship that focuses more on conceptualizations of violence and freedom, defining safety and safeguarding practice as the opposite or limitation of these latter concepts. However, when grounded by examples of everyday practices of safety, these long-standing connections can be interrogated and the *relationship* between safety, unsafety, and violence, and safety, freedom, and expression can be elucidated. Moreover, through this interrogation, we can begin to conceptualize safety, uniquely expressed, as an independent demand and practice of communities, as something that can actually generate

forms of community expression and the exploration of taboo and discomforting topics, including violence. In addition, in these examples, demands for safety have not only contributed to the articulation of the pursuit of social change, but have also enabled sites and communities in pursuit of social change to exist, to be maintained, and for material evidence of them and their histories to be protected.

These understandings and their implications are explored further in the next, concluding chapter of the thesis. I will initially begin by unpacking an existing definition in scholarship on safety and safe space practices (*see* Coyle 2004) to summarise the relationship discussed throughout this thesis between safety, violence, and freedom. In this concluding chapter, moreover, I will focus on the possibility of loss, framed as a potentially generative category in utopian and prefigurative politics, to engage with the demand of safety in and from community sites in pursuit of social change.

## **Conclusion: The utopian potential of safety**

### 8.1 Introduction: defining safety

Beginning with debates about safe space practices, this project has explored the longer political histories surrounding community demands for safety, and grounded these histories in the examination of safety as found in two communities sharing a pursuit and desire of social change, the bakery/café and zine community and culture. By broadening the focus from contemporary safe space practices in U.K. and U.S. universities, the exploration of safety in this project aimed to understand and define safety as complex, ambiguous, and mundane, but most importantly present, and potentially transformative to the sites in which it is found and practiced. In starting with conceptualizations of safety in safe space debates in Chapter 2, I identified the limitations and circularity of these debates, in which safety was often displaced or side-lined in favour of further exploration of violence and freedom, concepts which were positioned as oppositional to or challenged by forms of safety. Instead of attempting to resolve these debates by supporting or opposing particular safe space practices, I chose instead to committedly pursue understandings of safety in relation to its longer histories, broader contexts, and specifically the discussions of violence and freedom to which it has been so closely associated.

Of the existing scholarship reviewed towards the beginning of this thesis, there was only one explicit attempt to define safety. Coyle defines safety as ‘concerned with stability, predictability, a sense of control over space and bodies, and the establishment of supportive communications networks’ (Coyle 2004: 72), a set of categories drawn from research into women’s production of safe spaces as protection from environmental illnesses. Her use of the term safe space draws from longer political histories of women’s safety: the term safe space itself comes from feminist and queer liberatory activist spaces (*see* The Roestone Collective 2014). However, Coyle’s definition also touches upon the complications with defining safety.

Like this project, she moves away from understandings of safety that position it as the absence of violence; although the safe spaces in her study are used to protect women from the immediate potential of physical harm, this harm does not come from interpersonal or intentional physical attacks, but from a proximity to potentially harmful substances (Coyle 2004). This proximity can be dually inferred as both geographical proximity to chemicals which cause harm, as well as the fact that the women in Coyle's study are made vulnerable by a broader social context that means they are more likely to be in contact with these harmful substances, a recurring distinction discussed throughout this thesis by drawing on theories of spatial production (*see* Massey 2005; Lefebvre 1991; *see also* Garcia et al. 2015; Roestone 2014).

Coyle's research explores a form of potential harm that affects a minority group and that is caused by mostly invisible or hard-to-detect everyday substances, such as cigarette smoke, deodorant, and perfume. The production of safe space in her study is easier for and more accessible to women who are financially and socially secure – specifically, those who can work from home and maintain strong social networks. In part, her approach circumvents some of the ongoing debates about the definition of violence, which this project has also discussed. For example, Coyle may not be directly interested in the relationship between conceptualizations of violence and safety, but her approach resonates with ways in which pursuits of and demands for safety challenge normalized understandings of violence. Coyle's approach, in other words, speaks to some of the broader ways that limited and normalized understandings of violence have been contested and expanded by feminist, antiracist, and queer liberatory politics, which has broadened knowledge not only of who can experience violence, but also its psychological aftermath. Many of these points have been discussed more in-depth in Chapter 2, and the broader social and political themes that help to make sense of understandings of safety were overviewed in Chapter 3.

Drawing upon these discussions helps to demonstrate how Coyle's definition speaks to the complex relationship between safety and violence, particularly her engagement with the concept of control to describe safety. Included in her definition of safety is 'a sense of control over space and bodies,' a carefully phrased category that avoids the implication of the actual practice of control, but which invites interrogation because it is also a category used by scholarship to discuss practices of everyday and state violence (Coyle 2004: 72). Different definitions and theorizations of violence and freedom have been discussed throughout this thesis, specifically to develop more constructive engagements with practices of and demands for safety. Deconstructing Coyle's definition here in relation to scholarship on violence demonstrates and reiterates the necessity to situate practices of safety and of violence in broader socio-political contexts, as well as to frame safety, violence, and freedom in relation to each other in these contexts, rather than opposed or detrimental to understandings of each.

## 8.2. Safety, violence, and freedom

Tyner's theorizations of violence in the everyday suggests that desires for and practices of control are both cause and effect of forms of violence, which he contextualises with broader discussions of material social space and relationships. Tyner argues that both public and domestic spaces are infused with forms of violence that are often made invisible, because they are subjectively experienced by communities whose experiences are overlooked and devalued (Tyner 2012). Control appears again in discussions of neoconservatism and neoliberalism, as a strategy mobilized to maintain the status and assets of elite classes in a financial system that promotes "meritocratic" environments in which individuals compete over the provision of basic needs (Cooper 2017; Littler 2017; Featherstone 2017; Harvey 2005). The inequality that this system produces and maintains is veiled in rhetoric of freedom, drawing upon broader ideological notions of the freedom to choose to make money (Featherstone 2017) and the freedom of choice on how to spend it (Giraud 2019).

Control also manifests in surveillance, policing, and militarization, which affects certain communities more than others, particularly people of colour, LGBT+ communities, and those othered through dominant cultural logics – or, in other words, exactly those communities whose experiences of violence are made invisible (Cooper 2017; Hanhardt 2013; Harvey 2005; Ahmed 2004, 2002). Moreover, as Hanhardt (2013) and others argue, practices of safety developed by vulnerable communities, which sometimes involve militarization and often are concerned with control over community spaces (*see* Chapter 2), are often then weaponized by socio-economically privileged communities, primarily through the use of state forms of surveillance and policing (*see also* Phipps 2021; Roestone 2014).

Chasing categories, such as control, through practices of and demands for safety, violence, and freedom offers very little in the way of resolving debates about whether these demands and practices inhibit or enable each other. The discussion above demonstrates, however, that these debates can be reframed to enable more in-depth understandings of safety, violence, and freedom when they are discussed in relation to each other: an argument I developed in detail in Chapter 7. In this thesis, I have reframed discussions of safety to understand them as political demands shaped by vulnerable communities and their needs, rather than as threats to individual freedoms, or as the absence of violence. To reflect on these discussions, the remainder of the conclusion will return to these sites to argue that how safety is framed is vital not only to understanding safety in ways that prevent circular, unresolvable debates but which, instead, position the demand for safety as a form of hopeful, prefigurative politics that enable the formation and maintenance of communities of social change. To develop these conceptualizations of safety, I turned to two sites which shared a participatory ethics of cultural production and a pursuit of social change, the bakery/café in a participatory arts company, and zine community and culture. The structure of the discussion of the case studies in the thesis reflected my broader aim to develop situated and contextualised

understandings of practices of safety, and a more expansive conceptualization of safe space than had been discussed in existing scholarship in the literature review. Therefore I chose to structure the discussion by beginning with dominant themes that emerged from the fieldwork, and from these themes begin to draw out practices of safety contextualised by the community practices of these sites. These practices of safety found in the fieldwork were then brought into discussion with current debates about safe space practices, and broader contextual debates about violence and freedom, to address gaps in and to build from existing understandings of safety covered in the literature review (Chapter 2). Below, I will briefly review the discussions of these case studies, which were focused on shared themes of community (Chapter 5), spatial production and time (Chapter 6), and explicit practices of safety (Chapter 7).

### 8.3. Community and spatial production: situating practices of safety

To begin with, I framed the first discussion chapter (Chapter 5) around the theme of community. This chapter served to establish the people and places I had developed as case studies, and to foreground the examination of contemporary safe space practices as situated and relational by providing vital context to the discussion of community safety. In the fifth chapter I argued that the formation and maintenance of community in the bakery/café and zine culture are informed by an ongoing pursuit of social change, focusing on these sites' critical contentions with and resistance to existing socio-economic barriers to art, work, and food. Drawing from encounters with community members and signs in these sites, I argued that the bakery/café and zine culture implement practices (in)formed by participatory ethics, focusing on modes of trade and exchange, to actively overcome these barriers. I argued that these efforts are ongoing, drawing from experiences of conditional belonging in zine culture and ways in which these barriers are continuously reinforced. To articulate the informed,

ongoing pursuit and formation of hopeful, critical communities, I drew upon the concepts of *communitas*, potentiality, and transformative surplus.

These concepts have often been used to articulate a temporary sense of hopeful community, and fleeting, collective openness to possibilities for change (*see* Muñoz 2009; Dolan 2005). However, I wanted to engage with these ideas of possibilities to begin to articulate why these communities' work towards social change is ongoing, and why they continue to pursue it through the development of and experimentation with alternative forms of everyday practices. In my discussion of the zine community and community bakery/café, I reconfigured the fleeting and temporary characteristics of *communitas* to argue that the work of community formation and maintenance must be ongoing, as in my case studies these sites are continually working to contest and negotiate with socio-economic barriers and inequalities found both within and outwith these sites. I related these arguments to the discussions in the literature review of community-specific safe space practices and tools, particularly those discussions which focused on coalitional and grassroots activism to develop and maintain community spaces through visibility campaigns, policy making, and direct action (*see, for example* Hanhardt 2013; Moore et al. 2014).

I chose this approach because, in addition to introducing the politics, practices, and people discussed in the case studies, the aim of this chapter overall was to develop the groundwork to understand the demand and pursuit of safety. Drawing upon the broader theoretical and political concepts discussed in chapters 2 and 3, I aimed to situate the work of the case studies within broader contexts and longer histories of the development and experimentation with tools by grassroots activist communities, seeking to transform everyday public and domestic sites. In this chapter I began to discuss certain types of safety that contributed to or were implicit in demands for belonging, community, and social change.

These types of safety were revisited fully in chapter 7 to fully draw out their hopeful capacities.

Whereas Chapter 5 provided a broad overview of the case studies' sites, practices, and politics, Chapter 6 focused on close readings of brief moments and small actions – a volunteer and artist playing the piano in the bakery/café, for example, or a zinemaker enclosing a picture with a sticker that a reader may later open. In both of these chapters, the analysis of zines and the bakery/café were framed as transformative and critical contentions with much broader, seemingly encompassing socio-political logics that produced and continually reinforced borders and boundaries to material necessities, agency, and cultural expression. By navigating the community spaces of the bakery/café and the zine object through these analyses, Chapter 6 drew from experiences of discomfort, disorientation, and emotions (*see* Licona 2012) of anger, love, and hope, to examine the reflexive and intentional interventions in the maintenance and reinforcement of these borders through engagement with ways that these communities reconstitute understandings of work, space, and time.

Through discussing ways in which normalised temporal constructs are challenged and transformed in zine introductions and the bakery/café, I argued that these transformations had broader implications regarding the ways that community and creative work are often misrepresented, misconstrued, devalued, and exploited. I aimed to demonstrate how misrepresentations of these communities, discussed in Chapter 5, make vulnerable those who are denied cultural and material necessities, and how communities in pursuit of social change, such as the two discussed in this thesis, must continually find creative ways to make visible, resist, and survive these forms of vulnerability.

The discussions of harmful attitudes to these forms of work were connected to my later analysis of an oft-overlooked safe space practice: forms of health, hygiene, and worker's safety – a discussion first introduced in Chapter 2. By drawing upon broader theoretical and

socio-political theorizations of art and work, and particularly the way popular notions of cultural production and work are discussed and reconstituted in the bakery/café and zine community, my intentions were to conceptualize this under-interrogated form of safety as connected to past, present, and ongoing contestations with unequal and divisive notions of labour. Moreover, the analysis of health and safety in the bakery/café in chapter 6 was closely connected to overall discussions and problematizations of the border. These problematizations, hinted at initially in chapter 4, became a necessity due to the seemingly contradictory presence of borders and barriers in sites such as the bakery/café and the zine community that seek to challenge, critique, and break down such spatio-social structures. However, in these sites, borders can be crossed, negotiated, and shifted to enable the continued community engagement and maintenance of the space. The discussion of borders in the case studies is continued in chapter 7, where its potential as a practice of safe space production was emphasised.

In chapter 6, by examining practices of labour, spatial production, and border crossing, and by grounding these understandings in the materiality of community spaces, I intended to make visible and tangible the contradictions that can arise in debates about safety and safe space practices, which I have touched upon above through discussions of control. These contradictions between safety, violence, and freedom can be resolved through examining the broader context and work of communities pursuing social change, particularly by examining the forms of resistance and negotiation in these sites. Through this approach, broader political questions can be asked of practices that cannot be strictly defined as practices of safety or of violence, and of demands for social change. In Chapter 7, I revisit many of the practices discussed in the previous chapters to understand where these practices come from, who needs safety, and how it can be found.

The final discussion of the case studies, chapter 7, focused on specific practices of safety in the bakery/café and the zine community. In this chapter, I firstly discussed health, hygiene, and workers' safety in the context of cultural production and alternative modes of food production, distribution, and reuse in the bakery/café. This form of safety was grounded in a broader political context of food access activism, introduced in chapter 5, and direct challenges to the devaluation of creative and community work through spatial and temporal transformation, found in chapter 6. I related the use of health, hygiene, and safety signs in the bakery/café to the broader work of the arts company by referring to a sign found in the company archive and storage space, which calls out to warn readers of danger, as well as requests practices of care from its reader. I situated the analysis of this sign within previous discussions of the communicative potential of forms of safety, from chapter 6, as well as in relation to the arguments of ongoing community and cultural production from Chapter 5, both of which are revisited below.

Discussing the uses of signs, stickers, and notices in the bakery/café, I focused particularly on the use of LGBT+ safe space stickers found on the front door of the café and in the space itself, as well as ones used to designate the site as available for community use without the need to buy anything. To draw out the critical potential of these signs further, I turned to discussions found in zines – initially introduced in Chapter 6 – that critically contend with normalised cultural logics of work, health, bodies, and safety that are reproduced by everyday spaces such as the home, the doctor's office, and the chemists. Zinesters' critical engagements with sites such as these were grounded in existing scholarship into contemporary safe space practices, in which the uses of signs and stickers in support of LGBT+ communities were found to have a transformative effect not only on the specific sites in which they were used, but in a broader community context and in other local public spaces by extension (Katz et al. 2016). These specific forms of safety and their analysis were

situated in a broader political and theoretical context of discussions of violence; I grounded my observations in ongoing discussions of the definitions of everyday violence, and specifically in my argument that safety and violence must be discussed in relation to each other to enable a more complex understanding of safety in practice and as demand.

The next section of the chapter took to task critiques of contemporary safe space practices that argued that they limited individual freedoms, particularly freedom of expression. To challenge, but moreover to complicate, these criticisms, I discussed the uses of contemporary safe spaces in zines as well as community safeguarding efforts in zine culture. As I have mentioned above, I chose not to support or oppose the uses of tools like content and trigger warnings, nor to defend or criticize the removal of texts from circulation, but simply to situate these actions within their broader context and to discuss them in relation to their potential to inhibit or enable expression. Using examples of trigger and content warnings in zines, I grounded these practices in the cultural context of zine production and distribution. A form known for its subcultural and countercultural engagement with the taboo and obscene, and sometimes subject to censorship (*see* Duncombe 2008), the zine as part of a history of independent publishing makes use of warnings to produce and engage audiences, to structure and preface content, and to develop critical connections between everyday practices and broader socio-political inequalities and contemporary events. To compare the use of warnings with the resistance to or rejection of these practices, I drew upon the editorial history of *Factsheet Five* (Duncombe 2008; *FF#44*). In this comparative example, while one editor who attempted to screen submitted zines before advertising them was widely criticized for overstepping his role, his predecessor avoided the uses of warnings and included all zines, no matter the content, to turn away potential mainstream audiences and preserve a countercultural ethics of independent publishing.

Following these examples of individual editorial discretion over content and audience engagement, I then turned to a case of a broader community safeguarding: the mobilization of zine networks to restrict or remove zines mid-circulation. The example I used was of Bill Price, who was circulating zines from prison under a false identity, potentially enabling and continuing harm against survivors of sexual assault. One zinester investigated Price and published an article in another zine detailing his actions and intent, circulating this article to a zine distributor, who then called out to the wider community to find Price's zines and remove them from circulation, and also to contact potential victims. In this discussion, I focused on community debate and criticism of these measures against Price and these zinesters' responses to that criticism.

This discussion had two specific arguments related to practices of safety and their effects on individual freedoms and freedom of expression. The first drew upon broader discussions from Chapter 2, particularly critiques of contemporary weaponizations of free speech rhetoric to harm vulnerable communities (*see Sultana 2018 for example*), and continues my overall advocacy in this thesis that practices and demands for safety can only be properly understood in a broader socio-political context. In the case of Bill Price, zine community and culture were under interrogation as zinesters weighed up the implications of removing a zine from circulation, non-incarcerated people's ability to restrict the expression of incarcerated people, and more established zinesters' responsibilities to younger and vulnerable members of the community. Expanding from this discussion, my second argument reiterated my approach to safety that it should be discussed in relation to conceptualizations of freedom and violence, although overall I challenged critiques of safe space practices, specifically those who draw upon notions of free speech. This second, broader argument demonstrated how ongoing debates about individual freedoms and community safeguarding overlook the generative critical capacity of demands for safety, especially the productive

potential of exclusion in the development and maintenance of hopeful communities, a discussion foregrounded in Chapter 5 (*see also* Giraud 2019).

Finally, I turned to essays on and conceptualizations of safety in *High on Burning Photographs TEN*, to draw out important considerations suggested by the previous discussions' engagement with community responsibility, loss, and exclusion that are raised through my approach to theorizations of safety, particularly my ongoing struggle to define it. To discuss these considerations further, I will return to these sites and the broader context in which they, and this thesis, are situated to close this discussion. To do so, I will again turn to signs found in the bakery/café and the zine community and, in addition, it is also appropriate to return to the latter part of Coyle's definition of safety, 'the establishment of supportive communications networks' (Coyle 2004: 72), to engage with and compare understandings of safety in the broader context of existing scholarship.

#### 8.4. What is the contribution of considerations of safety to communities and the pursuit of social change?

In my discussion of practices of safety in the case studies, I examined many forms of signs, stickers, notices, and other material forms of communications and evidence of community networks. To ground these readings, I drew from theories of spatial production proposed by Lefebvre (*see* 1991) and Massey (2005), who examine the materialisation of socio-economic distance through the production of material spaces. In addition, I used material-semiotic analysis methods to discuss these forms in the broader cultural context of the communities which made and used them (Littler 2016; Piepmeier 2008; Barthes 2009). The uses of signs – including stickers and health and safety notices – have been analysed in this thesis in relation to the production of hopeful community spaces, and also as potentially transformative because of the ways they open up the possibilities of both these spaces, like the signs at the bakery counter (*see* Chapter 6), and because they can make visible forms of

safety that are missing or overlooked in other everyday sites, discussed in *Trailblazing Stories* (see also Katz et al. 2016).

Furthermore, throughout this thesis, I have drawn from utopian theories, specifically Blochian utopian theory and theories of everyday utopia, to articulate the prefigurative politics of safety and the hopeful potentiality of its practices. A recurring theme underlying both these theories and discussions of safety in this thesis, that I have so far under-discussed, is loss. In utopian theories, the experience of loss has been used to engender hopeful desires that are grounded in the necessity for socio-economic critiques of the present, in ways that stand in critical contention to nostalgia because of its promotion of reactionary politics and its resistance to imagining alternative futures (Bell 2017; Kenny 2017; Muñoz 2009; Bloch 1986).

For example, Bell (2017) interrogates one-sided pejorative conceptualizations of borders and boundaries; he argues that, in certain cases, they can be used to protect, maintain, and enable the continued survival of vulnerable communities and cultures. This is a point extended further by Licona in her case studies of zines, whose analysis of zines about bilingualism, mixed-heritage identity, and narratives of migration emphasise the preservation of language and culture, particularly in resistance to dominant cultures that erase or inhibit difference (Licona 2012). Another example comes from Muñoz, whose discussion of queer communities and culture, primarily in New York City and L.A., seeks to revisit and engage with many lost artists and their work. As I have mentioned in Chapters 3 and 7, he draws upon desires for reunification with members of these communities as one potential source of queer futuristic hope (Muñoz 2009).

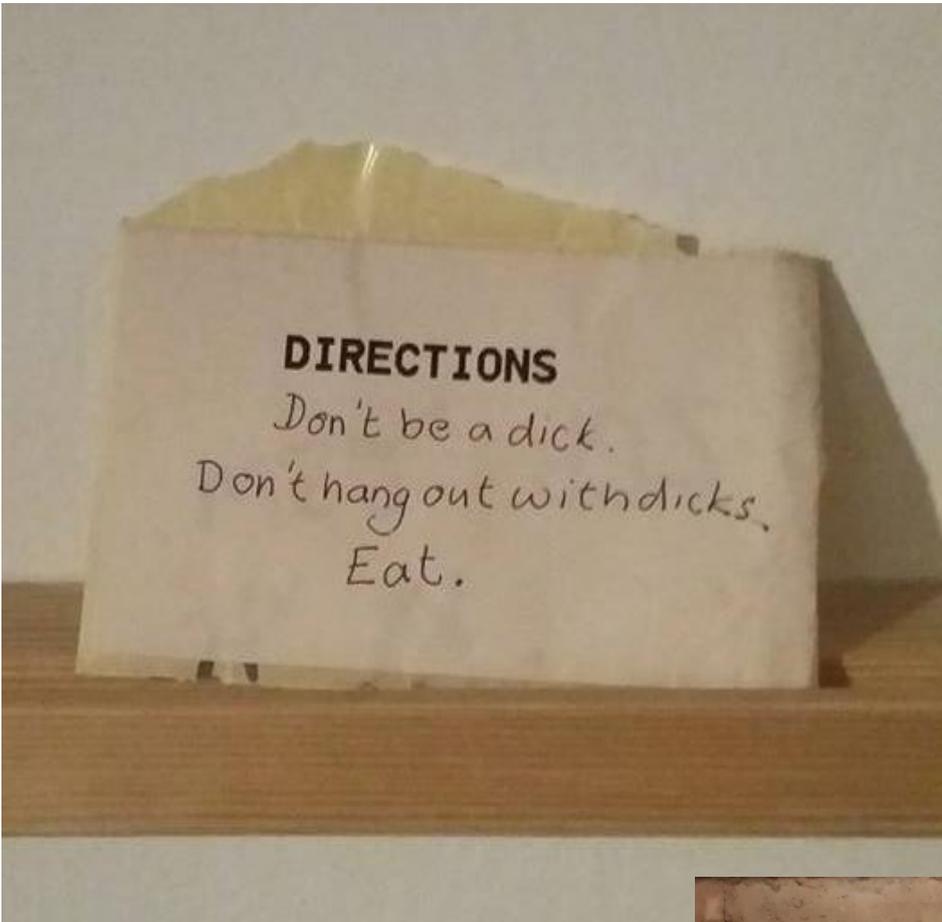
In the zine community, the ‘loss of loss’ has produced ongoing debate about the role of archives and libraries in zine culture (see Brouwer and Licona 2016, also Chapter 5). The ‘loss of loss’ refers to how preserving and archiving zines changes their nature as a hands-on

form that wears through circulation, a characteristic key to Piepmeier's theories of zine community formation (Piepmeier 2008). One counter to this criticism of archival practice is to refer to the preservation of community representation. Scholars point to the production of specialist archives focused on queer publishing and zinesters of colour, arguing that the loss of this representation would do more harm to zine culture, and additionally pointing out that archives themselves are evidence of community (Brouwer and Licona 2016; Ramdarshan Bold 2017; *see* Chapter 5).

Furthermore, in chapter 6, I drew upon zine community discussion in which arguments over the removal of zines from circulation would harm the community's representation: here social context was again key to the discussion, as the removal of zines could prevent harm coming to vulnerable zine makers. The discussion of loss in relation to forms of expression has therefore led to valuable understandings of community formation and representation, framed in this thesis as the pursuit of hopeful, inclusive communities that use forms of exclusion as a necessity of transformation. The remainder of this discussion revisits this generative potential of loss, primarily to cement understandings that the need for safety, and who it is for, is of vital importance to discussions of social change.

The photograph below (fig. 27) was taken at Salford Zine Library, an extensive and growing collection of over 1500 zines which has supplemented the writing in this thesis. The collection includes the three copies of *Chisel Tip* that I missed the release of, as well as publications produced by the Manchester-based Loiterers' Resistance Movement, a group who use Situationist-inspired interventions to wander, occupy, and map an increasingly financialised city centre, and other zines about since-closed second-hand shops, past gigs, and

**Figure 27** Sign from Salford Zine Library and **Figure 28** Sign from the bakery/café



little-known facts of Manchester history. Despite the name, the library was housed in Nexus Art Café in central Manchester until both closed over the pandemic period. Although there were many differences to the bakery/café discussed as a case study, Nexus Art Café was also a site that did not necessarily require visitors to exchange money to be there, and in fact also used alternative modes of exchange, such as pay-it-forward schemes, to enable people to have food and hot drinks who couldn't buy them. It was a community space with bookable options that was open throughout the day and into the evening, one of the few alcohol-free sites to be so in the area. The library was moved from a backroom to nearer the entrance, which had been adapted to enable accessibility, shortly before the site closed. A registered charity, and despite crowdfunding efforts, the site could not be maintained without income over the lockdown period in 2020.

However, like the discussion in chapter 7 of *Disgusting Stories*, the sticker contains a somewhat irreverent take on safe space practices, particularly in comparison to the signs in Birmingham Zine Library, another reference-only archive discussed in chapter 5. I have included this picture, taken in 2016, before the beginning of this project because, although the sticker in the picture and the place it was found are no longer there, broader contextual experiences informing the aims of this project, such as the one I introduced the project with, can be revisited and explored through documentation like this in ways that are reflected in arguments about the uses of archives and libraries discussed in this thesis.

Funny little signs like this are important because they are handwritten evidence – in a usually quiet space – of a community. They are prescient documents of efforts to create sites and guidance of and to better worlds (as ‘directions’ can have two possible interpretations). They are reminders amid broad conceptual and theoretical discussions such as this thesis that, often, good sense creates good places and neither are that difficult to find – another practical reminder is written on the art company’s wall from its publication *Recipes for*

*Pandaemonium* (see Fig. 28). These directions revisit, or have perhaps informed, dominant themes of this project – that the production of hopeful community spaces requires a knowledge of the basic needs of those communities (Direction #3: Eat.), but also a knowledge of the necessity to negotiate between reflexivity, inclusion, and exclusion to enable these sites to exist (Directions #1: Don't be a dick. and #2: Don't hang out with dicks.).

This latter argument, about personal and social responsibility in community contexts, drawn from Directions 1 and 2 on the sticker, and discussed in detail in chapter 5 and through chapter 7's engagement with the Bill Price scandal of the zine community, and later through Ocean Capewell's navigation of a city at night, will be discussed more explicitly as a way of closing this thesis. As I have suggested above, the utopian potential of safety is often ambiguous, even when it is grounded in the practices and tools developed by vulnerable communities, because it can so often be turned to harm those same communities. Throughout this thesis I have discussed how representations of and challenges to demands for public and community safety are reflected in the complex and profound interweaving of public debates about safety, state violence, and socio-economic inequalities on a global scale. To do so I have drawn upon ongoing theorizations of neoliberal and neoconservative politics, which often serve as the background noise for access to foundational, material socio-economic needs, including food, housing, political agency, and cultural expression. In this thesis I provide an overview of the fundamental logics informing these political ideologies and how they are mobilized to restrict these needs, often by divisively pitting certain communities and certain needs against each other through a combination of culture and class war strategies and through an aspirational rhetoric of individualism, freedom, competitiveness, and meritocracy (see above, also Brown 2018). Access to these needs and demands for them when they are

denied are crucial themes in the development and analyses of safety and safe spaces throughout the discussion of the case studies.

However, the writing up process of this project took place during a global pandemic, in which debates about public and community safety, basic material needs, and individual freedoms became increasingly heightened and only exacerbated tensions for certain communities over access to public spaces. For example, the UK government has recently proposed crackdowns on public protest rights in the wake of Black Lives Matter and women's safety protests, marches, and vigils. These protests responded to ongoing forms of state and interpersonal violence which restricted and penalized certain vulnerable communities' use of public space, but also to specific ways in which members of these communities had been made additionally vulnerable, often lethally so, by further restrictions. Yet these heightened restrictions to public space were implemented to curb the effects of Covid-19, a disease which disproportionately affects communities made vulnerable through existing socio-economic stratifications, as well as care and medical workers in an underfunded public healthcare system. Moreover, the protesters themselves were frequently and violently dispersed using methods justified through a rhetoric of maintaining public safety, and protests criticized for the risks they posed to concerns over public safety in the context of the pandemic.

In addition, broader and ongoing debates resurfaced over this period; one notable example was the closing of schools during national lockdowns and the resulting lack of meals and support for poorer schoolchildren which was met with both widespread protest, and a resurgence of "deserving poor" rhetoric, in which the health and wellbeing of children is overtly connected to the "choices" of their families. These debates built on decades of moral panic characterized by the stigmatization of poverty and food insecurity, as well as other issues discussed in this thesis, including a broader context in which public health has openly

become an individual responsibility due to a combination of government incentives and financial stressors on an increasingly privatised National Health Service.

Throughout this thesis, I aimed to make clear how exactly the broader political context surrounding discussions and understandings of safety, and the demands of communities made vulnerable by its conditionality, can demonstrate the coherence of these seemingly tenuous debates. To do so, I leaned heavily upon the existing politics and practices of the bakery/café and zine community, whose work to critically contend with these broader socio-economic inequalities enriched understandings of the connections between historical demands for safety in LGBT+, anti-racist, and feminist grassroots activism. Specifically, the people I worked with throughout the research period and during the write up process consistently found ways to resist and respond to the denial of basic needs to art, work, community, and food which have formed the key needs under discussion in this project.

As I have discussed above, part of the urgency that informs demands for social change and utopia comes out of the knowledge of loss; part of the urgency that informs demands for safety also comes from this knowledge, out of desires to resist or contend with the possibility of loss (*see* Muñoz 2009; Bell 2017; Bloch and Adorno 1988). I do not intend to imply here that safety is the opposite of loss, to simply replace one lacking definition – that safety is the opposite of violence, or freedom – with another. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the resistance to loss generates debates about safety, freedom, vulnerability, and the community's responsibility to its community (*see* Chapter 7). As I have mentioned above, drawing from Coyle (2004), the demand for safety is a call out and response to others, a point that can be illustrated when revisiting the arts company archive. The archive is an attempt to make and keep safe past, present, and future possible communities, in the form of cultural objects and material memories. One way of looking at this, as the arts company does, is to call it treasure.

Treasure, as we know it, is a collection of precious and valuable items pilfered from the past and kept safe, often hidden, for their use in the future. This treasure is threatened by the carelessness of others, but also by something much more innocuous and seemingly inevitable, even natural. Damp and mould are risks run by the accumulation of treasure in the archive, which are preventable by calling for safety and care in the handling of this collection. In another light, zine makers and readers, the bakery/café, and the arts company's work to challenge and reconstitute inequality and socio-economic barriers to art, work, and food are consistently threatened by the present conditions, and ways of degrading, harming, and losing communities that seem inevitable, presented as natural (Stewart, Proctor, and Siddique 2020). In this project I have tried to demonstrate how sites like the bakery/café and the zine community call upon safety as something both radical and familiar, and how they use it to enable the exploration of viable alternatives in the present, with the future in mind.

So, therefore, safety is a demand of vulnerable communities, only made coherent by examining the broader socio-political context through which these communities are formed and made vulnerable. This context draws out safety's subjective and relational attributes and grounds them in material spaces, such as bodies, and communities, and zines, and bakeries, which are continually working to maintain and develop new forms of safety, other ways of making the everyday. By examining the demand for safety, thus properly contextualised and grounded, I have begun to explicate its potential to transform everyday sites. Safety is transformative when it is examined in this way because such an approach asks important and vital questions about how and why the future of our everyday should be reimagined, who will reach this future, and who may reach towards it.

## Appendix 1: Application Approval



Keele University HumSS Faculty Research Ethics Committee  
[humss.ethics@keele.ac.uk](mailto:humss.ethics@keele.ac.uk)

14 March 2019

Dear Molly Drummond

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project Title:</b>         | Taking Up Space: Conceptualizing safe space as everyday utopia using zines as a methodological tool |
| <b>REC Project Reference:</b> | HU-190010   |
| <b>Type of Application</b>    | Main application  |

Keele University's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee reviewed the above application.

### **Favourable Ethical opinion**

The members of the Committee gave a favourable ethical opinion of the above research on the basis described in the application form, protocol and supporting documentation, subject to the conditions specified below.

### **Conditions of the favourable opinion**

The favourable opinion is subject to the following conditions being met prior to the start of the Study.

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. | Need to detail where the list of participants and pseudonyms will be kept, and when destroyed. |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |

### **Reporting requirements**

The University's standard operating procedures give detailed guidance on reporting requirements for studies with a favourable opinion including:

- Notifying substantial amendments
- Notifying issues which may have an impact upon ethical opinion of the study

- Progress reports
- Notifying the end of the study

### Approved documents

The documents reviewed and approved are:

| Document  | Version | Date       |
|---|---------|------------|
| 20_02_2019 Bakery Information Sheet Version 2 - Molly Drummond                              | 1       | 14/03/2019 |
| 20_02_2019 Stitch and Bitch Information Sheet Version 2 - Molly Drummond                    | 1       | 14/03/2019 |
| Consent Form_ Participatory Observation study Version 2 - Molly Drummond                    | 1       | 14/03/2019 |
| Consent Form_ Zine workshop Version 2 - Molly Drummond                                      | 1       | 14/03/2019 |
| DRUMMOND M 13004476 NWCDTP Full award FULL TIME offer letter template 2017 - Molly Drummond | 1       | 14/03/2019 |
| Protocol 0.1 - Molly Drummond   | 1       | 14/03/2019 |

Yours sincerely,

**Professor Anthony Bradney**  
**Committee Chair**

## Appendix 2: Amendment Approval



Keele University HumSS Faculty Research Ethics Committee  
[humss.ethics@keele.ac.uk](mailto:humss.ethics@keele.ac.uk)

16 April 2019

Dear Molly Drummond,

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project Title:</b>         | Taking up space: Conceptualizing safe spaces as everyday utopias using zines as a methodological tool |
| <b>REC Project Reference:</b> | HU-190010   |
| <b>Type of Application</b>    | Amendment   |
| <b>Amendment Reference:</b>   | HU-190018   |
| <b>Amendment Date:</b>        | 26 March 2019   |

Keele University's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee reviewed the above amendment.

### **Favourable Ethical opinion**

The members of the Committee gave a favourable ethical opinion of the above research on the basis described in the application form, protocol and supporting documentation.

### **Reporting requirements**

The University's standard operating procedures give detailed guidance on reporting requirements for studies with a favourable opinion including:

- Notifying substantial amendments
- Notifying issues which may have an impact upon ethical opinion of the study
- Progress reports
- Notifying the end of the study

### **Approved documents**

The documents reviewed and approved are:

| <b>Document</b>   | <b>Version</b> | <b>Date</b> |
|---|----------------|-------------|
| Application Form Version 2 Amended 25_03_2019 - Molly Drummond                  | 2              | 16/04/2019  |
| Bakery Information Sheet Version 2 Amended 25_03_2019 - Molly Drummond          | 2              | 16/04/2019  |
| Protocol 0.2 Amended 25_03_2019 - Molly Drummond                                | 2              | 16/04/2019  |
| UREC-QCD41-HumSS FREC Amendment Form-V1.0-15NOV2018 25_03_2019 - Molly Drummond | 2              | 16/04/2019  |

Yours sincerely,

**Professor Anthony Bradney**  
**Committee Chair**

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