Building Security from the Screen Up:

Securitization of migration, social media, and the Everyday Security of targeted immigrant groups in the United States

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List of Definitions

DACA/DREAMer: DACA, short for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, serves as a lifeline for some undocumented immigrants — known as "DREAMers" — who arrived in the U.S. as children. This policy allows them to avoid deportation and secure a work permit, social security number, and driver's license, enabling them to live and work in the U.S. openly and legally. Each DACA approval is valid for two years and can be renewed, providing ongoing protection and employment opportunities. However, it's important to understand that DACA is not a green card, and there is no citizenship through the DACA program. It offers a temporary reprieve, not a permanent solution (Moodie, 2021).

Trending/Trends (regarding social media): when a specific topic, hashtag, or keyword becomes popular and receives more visibility and engagement than usual on a given social media platform, like Twitter, TikTok, or Instagram (Buffer, 2021).

Memes: an amusing or interesting item (such as a captioned picture or video) or genre of items that is spread widely online especially through social media (Merriam Webster, 2025)

Abstract

This research explores the personal navigations, experiences, and perspectives of migrants in the New Jersey tri-state area, in response to the 47th presidential administration of the United States of America's apparent use of social media as a tool of securitization. This research takes place from July to September 2025, involving 16 non-citizens of the U.S. with insecure documentation status[1]. It evaluates the unprecedented implications of securitization carried out through digital platforms, and what this means for the nexus of migration and security studies. As illustrated through different axes of Securitization Theory, Donald Trump's second presidential term uses social media as a way to securitize migration to the general American public, in turn creating a real-time space where immigrant communities evaluate their navigational agency within these platforms. Members of these communities engage in Everyday Security to ensure their own security, prominently through methods such as restricted self-expression, increased use of community-focused information sharing, as well as avoiding social media completely also to dissimilate from "migrant identity". Further analysis shows these lived experiences navigated through core emotions of anger, grief, and hope. Ultimately, this research reveals how security has evolved from a top-down procedure from political elites to bottom-up processes when social media is a primary tool of securitization. It allows targeted individuals to provide security through their own choices in real-time due to the interactive nature of these digital spaces. In reflection of this work, expansion of Everyday Security theory must be conducted, focusing on the agency and power granted to individuals when social media is used as a tool of securitization by respective governments.

Relevance to Development Studies

This research bridges the nexuses of migration, securitization, social media, and bottom-up process to show how targeted individuals use social media to ensure their security. It relates to development studies by adding onto extensive literature of how migrants perceive and use social media, and how this relates to contextualizing immigrant journeys in a global sphere. This research is imperative as more of development studies is witnessed through the online world.

Keywords

Migration, United States, Securitization, Social Media, Everyday Security, Digital Spaces

[1] Document insecure is used in this context to refer to those who may not have documentation or has documentation that be easily revoked due to swift political acts. See page 25 for more.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1| An Introduction 1

1.1| Nature of the Problem 1

1.2| Justification and Relevance 2

1.3| Research Objective and Questions 3

1.3.1| Main Question 3

1.3.2| Sub-Questions 3

Chapter 2| Theoretical Framework 5

2.1| Securitization as the problem 5

2.2| Human Security- not enough 7

2.3| Everyday Security as a solving framework 7

Chapter 3| A literary-based intersection: Trump, Migration, and Social Media Narratives 10

3.1| A brief history- this is nothing new 10

3.2|The emergence of Donald Trump and his focus on migration 10

3.3| Donald Trump's resurgence and the fault of "illegal immigration" 11

3.4| How governments perpetuate narratives through social media 12

3.5| Securitization through social media 12

3.6| How the Trump administration frames immigration through social media 13

3.7| Migrant use of social media 14

Chapter 4| Methodology 15

4.1| How This Came to Be 15

4.2| The design- from plan to reality 15

4.3| Geographical Importance 16

4.4| Why Qualitative Interviewing? 17

4.5| Handling of Data and Analysis 17

4.6| My positionality and reflexivity 18

4.7| Limitations of the methodology 19

Chapter 5| An analysis of how the 47th U.S. administration uses social media for securitization of migration 20

5.1| The socioeconomic axis 20

5.2| The securitarian axis 21

5.3| The identitarian axis 23

5.4| The political axis 25

5.5| Expansion past the axes 27

Chapter 6| The navigation of these digital securitizations- how targeted immigrant communities engage in Everyday Security 28

6.1| The shifting of Mundane Spaces 28

6.2| Developing new Daily Routines 29

6.3| Lived Emotional Experiences as decision makers 33

6.3.1| Anger and its Peripheries 33

6.3.2| Grief and its Peripheries 35

6.3.3| Hope and its Peripheries 37

Chapter 7| Conclusions 39

Reference list 41

Appendix A: History 56

Appendix B: Codes from Data (and amount of times seen in interviews) 60

Appendix C: Categories of Codes in Appendix B 61

Appendix D: Themes of Everyday Security based on Codes in Appendix B (and Categories in Appendix C) 62

Appendix E: Interview Guide 63

Appendix F: Participant Descriptions 65

Appendix G: Consent Form (then verbally communicated in English or Spanish) 66

Chapter 1| An Introduction

1.1| Nature of the Problem

Pick a country, any country- you'll see similar discourses in who has been a scapegoat for the nation's cultural, economic, or political failures: migrants.

This is an important part of states' rationale and justification for engaging in the securitization of migration. Securitization Theory (Buzan, Waever, and Wilde, 1998), born out of the Copenhagen School of Security Studies in the 1980s, argues that by declaring certain beings or ideas as "threats" to the survival of the state, necessary emergency measures are required to "solve them at all costs". When migrants are deemed as these "threats", the state goes through extensive measures to 'protect itself' (Ceyhan and Tsoukala, 2002). Take for example the UK sending migrants to Rwanda to await status decisions (UNHCR UK, 2024), the EU cutting social assistance benefits to deter future immigrants (JCMS, 2021), or more prominent for this research, the United States making their Immigration and Border Enforcement (ICE) the most highly funded law-enforcement agency in the nation's history, all in order to conduct the most daily U.S. deportations *ever seen* (NPR, 2025; Chishti and Lacarte, 2025).

However, these actions do not go unpunished by civilian dissenters. Advocates for migrant rights engage in bottom-up resistance of this securitization by protesting, creating legal assistance workshops for migrants, engaging with local governments for support, and raising funds for affected families through the help of local businesses (Bharmal, 2025). More recently though, "digital spaces" (Mütterlein and Fuchs, 2019)[2] have expanded the ability to promote and conduct this activism, allowing these actions done on local levels to reach exposure nationally and globally (Hands, 2015). Through the rise of social media in the last 15 years, digital spaces (and its activist aspects) are seen as communities interacted in by civilians, for civilians, without political impositions by the state (ibid).

So, what happens when the state deepens itself in these digital spaces?

Evidently, world leaders and governmental institutions have increased their use of social media to share their national accomplishments and opinions on global issues, nurture diplomatic foreign relations, and even comment on popular culture to increase their relatability and popularity (Karaaytu, 2024). Notably, around the world, social media is used by politicians campaigning for elections and promoting their views to ensure a secure voting bloc come election day (Venus, Intyaswati and Prihatiningsih, 2023). These posts usually follow similar wordings of speeches, debates, or formal interviews where the politician invokes professional rhetoric and tone, in a way to not possibly upset possible voters or current constituents (Yantseva, 2020).

[2] As "digital spaces" is a coined term by Mütterlein and Fuchs (2019), its first reference is in quotes but will be referred without them for the rest of this paper for fluidity.

An exception to this is the social media use of Donald Trump, former 45th President of the United States from 2017-2021, and the now 47th President (2025-2029). Publicly deemed as 'not your typical politician' due to his brash, blunt, and provocative style of speech, he frequently made his opinions clear on social media regardless of public perception or political backlash. He created mass movements online in support of his policies (#MakeAmericaGreatAgain), against political rivals (#LockHerUp about Hillary Clinton), and for his xenophobic opinions (#BuildThatWall) (McKinley, 2025). Despite these mass movements, his use of social media was seen to be erratic and a liability for his success (Parker and Scherer, 2025). However, this shifted to become more strategic in the run-up to the election in 2024, as well as since his inauguration in January of 2025.

Currently, Donald Trump and his 47th administration arguably use social media just as much as, if not more than, traditional forms of political communication. They create videos, images, and provocative phrases daily in order to update the public on their actions and garner support for their political values. A prominent amount of their strategic content supports their anti-immigrant actions of increasing funding to deport "the largest number of illegal immigrants[3] ever" (The White House, 2025), fighting states that have livelihood support and legal protections for non-citizens (Santana, 2025), as well as defunding institutions that support "immigrant efforts" (The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, 2025). Over time, the administration has used a large amount of this digital content through the power of visuals (Karell, Freedman and Gidron, 2023) and xenophobic rhetoric to invoke negative perceptions of migration. While this has been done sporadically by other governments before (Karaaytu, 2024), the way in which the Trump administration has begun to systematically produce this content begs the question of whether they are engaging in an unprecedented occurrence: securitizing migration through digital spaces.

Based on the above considerations, the aim of this RP is twofold: explore whether we could indeed identify securitization of migration through the 47th administration's social media use and analyze how targeted groups experience these digital securitizations while simultaneously attempting to provide their own security due to, and through, social media. While there is a large corpus of literature involving migrant use of social media to feel secure throughout their immigration journeys, there is yet to be a thorough analysis of how targeted immigrant groups navigate their use of social media to ensure a sense of security for themselves as a political power tries to securitize that same space.

1.2| Justification and Relevance

This research comes at a time when in the United States, conducting research that goes against the values set by the current administration is deeply difficult. As the administration defunds educational institutions researching immigration (Klein, Krupa and Rose, 2025), revokes visas for migrant researchers exploring topics of social justice (The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights,

[3] The terms "illegal immigrants" and "illegal aliens" are referred to throughout this paper as they are phrases used by the 47th administration. However, they use these wide-sweeping terms used to refer to people who were "legal" under the previous administration but became "illegal" through their first acts in office (The White House, 2025). Therefore, it is consistently quoted in this paper as the administration's determined definition.

2025), and sues social media companies to silence opposing opinions (Spike and Riccardi, 2025), this work is crucial to record the experiences of those living through the impact of this anti-immigrant administration.

This research paper addresses gaps in the nexuses of migration, securitization, social media, and Everyday Security. Academically, there is little work on whether and how governments securitize (migration) through interactive digital spaces such as social media. Furthermore, when looking at ways individuals attempt to seek their own (not the State's) security, there is a lack of attention to how they navigate these digital spaces in response. This work expands on both Securitization Theory and Everyday Security to explore how governments use social media and its relevance to popular culture to increase the normalization of securitizing rhetoric, as well as displaying the way in which individuals targeted by this securitization can use digital tools to navigate their everyday for ensuring security themselves. This would enable a bottom-up understanding of migrant agency, and their possibilities for security in an anti-migrant context.

Ideally, this paper exposes new ways in which social media affects the intersections of migration and security and sparks a want for further research outside of physical spaces.

While this research paper may not be well-received by the current U.S. government, it intends to appreciate the efforts of targeted immigrant communities towards their own and others' security. Hopefully, this can inspire workshops and classes wherein groups learn strategies to further mitigate the administration's anti-immigration directives.

1.3| Research Objective and Questions

There are two objectives for this research: explore if the 47th administration uses digital spaces as a tool in securitizing migration, and analyze how groups targeted by this (supposed) securitization respond by using these same tools and spaces to ensure their own security. Accordingly, I propose the following research questions:

1.3.1| Main Question

How do targeted immigrant communities navigate social media to ensure security in response to its apparent use as a form of securitization by the State?

1.3.2| Sub-Questions

1. In what ways does the 47th U.S. administration use social media as a (proposed) tool to enact securitization of migration?
2. How does the state's use of social media for securitization affect targeted immigrant communities and their sense of security?

3. In what ways does social media securitization by the state influence these communities' own social media perceptions and strategy of use?

To answer these questions, Chapter 2 will first explore the theoretical frameworks of Securitization Theory, Human Security, and Everyday Security to create a foundation that surrounds this research.

Next, Chapter 3 provides a literary-based contextualization of the following: 1) how past U.S. securitization of migration feeds into Trump's last two presidencies, 2) a look into how social media depicts migration and is beginning to securitize migration, 3) Donald Trump's framing of immigration in social media, and 4) migrant navigation of social media, setting a foundation for subsequent data analysis.

An explanation of the methodological processes (Chapter 4) leads to an exploration of if the administration's social media content is identified as securitization of migration, as framed with axes of Securitization Theory (Chapter 5).

Chapter 6 provides an in-depth analysis of how members of targeted communities engage in bottom-up ways of ensuring their own security within and through digital spaces, via the dimensions presented in Everyday Security.

The research questions are then answered in Chapter 7, where both recommendations and expansion of theory are provided to wider situate the work in the migration-security nexus.

Chapter 2| Theoretical Framework

2.1| Securitization as the problem

Political theorist Buzan of the Copenhagen School of Security Studies describes security as "the pursuit of freedom from threat and the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity against forces of change which they see as hostile" (Buzan, 1990, pg. 432). Buzan (1990) dictates that the increase of globalization and influence of the 'centre' countries (previously "first-world") furthering dependence of the 'periphery' countries (formerly "third-world") to ensure their "security" indicates that there is no longer only a focus on military ideas of security as international relations change. Instead, he argues that new patterns are emerging in global security relations- political, military, economic, social, and environmental (Buzan, 1990). In line with this, the Copenhagen School additionally defines that security is determined by if there is a threat to survival of the state by any entity, not only a state or other territory (Buzan, Waever and Wilde, 1998). Since they assert that security threats can be viewed via the aforementioned five lenses of international relations patterns, they also deem that the state can take extraordinary action if depicted necessary anywhere, not just military force but for example socioeconomic policy. This is further confirmed in Buzan's seminal collaboration with Waever and Wilde in 1998, where they extrapolate securitization from security.

Buzan, Waever, and Wilde (1998) define securitization as a "more extreme version of politicization" (pg. 23) which include the use of "speech acts" to frame certain issues as matters of security when its non-securitized identity does not pose an everyday threat (Flohr, 2025). Speech acts are deemed as "performative statements" that create an existence of something simply by declaring it so (Austin, 1963). In securitization, deciding which issues are deemed as security concerns must be done in part with speech acts, and is not solely decided by the presence of military force. Buzan, Waever, and Wilde (1998) identify that there is a spectrum where issues can fall, from non-politicized, politicized, and then towards securitized. In practicality, this means that an issue can be unrelated to the business of the state, can be a business of the state but a non-threatening issue, or an issue deemed as a threat that now requires any means necessary to solve. In accordance with speech act theory, as well as early notions of security emphasizing the importance of perception (Herz, 1950), "any issue can end up on any part of the spectrum… the placement varies substantially from state to state" (Buzan, Waever, and Wilde, 1998, pg. 24). Furthermore, an issue is deemed securitized rather than politicized when the state can argue its urgent matter and prioritization over other issues (ibid). It is important to note that the Copenhagen School views securitization as "a failure to deal with issues as normal politics" (Buzan, Waever, Wilder, 1998, pg. 29), one that allows elite political figures to implement resources and policies due to 'necessary emergency measures' (Roe, 2012). It is a top-down cycle where high-power elites of the state decide, justify, and solve the threats, resulting in an exclusive concept of security that is told to the masses, not decided or shaped by them (McDonald, 2008). These speech acts have been used on different topics such as environmental disasters or foreign surveillance for securitization, but one of the most prominent topics it surrounds is migration.

As stated, securitization is the act of creating an issue that goes beyond politicization, done with dictative speech acts to assert an 'ever present' threat that deserves priority attention (Buzan, Waever, Wilde, 1998). When this is applied to migration, arguments for why it must be securitized usually revolve around the following "core axes" (Ceyhan and Tsoukala, 2002, pg. 24):

1. A socioeconomic axis, where migration is associated with unemployment, the rise of the informal economy, the crisis of the welfare state, and the urban environment deterioration
2. A securitarian axis, where migration is linked to the loss of a control narrative that associates the issues of sovereignty, and both internal and external security
3. An identitarian axis, where migrants are considered a threat to the host societies' national identity and demographic equilibrium
4. A political axis, where anti-immigrant, racist, and xenophobic discourses are often expected to facilitate political benefits

Much of the rhetoric supporting securitization of migration from around the 1980s onwards followed these axes, in part spreading the idea that migration was responsible for "most of the current social problems impacting Western societies" (Ceyhan and Tsoukala, 2002, pg. 23). By governments pursuing the illusion of control of a physical space to ensure "safety and homogeneity" (Lohrmann, 2002), securitization of migration builds on the foundation that what is needed for the state can be ever-changing based on the state's dictation of security. Furthermore, perpetuating the idea of 'needing to regain control of migration' as if it has existed in the past is, many times, a fallacy (Andreas, 2000). Yet, it becomes a hot-button issue that is present regardless of political ideology, one that must be talked about and securitized in order to claim legitimacy as an elite in power (Ceyhan and Tsoukala, 2002). In the United States for example, candidates from various political stances must address their thoughts on the *extent* to which it must be securitized, not if it should be, explaining how even 'non-xenophobic' candidates such as Clinton or Obama have completed speech acts calling some forms of migration a risk to the United States (ibid, pg. 30).

Walters (2010) responds to the lack of explained processes in Copenhagen School's definition of securitization (McDonald, 2008) to focus on the importance of the material processes of its execution. More specifically, he redirects thinking of securitization of migration to three ideas: 1) when securitization of the state is carried out it becomes part of what he refers to as the industry of the state and therefore 2) its consistent existence and integration into the state's industry gradually becomes routine and therefore 3) becomes normalized within the state (Walters, 2010, pg. 221-222). One of the most relevant takeaways from these ideas for the topic of this research is that once an issue is securitized, especially to the degree in which migration has been, it becomes ingrained into the political society of a state, ensuring that there can be an industry around it (ibid). Whether this industry is for profit or not, a new ecosystem emerges in which conscious awareness, space in public discourse, jobs, or education revolves around the securitized issue. When Walters (2010) expands on this, he explains that this industry in turn makes the securitized issue normalized, as the daily routines carried out in the industry makes the securitized issue part of many person's livelihoods. After migration has become an issue securitized over decades and seen as something 'ever-present' across elections, international crises, and societal downfalls, Walter argues that it must remain securitized and seen as a continuous abstract threat, or else it will ruin the newly adapted functioning of the state and its society (ibid).

It is important to note that Securitization Theory faces large critique: it dictates that the state decides which issues are securitized, in accordance with their interests, rather than the people living within the state (Buzan, Waever, and Wilde, 1998). To offer an opposing perspective, Human Security asserts

that the state should prioritize the needs of its inhabitants when declaring issues as securitized (Gasper and Sinatti, 2016).

2.2| Human Security- not enough

Human Security was first coined by Mahbub ul Haq in the 1993 and 1994 UNDP *Human Development Report*, focusing on individual protections rather than protecting the State and its control on deciding who gets protection as in alignment with their best interests (Gasper and Sinatti, 2016.) Unlike the Copenhagen School's definition of security, ul Haq developed 6 categories outside of security from physical harm that deserved consideration. These securities were named as income security, food security, health security, environmental security, community/identity security, and security of political freedoms (Gasper, 2005, pg. 2). Ul Haq's explanations reflect his then recently verbalized concept of Human Development. Previously, dominant interpretations of "development" were synonymous with economic and neoliberal growth, to which he proposed shifting development to the inclusion of health and educational growth (ibid). His coining and then further prioritization of Human Security (over Human Development discourse) reflects his focus on stabilized and attainable 'capabilities' as defined by Sen's Capability Model (1999). Capabilities according to Sen describe what freedoms or opportunities a person is genuinely able to achieve (obtain, or complete) within their life circumstances (Robeyns and Byskov, 2011). Ul Haq's translation of Sen's Capability Model posits that securities should be ensured to protect people from hardship or harm, which is possible in multiple forms besides the physical (Gasper, 2005). Further definitions of Human Security include accessing the "freedom" of existence without various hindrances. One being "freedom from want", as in the want for life without poverty, environmental disasters or diseases, as well as "freedom from fear", stated as a narrower version of freedom directed towards being secure from fear of physical violence or threats (Floyd, 2007, pg. 39). This expands on ul Haq's definition of Human Security, in refusing to determine restricted categories for where security can be granted. Proponents for wider descriptions of Human Security argue that as security should be guaranteed by the state for the protection of its inhabitants, then to give security is to ensure these inhabitants feel protected from malice, physical or otherwise as they harm livelihoods and futures (ibid). On the other hand, critics of this wider view retort that if Human Security is a solution "to all bad things that can happen" (ibid, pg. 39), then its use for actual policymaking becomes null. However, it is important to note that Human Security framework is born out of anthropological foundations, stating that its vagueness is intentional. This vagueness allows for changes in time, cultural context, and international institutions (Winslow and Eriksen, 2004).

Ultimately, the Copenhagen School asserts that security can only be ensured by the state, for the interests of the state (Buzan, Waever and Wilder, 1998; Floyd 2007). While Human Security does differ from Securitization Theory in stating that security should prioritize the needs of individuals, it agrees that security should be something *given* (Gasper, 2005; Gasper and Sinatti, 2016). Critics of Human Security remark how this certifies its existence as a top-down mechanism, and in doing so does not alleviate the structural asymmetry of how governments provide 'one-size-fits-all' security regardless of individual want and needs (Christie, 2010). In response to this, Everyday Security offers a framework to see how security can be created from the bottom-up.

2.3| Everyday Security as a solving framework

While Human Security focuses on developing a definition of security prioritizing the wants and needs of the individual, "a focus on personal security was intended as a first stage on the way to an expanded conception of Human Security, not a terminus" (Gasper and Gómez, 2015, pg. 105). Human Security's focus on state-led responses as a reaction to "unusual or spectacular events" (Lemanski, 2012) tends to ignore the individually led and community-based security-ensuring strategies at the "everyday" (ibid) level. As Lemanski (2012) asserts, these would be characterized by individuals' initiation of own agency rather than reliance on state-led initiatives such as law-enforcement or policy.

Table 1. Scales of analysis in researching human (in)security

	Spatial	Temporal	Subjectivity	Strategies
Human security	Global/national	Spectacular	Collective	State-led
Absent from human security	Local	Everyday	Individual	Citizen-led

(Lemanski, 2012, pg. 65)

Through analyzing the gaps that Human Security leaves for bottom-up mitigation strategies, the framework of Everyday Security was developed by Crawford and Hutchinson (2016). The concept of Everyday Security focuses on people's agency and the different dimensions in which individuals navigate their own security: spatial, temporal, and emotional (Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016). By looking through these dimensions, we see how securitized actions (by the state) are experienced by local constituents, and how they "deploy certain practices to govern what they understand and interpret as their own security" in response (ibid, pg. 1185). It is important additionally not to compartmentalize each dimension, as they flow and intertwine within each other to shape complex contexts.

Referring to spatiality in Everyday Security recognizes the "distinctly spatial dimensions inherent in experiences in that they are contained, contextualized and rendered concrete in particular places" (Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016, pg. 1194). Theoretically, it evaluates the scale ranging from macro to micro, global to local, but in practical applications, it can be interpreted as the presence of "mundane spaces" (Nyman, 2021). These mundane spaces refer to anywhere that securitization can be experienced or mitigated, from private homes to public policing of subways or supermarkets (ibid). In relation to this research paper, digital spaces have begun to emerge as mundane spaces (Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016). Outside formal political spheres such as legislature or public debates, analyzing how citizens evaluate and navigate their own security through these mundane spaces lead into their choices when it comes to temporal dimensions as well.

Temporality in Everyday Security categorizes the repetitive and daily routines as described in the 'everyday'. Importantly, it strays away from Human Security and Securitization Theory's association of securitization with the "unusual and exceptional" (Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016). Instead, it focuses on the habitual routines chosen by individuals or communities to ensure their security on a daily basis (Nyman, 2021). These habitual, informal strategies to mitigate securitization become normal behaviors over time, heightening a "state of permanent emergency" (Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016,

pg. 1193) for those targeted by securitization attempts repeatedly. These habitual routines also have "disruptive potential" (Nyman, 2021, pg. 319) of the mainstream political environment, depending much on the feelings of possible (in)security of individuals. Again, acknowledging the connection between temporal and spatial dimensions of individuals' experiences means that no two navigational journeys are alike.

As a final dimension, while typically forgotten in security studies, Everyday Security works with the "manifest centrality of emotions to security processes" (Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016, pg. 1196) and "lived experiences of in/security" (Nyman, 2021, pg. 320). Specifically, it focuses on how citizens prioritize lived experiences and emotions to navigate external security measures, internal perceptions of insecurity, and develop subsequent responses to provide self-security (Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016). Emotions can be overpowering or driving forces of the other dimensions, in both positive and negative ways. Crawford and Hutchinson (2016) address how evaluating self-safety through frames of emotion can lead to rushed actions without methodical process or contribute to "over-securitizing" through "othering". This is done in a way that prioritizes self over all others, even within community groups. Everyday Security also observes the positive ways in which lived emotional experiences directs navigational choices. This is most evident when individuals and communities are joined together due to a shared "cultural practice [and] intimate experience" (Nyman, 2021, pg. 320). It is also how individuals verbalize and linguistically interpret their emotions and security experiences. Environments that encourage the expression of these lived experiences and its emotional impact grant individuals security in their own agency, and in turn "sustain a feeling of ontological security" (Innes, 2017, pg. 394). Ultimately, Everyday Security suggests that how citizens express their emotions and lived experiences to mitigate securitization acts are crucial to facilitate a bottom-up understanding of security.

This research paper consolidates various interpretations of Everyday Security to utilize it as an analytical framework. I will intertwine Crawford and Hutchinson (2016)'s spatial, temporal, and emotional dimensions of Everyday Security with Nyman (2021)'s practical translation into mundane spaces, routine practices, and (emotional) lived experiences of in/security. As this research focuses on navigation[4] of social media as it is used as a tool of securitization by the state, this framework provides a useful lens to see how participants interact with mundane digital spaces as they are securitized, adapt their habitual routines within these digital tools, as well as situate their lived experiences within these platforms. Ultimately, using Everyday Security as a foundational framework prioritizes bottom-up mitigations of securitization and self-assurance of ontological security. Additionally, it expands on Everyday Security's so far limited attention to digital spaces and the use of digital tools against securitization from the state. The identification of how security and power can be sought after and ensured by individuals in response to elite institutions challenges previous Securitization Theory and Human Security. This expands the realm of security studies to further question how security can be obtained, and by whom.

[4] Throughout this paper, the definition of navigation is *operationalized* to look at different dimensions of Everyday Security

Chapter 3| A literary-based intersection: Trump, Migration, and Social Media Narratives

3.1| A brief history- this is nothing new

Securitizing migration within the United States is not a new phenomenon. Deportations based on nationality occurred (officially) as early as 1798 (Florido, 2015), and securitization based on "speech acts" followed not long after. Migrants became associated with unemployment, economic failure, drug trafficking, and terrorism in almost every presidency since 1917 (D'Appollonia, 2017), but over time, the methods evolved. From executive orders, acts of policy, newspapers, radio broadcasts, television, technological surveillance operations, and even through mobile phone applications, the U.S. government has perpetuated ethnic and political stereotypes to securitize migration across generations, embedding it in the American 'livelihood' (Walters, 2010)[5]. However, Donald Trump brought his anti-immigrant rhetoric onto social media in his first presidency, and as his administration strengthens it as a strategy in his current term, this research explores if it is indeed securitization. However, background of Trump's rhetoric is important to contextualize that exploration.

3.2|The emergence of Donald Trump and his focus on migration

Donald Trump, identified as a right-wing Republican, was the president of the United States from 2017-2021, and won a second term in 2024, currently making him the 47th President of the United States and in office until 2029 (BBC, 2024). While many of his policies aligned with previous Republican leaders in prioritizing economic prosperity over social endeavours, his 'bold' views on other political matters made him differ from other 'typical' leaders. (Waterhouse, 2024a). Politically, Donald Trump is known for his support in tax cuts for companies, isolationism and refraining from working with foreign allies, but most iconically, his "aggressive and racist" immigration directives (ibid).

Donald Trump's campaign to win the 2016 election included rhetoric of social exclusion especially of those with immigrant background, certifying that he would work for "the American people", not those coming from "beyond the border" (Abdullah, 2016). Additionally, his stark messages of being against "political correctness" and "getting rid of illegal immigrants" garnered him popular support from those who felt that previous president Barack Obama focused more on social equality and not enough on the 'average working American' (Hanson, 2016). His win resulted in polarized stances from the public and media alike, and despite criticism of his crude rhetoric to convey political messaging (Remnick, 2016), he did not change his approach to political discourse nor show change in his policies. In relation to securitization of migration, Donald Trump ordered or influenced policies that became iconicized with his character, for example allocating over one billion dollars to build a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico; signing an executive order to allow families to be separated during detainings and deportations; as well as invoking a so-called "Muslim Ban" to 'protect America from terrorists' (The American Presidency Project of UC Santa Barbara, 2021).

[5] For a more in-depth written history based on the core concepts discussed in this paragraph, see Appendix A.

3.3| Donald Trump's resurgence and the fault of "illegal immigration"

During Biden's presidency and into the 2024 election, voters felt that the economy had not recovered from the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic, and Donald Trump presented a compelling explanation- "illegal immigration" (Smith, 2024). Donald Trump and the Republican Party framed their "America First" campaign as a restoration to an idealized American past, to heal the country from "nearly four years of the Biden administration, [where] America is now rocked by Raging Inflation, Open Borders, Rampant Crime, Attacks on our Children, and Global Conflict, Chaos, and Instability" (The American Presidency Project of UC Santa Barbara, 2024). Capitalizing on asserting "illegal immigration" as the cause of economic difficulties within the U.S., Trump broadcasted that the Democratic party's pro-immigration standpoints equated to anti-economic prosperity (Gomez Licon and Long, 2024). Furthering this, he publicly questioned the ethnicity of Biden's Vice President Kamala Harris (the 2024 Democratic Presidential nominee) to emphasize her migrant background (Brown and Price, 2024) and portrayed her as "the enemy from within" (Ordoñez, 2024). Ultimately, Donald Trump's messaging prevailed and made him the 47th president of the United States of America (Hartig et al., 2025).

A stark difference between Donald Trump's first term and his current term is his newfound political maturity and power. He chose to work with staff that had immense political experience and encouraged the administration's use of social media, and had full political power with a Republican-controlled Congress (Crisp, 2025; Parker and Scherer, 2025). This allowed large support of executive orders relating to immigration, which made up over 86% of all executive orders in 2025 (Chishti and Bush-Joseph, 2025; Federal Register, 2025). The first of these orders declared a national emergency at the southern border, which enabled the federal government to allocate as many resources and funds to complete "all appropriate action [necessary]" (The White House, 2025). By declaring a state of national emergency, other executive orders were able to be enacted without unsurmountable challenge. Examples of these orders include militarizing the southern U.S. border with various branches of the U.S. military, indefinitely banning refugees from the U.S. and ending current protection programs, as well as expanding ICE's operations to detain individuals if suspected of being an "illegal immigrant" or having conducted criminal activity (Holland & Knight, 2025). This expanded the groups eligible for deportation, which led to the highest amount of ICE detentions in U.S. history for a single day on August 24th, 2025, at around 61,200 people (Chishti and Lacarte, 2025). After further research, Chishti and Lacarte (2025) found that 71% of these detainees did not have a criminal conviction, and of the 29% who did, most were for minor infractions like traffic violations. In July of 2025, Congress passed a budget of $170 billion for Immigration and Border Enforcement, making ICE "the highest-funded law enforcement agency in U.S. history" (NPR, 2025). Although Trump promised the American public an improvement in the national economy by expelling "illegal immigrants", it can be controversial to spend a large amount of money on initiatives that the average constituent does not immediately benefit from personally, unlike social security or educational improvements. However, the Trump administration buttresses their efforts against "illegal immigration" through their use of social media platforms, garnering legitimacy for their actions through posting content in accordance with popular media trends.

3.4| How governments perpetuate narratives through social media

Social media expands on the use of the internet to turn platforms previously meant for information sharing (i.e. Wikipedia), into interactive platforms where its use and development is based off interacting posts and opinions. Essentially, social media's existence and purpose is made from the people that use it (Calderaro, 2018). When witnessing social media's effects in politics, it shifts power from the "oligarchic form of traditional media [newspapers, television, radio] which is more easily controlled by capital or government organizations" to the general population (ibid, pg. 785). Calderaro (2018) notes that this is a double-edged sword: while this increases accessible information for political engagement, large swarms of (largely unchecked) information or opinions shared may lessen the quality of the news. Evidently, political information on social media influences opinions on real-life political debate, regardless of the information (and its validity) shared (Venus, Intyaswati and Prihatiningsih, 2023). Therefore, legitimate is no longer just something established by a political power, but decided upon by the typical social media user, who decides what narratives are valuable or not.

However, comes to observing how social media plays a part in legitimate narratives of migration, the struggle of moderating content on these interactive platforms matter. Social media platforms are businesses that thrive on engagement from users, and the moderation of shared content can become a hindrance to the successful operation (profitable) of those businesses. There have been many critiques of both businesses and governments lacking in content moderation, as the unrestricted nature of platforms has led to hateful messaging or incorrect information (OHCHR, 2021). This is also the case for discourse surrounding migration on social media. While traditional forms of media such as television or newspapers are found to typically repeat formal statements produced by political elites, social media is found to spread individual perceptions of migrants, which heavily echo "prejudiced frames" (Yantseva, 2020). More specifically, 'negative' emotions are found to be displayed more on social media platforms about topics involving migration in comparison to traditional media, where 'positive' emotions are more prevalent (ibid). The fact that mainstream media can be seen as being "too positive" or "neutral" about some migration topics can enhance the amount of negative content shared on social media, as some feel it is their job to conduct themselves as 'anti-system' and show a reality that is not shared through 'the mainstream' (Holt, 2018). Most importantly, it is important to note that a large part of the rhetoric about migration shared on social media is highly polarizing, settling in two main paths of thought: a so-called "extreme" left lens viewing migrants as "victims", and an "extreme" right lens viewing migrants as "deviant or criminal" (Silvana et al., 2021). The displayed 'only possible mindsets' on social media as "pro-immigration" or "anti-immigration" (ibid) have produced social media to be an "arena" of battling controversial social identities (Pak and Paroubek, 2010). As algorithms of social media platforms aim to give audiences content that they want to see, political homophily strengthens these strong opinions held by both sides of the spectrum and ultimately leads them to intensify (Colleoni, Rozza and Arvidsson, 2014), creating a strong "us vs. them" environment (Silvana et al., 2021). This sets the stage for these spaces to be tools for securitization.

3.5| Securitization through social media

The use of social media for securitization has become increasingly popular within the past 15 years. Qadri (2020) evaluated how television and other forms of media have perpetuated securitizing discourse against immigrants for the protection against "terrorism" since 2000. He notes that interviews shown on television and summarized in articles which justify torture and anti-immigration

sentiment radically changed the opinions of the American people within a presidential term. The use of speech acts for securitizing discourse spread fast with the platforms used at that time (2000-2008), but Qadri (2020) notes that further work must be done when analyzing how securitization is carried out on social media platforms, as their growth has taken over print audiences and quickly approaching those of television. This is addressed by Karaaytu (2024, pg. 88), "The dissemination of securitization themes by populists through Twitter is characterized by unconventional language, facilitated by the platform's nature allowing for free expression". Framing one's identity as "at risk from the other side", users find politician's lack of traditionalist political rhetoric identifiable, further legitimizing securitizing discourse on these platforms. Furthermore, it is the repetition of bold, vague, controversial phrases that enhance the desire for audiences to click on content quickly that make these leaders so successful with their audiences on social media (Oren and Solomon, 2014). By repeating certain phrases that refer to fear or an "emergency" situation (Buzan, 1998) in a way that is casual for the general public, and its repetition by the audience in tow, those phrases become legitimate regardless of their validity (Oren and Solomon, 2014). Social media is also not just textual, and many popular sites include videos or images with posts to increase viral ability. The inclusion of imagery or video with securitization rhetoric can heighten audiences' receptivity to its messaging (Karell, Freedman and Gidron, 2023). Consequently, Karell, Freedman and Gidron (2023) determined that even images only peripherally related to securitizing rhetoric can produce similar effects. While securitization was previously spread to audiences through (slower) media forms such as television, radio, and articles, the introduction of social media allows speech acts of securitization to flourish in a way unseen before. Without the bureaucracy or moderation of other media outlets (Karaaytu, 2024), securitization can be laid out in bold (yet ambiguous) ways with relatable language to an audience in a popular, interactive space.

3.6| How the Trump administration frames immigration through social media

While Donald Trump's use of social media in his first term was seen as a liability (Parker and Scherer, 2025), he and his administration use it to their advantage in his current term. By propagating supposedly funny, casual, and culturally popular images or videos about his policies and actions, the Trump administration gains audiences outside their typical political orbit as social media users tend to share their content (McKinley, 2025). The posted content is easily understood by large audiences due to its simplistic language and/or relation to trending phenomenon on the internet, and in many cases makes light of violations of human rights or mocks political rivals (ibid). Many of these posts highlight the administration's 'fight' against "illegal immigration"; examples include videos of ICE detainees awaiting deportation set to popular songs (The White House on X, 2025); cartoonified images of detained women crying in handcuffs (Baker, 2025); images that replace dialogue in popular movies and television shows to advocate for deportations (Department of Homeland Security on X, 2025); as well as a video celebrating how ICE 'collects' "illegal immigrants" as if they are fictional animals in the children's game of Pokemon (The White House on Instagram, 2025).

The informal and crass manner in which the administration displays its policy "achievements" has caused wide controversy across partisan lines, garnering remarks of unprofessionalism and disdain over taxpayer money being used to produce this content (McKinley, 2025). Public and political anguish for the administration's likening of forced detentions and deportations to laughable or entertaining viral content has caused White House officials to double-down and defend their social media strategy.

"The arrests will continue. The memes will continue" (Pemberton, 2025), said a top press aide on X. The way the administration uses social media to communicate anti-immigration policies as relatable to their audiences seems to make the extreme and inhumane ways they enact these policies as easily digestible as other popular social media content (ibid). It raises two questions: in what ways is this securitization of migration through social media and how do these targeted immigrant communities experience and respond to this?

3.7| Migrant use of social media

The literature review of this research could not identify responses to possible securitization of migration through social media by targeted immigrant communities. However, there have been many examples of how various types of migrants use social media to share their experiences while also using it to facilitate decisions. These migrants find that social media gives them a sense of security that not only will their journeys be successful, but that it is the "right decision" for them (Dekker et al., 2018). These platforms allow those in transit to have more agency in their movement (ibid), as well as transform how migrants keep in touch with their home country and family. Within refugee communities for example, social media has been used as a communication method to let other community members know they are safe through posting or private messaging (Netto et al., 2021). In practice, this contributes to easing anxieties during arrival and further assists in overcoming social hurdles in destination countries (Ihejirika and Krtalic, 2020). Especially when entering a new society as a minority and feeling unsafe from previous experiences, social media creates a sense of protection as they are able to stay tied to their own national or ethnic communities in the host country (Netto et al., 2021) Furthering on resilience, those with immigrant background have used social media to amplify their voices and demand for equal treatment, which creates a pipeline of influence from social media to political stages (Tesler, 2024). The ability for migrants to share individual stories on social media allows a separation of the "massification", or the association all migrants to a few stereotypical identities (Martikainen and Sakki, 2021). Previously, stories made public through media channels such as television or newspapers had to go through filtering processes to be published, and social media creates unfiltered spaces for any personal stories to be given power and an audience (Wright, 2024). The stereotypes of various migrant groups can be challenged by platforms that grant power to the individual, and where migrants have done so highlights their diversity and contributes to resisting single-story narratives (Martikainen and Sakki, 2021). This also opens the door to analyze how immigrant groups experience and respond to xenophobic rhetoric perpetuated by governments on social media, within and through those same spaces.

Before exploring the questions identified in this research, the methodological structure for conducting this research will be explained. Then, the 47th administration's anti-immigrant social media content will be explored to show its (possible) securitization of migration through Ceyhan and Tsoukala's (2002) core axes of Securitization Theory. Consequently, the data collected will display how immigrant groups targeted by the Trump administration's content ensure their own security with and through these same digital spaces, as analyzed through the dimensions of Everyday Security (Nyman, 2021).

Chapter 4| Methodology

4.1| How This Came to Be

This research topic changed many times as limitations stipulated by the Trump administration continued to unfold. Original focuses included the immigration appointment app CBP One, which was dismantled his first day of office, and primary research locations near the border needed to be scrapped due to his expansion of ICE heavily militarizing the border. An original design shared in June 2025 focused on families, which was ultimately seen as too dangerous for possible surveillance to lead ICE towards insecurely documented children and risking school environments. The reason for highlighting these changes pre-fieldwork is that it displays the increasingly tumultuous climate that unravelled throughout all stages of the research, and how safety and ethics of both the participants and me became priority. It gives context for the rest of the methodology especially through recruitment and development of questions while handling sensitive subjects.

4.2| The design- from plan to reality

For this research paper, I collected 16 interviews from men and women ages 18 to 60 who self-identified as originating from the regions of Central America, South America, and Africa, currently living in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. These interviews took place in person, through video-calls, and through phone calls, and ranged between 30 minutes to a bit over one hour. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish, with the assistance of in-community translators especially for country-specific slang. Questions for the semi-structured interview and resulting probes were asked in both English and Spanish depending on the preference of the participant (Appendix E). All interviews were recorded with verbal consent given by participants (App. G). Participants were asked to fulfil the following criteria to participate, to which they were then compensated 20 USD in cash each[6].

1. Be 18 years or older
2. User of social media platforms (as defined as interactive spaces to exchange information publicly in real-time)
3. Hold an 'insecure' documentation status (does not need to be disclosed), e.g.:
    a. Unauthorized/undocumented
    b. DACA/DREAMer
    c. Refugee/Asylum Seeker
    d. International Student
    e. Temporary Protected Status
    f. Recently changed status/Green Card

For anonymity of participants, I only asked to know their self-identified nationality/ethnic background, age, how long they have lived in the U.S., and in what areas they have lived[7]. Informal

[6] Funding received from the Institutional Institute of Social Studies. Important to note that a large drawing point for many participants was the money involved, especially with those who lost or left their jobs due to fear of ICE raids. The extremity of the situation must be presented, as it was a main reason people participated. On the contrary, some participants did not want the money, as they felt it was unethical.

[7] Besides this information, I know almost nothing about most participants, including names.

conversations with participants or personal connections made through the research process also gave me a broader understanding of context surrounding specific interviews.

While I was able to successfully obtain interviews and listen to the perspectives of members of targeted communities, this was not without large difficulty and the need to shift the participant target group as the political climate became more intense. Originally, my vision was to speak to people with statuses 'a' through 'c', which was based on stances and opinions made by Donald Trump and how those specific demographics were at higher risk of deportation or targeting for persecution (Frelick, 2025). However, through the month of July, various community groups, religious associations, and grassroots organizations did not show up to scheduled meets or stopped replying to my messages. Rightfully so, as ICE raids had increased steadily each month in 2025 (Chishti and Lacarte, 2025) and it became more deadly to be taken by ICE than ever before (Bustillo and Mukherjee, 2025). Personal connections had told me that even though I was willing to drive across states so that people didn't have to leave their homes, fears of me attracting attention or identifying themselves as part of at-risk groups made them unwilling to speak to me regardless.

Into the summer of 2025, more media attention arose for non-citizens coming under-threat for differing political views from the administration or assumptions of illegal status due to ethnic background, resulting in the stripping of permits from those who had been residing in the United States for decades (American Immigration Council, 2025). It then became evident that at-risk communities were not only groups deemed "threatening" by the president, but truly anyone who was not, or did not 'look like', a U.S. citizen. Aligning with this, I expanded my participant criteria to those who weren't citizens and did not have employer sponsorship (which would give them more security). This also aided in finding participants, as when I begun to tell possible participants that they just needed to fulfil *one* of the documentation options, but that I didn't need to know which, they felt more secure in being able to answer me. Of course, I still stressed that their participation was voluntary. I reached out to become involved in a local grassroots organization in central New Jersey, and I thoroughly explained how my data would be handled and the process of my research. Through time and assisting them with various events, they helped me reach more members in various immigrant communities.

4.3| Geographical Importance

To reduce risks for both me and participants, I chose to conduct research in states where there was public and infrastructural support for immigration regardless of documentation status. These are most prominent in states that lean left and have "sanctuary state" policies (Ilrc.org, 2024). These policies are more inclusive and supportive, including protection of personal and digital information, non-cooperation with ICE raids in certain areas, and access to legal help if necessary (ibid). The Trump administration in 2025 has begun to impose federal pressure onto these so-called sanctuary states, challenging their jurisdiction to protect their information and provide services (Santana, 2025). This has led to increased raids by ICE and deportations, impacting economic sectors in key industries in construction, hospitality, and agriculture (Doan and Ingram, 2025). Overall, this increases an already prevalent fear of deportation and can create more pressure on targeted immigrant communities.

Two of these sanctuary states, while being some of the smallest in size, have some of the densest document-at-risk populations. On the East Coast, New Jersey accounts for 10% of its population to be document insecure (Beshay, 2024), and New York state with 9% respectively (Campanile, 2025). New Jersey and New York are left-leaning 'Democratic' states and have been known to support pro-immigration presidential candidates in U.S. political history. Both states offer support for immigrant security including policies that ensure access to healthcare, free legal services, and educational information (New York State Attorney General, 2025; State of New Jersey, 2025). This has made both states popular for document-at-risk populations from various ethnic groups. The largest groups that have been recorded (before the Trump administration heavily increase deportation efforts) were from Mexico, El Salvador, India, Guatemala, Honduras, and Venezuela (Beshay, 2024).

Conversely, Pennsylvania is known as a swing state. Unlike New Jersey or New York, Pennsylvania has shifted in either supporting the Republican or Democratic nominee, many times even deciding presidential elections (Teixeira and Frey, 2008). This was ultimately the case in the 2024 election, in which Pennsylvania voted for right-leaning Republican Donald Trump (BBC, 2024). Irrespective of its voting nature, Pennsylvania declares itself in accordance with "sanctuary state" policies in which ICE arrests must be in ordinance with a criminal warrant (Federation for American Immigration Reform, 2020). Additionally, the state offers financial assistance to encourage documented migrants to integrate in Pennsylvania (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2022). In addition, even with unauthorized status, assistance becomes available through local organizations (Mejía and Donnan, 2024) or city wise, for example in the famously pro-immigration city of Philadelphia (City of Philadelphia, 2025).

4.4| Why Qualitative Interviewing?

This research used qualitative interviewing to evaluate participants' perspectives and subsequent navigation of social media as it is used as a tool of securitization by the United States government. This was additionally followed by observation and engaging with community groups surrounding some participants. Qualitative interviewing was chosen as the form of research method due to the ability to delve into the thoughts, emotions, and choices made by participants through their own narration, which is especially important for migrants with insecure status (Morawska, 2018). I chose these interviews to be semi-structured, which include a few guiding themes and questions for the participants to introduce a conversational flow. Through this conversational flow, there was space for follow-up questions, or probes, to be asked in response throughout the interview. Primarily, semi-structured interviews allow large amounts of flexibility when used with at-risk communities, especially of those with insecure documentation status (Jianbin, 2024). This allowed me to shape the direction of the interviews into engaging conversations that followed the lead of their responses. If my participants chose to interpret certain questions or focus on certain words of questions more than others, I wanted to take the time to explore their narrations and intentional focuses on what was important to them. It was my core thought that through this whole process my involvement as a researcher was to be a facilitator of their voices to be amplified, not extract their voices to facilitate my own answers. In practicality, semi-structured interviews allowed my research to be shaped upwards by the targeted communities in focus, which helped me obtain an in-depth understanding of their experiences.

4.5| Handling of Data and Analysis

When conducting the interviews, each participant was given a letter, resulting in participants A until P respectively. The interviews were recorded on an iPhone's device storage (not iCloud), to which then the audio was promptly uploaded to Yoda within 24 hours. Yoda is a database created by Erasmus University Rotterdam and protected by GDPR law for sensitive data. EUR and the ISS had commissioned a workspace for me to store the interviews due to their sensitive nature. After each interview was uploaded to Yoda, they were deleted from the original recording device. After all the interviews had been completed and uploaded to Yoda, they were transcribed (and further translated to English if necessary) by the transcribing platform Amberscript. Amberscript was provided to me by Erasmus University Rotterdam as it is used for highly sensitive data. After all interviews had been transcribed and revised for accuracy, coding was done in the desktop version of Atlas.ti. The coding was done by hand, without the use of features that uploaded information to their online services due to data protection. The coding included both inductive and deductive methods to let the data "speak" just as much as the theory surrounding the research (Williams and Moser, 2019). In total there were 77 codes, with 7 inductive and 3 deductive themes (Appendices B, C, D). These codes and themes were developed and curated based on the array of emotions, experiences, and navigations presented by participants.

Additionally: AI was not used in any *part of this research, neither in coding nor any other way of developing this paper (e.g. finding literature, proofreading, etc).*

4.6| My positionality and reflexivity

The nature of my research, without careful reflexivity and exploration of the impact my work can have on my participants, has the possibility to be extractive. As previously mentioned, one of the core decisions within my research process was to be a vessel to amplify voices affected by the securitization of a state through digital tools. While I did have some risk researching affairs disliked by the administration, I have the privilege of being a United States citizen, which my participants do not. I am also white, have an American accent while speaking, and even though I was given funding for this research, I was observed by the public eye to have the financial resources to fly from the Netherlands to the United States and live there multiple months to conduct research. As I had also been raised in New Jersey, my knowledge of the area and the personal connections I had gave me a sense of security that a good deal of my participants did not have.

When starting my research, I knew that my socioeconomic and racial status would very likely cause me difficulty in engaging with communities. This also became evident from the fact that various possible participants ignored my requests, in combination with the political climate. After assisting local groups with community events, I was able to form personal connections where I was allowed to listen to stories and perspectives and ask individuals what they want and need. Yet my positionality as the researcher with these non-lived experiences is that I was able to leave the spaces of these interviews, as they were metaphysical spaces where the stories and perspectives were recorded. My participants could not, and while it was a voluntary process, it must be said that in this research my ability to have choice correlates with my whiteness and privilege. In accordance with this, I aimed to engage in 'epistemological witnessing' (Pillow, 2019), developed by feminist and decolonial scholars, using my privilege and existing thought processing to bear witness to serve new thought processes and lived experiences. Therefore, I could reframe my thought processes and use my lived experience

as a catalyst for marginalized ones. Simply put- I was not collecting experiences to fulfil my research but collected experiences to shape the research most beneficial to the groups I was engaging with.

4.7| Limitations of the methodology

Engaging in this research to reveal important perspectives during a critical time in the geopolitical sphere, is indeed limited by those same surroundings. This research only delves into the experiences of individuals in a part of the East Coast of the U.S., and even moreso into a limited amount of people who trusted in me. It is a partial view of the experiences of those currently targeted for migratory status within the United States, which varies greatly based on region and personal nuances. While limited, it is important and does ultimately display the effects of social media being used as a newfound securitization tool. However, it is imperative that the data collected is not extrapolated to generalized narratives of migrant populations. Despite this small sample, I spent over 2 months of fieldwork furthering understanding political and social contexts and listening to community stories. This is factored into the in-depth analysis of the 16 interviews and my witnessing of experiences throughout my fieldwork.

Chapter 5| An analysis of how the 47th U.S. administration uses social media for securitization of migration

To explore how Donald Trump's administration engages in acts of securitization of migration through their social media presence, I will display a selection of their popular online content and how it aligns with Ceyhan and Tsoukala's (2002) core axes (see page 10-11). The content was chosen for its illustration of a particular core axis and emphasis of how the administration's speech acts of securitization are shown in an easily accessible and relatable way to the public. This is opposed to traditional ways of enacting securitization through televised speeches, newspaper articles, or policy releases. While there are thousands of examples of content from January 2025 until time of writing in November 2025, each section necessarily only focuses on a few, to illustrate the 47th administration's securitization of migration strategies through their social media presence and set the stage for how the participants navigate their agency in response to this presence. A synthesis of sources is gathered from the major platform X[8], but this content was also cross posted across their various other platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook.

5.1| The socioeconomic axis

where migration is associated with unemployment, the rise of the informal economy, the crisis of the welfare state, and the urban environment deterioration

Images 1 and 2 show how the Trump administration establishes a negative correlation between "(illegal) aliens" and the economic status of their definition of 'Americans'. More specifically, the administration claims that both "hardworking" and "taxpaying" Americans are faulted by "illegal aliens". Context for both images differ based on various political events occurring throughout the past year, but the administration ultimately frames migrants as being the reasoning for why these economic lapses are occurring.

In November of 2025, the Federal Government had been in shutdown since October 1 due to Congress being unable to pass an agreed budget (Zurcher and Sherman, 2025)[9]. Although Republicans do have voting control of Congress, both them and Democrats could not agree on resolutions to include in an approved budget (ibid). The 47th administration projects the responsibility onto Democrats for the fault of the shutdown in Image 1, but even further blames "criminal illegal aliens" for "cashing-in" on the available money left during the shutdown. This aligns with socioeconomic speech acts used by governments to securitize migration, broadcasting "the threat ... illegal immigration might constitute on the economy of developed countries, and [pointing out] its negative impact… on the welfare system and education" (Ceyhan and Tsoukala, 2002, pg. 24, see also: Halikiopoulou and Vlandas, 2020). Even further, the administration offers a website where the public can view these "criminals" who have qualified for state-granted healthcare. This gives a direct face for the public to 'place blame onto' and ultimately creates stereotypes of who uses public services 'wrongly'. The potential force of visuals (Karell, Freedman and Gidron, 2023) is further reflected in

[8] All obtained images from The White House on X (2025) or Homeland Security on X (2025)
[9] At time of writing, shutdown is ongoing but ended on November 12 before publication.

image 2, spread in a context where the administration used executive power to push states away from providing economic assistance for attending university without proof of citizenship (Svirnovskiy and Quilantan, 2025). By using 'memes' to portray their securitizing speech acts, the White House reinforces their message on how including "illegal aliens" intensifies the "exclusion of many [other] social groups" (Ceyhan and Tsoukala, 2002, pg. 24): "hardworking Americans", and their economic prosperity.

Image 1

Image 2

5.2| The securitarian axis

where migration is linked to the loss of a control narrative that associates the issues of sovereignty, and both internal and external security

Image 4

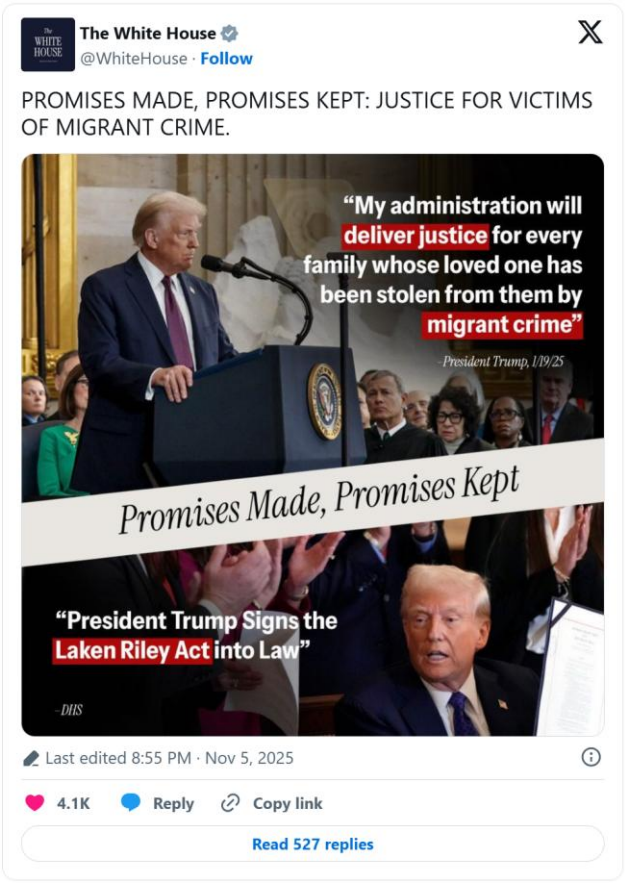

Image 5

According to Ceyhan and Tsoukala (2002, pg. 24) "[t]he demonization of immigration relies on the [state's] fear of a loss of sovereignty, the fear of crime, and the fear of the weakening of border controls". The Trump administration capitalizes on these fears, invoking speech acts that directly contribute to the existence of fear simply by declaring its necessity (Austin, 1963). This comes in the form of providing data to show Immigration and Border Enforcement (ICE) agents arresting "illegal aliens" as "serious criminals" (Image 4), displaying "migrant crime" as a top-policy priority (Image 5), and identifying migrants as "enemies at the gates" that must be fought in a collective effort by ICE (Image 6). The Trump administration clearly promotes these images to prove that there is an "urgent security threat" (Buzan, Waever and Wilde, 1998) to 'American safety' in the form of migration. In comparison to other tools used for migration securitization, displaying this 'necessity of fear' on social media gives a space for the general public to comment and interact in an echo-chamber of fear, further playing into people's emotions without factual bases (Wollebæk et al., 2019).

Image 6

5.3| The identitarian axis

where migrants are considered a threat to the host societies' national identity and demographic equilibrium

Image 7

Image 8

The core pillar of the identification axis involves the exposition of the migrant as a "cultural other", especially against stereotypical ideas of the (desired) identity of the national society (Ceyhan and Tsoukala, 2002). Donald Trump won the 2024 election through a conservative campaign that was vocally against LGBTQIA+ rights, and in adherence to his "Make America Great Again" slogan, referred to making the United States reminiscent of its 'golden era' (evidently lacking in multiculturalism) (Barrow, 2025). He held true to these campaign directives in office and has created personifications of the "cultural other" by combining these identities he has been vocally against. Image 7 displays a half-dressed man on the lawn of an office building flying a LGBTQIA+ support flag, consuming alcohol while supposedly yelling. He is also identified in the comments as seeming to be Hispanic. While this image has no context provided from the administration, the individual is identified as being an "anti-American Radical" and not belonging in the "Homeland" of the U.S. due to the assumed identities he possesses. The post also refers to keeping borders secure, and calls the man "illegal", while no proof is given for that claim. Regardless, it does the job of combining so-called "anti-American" in one individual to create a personification of the cultural threats the administration identifies for the country.

The administration additionally securitizes migration by personifying migrants as cultural threats when they oppose the administration's political opinions. Mahmoud Khalil (Image 8) was a graduate of Columbia University and had helped organize peaceful pro-Palestinian protests, until he was arrested for exercising "un-American activity" as deemed by the Trump administration (McCausland, 2025). The administration repeated these claims through their social media, associating Khalil and other pro-Palestinian supporters as engaging in "pro-terrorist, anti-Semitic, anti-American activity" (Image 8). Describing various individuals as "radical", "foreign", and "terrorist sympathizers" (Image 8) for not supporting opinions held by the U.S. government prescribes that 'Americans' not supporting certain ideals turns them into "cultural others". The 47th administration further personifies "cultural threats"

as individuals who do not agree with their values (Image 8), making an easily identified "other" on social media to be "seen as disturbing a culturally harmonious society by otherness and presence" (Image 7) (Ceyhan and Tsoukala, 2002, pg. 29).

5.4| The political axis

where anti-immigrant, racist, and xenophobic discourses are often expected to facilitate political benefits

The Trump administration creates a circular effect in which they retain legitimacy through their "demonization of migration" (Ceyhan and Tsoukala, 2002, pg. 29), and in turn strengthens their securitization of migration by acting on this legitimacy. At the core of this strategy is the racist and anti-immigrant rhetoric used to dehumanize migrants. Image 9 suitably shows this, as it frames a man with a criminal record from Guatemala as a popular children's toy, as a joke on the man's physical structure. It dehumanizes the man into an object 'advertised' as a "sexual predator illegal alien" (Image 9) and draws a cartoon emphasizing his ethnic features. This social media strategy of dehumanization of migrants is a continuation of how Trump garnered support before his second term (Conley, 2024).

Donald Trump further expands his political legitimacy through securitizing migration by comparing himself to his political counterparts. He asserts that due to the "Trump Administration Policies" (in juxtaposition to the Biden administration), "The Invasion of our Country is OVER" (Image 10). By doing this, he associates political success with stopping (unwanted) immigration, which has become a "political necessity" for states to rule with a governing mandate (Ceyhan and Tsoukala, 2002, pg. 30). Trump does not only frame his securitization of migration as successful in relation to his predecessor Biden, but also in comparison to previous Presidents (Image 10).

Image 9

Image 10

5.5 | Expansion past the axes

Embedding securitization of migration into popular culture for increased normalization

Image 11

Image 12

While not an axis as developed by Ceyhan and Tsoukala (2002), an important way in which the Trump administration securitizes migration is through references to popular culture. By creating ties to trending content, Donald Trump connects with social media users that consume this content, making them feel that he understands them better in comparison to other politicians (Madison et al., 2022). Especially when combining this perceived 'closeness' with casually-expressed anti-immigration rhetoric, the administration is able to securitize migration in a way that goes beyond typical political spheres. Instead of televised speeches, newspaper articles, or policy briefs, the 47th administration performs speech acts that securitizes migration through jokes popular with young teenage boys (Image 11), or classic films that are recognizable and relatable to different generations (Image 12). This expands on Ceyhan and Tsoukala's (2002) description of various methods used to declare speech acts. Moreover, it exposes how social media has become an unprecedented tool of securitization able to engage audiences regardless of their (formal) political involvement. However, in tandem it allows targeted groups to navigate Everyday Security in real-time, as I will show in the next sections.

Chapter 6| The navigation of these digital securitizations- how targeted immigrant communities engage in Everyday Security

This section will analyze the interviews with document insecure individuals through the dimensions asserted in Everyday Security: Mundane Spaces, Daily Routines, and Lived Emotional Experiences (Nyman, 2021). In further identifying the gaps in Everyday Security literature, participants heavily noted how the mundane spaces that shifted as a result of the administration's content were not just physical, but also digital.

6.1| The shifting of Mundane Spaces

As the Trump administration began to securitize migration through social media, the individuals I spoke to started to notice the bleeding between *digital* and real-life spaces, shifting the mundane spaces they were used to into spaces of securitization. Their private lives in the form of their social media accounts became influenced by the administration's securitizing content, even when they tried to avoid it. This diverts from the "historically embedded divides between public and private space" (Nyman, 2021, pg. 317), creating a precedent where the private influences the public and vice versa. Participant J, an 18-year-old female who moved to New Jersey from Guatemala when she was 12, noted how her Instagram had only showed her non-political content in accordance to her preferred content, until this year. But since January, her content had been "full of deportations" due to its popularity on the platform[10]. This experience was also echoed by a 20-year-old Salvadorian woman who had lived in the U.S. since 2013 (Participant K) who said she had seen "more political content than ever before" this year.

Participants also made it clear how they felt social media's securitization of migration impacted *physical* mundane spaces, also changing how they view themselves within them. Participant B noted that as a Nigerian man in his 30s who had only been in Pennsylvania for 2 years, he felt that ICE raids "were going to happen in Philly (Philadephia)" simply because he had "watched too much social media" about it. He asserted that the way he began to view himself in his daily spaces was of someone at risk, which he didn't think he would feel without seeing this type of administration's content on social media. Due to mounting insecurity, Participant D (a Ghanian man in his 30s) explained how his local church in Philadelphia had moved to online chapel services in order for people to continue engaging in their religious community. This is in-line with the argument that Everyday Security responses due to securitization in mundane spaces occur "outside the formal political sphere" and involve "bottom-up and "localized" practice to ensure peace within these spaces (Nyman, 2021, pg. 317).

[10] When content is popular on a social media platform, it is shown to most users regardless of the content they usually interact with (OHCHR, 2021)

Most prominently though, those that I spoke to brought up how the migrant-related rhetoric they had seen on social media, whether it be xenophobic or racist, had a clear effect on how they navigated interactions with others in their mundane spaces. For example, a 24-year-old man originally from Peru (Participant G) said that he had interacted with individuals who were more emboldened to repeat the social media speech acts and discourse that had been set by the Trump administration in real life, but he also understood why:

"It's a reflection [on] how people think it's okay to say [those things]… they think, oh yeah, the government is doing it, why can't I?" (Participant G, New Jersey)

Many other participants noted that they had seen these interactions with strangers, but that its biggest effect in their physical spaces was when it infiltrated personal connections. Respondent L was a 35-year-old man originating from Honduras and had lived 11 years in New Jersey, working with one employer for seven of those years. He described how his boss had gone on to support Donald Trump's anti-immigrant social media content, specifically his rhetoric in associating immigrants with "murderers" or "criminals". This caused an emotional reaction for Participant L, as the work environment he developed over multiple years had become an everyday space where xenophobic "policies are normalized" (Nyman, 2021, pg. 318) due to the administration's social media influence.

"I asked [my boss] if he thinks if I'm a criminal. He says, 'No you're not, you're a hard worker'. But how can [my boss] see me differently and say, 'it's just them (other immigrants)'? How many years have I been working for [him]? Seven years. How many times have I stolen a dollar from [him]? Not any. So, you can't judge people just because… [Trump] told you [they are] a criminal."

It was at this point where Participant L began to get heavily emotional and I asked him to stop the interview, but he wished to continue as he felt his experiences needed to be shared. He shared that he could not return to that workplace anymore, as he felt his safety and wellbeing had been compromised. This was one of the many examples shared of how participants needed to shift or adapt their mundane spaces in response to the administration's securitization of migration through digital spaces. In response to learning the ways their mundane spaces had changed due to Trump's social media influence, participants began to navigate new routines regarding social media to ensure personal security in those same spaces.

6.2| Developing new Daily Routines

In response to the securitization content shared by the administration and its influence on overall social media, participants remarked how they felt they needed to change the way they carried themselves or their actions in those digital spaces in order to ensure their own security. This primarily manifested in three core driving thoughts- restricting self-expression due to perceived danger, increasing use due to wanting community protection, or avoidance as a way of dissimilating from migrant identity. All participants that I spoke to noted these decisions were common for themselves or others close to them. While the participants' actions on social media could be viewed as "routine,

repetitive, habitual doings that… seem insignificant" (Nyman, 2021, pg. 318) to the public eye, individuals noted how these routines became highly intentional to ensure a sense of self-given, bottom-up security.

The most prevalent decision every respondent participated in was the act of *restricting* themselves in at least one regard on digital platforms. This was most commonly enacted through restricting self-expression, specifically in either identifying themselves as a migrant (regardless of status) or sharing any information that went against the Trump administration's political ideals.

Participant D said he purposely had to change his expressions and way of speaking on his social media and could no longer talk about specific topics that Trump had openly opposed in his administration (Barrow, 2025), "with the use of the word race, with the word gender, and all those types" (Participant D). As a PhD scholar researching those subjects, he felt that his "hands had been tied [behind his back]" as he was unable to advocate for his topic or do further research without surveillance from the administration, resulting in his funding cut and therefore his visa being revoked (The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, 2025).

These concerns of surveillance were echoed in multiple conversations, specifically over the fact that individuals felt that if they posted anything, it was a risk for their security. Participant H was a 35-year-old Guatemalan man who was going on his sixth year living in New Jersey and described how his participation in social media had decreased, as "you feel like when you [post] something… that's when they can, like, track you down". Even though this wasn't corroborated with any real-life experiences H had, he told me that this administration made people feel that they were "out to get [immigrants]", as seen on their social media. This was not something he thought about before with previous administrations, and he had to consciously evaluate what aspects of his speech or actions could risk his security. This was also the case with Participant I from New Jersey:

"I feel like now you [have to] think about 20 times before you do anything or you post anything, and at that point it's like, why do I even have the choice to upload something if I have to limit myself?"

Participant I was a 32-year-old man who had moved to the U.S. 23 years ago from Ecuador. He was incredibly frustrated with the idea that he no longer had the agency of decision-making on platforms where he had expressed his own thoughts on for years. To him, social media was a passion that ended up directing him to a career in journalism and social media management, and needing to restrict his habits and more importantly, his choices- felt like a large loss of identity. He expanded on this to say that he stopped posting on social media largely unless needed for work, even to share aspects of his personal life with family and friends. Ultimately, it became a priority for Participant I to engage in self-censorship on social media to ensure personal security.

Another core sentiment revealed through my conversations is that some individuals *increased their use and involvement on social media as a part of communities*, to protect communities. This was done both by actions completed in a private manner, or those public-facing on various social media platforms.

A woman in her early 40s from New Jersey and originating from Namibia (Participant F) explained how she and her friends "protected each other" on social media or messaging platforms by referring to each other in "codes". These codes involved references or plays on words with their actual names, in order to talk about possible immigration-related issues or conversations without connecting personal information[11]. Participant O, a 52-year-old Ecuadorian woman living in New York for 6 years, expressed how she enabled a similar strategy. She engaged in changing her social media platforms to different aliases of adjectives or personality traits that reflected what she felt about herself. By doing this, she was able to keep a sense of agency even if she could not post what she wanted to anymore, leading her to still feel empowered on these platforms.

Other participants noted other ways in which they or their online connections shifted their use of social media to share information publicly to combat the administration's securitization efforts. I was told that these forms of information included up-to-date spottings of ICE and possible raid locations, legal information if faced with detainment, and fact sharing to prove the Trump administration's securitization content as misinformation. While participants expressed that sharing this information may have been something they did casually before, it now became a genuine routine and form of resistance to share information just as frequently as the administration. Participant G noted that, while he was "definitely concerned" about possible consequences of him sharing this information, it "didn't stop [him] from sharing". He told me that "he did it regardless" of the outcome, as it was the "right thing". He reiterated that since the 47th administration came into power, social media was not a safe place for immigrants to participate anymore, and that sharing helpful information to document-at-risk communities was one of the only ways to keep power against this insecurity.

In my interview with participant K, she showed me videos on TikTok of how her connections filmed ICE patrolling through the streets of Washington D.C. This was due to Trump's "Make D.C. Safe Again" program (The White House, 2025b). While this video did show the way that law-enforcement was using violence and entering houses without warrants, it did more than just display the reality of Trump's securitization of migration in real-time. The commentary written by the author who published the video included a link to a social media messaging group that participant K had joined. "It has multiple channels… but one of the channels is… telling each other where, like, agents are at and where they were last seen. They take a picture and send the location… it gave me hope that sometimes it seems like there's nothing to do [against the administration], but the community is looking for ways to help each other out."

Participants did remark that immigrant communities rely heavily on platforms where you could share live video (TikTok, Instagram, Facebook), using the interactive nature of social media to display how the administration's heroic portrayal of ICE in his social media was not true in real-life. By broadcasting live video streams, it alerted others of possible raids and also showed how ICE used illegal ways of detaining individuals, such as pretending to be possible employers looking for day laborers, using unnecessary force, and entering without warrants even when necessary in sanctuary states (Federation for American Immigration Reform, 2020). When individuals engage in this video streaming, it even goes on to protect their physical security in real-time:

[11] For the sake of participant privacy, examples of how they created these codes are omitted as its mechanism is highly specific.

"Like in [the case of] a raid or that I get arrested- I can take out my phone, I can record it, and I can do a live broadcast on Facebook, on TikTok, wherever. And that helps me a lot, so that whoever is in front of me and wants to do something to me (injure, detain me) will not do it, because I am recording it live and there are people who are going to see it, even if [ICE] takes my phone away, there will be something [that I recorded]." (Participant L)

Very clearly, I was shown by multiple participants how they had to adjust the way they carried their online personas or increase social media use to protect themselves and their communities. However, a core factor in these strategies is that these individuals felt that they had to do these things in order to maintain their migrant identity. Other participants made a point through my interviews that they had *avoided using social media "as a migrant"* in totality, purposefully to advocate that they were not a "threat" to "U.S. security" (Participant O). In practicality, this was expressed by participants aligning their views and actions on social media in agreement with the Trump administration. Participant A, a Nigerian man in his mid-30s who had entered Pennsylvania less than a month before our interview, stressed that document at-risk people who were still using social media "put themselves in difficult positions":

"Following rules and regulations are very important. If you are told, 'okay, this is what it's supposed to [be, you] adhere to it"

He went on to explain that the administration had the "right" to enact what laws they choose, and that if people who were not legally residing in the U.S. used social media and that resulted in them being detained, then it was their responsibility. He emphasized feeling sad about this, but saw it as a risk when moving to the U.S. As someone who had lived as an immigrant in both Ghana and the UK before moving to the U.S., he told me that as an "experienced" immigrant he knew that avoiding social media completely would keep him secure.

Similar sentiments were shared by a 43-year-old Ecuadorian woman who had resided in New York for 2 years (Participant P), who shared that she stopped using social media because of a fear of the administration's content and possible surveillance but also because she felt she needed to respect their anti-immigration securitizing rhetoric: "We have to respect every law of every state of everything". To her, in order to ensure her own security, she needed to leave the spaces being (rightfully) securitized by the administration.

Finally, other participants shared feelings of ambivalence about choosing to stop using social media, as they didn't feel it was a big deal to them and simultaneously, the administration's right to enact securitization if was in alignment with the laws they wanted. Participant C was a Ghanian man in his 30s who had been living in Pennsylvania for about a year and emphasized that he appreciated living in a country that had strict rules set. He made it clear that privacy should not be violated and freedom should be ensured to anyone in the U.S. as long as they were there legally. He agreed that if this was not the case, then the methods the Trump administration was engaging in to securitize migration were

valid, but noted he felt the content they shared was too negative or threatening and it pushed him to stop using social media.

Ultimately, the conversations I had with my participants revealed that all of them had indeed changed the practiced routines of their "everyday" when engaging on social media in response to the Trump administration's securitizing of migration on those platforms. While all participants noted restriction in how either themselves or personal connections used these digital platforms, other ways individuals shifted their habits to ensure security through increasing social media use to disperse information to other members of their community, or avoiding social media entirely. The examples shown are partial, vivid accounts of participants' strategies, intended to show the multiple narratives through which document-at-risk immigrants recreate their everyday practices to ensure bottom-up security.

6.3| Lived Emotional Experiences as decision makers

This dimension will analyze the lived experiences of participants' (in)security, and the emotional and embodied aspects of these experiences. The analysis of these experiences is core to understanding participants' "everyday", but it is noted within Everyday Security theory that the abstract and nuanced components of these experiences make them "incredibly hard to research" (Nyman, 2021, pg. 320). In reflection of this, my goal with this analysis is to understand the emotional reflections of participants to their (in)security, and how it has developed their retelling of experiences. The retellings of participants' stories and lived experiences tells us about how navigating securitization affects overall wellbeing, which is a crucial aspect of ensuring personal security (Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016). While Everyday Security evaluates lived experiences as a result of imposed top-down security alone (Nyman, 2021; Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016), I will go beyond that to display how lived experiences are also shaped by the emotions related to acts of self-ensured security practices. Therefore, this analysis focuses on 1) emotions within lived experiences of insecurity, 2) how these emotions propel decision-making regarding routines and mundane spaces, and 3) the subsequent emotions that develop due to the navigations of these dimensions, which extends on present Everyday Security literature. Importantly, each interview contained verbalizations or expressions of each emotion, and they were exemplary of how these emotions fuse together to create full-bodied lived experiences. While I could not do a full analysis of their embodied experiences or how emotions are expressed in the body, I do take note of shifts in tone, visible emotional changes, etc to convey the impact of their lived experiences in reflection of the administration's securitization via social media. This section will be divided by the emotions most expressed in the interviews- peripheries of anger, grief, and hope. By periphery emotions, I refer to synonyms of anger, grief, and hope as defined by Merriam-Webster (2025). Ultimately, this analysis sheds light on how the Trump administration's securitization of migration- specifically through social media- affects the emotional experiences of the lives he targets.

6.3.1/ Anger and its Peripheries

During many of the interviews I had, a common emotion expressed through explaining personal stories, opinions, and choices for navigating Everyday Security was anger and its periphery emotions of frustration, betrayal and contempt (Merriam-Webster, 2025). Participants expressed these emotions both in verbatim but also through the body-language, tone, and specific vernacular used to refer to their experiences and feelings.

In terms of how respondents phrased aspects of anger into their experiences of insecurity, much was specifically directed towards perceived traits of Trump and his administration, largely feeling a sense of betrayal of humanity in the way they had conducted their securitization efforts on social media:

"The White House under Trump, it's soulless. It's cruel. [They] just don't care about the humanity of anything… They want to see us gone. They want to see us stripped away from our dignity, from our humanity." (Participant G, New Jersey)

Participant G carried much of this frustration and sense of injustice throughout the entirety of his interview, remarking how the "dog-whistles and propaganda" the administration had posted to securitize migration sparked his increase in posting content to keep his community safe (see 'Daily Routines'). The 'anger' that participant G expressed felt more like a passion he had to fight for immigrants because he believed that U.S. institutions were "not going to help [them]". While his wording was blunt, his tone was calm and reassured. When I commented on this, he remarked that the current reality was the 'new normal' and ultimately did not warrant any large reactions about it anymore.

Others though, were more animated with their frustration, especially when it related to their feelings of how they had to change their mundane spaces and practice routines due to the administration's securitization. Participant I noted that he had become angry for himself, after remembering his reality as a child:

"I grew up undocumented, and I feel like I grew up already with those limitations and my mindset like, I can't do this, I can't go to school. My friends [can do] this, my friend that. And then when you become an adult and you start seeing that [even though] all of this time has [passed] and now you're facing [a time just like before]… it impacts me emotionally… I wanted to do so many things and now it just kind of limits me."

He also expressed frustration over how communities he was a part of had become divided due to Trump's online messaging:

"In the immigrant community, ever since the new administration came [into power], I feel like a lot of different nationalities are causing more divisions. It's easy to blame, you know, "the folks that just came" like these Venezuelans and these Colombians, these Ecuadorians, etc. So it's causing division amongst our own community. And it's because the narrative [from the administration] are things that

they sell to our own. Um, so I feel like there's a lot of anger. There's a lot of hurt as well" (Participant I, New Jersey).

He went on to explain how the anger and hurt seen in his communities caused people to either rely on each other further for support or chose to separate themselves from the identity of the "bad migrants" verbalized by the administration. This further substantiates specific shifts of routines seen in 'Daily Routines' to either increase community participation on social media or avoid it completely to dissimilate from migrant identity. As Participant I really thought that he had seen an improvement in the lives of immigrants since he came to the U.S., seeing these regressions of freedom return made him upset and worried for himself and his family in the future.

It was also evident in many conversations how feelings such as contempt melted into feelings of anxiety, showing that it wasn't always clear which emotions directed people's perspectives. Participant F, after seeing the administration's securitizing rhetoric on her social media platforms, thought about how quickly she became identified as an outsider to a country she had spent 11 years investing in. Her deep sense of betrayal by a country she decided to raise her family in soon transitioned into expressions of anxiety within the interview, and she started to mention her concerns through questions phrased with a hastened tone, emphasizing her anger. This started when she told a story she saw on social media of a man who had been arrested after committing a traffic violation and had been detained by ICE after assuming his immigration status.

"Oh God… what if I forget to indicate (a turn signal) and I'm pulled over even though my license is valid just because I'm black? I have an accent already, [which is] a probe into my immigration status… will I [still] be entitled to a fair hearing as [an immigrant]? I just have made peace with the fact that any day could be my last day in the U.S., not because I've broken the law, but because the government decided [so]. I am now in a space where, most of the time, I wonder if I should really make long-term investments in the U.S." (Participant F, New Jersey)

While talking about her lived experiences translating her feelings of betrayal as directing the way she acts on an everyday basis, Participant F shifted her tone and emphasized her sadness about the current reality for her. She began to slow her speed of talking and spent more time focusing on the fear and worry she was experiencing. These feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, and ultimately, grief, were shown through most interviews.

6.3.2/ Grief and its Peripheries

As feelings of grief, and its peripheries of sadness, anxiety, worry, and fear were present in almost every interview, the following descriptions reflect common retellings of experiences. Again, depicting and describing lived experiences cannot be applied generally as each experience has extremely nuanced emotional embodiments (Nyman, 2021). However, the conscious decision to include these retellings reflect how these feelings of grief directed intentional actions in regard to experiencing and combatting insecurity.

First, it is important to acknowledge multiple interviews where fear was expressed by participants unwilling to respond to my questions with understandable distrust in my research. Participants A, E, J, M, and P had iterated that they were concerned with speaking to me about possible responses they gave me being shared with parties that could target them, most specifically in response to questions where I brought up the words of 'the administration', 'Trump', or 'the president'. They felt more comfortable answering questions about questions where I only referred to 'the current political climate on social media' and similar wordings. This was completely understandable and created no issues for the interviews, as I could adapt my terminology and move to other questions participants felt more comfortable with. Still, it is important to note that this fear, while not always verbalized, was clearly present.

As for conversations where these feelings of grief and subsequent emotions were expressed verbatim, participants noted that their main reasoning for changing their routines or mundane spaces was due to the fear or anxiety they felt. This was the most distinctive in comparison to anger or hope, where they felt a clear correlation between their experiencing of insecurity from social media and their feelings of grief (and periphery emotions). An example provided by Participant N, a 32-year-old man from Guatemala who had been in New Jersey for 2 years, was a sentiment shared by over 5 participants. Since seeing the content that the administration had produced and shared on social media, he shared that:

"It changes your thinking. Obviously, we can no longer go out on the street freely. I mean, it is not safe. I feel less safe because of the threat of deportations; I am less confident in going outside."

As it was reiterated by many participants that they felt their fear changed their experiences in their everyday spaces, it also became the driving force to their social media navigation. Participant O shared with me how she had a grandson who had been born after the administration was sworn into power, and since Trump share his priority to abolish birthright U.S. citizenship (Wofsy, 2025), she was scared to publish any content about her son on the platform or through messaging:

"[I feel] bad, super bad. It has affected me a lot because now it's scary to, uh, write something or say something because you can't even have a picture of your grandchildren in diapers because that's bad for U.S. security. Whether it's my grandson or me being his grandmother." (Participant O, New York).

And while some had strong feelings of anxiety, fear, or sadness, some participants felt hopeless, affecting their decision-making about whether to prioritize safety for themselves or their community. This was a key point made by an 18-year-old male from Guatemala, who had lived in New Jersey for two years (Participant M). He struggled with the fact that others who had just arrived went through the difficult journey of traveling to the U.S. and wanted to help them stay. However, after seeing the content of the administration, he felt that he lost any power he may have had, and needed to make sure he would be safe first:

"It's sad, because it's like thinking about everything that you went through and seeing them go through it. Because I would like to help them. But at the same time like if I [know that I] can't do anything for them, then I just can't [try]. I would like to help them. But at the same time, I'm [sad] because I can't do much for them."

Most of all, I was told the extreme measures in which the administration's securitization of migration affected the overall wellbeing of participants and their personal connections. Participant H shared with me how his brother had been arrested and detained from a public place and was told by ICE that his offense to be set for deportation was unpaid parking tickets. However, he did not own a car and could not drive. Unfortunately, he and his brother didn't have the legal resources to combat this, and his brother was transported around the U.S. to various detainment centers before he asked to self-deport[12]. He saw similar stories like his brother's appear repeatedly on his social media feeds, but that the administration framed it as 'necessary' (Pemberton, 2025). Participant H became emotional as he told me how he saw videos of ICE agents using unnecessary force because "the illegals had to go dead or alive". He told me he hoped his brother didn't go through that and that he didn't wish to either. He expanded on his lived experience, but instead of detailing his changed routines or mundane spaces, expressed the toll the administration's securitization took on himself and people he knew:

"It makes you have a lot of stress and a lot of people when they look on the platforms and look at how [ICE] are attacking people, they feel sick and that's why today there are a lot of people who are taking their lives, killing themselves. If you understand me well, I know it is because they look at everything that is going on and, well yeah".

Ultimately, many participants noted that they wished for the times before the administration started to securitize on social media, as they wanted their "freedom from fear" (Floyd, 2007, pg. 39) back. However, in spite of this, they looked towards the possibilities of the future. In the experiences shared by my participants, the emotions of hope, optimism, calmness, and positivity also resonated in the retellings of their stories.

6.3.3/ Hope and its Peripheries

Participant E, a Namibian man in his 50s who had resided in New Jersey for 11 years, commented that although he had deep feelings of frustration and anxiety, he refused to give up on the country that he had called home. It was ultimately the support he saw through social media from fellow immigrants, but also U.S. citizens, that made him feel positive about the future:

"Americans and, you know, well-meaning citizens, they're just speaking out and, telling their stories and the narratives of what these communities mean for the United States and [they are] inspiring the

[12] Due to the limitations of this research paper, explaining why detainees are transported numerous times before deportation cannot be explored, but it is crucial to mention this to display the human rights violations that detainees go through

United States. And actually, what makes America great is because of this diversity and all those immigrants that are out there. And for me, it gives me hope."

For others, the act of engaging in social media to provide security for themselves and their community helped them feel optimistic, as it gained traction through various platforms. While it also included feelings of fear, using these platforms to combat the administration's securitization efforts left them feeling more hopeful, empowered and politically engaged:

"I think a lot of people are scared, but I think it's like kind of helpful because we can share information for social media. We can report and everything." (Participant J, New Jersey)

"But those kinds of moments, like seeing that the community can actually come together, or I remember seeing another video of a guy who was patrolling his neighborhood (to see where ICE was), and his three kids were in the back of the car, you know, like, that's something that I think gives me hope that no matter how bad it seems to be getting, the community will still come together to try to find something to do." (Participant K, New Jersey)

"[Now,] pushing back [means] us getting together and organizing to at least, on a state level, getting our elected officials to commit to actually supporting immigrants. I cannot say much about the federal government, unfortunately, but at least in a state like New Jersey, where Democratic officials claim to care about immigrants, it's time to make them accountable and actually take action." (Participant G, New Jersey)

While it should be noted there were many participants that did not express optimism for the future, participants who did feel hope said it "was just the beginning". More specifically, seeing their communities secure their safety through digital platforms made them feel positivity that wouldn't have existed if they would only witness the administration's securitized rhetoric of migration. Typically, analyzing emotional and lived experiences through Everyday Security theory only involves feelings from experiencing pressures of insecurity (Nyman, 2021; Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016). However, through analyzing these interviews, it is clear that engaging in acts to ensure bottom-up security also generates emotional and embodied experiences that are important to take into account, as navigating securitization affects overall wellbeing- a crucial aspect of ensuring personal security (Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016).

Chapter 7| Conclusions

This research sought out to answer the question of how targeted immigrant groups use social media to ensure their own sense of security in a context of heightened securitization and anti-immigrant rhetoric and action by Donald Trump's 47th presidential administration of the United States. This was prefaced by theoretical conceptualizations and an extensive literature review.

Through developing this research, a first sub-question was necessary to set the stage for further analysis- in what ways does the 47th U.S. administration use social media as a tool for state securitization? By exploring the administration's anti-immigration social media content through the core axes of Securitization Theory (Ceyhan and Tsoukala, 2002), the government's current use of social media is indeed identified as a tool of securitization of migration. In alignment with the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, this is done through declarative "speech acts" that broadcast migration on social media as a "threat to the state's survival" (Buzan, Waever and Wilde, 1998) to the American public. However, addressing gaps in securitization literature, this research moreover found that it is the administration's combined use of visuals and references to popular culture within digital platforms that further fortifies and normalizes this securitization.

To analyze how targeted immigrant groups navigate social media as a result of the administration's securitizing content, two sub questions (2&3) arose- how does it affect said communities and their sense of security, as well their own social media perceptions and strategy of use? To answer those inquiries, this research employed semi-structured qualitative methods to bring out and engage with participants' narratives, a crucial strategy for working with migrant groups in risky contexts (Morawska, 2018; Pillow, 2019; Jianbin, 2024). Subsequently, following the dimensions outlined within Everyday Security theory (Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016), navigations of social media were revealed by participants through their mundane spaces, routine practices, and emotional lived experiences (Nyman, 2021).

In response to sub-question 2; the mundane spaces participants discussed were deeply affected by the administration's securitization content on social media and shifted their sense of security in those respective spaces. Primarily, mundane spaces were seen to be digital just as much as physical, where social media platforms usually seen as curated to personal taste became infiltrated by the administration's content and enriches previous Everyday Security literature where the public and private is deemed as "separate" (Nyman, 2021). Participants saw this trickle into their everyday physical lives, where due to the content they had seen from the administration, mundane spaces they frequently visited were deemed as "unsafe" and therefore needed to stop engaging in them.

Reflecting on sub-question 3; member of these communities either felt that their perceptions of social media shifted to be both a space and tool that could either cause them harm or were great help to ensure their own security against the administration's efforts. Based on these thought processes, core strategies used included restricting their self-expression on social media to be seen as 'non-threatening'; increasing their use of social media to share information for fellow community members; and the avoidance of social media in its entirety to dissimilate from migrant identity.

While Everyday Security literature only evaluates how emotions are created by feeling insecurity (Nyman, 2021), this research discovered that not only are emotional lived experiences produced by feelings of insecurity and prompt new strategies to ensure personal security, but they also create new emotions as a result of ensuring personal security. Participants identified core emotional peripheries, centered around anger, grief, and hope, but spanning a wider spectrum of similar emotions. These were noted as present in various stages as a result of the securitization of migration through social media by the Trump administration. These emotional lived experiences add depth in not only answering the two questions above, but also the main research question that inspired this paper:

Ultimately, targeted immigrant groups navigate social media when it becomes both a securitized space and securitizing tool by

1) shifting their existence within- or leaving completely- their physical and digital 'mundane' spaces

2) changing their digital routines by restricting self-expression, increasing use for community protection, or avoiding completely dissimilating their migrant identity

3) experiencing core emotions of anger, grief, and hope as a result to the administration's securitization of migration, and using those emotions as driving forces to enact their decision making- which in turn generates new emotional and embodied experiences that impact their wellbeing

There are limitations to this study, primarily the short time frame to conduct fieldwork and build rapport, and the level of background information gathered from participants. Prioritizing ethical concerns and to keep my respondents safe, I know and share very little about their livelihoods, which are core factors in how they verbalize their experiences of securitization and perspectives of insecurity. Only if ethically viable, future research that explores long-term, more in-depth personal impacts of digital securitization of migration could greatly expand on the research done here.

Overall, this research comes at a crucial time when completing research on social justice in the U.S. context is deeply risky (Klein, Krupa and Rose, 2025). It expands on how securitization is implemented and experienced in the digital 21st century, and further displays how security can be created through bottom-up initiatives – and why it is important to do so. This research also provides concrete examples on how targeted individuals use social media to ensure their security, and could be used as inspiration to create workshops and community spaces to increase individual agency. Additionally, this research provides lessons for global contexts as possible securitization of migration through social media may spread in the future. The dissemination of this research empowers theory to practical use, aiming to encourage individuals and local communities that ensuring personal security is possible even when their political institutions will not provide it.

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Appendix A: History

Past to Present of U.S. Securitization of Migration

Until 1960s

The United States began changing strategies in immigration control as early as the beginning of the 20th century. The Immigration Act of 1917 began the first documented policy for excludable categories of migrants in the United States. This was enacted on a large scale in 1919 when Mexican immigrants were required to request admission into the country at a port of entry, ending previous years of unrestricted migration for cheap labor (D'Appollonia, 2017). Furthermore, quota policies came into effect in 1921, which not only put numerical restrictions on Mexicans entering the country, but also established the agency of Customs and Border Control, which subsequently announced the first documented illegalized immigration "crisis" (ibid, 2017). Deportation of immigrants in the United States had already been normalized starting with the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798-1801 (against those deemed foreign and criticizing the United States), but the first documented deportations based on stereotypes of ethnic background occurred between the 1930s and 40s, where Mexicans or Americans with Mexican ethnicity were deported due to fear of "taking needed jobs and worsening economic prospects" during the Great Depression (Florido, 2015). Towards 1940, around 2 million people with Mexican ethnicity were deported, approximately 60% of them U.S. citizens (American Historical Association, 2025). Soon after, labor programs begun to recoup these populations as the U.S. needed cheap labor, which also prompted unauthorized entry- as a result, more mass deportations occurred, one of the most famous being "Operation Wetback" in 1954, again deporting as many as 1.3 million people based on Mexican ethnicity and not citizenship (Peralta, 2015). This was further solidified by its name, "wetback" being a derogatory term referring to "the act of swimming across the Rio Grande, one of the historical methods used by undocumented Mexican immigrants to enter the U.S." (Toft, 2023).

70s to 00s

Framing securitization as a normalization of mass deportations due to stereotypes of ethnic groups continued through the 1970s and 1980s, in part due to the War on Drugs. Started by President Nixon (until 1974) and continued by President Reagan (from 1981), the War on Drugs framed deportations (and heightened incarceration) as a normal occurrence in an effort to provide security constantly, instead of ebbs and flows of expulsion and recouperation of migrant populations. Combined with television forwarding stereotypes of Hispanics as "crime and drug lords" (The Los Angeles Times, 2021), as well as the Federal Communication Commission no longer requiring bipartisan news broadcasts in 1987 (McKenzie, 2023), fearmongering based on political ideologies and ethnic stereotypes was easily carried out. Securitization of migration structured by the U.S. government as keeping deportations constant for "preventative measures" was furthered justified through its use of media.

Towards the end of the 20th century, rigid policy which set restrictions against "illegal immigrants" was met with the paradox of the United States' focus on international humanitarian aid as well as refugee and asylum seeker protections. This necessitated the debate of who was categorized as the "good" or "bad" migrant, in part triggered by The Refugee Act of 1980 signed into law by President Carter before his exit from office in January 1981 (Gzesh, 2006). This act solidified the wording that a "refugee" is any person with a "well-founded fear of persecution" (United States Department of State, 2020). However, this act was deeply antagonistic to the Reagan administration, who felt that the act should be used for those "fleeing from communism", not for the large amount of those fleeing countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua due to civil war and economic hardship (Gzesh, 2006). Despite most migrants from these countries claiming asylum due to government repression and violence against anyone deemed with socialist ideas, the Reagan administration declared they did not identify said governments as violating human rights (ibid, 2006). As Gzesh (2006) states, "approval rates for Salvadoran and Guatemalan asylum cases were under three percent in 1984. In the same year, the approval rate for Iranians was 60 percent, 40 percent for Afghans fleeing the Soviet invasion, and 32 percent for Poles".

In alignment with previous policies securitizing "illegal" migration, nationality of those wishing to enter the U.S. was the main evaluation point in granting asylum. However, as shown during the 1980s, when even presented with legal pathways, it was indicated that security of a state became fused with the idea that migrants with an "unwanted" ethnicity, regardless of their documentation status, were deemed more of a threat as individuals than were their governments (D'Appollonia, 2017). Previously, "while challenges to a state's internal security were understood in terms of criminal or otherwise disturbing activities within the boundaries of the state, threats to external security were seen as arising first and foremost from the aggressive behaviour of other states" (ibid, 2017). This was displayed especially as Reagan worked with Mexico, despite previous immigration and "security" issues, to have them deport Central Americans before they reached U.S. borders (Gzesh, 2006).

It was in the 1990s when securitization of migration meant the furthering of the U.S. borders into other countries, triggered when the World Trade Center was hit by foreign terrorists in 1993 (D'Appollonia, 2017). When the Clinton administration shaped their subsequent Border Patrol plan in 1994, it was outlined as a "new security agenda" focusing on "prevention through deterrence" (ibid, 2017). Practically, this meant harshening restrictions and punishment on non-citizens within the United States as a way to keep arrivals to a minimum. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 mandated detention of those waiting to be deported, as well as mandating that judicial review was no longer needed to remove a non-citizen, if they were deemed a "threat" (American Historical Association, 2025). When this was challenged at the Supreme Court, the act was held, the Court dictating that "the Executive should not have to disclose its "real" reasons for deeming nationals of a particular country a special threat—or indeed for simply wishing to antagonize a particular foreign country by focusing on that country's nationals" (D'Appollonia, 2017). This was the first written confirmation of the United States shifting away from securitization as an idea involving other nations, including this legislation being one of the first ways that migrants are verbalized in policy as "security threats", it also began and encouraged the use of military technology for the "detection of illegal immigration" (ibid, 2017). Solidifying the so-called migration-terrorism nexus continued throughout the decade, coming to a culmination after the turn of the century.

00s to Now

After the attacks on the United States Pentagon and Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, the migration-terrorism nexus became intertwined with technology in order to securitize the United States. This began in the form of technological surveillance secretly conducted by Bush, the National Security Agency (NSA) and his administration starting in October 2001 (Laperruque, 2021) but not exposed to the public until 2005 by the New York Times (Cole and Lederman, 2006). This program involved the surveillance of all telephone, e-mail, and internet data of those in the United States, using both state technology and private companies to collect this data (Laperruque, 2021). As this was seen due to 'necessity' after the attacks on 9/11, Bush conducted this surveillance without notification of Congress or warrants for American public, actively breaking the law as established in the Foreign Intelligence Security Act (FISA) of 1978 by the Supreme Court (ibid). There was large public and political backlash to these actions, yet the Bush administration defended their actions as they argued that any surveillance done without warrants was not violating the fourth amendment (no unreasonable search or seizure of being or belongings) because it was deemed reasonable 'emergency measures' to ensure security for the United States (Cole and Lederman, 2006). While the Bush administration faced legal dissent from federal courts, they still went on to pass the Protect America Act in 2007 and then restructured it to the FISA Amendments Act in 2008, both of which provided protections to the federal U.S. governments for continued warrantless technological surveillance of the American people (Laperruque, 2021). While the administration was repeatedly sued and taken to federal courts, they claimed they were unable to display the data collected from the public to face legal debate as they were "state secrets" (ibid). Ultimately, this continued into the Obama administrations (2009-2017).

As the Obama administrations saw the rise of social media as a technological tool, federal agencies such as the NSA 'allegedly' began to create social media profiles in order to conduct surveillance on the public, to which platforms such as Facebook publicly expressed dissent as they noticed breaches of their security, and reached out to President Obama to curb this activity (Oreskovic, 2014). Additionally, Obama extended Bush's focus on cybersecurity as a form of protection for the United States (The White House of President Barack Obama, 2017) to the southern border, as a way to regulate border controls. Examples of these measures included "Mobile Surveillance Systems [and] Remote Video Surveillance Systems" (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2024).

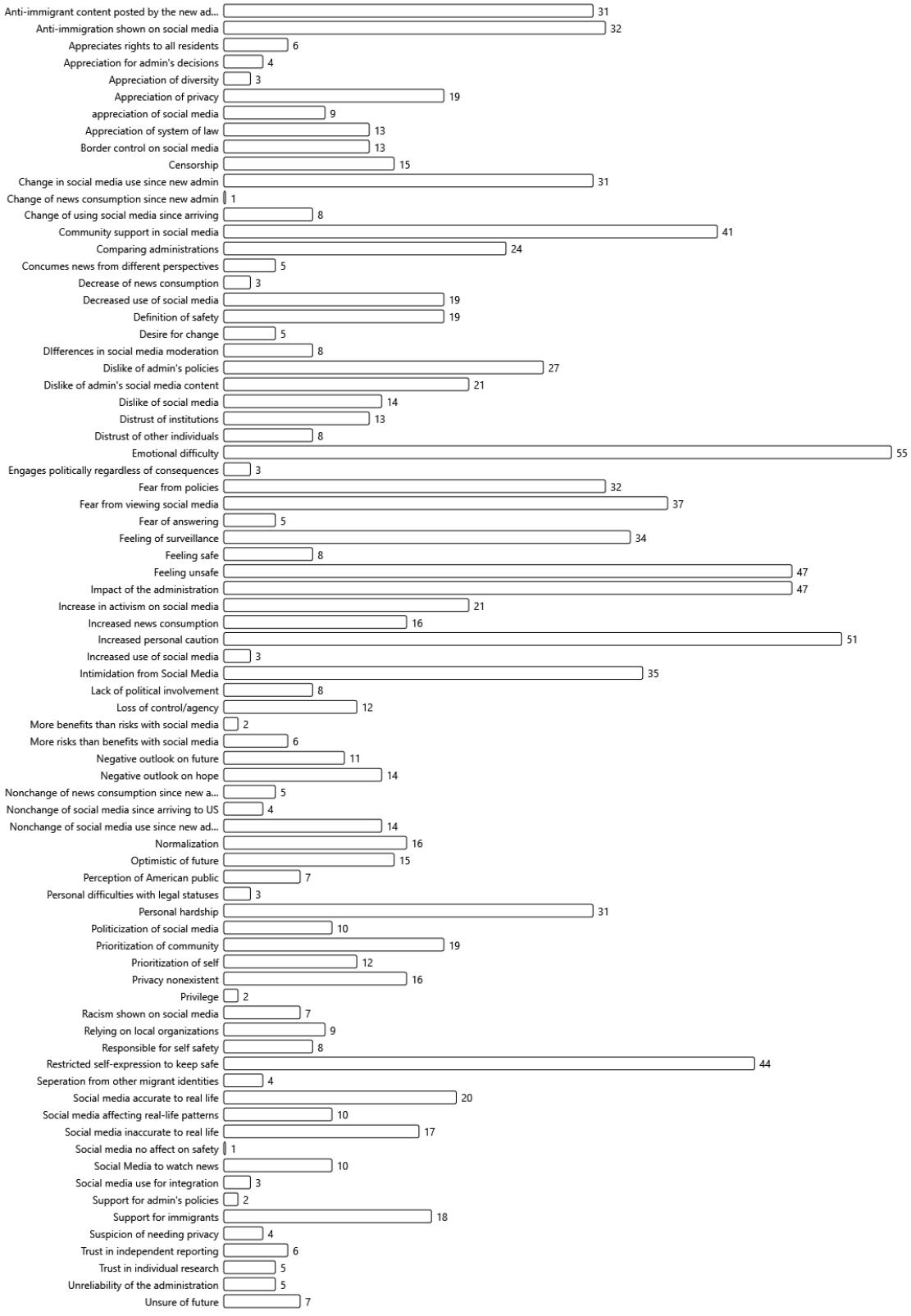
Throughout Trump's first administration, he combines the strategies of surveillance from Bush and Obama to use social media to monitor noncitizens *within* the United States. This began in January 2017 with enacting an executive order allowing "all appropriate means of ensuring the proper collection of all information necessary for a rigorous evaluation of all grounds of inadmissibility or grounds for the denial of other immigration benefits" (Brennan Center for Justice, 2021). This went on to justify programs instated by the Department of Homeland Security such as "Pilots for Social Media Screening" and the development of social media databases as shown by the Customs and Border Patrol (CBP)'s Intelligence Reporting System (ibid). Overall, this set the stage to intertwine social media and personal data with the securitization of U.S. borders as President Biden came into office in 2021.

While Biden undid many of the executive orders set by Trump involving surveillance of noncitizens within the United States, he developed the first technological tool to control border flow into the United States. This came in the form of CBP One, a digital mobile application to where those entering the U.S. from the southern border could request an appointment through a lottery system everyday at a set time (Dávila, Palacios and Thompson, 2024). Developed in 2023, it allowed users

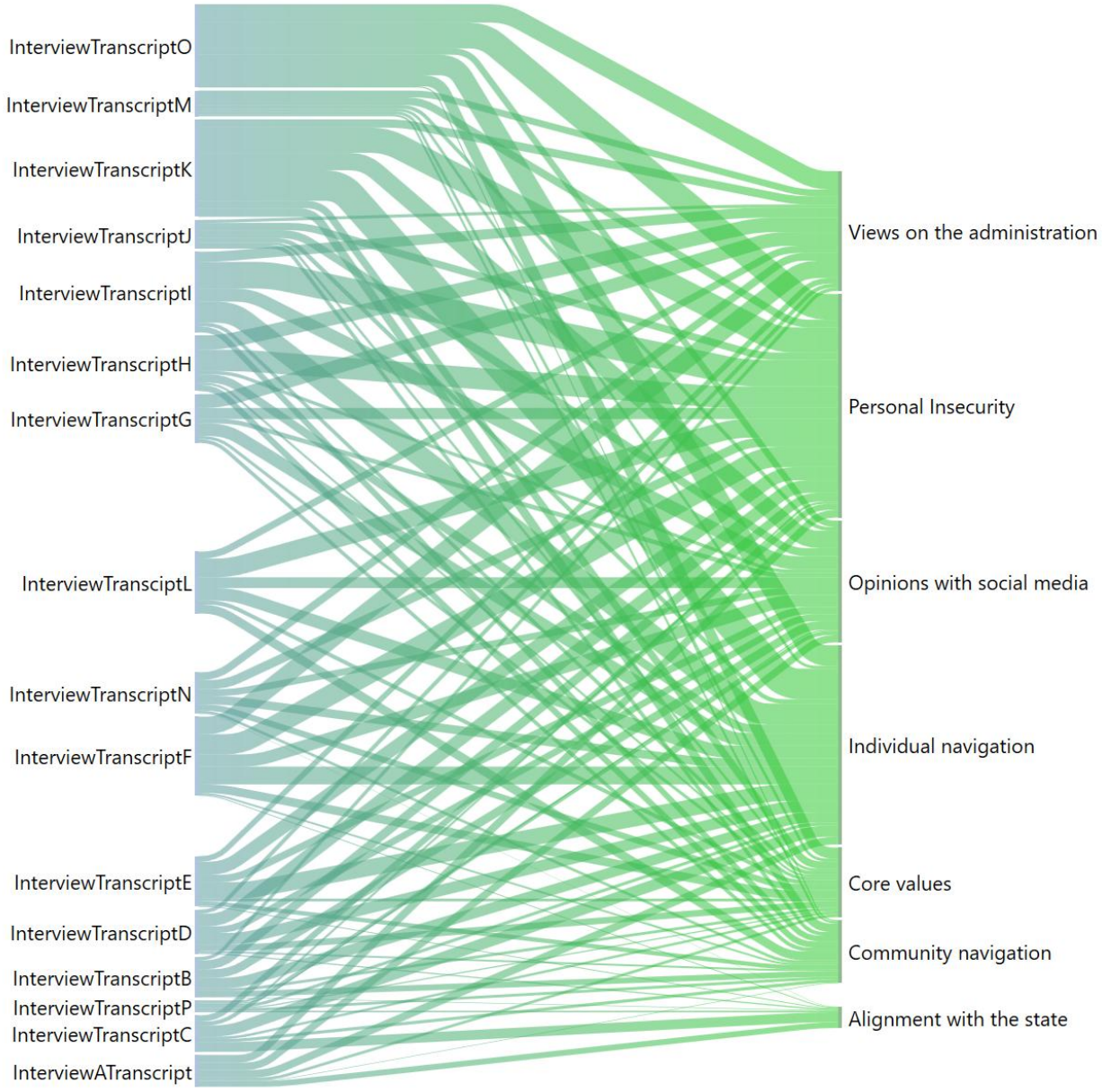
to request immigration appointment times without needing to line up at the border and was intended to keep "illegal immigration" at bay by 'systemizing migration' (ibid). However, this app came with concerns for personal data of those looking to enter the U.S. Primarily, personal information about the applicant and family members needed to be given to CBP's database, as well as biometric and location data (American Immigration Council, 2025). Additionally, this data was kept in CBP systems regardless of if noncitizens were not granted legal entry into the United States (Dávila, Palacios and Thompson, 2024). In practice, this meant that the U.S. government had access to the locations and identifying entities of any individuals south of the border, even if they had never resided in the U.S. (ibid). This set a dangerous precedent of what power the U.S. had to collect data of individuals in or out of their physical borders.

This brings the past of securitization of the U.S. into the present, with the current Trump administration. While it has been less than one year of his presidency, he has turned CBP One into an application for "illegal immigrants" to declare their intention to self-deport, as well as reinstating the executive orders from his first term to enable increases of social media surveillance on noncitizens (Stewart, Du and Lee, 2025). In addition, he has bought social media tracking technologies from private prison companies to ID potential deportees by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), as well as engaged in AI technology to monitor the speech of noncitizens on social media platforms (ibid). The ways that this administration has begun to use social media and personal technology to securitize migration is in early stages, yet it brings concerns to American citizens and noncitizens alike. As Stewart, Du, and Lee (2025) certify, "this extensive surveillance is likely to erode trust in the U.S. government… the expansion of immigration surveillance without robust privacy and free expression protections could have far-reaching efforts on all Americans".

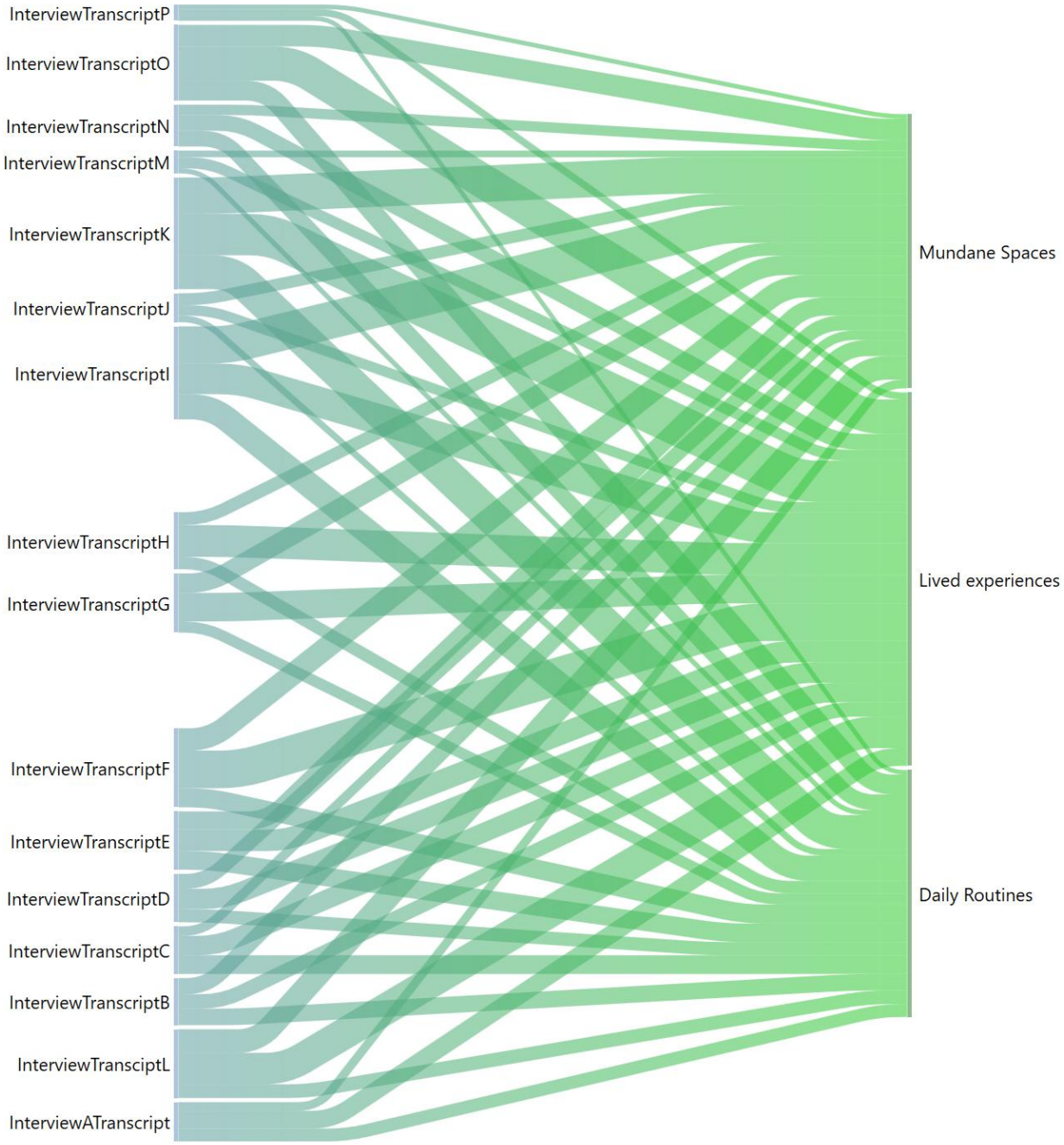
Appendix B: Codes from Data (and amount of times seen in interviews)



Appendix C: Categories of Codes in Appendix B



Appendix D: Themes of Everyday Security based on Codes in Appendix B (and Categories in Appendix C)



Appendix E: Interview Guide

Part 1:

Do you mind telling me a bit about yourself… etc

If they say "what do you want to know" then follow up

How long have you been in the US, and where have you spent most of your time while living here?

What would you say your ethnicity/nationality is? May I please ask your age?

Part 2:

- What forms of social media do you use? In what way do you use these? Can you give me examples?
- Since when do you use social media, and why did you start using it? If also using before coming to the US: how has your social media use changed since coming here?
- Can you tell me why you use social media? How is it important to you? What does it allow you to do?
- What do you appreciate about the different types of social media you use? What do you dislike?

- How has your use of social media has changed from 2024 into 2025 as the change of presidential administrations happened?
    - If so, how? If not, why not?
- What do you hear and see about immigrants and immigration through your social media?
    - What information does this entail? In what ways is this information helpful or unhelpful to you? to
- Are you familiar with the new administration's adjustments with social media on visa applications?
    - How do you feel about the new administration's policies about new visa applicants needing to make their social media profiles available and public to evaluate their applications?
- What does safety as an immigrant mean to you? What about privacy? What are the differences between those words?
- How has what you've seen in social media this year affected your ideas of security as a person and as an immigrant?

Part 3:

- How do you choose to have your privacy settings on your social media? What directs your decisions for those settings?
- How has the way you've carried your online presence shifted since the new presidential administration?
- What are your concerns using social media in 2025 that you didn't have before?
- Do you feel that some social media platforms are more helpful/useful/better to use than others? If so, explain.
- What shifts have you noticed in how you obtain your news and information within this year and say 2 years ago?
- How do you view social media being talked about in the news?

Part 4:

- How do you actively use your social media to ensure a sense of security for yourself?
    - In what ways has that changed the past year?
- Do you still continue to use your social media as frequently, or has it increased or decreased?
    - Why? If decreased, what have you chosen to use instead and why?
- How do you feel that immigrant communities protect each other on social media or through online communities?
- Do you feel that immigrants have become more focused on individual protection or group security due to the attitudes of the new presidential administration?
- Do you view social media as a friend for your security, or a curse for it?
- How do you see the opinions on immigration seen on social media also be apparent in real life?
- What strategies have you used to take care of your own wellbeing for the various headlines you see on social media?
- With the obvious attitudes this government has made towards immigration, how do you choose to process it? What are your overall views on it?
- How do you envision immigration policy with the US government changing in the coming years?
- What is the best thing you've seen on social media platforms that is hopeful for immigrant communities?

Appendix F: Participant Descriptions

Participant	Amount of Time in US	Where residing in US	Self-identified gende	Age	Self-Identified Nationality	Code most present in interview	Date of Interview
A	Less than a month	Pennsylvania	Male	mid-30s	Nigerian	Decreased use of social media	16-Aug-25
B	Almost 2 years	Pennsylvania	Male	30s	Nigerian	Community support in social media	16-Aug-25
C	A bit over 1 years	Pennsylvania	Male	30s	Ghanian	Appreciation of system of law	16-Aug-25
D	Almost 1 years	Pennsylvania	Male	30s	Ghanian	Increased personal caution, feeling u	16-Aug-25
E	11 years	New Jersey	Male	50s	Namibian	Increased personal caution	19-Aug-25
F	11 years	New Jersey	Female	early 40s	Namibian	Impact of the administration, increase	28-Aug-25
G	13 years	New Jersey	Male	24	Peruvian	Dislike of admin's social media conte	03-Sep-25
H	6 years	New Jersey	Male	35	Guatemalan	Emotional Difficulty	04-Sep-25
I	23 years	New Jersey	Male	32	Ecuadorian	Anti-immigration content posted by th	04-Sep-25
J	2 years	New Jersey	Female	18	Guatemalan	Anti-immigration shown on social mec	04-Sep-25
K	12 years	New Jersey	Female	20	Salvadorian	Restricted self-expression to keep sa	05-Sep-25
L	11 years	New Jersey	Male	35	Honduran	Emotional Difficulty, personal hardshi	06-Sep-25
M	Almost 6 years	New Jersey	Male	18	Guatemalan	Dislike of admin's policies	09-Sep-25
N	2 years	New Jersey	Male	32	Guatemalan	Lack of political involvement	09-Sep-25
O	8 years	New York	Female	52	Ecuadorian	Increased personal caution	09-Sep-25
P	2 years	New York	Female	43	Ecuadorian	Community support in social media	09-Sep-25

Appendix G: Consent Form (then verbally communicated in English or Spanish)

Information and consent form

Dear Participant,

My name is Grace Forrest, a Master's student and researcher from the International Institute of Social Studies. ISS is based as part of Erasmus University Rotterdam, in The Hague, The Netherlands.

I am incredibly pleased to invite you to take part in this study! Please know if there are any words or concepts that are unclear, I am happy to give further explanation, and I welcome questions at any time.

If you wish to participate in the study, you can indicate this at the end of this form.

What is the research about?

This research is about how people choose to use social media in response to how their communities are shown on social media. Since social media can show many different thing about different people, we want to know if and how people in immigrant communities react to how they are stereotypically shown on different platforms. Additionally, we want to know if stories shown on social media change how these communities use and view social media, and how it changes your idea of safety.

We ask you to participate because based on the information you have shared with us, you are part of a community that is currently talked about a lot on social media, and has also been talked about a lot online by the current U.S. government.

What can you expect?

I would love the opportunity to interview uou and listen to your experiences through a 30 minute interview. This interview would be us talking about your experiences with social media. Please know I am not looking to know your past experiences unrelated to social media. This would be a conversation exploring how your views, usage, and ideas of safety via social media have changed in current political contexts.

At the end of the interview/discussion, you will have the opportunity to comment on your answers. If you disagree with my notes or if I misunderstood you, you can ask to have parts of them amended or deleted.

You decide whether to participate

Participation in this study is completely 100% voluntary. You can stop at any time and would not need to provide any explanation.

What can cause potential discomfort?

With your permission, the interview will be recorded. Your name will not be in the recording. If you do not wish to be recorded, please let me know, that is no issue.

While I will not be asking for past experiences, it is still possible that they can be brought up by you to relate to other things. That is completely okay. After our interview, we can review what was said together and you can tell me if you would like that to be deleted from the data. While I cannot delete it from the audio, I can delete it from the transcription. After I upload the audio from my phone to my computer, the audio will be protected in a database based in The

Netherlands, not the United States. After saving it on the database and physical external flashdrive, I will delete it from my phone.

If you feel that this interview would be difficult to do alone, please feel free to bring a family member or close friend to be with you, that is also no problem.

What do you get for participating? / What are the benefits of participating?

Compensation

- After the interview, you will receive 20 (twenty) USD in the form of cash for your participation.

If you quit the study earlier, you will be compensated for the parts you participated in.

Benefits

- After participating in the study, you will gain insight into your results, as well as the overall results.

What data will I ask you to provide?

I will store your contact data so that I can be in contact with you. For the study, I will also need other data from you.

During the interview, I will ask you about the following personal data: Name, age, gender, audio recordings, and feelings about your safety in relation to social media with current political standings.

In addition, it is also possible that you will talk about your political affiliation and/or philosophical beliefs and those of others, as these may also relate to your opinion about decisions relating to social media.

I do understand that it is possible that I collect data about you in regards to your documentation status if it is brought up by you. As I previously stated, I am making sure that all audio files and data is handled via a Dutch database, not American. Additionally, if you wish to tell me any information that you would like me not to record, that is also okay. My priority is to complete this research thoroughly, but not to any expense of safety.

I will need either your email or phone number to send you the results and final research if you wish.

Who can see your data? / What will happen to my data?

- I store all your data securely via Yoda, a Dutch database via Erasmus University Rotterdam.
- Only I (the principle researcher) can see the data.
- Recordings are transcribed. Your name is replaced with a number/made-up name.
- Direct Data such as the recordings will be stored separately from the transcription.
- Once completed, the research will be accessible from the Erasmus University Rotterdam thesis database, and can be accessed by anyone.
- If possible, we will write an article about the results of the study which will be published in academic journals and/or books. The results will be accessible by anyone.
- We may use your specific answers or quotes in the final thesis. If your answer can be traced to you, we will ask your permission first.

Although we do not include your name in publications or communicate it to other participants or third parties, there is a risk that you could still be indirectly identified. [This for example because they are familiar with the organisation you work for. This for example because they are familiar with your expertise and the organisation you work for]

How long will your personal data be stored?

Your data will be retained for 10 years after completion of the research. We retain the data so that other researchers have the opportunity to verify that the research was conducted correctly. Your name and contact details will be deleted within one year.

What happens with the results of the study?

You may indicate if you would like to receive the results.

Do you have questions about the study?

If you have any questions about the study or your privacy rights, such as accessing, changing, deleting, or updating your data, please contact me.

Name: Grace Forrest
Phone number via WhatsApp: +31639181661
Email: grace.forrest@student.eur.nl

Do you have a complaint or concerns about your privacy? Please email the Data Protection Officer (fg@eur.nl) or visit www.autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl. (T: 088 - 1805250)

Do you regret your participation?

During or after the study, you may regret your participation. Please indicate this by contacting me. Deleting your data is no longer possible if the data has been anonymized, making it impossible to trace which data came from you. Anonymizing the data is done within one week after the data was collected.

Ethics approval

This research has been reviewed and approved by an internal review committee within International Institute of Social Studies at Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Declaration of Consent

I have read the information letter. I understand what the study is about and what data will be collected from me. I was able to ask questions as well. My questions were adequately answered.

By signing this form, I:

1. consent to participate in this research;
2. consent to the use of my personal data
3. confirm that I am at least 18 years old;
4. confirm that I understand that participating in this research is completely voluntary and that I can stop at any time;
5. confirm that I understand that my data will be anonymised for publication, educational purposes and further research;

Check the boxes below if you consent to this.

Personal Data

I consent to the collection, use and retention of the following data: political and philosophical opinions. ☐

Audio recording
I consent to the interview being audio recorded. ☐

Visual recording (only for online interviews, ignore if in person)
I consent to the interview being filmed. ☐

Name of participant:

Participant's signature: **Date:**

You will receive a copy of the complete information and consent form.