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*There and Back Again:
Online Media Engagement of Transnational Migrants in London*

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Abstract

The issue of how transnational migration is conceptualized has long been debated. This thesis argues that there are essential differences between the embodiment of old and new transnational migration. It does so by setting out to examine how new forms of technology have affected transnational migrants and how having to deal with multiple audiences influences their online media engagement. Advancing prior studies, this thesis attempts to contribute to the field of transnationalism by arguing for the importance of a new conceptualization of transnational migrants, one that takes into account their everyday engagement and the fact that it takes place within fluid spaces.

The thesis focuses on migrants living in London and the online engagement of both labour and education migrants through qualitative semi-structured interviews. The interviews are interpreted with a coding scheme developed using Adrian Athique's *transnational spectrum* framework and Peter Dahlgren and Annette Hill's *parameters of media engagement* model in order to show how multidimensional migrants' online engagement is. The analysis is structured along three separate themes relating to migrants' online engagement: *Role of Media in Integrating into New Life in London and Finding a Sense of Belonging*; *Online Media Engagement (Five Parameters)*; and *Online Self-Expression*.

Throughout, this thesis will argue that migrants' online engagement is multimodal, and their online media engagement is complex. Supporting this notion, the analysis finds that a person's self-identity and the environment they find themselves in will also play an important role in how and to what extent a person engages, and disengages, with online media. However, while there may be similarities amongst the migrants on the surface level, this research found that everyone has their own story and every migrants' online engagement is nuanced.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Brexit election result on June 24, 2016, showed that 52 per cent of the United Kingdoms (UK) population wanted to leave the European Union (EU). However, results from London painted a very different picture, given that 60 per cent voted to remain in the EU. These results showed that the capital's population, which stands at over nine million as of 2021, is by far the most diverse and transnational in the UK. It also highlighted that London was more than just the UK's central financial district but also a "global media, tourist and transport hub" (Oliver 2018). Furthermore, it demonstrated the vast contrast between the nationalistic political sentiments of some parts of the UK and London's opposing view that we live in a more globalised world than ever before. Therefore, London represents a world and a way of thinking that acknowledges that people are more connected than they have been in the past. In other words, the Brexit result highlighted London's transnationalism. Instead of regarding migrants as a burden, they felt welcomed in the capital, particularly highly skilled migrants. However, it is undeniable that the Brexit result came as a shock to many migrants, whose feelings and long-term plans in the city were impacted. Regardless, the capital has, for a long time, been an attractive destination for migrants because of its offers of career escalation and global networking opportunities (Mullholland & Ryan 2018).

The idea that people will spend their entire lives in one geographical location, thereby living by one particular set of cultural norms, is perhaps not as normal as it used to be nowadays in the 21st century (Levitt & Schiller 2004). It is becoming increasingly common for people to belong to more than one society simultaneously in recent decades (Skeldon 2018: 4). As a result of these changes, the interest in the research field of transnationalism has grown exponentially. While people crossing borders and relocating to new countries is not a new phenomenon, there is still a need to look at transnationalism since several things have changed in recent years. New developments have made transportation and communication more accessible than in the past. The internet and the rise of social media applications have not just changed what *transnational media* means but has also changed what the definition of an audience and user is (Gershon & Kamalipour 2019: 37). Since migration almost always leads to some form of family separation on some level, "the need for transnational communication between migrants and their left-behind families" is perhaps more important than ever before (Madianou & Miller 2012: 170).

This thesis sets out to examine how new forms of technology have affected transnational migrants and how having to deal with multiple audiences influences their online media engagement. While people crossing borders and relocating to new countries is not a new phenomenon, there is still a need to look at transnationalism since several things have changed in recent years, and new developments have made transportation and communication more accessible than in the past. Advancements in technology and ways of thinking have merged the world “in ways that reconfigure the contemporary organization of power and identities” (Schiller 1997: 155). These developments have led scholars in the field to argue for a restructuring of transnationalism and rethinking the conception of “the local, national, regional” (ibid).

Moreover, this thesis will also emphasise the importance of “the individual” when studying the media practices of transnational migrants. It is essential to analyse how transnational migrants view themselves and reflect upon their own online media engagement to conceptualize better the effects of being a transnational migrant in London and its influence on their engagement. Several scholars in the past have argued that the early conceptions of migrants no longer suffice and that there is a need for an updated way of looking at transnational migration (Cristina Szanton-Blanc and Linda Basch, 1995; Levitt & Schiller 2004). This is important because there is now a new kind of migrant population that has emerged, one that has strong ties to their host country while simultaneously still remaining strongly influenced by their home country (Levitt & Schiller 2004: 1002). Even more recent work on migrant transnationalism calls for a more updated view of the term, one that does not view migration through “the lens of conventional migration theory” (Nowicka 2020: 1). Building on these prior studies, this thesis also suggests that a new conceptualization of migrants' transnational participation is further needed, one that understands that it takes place within different levels and takes their everyday engagement into consideration.

Transnational migration refers to belonging to more than one society at a time, which is increasingly common. However, what this thesis sets out to investigate is how transnationalism might show in migrants' engagement in online media. Individuals will respond and engage with media in various different ways based upon their own past experiences, the environment in which they find themselves in and how they identify themselves (ibid). For that reason, as will be explained in the literature review section, this

thesis will opt to use a broad model of media engagement, more specifically Peter Dahlgren and Annette Hill's *parameters of media engagement*.

Thus, migrants' transnational online media use will present different identities, leading to this thesis's central argument that transnational migrants are multidimensional, and their online engagement will vary upon the individual. There is not one defining answer because transnational migrants and their engagement is multi-layered and determined by many different factors. As Dahlgren and Hill state, engagement is a subjective experience, rooted in "affect and identity" (Dahlgren & Hill 2020: 2). Engagement should, therefore, be regarded as something that takes place at "both the individual and collective level" (ibid). With the new online media technologies available, the ease and possibility of maintaining one's homeland ties while concurrently assimilating into a host country have changed. For this reason, an investigation into migrant media practices is timely to take into account these changing practices.

As mentioned above, it is vital to analyse how transnational migrants view themselves and how they reflect upon their own online media engagement to better conceptualize the effects of being a transnational migrant. Therefore, this thesis sets out to investigate several themes relating to migrants' online media engagement. The first theme is the role that online media plays for migrants in their assimilation into their host country and attempts to gain a deeper understanding of how these practices are formed and how they are related to the contexts that they are in. The second theme relates to how transnational audiences navigate multiple audiences and different levels of engagement in online media. The third, questions how individuals' migration stories are connected to the networks that they have made and how this shows in their online self-expression.

This thesis will look at transnational migrants based in London. The capital makes for a suitable setting to observe migrants considering its vast transnational population. However, it is important to note that there are several different types of migrants. Migration can generally be split up into two broad categories, *voluntary* and *forced* migration. This thesis will focus on the former since they make up such a large percentage of the total migrant population in London. Voluntary migrants can be further divided into two separate categories, with those being *labour* and *education* migrants (Levitt & Schiller 2004: 4).

Migrant is classified as an umbrella term, meaning that it groups other words into a similar category (Cambridge Dictionary). Although there is no universally accepted official definition, the term itself is defined by the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) as “a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons” (IOM UN Migration). IOM estimates in their World Migration Report of 2020 that there are an estimated 272 million migrants in the world, with around two thirds of those being classified as labour migrants (World Migration Report of 2020). To put it into perspective that is almost four per cent of the entire world population. It is estimated that around nine million people in the UK were born in a different country, with almost three million migrants living in London (The Migrant Observatory 2020 - University of Oxford).

Migration in London has changed substantially over recent years for a number of reasons, including labour demand and globalisation (Gidley & Jayaweera 2010: 9) The UK is today a place of “net-migration” meaning that more people relocate to the city than leave it (ibid). A study by the Office of National Statistics showed that labour migration presents numerous benefits for the capital. They estimated that each labour migrant contributes around £46,000 per year. With almost two million labour migrants in the capital, the research stated that “their total contribution is around £83 billion” which is around twenty-two per cent of the capital’s Gross Value Added per annum (UK Economic and Social Research Council).

London is also often recognized as one of the most reputable cities in the world for higher education (The World University Rankings). In the year 2019 there were almost half a million international students studying in the UK, with almost 300,000 of those being non-EU students. This is a figure that has been increasing in recent years, with the UK and more specifically London, being regarded as an attractive place to pursue further education (Higher Education Student Statistics). The increase has, however, slightly reduced recently as a result of the UK Government’s tougher education criteria particularly for visas of international students. However, even during the last year, figures have shown an increase of around four per cent of students in 2020 (Higher Education Statistics). The number of EU students has, however, decreased which could be partly due to the UK’s recent exit from the EU. Regardless, the figures suggest that education migrants play a significant role in the economy of the UK. According to a report by the greater London Authority, the average economic

contribution of students in London is estimated to be around £34,000 (Migration Advisory Committee 2018: 12).

For this reason, it is important to study and observe both labour and education migrants, seeing as they play an important role in the economy of the city but simultaneously have very different roles within the city. Moreover, their circumstances may be different in terms of prior social networks, the purpose of their stay and the chances of them staying long or short term.

With the aforementioned themes as motivations, this thesis will present three main research questions.

1. What role does online media engagement play in transnational migrants' integration into London communities?
2. How do transnational migrants navigate multiple audiences and levels of political engagement on social media?
3. How is political engagement manifested through transnational migrants' online self-expression?

To answer these research questions, this thesis will use qualitative semi-structured interviews focusing on migrants' online media engagement. As will be argued in subsequent chapters, it is difficult to identify and establish the participants' sense of belonging and media use in their host country through quantitative studies. A qualitative study is better suited to such a study of transnational migrants. Furthermore, migrants' self-expression and sense of belonging are determined by more than just one factor since it is "context-specific, multidimensional and, therefore, difficult to study quantitatively" (Paasche & Fangen 2012: 1).

In total, fourteen interviews were conducted, seven with labour migrants and seven with education migrants, between the ages of 21-30. A requirement for all participants was to have lived in London for at least one year. The reason for this is to shed light upon how engagement varies between them and whether it is the same for both types of migrants (Olson & Majmundar 2020: 47). The questions were split up into three separate themes which guided the analytical coding of the data. These will be discussed in further detail later in this thesis.

Chapter 2 outlines the thesis' theoretical approach. It begins by presenting a brief history of the field of transnationalism and the potential gaps in its conceptualization. It will then present and elaborate upon Adrian Athique's *transnational spectrum* and Peter Dahlgren and Annette Hill's *parameters of media engagement* model. This will be followed by a section on online self-expression and the importance of finding a sense of belonging when relocating to a new place. Chapter 3 will then continue by presenting the methodological approach that this research will take in studying transnational migrants in London while also reflecting on the sampling and the methods used to attain the necessary empirical material. In Chapter 4, the data will be critically analyzed and linked with the main concepts of this research. Finally, the thesis will conclude in Chapter 5 by presenting the main findings and argue for the thesis's contribution within the field of media.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In order to answer the research questions initially set out, this thesis analyses transnational migrants from a broader and more updated lens while also using a combination of theories. This chapter explains why it is important to take into account migrants' multi-dimensionality when it comes to their online media engagement. Every migrant has their own story - stories that are altered by migration - affecting their different levels of engagement and what they use online media for. It will suggest that, especially with the ever-growing rise of technology, transnational migration needs to be looked at from a more updated and modern lens, taking into account these new online technologies. It is known that migrants are often moving to new places, and London is a common destination for many of them. However, this research is also interested in looking at how these people bring their homes into their online expression. To do so, it is important look at everyday online engagement activities of migrants in order to illuminate their uniqueness. This thesis' core theoretical argument is that that one should not focus simply on, for example, their past experiences or self-identity but rather acknowledge that all of these elements are important in determining the individuals' online media engagement. One element cannot be claimed to be more important because no two migrants are the same and, therefore, cannot be generalised.

Adrian Athique's *transnational spectrum* was chosen as one of the primary theoretical frameworks because it emphasises and acknowledges that transnational engagement takes

place within numerous locations and different contexts. As will be shown below, Athique argues that we engage with media in three separate contexts. It is important to mention, however, that Athique's work is solely based on comment feeds and online forums. The *transnational spectrum* can be helped by combining it with Peter Dahlgren and Annette Hill's *parameters of media engagement*. Their model provides a conceptual, practical and analytical model that can be applied in real-world case studies. In this case, it can be used a "toolbox" for looking at and analysing migrants' online media engagement (Dahlgren & Hill 2020: 12). By combining these two frameworks, this thesis advances Athique's work on online commenting activity to a broader sense of online media engagement.

This chapter begins by explaining why Adrian Athique's *transnational spectrum* is valuable for this research while also mentioning potential gaps in his framework. This thesis attempts to fill them by using empirical data obtained from interviews with migrants as its core focus. This will be followed by an overview of the *parameters of media engagement*, how it can be related to migrant audiences and how it will be applied in this thesis. In doing so, this chapter will also justify why it decided to use the *parameters of media engagement* instead of the popular Uses and Gratification (U&G) framework. Lastly, the third theme that will be discussed is online self-expression since it is a crucial part of how engagement is produced.

Transnational Spectrum

Transnationalism is not a new phenomenon. In fact, the use of the term itself can be traced back to over 100 years ago with the work of Randolph S. Bourne published by The Atlantic during World War in July 1916. He wrote that America was no longer a nationality but rather a trans-nationality "weaving back and forth, with other lands, of many threads and of all sizes and colors" (Bourne 1916). However, it was not until the early 1990s when the field of transnationalism began to become a part of migration research within social sciences (Morawska 2003: 612). According to Steven Vertovec (1999:447), transnationalism refers to "multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states".

Nevertheless, this is merely one of many other slightly different definitions of the term, which shows how contested the term actually is. As mentioned in the introduction, the widespread adoption of social networking sites has made communication and transportation significantly faster than ever before; this has also led to differences in the embodiment of old

and new migration (Jaworsky & Levitt 2007: 10). In the past, there was an assumption amongst scholars and researchers that, over time, migrants will inevitably begin to cast aside their distinctive customs, traditions and homeland identities, meaning that over time the significance of “homeland ties would eventually fade” (Levitt & Schiller 2004: 2). Recently, however, it is becoming increasingly more recognized that many migrants’ identities continue to be affected and shaped by their sustained connections to their country of origin “or by social networks that stretch across national borders” (ibid). For that reason, it is crucial to study transnational migrants’ by not simply looking at what occurs within national boundaries (Smith & Bailey 2004). Rather, we should cast our gaze beyond borders, and examining migrants’ online media engagement is one way of doing so. In his book *Runaway World*, Anthony Giddens. (2002: 11) stated that new ways of online communication do not simply lead to new ways in which news and information can be spread more expeditiously, but in more general terms it “alters the very texture of our lives”.

A common argument is that transnational migration is not new and that early transnational migration studies may have slightly exaggerated its novelty. While this is a valid claim, there are essential differences between the embodiment of old and new transnational migration (Jaworsky & Levitt 2007: 10). Some of the most important differences include the online media technology revolution, globalization of media and the ease of transport (ibid). Social media networking sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter have made long-distance communication easier and faster than it has ever been. Thus, the fixed view and conceptualization of migration needs a rethinking, more specifically one that looks at people’s everyday activities on digital media. Like Levitt and Schiller, as well as Athique, this thesis attempts to adopt an approach to transnationalism that “distinguishes between the existence of transnational social networks and the consciousness of being embedded in them” (Levitt & Schiller 2004: 6).

The introduction of new media technologies has changed the “nature of our everyday experience” and increased communication flows, perhaps even more so for transnational migrants (Dekker & Engbersen 2012: 4). New technologies enable migrants to keep closer contact than ever before with people in their country of origin, while simultaneously facilitating the formation of new networks within their host country (Levitt & Schiller 2004: 6). Most previous research has analyzed online media as a “one-to-one communication tool”, for maintaining contact with people abroad, but the introduction of social media can be used

for much more than just that (Dekker & Engbersen 2012: 4). Contrary to the past, being a migrant does not have to lead to a “radical detachment from one’s community of origin”, seeing as online media technologies have facilitated communication methods and “act as a social glue connecting migrants and non-migrants” around the world (Marino 2015: 2). While some have argued that the field of migrant transnationalism has run its course and cannot provide any further insights, this thesis argues that it still has the potential to provide new findings and, therefore, warrants “further elaboration” (Boccagni 2012: 45).

One significant change brought about by these technologies is the transnational character of modern-day media engagement: this new ability to access information and communicate with people in a manner that was not possible prior. This can be linked to what Adrian Athique refers to as the *transnational spectrum* in his book *Transnational Audiences*. In order to understand transnational media engagement, Athique argues that one should look at individuals through what he refers to as the social imagination (Athique 2016: 177). The term itself is derived from the work of C. Wright Mills in 1959, who defined the sociological imagination as a form of self-consciousness that has the ability to “shift from one perspective to another” (Mills 1959: 3). Despite it being written over sixty years ago, it can still be applied when discussing transnational migrants’ online engagement because it is an “open-ended and dynamic process” (Athique 2016: 20). There is a relationship between “wider social forces and individuals’ personal actions” when establishing relationships with other people, societies and new cultures (ibid).

Athique’s categorizations and methods are highly relevant to this study, especially when looking at individuals across national borders. Mainly because of his argument that transnationalism is best understood as a spectrum with various different important elements that influence it rather than a “set of extraordinary disruptive conditions” (ibid: 155). Most importantly, he argues that individuals’ views of the world will differ from one another because their perception of the world are unique to themselves. The meanings that we make from events and things that are seen in online media will be determined by our self-identity, our perception of the world and “our own place in the scheme of things” (ibid). Instead of just taking individual elements that influence transnational media (such as culture, ethnicity and background) this spectrum captures the audiences’ “subjective inter-relationship between the personal, communal and political” (ibid: 144). This engagement takes place within different contexts and with different intensities. A detailed qualitative case study that focuses

explicitly on transnational migrants, such as this research, differs from Athique's work but also has the ability to complement his theory while providing examples of the linkages between different media forms and transnationalism (ibid: 3).

Athique argues that media engagement takes places within three separate levels, those being *Individual*, *Local*, and *National*. Each level is relevant to this thesis to a certain degree. Firstly, it can be beneficial to observe media audiences on an *Individual* level since it is helpful to view migrants in this manner because in the time of globalisation it is crucial to "account for a more sophisticated, and context-sensitive, viewer" (Athique 2016: 147). As stated in the introduction, for this reason, it is helpful to observe migrants' everyday engagement, given that this engagement will most likely differ from person to person. Transnational migrants' online engagement will most likely change and develop over the years as a result of relocating to new countries and being exposed to new forms of expression and other actors different from themselves (ibid). Migrants will engage with online media from specific standpoints, thereby "generating different meanings and pleasures" (ibid). Some will be more context-sensitive than others mainly because of the seemingly endless options of engaging with online media. Thus, media engagement cannot be regarded as a static phenomenon, and it is important to "recognize its subjectivity" and the fact that a multitude of different factors can influence it (ibid). New forms of communication and travel mean that individuals consume media knowing that others are consuming the same media "no matter how remote or asynchronous" that particular media engagement is (ibid). This can be linked to what Benedict Anderson refers to as an "imagined community" (ibid: 175). Anderson means that it is imagined because individuals will share an experience with people whom they will most likely never know, "yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 1991: 7).

Secondly, observing transnational audiences on a *Local* level, their thoughts and actions can be compared in relation to their geographical location and surrounding environment. Migrants' cultural identity will, mostly, be more multi-layered than those who constantly remain in the same place largely because relocating to new locations often means being exposed to new cultures and ways of thinking. Moving to a new country has the potential to, for example, change your political identity or even religious beliefs. Looking at the *Local* level is especially useful when observing migrants' everyday online engagement because individuals will not just "identify with a position in a symbolic sense but also inhabit it within

a particular set of social conditions” (ibid). In other words, a migrants’ online media engagement and response to what he or she sees is going to be influenced by that person’s social and geographical environment (ibid).

Lastly, the *National* level can be useful since transnational migrants will often communicate with individuals in both their country of origin and host country, which in the context of this research is London. Online media allows them to maintain their ties to their home country while also creating new relationships in London. Athique argues that audiences within this level are increasingly more likely to search for transnational media sources (ibid). The *National* level entails the place of consumption situated with “the practical boundaries of political administration” (ibid). This is relevant for a study on migrants because they will have two, if not more, of these political administration fronts. This adds a new dimension to the *National* level for migrants not fully taken into consideration by Athique.

Gaps in Previous Research on Transnational Migration

It is important to mention that there are certain gaps in Athique’s model that this research will attempt to build upon. Firstly, Athique does not explicitly look at transnational migration but rather transnational audiences in general and only briefly writes about migrants. Instead, he observes the “theoretical foundations of transnational communication” and how these transnational audiences are formed (Athique: 4). This is important because, as he states, the *National* level is defined by a transnational understanding of political borders and administration. However, when looking at migrants, they suddenly have to deal with borders and administration on two fronts, their home country and their host country. Is it the case that because of this, transnational migrants have to constantly be hyper-aware, which can lead to them wanting to take a break from online engagement? Does the fact that they deal with two separate fronts make them more media savvy?

Although Athique does not write extensively about migrants there are a number of reasons why it is important to analyse transnational migrants, and migrants in general, perhaps more so now than ever before. At no other time in our history have there been as many individuals moving around different countries. It is estimated that roughly three per cent of the entire world population lives in a country where they were not born, showing the vastness of this “global phenomenon” (Stiglitz & Ochoa Reza & Cortina 2013: xv). Furthermore, as Joseph

Stiglitz states, “international migration as a transnational and global process has reshaped the meaning of national borders” (ibid). It could be argued that the result of this transnational migration has a more significant effect than the other features of globalization (for example the movement of goods), simply because migration has the ability to influence cultures and “countries’ sense of identity” (ibid). Given this increase of influx of transnational migrants relocating regularly, this has to be observed alongside the rise of new online media technologies, since both are related to one another. Social media applications such as Facebook and WhatsApp, and online media in general, now play a crucial role in migrants’ assimilation into a new community in their host country. The subsequent chapter will provide a more in-depth analysis into how these practices are formed and how they are related to the contexts that the migrants are in.

Secondly, while Athique primarily focuses on comment feeds and online forums, this thesis will hopefully provide a more detailed look into how this can be applied to transnational migrants. By using interviews, it will allow the transnational interviewees to fully express themselves since this feels like something that is important to explore. Athique states himself in his introduction that his book does not provide an empirical account of transnational audiences (Athique: 3). He does, however, mention some authors who have provided qualitative research on transnational audiences, such as research done by Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller (2012). However, this research and the other research examples that he provides mainly deal with transnational family relations, and none of them specifically focuses on the whole political and everyday aspect of this engagement.

Instead, that particular research is more concerned with the long-distance connectivity of the family members in question. Thus, this research will move online comments into a broader sense of the parameters of online media engagement. Although transnational migrants can be (and have been) analyzed and observed from a macro perspective, which is a term used to describe and observe a group of people within a society (Jung & Moro 2012: 55), this thesis will take a different approach. Instead, this thesis will use a micro-perspective since it focuses on transnational migrants on an individual level (Boccagni 2012: 35). Or in other words, as Ewa Morawska puts it, “transnationalism from below” (Morawska 2003: 620). This way, Morawska stresses the importance of analyzing the “feedbacks between immigrant transnational involvements and their surrounding societal structures” (ibid). The micro perspective, or “transnationalism from below”, calls for a deeper analysis into transnational

migrants' identities, economic activities and also, as in this research, their political participation (Morawska 2003: 631). The fact that this research looks at their online engagement within all of the aforementioned sections adds another layer to the ever-growing transnational migrant field.

In addition to Athique's work, some of the theories and studies previously mentioned, such as the one's by Schiller and Levitt, fail to fully contextualise transnational migrants' online media engagement within their everyday lives. Qualitative research on different migrants' transnational media use can shed light upon why some groups of migrants integrate into a society differently than others. In a sense, Athique is mainly concerned with emphasising that transnational media audiences are transnational because media is generally transnational nowadays. However, this thesis is not just interested in looking at the reception side of this engagement but also the self-expression side, which is why it makes sense to look at engagement. Thus, as previously stated, this research will move online comments into a broader sense of online media engagement, as shown in the next section, by drawing on *the parameters of media engagement* model.

Transnational Online Media Engagement

When observing the altering ways transnational migrants interact with online media, it is also relevant to analyse how and why they engage with different online content. Media engagement, like Transnationalism, is a term that has different interpretations and definitions. In spite of the fact that there has recently been an increase in academic research looking at online media engagement, there is still a lack of studies that actually define what engagement is (Smith & Gallicano 2015: 82).

John Corners states that engagement is a descriptive, and not analytic, term but that this should be regarded as an advantage when used in an analysis for “exploring diverse territories” (Corner 2017: 2). Such analysis of engagement, like this thesis, often investigates the interplay of different factors such as “personal, social and institutional” (ibid). Previous studies of audiences and online media engagement have focused on brands, products and services. For example, the Advertising Research Foundation defined media engagement as “turning on a prospect to a brand idea enhanced by surrounding context” (Mersey & Malhouse & Calder 2010: 40). The issue with this definition is that engagement is, much like transnational migration, multi-layered and takes place within fluid spaces. Prior research

within the field of media has sometimes failed to consider this when looking at online media engagement.

Engagement is of particular importance, especially when looking at a diverse audience such as transnational migrants. Peter Dahlgren and Annette Hill argue that the term engagement has been utilized by organisations in the media sector to “capture social media analytics and ratings performance” thereby reducing the term as merely a “measurement of interest” (Dahlgren & Hill 2020: 1). In their work, they call for a more updated definition, one that recognizes that engagement is a subjective experience while unpacking new currencies of engagement within different fields (ibid). This drive to capture and measure, in turn, also reduces the audience and the public to these particular interest and consumer groups. Instead, this model opens up engagement, which suits this thesis on migrants’ online media engagement. As John Corner states, engagement research is valuable because it can allow us to gain a better understanding of the relationship and “connectedness” of audiences with different types of media (Corner 2017: 1).

Prior research on media engagement and audiences has also looked at engagement through what is known as uses and gratification (U&G) framework (Shade & Kornfield & Oliver 2015). This particular perspective, which can be traced back to Harold Lasswell’s model from 1948, argues that audiences choose media and content to engage with to “fulfil felt needs or wants” (Papacharissi 2009: 137). The perspective, which is commonly used in recent studies on media engagement, essentially attempts to explain media consumption through “the uses to which audiences put a particular medium and the gratifications they obtain from that medium” (Gher & Amin 2000: 22). Researchers within the field of media regularly use the framework to propose that people “define their needs and control of the media-seeking process in an attempt to gratify those needs” (Mersey & Malthouse & Calder 2015: 42). Most importantly, however, the framework argues that there is not necessarily a relation between “the communication message and the effects on the consumer” but instead claims that it is the consumer who actually “puts the message to use” (Gher & Amin: 22). In other words, the U&G framework suggests that audiences are the ones who utilize the media rather than the audiences being used or influenced by the media (ibid). Additionally, with this approach, there is also a “relative neglect of concrete social groups and their interactions” (Abercrombie & Longhurst 1998: 9). While the framework has proved popular, it has also been criticised by several scholars such as James W. Tankard and Werner J. Severin, who

argue that the framework is too simplistic (Tankard & Severin 1997: 335). A common criticism of the framework, despite its popularity, is that it can be too individualistic and does not take into consideration “societal implications of media use” (Ruggiero 2000: 12). Another significant limitation of the framework is its failure to clarify concepts such as personal backgrounds, motives and consequences (ibid). Furthermore, the U&G framework fails to take into consideration social network perspectives. Doing so would, as Zizi Papacharissi states, broaden the scope of the framework and examine “overlapping networks of media users and producers” (Papacharissi 2009: 144)

Thus, while U&G framework has many strengths, one of its main limitations is that it makes fixed assumption about audiences. Instead, this thesis argues that engagement can occur and also be encountered in several different ways, depending upon a number of factors such as a person’s self-identity, background, age and the environment they find themselves in. For that reason, this thesis sets out to use Peter Dahlgren and Annette Hill’s model entitled *parameters of media engagement* since it allows for a broader view and analysis of transnational migrants. This theoretical framework links “the personal, the socio-cultural, and the politics” to create the building blocks for the *parameters of media engagement* (Dahlgren & Hill 2020: 1). The framework stands out because it moves away from viewing engagement as a metric and instead sees it as a marker for para-dynamics. The model is divided into five separate themes: *contexts*, *motivations*, *modalities*, *intensities* and *consequences*. These five parameters provide more flexibility in conceptualizing engagement as the relationship between the individual and their specific context. Whereas U&G attempts to find patterns in motivations and rewards across large samples, the *parameters of media engagement* model is sensitive to contextual factors such as time and place, which may be particularly important in the everyday media practices (or avoidance) of transnational migrants. The five parameters are used in the coding of this study’s data and will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

One of the most important arguments that Dahlgren and Hill emphasise is that the concept of affect is important, and they attribute to it a collective character. They think of engagement as having something to do with, in part, individuals’ feelings, subjectivity and emotions (ibid: 11). Nevertheless, from a societal perspective, this model suggests that we see affect at work at the collective level and the collective dynamics of emotion (ibid: 2). They build upon Raymond Williams “structure of feeling” of societies at a particular historical moment (ibid: 6). The term “structure of feeling”, according to Williams himself, was created to draw

attention to a distinction from previous traditional concepts of “world view” or ideology (Williams 1977: 132). He argued that the relevancy of this was the necessity to analyse “meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt” (ibid). Other researchers, such as Brian G. Smith and Tiffany Gallicano, agree with this definition of engagement. They state themselves that engagement is “a state of mind and emotion” (Smith & Gallicano 2015: 82). In sum, Dahlgren and Hill argue that while engagement is seen as an affective experience, it also incorporates these elements of cognitive functions, analysis and argumentation. This link between affective and cognitive is one of the primary elements in their analysis of media engagement.

Given that online media engagement is so multidimensional, this model is suitable for a research about migrants because, as previously mentioned, they will engage with online media in a variety of different ways. The model itself refrains from portraying any concrete conclusions based on narrow and limited behaviours and instead places engagement within their own experiences. An essential element of this thesis’ approach is to not only look at the moment in which migrants engage with online media but also what leads to that engagement and what follows it. As Corner argues, it is crucial for researchers looking at engagement to “study engagement in all its forms, including what happens beyond engagement, such as participation in the media or creating content from our engagement with texts” (Corner in Hill 2017: 58).

Looking at engagement is beneficial because, as Annette Hill states, it provides a way of addressing “how audiences actually engage with a wide range of media through formal and informal routes” (Hill 2019: 7). Like Hill and Dahlgren, this thesis argues that media engagement is “a powerful subjective experience” (Hill and Dahlgren 2020: 2). Furthermore, in regard to engagement, Peter Dahlgren’s idea of *solo sphere* is also relevant, particularly when looking at the motivations and intensities of migrants’ online media engagement during the Coronavirus pandemic. *Solo sphere* refers to a new “habitus for online political participation” that has been created with new online settings that are available (Dahlgren 2012: 11). The empirical data from the interviews show examples of this at play. In his work, Dahlgren compares individual political engagement to a more collective kind of engagement.

As already mentioned, online media engagement takes place within affective and cognitive modes. These modes then lead to “switching” between positive and negative engagement and, most importantly disengagement (Dahlgren & Hil 2020: 11). Positive engagement can

involve “emotional identification” such as relating to something or supporting something online. In contrast, negative engagement can refer to “emotional dis-identification” with, for example, a particular political party or any sort of organisation (Hill 2017: 12).

Disengagement, on the other hand, can be used to understand how individuals “disengage” from certain things within media. In the context of this thesis, it can be used to observe, for example, how certain migrants decide to take a break from engaging with online media due to feeling overwhelmed with having to keep up with so many different sources. The reason for the importance of not leaving out disengagement is because it has not received as much academic attention from researchers within the field of media (ibid). Yet, disengagement is a highly relevant concept, especially when looking at specific audiences. When observing the engagement of migrants, disengagement becomes not just an observable non-activity, but also becomes part of one’s identity. We should see engagement and disengagement as part of this dynamic and relational and ever-shifting process that is embodied by our notions of media engagement (ibid).

Therefore, it is important that we spend time analysing non-participation and disengagement. As audiences, we disengage constantly, because we cannot be fully engaged in media all the time, and therefore engagement is to some degree defined by its opposite. Migrants, like all other audiences, are disengaging and re-engaging all the time. This disengagement can come in many forms and different intensities. This particular angle is vital to include particularly when researching migrants. This is mainly because, as Sara Ahmed states, “emotions do things, and they align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments” (Ahmed 2004: 119). Instead of simply regarding emotions as “psychological dispositions”, it is better to also understand how they work and how they are formed (ibid). By acknowledging the relevancy of affect and emotion in migrants’ engagement, one can better understand “what compels a group” to maintain their transnational networks and relationships, or vice versa (Wise & Velayutham 2017: 117).

Online Self-Expression

Based on this research it becomes apparent that online media engagement on social media applications, such as Facebook and Twitter are built around self-expression. This form of online expression is needed for producing and circulating content on platforms, which is why platforms entice us to do so through designing their platforms. Self-expression can be defined

as the articulation of an individuals' personhood. In some cases, especially within an online setting, this expression may be authentic or inauthentic depending on the individual (Tshivhase 2015: 38). The idea and debate regarding self-presentation is not necessarily a new one within the field of media, with Erving Goffman writing about it in his work *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* in 1959. The main argument in his work is essentially that the way in which individuals present themselves is an "ongoing process of information management", meaning that people are regularly attempting to influence the impression that other individuals have of themselves (Papacharissi 2010: 347). Goffman argued that individuals will often give "performances" to others in a given setting which "serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (Goffman 1958: 8). Goffman's ideas can still be applied to this thesis looking at online engagement.

In the same way that he argued that the setting and people around you will influence your performance, it could be argued that migrants will engage with media in different ways depending on the online source or platform that they use, and the audience that they have on said platform. Thus, online self-expression is a way in which individuals can present themselves to others to make a sought-after impression. Previously, such research on self-expression has primarily focused upon close interactions with participants (Strimbu & O'Connell 2019: 804). With the introduction of online media applications, however, there is now a new way for people to self-express and present themselves. This "performance" of audiences in modern times is now far more calculated, meaning that people now have more control over how they are presented. In the case of migrants, they can decide to present themselves to their new networks in London differently than to people from their country of origin. It could be argued that the deviation from one's offline personae can be explained by either a lack of self-awareness or even an intentional misrepresentation of the self, acting in a "self-idealizing way" (Bailey & Matz 2020: 8).

Although migrants have received considerable coverage and engagement in the media in the West in the past years, especially since the European migrant crisis in 2014, there is still a lack of coverage from the migrants' own point of view. Instead of hearing the stories and reflections of the migrants, the media is dominated by a Western perspective. That is one of the reasons why this thesis opts to instead focus on migrants' own self-expression. The fact that this thesis looks at online media engagement means that it provides a particularly interesting setting from which to analyse online self-presentation since individuals are able to

carefully curate a version of themselves on different online media platforms that perhaps differ from their offline selves. This is the reason why an online setting is so suitable for a research on how migrants use it for self-presentation and personality perceptions (Marcus & Machilek & Schültz 2006: 1015). Furthermore, as the empirical data will show, specific individuals will have different online selves or performances that they give depending on the social media application that they use. For example, a person may refrain from posting political thoughts on Facebook because some of his/her relatives and friends from her home country would disapprove. Instead, this person may decide to post about more general things on Facebook and share her political opinions on Twitter instead.

Although some individuals choose to express and present themselves differently in an online setting than in an offline one, it does not mean that this is the case for every person. As Robinson and Schultz state, not every individual will go online in order to “concoct a new self-identity or self-presentation” (Robinson & Schultz 2011 183). Regardless, self-expression was a prevalent theme in this thesis. More specifically, how people use engagement in online media to present a certain version of themselves within an online environment. This was particularly interesting given the fact that it has been a relatively understudied topic in previous existing academic literature. Most previous research has instead focused on online exposure, meaning how individuals are affected by being exposed to certain narratives in online media and how that can have an effect on said individuals.

The internet can, after all, provide a unique setting for expressing a different version of oneself (Seidman 2012: 402). Furthermore, the interviews with the transnational migrants also suggest that many online platforms have allowed them to express themselves more comfortably than in an offline setting. This was not surprising as Katelyn McKenna, Amie Green, and Marci Gleason argued that people with social anxiety or visible shyness in face-to-face setting are “more likely to locate themselves online” (McKenna & Green & Gleason 2002: 13). People who are normally shy can participate in different discussions and activities because they like the freedom of online communication which cannot be found within an offline setting (Gershon & Kamalipour 2019: 53). Looking at online expression is important because it can shape how individuals see themselves (Lane et al. 2019: 49).

Political self-expression is also a highly relevant topic, and a prevalent theme within this thesis. The relationship between online media and politics has never been more interwoven

and, as Manuel Castells states, “in our society, politics is dependent on media politics” (Castells 2007: 242). The way in which humans used to communicate in the “industrial society” was a system built around mass media and distinguished by a “mass distribution of a one-way message from one to many” (Castells 2007: 246). Conversely, in the network society that we now live in, communication has evolved to encompass “the multimodal exchange of interactive messages from many to many both synchronous and asynchronous” (ibid). Social media platforms in particular allow for this self-expression on a massive scale. It is through these applications that individuals have been able to create their own unique system of mass self-communication (ibid: 247). For things such political protests and other social movements, online media has gone from being a tool to a medium that can be used to make your voice heard (ibid). For migrants in London, particularly those who cannot vote, online media expression and engagement is hugely important since it can, not only, allow them to gain knowledge but at the same time allow them to “coordinate their actions to address joint concerns” (Shah & Cho & Eveland Jr. & Kwak 2005: 536). Shah et al. argue in their research that individuals’ use of media for gathering information contributes to online and offline self-expression which can later on encourage civic engagement (ibid). Thus, it could be argued that online self-expression leads to people taking action in an offline setting at times. In many ways, online media networks have now become “the organizational form of political action” (Bennett & Segerberg 2012 : 745).

There has been previous research that suggests that the experiences that individuals have in an online environment will have an influence on their “offline attitudes, perceptions and behaviours” (McLeod & Liu & Axline 2014: 59). For migrants, their online self-expression may be influenced by how other individuals in not just their host country but also in their country of origin respond to how they present themselves online (ibid). They have to deal with multiple audiences which can be difficult for some, particularly if the two countries are very different from one another culturally and socially. This is important because a migrants’ online engagement and expression can influence “offline relationships with family, friends and community organizations” (ibid). Stuart Hall’s argument that individuals are facing “a so-called crisis of identities” can be tied to this sentiment (Hall 1992: 274). He argues that individuals no longer have a fixed identity, but instead several which pull in different directions (ibid: 277). Like Hall, this research argues that identities are not transparent, and it should instead be regarded as something that is constantly evolving (Hall 1990: 223).

Political engagement in online media is usually associated with concrete issues but also things such as different ideologies and identities (Dahlgren & Hill 2020: 9). In certain cases, engagement and online self-expression can lead to participation. It is, therefore, important to make a distinction between the two terms. Contrary to engagement, which can be regarded as a “subjective disposition”, participation is instead regarded as observable behaviour, for example taking part in political demonstrations and protests (ibid: 6). However, when civic political engagement stems from online engagement and expression on social media there is a chance that it will lead to what Joakim Ekman and Erik Amnå “latent forms of political participation” (Ekman & Amnå 2012: 287). Eynep Tufekci argues that this form of online political participation and political self-expression is sometimes referred to as “slacktivism”, which is a term that implies “easy action requiring little effort or commitment” (Tufekci 2017: xxvi). Certain participants in the interviews questioned what should count as online political participation. Some felt that sharing links and donation pages online should be considered as political participation, while others argued that one needed to go further and take action in an offline setting. Nonetheless, most interviewees stated that they felt that it was important to share information with others regarding important issues. Sharing information on social media has now, in many ways, become “an integral part of human interaction” that has the ability to change attitudes and influence behaviours (Scholz et al. 2017: 2881).

For migrants, it can also be used as a tool for gaining a sense of belonging within your host country. Being politically expressive online and, in turn taking part in protests and demonstrations, allows them to feel part of something bigger than oneself. A key element of modern forms of political engagement and protests is the relationship between belonging self-expression (ibid). Online websites and social media applications are spaces in which migrant diasporas in London are “imagined and recreated” (Marino 2015: 2). For migrants, in particular, online self-expression is interesting to look at because it provides new opportunities of “representation and experimentation with new and different identities” when they relocate to a new country (Koles & Nagy 2012: 2). Despite social media engagement having its cons, individuals will return to using social media applications because “it provides the sheer joy of exercising freedom from physical limitations” (Gershon & Kamalipour 2019: 52). For many, they return because this new online identity that they have developed becomes “addictive” (ibid).

Thus, this chapter has argued that the introduction of online technologies has led to a need for a new conceptualization of transnationalism, and also emphasised the importance of focusing on the individual. This addressed the first research question that was set out regarding the integration of migrants in London. Athique's framework fits with this as he writes about the multiple levels of transnationalism which suits this thesis' view of migrants. Combining this with a robust model of media engagement, *parameters of media engagement*, that highlights the subjectivity of media engagement added to Athique's theory and better suits it to be applied to a real-world case study. In doing so, the following section of this chapter addressed the second research question of how migrants navigate multiple audiences and levels of online engagement. The third section of this chapter looked at self-expression since it was a natural progression based on the previous two frameworks, seeing as a lot of online media engagement is built around self-expression. This section linked to the final research question by outlining different forms of online self-expression. The three themes of this chapter eventually lead to the main theoretical argument which is that the identities of migrants are complex and, therefore, requires a broad and not fixed view of their online engagement. These three themes will be the foundation upon which the methodology of this thesis is based on. Each of these three is then split up into further sections ahead of the analytical coding.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter first outlines the thesis' methodology to answer the research questions about the online media engagement of transnational migrants in London. This will then be followed by the justification for deciding to use qualitative interviews in order to gain a detailed outlook of their own individual online media use and habits. The chapter will also explain the foundation of the interview protocol and how it ended up the way that it did. Then, the chapter delves into why the particular transnational target groups were chosen and offer reflections regarding how and why it has changed since the first inception of the thesis. The chapter also briefly touches upon the effects that the current Coronavirus pandemic has had not only on the design of this project but also on the participants themselves and their online media engagement. An overview of the coding procedure is then presented followed by the ethical considerations of conducting qualitative interviews.

Methodological Approach

The methodological approach deemed most suitable for this type of research was a qualitative approach since the aim was to allow the transnational participants to express themselves freely and reflect on their own engagement. The term qualitative research itself encompasses a number of different approaches. Qualitative research focuses on “observing, interpreting and analysing the way that people experience, act on or think about themselves and the world around them” (Bazeley 2013: 4). Furthermore, this type of approach is also particularly useful in this thesis since it aims to explore the participants’ everyday online engagement. The analysis of qualitative data is essentially an extension of the analysis that we conduct in everyday life (ibid). Analysing everyday life is important because as humans “we act, and influence others, on the basis of our interpretations of who they are and what they say” (ibid). Using a qualitative approach was important because, as has already been established before, online media engagement is subjective, and migrants will have their own unique ways of engaging with online content. By adopting this approach, this research was able to acquire detailed responses from the participants.

Research Design

Initially, this thesis was interested in solely focusing on transnational migrants’ political engagement online and comparing it with UK residents. However, early on in the research process, it became apparent that making the assumption that every participant would regularly be politically engaged online on a daily basis was simply not the case. Thus, the design of this research focused instead on more general everyday online engagement as this would lead to more revealing and insightful observations. Furthermore, there seemed to be a lack of previous research focusing on the media engagement of migrants and specifically, differences between different types of migrants. For this reason, this thesis opted instead to compare online media engagement between education and labour migrants. As mentioned in the introduction, they both contribute greatly to the economy of London and, despite the Brexit result, the city remains one of the most popular destinations for students and workers around the world. Transnational migrants in London were chosen as the target group for several reasons. Firstly, they form a sizable group of the population in London. Suzanne Hall, whose ethnographic research partly inspired the design of the interviews, stated in 2013 that the capital had the most intense concentration of migrants, with around 42 per cent of the

UK's entire migrant population living there (Hall 2013: 7). Secondly, previous research on this topic seemed to focus on one particular group of transnational migrants from a specific country (Portes & Haller & Guarnio 2002: 284). By interviewing transnational migrants from around the world this thesis was able to compare the engagement between different nationalities from different continents.

Two exploratory pilot interviews were initially conducted between 17-18 March 2021. In total, they were asked 40 questions which aimed at getting into the time and space of their media consumption, and also touched upon their self-expression. Their answers helped to readjust the scope of this research and helped guide the newer version of the interview protocol. The initial interview guide was updated and narrowed down significantly. Certain questions were combined because they were already too similar, and the interview itself was also structured along three different themes, with those being *Role of Media in Integrating into New Life in London and Finding a Sense of Belonging*; *Online Media Engagement (Five Parameters)*; and *Online Self-Expression*. This was necessary because it became apparent that there were too many questions in the initial pilots, and it was important to structure a coherent flow for the interview. Through these themes the participants were able to freely express themselves and give their own accounts of, for example, using online media as a way assimilating into their respective London communities. The first theme allowed the participants to discuss their own story and how they ended up in London. It attempted to get some context about the interviewee. The following two themes led to a deeper analysis of how these practices are formed and how they are related to the contexts that they are in. By dividing the interview guide in this manner, the thesis was able to combine their story of migration and networks they have formed to their social media habits and their media consumption.

The interview guide and methods used were partly influenced by the ethnographic work of Suzanne Hall on diversity in London. Just like this thesis was split up into three different themes, so too was Hall's work. More specifically, she focused on "macro perspectives", daily practices of exchange of the participants, and finally a more in depth and intimate look at the self-expression of participants (Hall 2013: 11). This was similar to the third theme in the interview guide of this thesis that looked at people's self-expression online.

One of the more significant changes between the initial pilot protocol and the final version is that the most updated version avoided political questions at the beginning of the interview. By not discussing politics, unless it came up organically, until the end the participants were more comfortable in sharing their online political habits than if the question had been asked at the beginning of the interview. The interview started with more general questions that allowed the participants to speak about their own background and their journey to London. It was beneficial to have this semi-structured approach so that the interview did not go stale. This change led to more interesting answers regarding people's online political engagement and whether they brought their prior political biases into their host country.

Sampling

The sampling for this research was made up of fourteen semi-structured qualitative interviews divided evenly between labour and education migrants. Every interview that was conducted was in turn transcribed and coded. All of the empirical data from the interviews was coded using an inductive and deductive approach, with specific quotes and keywords being selected to highlight the text and, in turn, be divided into separate themes. Using qualitative interviews was especially helpful for this study since it is a method often used for "accessing individuals' attitudes and values" (Seale 2017: 209). The deductive approach used some academic literature, such as Hill and Dahlgren's parameters of media, to help in developing themes before the analysis of the empirical data¹.

The use of semi-structured interviews proved to be beneficial as it allowed the participants more freedom to express their thoughts which also benefited this research as it led to more insightful answers regarding their news engagement. Furthermore, since an individuals' online media engagement can be a rather personal one, it was important to gain the participants' trust for both ethical reasons and also since it would lead to more honest answers. This was done by not only asking questions related to the study but also general questions that let the participants express themselves as they wished. It was important to establish a sense of trust with each interviewee as this would increase the likelihood of them being open to sharing more personal reflections. It was also important not to completely

¹ Themes are described in detail in the section *Coding Procedure*.

avoid the topic of Covid-19 since this may have had an effect on their online media engagement.

Research Process

This research adopted the snowball sampling technique to recruit all of the interview participants. Each participant was required to have lived in London for over a year at the very least. Because of restrictions with interacting with individual outside of your household (UK Government 2021), the interviews had to be conducted online through Zoom. Conducting online interviews led to some difficulties, such as participants not being able to connect to the meetings at the correct time. Some of the interviews had to be rescheduled to different dates and times because participants were suddenly unavailable. However, as Christine Hine states, researchers conducting online interviews should “embrace a sense of uncertainty” when conducting such a study (Hine 2015: 89). Another clear limitation of only conducting interviews in an online setting was the lack of “richness and spontaneity” from face-to-face interviews (Allen 2017: 1145).

The initial exploratory interviews helped identify the aspects of the interview process that worked and the things that did not, such as the fact that the initial interview protocol included too many questions. This did not allow the participant enough time to fully express themselves and their answers. As a result, the protocol was updated in order to allow the participants to have more time in answering the questions.

Coding Procedure

Each interview was transcribed after the interview was completed. The coding process started inductively with the identification of particular themes that stood out in the interview transcripts. A deductive approach was then used to find keywords and quotes that stood out corresponding to the themes in this thesis. The data was then sorted into three overarching themes and subcategories. The theoretical frameworks then provided subcategories for each of these three themes.

For the first theme, *Role of Media in Integrating into New Life in London and Finding a Sense of Belonging*, this thesis used Adrian Athique’s *transnational spectrum*. The data was operationalised by splitting the theme up into three subcategory sections; *Individual, Local*

and *National*. Each of these three categories had particular codes that were based upon the answers of the participants. The *Individual* category included codes relating to *Self-Identity*, *Current occupation*, *Past experiences*, and *Personal relationships*. These codes were assigned whenever a participant spoke of how they ended up in London and involved keywords such as “working, studying, travelling, friends, family” which guided the coding for this particular theme. The *Local* category was accompanied by codes such as *Social environment* and *Geographical location*. The phrases that stood out for this particular category included ones regarding environmental factors such as where they lived and where they like to socialise with friends in London. Thirdly, the *National* category included the codes *Home country media engagement* and *Host country media engagement*. Phrases such “...reading India’s news coverage of the pandemic” and “checking Twitter for updates on flights from Heathrow” were used to guide the coding of this category.

The second theme, *Online Media Engagement (Five Parameters)*, was coded based on Peter Dahlgren and Annette Hill’s *parameters of media engagement*. They present five separate levels which were operationalised into five categories. *Contexts* is interested in the actual point of entry, how individuals enter and encounter media content. It looks at, for example, which particular platforms individuals use and why. *Contexts* emphasises the importance of “distribution and the global flow of content” (Dahlgren & Hill 2020: 13). Dahlgren and Hill argue that media engagement is relational, and therefore see it as a “nexus of relations” (ibid: 2). Therefore, *Contexts* were coded when the participants mentioned engaging with online media during a particular time or place or a particular platform. The *Motivations* level is also vital for this type of research. The analytical coding showed a number of different motivations for choosing to engage with online media. For many participants, the motivation was simply to be entertained. Others were motivated to check Twitter for updates from politicians that they follow due to their interest in politics. Thus, *Motivations* was coded when the participants explained their reasoning behind engaging with or posting something in online media.

Like the previous two levels, *Modalities* is interested in the communicative character. This particular level can be linked with the work of John Corner’s work of affective and cognitive work on engagement. The feeling that the participants got from a particular video on Facebook or a live event would determine how they would engage with it. Some participants were more drawn to specific platforms when it came to live news coverage of an event, such

as Twitter, while others preferred balancing different sources for acquiring news. Therefore, this category was coded when interviewees referenced the type of online media they consumed and their feelings when consuming it. *Intensities* of online media engagement were sporadic amongst the participants and depended on their location and surroundings. Covid-19 lockdown measures had a significant impact on the intensity of the interviewee's online engagement, becoming more communal for some and more individualised for others. Phrases regarding the amount of time spent on engaging with something and how "deep" an engagement was were used to code for *Intensities*. Lastly, the category *Consequences* depended greatly upon the individual, they could be both positive or negative, and at times lead to disengagement. As Dahlgren and Hill state, the consequences of engagement can be varied and lead to anything from "sense of empowerment" or the experience of pleasure (ibid: 19). This category was coded when participants said that their online engagement had led them to taking action in real life, taking a break from online media or completely disengaging from particular online platforms or sources.

The third, and final, theme was *Online Self-Expression*, which was coded depending on the different types of self-expression that the interviewees mentioned. All fourteen interviews were then compared which resulted in three main subcategories that stood out. The first of which was *Social*, which was coded when participants expressed themselves, for example, regarding a film that they had watched or tagging and sharing memes with friends. *Political* was the second subcategory and was coded when participants shared a political article or tried to interact with local politicians through social media applications. Thirdly, the subcategory *Informative* was categorised whenever a participant shared a link regarding information regarding, for example, the latest Covid-19 government policies or links to a donation page. It also included whenever a person shared something for their work, such as a recruiter sharing an advertisement for a job.

Ethics

A consent form was sent to the participant before every interview that informed them of how their answers would be used in this study. It also informed them that their real name would be kept anonymous and that only their age, nationality, gender and occupation would be disclosed. Each interviewee provided their consent in written form and then orally at the beginning of every interview. It was important for each interviewee to be aware of their privacy and "confidentiality" before each interview (Allmark et al. 2009: 49).

The fact that certain questions were related to Covid-19 meant that it could also be a sensitive topic for some which could make the interview “emotionally intense” (ibid). For this reason, it was established early on in each interview that the participant was not obliged to answer any question that they did not feel comfortable with. It was for this reason that it was vital to make an assessment early on of how a sensitive topic may influence the participant (Swift & James & Kippen & Liamputtong 2007: 31).

Chapter 4

Analysis

This thesis began by putting forth three research questions.

1. What role does online media engagement play in transnational migrants’ integration into London communities?
2. How do transnational migrants navigate multiple audiences and levels of political engagement on social media?
3. How is political engagement manifested through transnational migrants’ online self-expression?

In order to answer these questions, this research conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with migrants living in London. This approach was chosen so the interviewees could give their own accounts of how they use and feel about online media engagement. As mentioned earlier, even though migrants have received increasingly more engagement and coverage in Western media in recent years, there is still a lack of research from the migrants’ perspective. Qualitative interviews can instead give migrants’ the chance to use their voice to talk about their online media experiences and how it affects them. As Bazeley states, qualitative research “honours” the participants’ role in a research (Bazeley 2013: 51). In such cases, the researcher is looking for the interviewees “perspectives on the research topic and their interpretation of what is going on” (ibid).

Focusing specifically on migrants’ online media engagement habits, this thesis benefited from using two theories and combining them. Firstly, Adrian Athique’s *transnational spectrum* helped provide a framework that takes into account the fact that transnational engagement will occur in various locations and within different contexts. Secondly, Peter

Dahlgren and Annette Hill's *parameters of media* engagement provides a model that is more flexible than past models in conceptualizing engagement as highly varied and dependent on the individual. It also emphasises the importance of place and time, which is highly relevant to this thesis (Dahlgren & Hill 2020: 13). By analysing engagement as a “nexus” this research is able to take into account the fact that migrants are multimodal, and their engagement and online self-expression will depend on numerous variables (ibid).

In total, fourteen interviews were conducted, seven with labour migrants and seven with education migrants living in London. This chapter will be based upon their answers, which is the foundation of the analysis of this thesis. By interviewing two different types of migrants, this research can compare and contrast to see whether there are any differences and similarities between the two. The empirical research shows that there is a difference between education migrants and labour migrants, showing that contexts matter. However, there are also several similarities. Regardless, three main themes arose from the interviews. These were 1: *Role of media in integrating into a new life in London and Finding a Sense of Belonging*; 2: *Online media engagement (Five Parameters)*; and 3: *Online Self-Expression*. These three themes also informed the analytical coding of the empirical data and added further subcategories for each theme along with quotes from the participants.

Role of Media in Integrating into New Life in London and Finding a Sense of Belonging

The success of integration is difficult to fully measure since it is so multi-layered and includes different aspects such as civic engagement and political participation. Furthermore, integration should be regarded as a two-way process that includes both the host country and the migrant (Barrero et al. 2013: 1). This is evident based on the interviews since it seems to suggest a slight difference in how education and labour migrants used media to initially integrate into their respective societies. However, in almost all cases, online media played an important role in helping them find a sense of belonging once they had relocated from their country of origin to London.

Virtually all of the student migrant participants stated that they used social media to a certain extent to meet people when they first moved to the city. This was mostly done through Facebook groups that they found or through WhatsApp group chats that they were added to when they moved into their student accommodation at university. For the student Sarah, 25,

Brazil, finding friends with similar interests through Facebook was accommodating since she stated that she did not enjoy attending big gatherings filled with strangers, which often occurs as the first year of university commences in the UK. In many of the other cases, it could be argued that social media made it easier for migrants to assimilate into their new life in London. For Randy, 30, Italy, Facebook played a vital role in helping him establishing new networks in London and maintaining contact with his family back home in Italy.

“I joined a group called Italians in London on Facebook once I found out that I was moving to London. There I met my future roommates, who are now some of my best friends. Three of us decided to find an apartment in Harrow to share before we had even met each other offline, but it worked (laughs). And three years later, we are still living together”.

– Randy, 30, consultant, Italy

The case of Italian migrants in London is particularly interesting, partly since there has been a massive increase in people from Italy choosing to relocate to the UK. In fact, three of the participants in this research originated from Italy, Randy and two students. While neither of the two students used the same Facebook group that Randy had used, they each joined the Italian society of their respective universities online, one at Westminster University and the other at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies). Thus, like Randy, they used online media to find other Italians in London. Sara Marino states in her research that London has become known as “the Promised Land” for young Italians who are looking to pursue careers due to the lack of opportunities in Italy (Marino 2015: 2). In more general terms, diasporic communities in London have been changed significantly because of online technologies. Migrant diasporas can now be imagined and recreated using, for example, social media applications. While diasporas have consistently depended on networks, the Internet is crucial to those networks and has taken on “a central function in many migrants’ day-to-day lives” (ibid). Through online media engagement, migrants can form a new life away from their country of origin and “re-create a community of comfort that is real in its emotional and political consequences” (ibid).

While the results from both set of migrants were mostly similar, analytical coding showed that labour migrants were initially more likely to establish initial relationships with others in an offline setting than student migrants. This was mainly done through people they met at work or their friends, who already lived in London, introducing them to new people. Thus,

not all migrants used online media to establish networks in London once they had relocated. When Haley, 29, Belgium, a project manager in central London was asked about her first point of contacts in London, how she met them, and whether online media played a role in this, she said:

“The first person I met was my flatmate, so it was not really through like Facebook or anything like that. I was then introduced to people either through her or just met them at my job. So, I did not really use social media much to begin with to meet people. But I used it a lot to keep in touch with my family and friends in Belgium. It has helped me whenever I am homesick”.

– Haley, 29, Project Manager, Belgium

This reflection showed that Haley, like a number of the other labour migrants, did not rely on online media to initially integrate into their London communities to establish contacts but did so instead through their work and people they had already met. Online media, however, still played an important role in allowing them to maintain close contact with their friends and family back in their country of origin.

Mary, 26, student, said that she initially moved to London only to study a bachelor’s degree at Kings College. However, through the contacts that she made, partly through online media, she decided to stay in London for her master’s degree, with hopes of finding a permanent job once she has graduated.

“I met my boyfriend online pretty soon after I arrived here. That was four years ago, and we live together now with some of our friends. So, without this app my life would have been very different in London because... I cannot imagine wanting to stay here to do my master’s if I had not met the people that I have”.

– Mary, 26, student, Taiwan

Mary differed from most of the other participants who had moved to London from a different continent because most of them only planned on remaining in London for a few years before returning home. The distance was generally the main reason for not wanting to remain in the long run. Like Hilary Perraton stated, some students often decide to return home because “they felt they belonged there” (ibid: 235). The empirical data suggests that, not just for the

students but also workers, there was a greater probability of staying in London longer for those who came from Europe since it was easier for them to visit their family regularly. Having your family live across the globe meant that flights and travel in general would be more expensive. However, being able to connect with their families across the world with social media had made the distance more bearable for many of the participants.

Perraton (2014) argues that, although concrete data is scarce, it is possible to make generalisations about migrants who stay in their host country or return home. For many, staying in their host country is out of their hands due to government policies. Those most likely to remain were those who were academically gifted and from upper-class families (Perraton 2014: 234). She argues that returning back to the country of origin was, for many, “never a realistic option for many of these who enriched their own lives and that of the universities that hosted them” (ibid). This falls in line with many of the education migrants who expressed their desire to remain in the city after graduating. One of them even began to work at her university while simultaneously studying her master’s degree. Luca, 24, who now works as a lab assistant at a university in London, was offered a place after his studies which he quickly accepted since he was keen on staying in the city.

Another interesting finding was regarding the comparison of integrating into London versus other places. Five of the participants claimed that, compared to other cities they have relocated to in the past, London was more welcoming and felt it was easier to establish new networks. This was apparent as Deandra, 26, student, stated that she was surprised by how easy it was to assimilate into the London society when she first came because she had found it difficult when she moved to Lausanne in Switzerland for work three years prior.

“It was much easier than in Lausanne. I liked it there, but it was so different and the Swiss... just a bit rude. But everyone is open minded in London I feel. Maybe because there are so many international people here already. People are more open minded than in other places”.

- Deandra, 26, student, Italy

Anthony Giddens points out that cosmopolitans found in big cities openly embrace and even encourage “cultural complexity” that arises as a result of an increasingly more globalized and digital world where people create connections with strangers who have different beliefs and live differently from themselves (Giddens 2002: 4).

Online media was generally thought of as being more inclusive, whereas traditional media such as television and newspapers could at times have the opposite effect on some of the migrants. The portrayal of migrants in certain British newspaper outlets such as the Sun and the Daily Mail was bothersome for some of the participants as well.

“I prefer online media to other forms of media I guess... because I can sort of chose what I want to engage with. I get most of my news and stuff from Twitter and social media. I stick to it more than like television and these really bad UK newspapers that are just so racist.

– Dennis, 23, actor, Australia

Dennis goes on to state that he felt that online media for news allowed for more voices and perspectives to be heard unlike the big broadcasters in the UK. His arguments were similar to some of the other participants. Their sentiments are also backed up by recent research that looked into the different ways in which countries report on migrants in the media. While there are newspaper outlets, such as the Guardian, that are generally sympathetic towards migrants, the right-wing press is particularly hostile towards them. While it is not unusual for countries to have anti-migrant perspectives, what set the UK’s right press apart from the rest was “the degree to which that section campaigned aggressively against refugees and migrants” (Berry & Blanco & Moore 2015: 10).

The theme of *Role of Media in Integrating into New Life in London and Finding a Sense of Belonging* found that one of the few major things that labour and student migrants differed on was their reliance on using online media to establish connection when they first moved to the city. Student migrants were more likely to have already made some contact with people in London before relocating through the use of things such as Facebook groups, although a few labour migrants did the same thing. However, all of the participants, regardless of their occupation, explained that they regularly used social media to stay in touch with their relatives and friends in their home country.

Online Media Engagement (Five Parameters)

As mentioned in the methodology section, for the online media engagement theme of the analysis, this thesis will use Dahlgren and Hill’s *parameters of media engagement* model.

They present five separate categories, and the following section will show how this research operationalises those categories. With the participant data collected from the qualitative interviews, this model was applied to the coding across the five parameters. As the data was coded for the second time, the stronger relations began to appear.

Contexts

The first level is the contextual level which is interested in the actual point of entry, how individuals enter and encounter media content. Media contexts are of particular importance to this research on migrants' every day online engagement because it is nuanced and situated to a particular region, time and place, and particular distribution platform (Dahlgren & Hill 2020: 13). Dahlgren and Hill argue that media engagement is relational, and therefore see it as a "nexus of relations" (ibid: 2).

The participants in this research all seemed to suggest that they had at least somewhat of a routine when it came to their online media engagement. For example, both Stan, 22, student, and Billie, 27, marketing assistant, had a similar routine where they would check their social media applications in the morning and then try to avoid it until after dinner time. Michonne, 27, teacher, on the other hand, said that she usually only uses social media applications on her way to and from work. She explained that her commute was rather long, and using her phone made her travels more bearable. Regardless of the specific reasons, virtually all of the participants explained that they were more engaged during a particular time of the day. This was to be expected since Dahlgren and Hill state that the place where individuals engage with media is significant (ibid: 13). This particular context, time, can also be connected with intensities, which will be discussed later in this section.

An interesting observation from several of the participants was how their online media engagement in London differed from the one their country of origin. Student migrants in this research were generally willing to try new forms of online media once they had relocated to London. Conversely, labour migrants were less likely to start using new social media applications to communicate. Emma, 24, a student from Sweden, explained that she was surprised at how differently students in London use social media networking sites (SNS) compared to Swedish people. For example, according to her, people her age were far less likely to use Snapchat to communicate with their friends in London. In Sweden, however, it was her primary source of communicating with her friends. This showed how online media

use could be culturally specific. This also showed how the first point of contact when moving to a new place has the ability to influence a person's engagement. When asked how her online media engagement habits had changed since moving to London, Emma stated:

“I started using TikTok and Twitter just because my flatmates all use it. So, it is fun sharing videos or tweets with each other. I did not think I would enjoy using them as much as I do now”.

– Emma, 24, student, Sweden

Oliver, 21, student, also explained that his media habits had changed significantly due to moving to London. Not only did he try new social media applications, but he also felt that his time spent using social media had increased, primarily because he wanted to maintain close contact with his friends and family from back home.

“I appreciate it a lot more now because I get to see my parents and sister and I feel close to them even though I am in another country. It is very good, and especially now with the whole Covid thing I am not able to travel there as much as I would like...it's good being able to catch up”.

– Oliver, 21, student, Denmark

This further proves the argument that “local, regional and global contexts impact on the ways people engage and disengage with media” (ibid: 13). This, in turn, can also be linked with Adrian Athique's theory that media engagement has now become a transnational phenomenon. This level also includes several “meta-contexts”, such as post-truths or even a Government's policy decision. Both student and labour migrants expressed their scepticism of only acquiring news material from social media applications such as Twitter and Facebook. They found a lot of the information found there to be untrustworthy. Riya, 25, student at King's College, explained that she avoided Covid-related news, and news in general, on social media because she deemed it untrustworthy. She preferred to use more reputable news sites as her main source for acquiring news.

Motivations

For many participants, the motivation was simply to be entertained, like scrolling through videos on TikTok, for example. Others, such as Emma, were motivated to check Twitter for

updates from politicians that she follows due to her own interest in politics. Another common motivation for several participants was simply needing a break from their work-life or studies. This showed how, for many participants, their motivation to engage with online media drew on “affect and emotionality” (ibid: 15). Like Dahlgren and Hill argue, the analysis in this research found that the motivations behind a person’s media engagement will depend on their interests, self-identity and the place in which they find themselves in.

For others, however, the motivation stemmed from more personal and social reasons. For some, a common motivation for engaging with online media was because it eased the transition into a new country. For some, getting involved in politics online in their host country made them feel more ingrained in the society that they live in. For example, Oliver explained that once he moved to London to study Politics, he got involved in the London Labour Party Facebook group. He was motivated to do so firstly because he wanted to get involved with political issues but secondly, also wanted to make new friends in his London community. Through that, he found information for things such as protests and campaigning, which he attended and met new people in. Other participants also stated that finding a sense of belonging online, whether it was through a particular Facebook group dedicated to a television show or a meme page on Instagram, was one of their main motivations for being engaged online. This kind of motivation showed that the migrants in this research, whether they were students or working, had different ways of finding a sense of belonging online through different “communities, groups and networks” (ibid: 15).

Some regarded being politically engaged in online media as a “duty” that motivated them into taking some form of action online. Certain conversations regarding the motivations for posting something online also led to the question of what actually counts as being politically engaged online. Is it enough to simply share something online, or does it have to go beyond that?

“Like, I know I am not going to change something drastically by just sharing a Black Lives Matter link for donations on my Instagram, but it just felt like I had to do something. And even if that makes just one of my friends consider donating or sharing, then I think that should count as something”.

- Billie, 27, marketing assistant, France

Many saw it as their responsibility to share particular messages around or write their own opinions about a specific event. It can be argued that this particular form of motivation stems from “some kind of social value that resides beyond the self” (ibid: 15). As Dahlgren and Hill state, some individuals regard this particular sort of engagement, such as news or recent social injustice events, as their obligation (ibid: 14). Thus, the empirical data showed that there were personal and collective social motivations, often overlapping with one another, for choosing to engage with online media.

A point was raised by Deandra, where she questioned how much of her engagement was necessarily voluntary. She spoke of the invasiveness of encouragement to engage with media and how news could become old within minutes.

“...we are pestered with smartphone notifications. This makes me wonder how much of that engagement being studied is voluntary”.

– Deandra, 26, student, Italy

She went on to question how much of our engagement is voluntary and how our content is, in many ways, picked by online algorithms. Deandra was not alone in such reflections as other participants explained how they thought that their engagement was not solely of their own will, but instead that they felt encouraged to engage with media because of things such as ads or notifications on their phones. There is voluntary engagement, such as how people choose to act and perform their identity (civic and political identities), but that is not to discount the fact that there are many examples of involuntary engagement, like what Deandra mentioned, or seeing certain ads on public transport, for example. This can be linked with other variables within the conceptual framework and, also, with the Consequences of media engagement, how does what we see impact us?

Modalities

The participants had different preferences of styles and themes when it came to their online media engagement. Some explained that they were more likely to remember the content of an article online if it included some visuals, as it made it more memorable and helped convey the message of the article. Most participants used various different online media platforms to obtain information and communicate with people in both their country of origin and in London. This can be linked with Madianou and Miller’s “polymedia” approach. They argue

that people are “increasingly free to choose” between a multitude of different platforms (Miller et al. 2016: 4). Polymedia is, according to them, an emerging “environment of communicative opportunities” (Madianou & Miller 2012: 170). Moreover, this could also be linked with what Annette Hill refers to as “roaming audiences”, which refers to individuals that “access media through myriad ways” in different places and at different times (Hill 2019: 34). The reasons and consequences for choosing to engage with a particular platform will be discussed in further detail in the last section.

Online media invites both cognitive and affective engagement, as was shown by the data. Most of the participants had their own unique strategy that they used when looking for reliable source material. This cognitive engagement depended on their country of origin and what they deemed themselves to be reliable. In one of the interviews, Oliver revealed that he studies politics and has gained experience and knowledge of how things such as news and political ideas spread in online media, which has led to a change in his online media engagement. This sort of cognitive engagement was also found in the other interviews as well. As mentioned earlier in this research, these sorts of answers prove that media engagement is not static but instead subjective (Athique: 157). The interviews and the empirical data suggest that transnational migrants’ online media engagement is shaped by their self-identity, current occupation, experiences and relationships. Their affective engagement with online media involved what happened before the actual engagement took place, what they experienced during the engagement and what that led to (Hill 2019: 60). These affective processes of media engagement “work across a short and long timeframe”, as will be discussed in the next section (ibid).

Intensities

For many of the participants, such as Stan and Kyle, their online media engagement was sporadic and depended on several things. For Stan, the level of his engagement depended on whether he was staying with his family or his flatmates. For Kyle, it mainly increased in the last year because he could not travel back home to visit his family and friends in Brazil due to travel restrictions. According to him, online media helped him cope with his homesickness as he was able to Skype with his family regularly. The interviews proved that, as Dahlgren and Hill put it, a person’s “time bonds with media are vital to engagement”, impacting the duration and affective dimensions of engagement (Dahlgren & Hill 2020: 19).

The Coronavirus outbreak also had a significant impact on the intensity of the participants' engagement. Most of the interviewees explained that they felt their engagement had increased throughout lockdown, whether it was binge-watching series or just generally spending more time on social media than before. Mary, for example, explained that she began watching the television show *The Office* (US) during lockdown, which eventually led her to joining groups related to the show on various different social media applications. This was an example of a more intense form of engagement where "deeper connections" were made with a number of different collective groups (ibid: 18).

Moreover, for some, online media engagement became more communal, while, it became more individualised for others. Billie explained that she believed that lockdown measures meant that people's only possibility of interacting with other people was by being engaged online.

"At the start of lockdown last year everyone seemed to be doing these online quizzes on this app called Houseparty. It was quite intense (laughs) but it died out fast when lockdown restrictions were eased again. I feel that it was healthy for us, though, to be able to interact digitally when we could not do so in person".

– Billie, 27, marketing assistant, France

Certain participants specified that this depended on where and with whom they were staying with at a particular time. Which can also be linked to the contexts level that emphasises the importance of time and place to a person's engagement. Things such as Boris Johnson's Covid-19 conferences and or new weekly episodes of a television show became a communal activity for many of the participants. Thus, in many cases, a simple event such as a daily conference was soon turned into a communal occasion for all flatmates to engage with together.

Consequences

The consequences of online media engagement depended on the individual. For some, the consequence of online engagement led to an increase in self-confidence. Others explained that their engagement with online media had inspired them to take action in real life. Five student migrants and two labour migrants stated that they had been inspired to take an activist approach to issues regarding the environment and social injustice after being exposed to those

issues on social media. Facebook was the main source used for organising and finding out information regarding protests. Certain participants got involved in political protests on UK based issues for other reasons such as not being able to vote, which led them to take action in real life with issues that concerned them. Peter Dahlgren and Claudia Alvares state that there is an increasing amount of people that feel that there is a lack of political parties that listen to their needs which makes them feel “marginalised by the political system” (Dahlgren & Alvares 2013: 50). This can, in turn, lead to people “turning to alternative paths of participation” (ibid).

For others, it was for this particular reason that they disengaged from UK politics online since they knew that they could not vote. Some of them explained that they were put off by UK based political content in online media because they felt like it was more difficult to make a change as a migrant. This was particularly the case for migrants who had only been in London for a short amount of time and did not necessarily have any long-term plans of staying in the city longer than a couple of years. Often, if people do not experience any openings for participation, the blame of this should not solely be put on media because it also has to do with actual real power relations and structures within a society as well. The media can, however, reinforce those or even in other cases function to subvert them and work in the opposite direction to encourage engagement and participation, as has been shown in the empirical data. Media can, as Peter Dahlgren states, invite us to engage “with both our hearts and our minds” (Dahlgren 2013: 53).

The empirical data shows that some consequences can be positive, while other’s can be negative. Some of the participants explained that they believed that being a transnational migrant positively affected how they navigate online media. This is evident since the material from both sets of migrants suggests that they have become hyper-aware or more skilful at navigating online media, due to their transnationalism. For example, Haley argued that speaking three languages allowed her to read sources regarding, for example, a recent event from three different angles. According to her, being able to compare the way in which certain things were reported by different countries helps her in figuring out what is trustworthy and what is not. However, a number of migrants explained that having to keep up with news from both their country of origin and the UK could at times be tiring and would sometimes lead to them taking short breaks from interacting with online media. Feeling overwhelmed by online media often led to the participants choosing to avoid certain platforms for a while. Again, the

time and place played an important role in when the interviewees decided to disengage. It is important to spend time analysing non-participation and disengagement because, as audiences, we frequently disengage. Today, there is almost too much media that we are confronted with in our everyday lives. For that reason, each individual will create a strategy of how to deal with this. Each participant in this study has their own particular routine and selection, and disengagement, because it is simply impossible to engage with everything. That is why it is important to spend time on disengagement or a particular phase, because one can learn from why things have not worked out or why someone has become demotivated in participating in something.

An interesting consequence of online media engagement came from Riya, a student from India. She said that she often shares articles and posts her own thoughts on ongoing issues to her social media accounts in comment sections or on her own Facebook page. However, Riya explained that she had received some messages from people back home asking her why she was concerned with issues in Europe and did not post about Indian issues, such as the Indian farmer's protests that have been ongoing since 2020. This resulted in her choosing to not be political on Facebook, since that is where she had most of her connections from her home country, and instead began using Twitter because it allowed her to decide who could actually see her posts. Thus, she felt more comfortable expressing herself on a different platform in order to avoid certain opinions from some of her contacts from her country of origin. This was similar to Luca, 24, lab assistant, who asked his friends not to tag him in pictures of him at demonstrations as he did not want his family members to see him attending them since he believed that they would disapprove. These two examples show the different types of consequences of going beyond engagement. Although this sort of consequence of media engagement did not come up often in all of the interviews, it is still an illustrative case that shows how context can really influence behaviour at this level. Even though there were few examples of this, it was still a good case to highlight despite not every migrant in this study saying something similar. This is one of the benefits and values of conducting such a small sample, since it allows for a deeper analysis of instances such as this. This is something that would not have been possible with a quantitative study using surveys, for example.

Overall, as with the previous theme, there seemed to be both similarities and differences between the two sets of migrants. Virtually all of the participants stated that the pandemic has had an effect upon their online engagement, as shown by the analysis of the *five parameters*

of media engagement. For most it had become more intense as they spent more time online due to outdoor restrictions. Some participants, however, also felt overwhelmed by the amount of media that they were consuming which led some to disengaging from certain platforms and types of media that they consumed. The analysis has also showed that those migrants' who lived with more than one flatmate were more likely to have a more communal online media engagement, as they would often share pages and articles with one another.

Online Self-Expression

This research also wanted to focus on self-expression because it is a critical way that engagement is produced. For many participants, online media platforms provided a necessary outlet to express oneself. There were several different reasons why the participants decided to express themselves online, such as for social, political or informative reasons. Focusing on transnational migrants meant that there was an interesting aspect to their online self-expression, which also led to the question of how people bring in their homes into their expression. For some participants, their self-expression depended on the platform they were using and the audience they thought they have on said platform. Instagram and Facebook were the two most used social media platforms for more social self-expression. Some of the student migrants also used TikTok for self-expression through short videos. Twitter, on the other hand, was used by some for more political self-expression. Regardless of the platform, many expressed that being able to be self-expressive online and connecting with other people had eased their move to London. Sarah, said that moving far from home for her studies was made significantly more accessible by online media:

“I remember seeing this video or something where this guy was saying that he is as much an American, or a citizen of the US as he is a citizen of Instagram. And I was like... it makes sense. I am as close to people back home in Brazil as I am with my neighbor here in London who I see every day. I can live my day with people online and that's awesome”.

– Sarah, 25, student, Brazil

In many ways, she was referring to the fact that she is able to live her everyday life with people online simultaneously as in real life. In the past, it was more common for us to just have one-self. This is the self that people tended to be most of the time, with friends and family. While the chances are that people acted differently depending on who they were with,

which can be linked with what Erving Goffman referred to as a “front”, it could be argued that this was still your single, real-world self. However, with the dawn of new online media technology and the rise of social media applications, this has changed significantly since people are now able to live two completely different lives: offline and online. This has both its pros and cons, as one of the interviewees stated he thought it can be dangerous to solely live your life within an online setting. Dennis, argued that it is easy to begin to not recognize the online version of yourself if the gap between your offline and online self grows exponentially:

“The online version is not a complete version of a person, just small good parts. I do not want my online version of myself differ so much from the offline version... if that makes sense”.

– Dennis, 23, actor, Australia

Another interviewee, Randy, 30, consultant, explained how at first, his use of social media was something that he used for validation, and wanted to get likes on his posts from friends back home because he wanted them to see his life in London. He explained that eventually he realized that it was unnecessary to depend on likes and retweets and did not get any satisfaction from this online validation that he had been craving. This was a common theme among some of the interviewees, how one’s online self is just a finely curated version of the whole person. Certain participants argued that they felt that they expressed themselves differently online to people in London than to people in their home country and stated that having to deal with multiple audiences could at times be tiring.

The importance of the role that social media plays within politics cannot be understated. In a lot of cases, as seen in the empirical data, online media has the ability to alter an individual’s political self-identity, particularly when moving to a new country. As Daniel Lane et al. stated, political participation and expression online has the ability to “influence not only political behaviour, but also citizens’ more fundamental political self-concepts” (Lane et al. 2019: 34). Some participants explained how they felt that their political identity had changed as a result of moving to London, and in turn how they express themselves politically online. Some simply claimed that they were more willing to read and keep up with political events, while others claimed that their political opinions had changed significantly. Stan, 22, explained that since moving from his small hometown in Italy he had lost contact with certain

friends because of his altering political beliefs. He explained that being exposed to different cultures had helped him form his own ideals, which affected his relationship with some of his friends back home. This falls in line with one of Arjun Appadurai arguments in his book *Modernity At Large*, where he argues that it is normal for this to occur as “generations easily divide” as ideas ranging from politics to culture “wither under the siege of distance and time” (Appadurai 1996: 44). In other words, in many cases, as transnational migrants spend more time away from their country of origin their culture begins to become an “arena of choice, justification, and representation” (ibid). As early as 1996, Arjun wrote about how assimilating into new surroundings can be difficult because of the “politics of representing” oneself as normal to new people in one’s new environment. The fact that migrants now have access to new forms of communications and expressing themselves gives it a whole new dimension. It is now more common, especially with younger migrants, for their self-identity to be influenced by online media since they can easily find likeminded people.

The analysis of the theme of *Self-Expression* resulted in several insightful findings. Answers from the participants showed that both sets of migrants had many different reasons for expressing themselves in an online setting. One of the few differences between the two was that student migrants were more likely to use newer social media applications such as TikTok than labour migrants. In general, labour migrants were slightly less likely to express themselves socially in online media and choose to do so privately amongst friends through Facebook messenger or WhatsApp. However, most of the participants, nine to be specific, claimed to have shared information or tried to raise awareness for social and political issues that they deemed important at some point over the last year. The results also showed that a number of migrants, particularly the younger ones, felt that their political identities had changed, albeit to varying degrees.

Summary

Overall, three main themes were identified, each of which was linked to the research questions that this thesis set out to answer. The themes were 1: *Role of Media in Integrating into New Life in London and Finding a Sense of Belonging*, 2: *Online Media Engagement (Five Parameters)*, and 3: *Online Self-Expression*. Across the three themes certain similarities began to arise between the migrants in this study. For both sets of migrants, online media has played an essential role in different ways. All participants expressed, in some manner, that online media has allowed them to cope with their move to London and that they imagined

that it would have been much more difficult to adapt without access to social media. Certain participants even argued that had it not been for social media, they probably would not have stayed in London as long as they have. For some, because it facilitated making new friends in their first couple of weeks, while for others simply because it made it easier to maintain close ties with people in their home country. Finding a sense of belonging within the capital was facilitated by online media for most interviewees. When reflecting upon their own media engagement, a common theme amongst the participants was the feeling of being overwhelmed by having to keep up with multiple sources from their country of origin and the UK. This had different consequences depending on the individual but often resulted in some form of disengagement. Another interesting similarity amongst the participants, with the exception of one interviewee, is that migrants from continents other than Europe were less likely to make long term plans in London because it was more difficult for them to travel back home regularly.

However, the analysis of the participants across all three themes also suggests that there were differences in the online media engagement of labour and student migrants. One of the most significant differences between the two migrants across the three themes is that labour migrants seemed more reluctant to express themselves publicly on social media than student migrants. However, most participants stated that they had at least shared a donations page or something similar at some point over the last year. There was a common sentiment that people felt a certain degree of responsibility to be at least somewhat politically engaged and raise awareness for social and political issues. One of the most apparent differences was how education migrants were more likely to use social media to make connections when first moving to the city.

The political identity of labour migrants was more likely to remain unchanged following their move to London, especially the older participants. Student migrants, on the other hand, explained that they had become more politically active online, and their political identities had flourished while being within a new mediated environment. Moreover, certain participants, both labour and student migrants, claimed that having to deal with multiple audiences led them to develop different ways of expressing themselves within online settings. For others, having to deal with multiple audiences led them to disengage and taking breaks from online media due to feeling overwhelmed. Overall, however, most individuals

expressed that they felt it was their duty to be somewhat politically engaged and raise awareness for social causes.

The intensities of migrants' engagement also varied greatly, but Covid-19 seemed to have affected them all in some manner. For some, media engagement became more individualised but for other's it became more communal and led to a deeper form of engagement. The importance of place and time was apparent when migrants' spoke of their different levels of engagement. Over the last year, the empirical data also suggested that student migrants were far more likely to try new forms of online communication while labour migrants mainly used the same platforms that they had used before. In the conclusion, these similarities and differences will be discussed in light of the research questions and theoretical approach.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

At the beginning, this thesis argued that the view that individuals stay put in a specific geographical location is not necessarily the case anymore, at least not for many people. Transnational migrants have been of increasing interest within the field of transnationalism. Moreover, while previous research has provided some interesting insights, this thesis has suggested that, as Peggy Levitt & Glick Schiller (2004) argued, there is a need for more research primarily focusing on how migrants use online media. Not only as a means of keeping in touch with contacts back home but also as a way of integrating into their new environment in their host country. The internet has led to new communication tools that have changed the world, so it is only fitting that migrants are reconceptualized with a modern lens that takes these new forms of communications into account (Nowicka 2020). Therefore, this research called for a difference to be made between the embodiment of old and new transnational migration (Levitt & Jaworsky 2007: 14).

This thesis asked three main research questions.

1. What role does online media engagement play in transnational migrants' integration into London communities?
2. How do transnational migrants navigate multiple audiences and levels of political engagement on social media?

3. How is political engagement manifested through transnational migrants' online self-expression?

In order to answer these questions, this study used semi-structured qualitative interviews with migrants since it allowed this research to acquire different forms of answers (Seale 2017: 207). The use of interviews meant that this thesis could delve deeper into each participant's answers than if this had been a quantitative study based on a survey or questionnaire. Allowing the participants to express themselves fully was of the utmost importance, which led to insightful observations that the interviewees made of their online engagement. Since this particular angle has been relatively under-researched, one of the main aims was to allow migrants to discuss the importance of online engagement with their own words. Thus, this research has attempted to contribute to the increasingly growing field of transnational migrants and the effects of modern technology in their lives. To answer these questions, this thesis used Athique's *transnational spectrum* and combined it with Dahlgren and Hill's *parameters of media engagement* model. Using a combination of these two theories was beneficial for a study such as this since they each provided a broad perspective from which to analyze migrants' engagement.

To answer the questions, the analysis of this study was split into three separate themes, the first of which was *Role of Media in Integrating into New Life in London and Finding a Sense of Belonging*. This theme was analyzed using a coding scheme based on Athique's work. His argument that transnational media engagement occurs within three separate contexts (*Individual, Local and National*) was helpful as these three were useful categories for a coding scheme. It also argues that migrants' media engagement takes place within different locations and contexts. The research found that successful integration is difficult to measure, given that it is so multi-layered. However, what can be drawn from the empirical data is that online media played a role, to varying extents, in helping migrants adapt to their new lives in London. For some, because it facilitated the process of establishing new connections in London, while for other's because it allowed them to stay in touch with their friends and families in their home country.

While Athique's theory was helpful in the analysis, this thesis argued that the theory should be taken further and specifically focus on migrants more thoroughly. One of the main gaps in Athique's theoretical framework was his lack of focus specifically on migrants. Particularly because, as mentioned earlier, migrants have to deal with two borders of administration.

Thus, this thesis questioned whether this makes migrants hyper-aware when dealing with online media, or whether it may lead some of them to take a break due to feeling overwhelmed by having to deal with these two borders. The results from the interviews suggest that it is essential to account for migrants specifically for this reason. A number of the participants argued that being a transnational migrant resulted in them having to keep up with more online sources than most people, and often resulted in participants disengaging from certain platforms or specific subject online. Although not conclusive since it was only based upon the answers of a few migrants, the answers meet the claim that migrants should be further taken into account by Athique in his framework. Another gap in his framework is that it only focuses on comment feeds and online forums. Instead, this study attempted to give a broader and more detailed look into how this can be applied to transnational migrants through qualitative interviews.

Therefore, the second theme that arose was *Online Media Engagement (Five Parameters)*, which was linked to the second research question. Dahlgren and Hill's *parameters of media engagement* model was used as the coding scheme for this particular theme. A common limitation of previous qualitative studies on this subject is that they focus solely on regular and visible instances of transnationalism and in doing so ignore most of those who are involved in transnational activities less frequently, or disengagement in this case (Portes & Haller & Guarnio 2002: 284). Instead, this research opted to look at migrants' everyday online engagement. The *parameters of media engagement* model was useful in advancing Athique's work on online commenting activity to a much broader sense of online media engagement. The model provides a framework that can be applied to real-world case studies. Most importantly, the Dahlgren and Hill model refrains from making fixed assumptions about audiences and their engagement.

The two theoretical frameworks allowed for a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the empirical data from the interviews. The fact that the answers regarding migrants' online media engagement were so varied but also similar at times, proves how multidimensional they are, further justifying the use of the robust *five parameters of media engagement* that encompasses all of the important elements of their engagement. By analysing each of the five levels, this research was able to clearly see what was similar and what differed in terms of the engagement of the fourteen migrants.

The final theme investigated was *Online Self-Expression*, responding to the third research question. This theme was closely connected to the second theme, seeing as online self-expression is a critical way that engagement is constructed. The self-expression of the migrants was varied and depended heavily upon the individual seeing as they each had different ways of expressing themselves in an online setting. Most of the interviewees, particularly students, agreed that a person's online identity was most likely somewhat different to their actual offline personalities. However, this varied greatly depending on the individual. Sometimes this was done subconsciously, while other times, it was done on purpose. The analysis of this last theme, as with the previous two themes, solidified the overarching core argument of this thesis which is that migrants are multimodal.

Throughout, this thesis has emphasised that migrants' online engagement is unique and complex. As the empirical data has proven, the engagement will vary between individuals and depend upon many different factors. While self-identity and personal relationships are undoubtedly relevant, one cannot be said to be more important than the other, simply because migrants cannot be generalised. Virtually all participants had their own unique strategy and routine for their online media engagement and consumption.

The research has dealt with migrants and attempted to get into their assimilation and what role the media plays for them. However, the more profound analysis of the thesis attempted to find how these practices are formed and how they are related to their contexts. In other words, how is their migration story connected to the networks that they have made and how does this show in their media habits and general media consumption? The empirical material suggests that one's current occupation will ultimately determine how much online media is initially used for assimilation. Results from the interviews also show that a person's self-identity and the environment they find themselves in will also play an important role in how and to what extent a person engages, and disengages, with online media.

By building on prior studies, this thesis has attempted to contribute to the field of transnationalism by arguing for the importance of a new conceptualization of transnational migrants, one that takes into account their everyday engagement and the fact that it takes place within fluid spaces. In the introduction, this thesis already established that there can be no defining and concrete answer regarding how transnational migrants' online engagement, simply because it is far too multidimensional. The results from this thesis have shown

precisely that. The answers were thoroughly varied and depended heavily upon the individual. Having said that, some patterns could be spotted from the empirical data.

This thesis initially set out with the argument that migrants are multidimensional. The study found evidence for that in the differences between the two sets of migrants. Empirical data from the interviews suggests that student migrants were slightly more likely to rely on online media to integrate into their lives in London. Participants mainly did so through social media application such as Facebook. Half of the labour migrants that were interviewed stated that they integrated through their work and the people they met there, while others said they already had connections from before and were introduced to new people through them. Student migrants were less likely to have already established connections in London before moving but said that the use of social media helped them integrate faster than they had expected. Results suggest that student migrants are slightly more willing to be politically flexible and vocal online. However, most claimed to have at least shared a link to raise awareness for a certain social or political cause. Student migrants were also more likely to argue that their political identities had flourished in some senses since moving to London.

Nevertheless, there were also several similarities between the migrants. All of the interviewees, both student and labour migrants, argued that online media played a significant role in helping them adapt to life in London. Most participants also discussed having to deal with multiple audiences. Some felt that being transnational and consuming sources in multiple languages had helped them become more aware of what online sources to trust and which ones not to. However, many felt that it could be tiring having to keep up, for example, with news from both their country of origin and their host country, often leading to disengagement. Dealing with multiple audiences was difficult, especially for those who felt that London and their home country differed culturally and socially. Furthermore, virtually all of the participants claimed that the pandemic affected their online engagement. For some, it became more intense and communal while other's felt that it had become more individualized.

Thus, while differences were found, the research also found a number of commonalities amongst the participants. This leads to the question of what it means that there are some common trends amongst the migrants' media engagement? What the results seem to suggest is that there is some structure to online media engagement. The models used in this study can

be useful because they highlight the fact that there are commonalities, but also differences. Some things unite these two sets of migrants, and that is why it is important to look at these different contexts and levels of engagement. The argument that migrants are multidimensional and highly individualized still stands. However, within these similarities each participant had their own unique strategy of interacting and engaging with online media. Even though some of the reflections of the participants were similar, they were still individually unique. Thus, while there may be similarities amongst the migrants on the surface level, when this research really dug into their individual level it found that everyone has their own story and, as a result, everyone has their own online media practices. This thesis has shown that qualitative research on migrants is essential because just relying on quantitative studies would lead to a loss of nuance.

This thesis has argued that it is important to know the stories of migrants because they play such an essential role in London and make the city what it is. In order to best understand not just London but any modern city, as well as political changes in those cities, one has to account for migrants. Gaining a deep understanding of their personal stories is vital because it is often lost in other research. Emphasising the significance of the individual when researching transnational migrants was one of the key arguments in this work. By allowing them to reflect on their engagement, this thesis provided a better conceptualization of how being a transnational migrant in London can affect a person's online media engagement. Early on, this thesis established that it is important not to solely focus on migrants within national borders but instead also look beyond that. Observing their online media engagement was an appropriate method of doing so.

However, this study was also limited by certain factors, so it is important to mention its limitations. As mentioned before, only fourteen interviews were conducted, meaning that the findings from this research cannot be said to be conclusive. Conducting more interviews would benefit a research such as this in giving more definitive answers. Certain aspects of this study also merit further exploration, such as increasing the age range of the participants given that the age range in this study was fairly low (21-30). Increasing it could perhaps illuminate further differences in the online engagement of labour and education migrants in London. Furthermore, future research on this subject could also include involuntary migrants since their answers may differ significantly from voluntary migrants. Another limitation is that no interviewee in this thesis had lived in London longer than five years. Perhaps the

online engagement of migrants who have lived in the city for a longer period of time will be different than the engagement of the participants in this study. The fact that all of the interviews had to be conducted online was also a limitation in some regards. It prevented the researcher from establishing a relationship with the participants in an offline setting. Developing a greater trust with the participants could have led to even more personal reflections. In the future, a more ethnographic approach with participant observation could perhaps help illuminate new aspects of transnational migrants' online media engagement. In conclusion, these are just the initial findings in a field where, despite claims that the novelty of transnational migration has been overemphasised, there is still a lot of uncover on how online media has affected the lives of transnational migrants.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Overview of Participants

Students:

1. Sarah, 25, female, Brazil, student at University College London – Time in London: 2 years. Interview duration: 1 hour 2 minutes. Date conducted: 29 March 2021 via Zoom.
2. Stan, 22, male, Italy, student at Westminster University – Time in London: 1 year. Interview duration 54 minutes. Date conducted: 30 March 2021 via Zoom.
3. Deandra, 26, female, Italy, student at King’s College – Time in London: 2 years. Interview duration: 1 hour 7 minutes. Date conducted: 5 April 2021 via Zoom.
4. Mary, 26, female, Taiwan, student at University College London – Time in London: 4 years. Interview duration 50 minutes. Date conducted: 7 April 2021 via Zoom.
5. Emma, 24, female, Sweden, student at University College London – Time in London: 2 years. Interview duration 51 minutes. Date conducted: 8 April 2021 via Zoom.
6. Oliver, 21, male, Denmark, student at Westminster University – Time in London: 2 years. Interview duration 48 minutes. Date conducted: 8 April 2021 via Zoom.
7. Riya, 25, female, India, student at King’s College – Time in London: 3 years. Interview duration 50 minutes. Date conducted 11 April 2021 via Zoom.

Labour:

1. Luca, 24, male, Portugal, Lab Assistant – Time in London: 4 years. Interview duration 54 minutes. Date conducted: 31 March 2021 via Zoom.
2. Randy, 30, male, Italy, Consultant – Time in London: 3 years. Interview duration 1 hour 12 minutes. Date conducted: 31 March April 2021 via Zoom.
3. Haley, 29, female, Belgium, Project Manager – Time in London: 5 years. Time in London: 5 years. Interview duration 57 minutes. Date conducted 2 April 2021 via Zoom.
4. Billie, 27, female, France, Marketing Assistant – Time in London: 2 years. Interview duration 52 minutes. Date conducted: 5 April via Zoom.

5. Dennis, 23, male, Australia, Actor – Time in London: 1 year. Interview duration 1 hour 4 minutes. Date conducted 9 April via Zoom.
6. Michonne, 27, female, Spain, Teacher – Time in London: 3 years. Interview duration 39 minutes. Date conducted 11 April via Zoom.
7. Kyle, 26, male, Brazil, Recruiter – Time in London: 2 years. Interview duration 46 minutes. Date conducted 12 April via Zoom.

Appendix 2
Informed Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This form details the purpose of this study, a description of the involvement required and your rights as a participant. Information obtained through this research will be used in a Master's Thesis at the Department of Media and Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences, Lund University, Sweden.

The purpose of this study is: To investigate the online media engagement of transnational migrants living in London.

Your Participation:

Your participation in this study will consist of an interview lasting approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. You will be asked a series of questions about your online media engagement as a migrant and how you reflect on your own experiences and engagement.

You are not required to answer the questions. You have the right to pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable.

At any time, you may notify the researcher that you would like to stop the interview and your participation in the study. There is no penalty for discontinuing participation.

Confidentiality:

The interview will be audio recorded.

Your information and interview responses will be kept confidential. Your name and identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written report of the research.

The researcher shall not share your individual responses with anyone.

For any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at: ad0378bl-s@student.lu.se

By signing this consent form, I certify that I understand and agree to the terms of this agreement.

Date:

Appendix 3

Interview Protocol

Step 1: Explanation about the research:

1. Greetings.
2. Briefing on topic of study and target audience.
3. Briefing on *Research Questions*.
4. Brief on the informed consent and participants' rights.
5. Acquire consent: Word form.

Theme 1: *Role of media in integrating into a new life in London and finding a Sense of Belonging*

- a. Where are you from?
- b. What is your current occupation?
- c. How long have you lived in London?
- d. How/Why did London become your destination?
- e. How were your first couple of weeks in the city?
- f. Who were the first people you met?
- g. How did you meet them?
- h. What were those people like?

Theme 2: *Online media engagement (Five Parameters)*

- a. What sort of online media do you use?
- b. How do you choose your online media sources?
- c. Did you use online media to meet new people when you first moved to London?
 - Which platforms?
 - For what purpose?
- d. Do you use online media to stay in touch with friends and family in your home country?
- e. In which context do you find yourself engaging with online media?
 1. Time

2. Location
 3. Mood
- f. How would you compare your engagement with British media and your engagement with the media from your country of origin?
 - g. What influences your decisions in picking media sources?
 - h. Would you say that your media habits have changed since you came to London? If so, in what way? (*Friends, engagement with posts etc*)
 - i. How much have your friends influenced the online media you consume?
 - j. Has the Covid-19 pandemic affected the intensity of your online media engagement? (Communal, Individual)
 - k. Has online media influenced you to take action in real life?

Theme 3: *Online self-expression*

- a. In regard to Social Media Networking Sites, which platforms do you use?
 1. What do you use them for?
 2. What do you post/share about?
- b. How do you feel about the presence of politics on online media?

When do you engage with it?
- c. Do you often post about politics?

Do your friends?
- d. Would you say that your political identity and general engagement has changed because you are in a different media context?
- e. Is there something in particular that you have engaged with online that stands out?

Other:

- a. Is there anything else you want to add?
- b. Thank you. You can contact me if you have any questions at:
[ad0378bl-s@student.lu.se]

Appendix 4

Interview Transcript

Interview #8

8 April 2021 – 14:01-14:52

Location: Zoom: London (Researcher) – London (Participant)

Background:

Female.

From Stockholm, Sweden

Master's student in History, UCL

Been in London for: 2 years

Background Notes: Studied in Sweden before coming to London

Okay, let's begin.

Let's do it.

First of all, where are you from?

I'm from Sweden.

Alright, whereabouts in Sweden?

From Stockholm. But I was born in Luleå. But yeah, I'd say Stockholm.

What is your current occupation?

I'm doing my Master's in History at UCL.

Interesting. So how long have you been in London/UK?

I think I moved here pretty much around 2 years ago. Yeah, two years.

How did London become your study destination?

How I came here?

Yeah, or how did you decide that you wanted to move here?

It was just a place I had always wanted to live in. I had finished my bachelor's degree in Sweden and knew that I wanted to do a master's eventually but not straight away. So, I took a year off to take a break from studies and traveled around the world for a bit and then started looking around at universities in the UK. I got accepted to St. Andrews in Scotland, which is a great university, but I knew that I would be happier in a big city like London. So, I waited a long time but finally got accepted and then I booked my flights pretty much as soon as it was confirmed. But so yeah, London had always been like in the back of my head pretty much.

So, where did you travel during your year off?

I travelled around South America for two months. Visiting friends in places like Chile and Brazil. It was nice to get away from Europe and my comfort zone for a while. Most of all it was nice to take a break from writing assignments and university stuff... Anyway, then I travelled with my family to Croatia over summer which was nice... I miss being able to travel

I know... me too. Hopefully things will start going back to normal soon.

I think they have to!

So, do you remember what the first couple of weeks in the city were like for you?

You mean like in London?

Yeah, for example who were the first people you met.

Oh... well the first few weeks were good actually. I was nervous before I came because I didn't know anyone in the city, and I was leaving behind basically my whole life in Sweden... friends and family. But I was lucky I think because I lived in student halls which meant that I quickly met people. There was a Facebook group for our student block that I joined and basically just met loads of people through there. I found another Swede who lived right next to me through Facebook and we sort of went to these initiation parties together which was a good way of meeting new people... So, I guess the first people I met were other students through Facebook.

You mainly met students then in your first weeks?

Yeah, first just people that lived in my student accommodation through events and that Facebook group. And then when I started my course, I just met people on campus. But like even for the course one of the students had already created a group online for us to join and sort of get to know each other.

I'm doing my master's part-time, so instead of doing it in one year I do it in two years. So, at the start of the second semester I actually created a group on Facebook for all the new students. It's such a great icebreaker, being able to chat to people before you start your studies. At least for me it really calmed my nerves.

I think especially now this last year because of Covid-19 and everything having to be done at distance... I mean distance learning is fine, but people are really missing out on the university experience. I was lucky and had at least almost a year of normal classes. So, being able to connect online with people and like playing games or whatever feels like the next best thing.

That's so interesting, and very true about missing out on certain aspects because of Covid-19. I'm glad you brought up social media, I was wondering if you could just give an overview of the platforms that you use and how you use them?

Well a bit of everything really. I think at this point I pretty much have every social media application you can think of (laughs). But I don't really use them all that much. I think it comes in waves, like sometimes it feels like an application is "cooler" and then other times everyone suddenly moves to a new app.

But I like the classics, stuff like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and Snapchat. But funnily enough once I moved here, I started using Facebook a lot more and then Twitter also. It depends on which country I'm in. Almost none of my friends in Sweden use Twitter so all of my followers are pretty much from people that I've met through university. And then the same with Snapchat where pretty much all my friends are from Sweden. Not many people seem to use Snapchat here in London.

I started using TikTok and Twitter because my flatmates all use it. So, it is fun sharing videos or tweets with each other. I did not think I would enjoy using them as much as I do now. (Pause). I do maybe regret getting TikTok though.

Really, why?

Well, I just use it a lot. Like a lot. It's quite addictive, like Vine was when that was around. And with Twitter and Facebook you can at least look at news and other things, but with TikTok it's just stupid videos. And I love it (laughs). It's one of those apps where you can just sort of turn off your brain for a little while and relax.

I've heard exactly the same thing said about TikTok, so I've tried to stay away from it.

Don't get it (laughs).

(Pause)

And then you asked how I use them? Well, I mainly use social media to keep in touch with family and friends. I guess for news and stuff like that as well. And then of course just with my flatmates and course mates here as well.

But alright, so a bit of everything then in terms of online platforms. So, you say you use online media to stay in touch with people back in Sweden as well?

I do, quite a bit yeah.

Are there any particular online platforms you use for this?

Mainly just like Facebook, I guess. Just messaging friends and family. WhatsApp as well of course. Snapchat as well with friends back home... I still like to use it even though no one seems to like it here.

And with Facebook I feel like people are always pretty active there. Like, my mom often posts pictures of our pets and the whole family so it's always nice seeing familiar stuff like that in the timeline.

Yeah, that's understandable.

Right now, with Covid and everything I just can't travel there all the time like I used to be able to. And flights used to be so cheap but now everything has gone up and you have to do like three tests, so it's all just a massive hassle. I can't go back very often anymore unfortunately. So, being connected with my family online really helps actually.

It's difficult, I'm in a similar position. Most of my family lives in Sweden as well and I haven't been able to visit as much as I want to.

Yeah, but then imagine for people who live super far away from their families. Like, at least we know that we are relatively close to them. I can't imagine living in London and having my family in like the other side of the world like Australia or something.

And then, also I was talking about this with a friend the other day... Imagine having to go through this whole Covid thing like fifty years ago before the internet. It would be so much harder. You'd have to like send letters by like post or something...

That's true. And then have to wait weeks or something before finding out how they were doing.

Exactly! So, even though this is all really difficult for us all I think that being connected in this virtual world has made it so much more... It makes it all a bit simpler. I get so happy when I can just FaceTime my sister when I miss her and actually see her face. It makes such a difference. It would really suck not being able to be so connected...(Pause)

Sorry, I just started talking about other stuff there (laughs). Did I answer the questions there?

Yeah you did, that was a good answer. And I agree with what you're saying.

Ok, I tend to ramble on sometimes about other stuff but alright, good.

So, in which context do you find yourself engaging with online media?

Hmm, what do you mean?

So, is there like a specific time of the day when you find yourself is engaging with online media?

Do you mean with social media?

Well yes, anything like that. It can be like blogs, forums etc.

Ah, yeah well. I guess it depends. I usually start most mornings by scrolling through Facebook, Instagram and all that stuff. Through that I sort of read up on the latest news and just see what's going on everywhere, London and Sweden and the world. Especially with Covid I think that I like to keep up with news and stuff maybe a bit more than I used to. Just to see what's happening in Sweden and in London. Although maybe not as much anymore since I just got a bit tired of it.

I try to avoid social media and just anything online during the day because it can be so distracting. Instead I try to focus on reading and catching up on my studies and just try to be as proactive as I can. Until around 5-6pm I just avoid my phone unless someone texts me on WhatsApp or something. And then I open TikTok and before I know it suddenly it's bed-time (laughs). It's scary how fast time goes when you're on your phone.

I get these notifications at the start of each week on my phone of how much time I've spent using it, and it even shows how much time you spend on each app, and it really shocked me the first time I saw it. I mean seriously, how can you spend so much time on your phone?!

What was your average time?

(laughs). I don't want to say but... it was just too much. So, since then I've just tried to avoid it as much and really think about my social media use. It can be quite tiring, especially keeping up with friends everywhere and... it's just all a bit much sometimes. I don't think that it makes you feel good. I mean, in a way social media is great because otherwise I wouldn't be able to keep up with my friends lives as well. And of course, being able to FaceTime with family and friends is so important, especially when I first moved here and whenever I get homesick. But at the same time it's just natural that you start comparing your life with all your friends, and it's hard to remember sometimes that people's lives online are much more glamorous than what they probably are in real life. After summer I took a break from Facebook and Instagram and it was great. I only used Twitter since I just use it for news pretty much. I might take another break soon actually because it's just good for the brain.

So, you consciously disengage from online media?

Yeah, I mean... I think I have to. Otherwise I'd spend every waking minute just on my phone. But... I mean it's so much easier said than done. Like, I try to stay away from Facebook during the day, but then I'll be reading the news online and it will remind me of something random and then I'll think, oh I wonder if there's an event for this on Facebook. And so... I mean it feels like I always somehow end up on a social media application but it's almost like I do this without thinking. Like I'm guided to it by other things (laughs).

You sound crazy saying it out loud, but I mean, I know a lot of people feel the same way.

Yeah, definitely. There is definitely an algorithm online that sort of nudges you in the direction that it wants.

Yes, and that's why I have to seriously tell myself not to get distracted when I'm trying to write something on my mac, for example. I've even downloaded this app called Offtime, that sort of blocks Social Media applications. So like, you set a timer for like an hour and then you can't go on Facebook or Instagram or whatever for x amount of time. It's super helpful actually.

Is there a particular location where you find yourself engaging with online media?

Mostly at home, especially now because there's just not much to do outside. But yeah, mainly at home I guess.

Okay, and would you say that you have to be in a certain move to be engaged with online media?

I don't think so. Or maybe it depends. Like some days I just feel like forgetting about what is going on around the world and just sort of spend an entire day with my friend watching Netflix or something. So, like, mainly just avoid news and stuff like that sometimes. Mainly because it can sort of really affect your mood, I think. Things have been so bad lately that I think it's good to avoid the news sometimes. I mean, of course, it's important to keep up with current events but not like 24/7 or anything.

So, there are things I sort of avoid depending on how I feel. That's why, like I said before, I like apps like TikTok where you can just switch off after a long day or something. If I'm like feeling extra homesick I'll just watch a Swedish film online or like read a blog by these Swedish people that I follow.

Right, so how would you compare your engagement with British media and your engagement with Swedish media?

Well, even though I've lived in London for a while now I still regularly keep up with Swedish online sources because... that's where I come from, and that's where my family is. In Sweden I followed things like politics and latest events through sources like Dagens Nyheter, like I already knew the things that were reliable sources. When I first came here I only really used BBC and the Guardian and even stuff like the Daily Mail, but then I sort of (laughs) learned that the Daily Mail isn't really a great source for information other than like celebrity gossip... which I'm not really that interested in to be honest. So, I guess my engagement with online media is similar in both Sweden and Britain... I just prefer to use reliable sources. Doesn't really matter to me if their Swedish or British.

Of course, if I want to read about like how elections are going in Sweden, I wouldn't read British sources for that (laughs). Yeah, so just reliable sources and try to avoid fake news.

So did you start keeping up with British related things on online media before you came here? And if so, how did you pick your media sources?

Well, I'm interested in politics and the different dynamics at play on a global scale, so I feel like I've always kept up with ongoing issues in the UK long before I actually moved here. I think because of how the UK has... sort of... I don't know... acted in the last couple of years it was almost unavoidable to not read up on issues regarding the UK. Especially if you're into politics and that sort of stuff, which I am (laughs). Of course, when I knew that I was moving here I started reading more about the latest developments and stuff like that. As for the sources, I just mainly use the big one's like BBC and the Guardian because... I think that they're reliable (laughs). You never know though sometimes these days, what is real and what is fake.

Alright.

I think also, you know, if I have to think of a difference between Sweden and the UK then there probably was one in terms of both countries reported on the pandemic. Like, here they were all about the lockdown's and all that stuff, and in Sweden they had a very relaxed approach to it. The way like the BBC reported on the Swedish approach was sort of weird and didn't really match with how it was reported on in Sweden.

In what way?

Well, I just remember reading articles titled like "How Sweden got their approach wrong", or basically trying to use Sweden as an example for how not to deal with the pandemic. And if you actually look at it, the Swedish approach wasn't that bad... but anyway going off topic again (laughs).

No, it's fine don't worry.

(laughs). As a fellow Swede I'm sure you saw the same thing.

I did. Also had a lot of friends ask me about why Sweden had such a different approach.

Same, like I'm supposed to have the answer for that or something.

So, back to online engagement. I was wondering if you could talk a little about what influences your decisions for picking online media sources.

Well, like I said before, I just try to make sure that if I'm reading about the news online I want it to be reliable. So, I don't get my information from Facebook or anything like that. I prefer to stick to reputable sources.

Then also of course, for live events, like really wanting to be up to date I think that Twitter is really good at that. And there you can sort of see who's writing what and if it comes from a reliable source.

Can you think of an example when you used to Twitter for something like that?

I remember when the black lives matter protest happened here in London last summer and how towards the end of the protest it got quite violent, but because of the police and their aggressive tactics. I went to the protest but left early so I wasn't there when it all got violent. But I was checking Twitter, and updating all the time and managed to get a pretty clear picture of what happened. That's just why I love Twitter, it's so great for things like that. In the past, people didn't have smartphones to use to record everything so the people in power got away with a lot of things. I think... again like I was saying before, that's another example of the benefit of all of these new online means of communication that citizens have. And that that way a little video can lead to a massive change. I mean, we saw that very clearly with George Floyd and what happened after that video was posted and shared between people.

How much would you say that your media habits have changed since you came to London? If so, in what way? (Friends, engagement with posts etc)

I don't think it's changed that much to be honest... (pause) Or maybe it has, I guess. I use social media a lot more now than before because I want to stay in touch and see what my friends are doing in Sweden. I also FaceTime my

family at least once a week, and I never used to use Facebook FaceTime before because it's... just strange (laughs). But I appreciate it a lot more now because I get to see my parents and sister and I feel close to them even though I'm in another country. I usually put it on my laptop and then we have dinner together on like a Sunday night of something just to catch up. It's very good, and especially with the whole Covid thing I'm not able to travel there as much as I would like. So, this makes it all a bit more manageable actually. So I think that overall I maybe spend more time on social media than I did when I was in Sweden, just because I want to stay in touch with people and sometimes it can feel like you are a bit left out or something, but with stuff like Facebook and Snapchat I can still see what people are up to.

(Pause)

And yeah, well like I said back in Sweden I used a lot of Snapchat with friends and stuff. I've noticed that no one uses Snapchat here... Which is a shame because I used it more than anything else (laughs). And you have all those maps and stuff, I don't know... I think it's great. But apparently younger people use it more here in London than adults so... I only really use it friends from back home. I downloaded Twitter when I came here because my friends use it and it's a good way of keeping up with live events and following journalists and people that you're interested in. At first, I was a bit sceptical but once you start using it it's difficult to stop. And you know, like I said before, now I think that it's the best online option of staying really up to date on latest developments of an issue.

WhatsApp is the other media app that I use more now as well because it's free to text people abroad which is useful. With that I avoid really big phone bills (laughs).

So, would you say that your friends influenced the type of news and media that you use?

My friends in London?

Yeah, like did they influence the things that you engage with.

Hmm, yeah, I mean I probably wouldn't have downloaded twitter if it wasn't for one of my flatmates who sort of introduced me to it. On Facebook I get invites to join certain groups or UCL Societies which helps in meeting new people. It was also my friend who told me to avoid the Daily Mail as much as possible (laughs). So, through them I've sort been able to create or sort of make my own media habits, I guess. But yes, they definitely had an influence on it.

Alright, well I'm happy that you bring up all of these different social media platforms that you use. Which one's would you say that you use the most since moving to London?

I think that it depends on the day really. And also, like we discussed earlier the mood that I'm in. But overall, I probably use Facebook more than anything else. I guess Instagram as well but just posting stories of my daily activities or whatever. I tend not to actually post anymore.

Has the Covid-19 pandemic affected the intensity of your online media engagement?

Yes, definitely. Hasn't it for everyone? (laughs). Because there's not much else to do, or at least before there wasn't, I feel like more and more people turned to social media to be able to interact with people. Human interaction is so crucial to us all and so when that is taken away, I think it's only natural for people to look for other ways to interact with people.

You think that more people use social media now because of Covid?

Yeah, for sure. Especially people for who were maybe secluded or had to, you know, self-isolate but do so alone. I was really lucky because I was with my flatmates, but I know that others weren't really as lucky. I think... I mean even my grandmother managed to figure out how to create a Zoom account just so that she could talk to me in London. And she's over eighty years old so I mean (laughs), it shows that really it doesn't matter what age you are, online communication is important to everyone. I think that it must've helped the mental health of so many people. Being so lonely for

months must be so tough but at least being able to communicate with people, even if that is through a screen it makes such a big difference.

Do you think that online engagement has become more communal or more individual?

Well, it depends on the person really. And I think for, maybe a little bit of both. Like, we had a lot of quizzes and things like that on Zoom and Houseparty, and that was really in big groups. Like sometimes there were maybe twenty- or thirty-people taking part, so that was very communal.

And then also like watching Netflix every Friday with my friends here in my flat. We had this tradition of watching trashy B-horror movies and that was a really nice thing to have to look forward to at the end of the week. We weren't able to go out clubbing or even go to the pub so we had our own little party.

But then again at the same time, I think that I just spend a lot more time on my phone now than before the pandemic. Like, I wouldn't be on my phone when I used to go to a bar with friends but now since I'm mainly in my flat all day, I tend to spend most of my time on my phone. So yeah... it has become both more communal and individual I think.

Great answer. So, do you often post on social media?

I think that... I don't know I don't post that much myself. When I first moved to London I posted stuff of all the touristy stuff, like Kew Gardens and the London eye and Madame Tussauds. That was mainly on my Instagram and like stories on Snapchat. But now, not so much. Maybe it's because everything is closed and there's nothing to post about... But I guess now I just mainly share articles if I find them interesting or I want to help it get more readers or something. (Pause). These days it's just like stories or little videos on Instagram though, mainly if all of my flatmates get together and we have like a small party or something.

It was weird seeing all my friends in Sweden basically having a completely normal summer while we were all stuck in lockdown in London... Well we

still went out, but you know... It wasn't the same. Then when I went to Sweden for a week over summer, I couldn't believe it! I posted a lot that week (laughs).

Sweden were very talked about in the UK, and the world really, because of their coronavirus strategy and not going into lockdown. A lot of people I saw online who I knew... they loved to bring it up and how they (Sweden) made a mistake. So, I guess I posted a lot to show off when I was there. Like, look we're not as stupid as you think! Our bars are open! (laughs).

I was also wondering if online media has influenced you to take action in real life?

Yes, a couple of times actually. (Pause)

Are there any examples you can think of?

Well the first thing that comes to mind is like the whole climate change debate and how Greta raised awareness for it on such a massive level. Before I saw all of the stuff online, I didn't really get very involved in climate issues. But seeing people my age and even younger going and really making their voice heard inspired me to also take action. So, my friends and I both went out and took part in the Extinction Rebellion protests and all of the other ones to do with climate change.

I see, so social media had a big impact on your activism?

Definitely, I wouldn't have done it probably if I hadn't seen all of those videos of people protesting on Facebook and Twitter, it was just all very awe inspiring. And there are other examples I can think of as well, but maybe you just need one example?

No please, carry on.

Well the other example I can think of is the black lives matter protest as well. I mean, like everyone else, I was disgusted by that video I saw from the US and then at the

same time felt really emotional when I saw the protests in Washington and all over the country. So, when I got invited to a march taking place in London by a friend, I just knew I wanted to take part. Like I said before I couldn't stay all the way until the end, but it was good just taking part and showing your support for something that is so important. And then, some might argue that it doesn't actually lead to change, but I would argue otherwise since I think that there have been some results.

I think that slowly, but surely, citizens are starting to realise that they have power especially when we are all united. Social media has played such an important role in this. And I mean...(Pause)... I think that you can see it. Not just in the country that you are in but all around the world, and it's just great.

Yeah, so people aren't only focused on issues in their country but more worldwide issues as well.

Exactly, I mean... even other protests that I've been to here in the UK... where you meet people from so many different countries. There was an anti-Boris protest which I went to in 2019, and there were people from everywhere even though it was more of a British issue. And again, I think that making things like event on Facebook plays such a crucial role in raising awareness for all of these issues that people wouldn't be aware of otherwise.

How do you feel about the presence of politics on online media?

I think it's really great. I mean it has to be backed up by facts and people shouldn't just believe anything that they read online but in general I think that it does a really good job of raising awareness for things that are important.

But again, it's important to educate people on what to believe and not believe in. I think, again I have to bring up the US, so many people seem to believe that Trump lost the election against Biden because of electoral fraud. And, there's no evidence to back that up. It's just information that regular people are getting from some random person online who is really into conspiracies. I think that is one of the obvious negatives of the presence of politics on media. Facebook and these big corporations should do a better job of filtering what is real and what is fake.

Do you often post about politics?

I like to think that I've always been a bit active politically both online and offline. I maybe even more over these last years where you really start to see all of these problems in the world very clearly. But, it's not like I write something political everyday, but when I read an article that I think is important I'll share it on my Facebook. I think on Twitter I'm probably more likely to tweet something political, because most of my followers there are people that I've met here who are students and already quite political.

Instagram is also good for sharing links to videos and protests that are occurring in the city. So, I think every social media app has its own sort of role to play in this.

Would you say that your political identity and general engagement has changed because you're in a different media context?

I think that just being surrounded by other students from different countries, and obviously me being a migrant here in London, you're bound to become a bit more political. I've been influence by the friends that I've made but also just by the times that we're living through right now. Right now, more than ever, I think it's more important and more manageable to be political.

Great, so lastly, is there something in particular that you have engaged with online that stands out?

I think it would have to be all the pictures I've seen of people protesting for different issues around the world. And then, you know, watching BBC news later and seeing the coverage of the protest and thinking, wow, I was part of that. To me, that is very special.

Okay, great. Thank you so much for taking part in this interview. Do you have anything you want to add?

No nothing really but thank you as well. And good luck with your thesis, I think it's very interesting.

Alright, well thanks again. If you have any further questions, feel free to contact me at my email address.

Great, sounds good.

Thank you again for taking part in this research.

Appendix 5

Coding

Example of the coding transcript on Microsoft Word of the interview with Sarah.

Right, do you use online media often to stay in touch with friends in Brazil?

Yes, all the time. I think I talk to some of my friends and even my parents more now than I did when I was still in Brazil. Mainly just calls on WhatsApp, and FaceTime on Facebook pretty often as well. Especially when I first moved in to my new accommodation near Euston and I didn't really know anyone yet that well.

I think my relationship with, like... especially my father is better than ever even though I live so far away from them. Even with some friends that I hadn't spoken to in a long time, suddenly we're pretty close just because they want to check up on me and my life in London.

So, like I said, I think Facebook is especially really great at helping you stay close with people that you love. But to answer your question, I guess it comes in sort of waves. Like when I'm really busy with my studies I don't FaceTime everyone as much, but then, like, over lockdown when I wasn't able to fly to Brazil I spoke with my family like every day almost.

I see, I actually wanted to ask if you could elaborate a bit on the different contexts of your online media engagement... Like is there a specific time of the day or something?

Well during term time when I've got loads of assignments, I think that I try creating a sort of schedule for everything, and that includes like a certain time to be on my phone or something. Overall though I think... I just check Facebook and Instagram in the morning, then maybe during lunch again. Then not much during the day if I'm out or something. Then when I get back home, I'll probably read the news online or go watch something on Netflix or YouTube to unwind. So, there is a bit of a structure, I think. But you can't really plan for everything. And also, I think the time maybe doesn't matter as much now that I'm not as busy. Because at the end of the day it just makes me happy so I can always make time for a chat if I feel it will help me when I'm homesick of something.

Adrian Blazquez
Theme: *Role of Media in Integrating into New Life in London and Finding a Sense of Belonging*

Category: Local

Code: Geographical Location

Adrian Blazquez
Theme: *Role of Media in Integrating into New Life in London and Finding a Sense of Belonging*

Category: Individual

Code: Personal Relationships

Adrian Blazquez
Theme: *Online Media Engagement (Five Parameters)*

Category: Contexts

Code: Platform

Adrian Blazquez
Theme: *Online Media Engagement (Five Parameters)*

Category: Intensities

Code: Pandemic

Adrian Blazquez
Theme: *Online Media Engagement (Five Parameters)*

Category: Contexts

Code: Time

Adrian Blazquez
Theme: *Online Media Engagement (Five Parameters)*

Category: Contexts

Code: Place

Adrian Blazquez
Theme: *Online Media Engagement (Five Parameters)*

Category: Motivations

Code: Taking a break

Adrian Blazquez

Theme: *Online Media Engagement (Five Parameters)*

Category: Modalities

Code: Mood

Code Overview

Example of how the data was divided into themes, categories and codes. This was done using Google Sheets.

1	Participant	Theme	Category	Code	Quotes
473	Billie	Self-Expression	Social	Privately with friends	"...just through FB messenger and like text. Some memes are a bit dark (laughs)
474	Billie	Self-Expression	Informative	Raise awareness	"But the few times I actually wrote a post was after the whole me too movement"
475	Billie	Self-Expression	Informative	Raise awareness	"... of course with the whole BLM movement as well, I thought it was important"
476	Billie	Self-Expression	Political	Interest/Duty	"Being a migrant well yeah, I think I've become pretty politically engaged"
477	Deandra	Role of media in integrating into a new life London	Individual	Self-Identity	"...born in the US but consider myself more Italian".
478	Deandra	Role of media in integrating into a new life London	Individual	Current occupation	"A student in London"
479	Deandra	Role of media in integrating into a new life London	Individual	Master's Student	"Doing my Master's degree at King's College London"
480	Deandra	Role of media in integrating into a new life London	Local	Been in London for over two years	"First moved here in 2019, and had visited before"
481	Deandra	Role of media in	Local	Geographical Location	"Currently living in flat by Warren Street"
482	Deandra	Role of media in	Individual	Past experiences	"I did my bachelor's degree in Italy before my master's"
483	Deandra	Role of media in	Individual	Past experiences	"Had a summer internship in Scotland during my master's"
484	Deandra	Role of media in	Individual	Self-Identity	"...dad used to live in London so I had been before"
485	Deandra	Role of media in	Individual	Personal relationships	"Student building organised an event on Facebook and that's how I first met people"
486	Deandra	Role of media in	Individual	Personal relationships	"Joined the King's College London Postgraduate Offer Holder page..."
487	Deandra	Role of media in	Local	Geographical Location	"... used to do pub quizzes with friends at the student bar when I first came here"
488	Deandra	Role of media in	National	Host Country Media En	"... but started reading more London based news when I moved here"
489	Deandra	Role of media in	National	Host Country Media En	"Think with Covid as well, I wanted to know the latest news on like the vaccine..."
490	Deandra	Role of media in	National	Host and Home	"...I tend to read from both sources, so yeah I guess I compare quite a lot"
491	Deandra	Role of media in	National	Home Country Media E	"Still probaby consume more media from Italy, but there's a nice balance..."
492	Deandra	Online Engagerr	Contexts	Influence of Friends	"Started using Twitter more because my friends here use it a lot"
493	Deandra	Online Engagerr	Contexts	Platform	"...and mainly Facebook and WhatsApp to speak with family and friends back home"
494	Deandra	Online Engagerr	Contexts	Platform	"And Twitter is good for latest news and always has very fast updates"
495	Deandra	Online Engagerr	Contexts	Time	"...routine is mainly just checking Instagram, Twitter, Facebook in the morning"
496	Deandra	Online Engagerr	Contexts	Time	"... try to ignore it for the rest of the day until I get home"
497	Deandra	Online Engagerr	Contexts	Place	"mainly at home and maybe like on the bus if I'm bored"
498	Deandra	Online Engagerr	Modalities	Mood	"...something like TikTok makes me happy, and not all negative like the news can be"
499	Deandra	Online Engagerr	Modalities	Mood	"Binge watching Parks and Rec on Prime also just gives me joy when I need it"
500	Deandra	Online Engagerr	Motivations	Entertainment	"Social media is just how I kept myself entertained when nothing was open outside"
501	Deandra	Online Engagerr	Motivations	Information	"In Italy it was bad at the start so I would check the news regularly from Italy online"
502	Deandra	Online Engagerr	Motivations	Entertainment	"... and post like videos dancing with friends on TikTok just for fun"
503	Deandra	Online Engagerr	Modalities	Mood	"As well all the stuff in America that just shocked us all and made me angry"
504	Deandra	Online Engagerr	Motivations	Taking a break	"But yeah. literally the first thing I do after coming home is go on my phone..."