

THESIS

DEPART FROM STUDY OR BE DEPORTED? EXPLORING INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS' CRISIS RESPONSE TO U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS
ENFORCEMENT AGENCY'S (ICE) ANNOUNCEMENT ON TIKTOK

Submitted by

Urusha Silwal

Department of Journalism and Media Communication

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Science

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 2021

Master's Committee:

Advisor: Tori Arthur

Michael Humphrey
Eric Aoki

Copyright by Urusha Silwal 2021

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

DEPART FROM STUDY OR BE DEPORTED? EXPLORING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' CRISIS RESPONSE TO U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT AGENCY'S (ICE) ANNOUNCEMENT ON TIKTOK

On July 6, 2020, Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) announced that international students would face potential deportation if they took all-online courses in the fall while matriculated on United States university campuses. Through the lens of Media System Dependency Theory and Social Identity Theory, this study examined the crisis responses of international students between July 6-July 14, 2020, on an emerging social media app- TikTok. Despite TikTok's extensive use and thriving presence as a platform for social and political conversations, there are only a few studies on TikTok. Adopting the multimodal method of Critical Techno-Cultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA), the researcher analyzed twenty-one TikTok videos made by international students to study interface features, practices, and discourses present in the platform. The findings indicated that hashtags, green-screen effect, first-person camera view and share feature on TikTok facilitated the articulation of crisis responses of international students. Similarly, the discourse themes of humor, fear of displacement, contribution reminders, and call to action helped to understand how international students articulated their fears and concerns about the ICE announcement. Addressing the gap in TikTok literature, this study elucidated the connection between marginalized groups and their social media use at the time of crisis. This study paves a path for researchers in and beyond

academia to study the connection of technology, marginalized cultural groups and social structures.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all the international students and international offices for whom I have worked with so far. Thank you to Dr. Arthur for believing in my ideas and writing. Special mention to Dr. Aoki and Dr. Humphrey for inspiring me. This thesis is dedicated to all the international students studying in the United States who have outshined time and again despite all the odds.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Thesis Overview.....	1
Overviews and Rationale	1
Goal and Research Questions.....	6
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW	8
Coronavirus pandemic and ICE announcement	8
Coronavirus pandemic and international students.....	8
ICE announcement.....	9
Social media and International students.....	10
Introduction to TikTok.....	11
Media System Dependency Theory.....	13
Social media dependency.....	16
TikTok Dependency during the coronavirus pandemic.....	17
Social Identity Theory.....	17
TikTok and social identity.....	20
Research Questions.....	21
CHAPTER 3. METHODS.....	22
Theoretical Framework of the Method.....	22
Explanation of Method.....	24
Data Collection Procedures.....	29
Pretest.....	29
Data and Codebook Creation.....	30
Codes.....	30
CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....	35
Interface Analysis.....	35
Hashtags→Self-categorization, Archived Interactions.....	36
Green Screen Effects→ Audio-visual interaction and identification.....	38
First person camera view→Immersive Interactions.....	41
Shares →Engaged interactions.....	44
Discourse Analysis.....	47
Humor & Sarcasm.....	47
Fear of displacement.....	51
Contribution Reminder.....	54
Call to action.....	55
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION.....	59
Limitations.....	60
Future Research.....	60
REFERENCES.....	63

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. CTDA Explanation Chart 1.....	28
Table 2. CTDA Explanation: How the interconnection of technology, technology practices and cultural ideology relate to the theories and lead to the research question.....	29
Table 3. Emergent Themes and Frequencies	33

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Screenshot of a portion of the codebook showing quantitative information of the videos.....	31
Figure 2: Screenshot of preliminary codes based on Media System Dependency Theory.....	32
Figure 3: Screenshot of preliminary codes based on Social Identity Theory.....	33
Figure 4: Screenshot of a portion of codebook showing thematic analysis.....	34
Figure 5: Screenshot showing how hashtags work in TikTok. The first figure shows the screen that pops up when you type #internationalstudent in the search bar. The second screen shows the list of videos that have used the hashtag #internationalstudent.....	36
Figure 6: Screenshot of videos showing popular hashtags like #abolishice #internationalstudent #crisis that international students used to express concerns about the ICE announcement.....	37
Figure 7: Screenshot of recording screen on Tik Tok with different green screen features.....	39
Figure 8: Screenshot of two videos that have used the greenscreen effect on TikTok	40
Figure 9: Screenshot of a video showing the first-person camera view of TikTok.....	42
Figure 10: Screenshot showing the share options of TikTok.....	45
Figure 11: Screenshot of a video showing humorous reaction to the ICE announcement	48
Figure 12: Screenshot showing progression of a humorous video made by an international student.....	50
Figure 13: Screenshot showing a progression of a Call-to-Action theme video made by an international student.....	56

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Thesis Overview

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 includes the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study. This section discusses some of the existing literature on international students, social media, media system dependency theory, social identity theory, essential facts about the coronavirus pandemic, the ICE (Immigration and Customs Reinforcement Agency) announcement, and its relation to the study. Chapter 3 focuses on Critical Techno-cultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA), why this method was adopted for this study and the data collection process. Chapter 4 explains the findings, provides insights through discussion and provides suggestions for future research. Finally, Chapter 5 offers conclusions to understand the overall scope of the entire project.

Overviews and Rationales

Background. The coronavirus that started in Wuhan, China, has infected and killed millions of people worldwide (Taylor, 2020; Koh et al., 2021). On January 21, 2020, the United States of America announced its first coronavirus case (Taylor, 2020). Schools, offices, and businesses started shutting down in March of 2020. Students (including international students) studying in the U.S. had to complete their spring semester online. On July 6, ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency) announced that international students might need to leave the U.S. if their universities transitioned to online-only learning. They announced that the U.S. Department of State would not issue visas to students enrolled in schools or programs that are entirely online for the fall semester, nor would Customs and Border Protection permit these students to enter the United States. When that announcement came, students enrolled in online-

only universities had two options: either leaving the country or transferring to a university that offers face-to-face or hybrid classes in the fall (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2020). Due to travel restrictions imposed by many countries, there was no way they could have gone back to their home countries when the spreading of coronavirus was at its peak during the summer of 2020. With a couple of months left to start school, it was practically impossible for many students to transfer to a new school to maintain their student status.

International students make up 5.5 percent of the total United States higher education population. The total number of international students was 1,095,299, according to the 2019 Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange (Institute of International Education IIE,2019). These students face immense challenges when they study in a foreign country. One of the biggest challenges they face is adapting to the new social and cultural environment as they undergo college experience in a different country. New cultures, language challenges, and lack of existing social relations in the host country might aggravate academic and social challenges that already face American students (Sherry et al., 2009). International students undergo a prolonged period of cross-cultural transition from their home country's familiar culture to a new and unknown host country's culture. Many international students face obstacles such as financing education, balancing work/study schedules, finding the self-discipline to persist, personal barriers, and many other obstacles that can make attending college a difficult task (Bista & Foster, 2011).

During the quarantine, isolation and social distancing rules caused almost the entire U.S. population to stay home. As a result, people started using social media platforms more than ever before. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and TikTok saw a massive increase in their followers and site usage. (Koeze & Popper, 2020; Levine,2020).

International students were no exception to this trend. When ICE made the above announcements, many international students used social media platforms to express their concerns related to the announcement. Although ICE rescinded the above policy on July 14, 2020 (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2020), this announcement caused a lot of anxiety and uncertainty for international students living in the United States (Beckstein, 2020).

Rationale and significance of research. This study explores international students' crisis responses on an emerging social media platform-TikTok. TikTok is a video-based social media platform, and it became extremely popular during the first few months of the quarantine period. TikTok saw over two billion downloads in the first quarter of 2020, being the most downloaded app in the world (Brown & Chmielewski, 2020). TikTok is "the most rapidly growing app with about 300 million users whose reach will only increase in the future" (Long, 2020). Although people initially perceived TikTok as primarily a dance and entertainment app, it is increasingly being used to raise awareness about social issues (Ali, 2019; Monga, 2020; Lorenz, 2020; *APB+ News*, 2020). TikTok became a tool for youth activism and racial justice movement during the Black Lives Matter movement. It became a space where young people talked about suppression, police brutality, racism and criminal justice reform (Lorenz, 2020; Allyn, 2020; Richardson, 2020). Political activism also became popular on the app. TikTok made headlines when it played a part in decreasing supporter's attendance for former President Trump's campaign rally in Tulsa (*APB+ News*, 2020). Millions of young viewers turned to TikTok during the election campaign and election night of 2020 to be politically informed and express their political views and anxieties (Lorenz, 2020). Girls from Bahujan communities in India used TikTok for the creation and proliferation of anti-caste activism (Subramanian, 2021). TikTok is also rapidly becoming a platform where creators and viewers can freely talk about

various issues like “insecurities, loneliness and depression, relationship abuse, sexuality” (Ao & Silverman, 2020). Not surprisingly, TikTok was extensively used in 2020 to distribute information about coronavirus and other public health messages (Sidorenko-Bautista et al. 2020; Basch et al., 2020).

Even after former President, Donald Trump tried to ban it in the United States due to national security and data privacy concerns, TikTok is still rising in the American youth landscape and is a mainstay in internet culture (Leskin, 2020; Gertz, 2020). The rapid popularization and extensive use of TikTok have led to an increased presence of TikTok videos in mainstream media such as television. According to a study about the intersections of TikTok and TV, researchers identified 133 profiles of official television channels and programs on TikTok (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2021). In addition, national news media CNN featured TikTok videos of international students in their news coverage of the ICE announcement of July 6 (Iyer, 2020). TikTok’s thriving presence as a platform for social and political conversations presents a vast scope for research in industry and academia. However, despite its latest popularity and tremendous use among adolescents, there is minimal research emphasizing TikTok. This study addresses the gap in the literature by analyzing the TikTok interface and the role it plays in facilitating the self-expression of international students.

Through this project, the researcher analyzed international students’ TikTok videos regarding the ICE announcement from July 6 to July 14, 2020. The researcher chose this particular period because ICE announced the policy on July 6 and rescinded the policy on July 14, 2020. Many international students shared their reactions and opinions about the ICE announcement on this platform. Moreover, they depended on the TikTok platform to express their fears and concerns as international students. This project evaluates international students’

videos on TikTok from July 6 to July 14, 2020, through the lens of Media System Dependency Theory and Social Identity Theory using a novel method called Critical Techno Cultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA). It is a multimodal technique developed by Andre Brock (2018), and its goal is to analyze digital practices, artifacts, and cultural ideology. This approach clarifies how users operate in digital spaces, how platform/interface capabilities help them and what cultural ideologies emerge from these spaces. The interconnection of technology, technology practices, and cultural ideologies and how they relate to the theories brought a multi-layered understanding of how international students used TikTok to express their concerns and fears regarding the ICE announcement of July 6. It also made it easier to understand how TikTok facilitated the discussion of the impact of the ICE announcement and articulation of international students' problems and their social identities online. The overall findings showed that affordances of TikTok, such as hashtags, green screen effect, first-person camera view, and sharing capabilities, allowed international students to articulate fears and concerns at the time of crisis. All these technology features gave birth to user interactions which are archived, audio-visual, immersive and engaged in nature. Similarly, international students articulated their fears and concerns regarding the ICE announcement of July 6 by discussing themes of humor and sarcasm, fear of displacement, contribution reminders and call for action in their TikTok videos created between July 6 and July 14, 2020.

The findings of this study offer implications for providing relevant social, academic, and professional resources to international students in the United States--- a group that has significantly grown in numbers and is still understudied. This study helps higher education school officials, policymakers, and administrators better identify international students' problems and the role social media can play to mitigate them. This understanding can help them create,

modify and distribute content, events, and resources that suit international students' needs, ultimately helping international students better adjust to universities in a foreign country and improve their quality of life. Studying how the affordances of TikTok like hashtags and first-person camera view provides voice and ways of expression for diverse communities also furthers social media study in general. How social media gave a sense of voice and agency to a marginalized population and helps them to cope with a personal and educational crisis also shed light on the extraordinary impact of video-based social media in the modern world. This study has several implications beyond academia. It could also help social sectors better understand how understudied/ international communities use emerging social media platforms to fulfill various needs at the time of political and public health crises.

Goal and Research Questions

This study's primary goals were to examine international students' dependency on social media (TikTok) at the time of crisis and its role in facilitating that dependency. In addition, this project studied how international students used this platform to articulate their problems and social identities online. Through the overarching lens of Media System Dependency Theory, this exploratory study examined how "an individual's or the society's level of dependency is a function of the degree of change and conflict present in a society" (Ball Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976, p. 7). Through the secondary framework of social identity theory, this project examined how international students' social media dependency helped them give voice to their social identities.

RQ1: In what ways did international students depend upon TikTok to articulate their fears and concerns as members of a vulnerable population or out-group in the wake of the ICE announcement of July 6?

RQ2: How do the TikTok platform and its features enable international students to articulate fears and concerns as members of an out-group at the time of crisis in the United States?

Therefore, the overall purpose of this study was to develop a holistic understanding of how marginalized groups like international students use emerging social media platforms like TikTok at the time of crisis. The other goal was to be aware of how the platform features facilitate that process by analyzing the connection of both culture and technology in these unique spaces and how they relate to media dependency and social identity.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Coronavirus pandemic and ICE announcement

Before understanding the core concepts and theoretical framework of this project, it is essential to understand the background and environment that led to creating this project in the first place.

Coronavirus pandemic and international students. The coronavirus pandemic, which started in Wuhan, China, in January 2020 (Taylor, 2020), has brought the whole world to a standstill. United States reported its first COVID-19 death on February 29, 2020. President Trump declared a national emergency on March 13, 2020. Since then, coronavirus has infected millions of people in the United States (Taylor, 2020). In response to the coronavirus disease, 107 countries implemented national school closures by March 18, 2020 (Viner et al., 2020). Social distancing, self-isolation, lockdown, travel restrictions, and stay-at-home orders became the new normal for all people living in America, including students. COVID-19 transformed the educational landscape of the U.S. and posed distinctive challenges, including international students.

After the universities shut down and classes became entirely online, many international students could not go back to their home country due to travel restrictions. Many of them did not have any accommodation besides college housing. (Sahu, 2020; Cheng, 2020). Visa restrictions prevented international students from working outside campus, which added financial burden at the time of crisis (Dickerson, 2020). The pandemic created a heightened sense of isolation for international students because they were far from their homes and family members. Mental health issues might also be present in them during the crisis (Beckstein, 2020; Cheng, 2020). In

this way, lack of accommodation, transportation, jobs, robust support system, and lack of advocating body in universities added double stress to the international student population on top of the already existing chronic stress of the coronavirus pandemic. International students became one of the most vulnerable groups during the pandemic (Firang, 2020).

ICE announcement. The official website of the Department of Homeland Security sent out a press release on July 6, 2020, which mentioned that:

Nonimmigrant F-1 and M-1 students attending schools operating entirely online may not take a full online course load and remain in the United States. The U.S. Department of State will not issue visas to students enrolled in schools and/or programs that are fully online for the fall semester nor will U.S. Customs and Border Protection permit these students to enter the United States. Active students currently in the United States enrolled in such programs must depart the country or take other measures, such as transferring to a school with in-person instruction to remain in lawful status. If not, they may face immigration consequences, including, but not limited to, the initiation of removal proceedings (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency, 2020).

Universities and international students saw this directive by Trump Administration as an attempt to put pressure on universities to reopen colleges in the fall and prevent international students from maintaining their valid student visas (Jordan et al.,2020). The confusion and uncertainty caused by this directive forced students and universities to re-assess their fall school plans amidst the presence of the coronavirus pandemic. This policy immediately faced much backlash from universities and international student community. On July 8th, two days after ICE made the announcement, Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) filed a lawsuit against the Trump Administration, saying it was unlawful and should be reversed (Chin, 2020; Treisman, 2020; Barros, 2020). On July 14, 2020, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and ICE decided to rescind the policy. Although the policy remained in effect for a week, the fear of uncertainty and unexpected deportation remain in the minds of international students (Chin, 2020).

Social media and International Students. Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Hanelein, 2010). The most popular social networking sites are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and WhatsApp. These platforms help the user create personal accounts, sustain established relationships, develop new relationships, and post individualized content, including text and multimedia. In addition, social media-facilitated relationships can help people adapt to new environments and deal with complex problems, especially when they reach a new environment, culture, or country (Lin et al., 2012). Therefore, international students are likely to use or adopt social media as the primary channel of communication to share their problems. Social media have become such an integral part of our lives that there is an increased interest in researchers to study the effects of social media on the social capital and wellbeing of the people.

Researcher danah boyd talks about the concept of social network sites as networked publics. The technology itself offers separate utilities that design how people participate in online environments (Boyd, 2011). She says it is a space that facilitates the converging of people, technology, and practice. Social networking sites provide distinct affordances that create an atmosphere for individuals to interact and assemble for social, cultural, and civic purposes (Boyd, 2011). Because of affordances like membership, personal expression, and connection, social network sites act as virtual communities for people (Parks, 2011). Social network sites help connect and draw strangers who have a common language, race, ethnicity, religion, and other identities (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Boyd and Ellison defined *social network sites* as “web-based services that allow individuals to articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, para 5). Internet-based research has been recommended as a

useful tool for studying international students. (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009). Social media use has important implications for international students in personal and educational contexts (Sleeman, Lang, & Lemon, 2016). Studies have shown that international students who use social networking sites reported less acculturation stress and experienced more social support from their host country (Li, Lin & Peng, 2019).

Introduction to TikTok

TikTok is the most exciting and controversial social media app on the planet (Jennings & Ghaffary, 2019). TikTok is a mobile app that allows users to create and share short videos that span from 15 to 60 seconds. Users can use background music, lip-syncing templates, or use their audio to communicate to online audiences. It is one of the most popular and talked-about videos-based social media app of recent times. In September 2016, a Chinese company named ByteDance introduced a lip-syncing video creation app called Douyin and later launched TikTok for users of other countries. ByteDance purchased Musical.ly for \$1 billion in November 2017 and merged it with TikTok in 2018 (Anderson 2020). Meanwhile, in China, Douyin remains alive and complies with the Communist party's content restrictions (Rodriguez, 2020). TikTok has become one of the most downloaded non-gaming apps in the world, just behind WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger in 2019. This app generated more than 738 million downloads in 2019, up 13 percent from 655 million first-time installs in 2018 (Clement, 2020). Young Americans spend about 80 minutes per day using TikTok (Long, 2020). It is a creative app mostly known for short-form amateur videos of dance, skits, comedy, musical performances, and self-expression (Long, 2020; Shutsko,2020).

Unlike other social media apps like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, the algorithm drives TikTok, which determines the default video feed called the "For you" page. TikTok

presents one video at a time on screen, and the user needs to swipe up for the next video, which goes on continuously in a loop (Anderson, 2020). This pattern repeats on loop until the user stops. Each swipe takes the viewer to different content in a straightforward way. The user does not know what video will appear next. Therefore, this creates mystery, makes people excited, and that is what makes it unique and spontaneous than other apps. This structure of new, emerging movement and cultural sensibility is called metamodernism (Weil, 2019).

In other mobile apps like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, users choose the content they want to see and filter out their preferences manually. In the case of TikTok, Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology is used to showcase content based on user behavior (Yu, 2019). TikTok preselects the videos that are presented to the user based on the videos the users have liked, shared, searched and commented on. In video apps like YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram, the users need to click on the video they want to watch. TikTok spoon-feeds the video to viewers based on the algorithm. Users do not need to search or think about whom to watch. For example, one user might see mostly dance videos while the other might see mostly cooking videos.

According to Tolentino (2019), TikTok is a “social network that has nothing to do with one’s social network,” which means anyone can follow anyone and the customized videos of the people that users follow appear on the “Following” feed. The author also says it is an “enormous meme factory, compressing the world into pellets of virality and dispensing those pellets until you get full or fall asleep” (Tolentino, 2019). Like Instagram and Twitter, TikTok also features hashtags that allow users to search for sounds, videos and other users easily. Studies have shown that people mostly use TikTok for sharing creativity, archiving, self-expression, social interaction, and escapism (Shutsko, 2020; Omar & Dequan, 2020). In addition, TikTok’s

“decentralization” element allows users to create short videos, anytime, anywhere, and express themselves effectively (Zuo & Wang, 2019).

What makes it so different from other apps is the one-of-a-kind immersive user-centered interaction design, requiring minimum effort from the user. The TikTok interface design adopts a “Don’t make me think” methodology (Yu, 2019), which requires a less cognitive task on the part of the user. TikTok caters to millennials’ tech-dependent nature by providing features of audio, video and editing apps all in the same interface. The main purpose of TikTok is to facilitate the recording of fun videos for users without audiovisual training (Rodriguez, 2020). Similarly, the straightforward minimalistic design and spontaneous nature of TikTok is what is sweeping the American youth. In this way, TikTok is rewriting the rules of entertainment and mobile app design by adopting the algorithm technology to make short video-based platforms more straightforward, interactive, and spontaneous for the upcoming generations.

Media System Dependency Theory

One of the earlier theories that focused on studying media and audiences in broader social systems is the Media System Dependency theory. Mass media affects individuals because they rely on media to achieve their everyday goals. Audience dependency on media emerges from the tripartite relationship of the audience, media and societal systems (Rubin & Windahl, 1986; Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976).

According to Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976), dependency is characterized as a relationship in which one party's fulfillment of needs or achievement of objectives is dependent on another party's resources. There are various ways in which people rely on the media to fulfill the need for information. One type of dependence, for example, is based on the desire to grasp one's environment. Another type of dependence comes from the need to behave in that world

meaningfully and efficiently. The third type is based on the need for fantasy escape from daily problems. The greater the need, the greater the possibility that the information given can modify the audience's multiple cognitions, emotions and actions. One situation under which dependency intensifies is a comparatively high degree of change and conflict in a society.

People's dependence on media escalates when there is a sudden unexpected change in society (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). In a modern complex society like the United States, media has close ties with the economy and politics and is considered one of the primary information sources for most people. Media facilitates people's understanding of their social environment and themselves. This implies that American media fulfills more personal goals of audiences than countries like Russia and Israel, thus playing a central role in individuals' lives. People's dependency on media increases as the level of change increases (Ball-Rokeach, 1985; Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). When the news of change or conflict breaks through media, it creates discomfort and ambiguity. Depending on the news, ambiguity can pose potential psychological, economic, and physical threats to people's well-being. Then, individuals will intensify their media use to seek information that helps to overcome that ambiguity (Ball-Rokeach, 1985; Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976).

There are two different perspectives of Media System Dependency theory- macrolevel and microlevel. The micro component of Media System Dependency Theory is IMD (Individual Media Dependency) which shows how individuals use media to satisfy human goals. According to IMD, there are three motivational goals of using media: understanding, orientation and play. Understanding focuses on the need for individuals to understand themselves and the world around them. Orientation is the need of individuals to direct personal actions effectively and interact successfully with others. Finally, play is the need to learn norms, roles, and values, and

reflects in activities such as sport, dance and celebration (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach & Grube, 1984; Grant & Ball Rokeach, 1989).

Each of these three motivations is further divided into two categories, each based on the self-versus-social focus. Self-understanding is the process of interpreting one's own beliefs, behaviors and self-concept. Social understanding is comprehension of the other people, their cultures and the world. Action orientation is the guide to knowing behaviors like eating, dressing and voting. Interaction orientation is knowing how to behave appropriately with friends, family and even strangers. Solitary play is using media alone for relaxation, and social play is using media with others for entertainment. The type and intensity of dependency vary by medium and the audience (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach & Grube, 1984; Grant & Ball Rokeach, 1989).

Over time, the definition of media changed in the world. The world wide web was invented in 1989 by Tim Berners-Lee (Caenrigh, 2017). The discovery of the Internet no longer confined media to radio and television. The Internet became an important source of information and entertainment, expanding the media system and the motivations that individuals had towards media. People increasingly became dependent on media to get in-depth information about health, science and business (Riffe et al, 2008). Researchers claimed that media motives lead to cognitive and affective involvement leading to Internet dependency (Sun et al). Several studies look at the impact of Internet dependency on shopping and consumer purchase intention (Mafe & Blas, 2006). The favorability of everyday people to use the Internet led to the innovation and increased use of digital media platforms (Caerigh,2017). Academic researchers have extended the concept of dependency to digital media dependency research (Bahk et al, 2010). In this way, as media and communication evolved, media dependency gave rise to Internet dependency, and Internet dependency gave rise to social media dependency.

Social Media Dependency. The development of smartphones and communication technology has brought significant growth in social media usage among people of all ages (Wang et al., 2015). Media System Dependency Theory is an active audience theory where users are active players who use media to achieve different purposes and motives. This theory suits the current social media landscape in which users have the ability to produce, share and curate different types of content. (Kim & Jung, 2017). Social media is as important as traditional media these days (Charleston, 2017). Social media is the widely preferred means of communication and news source among young adults like university students (Ha et al., 2013). Analysis has found that social media allow students to portray themselves differently and be less reserved (Mahmud et al., 2018). Gratifications sought from traditional media like information seeking, communication, and solitary play also explains young people's intent to use mobile social media (Li et al., 2019).

Kim and Jung (2017) and Lee & Choi (2018) have made efforts in recent studies to conceptualize social media dependency employing the goals proposed by the original Media System Dependency theory. The framework of social media dependency has also been used to study various types of phenomena such as online support behavior for LGBTQIA communities, community engagement in urban neighborhoods, emergency management, mobile social media use intention, Australian juror's use of social media in criminal trials, and rumor communication (Han et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2019; Li et al., 2019; Braun, 2017; Lee & Choi, 2018). Social media dependency of LGBT online community results in greater enactment of online support seeking and offering activities (Han et al., 2019). It shows that marginalized populations (like international students) are likely to use social media during a crisis to offer and seek support from people who belong to the same group and share the same identity. Social media use is

increasingly popular in the LGBT community, and use it for interacting and managing their online community (Owens, 2017). This shows that social media is a suitable platform for offline and online communities to interact with each other and is therefore suitable for studying international student community interactions.

TikTok Dependency during Coronavirus pandemic. The coronavirus shutdowns around the nation kept most people at home, allowing them more time to be online and on social media (Koeze & Popper, 2020). The content of TikTok is short, enjoyable, and relatable, which made it a popular choice for lockdown viewing (Preskey, 2020). Through its viral dance/fitness challenges, light-hearted comedies, memes, and insightful social messages like virus information, TikTok managed to engage, uplift and win over crowds during lockdown (Jeffries, 2020). As a result, TikTok saw record growth during quarantine, drawing everyone from adolescents to senior citizens despite being surrounded by data collection, censorship, and child protection controversies (Levine, 2020). TikTok was downloaded 315 million times across Apple and Android phones in the first quarter of 2020, the most quarterly installs for an app ever. Forty percent of its users are between 16 and 24 (Brown & Chmielewski, 2020). This statistic shows that TikTok is extremely popular among college-going young adults.

Social Identity Theory

Henry Tajfel and John Turner in 1979 introduced the concept of social identity to explain the dynamics of intergroup behavior. Researchers initially believed social identity theory to be an integrative theory of intergroup conflict and relations to understand the in-group/out-group concept that people consider themselves to be a part of (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity theory says that the part of one's self-concept is based on the knowledge of membership in social groups. Individuals make comparisons between in-groups and out-groups, which impact their

social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Regardless of large or small, social groups provide their members with a shared identity that influences what they believe and how they should behave. (Hogg, 2016).

The theory posits that people changed their behavior in a group that varies along a continuum between interpersonal behavior and intergroup behavior. Interpersonal behavior is guided by the individual characteristics and interpersonal relationships between two people, whereas intergroup behavior is determined by the characteristics of the group exclusively. (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The theory also states that people categorize other people to identify and understand them. When people categorize themselves, they view themselves in terms of the defining attributes of the in-group (Hogg, 2016). This social categorization leads to in-group bias and might trigger intergroup discrimination (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When people categorize themselves as a part of a social group, they define themselves as being similar to or different from members of other groups and usually strive to achieve or maintain positive social identity. This tendency to portray themselves positively through in-group/out-group comparisons makes their group distinctive from other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Social identity theory has three main components: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison. In the early literature of this theory, researchers identified three distinct behaviors to show how individuals establish their self-concept based on their membership in social groups. People who think that they belong to a specific group create the perception of two distinct groups- in-group and out-group. According to the theory, people favor the in-group and tend to discriminate against the out-group. In other words, they are self-categorizing themselves by showing group affiliation. This is the prominent behavior that helps to operationalize the theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). People are

motivated by the need to present themselves as positively distinct and to maintain a positive social identity. It is referred to as the underlying reason to engage in categorization, identification, and comparison (Turner & Reynolds, 2010). In addition to presenting clearly defined entities and references to group membership, when individuals self-categorize themselves, they assign a prototype to themselves and the out-group, they tend to engage in stereotyping (Hogg, 2016). Due to common attributes, they see themselves as being similar to members of their in-group than other groups (Tajfel, 1969).

The basic idea behind social identification is that the “individuals define themselves and are defined by others as members of a group” (Tajfel and Turner, 1986, pp.15). The attributes and characteristics of the group become a part of their identity and self-image. These identifications are comparative and relational. They see in what ways they are similar and/or different than the other group. They tend to become emotionally involved in an activity and circumstance as a group. Similarly, social comparison involves weighing the differences in comparison to the out-group based on attributes and characteristics. The early literature on social comparison mainly focuses on the negative comparisons, which leads to discriminatory behavior towards the out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979,1986). Social comparison (making in-group/out-group comparisons) is the effect as well as the cause of categorization and identification. These processes are not rigid and established. They are context-dependent and vary according to time (Turner & Reynolds, 2010). The researcher and the reader need to understand that these three behaviors are not mutually exclusive from one another. The interdependency of categorization, identification, and comparison provides a full explanation of social identity theory.

The above concepts fit with the specific needs of the group of international students. International students who choose to study abroad undergo a change in their self-identity. When

students who grew up in one culture relocate to another country of a different culture, they face change and challenge both in identity and self-image (Osborne, 2012). After leaving familiar surroundings and support in the home country, international students try to assimilate into the new culture, thereby discovering the change in social identity in everyday life. This change in aspects of social identity brought by being an international student becomes often more pronounced at the time of crisis. That is when a marginalized group like international students communicate and confirm their identity by posting individualized content posted on social media platforms like TikTok. Through their confessions and sharing of experiences, international students have depended on social networks extensively in the past to reveal aspects of their unique social identity (Gomes et al., 2014). Therefore, the researcher chose social identity theory to answer how international students exploit social media dependency to articulate their social identities on TikTok.

TikTok and social identity. People create and share their unique profiles and personalized content through social media. Many studies have tried to study the social identity of various marginalized groups on social media platforms, but these studies have focused on Twitter. A study about college students' social media use showed that those who often use social media for college sports are more likely to develop group identity as well as collective self-esteem (Kim & Kim, 2019). Researchers used a qualitative study of queer in-group members' posts after the Orlando shooting to understand how members of the queer community linguistically responded to the threat to their social identity (Jenkins, Zaher, Tikkanen & Ford, 2019). Similarly, researchers have also explored the role of hip-hop celebrities in constructing racial identity (Harlow & Benbrook, 2019). TikTok has changed popular culture by providing an accessible and creative space for digital identity development (Rodriguez, 2020). It empowers

every user to produce content independently to meet the needs of self-presentation and self-expression. Therefore, TikTok is a suitable platform to form self-identity and group identity. The fast interaction system and a unique discourse system of interaction strengthen the creation of group identity on TikTok (Zuo & Wang, 2019). Moreover, TikTok encourages teenagers and young adults to explore and conduct online identity complexities while attracting audiences through participatory culture (Smith, 2020). When it comes to TikTok, none of the few published articles have addressed social identity. This study is the first of its kind to explore the articulation of social identity on TikTok.

Research Questions

The researcher used the interconnected concepts of social media dependency and social identity theory to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: In what ways did international students depend on TikTok to articulate their fears and concerns as members of a vulnerable population or out-group in the wake of the ICE announcement of July 6?

RQ2: How do the TikTok platform and its features enable international students to articulate fears and concerns as members of an out-group in the United States at the time of crisis?

These questions seek to understand how marginalized groups like international students use emerging social media platforms like TikTok at the time of crisis and how it facilitates media dependency and articulation of social identity. The researcher was able to analyze the connection of both culture and technology in these unique spaces and how it relates to Media System Dependency Theory and Social Identity Theory.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

Theoretical Framework of the Method

The researcher chose qualitative analysis as the method for this study to examine how international students articulate their fears and concerns in response to an unexpected crisis. The answer to the above query required an in-depth understanding of the nuances of international students' TikTok videos and the context in which they are based. Media content is no longer seen as objective. It is a text that requires in-depth reading; cultural studies scholars claim that every cultural practice and product can be analyzed as text (Elfriede, 2009).

Critical techno cultural discourse analysis (CTDA), a multi-modal technique proposed by Andre Brock, was used in this study to examine various features of TikTok as a platform. First, it is crucial to understand the types of analysis that come under CTDA. Critical analysis is a detailed examination and evaluation of a text. Discourse Analysis is the examination of the social context to understand the meaning of the text. The aspect which makes CTDA unique from other methods is the "Techno-Cultural" part. CTDA assumes that culture and technology are intermixed concepts. Our shared practices and ways of doing things (in other words, culture) give meaning and shape to technology. How we use that technology and the culture it creates give rise to new technology (Graf, 2017). On the other hand, technology creates the fabric of our culture. The Internet, smartphone and social media technology have created a distinctive online and digital culture. There are several ways technology alters the individual and collective behavior of human beings (Gilkey, 2015). People's need for interaction and connectivity gave rise to social media platforms. Through its distinct interface, design, content, mechanism, and functions, each social media offers a unique communication environment on its own. The

technological features of the computer-mediated communication system may shape the digitally mediated discourse on these platforms (Herring, 2004).

Social media platforms like TikTok have unique communication environments that are entirely different from other social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. This unique feature of social networking sites required separate analysis of the information technology material and the visual design itself, which is lacking in just critical discourse analyses. Since CTDA provides a holistic analysis of the interactions of technology, technology practice and cultural ideology (Brock, 2016), it was a suitable method to study social media interactions on platforms like TikTok. In addition to understanding the crisis response discourse of international students, deciphering technology's social and cultural meaning was equally necessary to know what characteristics/features of TikTok allowed international students to articulate their concerns online. That was only possible by adopting a multi-modal technique like CTDA, which incorporates both discourse analysis and interface analysis.

Although CTDA is a novel method in academia, researchers have applied this method to study the use of various social media platforms by different communities in the world. One of the prominent applications of CTDA was analyzing African American Twitter usage and how the African American community used Twitter's interface to explore critical techno-cultural digital practices (Brock, 2012). Researchers have also used CTDA to study the online identity and racial authenticity of the African American community on Twitter (Maragh, 2017). It has been applied in studies that examine how Instagram use by Black travel influencers challenge racialized place myths and erroneous beliefs about Black travel (Arthur, 2020). Besides its most used platform Twitter, CTDA was also used to research digital sextortion in YouTube (Gaunt, 2018) and intersectional discourse on a Tumblr page - "Fat people of color" (Williams, 2017). In

this study, the international student community is a population that perceived a sense of online community in TikTok to communicate the concerns that affect the group by using relevant hashtags. Thus, looking at the previous applications, CTDA was the most appropriate method to examine online communities that share common identity and experiences.

Explanation of the method

Interface analysis was the first step in the process. Interface analysis is examining the formatting qualities of information technology. It incorporates analysis of everything from symbols, algorithms, practices to screen, app, multimedia, and graphic capabilities that define the physical design of the technology (Brock, 2016). Symbols include logo, icons that represent different functions in TikTok. An algorithm is a set of mathematical rules that specifies how data behaves. They help to maintain order and mainly search results. Examples of social media practices include sharing, commenting, and liking. Multimedia capabilities enable users to display data in various formats like text, images, audio, video, and animation. Graphic capabilities allow users to make different photographs, diagrams, designs and patterns. Humans interact with information communication technologies through these interface features. CTDA is interested in interface and its symbolic meaning. The TikTok interface is rich in layout and design elements that CTDA gave unlimited scope for interface analysis. CTDA provided the opportunity to study the affordances of TikTok in relation to the discourse and theories, which helped to understand not just the technical but social and cultural meaning of technology which is missing in the existing literature of social media.

When it comes to TikTok, international students used TikTok features like 15-60 second videos, soundtracks, first-camera view, hashtags, special effects, comments, voice recorders, etc. to express their concerns regarding the ICE announcement. The vertical video recording screen

allows users to record short snappy videos 15- 60 seconds long with nothing but their mobile phones. Users can match the audio or their favorite soundtrack to their recording to enhance the dancing and lip-syncing experience on the app. In addition, users have the option to record their voices and add background music later. Similarly, the first-person camera view allows users to directly look into the camera and shoot videos in selfie mode. Like Instagram and Twitter, Users can use hashtags which are short words accompanied by the # sign used to find and share content.

International students used hashtags like #ICE #deportation #internationalstudents in TikTok to represent their group and related problems. Users can double-tap the screen or tap on the heart icon on the lower right portion of the screen to express their likes. Clicking on the comment box icon below the heart icon allows users to comment on the video. Users can click on the effect icon on the lower left part of the recording screen, to see 100+ special effects of TikTok. All these affordances of TikTok increase the dependency of the users on the platform, making it innovative, entertaining, and extremely useful. These technology features also make the articulation of the social identity of international students easier on the platform. The interactions between the interface features and the user led to technology practices, also called user interactions.

Secondly, the researcher examined user interactions (technology practices) to see how technological behaviors create meaning within the platform. Understanding these user elements and the distinct technological environment of TikTok revealed how international students are connected to their online community and how they respond to the crisis surrounding them. The interface features of TikTok allowed international students to express their concerns about the ICE announcement effectively. For instance, the ease of making short-form videos and the first-

person camera view allowed international students to immediately record their crisis response after the ICE announcement on July 6, 2020. Furthermore, the first-person camera view, soundtrack and video screen helped students to communicate their thoughts visually. For example, special effects like green screen video and green screen photo allowed users to attach video and photo in the background while still showing their face in the foreground. This feature allowed international students to attach any relevant document, photo, video related to ICE announcement providing more depth to their presentation in the video. This capability leads to enhanced audio-visual interactions in the platform, a form of technology practice that arises from greenscreen effect features. Studying all these technology features of TikTok and the user interactions helped to understand how these platforms facilitate TikTok dependency and articulation of social identities online.

The use of hashtags resulted in archived interactions that improved social understanding needs while depicting social categorization of international students. The application of the green screen effect resulted in audio-visual interactions that supported all three media goals- understanding, orientation and play. This information presented in a visually appealing way helped establish the social identity of students. The use of first-person camera perspective resulted in immersive interaction, assisting individuals in their urgent need to connect with the community during a crisis. Finally, the usage of the share option resulted in extensive engagement and enhanced awareness of the problem among TikTok viewers. In this way, Interface analysis explains the link between technology and technology practice and how they relate to the theories.

Discourse analysis was the final step of the process. Under CTDA, discourse analysis explores the social, historical, and cultural context in the generated text. It is about finding the

text's cultural ideologies and themes (Brocks, 2016). Considering international students come from different backgrounds, nationalities, and worldviews, their responses and opinions of the ICE announcement of July 6 may be similar or different. Discourse analysis from a critical techno-cultural perspective provided a comprehensive approach to understanding the nuances of international student's fears and concerns regarding the ICE announcement. Like other social media platforms, TikTok discourses consist of inextricable opinions of users who consume the discourses and create and shape them. Unlike in Twitter and Instagram, where discourses are based primarily on text and images, in TikTok, short video induced discourse provided a diverse range of written and visual text for discourse analysis. For this project, in addition to the text transcribed from the videos of international students, discourses from the captions, visuals, photographs, stickers, audio clips and texts within the videos were collectively analyzed as one.

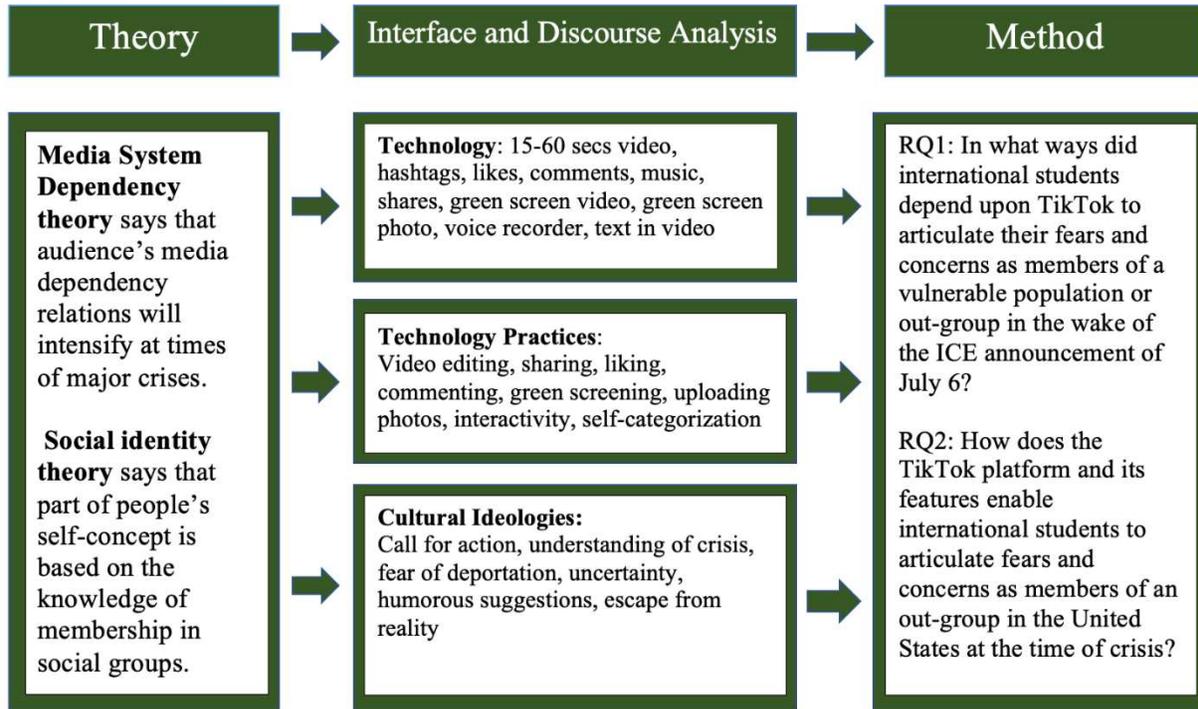
In CTDA, both interface features and technology practices facilitated how international students communicated their crisis response. For instance, humor was one of the cultural ideologies observed from discourse analysis. International students offered humorous suggestions to an otherwise serious situation and pointed to the absurdity of the ICE policy in a comical way. The humor shown in the TikTok app is very different from the humor shown in other social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram. International students used TikTok features like captions, text boxes, hashtags, stickers, soundtracks, and special effects to share their crisis response and articulate their identities in a visually appealing way. For example, the green screen interface feature (technology), which led to audio-visual interactions (technology practice), facilitated humor discussion in the TikTok platform. Humor signified the social play element of media needs outlined by Media System Dependency Theory and how the articulation of humor showed social categorization, social identification or social comparison processes of

social identity theory paints a complete picture of how international students depended on TikTok to articulate their fears and concerns as members of vulnerable population or out-group in the wake of ICE announcement of July 6.

Table 1: CTDA explanation: The form and function of TikTok facilitate the ways in which international students communicate their crisis responses.

Interface/Technology	Technology Practices	Culture/Ideology (both interface and practice influence the possible cultural ideologies that emerge from themes within the Media System Dependency theory and Social Identity Theory)
15-60 second videos	Video editing	Understanding of crisis
Hashtags	Sharing, liking, commenting	Online interaction with other group members
Likes, comments, shares	Audio-visual Interaction	Call for action, escape from reality
Soundtracks	Uploading photos	Fear of deportation
Green screen video, green screen photo	Interactivity by special effects	Humor and Sarcasm
Text in video	Self-categorization	Uncertainty
Video screen		
Special effects		

Table 2: CTDA explanation: How the interconnection of technology, technology practices and cultural ideology relate to the theories and lead to the research question.



In this way, the interconnection of technology, technology practice and cultural ideologies, and how they relate to a greater understanding of Media System Dependency Theory and Social Identity Theory were examined to understand the ways in which international students employed TikTok to articulate their fears and concerns as vulnerable out-group in the wake of ICE announcement of July 6.

Data Collection Procedures

Pretest. The researcher conducted the initial test for this study using the hashtag #internationalstudentproblems on TikTok. The researcher chose this hashtag because it is related to international students' issues and comprehensive enough to find data. TikTok videos from March 15 to April 15, 2020, were used to understand TikTok content, interface features and themes explored. The main components of social identity theory such as social categorization, social identification, and social categorization, and tenets of media system dependency theory

such as understanding, orientation and play were used as a guiding point to interpret the material found within the videos. Similarly, emergent themes like inexperience in a new culture, homesickness were tracked in a separate sheet. This pretest helped in figuring out codes and emergent themes in the actual study about ICE policy response.

Data and codebook creation. The overall method of gathering data for this study depended on the number of TikTok videos that could be collected with the hashtags like #internationalstudentproblems #deportation #ICE etc. Several steps were employed to analyze and interpret the TikTok videos through Critical Techno-Cultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA). The first step of data collection was extracting all the TikTok videos in which international students have expressed concerns about the ICE announcement of July 6. The researcher selected the timeframe between July 6 and July 14, 2020 for the study. Since the new policy was announced on July 6 and got canceled on July 14, the videos within that crucial time were included. This provided an accurate understanding of international students' crisis response when the public conversation and deportation anxiety among international students was at its peak. Hashtags such as #abolishice #studentban #internationalstudents #internationalstudent #immigration #ice #f1visa #greenscreen #college #travelban were used to find videos where international students expressed their response and reactions to the ICE policy of July 6. The researcher then scraped altogether 21 videos from TikTok, which ranged from 10 seconds to 1 min. She copied the video links and screen recorded the videos for ease of access.

Codes. Once the videos were scraped, the researcher hand-coded them in Excel. Then, she created several Excel spreadsheets to organize data and findings. For initial interface analysis, the researcher created an Excel sheet to track quantitative information and prominent features of TikTok like author, captions, hashtags, likes, comments, shares and soundtrack. This

sheet helped determine the specific affordances of TikTok that were the most popular among the video creators. In CTDA, this analysis corresponds with technology. Then, the researcher selected some of the prominent technological features and analyzed them in detail to understand how they facilitated the communication of international students' crisis responses.

S.N	Author	Captions	Hashtags	Likes	Comments	Shares	Soundtrack	Link
Video 1	simonfloris	I signed all the petitions and stuff but I just KNOW that won't help	#abolishice #dontdeportme #scrawice #foryoupage #fortheinternationalboys	6008	88	1440	no	https://www.tiktok.com/@simonfloris/video/6849245529772319427?lang=en&sender_devicepc&sender_web_id=6919291547104642565&is_from_webapp=v1
Video 2	maribernal766	I guess international student's appeal is money	#internationalstudent #studentban #internationalstudents #internationalstudentsunited	10	1	0	no	
Video 3	yvonnexiao	Let's hope for a successful court challenge :(#internationalstudent #1visa #CE #covid #usa #deported #exchangestudent #college	128	3	35	no	https://www.tiktok.com/@yvonnexiao/video/6846824415573839110?lang=en&sender_devicepc&sender_web_id=6919291547104642565&is_from_webapp=v2
Video 4	gordacorajuda	Now ice is targeting international student This will affect phd and master student the most.	#greenscreen #ice #internationalstudent #phd #masterstudent #abolishice	4838	94	835	no	https://www.tiktok.com/@gordacorajuda/video/6846878083971108101?lang=en&sender_devicepc&sender_web_id=6919291547104642565&is_from_webapp=v2
Video 5	lucamornet	Please sign the link in my bio. I among many don't want to find a new home.	#internationalstudent #USA #yp	1814	42	207	no	https://www.tiktok.com/@lucamornet/video/6846802155941170437?lang=en&sender_devicepc&sender_web_id=6919291547104642565&is_from_webapp=v1
Video 6	ethenostrofflaw	I was asked over and over again by students who were at risk of being deported what should they do	#immigrant #student #foreignstudents #onlineclass	2283	34	16	no	
Video 7	marsexplorer	My opinion on the treatment of international students	#ice #internationalstudents #rump #mit #stem #deportation #learnontiktok	2928	84	164	no	https://www.tiktok.com/@marsexplorer/video/6847259775772790021?lang=en&sender_devicepc&sender_web_id=6919291547104642565&is_from_webapp=v1
Video 8	leftist.leah	making international students choose between being deported or risk catching coronavirus is evil	#yp #politics #kyzbca #leftist #for you	3087	90	77	yes (the city's gonna break my heart)	
Video 9	prikrihiyer	N/A	#internationalstudent #immigration #us #rump #viral #quarantine #covid19 #crisis #support	180.3k	10.5k	13.5k	no	

Figure 1: Screenshot of a portion of the codebook showing quantitative information of the videos.

Secondly, for a greater understanding of the theories, the researcher created a second Excel sheet. She selected preliminary codes based on the basic tenets of media system dependency theory such as understanding, orientation, escape from reality. She also selected themes within social identity theory. Social categorization, social identification and social comparison became categories to see where TikTok data might fit into the theories' underlying

themes. Lastly, the researcher analyzed each of the videos by placing them in the categories they belonged to and interpreted them separately.

Finally, for the thematic analysis, the researcher transcribed all the videos into text for coding convenience. Then, she printed the video transcript on paper. The researcher read the transcript several times and hand-coded the transcript to find the emergent themes in the text. After extensive critical reading of the transcript, she found emergent themes like humor, call to action, fear of displacement and inserted them to the excel sheets as emergent codes. Based on the coded text, she then placed each video transcript under the emergent codes in another codebook.

Theories	Preliminary Codes Based on Media System Dependency Theory					
Tenets of theory	Understanding (The desire to grasp one's environment)		Orientation (The need to behave in the world effectively)		Recreation (the need for escape from daily problems)	
	Self Understanding	Social Understanding	Action orientation	Interaction orientation	Solitary Play	Social Play
Video 1						
Video 2						
Video 3						
Video 4						
Video 5						
Video 6						
Video 7						
Video 8						
Video 9						
Video 10						
Video 11						
Video 12						
Video 13						
Video 14						
Video 15						
Video 16						
Video 17						
Video 18						
Video 19						
Video 20						
Video 21						

Figure 2: Screenshot of preliminary codes based on Media System Dependency Theory.

Preliminary Codes based on Social Identity Theory									
Tenets of Theory	Social Categorization				Social Identification				Social Comparison
	In-group bias (ingroup-favoritism and discrimination against the outgroup)	distinct and clearly defined entity(what makes this group unique from other groups	references to group membership(we belong to a distinct group) What it means to be in that group?	(in-group prototype/ self stereotype: we agree that we are like this and they are like that..	expression of shared emotional involvement(being emotionally part of an activity, groups or circumstances)	social consensus about group and membership	relational and comparative definition (how am I similar to or different from as better or worse than members of other groups.	expressions striving to maintain and achieve positive social identity/self-esteem	in group/out group comparison (the evaluation of one's own group with reference to other groups in terms of attributes and characteristics..
Video 1									
Video 2									
Video 3									
Video 4									
Video 5									
Video 6									
Video 7									
Video 8									
Video 9									
Video 10									
Video 11									
Video 12									
Video 13									
Video 14									
Video 15									
Video 16									
Video 17									
Video 18									
Video 19									
Video 20									
Video 21									

Figure 3: Screenshot of preliminary codes based on Social Identity Theory.

The number of times the theme appears in each category is listed below in the table format.

Table 3. Emergent themes and frequencies

Emergent Themes	Frequency(n=)
Humor and Sarcasm	9
Fear of displacement	5
Contribution Reminders	3
Call for action	3
Anti-Trump Sentiment	2

Emergent Themes				
Call for action	Contribution to the US	Fear of displacement	Anti-Trump sentiment	Sarcasm and Humor
<p>Video 3 @gymnaxx</p> <p>Here are four ways you can help international students right now. For background, the ICE released a new guideline yesterday stating that international students will be deported if college classes are solely offered online. Not going to go into details about how I feel about this. You guys know how I feel about this. But here are the things you can do if you don't support this. Number One, if you're an American, please call your representatives. This will have the most direct impact and you only take about five to ten minutes all of your day. Number 2, sign petitions. Number three, spread awareness.</p> <p>Talk about this with your peers, with your friends, checking with their international student friends and share your concerns with college administrators. And number four, if your school is going hybrid for the fall semester or quarter, consider reaching some in-person classes and share that with your international students. Even swapping them out with them will be greatly appreciated. And to my fellow international students, this sucks. I understand. Please reach out, if you need anything, stay strong.</p>	<p>Video 4 @gencocquiza</p> <p>When we thought that ICE couldn't get any more awful... they outdo themselves every time... do you know how American universities work REALLY hard to get international students to attend their institutions... that because international students typically don't qualify for most of the scholarships so they end up paying more and also makes them look really good when they have a high international student population... it makes the institution seem more prestigious... is really important for institutions of higher education to have international students... ICE is now telling international students that we have on a student visa that if their institutions are online in the fall then either have to return to their home countries or they have to transfer to another institution... what mechanisms don't even know they're gonna be online or in person in the fall because covid cases could skyrocket in their states so they don't know yet... see this is also including masters and phd students they can't just transfer to a different institution because all their research is at their current institution that would require some students to basically start their degree all over... the only thing that ICE is doing with this policy is screwing over students</p>	<p>Video 2 @marabam766</p> <p>I wanted to address what's going on with international students right now I've been seven years in the United States two of them working 3 of them studying. I am actually going to start another degree in September. I am hoping to. But now all of a sudden, we have to go home and study online in our countries. I pay for next semester \$4000 in because I'm going to community college.</p> <p>I don't know what the point of paying so much fucking money if I'm not gonna be able to be here. I have made a life here. I have a boyfriend here I have three dogs and two cats... how do you expect me to wait until you want to... to just tell me if I can go back or not? no, I can arrange all my shit let me know.</p>	<p>Video 11 @lex_ny</p> <p>Go Howard and Mitt had a lawsuit with Trump earlier this week trying to stop ICE from deporting over 1 million international students... long story short... Trump wants all the schools and universities reopen and the colleges are like extra... ICE's newest policy is to deport anyone that's only taking online courses meanwhile the big league colleges are rushing to figure out some sort of hybrid model so then keep their 1 million students in the country... ummm... just but not least cause you can't make this stuff up... Trump in response to the lawsuit is threatening to remove universities talk to them status he's claiming on Twitter that colleges lean too far to the left which I don't know it's like getting a college education or being smart enough to get a PhD far to the left?</p> <p>with also there's me off is that like we've never questioned church taxes and status and we've gone so far as to let them contribute to political donations which that is definitely not a separation of church and state in my humble opinion</p>	<p>Video 1 @simonforis</p> <p>Because my school is going online hi this is simon... and I am I'm not from around here... ICE is going to deport me because my school is going online</p>
<p>Video 14 @jwanna</p> <p>Here why Trump's student ban is inherently xenophobic... it criminalizes international students, and essentially ignores our valuable and indispensable role within US academia... on average we pay higher tuition than domestic students... in 2018 we actually contributed \$45 billion dollars to the US economy meanwhile we're not even allowed to work more than 20 hours on-campus job... that is severely limiting for international students who need to make money while in college to pay for tuition... this ban violates the basic human right to an education... it not only targets but it attacks people who are not even given a voice in American politics</p> <p>Donald Trump is essentially using the 1.5 million international students as a political tool for his stupid re-opening agenda... we are not your cash cows... we have as much right to education as everyone does... how to help?? Email the administration your university or school to publicly denounce this guideline... call and email your senators and please spread awareness and finally petition university to</p>	<p>Video 7 @manojeev</p> <p>MIT is suing the government over the deportation of international students... I wanted to talk about why it's important to have international students especially in STEM... aside from the fact that they help stimulate the economy a lot of these students work in laboratories and do important research... especially in the graduate student community where most of them are international students... if they leave it will cause tremendous disturbance with university faculty and the scientific community... overall I just think it's absolutely necessary to have people from different social and economic backgrounds in the academic community</p>	<p>Video 5 @urammet</p> <p>Oh so I don't really do serious videos but I feel like this has to be talked about... so basically yesterday ICE announced that if you're an international student living in the US and studying in the US, if your school is going online next semester, all you have to leave or you are going to be deported... I am an international student and live in the US and I think this is personally fucked up just because I am an international student I can stay when I live when I made friends, when I am building a life and career and not only me personally I feel like some people are in a situation where they can't even go back and have the money or like the capabilities to go back to their home country like like in my situation my friends live in Russia and I am friends like I couldn't take a visa to go to Russia if I wanted to so I wouldn't even know where to go so if you happen to see this video please send a petition that's in my bio and share it as much as you can just to help us international students</p>	<p>Video 14 @jwanna</p> <p>Here why Trump's student ban is inherently xenophobic... it criminalizes international students, and essentially ignores our valuable and indispensable role within US academia... on average we pay higher tuition than domestic students... in 2018 we actually contributed \$45 billion dollars to the US economy meanwhile we're not even allowed to work more than 20 hours on-campus job... that is severely limiting for international students who need to make money while in college to pay for tuition... this ban violates the basic human right to an education... it not only targets but it attacks</p>	<p>Video 8 @ethelash</p> <p>Just pressscreen effects and photos</p>
	<p>Video 9 @berkshyer</p> <p>Guys what? I'm getting kicked out of this country... awesome... the ICE, the immigration customs enforcement has just come up with the law saying oh you have to leave the country because your school is going online... do you know how much it takes to get into an international program and travel all the way across your country and missing all your family for months and months and months and not being able to see them or even travel in case of an emergency during this pandemic? the only thing that was constant in my life was my education and now you're not you're just taking that away from me... what is going on? and this is not even if it's not happening to me even if it's not happening to one of the friends that know it's happening to international students... and how the hell are we going to support all of them? it is unbelievable I feel so vulnerable right now... I've been in this country for six years I've never felt so vulnerable... as I am</p>	<p>Video 10 @sheshbanarigiri</p> <p>How to stay in the US and remain and cancel the new rule that ICE entered! Many just not best and dance</p>		

Figure 4: Screenshot of a portion of codebook showing thematic analysis.

In summary, interface analysis (analysis of technology and technology practice) and discourse analysis (analysis of cultural ideologies) of the Critical Techno-Cultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA) method guided the process of evaluating TikTok videos made by international students from July 6-14, 2020. The researcher extracted the data from TikTok with the help of hashtags and coded them based on the tenets of Media System Dependency theory and Social Identity theory. In the second phase, she coded the data based on emergent themes coming from the audio, visuals, music, captions, and texts shown in the videos.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the study provides a detailed understanding of how international students impacted by the ICE announcement in the United States used TikTok from July 6-July 14, 2020. The data collected, coded, and analyzed through the three-evaluation lens of CTDA (technology, technology practice, and cultural ideology) provided substantial evidence to understand the interconnected nature of technology and culture in TikTok. It discusses TikTok's design features and formatting qualities that enable international students to articulate their crisis responses in TikTok. These design features and their resulting user interactions and practices shed light on the impact of the interface environment on user behavior. People's shared self-expression conversations on social media have been able to identify various issues and problems present in society. Likewise, the themes and cultural ideologies that emerge from international student posts on TikTok informed people of the diverse range of problems faced by international students. Overall, this section details the critical techno-cultural components of TikTok and the discourses present in the crisis response of international students.

Interface Analysis

The one-of-a-kind, algorithm-driven technological environment created by TikTok creates a unique space for people of diverse backgrounds, cultures, and ideologies to express their opinions and concerns on various issues. International students utilized TikTok features such as first-person camera view and green screen effects to perform their identities. They performed for the audiences in the TikTok app, hoping the viewers would see them, hear their concerns, and understand the urgency of the crisis they were dealing with. For instance, the camera view of TikTok takes up the whole screen in the user's phones, leaving them no option

other than to watch the entire video, unlike other apps like Instagram and Facebook where the video is played in a box. This feature satisfied the need of international students to be seen. The capability to record one's voice or choose different soundtracks and music met the need of international students to be heard by other international students and the public. Effects like the green screen effect that allows embedding photos and videos in the background satisfied the students' need to be understood by providing more details and context in the video. In this way, the technological capabilities of TikTok made it easier for international students to present their performative identities during crisis situations.

In this section, the researcher discusses the technological affordances or artifacts of TikTok that allowed international students to articulate their fears and concerns in the wake of the ICE announcement of July 6, 2020, followed by the technological practices/user interactions brought by the interface features. The discussion of how the findings relate to the theories follows later. These components are described together and incorporated in one section to clarify how a technological feature leads to a specific technology practice in TikTok.

Hashtags. TikTok is an open social media platform that allows users to follow anyone they like and explore specific searchable topics in the form of hashtags. When a user adds any text after the # symbol without inserting space, it becomes a hashtag. So, for example, if #internationalstudent is a hashtag, then the users of TikTok can go to the search bar; when they type #internationalstudent, all the videos that have included that hashtag will populate on the screen.

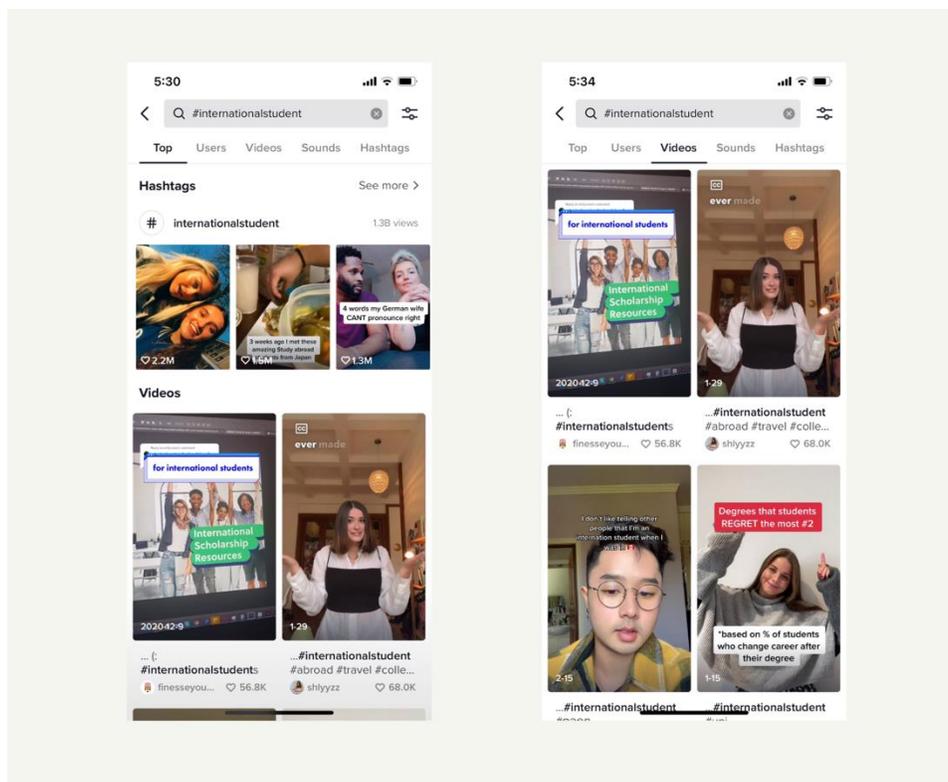


Figure 5: Screenshot showing how hashtags work in TikTok. The first figure shows the screen that pops up when you type #internationalstudent in the search bar. The second figure shows the list of videos that have used the hashtag #internationalstudent.

A hashtag is especially beneficial for users who are looking for videos about a specific issue and topic. Like in Twitter and Instagram, hashtags allow users to form a community and share opinions on their interests.

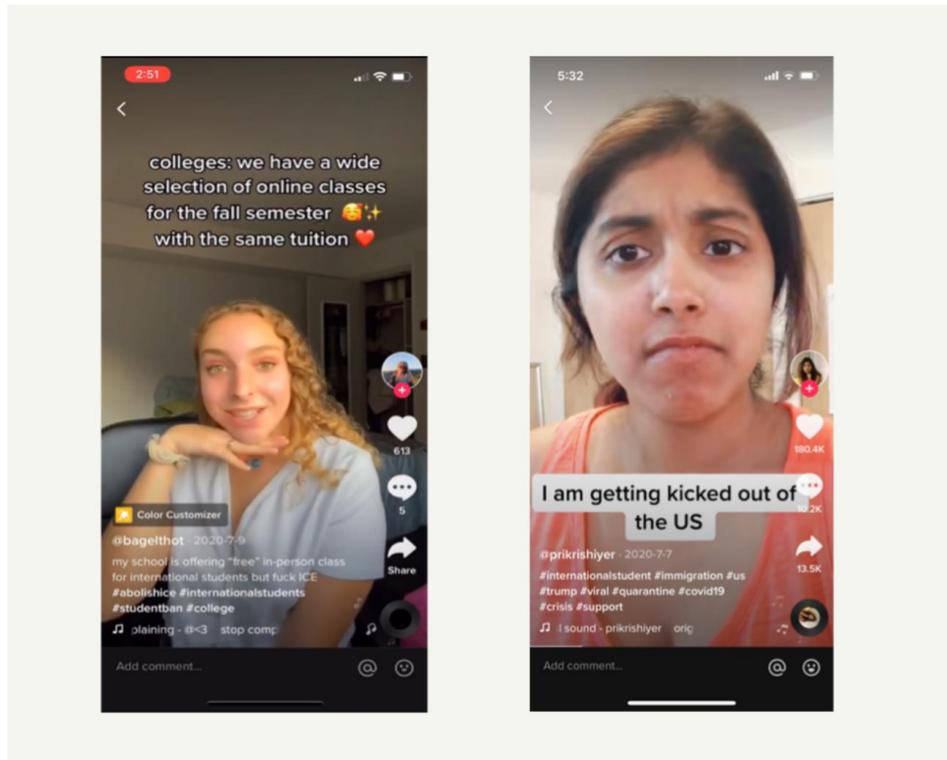


Figure 6: Screenshot of videos showing popular hashtags like #abolishice #internationalstudent #crisis that international students used to express concerns about the ICE announcement. These hashtags increase the findability of the videos and make them distinct from other issues that are going around at that time.

Archived interactions. Since hashtags serve as searchable archives in the TikTok platform, hashtags automatically generate an archive of similar videos that used the same hashtag. If a user wants to find videos regarding a specific topic, as shown above in the example, he/she needs to insert the # symbol after the word. This leads to an increased understanding of the topic, eventually enhancing users' knowledge regarding a topic. According to Media System Dependency Theory, one of the main motivations behind people using media is social understanding. The archiving feature of hashtags made it easier for both creators and

audiences who identify as international students to better understand the issue from the perspective of other people in the community by using hashtags. Because of its utility, the use of hashtags also made it easier for the researcher to find videos related to international student's ICE policy responses on TikTok. Students using specific hashtags like #abolishice #internationalstudentban in their videos also show their need to interact with other students going through a similar crisis. They wanted to increase the findability of the videos so that people who belong to the same community can further the conversation about abolishing the ICE policy of July 6. The more accessible the video, the more engagement and interaction. These motivations showed by international students confirm the social understanding and interaction orientation tenet of Media System Dependency Theory. The fact that international students used hashtags like #internationalstudentban #abolishice itself shows that they are showing the process of social categorization by referring to the distinct situation that only international students were facing at that time. They were making references to group membership by using hashtags like #internationalstudent #foreignstudnet #internationalstudentUS etc. In this way, hashtags helped students to articulate their media dependencies and social identities on TikTok.

Green screen effect. TikTok recently added a creative tool called the green screen effect. This feature allows users to add customizable backgrounds to their videos. The background can be a still image or a video from the mobile's camera roll. Green screen is mainly used in film production to add background image while the actor or speaker performs in the foreground. This unique platform capability of TikTok allows users to incorporate multimedia elements like photos and videos in the form of fun things like stickers, hearts, rainbow waves, cutouts, sunglasses, leaves, hand, thought bubble, tiles, shirt, sky, etc. which appear in the background. The incorporation of these multimedia elements in the video makes the video creative and

appealing to the viewers. It also gives an opportunity for creators to upload user-generated content or the creative freedom to upload the photo/video they want. One of the significant

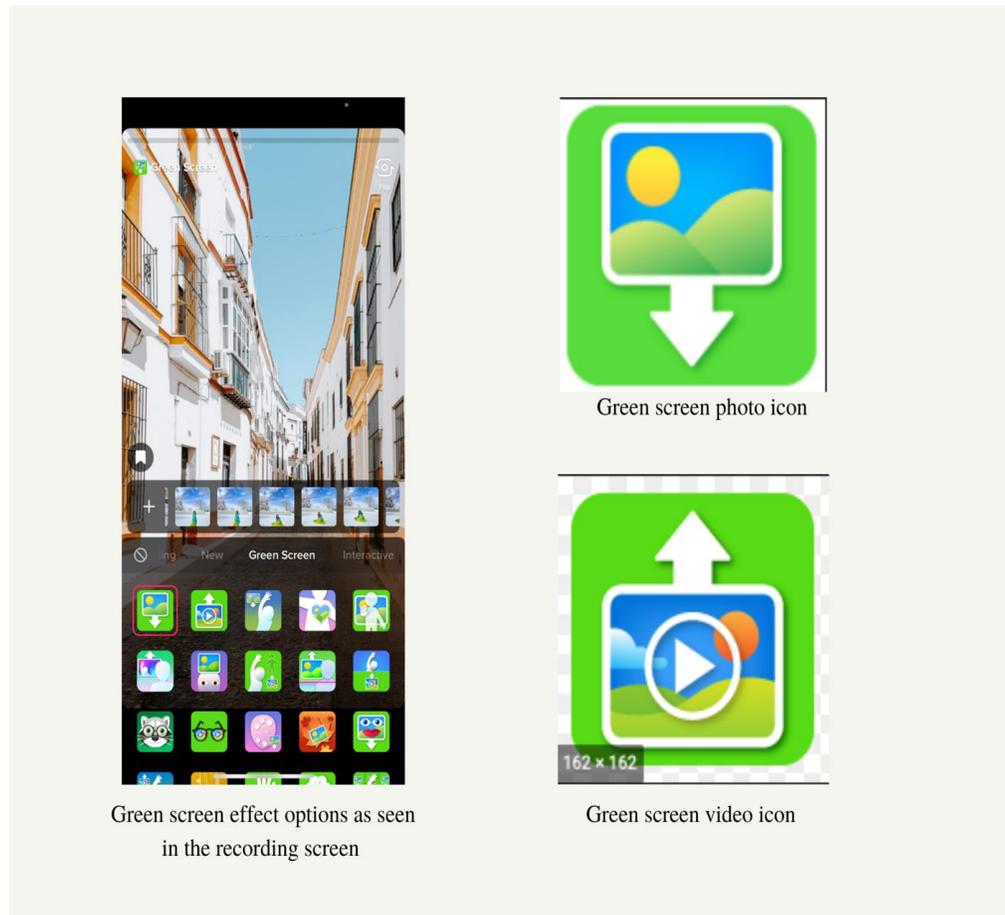


Figure 7: The screenshot of recording screen on Tik Tok with different green screen features.

advantages of this effect is the ability to shoot where users want, when they want, without having to set up a studio. Thus, it eliminates extended production time and production cost and provides the creator with infinite possibilities.

In figure 7, the left picture shows a recording screen of TikTok featuring customizable background along with the green screen options of a photo, video, sticker, sunglasses, cat scan, etc. The two icons on the right show Green screen photo icon and Green screen video icon.

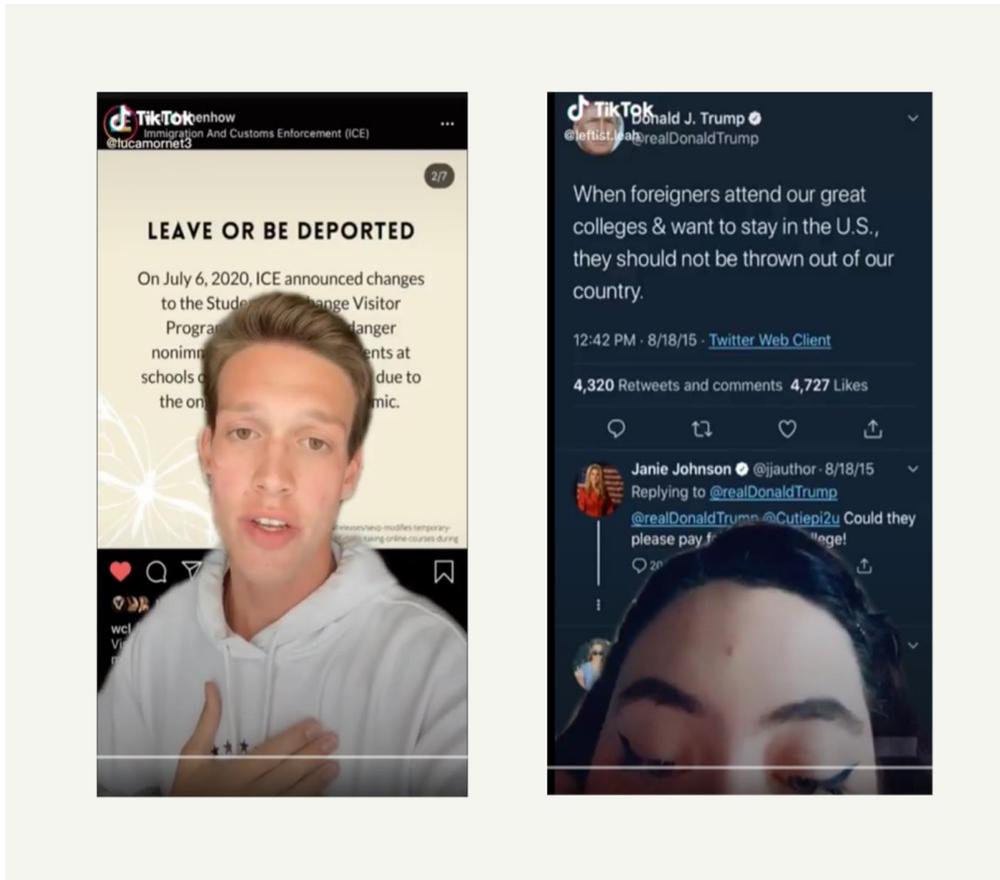


Figure 8: Screenshot of two videos that have used the greenscreen effect on TikTok.

Out of hundreds of effects offered by TikTok, international students used green screen features to make their assertion and confessions visually appealing. Images of the ICE announcement, former President Trump’s tweets, people’s reactions to the announcement on Twitter, Instagram, and screenshots of news headlines reporting the announcement were background images using the green screen effect. When the speaker shared their thoughts in the foreground, having these images in the background immediately notified the viewer about the issues concerning international students. Often depending on the source used, these background images provided more credibility to the information shared by these international students. The students used green screen to situate themselves into this international student user community. The visual representation of the announcement details on the background helped international

students solidify their social and cultural identity. In figure 8, an international student has used the green screen effect of TikTok to attach a screenshot of President Trump's tweet, which was initially written on August 18, 2015, to show the hypocrisy shown by the Trump administration. In the tweet, former President Trump advocates for international students and says that international students should not be thrown out of the country. However, five years later, his administration made it harder for international students to continue living in the United States during a pandemic.

This example shows that these effects were also playful because they gave a bit of comic relief to a dire and scary situation for the students. It became the perfect way to point out the comic absurdity of the announcement and lighten the seriousness of the issue. The addition of the green screen effect made the video both interactive and playful, validating all three motivations of using media: understanding, orientation, and play, as predicted by Media System Dependency Theory. Visually, this effect also led to a better presentation of fears, concerns, issues that international students were facing from July 6-14, 2020. It allowed users to push beyond the limits of a spoken message and simultaneously emphasize the point through background texts and images. In this way, the green screen effect of TikTok led to appealing audio-visual interactions and identification processes in the platform, thus resulting in improved articulation of fears, concerns, and opinions of the ICE announcement.

The first-person camera view. The technological environment of TikTok promotes first-person camera view or the first-person perspective, making the viewers the main audience of the video. The video is formatted to give the impression that the speaker is directly talking to the viewer. This unique, one-of-a-kind platform capability of TikTok allows creators to engage with the viewers on a more personal level. Most TikTok videos generally have only 10-15

seconds to engage a viewer. The first-person camera view immediately grabs the viewer's attention by pulling them into the content of the video. The screenshot below in Figure 9 shows an international student shooting video content utilizing the flipped version of the first-person camera view of TikTok. The camera directly aligns with the creator's forehead giving the

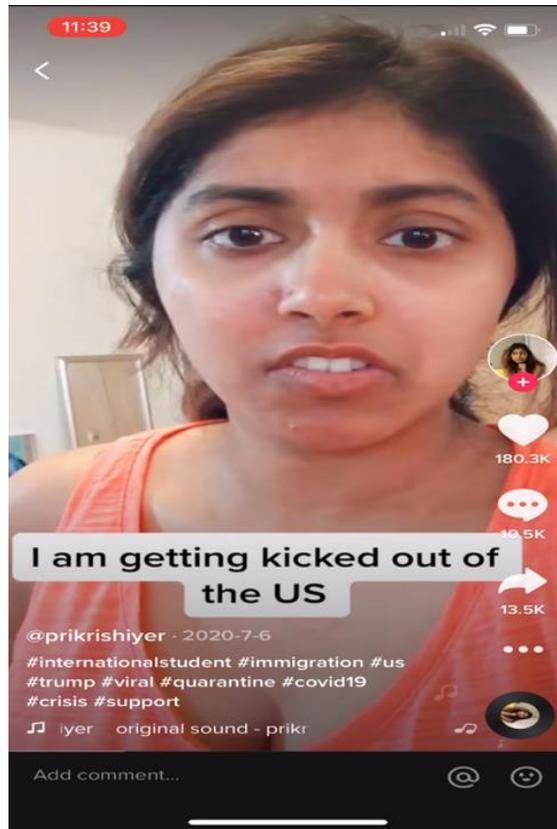


Figure 9: Screenshot of a video showing the first-person camera view of TikTok.

impression to viewers that the content creator is directly talking to them.

The above screenshot shows a still image taken from a video that exhibits the first-person camera view. The speaker (an international student) directly looked at the camera and the audience, demanding more attention and engagement. She was talking about the vulnerabilities and issues facing international students at the time of crisis. This post went viral on July 6, 2020, within a few hours of posting, gathering thousands of likes, shares and comments. Her video

takes up the whole screen on the mobile device. The first-person camera view of the TikTok home page increases perceived realism and immersion on the part of the audience, thereby increasing the opportunities for people's engagement and interaction with their perceived social group.

Immersive interactions. The first-person camera view feature of TikTok led to immersive interactions between the creator and the viewer. In the majority of the videos, the international students (video creators) are directly looking into the camera, mainly showing their face and the upper half of the body close to the camera. It makes the viewer think that the speaker is directly talking to them or addressing them. They wore casual clothes and looked like they made these videos without much preparation or practice. Unlike other performance oriented TikTok videos, these videos were raw, unfiltered, and directly addressed to the audience. The default in-built first-person camera view feature of TikTok allowed international students to express their immediate response to an urgent crisis. This view validates Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur's (1976) claim that media dependency intensifies when there is a high degree of change and conflict in a society. The fact that international students immediately used the TikTok platform within the first few days of the ICE announcement to express their opinions and concerns without much preparation speaks volumes about how accessible and popular the TikTok app is with young people, especially in the United States. When people were isolated at home during the global pandemic, glued to their devices, TikTok became their preferable social media for self-expression (Vecchio, 2020). The unique social networking and video production features of TikTok became an immediate go-to platform for international students to express their crisis response, thus validating the assertion of Media System Dependency Theory that media needs escalate at the time of crisis. Applying this concept to social media validates TikTok

dependency among international students from July 6-14, 2020. Previous research has also shown that first-person camera view may be more immersive and engaging (Bateman et al., 2011). Mobile apps like TikTok help generate unique psychological experiences of Immersion, Social Presence, Perceived Realism and Entertainment (Wang, 2020). Unlike other social media platforms, TikTok's content takes up the whole screen of the homepage. Unlike YouTube and Instagram, users are not watching the video inside a small frame or box. In TikTok, the video takes up the whole screen of the phone without leaving any choice for the viewer but to watch the entirety of the video. The first-person camera view allows TikTok users to immerse themselves in the video without any distractions, leading to immersive interactions. Immersive interactions do not singularly demonstrate tenets of social identity theory like categorization, identification, or comparison, but they aid in making these processes more effective. Immersive interactions increase international students' social presence, which eventually makes verbalization of social identity more engaging in the TikTok platform. In this way, the use of first-person camera view for urgent expression of concerns in crisis by international students shows media dependency. Similarly, immersive interactions display the role of first-person camera view in facilitating the articulation of social identity by international students.

Shares. There are icons for likes, comments, and shares on the main home screen or the "For you" page of TikTok. There are multiple ways to share TikTok videos within the app and through other social media platforms. Users can save the video to their devices, copy links, and distribute the video to other social media platforms like Snapchat, Instagram, Messenger, Facebook, Twitter, Viber. Users can also share their profile, sounds and hashtags to their contacts and social media spaces.

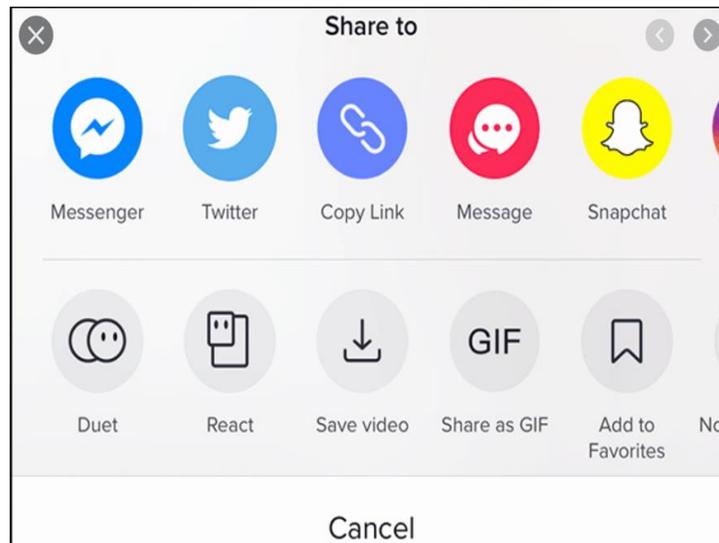


Figure 10: Screenshot showing the share options of TikTok

When a viewer shares a TikTok video through any of the above ways, TikTok rewards the creator's profile with more engagement. This increased social connectivity and findability makes it easier for users to share videos to the platform they want, eventually increasing the video's viewership to a large audience. When these videos reach millions of people, people who identify with the issue and with the content creator can quickly become a part of that conversation by engaging in the video through likes, comments, and shares. Moreover, the TikTok algorithm works in such a way that once a user engages with the video that they like, they will see similar videos in their "For you" page feed. TikTok's interface features allow the formation of an online community much faster than any other social media platform. TikTok has the highest engagement rate per post compared to Instagram and Twitter (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2021).

For example, in Figure 9, it can be seen that the number of shares (13.5k) outweighs the number of comments (10.5k). The researcher observed similar trends in the majority of the videos. Due to extensive engagement, this video gathered more than a million views in just one

week and got featured in CNN's news coverage about the issue (Iyerr, 2020). When a creator posts a video on TikTok, they can choose whether the viewers can share or download the video on their videos. The fact that international students who made the video enabled the sharing option while posting the video shows that they want the viewers to share the message with other people. They wanted their understanding and interpretation of the deportation issue to reach millions of people so that the policy of July 6 would be eliminated. This sharing trend also showed that viewers who watched the video felt the message was more worthy of sharing with other people than just appreciation in the form of a like. It can also be interpreted that TikTok users who came across these videos probably made a conscious decision to share it in some form (realizing the urgency of the crisis) rather than expressing their opinions or likes/dislikes on the issue. They wanted to spread awareness of the issue to a large number of people. This commitment to engagement through sharing represents the immediate need of international students to use TikTok for social understanding at the time of crisis, reflecting the phenomenon of dependency.

Engaged Interactions. The algorithm of TikTok favors the videos that have the most engagement in the form of likes, comments and shares. Shares are more valuable in pushing the content to more people than likes and comments. This extensive engagement on the international student's videos due to sharing shows the motivation of creators to promote understanding of the issue, which shows the level of media dependency that international students showed towards TikTok to express their crisis response to the ICE announcement. Therefore, the extensive engagement shows media dependency and social consensus created by the sharing capability of TikTok represents the amplification of international students' social identity on TikTok.

Discourse (Cultural Ideologies) Analysis

The researcher identified four main themes and cultural ideologies after conducting critical techno-cultural discourse analysis of the TikTok videos. They were: Humor and Sarcasm, Fear of Displacement, Contribution Reminders and Call to Action. These ideologies provided evidence to verify media goals of understanding, orientation, and play and their nuanced versions of self vs. social, as outlined by Media System Dependency theory. In addition, the four themes also reflected various phenomena like references to group membership and distinct entities of the group, shared emotional involvement, relational comparison, which are indicators of social categorization, identification, and social comparison, as outlined by Social Identity Theory.

Humor and Sarcasm. International students used several forms of Humor and sarcasm in their videos to express their opinions about the ICE announcement. International students used humor to express uncertainty and fear of deportation while utilizing various cool effects of TikTok. International students were found making jokes about the situation (often in disbelief), combining hurtful responses with funny soundtracks, pointing the hypocrisy of the Trump administration, creating humorous solutions, and using popular voiceovers of celebrities to communicate their mental state in response to the ICE announcement. The content matter in the videos was serious but what made it funny were the soundtracks, background music and voiceovers that matched international students' emotional response to the pertaining deportation crisis. For instance, a couple of users used the soundtrack of many kids singing "Go, Go, Go, Go. Who's next? Go...Go.... Go" in a rhythmic pattern

https://www.tiktok.com/@magenta132/video/6847565107858377990?lang=en&is_copy_url=0&is_from_webapp=v1&sender_device=pc&sender_web_id=6955721738446407169

In the video, one of the creators showed the details of the ICE announcement image in the background and other creators showed how Boston area universities like MIT, Harvard, Tufts, Northeastern and Boston University have stood up for international students by filing a lawsuit against the policy. The background images are mostly news stories of various online newspapers but what makes these videos humorous is the “Go..Go....Go” music implying that the Trump administration is trying to deport international students to their home countries by saying “Go”!

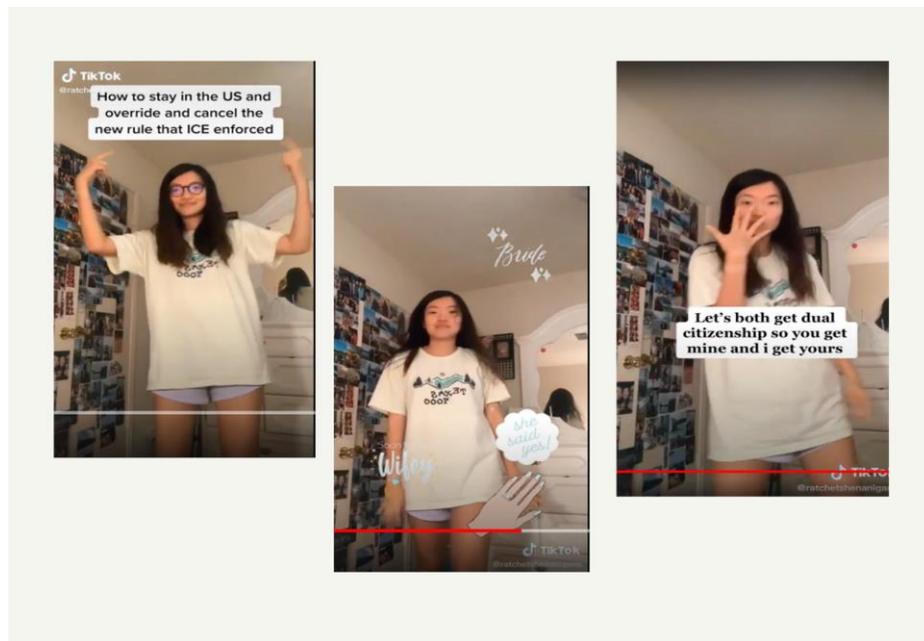


Figure 11: Screenshot of a video showing humorous reaction to the ICE announcement.

In another video, the text in the video reads, “How to stay in the US and override and cancel the new rule that ICE forced” in bold letters. The girl then starts dancing to the music, and the text says, “if you want to put ring in my finger..... marry me,” and the following text reads, “let’s both get dual citizenship, so you get mine and I get yours”. The international student is offering a clever solution to the crisis by asking Americans to marry her so that the ICE will not deport her (Shenanigans, 2020).

In another video, the text says, “Friends checking in on me after ICE rule on student visas.” At first glance, looking at the facial expressions and the title, the viewer anticipates the video to be serious and emotional. However, then suddenly, the viewer hears Kourtney Kardashian’s voice in the background, to which the international student lip-syncs and says, “I mean I feel fine, I just cry myself to sleep every night...ya that’s totally normal” (Anna, 2020). For reference, Kourtney Kardashian is a popular American media personality and a model. Therefore, the student puts up a lighthearted comical performance by mocking the potential crisis that she is facing. In all the above examples, humor is not necessarily present in the texts. However, it shows in the overall presentation created by the unique affordances of TikTok, which allows users to add soundtracks in the video. These different humorous techniques on TikTok have helped the international students lighten the tension caused by the contemporary situation through comic relief in the form of humor and sarcasm.

Many studies have supported the view that humor and laughter help relieve tension and anxiety (Kuiper and Martin, 1998; Lefcourt et al. 1995; Moran 1996; Yovetich et al. 1990). People who have a high sense of humor have reported less stress and anxiety (Abel, 2002). Humor makes a stressful situation less threatening (Martin et al., 1993). Therefore, humor is an effective coping strategy because it gives a sense of control over uncontrollable events (Yovetich et al. 1990). Humor played an important role in transmitting positive emotions and distancing emotions during the COVID-19 Outbreak (Amici, 2020). People used humor scripts on various social media platforms to diffuse tension, lighten the mood and accept the global pandemic’s new normal (Torres et al., 2020). The use of humor and sarcasm in the TikTok videos shows that international students used humor as a coping strategy during July 6-14, 2020. The purpose of making these videos appear to be comic relief for both the creator and the viewers. International

students made the videos entertaining by lip-syncing, adding captions, and adding funny soundtracks. This discussion also substantiates the claim of Media System dependency theory that one of the motivations of using media is social play (using media with others) for entertainment (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach & Grube, 1984; Grant & Ball Rokeach, 1989).

Humorous video with satirical scripts has also assisted international students in displaying and connecting with their social identity. Although the tone of the message they are conveying is humorous, the text, captions, and the underlying information in the video make references to group membership. In other words, these videos explain what the students have to go through just because they identify as an international student during that crisis time.

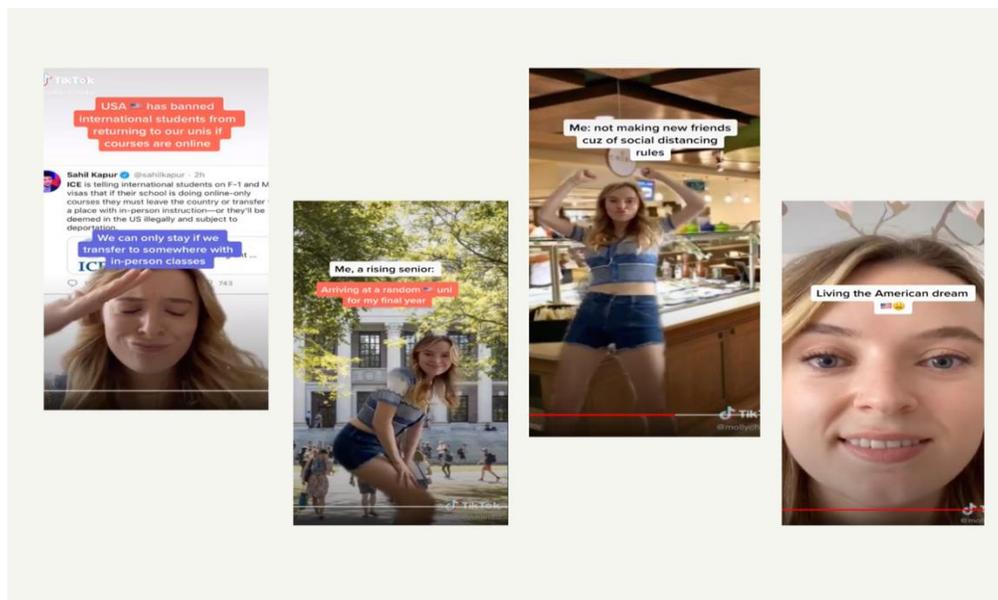


Figure 12: Screenshot showing progression of a humorous video made by an international student which makes references to group membership.

In the above figure 12, the screenshots show a humorous video where a creator with the music “Go. Go..Go” playing in the background is imagining how her life will turn out if the ICE policy goes into effect. She has to transfer to a new school with in-person classes. In the following shots, she writes in her video caption that she would have to arrive at a random university as a senior. She would not make friends due to social distancing issues. That is how

she would live her American dream (Chambz, 2020). With the help of music, relevant background images, satirical captions, and comical dance to go with it, the international student showed what it means to be an international student at that point in time in the United States. In this way, by highlighting group references and showing distinct entities of international student's condition, students were taking part in the social identification process of social identity theory.

Fear of displacement. By nature, human beings are apprehensive of adverse changes in their lives. Any crisis, including natural, health-related, physical, mental like the COVID-19 pandemic, disrupts life's habitual pace (Haleem & Javaid, 2020). In crises, people become worried and anxious when they must leave their homes and move to a different place (Shukri, 2017). In the context of the ICE announcement of July 6, the stress of leaving everything in America in a short period of time and moving back to the home country, in other words, the researcher observed fear of displacement among international students who expressed their concerns on TikTok through the examined videos.

Having lived in the United States for many years, international students emphasized that they have already built their lives, careers, and romantic and social relationships. They have already invested in their tuition, apartment leases, cars and other necessary things. Implementing this policy would mean leaving all these commitments and investments behind and returning to the home country. For example, one user said, "I pay for next semester \$4000...I don't know what's the point of paying so much fucking money if I'm not gonna be able to be here. I have made a life here. I have a boyfriend here I have three dogs and two cats..how do you expect me to wait until you want to..to tell me if I can go back or not?" (Bernal, 2020). Another international student said, "It's so stupid like flights are also like limited as well or you can't jump on a plane and leave..we have lives here..we have to take care of cars..we have like leases

and everything” (Louis, 2020) All these statements point out the absurdity and unrealistic nature of the ICE policy that it is not logistically and practically possible for international students to leave everything behind and move back to where they came from in the midst of a global pandemic.

A student pointed out that continuing education in the home country is not an option for many international students because of the unstable political environment, lack of access to educational resources, discrimination due to gender, limited access to basic needs, and unsafe health conditions due to COVID-19 (Als, 2020). Students also expressed that being an international student in America comes with many challenges like paying higher tuition than other students, lack of family support, and inability to travel during emergencies like the coronavirus pandemic. One student said, “The only thing that was constant in my life was my education, and now you’re just taking that away from me” (Iyer, 2020). This policy seems to have disrupted the stability. In this way, students expressed their fear of displacement by discussing the consequences and challenges of potential deportation that the ICE policy could bring about.

The uncertainty that they may have to undertake a forced journey in a very short amount of time, leaving everything behind in the United States, has caused fear of displacement among the international students who created the videos. These students went online and used TikTok to understand the uncertainties associated with forced displacement to reduce it. They were trying to seek out information to orient themselves to thinking about being in an unexpected situation. In this case, TikTok is a site for information gathering and sharing. It serves as a platform to relieve some of the tension and fear that the international students had about potential deportation. It became a go-to platform for students to understand the issue from different

perspectives and interact with the people who are going through the same situation with the hopes of reducing the anxieties and fear brought by the ICE announcement of July 6, 2020. This conversation substantiates the foundation of Media System dependency theory which states that media use escalates during crisis and conflict in society. The crisis news creates discomfort and ambiguity. In order to reduce ambiguity, individuals seek information from media, thus resulting in media dependency (Ball-Rokeach, 1985; Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976).

Likewise, these statements of fear and uncertainty are unique to the international student population. No other population was going through this fear of potential deportation in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. By talking about these experiences' students are making references to group membership and involved in social categorization. By describing shared emotions of fear, anxiety, nervousness, international students showed examples of shared emotional involvement (being emotionally part of an activity, groups or circumstances). For instance, one international student said, "it is unbelievable I feel so vulnerable right now... I've been in this country for six years I've never felt so vulnerable" (Ayer, 2020). Expressions of emotional involvement in shared emotions like these are indicators of social identification, as predicted by social identity theory. In this way, fear of displacement as expressed by international students, led to increased TikTok dependency during July 6-14. It became a common emotional aspect that international students around the United States could identify with after the ICE policy went into effect.

Contribution Reminders. The TikTok videos under this theme highlighted the contribution of international students in the United States. The students made the videos to remind the users how international students contribute to the economy, workforce and academic environment of universities and colleges. Many students pointed out that international students

typically pay exceptionally higher tuition, which is benefitting the US economy. Pointing to the exact figures, one student said, “In 2018, we actually contributed 45 billion dollars to the US economy meanwhile, we’re not even allowed to work more than 20 hours on-campus job” (Als, 2020). Another student shared her opinion that it is necessary to have people from different social, cultural and economic backgrounds in the academic community (Xplorer, 2020). By highlighting the contributions of international students, these users are trying to convince the users that international students are boosting the economy and providing a valuable cultural experience for academic communities in US universities. Furthermore, they are trying to imply that deporting international students during a pandemic is unfair and ignorant decision of the Trump administration.

The above statements suggest that international students may have had some fear of erasure or fear of not being acknowledged for their presence and contribution to the United States. Moreover, like in the case of fear of displacement, students depended on the TikTok platform to reduce their fear. Students have highlighted the details of why international students are important, how they contribute to the US economy and the university’s academic environment, and why this policy might be unfair for them. This elaborated narrative presented in short video format of TikTok shows that international students wanted to make others and themselves discern the seriousness and urgency of the crisis at hand. They wanted the viewers to have elaborate awareness of the international students’ contributions to prove the point that the policy made by the Trump administration was unjust. This information also testifies Media System Dependency Theory’s claim that people have the need to understand themselves and the social world through media (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976; Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1979).

In the videos, by highlighting the contributions made by international students, creators are trying to show the international student community in a positive light. There is an intention to portray the good image of international students by drawing attention to their positive reputation and contributions to American society. The researcher interpreted these expressions as, striving to maintain and achieve positive social identity, which is one of the components of social identification process. While discussing the contributions of international students, creators have also compared their tuition, job and other privileges with American students. For instance, a student said international students pay higher tuition on average than domestic students (Als, 2020). In this way, international students made relational and comparative definitions of themselves by engaging in in-group/out-group comparison. They were evaluating their out-group group with reference to the in-group in terms of attributes and characteristics. International students were trying to show how their group is similar or different or, in another sense, how their situation is better or worse than members of other groups. Relational and comparative definitions and in-group/out-group comparisons are indicators of social identification and social comparison aspects of social identity theory.

Call to action. Videos under this theme were mostly made call-to-action statements that encouraged concerned authorities, universities, and other students to take action against the ICE policy of July 6. Students asked other TikTok users to sign petitions to allow international students to remain in the country. In addition, they asked other people to take concrete actions to avoid the unexpected deportation of international students in various colleges and universities.

One concrete action was encouraging viewers to call their representatives and senators. For instance, one student said, “if you’re an American, please call your representatives. This will have the most direct impact” (Xiaoo, 2020). International students requested American students to talk about this issue, check with their international friends and share the concern with college authorities if needed. Some videos were directly addressed to the university and the President of the United States, asking them to cancel the deportation.

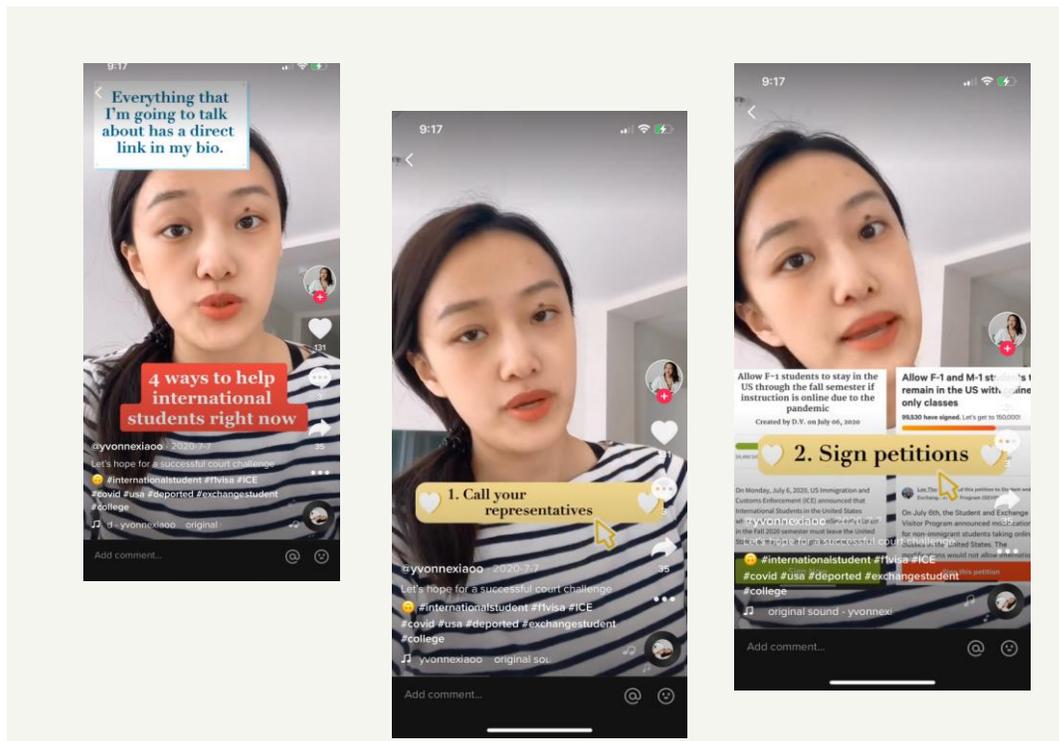


Figure 13: Screenshot showing a progression of a Call-to-Action theme video made by an international student

The screenshots above show the progression of how an international student creatively produced her TikTok video highlighting the four ways to help international students. She used the text feature and the green screen photo effect of TikTok to make the video visually appealing, interactive and informative. She requested the viewers to call the representatives and sign petitions while showing evidence of information and news stories regarding the ICE policy in the background of the text.

Considering that this policy remained in effect only for a week, international students chose to utilize TikTok to make that emergency call to action videos hoping it would reach a large number of American students. It also suggests that marginalized groups like the international student community, depended on TikTok at the time of crisis to share information. International students made call to action videos intending to share information about the crisis quickly so that the viewers watching it would take immediate action like signing petitions and contacting their representatives to abolish the policy as soon as possible. The fact that these international students chose TikTok over other social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to get the message out to the public immediately speak volumes about the reachability, accessibility and engagement capabilities of TikTok. These students showed that TikTok was one of the fastest mediums to reach other people in their community in the midst of a global pandemic. On top of that, creators underlining the step-by-step instructions for taking actions against the policy and requesting the viewers to engage with the information verifies the need for understanding and interaction orientation, as asserted by Media System Dependency Theory. Therefore, the use of TikTok during emergencies, and the information sharing, and interaction components of the video highly validates the phenomenon of TikTok dependency among international students from July 6-July 14, 2020.

In addition to giving information about how the viewers can help denounce the policy, the students also acknowledged the shared emotions they were going through by being a member of the international student community. They were making appeals to Americans to take steps against this policy to create more impact. In other words, these students acknowledged the political and emotional status of their community. They were differentiating the capabilities of the in-group vs. the out-group by making distinct references to group membership and the

specific political and emotional entities that made their group exclusive at that time. All of these processes are indicators of social identification and social comparison. This shows how international students' dependency on TikTok facilitated the creation and strengthening of their social identity.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This research shows how marginalized populations use emerging social media platforms at the time of crisis through the lens of Media System Dependency Theory and Social Identity Theory. The goal was to understand how international students (an understudied group in the United States) employed TikTok to articulate their fears, concerns and crisis responses in the wake of the ICE announcement of July 6. The research questions answered in this study include: How does the TikTok platform allow international students to articulate fears and concerns at the time of crisis? How do international students articulate their social identities and problems on TikTok? The method used for this study was Critical Techno cultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA). This multimodal technique analyzed the technology, technology practices and cultural ideologies that emerged from TikTok data. The study found that affordances of TikTok, such as hashtags, green screen effect, first-person camera view, and sharing capabilities, allowed international students to articulate their fears and concerns at the time of crisis. On the other hand, international students articulated their fears and concerns regarding the ICE announcement of July 6 by discussing themes of humor and sarcasm, fear of displacement, contribution reminders and call for action in their TikTok videos created between July 6 and July 14, 2020. Despite the widespread popularity and extensive use of TikTok among youth for social and political discourse, there are very few studies on TikTok. Addressing the gap in TikTok literature, this study elucidated the connection between marginalized groups and their social media use at the time of crisis.

This study has several implications in and beyond academia. First, it shows a meaningful way to learn how international students use digital platforms to articulate their fears and concerns

(in the midst of a pandemic) while studying in the United States. Second, this study could help a larger academic audience understand the struggles and issues international students face while studying in the US and how international students process and react to restricting public policies laid out by ICE. Third, this study can also help academic administrators and authorities who work with international students to find ways to assuage their fears and support international students in their respective institutions. Finally, this study offered an interpretation of how emerging social media like TikTok's technological functions influence minority populations' perceptions and conversations about potentially threatening public policy.

Limitations. Since this study is novel in terms of its approach and the platforms selected, it is important to consider its limitations. While social media is a great resource to extract publicly accessible information about people, it comes with its own set of drawbacks. For instance, the data pool in TikTok decreased due to anonymous usernames, profile names and unrelated content for the selected hashtag. CTDA is a suitable method to understand the form and functions of social media. However, researchers need to be aware of one possible drawback of using CTDA. CTDA's flexibility and complete reliance on the writer's interpretation can be a blessing as well as a curse. According to Brock (2016), CTDA can get complicated and wordy because it demands an in-depth description of the interface and an extensive understanding of discourse context for effectiveness. Unlike other methods which seek to understand questions related to one issue or theme, this study sought to understand broader themes and features within the platform.

Future Research. TikTok is an emerging social media that is growing in popularity. There are very few research papers that have examined TikTok in academia, let alone examined the media dependency of minority populations like international students. This study can guide

researchers to study TikTok to better understand several other minority/immigrant populations in the United States and how they use social media for self-expression and articulation of their social identity. This study and CTDA approach can be conducted on other social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Reddit and Tumblr to analyze the unique functions of different platforms. This study dealt with a time-specific problem of international students related to a specific public policy. Researchers can use this framework and method to study other phenomena, problems, and issues faced by diverse online and offline communities in the United States.

REFERENCES

- Abel, M. H. (2002). Humor, stress, and coping strategies. *Humor – International Journal of Humor Research*, 15(4). <https://doi.org/10.1515/humr.15.4.365>
- Ali, B. (2019, November 6). *TikTok making waves in raising awareness on social causes* | Latest World News—Breaking News & Top Stories. ByteBell. <https://bytebell.com/tiktok/>
- Allyn, B. (2020, June 7). *TikTok Pivots from Dance Moves To A Racial Justice Movement*. NPR.Org. <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/07/871065917/tiktok-pivots-from-dance-moves-to-a-racial-justice-movement>
- Als, J. [@janetals]. (2020, July 8). There is no better time to abolish ICE than now. #fyp #studentban #abolishice #immigration #internationalstudent #nottrump2020 #covid19 #college. [Video]. TikTok.
- Amici, P. (2020). HUMOR IN THE AGE OF COVID-19 LOCKDOWN: AN EXPLORATIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY. *Psychiatria Danubina*, 32, 6.
- Anderson, K. E. (2020). Getting acquainted with social networks and apps: It is time to talk about TikTok. *Library Hi Tech News*, 37(4), 7–12. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LHTN-01-2020-0001>
- Anna, L. [@luluanna4]. (2020, July 12). “So how are you doing?” #ice #f1 #f1visa #studentvisa #fucktrump #pandemic #travelban #phd [Video]. TikTok. https://www.tiktok.com/@luluanna4/video/6848620718754794757?lang=en&sender_dev_ice=pc&sender_web_id=6919291547104642565&is_from_webapp=v1
- Ao, B., & Silverman, E. (2020, January 6). *Teens are using TikTok to talk about mental health, relationship abuse, and sexuality* | The Star. TheStar.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/tech/tech-news/2020/01/06/teens-are-using-tiktok-to-talk-about-mental-health-relationship-abuse-and-sexuality>

Bahk, C. M., Sheil, A., Rohm Jr., C. E. T., & Lin, F. (2010). *Digital Media Dependency, Relational Orientation, and Social Networking among College Students*. 11.

BALL-ROKEACH, S. J. (1985). THE ORIGINS OF INDIVIDUAL MEDIA-SYSTEM DEPENDENCY: A Sociological Framework. *Communication Research*, 12(4), 485–510.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/009365085012004003>

Ball-Rokeach, S. J., & DeFleur, M. L. (1976). *A Dependency Model of Mass-Media Effects*. *Communication Research*, 3(1), 3–21. doi:10.1177/009365027600300101

Basch, C. H., Hillyer, G. C., & Jaime, C. (2020). COVID-19 on TikTok: Harnessing an emerging social media platform to convey important public health messages. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijamh-2020-0111>

Barros, A. (2020, July 15). *Four Things to Know after ICE Withdraws Directive on International Students* | *Voice of America—English*. <https://www.voanews.com/usa/immigration/four-things-know-after-ice-withdraws-directive-international-students>

Bateman, S., Doucette, A., Xiao, R., Gutwin, C., Mandryk, R. L., & Cockburn, A. (n.d.). *Effects of View, Input Device, and Track Width on Video Game Driving*. 8.

Beckstein, A. (2020, July 24). *How are international students coping with the Covid-19 pandemic?* Times Higher Education (THE).
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/blogs/how-are-international-students-coping-covid-19-pandemic>

- Bernal, M. [@mariabernal766]. (2020, July 7). I guess international student's appeal is money #internationalstudent #studentban #internationalstudents #internationalstudentsunited [Video]. TikTok.
- Bista, K., & Foster, C. (2011). Issues of International Student Retention in American Higher Education. *The International Journal of Research and Review*, 7, 2.
- Boyd, D. (2011). Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications In Zizi Papacharissi (Ed.), *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, 39-58.
- Boyd, D. M, Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 11.
- Braun, K. (2017). Yesterday Is History, Tomorrow Is a Mystery—The Fate of the Australian Jury System in the Age of Social Media Dependency. *University of New South Wales Law Journal*, 40(4), 1634–1662.
- Brock, A. (2012). From the Blackhand Side: Twitter as a Cultural Conversation. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 56(4), 529–549. doi: 10.1080/08838151.2012.732147
- Brock, A. (2016). Critical techno cultural discourse analysis. *New Media & Society*, 20(3), 1012–1030. doi: 10.1177/1461444816677532
- Brown, A., & Chmielewski, D. (2020, May 20). Inside The Hunt For TikTok's New Ceo—And What's Next For The World's Hottest App. *Forbes*. Forbes.com.
- Caenrigh. (2015, February 4). A Brief History of Digital Media. *Digitalbusters*.
<https://digitalbusters.wordpress.com/2015/02/04/a-brief-history-of-digital-media/>
- Chambz, M. [@mollychambz]. (2020, July 7). Where r my international students at? #internationalstudent #ivyleague #international #ice #transfer #america [Video]. TikTok.

https://www.tiktok.com/@mollychambz/video/6822316151800876293?lang=en&sender_device=pc&sender_web_id=6919291547104642565&is_from_webapp=v1

Charleston, L.J. (2017, September 3). Why Social Media Should Now Be Seen As Traditional Media | HuffPost Australia Life. *Huffpost*.

https://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/03/08/why-social-media-should-now-be-seen-as-traditional-media_a_21876694/

Cheng, R. (2020, March 19). The COVID-19 Crisis and International Students. *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/03/19/higher-ed-institutions-arent-supporting-international-students-enough-during-covid>

Chin, M. (2020, August 18). *The ICE directive is gone, but international students still fear deportation—The Verge*. <https://www.theverge.com/21365223/ice-international-students-college-coronavirus-covid-19-school-year>

Clement, J. (2020, May 11). *Tiktok first-time installs per quarter 2016-2019*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1078692/china-tiktok-worldwide-downloads-quarterly/>

Dijk José van. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: a critical history of social media*. New York (N.Y.): Oxford University Press.

Elfriede, F. (2009): In Defense of Textual Analysis, *Journalism Studies*, 10:2, 238-252. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14616700802374050>

Fearn-Banks, K., 2017. *Crisis Communications: A Casebook Approach*, fifth ed- Routledge, New York, NY.

- Firang, D. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on international students in Canada. *International Social Work, 1–5*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/07702008207827822802909440030>
- Gaunt, K. D. (2018). The Disclosure, Disconnect, and Digital Sexploitation of Tween Girls Aspirational YouTube Videos. *Journal of Black Sexuality and Relationships, 5(1)*, 91–132. doi: 10.1353/bsr.2018.0017
- Gertz, G. (2020, August 7). Why is the Trump administration banning TikTok and WeChat? *Brookings*. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/08/07/why-is-the-trump-administration-banning-tiktok-and-wechat/>
- Gilkey, C. (2015, April 22). Technology and Culture Influence Each Other. *Productive Flourishing*. <https://www.productiveflourishing.com/technology-and-culture-influence-each-other/>
- Gomes, C., Berry, M., Alzougool, B., & Chang, S. (2014). Home Away from Home: International Students and their Identity-Based Social Networks in Australia. *Journal of International Students, 4(1)*, 2–15. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v4i1.493>
- Graf, V. (2017, August 29). “Technology is human”: How Culture Shapes Technology. *Ars Electronica Blog*. <https://ars.electronica.art/aeblog/en/2017/08/29/how-culture-shapes-technology/>
- Ha, L., Yoon, K., & Zhang, X. (2013). Consumption and Dependency of Social Network Sites as a News Medium: A Comparison between College Students and General Population. *Journal of Communication and Media Research, 5(1)*, 1–14.
- Haleem A, Javaid M, Vaishya R. Effects of COVID-19 pandemic in daily life. *Curr Med Res Pract.* 2020;10(2):78–79. doi: 10.1016/j.cmrp.2020.03.011.

- Han, X., Han, W., Qu, J., Li, B., & Zhu, Q. (2019). What happens online stays online? —— Social media dependency, online support behavior and offline effects for LGBT. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 93, 91–98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.12.011>
- Han, X., Han, W., Qu, J., Li, B., & Zhu, Q. (2019). What happens online stays online? —— Social media dependency, online support behavior and offline effects for LGBT. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 93, 91–98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.12.011>
- Harlow, S., & Benbrook, A. (2019). How #Blacklivesmatter: Exploring the role of hip-hop celebrities in constructing racial identity on Black Twitter. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(3), 352–368. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1386705>
- Herring SC (2004) Computer-mediated discourse analysis: an approach to researching online behavior. In: Barab SA, Kling R and Gray JH (eds) *Designing for Virtual Communities in the Service of Learning*. Available at: <http://ella.slis.indiana.edu/~herring/cmda.pdf>
- Hogg, M., A. (2016). Social Identity Theory. In S. McKeown et al. (eds.), *Understanding Peace and Conflict Through Social Identity Theory*, Peace Psychology Book Series, doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-29869-6_1
- Institute of International Education. (2019). Number of International Students in the United States Hits All-Time High. *2019 Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <https://www.iie.org/en/Why-IIE/Announcements/2019/11/Number-of-International-Students-in-the-United-States-Hits-All-Time-High>

- Is sense of humor a positive personality characteristic? In Ruch, W. (ed.), *The Sense of Humor: Explorations of a Personality Characteristic*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 159-178.
- Iyer, P. K. [@prikrishiyer]. (2020, July 8). My video went viral on TikTok and I was on CNN Live! #international #internationalstudents #live #cnn #us #viral #tiktok #tiktokviral #trump [Video]. TikTok. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMJxEcNY9/>
- Jeffries, B. (2020, May 27). *How TikTok thrived during coronavirus and will it last?* <https://www.thedrum.com/opinion/2020/05/27/how-tiktok-thrived-during-coronavirus-and-will-it-last>
- Jenkins, E. M., Zaher, Z., Tikkanen, S, A., Ford, J, L. (2019). Creative identity (re)construction, creative community building, and creative resistance: A Qualitative analysis of queer ingroup members' tweets after the Orlando shooting. *Computers in Human Behavior* 101. 14-21
- Jordan, M., Kanno-Youngs, Z., & Levin, D. (2020, July 13). Trump Visa Rules Seen as Way to Pressure Colleges on Reopening. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/07/us/student-visas-coronavirus.html>
- Kaplan, A., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, united! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68. doi: <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>
- Kim, B., & Kim, Y. (2019). Growing as social beings: How social media use for college sports is associated with college students' group identity and collective self-esteem. *Computers in Human behavior*, 97 (241-249).

- Kim, Y.-C., Shin, E., Cho, A., Jung, E., Shon, K., & Shim, H. (2019). SNS Dependency and Community Engagement in Urban Neighborhoods: The Moderating Role of Integrated Connectedness to a Community Storytelling Network. *Communication Research*, 46(1), 7–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650215588786>
- Kim, Y.C., & Jung, J.Y. (2017). SNS dependency and interpersonal storytelling: An extension of media system dependency theory. *New Media & Society*, 19(9), 1458–1475. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816636611>
- Koeze, E., & Popper, N. (2020, April 7). The Virus Changed the Way We Internet. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/04/07/technology/coronavirus-internet-use.html>
- Koh, H. K., Geller, A. C., & VanderWeele, T. J. (2021). Deaths From COVID-19. *JAMA*, 325(2), 133–134. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2020.25381>
- Lee, J., & Choi, Y. (2017). Informed public against false rumor in the social media era: Focusing on social media dependency—ScienceDirect. *Telematics and Informatics*. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0736585317300291>
- Lee, J., & Choi, Y. (2018). Informed public against false rumor in the social media era: Focusing on social media dependency. *Telematics and Informatics*, 35(5), 1071–1081. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2017.12.017>
- Lefcourt, H. M., Davidson, K., Shepherd, R., Phillips, M., Prkachin, K., & Mills, D. (1995). Perspective-Taking Humor: Accounting for Stress Moderation. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 14(4), 373–391. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.1995.14.4.373>

- Leskin, P. (2020, Sep 18). *Trump's push to ban TikTok, explained in 30 seconds*. Business Insider. Retrieved November 15, 2020, from <https://www.businessinsider.com/donald-trump-tiktok-ban-us-china-explained-in-30-seconds-2020-8>
- Levine, A. (2020, July 9). The pandemic multiplied TikTok's audience—And its critics in Washington. *POLITICO*. <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/09/pandemic-tiktok-critics-washington-354467>
- Li, Lin, and Wei Peng. 2019 “Transitioning through Social Media: International Students' SNS Use, Perceived Social Support, and Acculturative Stress.” *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 98, 2019, pp. 69–79., doi:10.1016/j.chb.2019.03.011
- Li, Y., Yang, S., Zhang, S., & Zhang, W. (2019). Mobile social media use intention in emergencies among Gen Y in China: An integrative framework of gratifications, task-technology fit, and media dependency. *Telematics and Informatics*, 42, 101244. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2019.101244>
- Lin, J. H., Peng, W. Kim, S. Y., & Larose, R. (2012). Social networking and adjustments among international students. *New Media & Society*, 14, 421-440. doi:10.1177/1461444811418627
- Long, R. (2020, August). *The Soft Power of TikTok*. <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/rob-long/the-soft-power-of-tiktok/>
- Lorenz, T. (2020, December 31). This Is Why You Heard About TikTok So Much in 2020. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/31/style/tiktok-trends-2020.html>
- Louis, B. [@blt_sandwich2000]. (2020, July 7). #greenscreen #international #students support international students to study in the USA. These policy is so stupid. They also gave no reason for this. [Video]. TikTok.

- Mahmud, M. M., Ramachandiran, C. R., & Ismail, O. (2018). Social Media Dependency: The Implications of Technological Communication Use Among University Students. In S. F. Tang & S. E. Cheah (Eds.), *Redesigning Learning for Greater Social Impact* (pp. 71–87). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4223-2_7
- Maragh, R. S. (2017). Authenticity on “Black Twitter”: Reading Racial Performance and Social Networking. *Television & New Media*, 19(7), 591–609. doi: 10.1177/1527476417738569
- Martin, R. A., Kuiper, N. A., Olinger, L. J., & Dance, K. A. (1993). Humor, coping with stress, self-concept, and psychological well-being. *Humor - International Journal of Humor Research*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.1515/humr.1993.6.1.89>
- McKee, A. (2003). *Textual Analysis: A beginner’s guide*. Sage Publications
- Monga, S. (2020, October 18). *TikTok users spread social awareness through videos – The Arrow*. <http://westlakearrow.net/tiktok-users-spread-social-awareness-through-videos/>
- Moran, C. C. (1996). Short-Term Mood Change, Perceived Funniness, and the Effect of Humor Stimuli. *Behavioral Medicine*, 22(1), 32–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08964289.1996.9933763>
- Omar, B., & Wang, D. (2020). *Watch, Share or Create: The Influence of Personality Traits and User Motivation on TikTok Mobile Video Usage—Learning & Technology Library (LearnTechLib)*. International Association of Online Engineering. Retrieved October 8, 2020, from <https://www.learntechlib.org/p/216454/>
- Osborne, D. (2012). Factors in International Student Identity Formation: Processes and Challenges In Sino-US English Teaching, 9, 4.

- Owens, Z. D. (2017). Is It Facebook Official? Coming Out and Passing Strategies of Young Adult Gay Men on Social Media. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 64(4), 431–449.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2016.1194112>
- Parks, M. R. (2011). Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities In Zizi Papacharissi (Ed.), *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, 105-123.
- Preskey, N. (2020, April 15). *TikTok during lockdown: Is it the perfect antidote to isolation?* Stylist. <https://www.stylist.co.uk/opinion/tiktok-videos-dances-songs-challenges-coronavirus-popularity-social-media/379053>
- Riffe, D., Lacy, S., & Varouhakis, M. (2008). Media system dependency theory and using the Internet for in-depth, specialized Information. *Web Journal of Mass Communication Research*, 11, 1-14. 14p. 4 Charts.
- Rodriguez, A.M. (2020, May 19). *TikTok, digital identity and other controversies—Find your digital self*. Fyself. <https://blog.fyself.com/tiktok-digital-identity-and-other-controversies/>
- Rubin, A. M., & Windahl, S. (1986). The uses and dependency model of mass communication. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 3(2), 184–199.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15295039609366643>
- Ruiz Mafé, C., & Sanz Blas, S. (2006). Explaining Internet dependency: An exploratory study of future purchase intention of Spanish Internet users. *Internet Research*, 16(4), 380–397.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/10662240610690016>
- Sahu, P. (2020). Closure of Universities Due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Impact on Education and Mental Health of Students and Academic Staff. *Cureus*, 12(4).
<https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.7541>

- Samet, A. (2020, July 29). How the Coronavirus Is Changing US Social Media Usage—Insider Intelligence Trends, Forecasts & Statistics. *How the Coronavirus Is Changing US Social Media Usage*. <https://www.emarketer.com/content/how-coronavirus-changing-us-social-media-usage>
- Seeger, M. W.; Sellnow, T. L.; Ulmer, R. R. (1998). "Communication, organization, and crisis". *Communication Yearbook*. **21**: 231–275. doi:10.1080/23808985.1998.11678952
- SEVP modifies temporary exemptions for nonimmigrant students taking online courses during fall 2020 semester. (2020, July 6). <https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/sevp-modifies-temporary-exemptions-nonimmigrant-students-taking-online-courses-during>
- Shenanigans, R. [@ratchetshenanigans]. (2020, July 7). We can get married and get dual citizenship. #internationalstudent #abolishice [Video]. TikTok. <https://vm.tiktok.com/dlkfjn>
- Sherry, M., Thomas, P., & Chui, W. H. (2009). International students: a vulnerable student population. *Higher Education*, 60(1), 33–46. doi: 10.1007/s10734-009-9284-z
- Sherry, M., Thomas, P., & Chui, W. H. (2009). International students: a vulnerable student population. *Higher Education*, 60(1), 33–46. doi: 10.1007/s10734-009-9284-z
- Shukri, I. (2017). Fear in the Age of Displacement. *Transition*, (123), 20-39. doi:10.2979/transition.123.1.03
- Shutsko, A. (2020). User-Generated Short Video Content in Social Media. A Case Study of TikTok. In G. Meiselwitz (Ed.), *Social Computing and Social Media. Participation, User Experience, Consumer Experience, and Applications of Social Computing* (pp. 108–125). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49576-3_8

- Sidorenko-Bautista, P., Herranz de la Casa, J. M., & Cantero de Julián, J. I. (2020). *Use of New Narratives for COVID-19 Reporting: From 360° Videos to Ephemeral TikTok Videos in Online Media*. <https://ruidera.uclm.es/xmlui/handle/10578/26040>
- Sleeman, J., Lang, C., & Lemon, N. (2016). Social Media Challenges and Affordances for International Students: Bridges, Boundaries, and Hybrid Spaces. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 20(5), 391–415. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315316662975>
- Smith, A. (2020, November 5). ‘For You Page’: TikTok as a lens for identity discourse in Western culture, Debating Communities and Networks XI. *Debating Communities and Networks XI*. <http://networkconference.netstudies.org/2020Curtin/2020/05/11/for-you-page-tiktok-as-a-lens-for-identity-discourse-in-western-culture/>
- Subramanian, S. (2021). Bahujan girls’ anti-caste activism on TikTok. *Feminist Media Studies*, 21(1), 154–156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2021.1864875>
- Sun, S., Rubin, A. M., & Haridakis, P. M. (2008). The Role of Motivation and Media Involvement in Explaining Internet Dependency. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 52(3), 408–431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838150802205595>
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (33–47). Monterey, CA: Brooks/ Cole.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (7–24). Chicago, IL: Nelson
- Tajfel, H. 1969. Cognitive aspects of prejudice. *Journal of Social Issues* 25,79-97.

Taylor, D. B. (2020, August 6). A Timeline of the Coronavirus Pandemic. *New York Times*.
nytimes.com.

TikTok users drawing attention to more serious social issues. (2020, July 1). *APB+ News*.

<https://apb-news.com/tiktok-users-drawing-attention-to-more-serious-social-issues/>

TikTok: The most exciting, and controversial, social media app on the planet. (2019, November

25). Vox. <https://www.vox.com/culture/2019/11/25/20982107/tiktok-app-songs-meme-social-media>

Tolentino, J. (2019, September 23). How TikTok Holds Our Attention. *The New Yorker*.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/09/30/how-tiktok-holds-our-attention>

Tori Omega Arthur (2020): #Catchmeinashithole: Black Travel Influencers and the Contestation
of Racialized Place Myths, *Howard Journal of Communications*, DOI:

10.1080/10646175.2020.1819481

Torres, J. M., Collantes, L. M., Astrero, E. T., Millan, A. R., & Gabriel, C. M. (2020). *Pandemic*

Humor: Inventory of the Humor Scripts Produced during the COVID-19 Outbreak

(SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 3679473). Social Science Research Network.

<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3679473>

Treisman, R. (2020, July 14). *ICE Agrees To Rescind Policy Barring Foreign Students From*

Online Study In The U.S. : Coronavirus Live Updates: NPR.

[https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/07/14/891125619/ice-](https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/07/14/891125619/ice-agrees-to-rescind-policy-barring-foreign-students-from-online-study-in-the-u)

[agrees-to-rescind-policy-barring-foreign-students-from-online-study-in-the-u](https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/07/14/891125619/ice-agrees-to-rescind-policy-barring-foreign-students-from-online-study-in-the-u)

Turner, J. C. & Reynolds, K. J. (2010). The story of social identity. In T. Postmes & N.

Branscombe (Eds). *Rediscovering Social Identity: Core Sources*. Psychology Press. p.

142

- Vázquez-Herrero, J., Negreira-Rey, M.-C., & Rodríguez-Vázquez, A.-I. (2021). Intersections between TikTok and TV: Channels and Programmes Thinking Outside the Box. *Journalism and Media*, 2(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia2010001>
- Viner, R., Russell, S., Croker, H., Packer, J., Ward, J., Stansfield, C., Mytton, O., Bonell, C., & Booy, R. (2020). School closure and management practices during coronavirus outbreaks including COVID-19: A rapid systematic review. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 4. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642\(20\)30095-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30095-X)
- Wang, C., Lee, M. K. O., & Hua, Z. (2015). A theory of social media dependence: Evidence from microblog users. *Decision Support Systems*, 69, 40–49. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2014.11.002>
- Wang, Y. (2020). Humor and camera view on mobile short-form video apps influence user experience and technology-adoption intent, an example of TikTok (DouYin). *Computers in Human Behavior*, 110, 106373. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106373>
- Weil, E. (2019), “What do teens learn online?”, *The New York Times Magazine*, available at: www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/13/magazine/internet-teens.html
- Williams, A. (2017). Fat People of Color: Emergent Intersectional Discourse Online. *Social Sciences*, 6(1), 15. doi: 10.3390/socsci6010015
- Xiaoo, Y. [@yvonnexiaoo] (2020, July 7). Lets hope for a successful court challenge ☺
#internationalstudnet #f1visa #ICE #covid #usa #deported #exchangestudent #college
[Video]. TikTok. https://www.tiktok.com/@yvonnexiaoo/video/6846824415573839110?lang=en&sender_device=pc&sender_web_id=6919291547104642565&is_from_webapp=v2

Xplorer, M. [@marsxplorer_] (2020, July 7). My opinion on the treatment of international students. #ice #internationalstudents #trump #mit #stem #deportation #learnontiktok [Video]. TikTok.

https://www.tiktok.com/@marsxplorer_/video/6847259775772790021?lang=en&sender_device=pc&sender_web_id=6919291547104642565&is_from_webapp=v1

Yovetich, N. A., Dale, J. A., & Hudak, M. A. (1990). Benefits of Humor in Reduction of Threat-Induced Anxiety. *Psychological Reports*, 66(1), 51–58.

<https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1990.66.1.51>

Yu, S. (2019, September 9). *Why is Tik Tok sweeping over the world? — An app critique.*

Medium. <https://uxdesign.cc/why-is-tik-tok-sweeping-over-the-world-e06ab94262e8>

Zuo, H & Wang, T. (2019). Analysis of Tik Tok User Behavior from the Perspective of Popular Culture. *Frontiers in Art Research*, 1(3). <https://doi.org/10.25236/FAR.20190301>