The Visual Securitisation of Migrants and Refugees
Examining British Tabloids During Brexit

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how the British tabloid media visually securitised migrants and refugees in the lead up to the 2016 UK referendum on EU membership. The focus is on the time period of 01/05/2016 until 23/06/2016, when immigration was a particularly salient issue in the referendum discourse. The thesis adapts Lene Hansen’s (2011) framework for visual securitisation in which one analyses the image itself, its intertext and the wider societal and policy discourses that surround it. This thesis analyses 703 photojournalistic images and 20 front-pages from The Sun and The Daily Mail along with the articles, headlines and captions that accompanied the images. Furthermore, the political discourse that characterised the referendum is examined. The central claim of this thesis is that the tabloid media visually securitised migrants and refugees in heterogeneous fashion. The tabloids visualised migrants and refugees as threatening, threatened and in a de-securitised manner which brought them out from the above-politics realm of securitisation. It was through the co-constitutive relationship of the images, their intertext and the surrounding discourse that these various images came to securitise migrants and refugees in such a heterogeneous and nuanced fashion. This indicates that the tabloid reportage on migrants and refugees is much more nuanced than the prevailing social commentary would lead one to believe.
List of Abbreviations

A2 States – Bulgaria and Romania

A8 States – Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia

CSS – Critical Security Studies

EU – European Union

IR – International Relations

NGO – Non-governmental Organisation

NHS – National Health Service

No.10 – Colloquial term for the United Kingdom’s government and/or Prime Minister

PM – Prime Minister

UK – United Kingdom

UKIP – United Kingdom Independence Party

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

URL – Universal Resource Locator (a web address)

US – United States (of America)

VSS – Visual Security Studies
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Ch.1: Introduction

1.1. Research Objective and Formulation of the Problem

On the 23rd of June 2016 the United Kingdom (UK) voted to leave the European Union (EU). Several issues gained prominence in the public debate surrounding the referendum, such as the economy, immigration and national sovereignty. Media coverage of immigration increased from the middle of the campaigning period onwards, with a particularly sharp increase in the final three weeks (Moore & Ramsay, 2017: 65). This thesis is interested in the British tabloid media’s coverage of the issue, which is said to have been “marked by a relentless drip of anti-immigration rhetoric” (Bennhold, 2017). A quick online search reveals many articles published in the run up to the referendum that positioned immigration as a threat to border control, and migrants and refugees as violent, dangerous and harmful to the UK. In other words, these articles constructed immigration as a matter of security.

This repeated invocation of security in relation to immigration therefore serves as the starting point for this thesis. The thesis is aiming to discover whether the coverage was as “poisonous” and “acrimonious and divisive” as commentators have suggested (McGuinness, 2017; Moore & Ramsay, 2017: 164-168). Much of the focus that the media coverage has received has been centred almost exclusively on the language that was used (Bennhold, 2017; Buckledee, 2018). This thesis, however, seeks to go beyond the linguistic-discursive conception of securitisation theory. The contemporary world is characterised by an omnipresence of images; therefore, this thesis acknowledges the importance of visual securitisation. Consequently, the guiding research question of the thesis is; how did photojournalistic images published in the British tabloid media securitise migrants and refugees in the context of the EU referendum?

Tabloid outlets have often been criticised for their anti-immigration reportage which might lead one to assume this thesis will find exclusively threatening depictions of migrants and refugees. However, the coverage is more nuanced than the criticism would suggest. The predominant visualisation does frame migrants and refugees as threatening; however, instances of sympathetic and humanising imaging also prevail. The central proposition of this thesis is that in the context of the referendum, the British tabloids visually securitised migrants and refugees in a heterogeneous manner. The three most prominent invocations of security by the tabloids were; 1) migrants and refugees as a threat to the physical security of the UK and its people, 2) migrants and refugees as being under threat themselves, and 3) migrants and refugees as a threat
to the societal fabric of the UK. A fourth strategy of depiction humanised migrants and refugees, ascribing them agency and voice and allowing them to express personal narratives. This thesis interprets this depiction as an act of de-securitisation, because it removes the migrant/refugee from the dichotomous representation of threatening/threatened and places them within the normal, political realm.

This thesis analyses 703 images and 20 front-pages from the UK’s two most prominent tabloid outlets; The Sun and The Daily Mail. The research design outlines the adaptation of Lene Hansen’s (2011) framework for visual securitisation so that it can be applied to a high quantity of images. The images are analysed in three sections; the images themselves, their intertext and the constitution of the images. The framework for visual securitisation provides a set of “theoretically derived arguments that lead to concepts and distinctions that can be used in empirical analysis” (Hansen, 2011: 69). The thesis seeks to “engage it, both at the level of soundness of its theoretical assumptions and through further empirical applications” (ibid.). By examining a large quantity of images, this thesis helps in assessing the “soundness of its [the framework’s] theoretical assumptions” (ibid.).

The remainder of chapter 1 seeks to position the contribution of this thesis within the existing body of literature. This thesis claims to make an empirical contribution through its introduction of visuality to interrogations of Brexit and the securitisation of migration. The academic and societal relevance of the thesis is made explicit and then an outline of the structure of the remaining chapters is given.

1.2. Literature Review

The following section discusses the existing literature that is of relevance to the research question. The focus therefore is on two different topics; 1) the securitisation of migration and 2) Brexit. The key contributions in each of these fields are identified and discussed. The securitisation theories that have been applied to the issue of migration are outlined and their limitations delineated. There is a lack of visual securitisation literature in relation to migrants and refugees and thus an empirical gap exits for this thesis to fill. The literature that the EU referendum result has inspired is also examined. Most of the literature is either attempting to explain result of the vote or predict the future implications of Brexit. The literature that focuses on the media coverage and prominent political discourses during the referendum campaign is a useful step towards understanding the dynamics of the referendum campaign period. However,
its primary limitation is a failure to consider the visual. The predominant focus on linguistic-discursive communication imbues this literature with a narrowness that overlooks the presence of the visual in the referendum campaign and aftermath. Therefore, this thesis is situated within a gap in the literature where academics have failed to, 1) Sufficiently engage with the securitisation of migration from a visual perspective, 2) acknowledge the important role played by visuals in the media coverage of the EU referendum and 3) expand their focus beyond the linguistic dynamics of the referendum and acknowledge the prominent role played by the visual in connecting the issues of migration and security in the context of Brexit.

To begin with, the key literature relating to the securitisation of migration will be discussed. Several scholars have adopted the Copenhagen School version of securitisation theory and focused on utterances of security in relation to migration (Buzan et al., 1998). Scholars such as Ceyhan & Tsoukala (2002) and Ibrahim (2005) have focused on the discourses that constitute migrants as a threat and the policies that such discourses lead to. However, other scholars have contested the centrality of the speech-act to securitisation, focusing instead on practices and everyday technologies (Bigo, 2002: 73). The securitisation of migration within the EU has received ample focus from the practice perspective (Neal, 2009; Van Munster, 2009; Leonard, 2011; Bigo, 2014). Some authors have sought to unite these different approaches. Balzacq (2005) has argued that securitisation should consider both communicative acts and quotidian practices. The securitisation of migration has been approached from this sociological perspective by Bourbeau (2011) in a comparative examination of cases in France and Canada.

The identified strands of securitisation theory are guilty of obscuring the importance of the visual. The narrow conception by Buzan et al., (1998) that security can only be communicated through a linguistic-discursive utterance does not acknowledge the communicative capabilities of visuals (Williams, 2003). The practice approach does not account for the securitising power of everyday, non-iconic visuals. The visual securitisation of migrants and refugees has received surprisingly little scholarly attention considering the ubiquitous character of the visual and the prominence of immigration as an issue in political discourse. The most valuable contributions examine the visual dehumanisation of refugees (Bleiker et al., 2013) and the way in which the media can construct different visual typologies of migrants and refugees, including as a threat to security (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017). There has been a clear lack of engagement with the securitising ability of visuals in relation to migration.
The UK’s decision to leave the EU has inspired academic literature from a variety of perspectives. Several quantitative analyses have been conducted regarding the media coverage in the lead up to the referendum (Levy et al., 2016; Deacon et al., 2016; Moore & Ramsay, 2017). These studies conclude that most of the coverage was negative towards immigration and that coverage of the issue increased as the referendum neared. However, these studies are of somewhat limited because they do not engage with how migration was constructed negatively.

Scholars have also attempted to explain why people voted to leave, with some pointing to immigration concerns and austerity (Gietel-Basten, 2016), low income (Becker et al., 2017) and exclusion from the benefits of globalisation (Hobolt, 2016). Other literature seeks to theorise the post-exit relationship between the UK and the EU. Martill & Staiger (2018) question what Brexit will mean for, among other things, UK – EU trade, EU disintegration and the Northern Irish peace. Scholars have disagreed on the future economic implications of Brexit, with some predicting negative repercussions (Sampson, 2017) whereas others predict a positive outcome (Ringe, 2018).

This thesis is more concerned with the dynamics of the campaign. There has been less literature focused in this area, however. The work in this field has predominantly focused on how language has been used to construct the issues surrounding the referendum campaign in certain ways (Buckledee, 2018). Scholars have paid attention to the prominence of immigration in the media and political discourses but have once again constrained their focus to speech-acts (Cap, 2016; Goodman, 2017). The glaring limitation of the literature that attempts to connect the issues of immigration and Brexit is that they do not give any attention to the visual. This thesis is therefore seeking to fill a gap and direct scholars’ attention towards the importance of the visual.

1.3. The Academic and Societal Relevance of the Work

This thesis is relevant to both academia and society. The academic contribution it makes to the field of visual securitisation is relevant in two ways. First of all, it answers Hansen’s call for engagement with her framework: “It is obvious that more case studies are called for and these might ideally be conducted to create variation along dimensions important to the visual securitization framework as well as to Security Studies more broadly” (2011: 69). This thesis assesses the applicability of the framework in a number of ways. First of all, it focuses on a source of securitisations that has thus far not been examined, tabloid media. Secondly, it...
grapples with a much higher quantity of images than Hansen did initially. Her case-study focused on 12 cartoons whereas this thesis examines 703 photojournalistic images. The thesis is also academically relevant in that it examines two interlinked issues, Brexit and the securitisation of migration, but focuses on a previously understudied aspect of this linkage, the visual. This thesis introduces the centrality of the visual to the interconnected issues of Brexit and the securitisation of migration, which opens new avenues for future research related to the role of the visual in the EU referendum.

The societal relevance of this thesis stems from a greater comprehension of how migrants and refugees are securitised through images. The predominance of visuals in the contemporary world demands an understanding of how they come to convey meaning (Mitchell, 1994, 2018). The application of the framework for visual securitisation in this thesis takes us further towards this understanding. It shows how images can be used to dehumanise, passivise and securitise vulnerable people (Bleiker et al., 2013). The way in which migrants and refugees are represented can often constitute “a dividing line between life and death” (Donnelly, 2017: 241-242). Therefore, readers of this thesis will come to understand the incredible power of images and the importance of representing people in a fair way.

1.4. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured as follows. The next chapter outlines the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis. To begin with, the pictorial turn is discussed which situates this thesis in the broader turn to visuality in the social sciences. Then, a more attentive focus is given to the infusion of visual politics and critical security studies (CSS). This leads into a discussion on visual securitisation. After an introduction to this approach, Lene Hansen’s (2011) framework for visual securitisation is unpacked. This is the theoretical fulcrum of the thesis and a comprehensive examination of the framework is conducted. Following this, a discussion on other works in visual securitisation is held, including works that mobilise Hansen’s framework. Overall, this chapter provides the reader with a comprehensive understanding of the theory guiding the thesis.

The next chapter explains the logic behind the research design and methodology of the thesis. To begin with, the justification for a qualitative case-study approach is given. Then, the data selection process is presented to the reader in detailed fashion. This also outlines a preliminary phase of analysis crucial to the thesis in which the collated images were categorised based on
their strategy of depiction. Then, the reliability of the research design and data selection process is discussed. Finally, the framework for visual securitisation is operationalised and situated within the context of this thesis. Several aspects of the framework are foregrounded as they remain common throughout the analysis, rendering a systematic analysis of such factors unnecessary.

Having outlined the theoretical framework and research design of the thesis, the analysis can then begin. The analysis is conducted in three distinct sections, based on this thesis’s interpretation of the framework. Chapter 4 examines the images themselves, by analysing the composition strategies and larger collective bodies being represented. Then, in chapter 5 the immediate intertext of the images is considered. The final section of analysis deals with the constitution of the images by looking at their ambiguity and immediacy.

The thesis concludes by summarising, discussing and reflecting on the results and implications of the analysis. The contribution that this thesis makes to the field of visual securitisation is made explicit and the guiding research question is answered. Then, the limitations of this work are discussed. Finally, recommendations for future research are made.
Ch.2: Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the framework that acts as the theoretical spine of this thesis. The framework that will be adopted is Lene Hansen’s (2011) framework for visual securitisation. This conceptual approach directs the focus of the thesis to images and how they perform security and are given meaning through their intertextuality and inter-visuality. The framework also considers the unique traits and qualities of visuals in the context of securitisation when compared to speech and text; immediacy, circularity and ambiguity. Furthermore, the framework asserts that different strategies of depiction can contribute to different kinds of securitisations. Finally, it is also claimed that images can make various epistemic-political claims based on their genre. By using this framework, one can gain an understanding of how visuals come to constitute certain subjects as matters of security.

The chapter will proceed as follows. First, a broader discussion will be held surrounding the pictorial turn in the social sciences and humanities. Then, it will show how the pictorial turn has influenced CSS and inspired work in the field of visual security studies (VSS). Following this, it will discuss how securitisation theory and VSS have meshed to produce the visual securitisation approach. Then, it will engage with Hansen’s (2011) framework for visual securitisation by identifying the key tenets of her framework. Finally, supplementary works in the field of visual securitisation will be examined.

2.2. The Pictorial Turn

Mitchell (1994: 13) proposed that, “we still do not know exactly what pictures are, what their relation to language is, how they operate on observers and on the world, how their history is to be understood, and what is to be done with them or about them.” The visual, despite its pre-eminence and importance in human memory and cognition, had been understudied in the social sciences. Mitchell sought to understand the relationship between the visual and the textual and between images and the world around them. His overarching argument is that the visual cannot be considered a pure form of representation extraneous to the textual, but rather that, “the interaction of pictures and texts is constitutive of representation as such: all media are mixed
media, and all representations are heterogeneous; there are no ‘purely’ visual or verbal arts” (idem: 5). For Mitchell, images and texts work in unison in order to create meaning (2018: 231).

Mitchell warns that researchers should not fall into the trap of believing “that images have replaced words as the dominant mode of expression in our time” (ibid). This thesis concurs with this claim. The focus of this work is on how the visual can come to speak security. However, this thesis does not disregard linguistic-discursive forms of communication, and instead understands that visuals come to communicate security through their co-constitution with the texts and discourses that assign them meaning.

The pictorial turn is thus therefore rooted in an acknowledgement of the co-constitutive relationship between images and texts. This proposition inspired new literature in a variety of fields and one such field was CSS.

### 2.3. Visual Politics and Critical Security Studies

The pictorial turn has inspired a focus on visuality in CSS. Scholars have come to realise that “images and visual artefacts do things. They are political forces in themselves. They often shape politics as much as they depict it” (Bleiker, 2018: 3). VSS has seen several different strands emerge, each focusing and theorising different aspects of the visual.

The features of VSS are conceptualised by Vuori & Saugmann (2018) in three distinct categorisations; visuality as a modality, as a practice and as a method. They also identify three areas in which visuality is particularly relevant to security; in technologies of security, in spectatorship of security and in the means of making security perceptible. This thesis is most concerned with visuality as a modality; how security is signified and made perceptible. In the context of this thesis, photojournalistic images are a modality through which security is spoken and a medium through which security matters can be made visible to people.

This thesis is seeking to contribute to the literature on visual securitisation, a specific approach within the broader scholarship of VSS. The next section will outline the key aspects of this approach.
2.4. Visual Securitisation

The theory of visual securitisation is an approach that challenges the conception of securitisation by Buzan, Waever & de Wilde (1998). Visual securitisation critiques the lack of focus on visuality and the primacy of the speech-act as a form of communicating security. Visual securitisation expands the range of actors and objects that are able to speak security which is a crucial step-forward for the securitisation approach.

Buzan, Waever & de Wilde (1998: 23) argued that “security is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics.” By invoking security, an actor presents an issue “as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actors outside the normal bounds of political procedure” (ibid.). The authors, citing Austin (1975: 98), contend that a ‘speech-act’ is how one might conduct a securitising move; “by saying words, something is done (idem: 26).” Through the act of speaking, security can be invoked, and politics can be taken “beyond the established rules” (ibid.). This emphasis on the speech-act has given a narrowness to the Copenhagen School approach because it limits who can speak security, how they can speak and to whom they can speak it. The turn to visuality has brought greater breadth to securitisation theory and enhanced its applicability in the highly visual, contemporary world.

Williams (2003: 525) critiqued the theory stating that “treating social communication in strictly linguistic-discursive form risks limiting the kinds of acts and contexts that can be analysed as contributing to securitizations.” Security is not articulated exclusively through speech-acts. There are other ways of communicating; “I can make a promise or threaten with a visual sign as eloquently as with an utterance” (Mitchell, 1994: 160). Therefore, these visual forms of communication must be considered when one adopts a securitisation approach.

It is important to note however; these visual signs do not speak and communicate by themselves. The meaning attached to the visuals is dependent on that which surrounds the visual; its intertextuality and its inter-visuality. The human subject is “a being constituted by both language and imaging” (idem: 24); one gives meaning to the other and vice versa. Therefore, linguistic-discursive communication does not become obsolete in a visual securitisation approach, but rather takes primacy alongside the visual.

A framework for visual securitisation was proposed by Lene Hansen (2011) theorising how academics might conduct a visual securitisation analysis. The framework will now be unpacked before it is summarised.
2.5. The Framework for Visual Securitisation

Hansen argues that in order to study visual securitisation, one must analyse the image through four different components; “the image itself, its immediate intertext, the wider policy discourse, and the texts ascribing meaning to the image (2011: 53).” The framework places an emphasis on the aspects of visuality that distinguish visual securitisations from linguistic securitisations; immediacy, circulability and ambiguity. She also stresses that the genre of the image(s) is important, because different genres make different epistemic-political claims and are received by audiences differently. The strategies of depiction employed by images are also crucial to understanding how they securitise. Overall, she offers a theoretical framework with which to assess the securitising potential of the visual.

Hansen emphasises the differences between the securitising potential of language and visuals, and thus the need for a specific framework theorising visual securitisation. Images “evoke an immediate, emotive response that exceeds that of the text” (idem: 55). Visual immediacy is constituted through several elements. The first of these is authenticity, which “rests on the visual’s privileged epistemic status: it verifies and it brings the audience closer to the event” (idem: 56). The second is identification, which establishes a relationship between the subject of the photo and the viewer(s) of the photo evoking an emotive, ethical response (ibid.). Circulability “accentuates the significance of speed and space for processes of securitizations” (idem: 57). Images can be circulated quicker and by a variety of people, not just political elites as traditional securitisation theory posits; in this sense, the visual has democratised securitisation. Hansen also argues that “the main distinctiveness of the visual resides in the belief in its capacity to transgress linguistic boundaries – that visuals can be ‘read’ by all” (ibid.). Images can speak security to a much larger and more diverse audience. However, Hansen caveats this fact, arguing “that although different audiences might ‘see’ the same image, they are unlikely to ‘read’ it in the exact same way” (ibid.). For Hansen, ambiguity is linked to the fact that “security has to be spoken in the name of protecting a larger whole” (idem: 58). Images usually depict a small number of individuals but these “individual depictions are read as having collective status, but there is always an ‘interpretive gap’ between the two” (ibid.). Furthermore, visual securitisations cannot articulate specific policy responses to a threat the way in which linguistic securitisations can, which contributes to the ambiguity (ibid.). Hansen contends that “ visuals might be said to lend themselves to specific political interpretations or open up spheres for action, but they do not make an explicit policy demand” (ibid.). Images therefore have an immediacy that can create an emotive process of identification between
witness and subject. They are also assumed by audiences to be authentic representations of reality. They are ambiguous in that they cannot make specific policy demands and the larger collective body being represented is often difficult to identify. They can also circulate quicker and farther than textual securitisations. The specific characteristics of the visual necessitate a unique framework for theorising its securitising potential.

The strategy of depiction that an image employs is crucial to the securitising process. Hansen suggests that the visual has led “to a heightened density in the ‘security communication’ between an expanding number of actors” (idem: 59). This means “a wide array of visuals” have been securitised and they depict the existential threat in a variety of ways (ibid.). Hansen then outlines four strategies of depiction of the Other: 1) “demonic, barbaric, evil and menacing,” 2) “as insignificant, weak, small, cowardly, backward, or feminine,” 3) “familiarization where a securitization is made in reference to something that is held to be divine, sacred, or superior,” 4) “suffering where someone is represented as persecuted, violated, downtrodden, starving and thus threatened” (ibid.). Hansen suggests that these are “four ideal-typical forms of visual depiction”, but this thesis departs somewhat from her suggestions (ibid.). This thesis does find that depiction strategy 1 and 4 are common in the tabloid press. However, it also identifies the Other being represented as undesirable and unwelcome and as human with voice and agency. This might indicate that despite being “ideal-typical forms”, the complexity of each specific case necessitates an interpretive and adaptive approach.

The genre of an image has important implications for its ability to communicate security. Hansen argues that “different genres of discourse make different epistemic-political claims” and that “the significance of such epistemic-political claims for visual securitization is striking” (idem: 60). She suggests that different genres make different claims about their “relationship to ‘the real’” – for example, photojournalistic images are considered to be true and authentic whereas cartoons do not “transmit a situation” but rather act on it “possibly with irony or satire” (ibid.). Different genres play on different ‘truth terrains’ and for photojournalistic images the audience expects “a rather straightforward truth: that the image depicts a real reality” (ibid.). Hansen also adds that “genres differ in the degree to which they are seen to be making explicit political statements” (ibid.). Different genres have “different histories and thus generate different audience expectations” (idem: 61). Hansen concludes by saying that “the epistem-political claims that producers and audiences expect visuals to make are significant for the way in which processes of securitization and counter-securitization unfold” (ibid.). Therefore, the genre of an image is important to how an audience might receive it and what they expect that
image to say and do. Figure 1 displays the key components of Hansen’s frameworks and the different levels of analysis for which she calls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framework for Visual Securitisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. The Image Itself</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>° What is the image itself composed of?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>° What is the strategy of depiction employed by the image?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>° Who or what is the larger collective body depicted by the image?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. The Immediate Intertext</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>° What do the text(s) that accompany the image say?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>° What epistemic-political claims does the genre(s) of the image make?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>° What audience expectations does the image generate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>° In what context was the image published?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. The Constitutions of the Image</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>° What (if any) ambiguity, immediacy and circulability does the image exhibit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>° What is the wider policy discourse that surrounds the image?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: The author’s interpretation of the framework for visual securitisation

There is a question of applicability that surrounds Hansen’s framework. In her article putting forth the framework, she analyses a set of 12 cartoons, which is a significantly smaller number than this thesis’s dataset. If the framework is to be used successfully on a much larger corpus of images, then some adaptation must occur. However, the guidance for this adaptation can be gleaned from Hansen herself. She does not apply the framework to each individual cartoon in a methodical manner. Rather, she categorises the 12 images into sub-sets based on the strategy of depiction employed. Furthermore, Kearns’ (2017) analysis of 123 photojournalistic images of Afghan women involves the division of images into two categorisations based on strategies of depiction. Kearns does not assess “how specific images were constructed within particular
media texts,” instead he explores “the wider discursive context in which they were situated and through which their collective meaning would be shaped” (2017: 5). The same justification is used in this thesis; this is an exploration of the broader discourses that permeated the EU referendum campaign period. It seeks to discover how the photojournalistic images of migrants and refugees published by the British tabloid press constituted migration as a matter of security.

Therefore, in the application of this framework the images are grouped together, and the framework is applied to the group of images rather than the specific images themselves. Certain images will be used as examples of the broader strategies of composition that have been identified. These images should not be taken as iconic or stand-alone images, but rather, they are representative of the broader patterns of composition that have been identified. By displaying them in the thesis, it is hoped that it will enhance the reader’s understanding of the identified strategies of depiction and composition. As is discussed later in this chapter, this thesis is concerned with the continuous and day-to-day omnipresence of visuals (Mitchell, 1994; 2018; Bleiker, 2018). The iconographical approach to visuals is touched upon, but this thesis does not identify any iconic images and therefore in this context that approach is of little utility. The sub-categorisations employed by Hansen do offer useful guidance as to how to organise the data of this thesis. Kearns (2017) demonstrates that this visual securitisation framework is applicable and can be adapted to a larger quantity of images, by focusing on the sub-sets of images rather than narrowing in on specific images.

2.6. Other Works in the Field of Visual Securitisation

Various scholars have attempted to theorise the securitising capabilities of the visual and these works offer useful, supplementary insight to Hansen’s framework. This section outlines the works that have engaged directly with Hansen’s framework. It also touches upon other works that have engaged with the securitising potential of the visual. Then, the section concludes with a brief discussion on iconographical approaches and it will be explained that while there is credence to this theoretical stance, it is not of use in the context of this thesis.

The two most direct engagements with Hansen’s framework appear to be Rørbaek (2012) and Kearns (2017). Rørbaek (2012) examines the visual securitisation of climate change through televiusal communication in the form of a film. Rørbaek engages with the theoretical assumptions of Hansen’s framework and applies the framework in a relatively rigid manner. This suggests that the framework can transfer across to other genres with relative ease.
Rørbæk’s (2012) work is of somewhat limited utility to this thesis due to the difference in genre being examined. Kearns (2017), on the other hand, examines the visual securitisation of Afghan Women through photojournalistic images in the US media prior to and during the invasion of Afghanistan. He offers valuable insight into how Hansen’s framework can be adapted and infused with a critical perspective, in his case feminism. He also analyses a much larger number of images than Hansen (2011) did, which is useful for this thesis. The two works that have directly mobilised Hansen’s framework certainly offer some insight and guidance to the application of the framework in this thesis, with Kearns’ analysis of a large quantity of photojournalistic images particularly useful.

There are other works that have theorised the securitising power of visuals. Williams (2003) offered an early criticism of the Copenhagen School conception of securitisation theory, critiquing the narrow focus on the speech-act as the preeminent form of social communication. Dodds (2007) examined the genre of editorial cartooning by looking at the way in which meaning is given to the geopolitical context of the world through the visual. Moller (2007: 187) looked at the securitising potential of images of 9/11 and suggested that their ambiguity and excess meaning made them “fairly weak political tools.” Vuori (2010) has looked at the symbolism of the ‘doomsday clock’ arguing that this is a visualisation of threat to a global referent object and that it is a master signifier of imminent doom. These works offer useful insights into the broader foundations of visual theory, and a common emphasis is placed on the inter-visibility and inter-textuality of images.

Some scholars have adopted iconographical approaches to the visual. Iconic visuals are those visuals that “are widely recognised and remembered, are understood to be representations of historically significant events, activate strong emotional identification or response, and are reproduced across a range of media, genres or topics” (Hansen, 2015: 268, citing Hariman & Lucaites, 2007). The icon has been examined by both Heck & Schlag (2012) and Hansen (2015). Heck & Schlag (2012) looked at an iconic TIME Magazine cover featuring an Afghan woman whose face had been mutilated by the Taliban. Her image came to represent the plight of Afghan women under the Taliban which the US used as a justification for their invasion. Hansen has outlined an iconographical approach to world politics, in which one theorises the iconic image itself, the international status and political impact of the icon and appropriations of the icon (2015: 77). She then applies this framework to the ‘Hooded Man’ image from Abu Ghraib. The theorisation of the political implications and capabilities of iconic visuals is a valuable attempt to further enhance the turn to visuality in IR. However, in the context of this
thesis it is a limited and inapplicable approach. This thesis seeks to pay attention not to the
iconic images that come to represent events in singular and recognisable fashion, but rather to
the everyday images and that shape our understanding of social and political phenomena
(Bleiker, 2018: 1). This thesis is examining a 54-day time-period and 703 images, which
indicates sustained and consistent exposure to certain visual modalities that were representing
migrants and refugees in certain ways. The omnipresence of images in the contemporary world
is irrefutable, therefore it is vital to gain a comprehension of the political and securitising power
of everyday, non-iconic images. Mitchell has postulated that we may “find that the problem of
the twenty-first century is the problem of the image” (2018: 230). Therefore, it is important to
try and comprehend this problem. This thesis does not suggest that the iconographical approach
is without its merits, however within the context of the contemporary world in which visuals
are a constant feature at every moment of every day, it is important not to get too captivated by
those iconic images that transcend borders, circulate quickly and come to constitute a singular
representation of an event or phenomena. We must also gain suitable comprehension of the
everyday images that are capable of shaping people’s understanding of certain phenomena and
subjects, for example, migrants and refugees.

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the theoretical framework of the thesis. The first important theoretical
insight is that of the pictorial turn in the social sciences, which identifies visuals as an extremely
important form of social communication that had perhaps been overlooked. An
acknowledgment of the importance of visuality has led to wide array of new scholarship,
including in the field of CSS. The field of VSS was briefly discussed before delving deeper and
examining visual securitisation. This is an approach that critiques the emphasis placed on
speech-acts in the Copenhagen School’s approach to securitisation. The important and over-
arching point to emerge from the pictorial turn and visual securitisation literature is that while
images are an important form of social communication, they cannot perform communicative
acts themselves in isolation. Images are given meaning by the texts that surround them and thus
in adopting this theoretical approach, the emphasis is on analysing the images in conjunction
with the texts and discourses that inform them and give them meaning.

This then leads to Hansen’s (2011) framework for visual securitisation, which forms the
theoretical backbone of this thesis. The thesis applies this theoretical framework to the images
used by the British tabloid media in the run-up to the Brexit referendum, to understand how migrants and refugees were securitised and what these images were saying. In applying this framework, the intertextuality of the images is vital, with a focus not just on the images themselves but the broader texts and discourses that inform the images and give them meaning.
Ch.3: Research Design

3.1. Introduction
The previous chapter set out the theoretical foundation of the thesis and outlined its guiding framework: visual securitisation. The following chapter introduces and justifies the research design of the thesis. The selected data provides a suitable corpus to which the framework can be applied. The chapter is structured as follows. First, the research design of a qualitative case-study approach is outlined and justified. Then, the data selection process is explained. Following this, reflections will be offered on the reliability of the research design. Finally, the selected framework will be operationalised for the specific case-study of this thesis through the foregrounding of certain aspects of the framework.

3.2. A Single, Qualitative Case-Study
This thesis employs a qualitative research design and focuses on a single case-study. The justifications for such methodological decisions will be delineated in the following section.

A qualitative researcher is “concerned primarily with process, rather than outcomes or products” and is “interested in meaning” (Atieno, 2009). This thesis is concerned with how photojournalistic images came to speak security. It is not interested in causality and what the speaking of security did to the referendum result. Therefore, it meshes well with a qualitative approach that is concerned with process and meaning. An inductive approach is adopted, because such an approach is predicated on interpretation and open-ended questions, rather than beginning with a pre-formed hypothesis to test (Vromen, 2010: 249-266). This thesis did not begin from a pre-formed hypothesis, but rather seeks to approach the topic with an interpretive and inductive stance. The foundations of qualitative research align nicely with the aim of this thesis and therefore the logical decision to use a qualitative research design has been taken.

The decision to focus on a single case-study (the British tabloid media during the EU referendum) has been taken based on the merits a single case-study offers. A case-study analysis allows the author to examine the “complex and relatively unstructured and infrequent phenomena that lie at the heart” of IR, and more specifically CSS (Bennet & Elman, 2007: 171). A single case-study allows for a level of detailed analysis that other methods do not. By focusing on one specific case, the researcher can get to the heart of the “particularity and
complexity” of their chosen case (Stake, 1995: xi). The researcher can reach a nuanced and holistic account of a specific phenomenon. As Eckstein suggested, “one cannot attain prediction and control in the natural science sense, but only understanding (2009: 132). This thesis is, through a configurative-idiographic study, attempting to gain comprehension of the specificity and complexity of the visual securitisation of migrants and refugees in the British tabloid media in the lead up to the UK referendum on EU membership.

3.3. Data Selection

The following section describes the process of data collection. It will specify the sources from which the data is taken and rationalise the selection of these sources. The framework for visual securitisation requires that one analyses “the image itself, its immediate intertext, the wider policy discourse, and the texts ascribing meaning to the image” (Hansen, 2011: 53). Therefore, the data collection went beyond simply gathering images. The prominent discourses in the reportage were noted. Examples of the broader political and societal context of the selected timeframe were also collated. The data collection was a structured process that began by casting a wide net and working to narrow it down into a comprehensive yet functional corpus of images, intertext and broader contextual exemplars.

The selected case-study is the British tabloid media between 01/05/2016 and 23/06/2016. Two tabloid outlets have been selected, The Daily Mail and The Sun. Tabloids, like all media sources, have had to adapt to the changing landscape of journalism. The two selected newspapers still enjoy comparatively high circulation in print form but not to the extent that they once did. Their online sites are the most widely read online newspapers in the UK (Statista.com, 2018). Therefore, this thesis will look to the front-pages from the print forms and articles from the online outlets for its data. This is in order to accurately capture the totality of their securitising moves, in both their more traditional form and the newer online form. Tabloids utilise “large headlines, photos with graphic and often disturbing content” and place “sensational stories on the front-page and as the lead story” (Grabe & Kleemans, 2012: 1). Therefore, it is vital to understand what these images and their intertext communicate to their audience.

The decisions taken regarding the data must be justified. Firstly, the decision was taken to focus on two infamously right-wing and anti-immigration tabloids. The inspiration to investigate tabloids as a source of visual securitisation in the context of the EU referendum was the widely held criticism of their rhetoric towards immigration. The tabloid media have been said to
“poison […] debate by playing to people’s worst instincts and prejudices, distorting facts and creating a propaganda ramp that mainstreams intolerance” (Bennhold, 2017). The UK tabloids showed “a hostility towards refugees and migrants which [is] unique” when compared to other European countries (Berry et al., 2016: 10). This thesis, inspired by such conclusions, sought to discover how the right-leaning tabloids utilised images to achieve a securitised representation of migrants and refugees and whether it was as wholly negative as critics have suggested. The Daily Mail and The Sun were selected as the two sources of data, along with their corresponding websites. These two tabloid outlets are the most widely circulated and popular tabloids in the UK, in both print and online form (Statista.com, 2018). Therefore, in the context of media consuming Britons, they have a relatively large audience with whom to speak. The timeframe has been selected because immigration gathered saliency as the referendum neared. Immigration was covered consistently from the announcement of the referendum (20/02/2016) until the referendum date (23/06/2016) and never left the debate surrounding the EU referendum (Moore & Ramsay, 2016). However, in the second half of the campaign period the focus on immigration increased as it became an ever more prominent issue in political and societal discourse (ibid.). Therefore, the decision was taken to focus on a timeframe when the issue was most prominent. This timeframe captures 54 days of reporting and has yielded 703 images.

The data collection can best be understood as a continuous process of refinement. The goal of the collection process was to gather a comprehensive corpus of images and the most prominent intertextual discourses and contextual factors that surrounded their publication. The intertext was understood to include the headlines, captions, articles and front-page headlines from the selected timeframe. These were not collected for a complete content analysis of the reportage, but rather the most prominent and repeated discourses of the timeframe from the two sources were identified. The wider contextual factors were understood to be political debates and discourses in the referendum campaign and in relation to migrants and refugees within the EU. These were gathered by noting down the prominent issues and events being discussed by the two sources. Impartial and left-leaning sources were also consulted to corroborate that these were important events regardless of political leaning. This means that in collecting the photojournalistic images it is possible to “analyse the image itself” (Hansen, 2011: 53). The identification of the discourses commonly espoused in the captions, headlines and articles allows one to analyse the “immediate intertext” and the “texts ascribing meaning to the image” (ibid.). Finally, in noting the prominent political and societal discourse of the time through
consultation with a variety of media sources, it is possible to analyse the “wider policy discourse” (ibid.).

To return to the process of collecting the images, this was done using the Mail Online and Sun Online article databases. These archives allow anyone to search for historic articles that have been published online. The searching process began by entering the keywords ‘Migrant’, ‘Migration’, ‘Immigrant’, ‘Immigration’, ‘Refugee’, ‘Brexit’, ‘Referendum’ and ‘EU’ in various permutations. For example, ‘EU immigration’ or ‘Brexit Refugee’. This search returned the articles that included these words, whether it be in the headline or main body. This initial process of collection returned 807 online articles from the two sources that referred to migrants and refugees in the context of the EU referendum. This corpus of articles was then examined systematically one by one. The process involved visiting the URL of the article, verifying that the article related to the object of research, saving the image(s) contained in the article, noting down the key words and tone of the reportage and what event was being reported on. This process yielded a corpus of images, intertext and contextual factors that could then be categorised and prepared for analysis. It must be noted that some articles did not contain images although they did still provide indications of the wider contextual factors. Other articles were discarded because their content did not directly relate to the research question; for example, an article about a British run refugee camp in Cyprus being shut down or articles about Swiss immigration policy in relation to the EU were deemed as irrelevant.

This process produced a corpus of 1,184 images. These 1,184 images were then further refined through the categorisation of the images into two groups. The images were categorised as either visualising migrants and refugees or not visualising migrants and refugees. There were several images discarded during this process because they did not, in the interpretation of the author, visualise migrants and refugees. For example, many of the articles that spoke about migrants and refugees contained images of British political figures, which were deemed to be irrelevant. Other images were discarded because they were not the correct genre; for example, cartoons or visualised statistics were deemed as inappropriate to the research objective because of its exclusive focus on photojournalistic images. This process resulted in a corpus totalling 703 photojournalistic images that were interpreted as visualising migrants and refugees.

The 703 photojournalistic images were then uploaded onto Atlas.ti and if they were captioned, this caption was attached to the uploaded image. This provided an indication of the accompanying intertext of the image and what the subject and tone of the article was about.
Furthermore, the prominent headlines and discourses attached to the images were noted down; for example, an image of disturbances in and around Calais was characterised by an intertext filled with negative, securitising words like “violence” and “riot” (Calderwood, 2016). These words were noted as important and attached to the images too.

Then, in a preliminary phase of analysis the images collected for this thesis were categorised based on the strategy of depiction they employ, thus following the same analytical strategy adopted by Hansen (2011) and Kearns (2017). The 703 images were categorised into four different prominent and identifiable strategies of depiction. Armstrong (1999: 20-21) has suggested that due to the inter-visibility of images, a viewer will recognise a specific “category of subject matter simply by recognizing the pose, a few background details, and a constellation of physical features.” This causes the viewer to link this image to “a type or a category.” Therefore, it is possible to distinguish between different strategies of depiction based on the inter-visibility of images. Furthermore, theoretical literature on migrant and refugee representation was consulted in order to understand what the different composition strategies might be communicating. For example, young, able-bodied men tend to be a representation of threat, whereas women and children are signifiers of suffering (Gray & Franck, 2019: 6-7). The collated images display four distinct strategies of depiction of the ‘migrant’ and the ‘refugee’. The migrant and refugee are depicted as; 1) Threatening, barbaric and dangerous, 2) Threatened, suffering and in need of rescue 3) Inferior, unwelcome and undesirable and 4) Human with voice and agency. These diverse strategies of depiction demonstrate that the visualisation of migrants and refugees in the British tabloid press during the selected timeframe was not homogenous. There are dichotomous depictions at play. The different depictions perform different acts of securitisation, sometimes framing migrants and refugees as the existential threat and at other times as the referent object of security. By humanising migrants and refugees and giving them a voice that they are often denied in media depictions a process of de-securitisation and re-humanisation takes place. When given a voice, refugees and migrants can personalise their experiences. They avoid being grouped together as a threatening mass or passive bodies. This brings their personal narratives to the fore and away from the sensationalised and securitised representations of threat or suffering.

This process was highly inductive. The author interpreted the strategies of depiction, the key intertext and wider contextual factors. As Burr (1995: 40) argues, in the social sciences there exist an innumerable variety of perspectives to a given research object, all of which are “equally valid.” Therefore, this highly interpretive process of data collection in which the researcher...
inductively selected the images, intertext and contextual factors that were of relevance to the research question and interpreted their strategy of depiction is methodologically sound.

The front-pages were collected through the twitter accounts of both sources. The accounts @MailOnline and @TheSun both tweet out the front-pages of their print version. Therefore, a search on twitter confined to between 01/05/2016 and 23/06/2016 with the key word ‘front-page’ yielded the results. These front-pages were categorised as either relating to migrants and refugees or not relating to them. This process of categorisation yielded 20 front-pages. These front-pages do not always contain a visual, and therefore some of them are taken to be part of the data relating to intertext. The images of the front-pages were also uploaded to Atlas.ti and they were grouped separately to the 703 photojournalistic images. Once again, they were categorised based on how they depicted migrants and refugees.

Therefore, this comprehensive process of data collection produced a corpus of 703 photojournalistic images published online by the two sources and 20 front-pages published between (01/05/2016-23/06/2016). These images were interpreted by the author as visualising migrants and refugees and hence were deemed to be appropriate for the analytical process and the answering of the research question. Other images were discarded based on the interpretation of the author, such as images of political figures. The images were then stored on the atlas.ti programme (although it must be noted this programme was not used to code during the analysis, merely as a location in which to organise and categorise the data).

3.4. Reliability of the Research Design

This section details the reliability of the research design that has been outlined. The limitation that is addressed is bias, which interpretive research can be prone to, but this section outlines how potential bias has been mitigated.

A well-publicised limitation of interpretive research is the challenges that internal bias and assumptions can cause. Norris suggests that “a consideration of self as a researcher and self in relation to the topic of research is a precondition for coping with bias” (1997: 174). This involves the voicing of “prejudices and assumptions” in order so that the work can be “considered openly and challenged” (ibid.). The motivation for the topic of this thesis stemmed in part from societal and political assumptions held by the author (a British citizen who experienced the media coverage of the 2016 referendum). This assumption was that the right-
leaning tabloid press represented migrants and refugees negatively and framed them as a security threat. As has been shown in the introduction and research design, this is not a unique assumption to hold (see for example; Deacon et al., 2016; Moore & Ramsay, 2017; Bennhold, 2017; Buxbaum, 2019). However, these pre-held assumptions do leave the analysis prone to confirmation bias, which is defined as the “interpreting of evidence in ways that are partial to existing beliefs” (Nickerson, 1998: 175). Confirmation bias can thus challenge the validity of the research because the author sees what they want to see, rather than what is there.

However, the potential effects of bias can be mitigated in several ways. Firstly, in making clear the assumptions that pre-dated the research and analysis, the reader gains a much more complete picture of the analytical process and can judge the analysis in a more complete way. Secondly, a researcher can rely on “critical friends and colleagues” to explore “their preferences for certain kinds of evidence, interpretation and explanations and consider alternatives” (Norris, 1997: 174-175). An earlier draft of the analysis section of this thesis was peer reviewed by two colleagues which has improved the self-reflexivity of this work. Furthermore, the data collection process and interpretative analytical process were discussed with critical colleagues who posed worthwhile questions and forced the author to reflect on the epistemological foundation of this thesis. Lather (1993: 697) understands research validity to be “multiple, partial, endlessly deferred.” Therefore, it is difficult to ensure any kind of objective validity in interpretive research, but steps have been taken throughout the research, analysis and writing process to address potential biases. Validity is a concept that is manifold, and to return to Burr (1995: 40), there exist multiple perspectives and interpretations in social science research and they are all “equally valid.”

Overall, the potential limitations of this thesis are related to the interpretive nature of the research which leaves the process prone to bias. However, as has been explained, steps have been taken to address any potential biases. The assumptions of the author have been made explicit which seeks to enhance the credibility of this work. There are certainly limitations to interpretive research but as this section has outlined actions have been taken to mitigate such limitations.

3.5. Operationalisation of the Framework

The following section aims to operationalise and foreground aspects of the framework. The framework provides “a set of theoretically derived arguments that lead to concepts and
distinctions that can be used in empirical analysis (Hansen, 2011: 69).” She calls on other scholars to conduct case studies that “create variation along dimensions important to the visual securitization framework” (ibid.). There are several concepts and distinctions from the framework that are common to all the images analysed and therefore can be foregrounded. This is an example of the variation that Hansen points to; the framework is not ‘one size fits all; it must be adapted to the specificities of the data to which it is applied. The aspects that are common to all the images are the genre, context, circulability and the wider policy discourse in which the images were published. The following section briefly engages with each of these aspects.

The images analysed all fall under the genre of photojournalistic images. Photographs have an “illusion of authenticity” (Hutchison et al., 2014: 2). Their perceived authenticity “provide us with the seductive belief that what is revealed correlates exactly with what was happening at a particular moment in time” (ibid.). Photojournalistic images thus gain an “epistemological – and political – authority” stemming from “their claim to depict something that is actually happening” (Hansen, 2011: 60). The images that have been analysed make the claim that they are representative of reality. But a photograph can never display an objective truth. There is no way to transfer “meaning from one site to another without affecting the object’s nature and signification in the process” (Bleiker, 2018: 12). Although spectators to the image may believe they are presented with an objective and factual visual, they are actually presented with a visual that has been influenced by a series of political and aesthetic decisions. A photograph “cannot be neutral because it always is an image chosen and composed by a particular person” (idem: 14). Every single photograph analysed has been taken from a specific politically charged angle (Strauss, 2003: 45), and the photographer has chosen what to include and what to omit. The audience expects that photojournalistic images provide them with “a rather straightforward truth” and that the image is representative of reality (Hansen, 2011: 60). However, this isn’t the case. Despite believing that they are bearing witness to the reality of migrants and refugees, readers and viewers of The Sun and The Mail are witnesses to a specific and deliberate perspective. These images do not represent the objective reality of migrants and refugees trying to reach Britain or within Britain, they represent a particular, politically motivated interpretation of that reality.

The analysed images possess the same degree of circulability. Visuals can be circulated quickly, transcend borders and linguistic boundaries and be securitised by non-elites just as effectively as elites (Hansen, 2011: 57). The circulation of the analysed images is inherently linked to the
readership of the two tabloids and their respective websites. The consumers of The Mail and The Sun are likely to be drawn towards these media sources due to a shared political outlook. Therefore, the circulation of these images, that are published within articles, is likely to be limited among a readership who are open to right-leaning politics. Although the strategies of depiction identified are heterogeneous, the predominance of negative migration-related stories and front-pages suggest that the over-arching message of these two tabloids is anti-immigration. Unless one held these views, it is unlikely they would seek out these newspapers and websites. These images are circulated among a specific group (the readership) but likely have a limited influence and reach outwith this context, because they are coupled with a specific political intertext. The images analysed did not achieve a transcendent and cross-border iconic status like, for example, the Muhammad Cartoons in Jyllands-Posten. They were much more contained and constrained by their domestic context.

The context in which these images were securitised is important to understand. This thesis focuses on the timeframe of 01/05/2016 to 23/06/2016, a 54-day period preceding the UK referendum on EU membership. In this thesis, the context of publication and wider policy discourse are intimately linked. The wider policy discourse is centred around the referendum campaign in which dichotomous discourses emerged around the issue of immigration, with both negative and positive stances articulated by prominent political figures. There was also a nativist narrative employing the clash of civilisations discourse to securitise British society articulated by Nigel Farage, the then-leader of the UKIP.¹ The most prominent sympathetic policy discourse was regarding child refugees stranded in Europe, which was a widely debated issue at the beginning of May, 2016 and caused rebellion in the government. This sympathetic discourse faltered as the referendum neared however, as debates became more about the costs and benefits of migration. The negative discourse arguably took hold most effectively and became a prominent focus of both tabloids over the timeframe, owing perhaps to their right-leaning and pro-Brexit stance.

There were arguably three different prominent discourses identifiable over the selected timeframe. These were each most prominent at a different time but also common throughout. For example, a sympathetic discourse was most prominent between 01/05/2016 and 07/05/2016, but it did not disappear after this. It remained but it was perhaps overshadowed in

¹ Nigel Farage at the time of the referendum was the leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party, which campaigned for the UK to leave the EU. He has been criticised for his various false claims made around migrants and refugees in the context of the referendum, see for example; (Mortimer, 2016 or Stewart & Mason, 2016).
the rest of the period by other discourses. The three prominent discourses that can be identified in the timeframe in relation to migrants and refugees are 1) sympathy for child refugees, 2) debates on the consequences of immigration on the UK and 3) a sensationalised and exaggerated scaremongering that was often rooted in nativist sentiment.

The initial wave of sympathy was centred around unaccompanied child refugees in Europe. The UK’s PM at the time, David Cameron, was initially against accepting unaccompanied children from within the EU, framing it as an incentive for others to make the lethal journey to European shores (Kuenssberg, 2016). However, this stance received criticism and caused revolt within his government and party. The message that dissenters wanted to convey was that Britain was open and here to help for those children who had made it across the Mediterranean (Asthana et al., 2016). Cameron succumbed to the pressure and announced government plans to admit more child refugees from within the EU (ibid.). These events unfolded in the first week of May, and the invocation of the suffering child garnered cross-party support within the UK parliament for a sympathetic and open policy towards unaccompanied refugee children. This sympathetic discourse would never return to such a high degree of prominence in the wider policy discourse or general context of the referendum after the first week. It did not vanish, but other competing discourses took eminence over it as the referendum neared.

Immigration was an undoubtedly salient issue in the campaigning phase for both sides of the referendum. The Leave side were insistent on examining what negative consequences immigration had brought and would bring to the UK. This was mostly focused on topics such as the economy and over-burdened public services. Several political figures on the Leave side made exaggerated if not entirely false claims regarding this issue; without a vote to leave the EU, it was claimed that the National Health Service (NHS) would be “financially unsustainable by 2030” due to high immigration (Mason, 2016). The threat of rising immigration levels was also linked to an under-supply of housing (BBC, 2016a) and job opportunities for British people (BBC, 2016b). On the 18th of May, it was revealed in published governmental figures that the number of EU workers in the UK had reached an all-time high of 2.15million (Financial Times, 2016). This was used by the Leave campaign as an example of uncontrollable immigration as a result of EU membership, and subsequently, a vote to Leave would take back control. Rather contrastingly, the Leave side also pushed the idea that incoming migrants and refugees had no intention of working and sought to benefit from the British welfare state (Witte, 2016). Therefore, what becomes clear is that even in the mainstream political debate there were several exaggerated, contradictory and baseless claims made by the Leave side that positioned migrants
negatively. For a long time, the British political discourse has been wary of migrants and refugees in case they “abuse our hospitality”, an attitude that is overflowing with a sense of superiority (Darling, 2009: 650, citing Jones, 2005). They were said to pose a threat to things like the NHS and housing. The discourse was characterised at this point by debate surrounding cons that immigration brought to the UK. Overall, a prominent discursive aspect during the referendum was the negative portrayal of immigration and the positioning of migrants and refugees as threatening to things like public services and the economy. This was achieved through exaggerated claims made by prominent and mainstream political figures on the Leave side, who had the authoritative voices necessary to make these claims stick. It created a negative perception of immigration and ensured it was a salient topic in the referendum debate.

However, a third prominent discourse that permeated the referendum was of a much more sinister tone regarding migrants and refugees. Particularly, as the referendum neared, the racialised portrayal of migrants and refugees as an existential threat to the safety and societal fabric of the UK cemented its place in the mainstream discourse. This was a result of pro-Brexit figures, particularly Nigel Farage, ramping up the anti-immigration sentiment and framing it as the key issue in relation to the referendum. One of the prominent arguments was that Turkey’s potential future accession to the EU posed a security risk for the UK. The official Vote Leave campaign group suggested that Turkey’s accession to the EU was imminent and that it would see one million people emigrate to the UK from Turkey in eight years (Boffey & Helm, 2016). They further suggested that the higher rate of crime and higher rate of gun ownership in Turkey rendered Turkish emigration to the UK a security threat (ibid). Farage’s rhetoric was even more controversial as he made spurious claims regarding rising migration and the threat to British women. He suggested that they would be at risk of sexual assault from migrants and refugees (Mortimer, 2016). Perhaps, his most controversial moment, and one that was emblematic of the more extreme discourse that was being normalised during this period, was the ‘Breaking Point’ poster (see image 1) (Calamur, 2016). The UKIP-issued poster depicts migrants and refugees (predominantly Syrian) walking in Slovenia and is captioned ‘Breaking Point’, the suggestion being that Europe is overrun with refugees and cannot cope with any more arrivals. This poster received condemnation from all mainstream political parties with some suggesting that its intervisuality was reminiscent of Nazi propaganda (ibid.). The poster was attempting to stoke anxieties and convince people that the EU had lost control over immigration. It directly securitised migrants and refugees as threatening and is an example of how extreme the discourse had become as the referendum neared.
There were three prominent yet competing discourses noted during the referendum campaign period. The first was a sympathetic attitude towards child refugees and a focus on their struggles in Europe, which was particularly prominent at the beginning of May. However, immigration was an important issue in the policy discourse surrounding the referendum and it was frequently invoked by the Leave campaign as detrimental or even threatening to the UK economy and public services. A third discourse was the overtly racial construction of migrants and refugees as threats, which was particularly focused on potential Turkish accession and those refugees and migrants journeying through Europe from Africa and the Middle East. These three competing discourses show that the wider policy discourse at the time of the referendum was not homogenous and there were competing frames of migrants and refugees at play. Overall however, this section has attempted to show that the discourse grew extreme as the referendum neared. Immigration was a topic that never left the context and wider policy discourse of the referendum campaign, and consequently, it received extensive coverage from the tabloid media. Having foregrounded several aspects of the framework and made explicit the high quantity of data to be analysed, the framework can be adjusted for the primary analysis to come as seen in figure 2.
3.6. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to map out the research design, data selection and operationalisation of the framework for visual securitisation in this thesis. The chapter began by justifying the selection of a qualitative single-case approach, which will allow for an interpretive approach that understands the “particularity and complexity” of the selected topic (Stake, 1995: xi). Then, the process of data selection was outlined and made explicit to the reader. A comprehensive process of refinement led to a corpus of 703 photojournalistic images and 20 front-pages. The potential limitations of this approach were then delineated, with focus paid to the way that interpretive research can be prone to bias. However, this was mitigated through various actions taken by the researcher. Finally, certain aspects of the visual securitisation framework were foregrounded based on the author’s operationalisation of the framework. The genre, circulability, context and wider policy discourse of the images were examined, as these were
common to all 703 images and 20 front-pages. Overall, this chapter has outlined and justified a comprehensive research design, been open and explicit on potential biases and provided ‘thick description’ of the process in order to give this work credibility and transferability.
4.1. Introduction

In the following section, the images themselves are examined. This is done by identifying the dominant composition strategies for each form of depiction and assessing which larger collective body the images represent (Hansen, 2011: 58). Four strategies of depiction have been identified. Migrants and refugees are depicted as; 1) Threatening, barbaric and dangerous (Image Set A), 2) Threatened, suffering and in need of rescue (Image Set B), 3) Unwelcome, inferior and undesirable (Image Set C) and 4) Human with voice and agency (Image Set D). Although this is not a quantitative analysis, it should be noted that the largest number of images were identified as belonging to Set A. The second most common depiction were those images belonging to Set B. Then, Image Set C and D were significantly less common. Just over half of the collected images were identified as belonging to Set A, roughly a quarter made up Set B and then the rest made up Set C and D. This suggests that the commonly espoused view that the tabloids are negative towards migrants and refugees is partially confirmable. But there is more nuance to their coverage than some would suggest. For all four strategies of depiction, the larger collective body is steeped in ambiguity and it is difficult to ascertain who exactly is being securitised.

4.2. Image Set A – Threatening, Barbaric and Dangerous

The predominant strategy of depiction identified in the dataset visualised migrants and refugees as threatening, barbaric and dangerous. This depiction was achieved by visualising either young males or large groups. These images are focused on migrants and refugees who have crossed the Mediterranean meaning the subjects are mainly of African or Middle Eastern origin. The securitisation of these migrants and refugees is highly racialised and underpinned by logics of coloniality (Gray and Franck, 2019). The young males are portrayed as barbaric and subsequently they come to constitute a security risk to the self-perceived civility of the UK and Europe (Guizardi, 2017). This continues a colonial legacy in which young Arab and African men are depicted as threatening. When large groups are visualised a process of dehumanisation takes place. The migrants and refugees are depicted as a “faceless mass” (Bleiker et al., 2013: 411). This encourages fear and anxiety to take hold in response to the images, rather than compassion. These two forms of composition create the perception that migrants and refugees
are “enemies at the gate, who are attempting to invade Western nations” (Esses et al., 2013: 519).

The visual focus on young males links into a wider tradition of framing the able-bodied male Other as a threat. The almost exclusive focus on black or Arab men links into the racialised logics that underpin migrant and refugee representation, in which non-white male subjects are imbued with an inherent and unrestrained urge for violence (Moffette & Vadasaria, 2016: 295). In this kind of depiction, migrants and refugees are ascribed agency but it is a negative agency; their agentive power is in situated within their “will to harm ‘us’” (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017: 7). This agency that they are ascribed, as commiters of illegal acts, leads to a culture of fear and the perception of threat. The young male Other is also framed as “hyper-sexualised and misogynistic” (Holzberg et al., 2018: 546). A specific clash is invoked between the dangerous and misogynistic cultures of migrants and refugees and the progressive and equal society they will reach in Europe (Guizardi, 2017). The photographs published by the tabloid press attempt to crystallise the notion of threat, danger and barbarity around the figure of the migrant and refugee by depicting them engaged in violent or forceful acts, such as rioting, breaking and entering or illegally crossing through barriers and fencing. Images 2 and 3 are examples of a common composition strategy employed in order to securitise migrants and refugees. As was noted earlier, these images should not be taken as stand-alone iconic images but rather as good examples of the kinds of composition strategies one would find in the tabloid press during this time period. These images depict young, male migrants and refugees exercising their agentive criminality or engaged in violent, forceful acts and they come to constitute an invading enemy at the gate.

Image 2: Published on 21/06/2016 by The Sun Online and Mail Online.

Image 3: Published on 19/05/2016 by Mail Online.
There is also a second composition strategy that evokes feelings of fear and threat in the audience, which is the depiction of migrants and refugees as a large, collectivised mass. In this kind of depiction, large groups are shown walking, on boats or at border crossings. There is no individual facial focus and the migrants and refugees come to constitute a “faceless mass” (Bleiker et al., 2013: 411). The number of migrants and refugees becomes the existential threat. This kind of depiction also enacts a process of dehumanisation (Esses et al., 2013). The experiences and narratives of the migrants and refugees are obscured or ignored and instead “we see an abstract and dehumanised political problem” (Bleiker et al., 2013: 411). Images 4 and 5 are two examples of this kind of depiction. They come to represent an influx and their personal narratives are overlooked. The depiction of larger groups increases emotional distance between the witness and the subjects (Kogut & Ritov, 2005). Therefore, feelings of threat, fear and anxiety come to surround these images, as the political implications of these large groups are foregrounded whereas the lived human experiences of the photographed subjects are concealed. The dehumanised mass is easier for the reader to view as a threat and unworthy of sympathy or understanding (Esses et al., 2013: 531).

![Image 4: Published by The Sun Online 22/06/2016](image4.jpg) ![Image 5: Published by Mail Online 12/06/2016](image5.jpg)

Images are inherently ambiguous. Within the context of securitisation, it is not clear which larger collective body the subjects of an image represent. In the first form of composition identified, young, able-bodied black and Arab men are visualised as threatening and engaging in criminality. During the examined timeframe, the reader does not see migrant and refugee women or children engaging in the same acts of violence. In other words, they are never represented as exercising an agentive criminality. Therefore, this composition strategy seems to zero in on young migrant and refugee men specifically from Africa and the Middle East, as
a racialised spectre of threat. The reader encounters this masculine and racialised threat and comes to interpret them specifically as the danger. However, the second composition strategy points to a much broader collective body, because no distinction is made between any of the subjects depicted. The ‘mass’ is the threat, and thus men, women and children are collectivised and dehumanised into one threatening group. The reader thus might come to interpret all who cross the Mediterranean as the threat, due to the ambiguous nature of the image. This overall ambiguous depiction of migrants and refugees suggests the reader may sometimes come to see all those who travel to Europe across the Mediterranean as a threat but at other times view the threat through a masculinised lens.

4.3. Image Set B – Threatened, Suffering and in Need of Rescue

Although the predominant representation of migrants and refugees depicted them as threatening, there were instances in which they were represented as threatened. This depiction was centred around “women and children” (Enloe, 1993: 166), who are imbued with an innocence and vulnerability that evokes sympathy rather than fear. The visual focus is on isolated women and children and their faces are usually identifiable. They are depicted as suffering, helpless and passive bodies, tropes common to humanitarian photography but also visible in photojournalism (Manzo, 2008). This strategy of depiction is once again underpinned by logics of coloniality, and the notion that the vulnerable Other must be rescued from their own oppressive situation and surroundings (Spivak, 1988: 297). Isolated children also evoke sympathy owing to their pre-political status and the universally accepted Western notions of care, guardianship and paternalism (Manzo, 2008: 649-650). There are also photos showing rescue operations or aid deliverance which often involve larger groups, which collectivise and passivise the subjects of the image, denying them agency and ascribing them dependence on European aid and charity. Rescue photos sometimes focus on passive individuals too, which reinforces unequal relations of power between the European and the Other (Briggs, 2003; Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2015) These various forms of composition and subject focus combine to portray the migrant and refugee as suffering and in need of help, in other words, in need of security. They become the referent object and their own transience and surroundings are the threat.

The depiction of migrants and refugees as suffering and in need of rescue is achieved using images that focus predominantly on women and children. This focus is mainly on individuals and faces are clear and easy to see. Women and children are alleged to be innocent and pre-
political and hence they come to signify being threatened and suffering when photographed in transience (Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2015: 1143). For Gray & Franck (2019: 9), the “focus on female refugees” in the British Press “enables their positioning as symbols of vulnerability who need to be ‘saved’ by the heroic Western subject.” Images of women and children are often taken without a paternalistic presence. These kinds of images seek to visually represent “the absence or inadequacies of the patriarchal protections of one’s state, one’s husband and one’s father” (Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2015: 1144). Images 6 and 7 are clearly representative of this kind of composition strategy. The subjects of the photo are held to be vulnerable and in need of security, and the images call upon the compassion and sympathy of their audience.

Holzberg et al., (2018: 546), drawing on Casteneda, 2002, argue that “the figure of the child specifically operates as the ultimate symbol of innocence and helplessness evoking compassion and pity.” Due to their perceived vulnerability, images of children evoke sympathy from the spectator and security is spoken on their behalf; they become the referent object. Suffering children gained this primacy in visualisation because “audiences are often captivated by idealised images of ‘innocent’ children as they appeal to parenting instincts of care and protection” (idem: 650). When children are portrayed alone and in dangerous situations, the audience is expected to react with compassion and a desire to help, or in other words, a desire to provide security for them. Briggs (2003: 185) describes how “an infant alone is a disturbing picture. We long to solve the narrative problem it presents us, to pick the child up and comfort it if its parents cannot be found.” Much of the sympathetic coverage was centred around images
of children. This visualisation often focused on migrant and refugee children in makeshift camps or at border crossings, as is shown below.

![Image 8: Published by Mail Online 18/05/2016](image1.png) ![Image 9: Published by Mail Online 06/05/2016](image2.png)

The ‘rescue photo’ was commonly used during this timeframe in which the Other is depicted being saved or recovered. This passivises the migrants and refugees and imbues them with a dependence on the Western saviour (Abu-Lughod, 2002). This form of depiction was not limited exclusively to children; women and men were also depicted as being rescued, ascribing a passiveness and helplessness across most migrant and refugee bodies, as is exemplified by image 11. We see an Italian Navy helicopter hovering overhead as migrants and refugees wait to be rescued after their boat capsized. This is an example of passivisation and the construction of refugees as lives who exist merely to be saved (Edkins & Pin-Fat, 2005). However, the most affective rescue photos are those involving the child. This strategy of depiction has its roots in humanitarian photography, which during the latter half of the 20th century frequently visualised rescue and guardianship by showing things like “the helpless hand of a dying African child clasped by a fat and healthy adult white hand” (Manzo, 2008: 637). Manzo has suggested that “the visible connotations of protection and rescue suggested by the presence of […] aid workers magnify the power and influence of external forces” (idem: 644). The depiction of aid workers and volunteers rescuing migrants and refugees helps to portray them as suffering, downtrodden and in particular, in need of saving.
Image 10 is a particularly striking image and demonstrates the depiction of the rescuing and recovering European and the passive Other. It is a photo that evokes the humanitarian photography tropes of “the solitary child suffering or dying alone, and that of the rescue photo,” (Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2015: 1127). As Manzo suggests, this kind of image demonstrates the power of external forces. It also links to her point regarding children being a “dominant signifier of death” and due to their innocence, they become an evocative symbol which produce sympathy and compassion from their audience (2008: 639). However, this kind of depiction is prone to the same criticisms that have befallen certain kinds of humanitarian photography. Images of suffering or dead children are “demeaning” and rob “them of their dignity” and can be considered as “demeaning [to] entire geographical areas” (idem: 638).

4.4. Image Set C – Inferior, Unwelcome and Undesirable

The third strategy of depiction identified frames migrants and refugees as a societal threat because of the danger they pose to the identity and culture of the UK. Societal security is a concept that was developed as part of the Copenhagen School approach to securitisation, where society itself becomes the referent object of security (Waever et al, 1993: 23). Immigration is something that can come to constitute a threat to the security of a particular identity, due to changing demography. This is seen to threaten tradition and political community due to new and different influences entering the host country. The concept of British national identity is difficult to define and understand, particularly within the context of the EU referendum.
It has been argued that it is not a British identity that drove preferences for leaving the EU and tightening immigration control, but rather an English identity (O’Toole, 2016). Englishness is a social identity and a core tenet of social identity theory is that “group members of an in-group will seek to find negative aspects of an out-group, thus enhancing their self-image” (McLeod, 2008). In the context of the EU referendum, the English identity constitutes the in-group and immigrants (broadly speaking) constitute the out-group. It is worth noting that in the tabloid press and the political discourse, the immigrant outgroup was predominantly argued to be Eastern European, African or Middle Eastern. The conception of this English identity and its insular aversion to the Other perhaps owes to a longing for by-gone days of Empire and superiority, which is apparently a core aspect of Englishness (Virdee & McGeever, 2016: 1804). This has led to a racialised nationalism informed by perceptions of supremacy. Indeed, Englishness has been termed the “invisible driver of Brexit”, it has “been reasserted through a racializing, insular nationalism, and it found its voice in the course of Brexit” (ibid.). Heath & Richards (2018) have found that “an exclusive English identity” has a “rather ‘nativist’ or ‘ethnocentric’ character” with an aversion to “outsiders and an emphasis on ancestry as a criterion for national belonging.” Indeed, the English identity, as Epstein (2011: 337) suggests, is constituted by the “self-other relationship.” The encounter with the Other (in this case migrants and refugees) “is the very site where [the] identity takes shape” (ibid.). Therefore, this English social identity is predicated on a historical legacy of self-perceived superiority and the subjugation of the Other which makes itself apparent in the visualisation of societal security identified in the British tabloid press. The xenophobic undertones to this identity then cause immigration to be perceived as a threat to “major societal values” because it will alter “the ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic composition of the host populations” (Soguk, 1999: 201). And this insular xenophobia is only further entrenched when the English self encounters the foreign Other (Epstein, 2011: 337).

Both newspapers published images that were framed as threatening or counter to British/English identity and culture. They depicted this by showing non-Britons engaged in perceived unbecoming behaviour, like public consumption of alcohol. They also published images of non-British shops, businesses and signs, framing this as an incursion of sorts which was degrading what had once been British/English. This criticism of behaviour and its explicit ascription to migrants and refugees creates an air of superiority in which the Other is deemed as unable to positively contribute to society. Instead, their negative contribution is visualised and emphasised. Furthermore, images of foreign businesses and signs visualise an incursion
into what was once British/English. It is through the intertext that this foreign object becomes explicitly undesirable and unwanted. The suggestion is that the host identity is being pushed aside by incomers. Hence, the incoming migrants and refugees come to constitute an existential threat to the referent object of security, English/British identity. The work that images of migrants and refugees engaged in perceived unbecoming behaviour does is to reinforce negative stereotypes whereas images of foreign influences in the UK suggest an arrival of new cultures, languages and customs which threaten the old ones.

The above photos are demonstrative of the kind of composition one would expect to find in images that are securitising British/English identity, culture and society. Images 12 and 13 display behaviour that is considered undesirable and even criminal. This behaviour, however,
is far from unique in the UK and is not unique to migrants or refugees either. The specific visualisation of migrants and refugees doing this seeks to ascribe this instance of negative or undesirable behaviour to an entire group, a larger collective body. Although there are only a few subjects in the photo, the larger collective body is often explicitly suggested to be Eastern Europeans. The same can be said for the visualisation of the inanimate objects. They are taken to represent an entire region, Eastern Europe, and this region and its people are imbued with a negativity and inferiority. The tabloid audience may come to interpret such images as representative of excessive immigration from Eastern Europe because they show businesses and signs in English towns that are not exclusively English. This insular attitude and mistrust of diaspora communities manifests itself in an identity that is averse to foreign influences and sees things like ethnic supermarkets or businesses as a direct threat to that identity. Overall, migrants and refugees are depicted as engaging in anti-social behaviour and this characteristic is ascribed to entire regions, the larger collective body becomes their point of origin, Eastern Europe. Similarly, non-English shops and signs are taken to be an incursion upon Englishness which constitutes a security threat to the preservation of one’s identity. The larger collective body being represented as a security threat to society is predominantly Eastern European, although there are also cases of African and Arab migrants and refugees being represented in a similar way.

4.5. Image Set D – Human with Voice and Agency

The final strategy of depiction employed by the tabloids portrayed migrants and refugees as human with voice and agency. This kind of depiction enacted a process of de-securitisation. Migrants and refugees were portrayed engaging in activities that were either normal and innocuous, or that demonstrated an agentive capability that brought them well beyond “bare life” (Agamben, 1998). For example, migrants and refugees were shown taking part in school lessons, the upkeep of personal hygiene, or political and social activism. These depictions shatter the illusion of “ambivalent humanity” that so much of the coverage ascribed them (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017: 621). The first three depictions render them both “vulnerable and lethal”, unable to escape these diametric poles of securitised representation (ibid.). They are either the threat, or they are threatened. The humanising strategy of depiction reminds the spectator that migrants and refugees are agentive, and this agency does not cease to exist due to their transience. The British press has traditionally homogenised and dehumanised migrants and refugees (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008; Khosravnik, 2009). However, there were some
instances of fair and humanising visualisation that allowed migrants and refugees to be seen not as some exceptional threat or issue that requires an exceptional response, but as humans with agency and voice trying to navigate their lives.

The representation of migrants and refugees as human with voice and agency is focused on subjects engaging in day-to-day activities or forms of activism. These depictions emphasise to the reader that migrants and refugees are agentive. The concept of “bare life” refers to life that exists in a biological sense, but the political capabilities of that person have been removed by a higher body with the power to categorise and define who is included and excluded (Agamben, 1998). Migrants and refugees are often ascribed the status of bare life, suggesting that they exist purely in a biological sense. However, other scholars contend this point, arguing that “migrants are not just passive objects [...] they are subjects with dignity and agency who care for themselves and each other in ways that exceed mere biological survival” (Lisle & Johnson, 2018: 15). The camp or border station should not be viewed as “a life-world of passive waiting or abjection, but rather a rich set of embodied collective practices that signify dignity, agency and power” (ibid.). Migrants and refugees have for a long time themselves called for greater representation of their voice in the media; “Why not publicize our energy and our power to help ourselves? We talk about UNHCR and we talk about NGOs, but we forget the refugees themselves. We forget the power they have to help themselves” (Harrell-Bond, 1985: 4). This representation comes in the form of innocuous and recognisable activities and actions, such as the upkeep of personal hygiene or engaging in work. This breaks the threatening/threatened dichotomy. The migrants and refugees are not portrayed as violent or barbaric nor are they portrayed as passive, abject and in desperate need of rescue. They are portrayed as human. They are recognisable and their agency is apparent. They are neither the violent existential threat, nor are they the helpless referent object of security. They are brought out of the above-politics realm of securitisation, and consequently are de-securitised.

Images 16 and 17 are but two examples that demonstrate the agency that migrants and refugees exercise daily. They engage in activism to make their voices heard. They exist beyond ‘bare life’ and ensure that they are well-kept. This kind of depiction does not show them to be threatening or violent or a mass. They are depicted in smaller groups or individually. They are not depicted as passive because they are seen exercising their agency. Overall, this strategy breaks the threatening/threatened dichotomy that the media so often traps migrants and refugees in.
Once again, the larger collective body being portrayed is extremely ambiguous. There is never a clear or specific articulation of who the reader should take these people to represent. In this depiction, migrants and refugees are sometimes named (which rarely if ever occurs in the other three strategies) which gives an individualised nature to the images. These images are representations of individuals and their daily lives. Therefore, it is difficult to truly comprehend the ambiguous representations seen within these images, as it is unclear who is being de-securitised. Is it the individuals through their displays of voice and agency? Or is it a much larger body altogether? The latter is unlikely because despite this strategy of depiction existing in the timeframe, the other three strategies were much more common.

4.6 Conclusion

This first phase of analysis has outlined the composition strategies and the larger collective bodies being depicted in the analysed images. In image set A, the figure of the migrant and refugee is portrayed as threatening, barbaric and dangerous. This is achieved through the visualisation of young able-bodied males engaged in forceful/violent behaviour or large groups in transit. The depiction of migrants and refugees as threatened, suffering and in need of rescue is accomplished through a focus on “women and children”, inherently vulnerable and pre-political figures who evoke sympathy rather than fear in the spectator (Enloe, 1993: 166). The third strategy of depiction identified was the migrant and refugee as inferior, undesirable and unwelcome, in which subjects were engaged in inappropriate behaviour or foreign influences in the UK were visualised. The final strategy of depiction showed the migrant and refugee as human with voice and agency, by depicting them engaged in either innocuous or everyday tasks.
or (peaceful) activism. The larger collective body being depicted by these various sets of images is ambiguous. At times, the larger collective body appears to be racialised, and the negative focus is almost exclusively on those crossing the Mediterranean. At the same time, within this group there are divisions and sometimes only men are being visually securitised as a threat, whereas women and children are securitised as an innocent referent object. At other times, the larger collective body appears to be those who have come from Eastern Europe and are perceived as having brought undesirable and unassimilable aspects of their societies into Britain. The larger collective body is at times broken along lines of perceived deservingness and at other times is collectivised and includes all who have crossed the Mediterranean or are entering from Eastern Europe. This high degree of ambiguity challenges the reader and makes it unclear exactly who or what is being securitised at any given time. The threat is difficult to pin down and specify which speaks to the complexity of this case of visual securitisation.
5.1. Introduction

The intertext that surrounded these images sought to constrain their ambiguity and perform the four strategies of depiction that have been identified. The articles, headlines and captions that accompany the images act as discursive signifiers, helping the spectator to interpret and read the images. Images and words are co-constitutive and work together in unison to construct meaning. As Mitchell (1994: 5) has said; “the interaction of pictures and text is constitutive of representation as such.” Therefore, in order for us to understand how these photojournalistic images came to constitute migrants and refugees as a matter of security, we must look to their intertext too.

This thesis has attempted to glean the prominent discourses that emerged in The Mail and The Sun. In similar fashion to Kearns (2017: 5), this thesis seeks to understand “the wider discursive context in which they [the images] were situated and through which their collective meaning would be shaped.” This process allows us to understand what kind of discursive signification the intertext of the tabloids provided for the images they published and how they interacted to render migrants and refugees as matters of security.

5.2. Image Set A – Threatening, Barbaric and Dangerous

The intertext that surrounds the images categorised as depicting migrants and refugees as threatening, dangerous and barbaric seeks to limit the ambiguity of these images by performing and reinforcing this depiction. The emphasis in the intertext of the articles was on the violence, illegality and criminality of the migrants and refugees. They stress the unrestrained barbarity and uncivil nature of the migrants and refugees. For example, Moore (2016) writes in The Mail Online that “Hundreds of enraged migrants caused chaos in Calais as they tried to board ferries to the UK in a violent rampage” and in similar fashion, Royston (2016) reports in The Sun Online that “HUNDREDS of rioting migrants swarmed Brit cars and lorries at the flash-point port of Calais.” Moore (2016) points to the chaos caused by “enraged” migrants, suggesting that they are unrestrained and barbaric, linking the threat to their attempt to reach the UK. Royston (2016) goes further, not only emphasising their violence by referring to their rioting, but also dehumanising them by likening them to a swarm. The discourse seen here is apparent throughout the entire timeframe, with frequent mentions of rioting and violence (Calderwood,
2016; Tomlinson, 2016; Hopkins, 2016). Articles discuss how “Brits were pelted with rocks in their cars” (Hopkins, 2016) at the port of Calais by migrants and refugees. Alexander et al., (1999) have suggested that dehumanisation can occur when an outgroup is seen as enemies or barbarians, which the intertext of violence and invasion certainly connotes to. Dehumanising metaphors that liken migrants and refugees to flooding, storms and uncontrollable influxes are also common which securitisates the migrants and refugees as one large group (Hawkes, 2016; Hawken & Matthew, 2016). Much of the intertext from the selected timeframe worked to dehumanise migrants and refugees and position them as a threat to the security of the UK.

The two tabloids are known to profess conservative political views and as a result of this, it is often assumed that the predominant message they espouse regarding immigration is negative. This is exemplified by the intertext they offer through their front-pages. The front-page of a newspaper has an affective power that grabs the attention of spectators with sensationalised headlines (Harrower, 1998: 28, 37). The headline therefore becomes crucial to establishing a discourse. The Sun and The Daily Mail both ran several extremely negative portrayals of migrants and refugees on their front-pages. Headlines such as ‘Let Us In Before You Vote Out: Illegals Storm Ferry Port To UK’ (The Sun, 21st June, 2016), ‘Checkpoint Charlies: Euro Judges Open The Floodgates to Illegals’ (The Sun, 8th June, 2016) and ‘Fury Over Plot To Let 1.5M Turks Into Britain: No.10 accused of cover-up before Brexit vote’ (Daily Mail, 13th June, 2016) demonstrate that they established a discourse of fear around the issue of migration. This discourse was prevalent on the front-pages; of the 20 front-pages collected whose main story was related to migration, 19 were negative. This suggests that despite the heterogeneous nature of the depictions identified in the images and articles, the main message of the newspapers regarding immigration was predominantly negative. These headlines perform a process of dehumanisation by portraying migrants and refugees as barbaric and violent. They also use metaphors and represent migrants and refugees as a large number rather than allowing any room for personalised narratives to take hold. This dehumanisation then feeds into a culture of fear, that allows the portrayal of migrants and refugees as a security threat to take hold (Esses et al., 2013).
The depiction of migrants and refugees as threatening is achieved through the mutually co-constitutive work of images and texts, which produce the portrayal of the migrant and refugee as a barbaric, invasionary subject. The negative and dehumanising intertext centres around the violence and force of migrants and refugees attempting to reach the UK, which reinforces the notion of invasion in the mind of the reader. Dehumanising metaphors and large, decontextualised numbers are common too, with migrants and refugees coming to constitute a threatening mass that will hamper the security of the UK. The prominence of these negative frames on the front-pages only add to the securitising potential of the images. The first thing a spectator would encounter would be theses overtly negative discourses. Overall, the accompanying intertext enhances the depiction of migrants and refugees as threatening and reasserts to the reader that those crossing the Mediterranean in a bid to reach the UK are a danger.

5.3. Image Set B – Threatened, Suffering and in Need of Rescue

The articles accompanied by images of women and children employed discursive registers that attempt to evoke feelings of sympathy and compassion. They assert that the women and children are innocent, passive and helpless victims in need of rescue. They convey a message
of deservingness and appeal to the sensitivity of readers. The intertext and image work in unison to undermine “our alibi of ignorance”, appeal to our emotions and “create a consciousness of what it means to be human” (Musaro, 2015: 320). This is intended to evoke compassion and sympathy from the reader. However, the act of talking about rather than to migrants and refugees enhances the depiction of them as passive. Therefore, this intertext does speak security on their behalf but it also places them “outside the order of humanity” (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017: 617).

While both newspapers are guilty of publishing negative images and texts during the examined timeframe, there is evidence showing sympathetic depictions and discourses. Consider for example The Daily Mail front-page from 05/05/2016 in which the banner headline read ‘After Mail highlights their plight, PM pledges sanctuary for child refugees suffering alone in European Camps: Victory for Compassion’. This text is not only written in order to evoke sympathy, but the newspaper themselves have claimed responsibility for instigating this compassion at a political level. Words like ‘plight’ and ‘suffering’ obviously point to a depiction of downtrodden bodies, whereas ‘sanctuary’ points to saving and rescue. The headline also seeks to emphasise that these children are alone. However, as was noted previously, this was the only sympathetic front-page relating to migrants and refugees identified during the timeframe. It is not surprising that it came early, when the wider policy discourse was somewhat sympathetic, and that it centres around the figure of the child, the ultimate symbol of innocence (Castaneda, 2002).
Both newspapers expressed sympathy and support for women and children, with an intertext that contained claims like “We believe that the plight of these unaccompanied children now in Europe […] has become so harrowing that we simply cannot turn our backs” (Stevens, 2016). Other articles emphasise that children have been “stranded in squalid conditions for weeks,” (Tomlinson, 2016) and others tell of the “severe risk” in which transient children live their lives (Newton Dunn, 2016). Articles that focus on vulnerable refugee women emphasise how “they live in constant fear of sex attacks against them or children” in the makeshift camps they call home (Newton, 2016). An article from The Sun describes the “tragedy” of a ship full of migrants and refugees capsizing in the Mediterranean (Hall et al., 2016). The article goes to great lengths to emphasise that among those thrown overboard into the sea were “women wearing headscarves and children” (ibid.). It describes how when the Italian Navy approached the sinking ship, the “panicking migrants rushed […] towards their saviours” (ibid.). This is a clear invocation of the vulnerable subjects (women and children) and an emphasis on the dependence felt by migrants and refugees on the heroic Western subject (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Gray & Franck, 2019).

This intertext thus performs the strategy of depiction of migrants and refugees as vulnerable, suffering and in need of rescue. It is a sympathetic discourse that speaks security on their behalf, with images of women and children enhancing their affective power. The intertext signifies these images by suggesting the women and children are vulnerable, at risk, living in squalid conditions and in need of saving. This intertext contributes to framing the migrants and refugees as the referent object of security, in need of help and protection. The combination of images of women, children and rescue photos and a sympathetic intertext contributes to the compassionate depiction of migrants and refugees. This somewhat contradicts the widely held assumption that the tabloids portray migrants and refugees in a negative and threatening way. Although, this depiction is negative in the sense that it passivises the migrants and refugees, it also constitutes them as threatened rather than threatening.

5.4. Image Set C – Inferior, Unwelcome and Undesirable

The headlines, captions and articles that serve as the intertext for these images in Set C place an emphasis on articulating an undesirable quality in immigrants and refugees and their incompatibility with English/British society. The aspects of society that the articles often focus on most are a perceived civility that migrants and refugees are framed as lacking, for example by specifically linking Eastern European migrants to public consumption of alcohol and
disorder. These are lazy stereotypes and tropes that are absolutely not limited to specific persons based on their point of origin, yet the articles go to great lengths to stress that these are the characteristics to be associated with Eastern Europeans. For example, Jeffery (2016) describes an image in which “Downing what appears to be straight vodka in the middle of the day, around a dozen migrants have been snapped huddled in warm clothing just yards away from one of the world’s most famous 5-star hotels.” She stresses that “the vast majority of homeless migrants in the UK come from A8 and A2 Accession States including Poland, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria” (ibid.). The author goes to great lengths to stress their point of origin and their incompatibility with British society through their unbecoming behaviour in the proximity to a symbol of British wealth and decadence. *The Mail Online*, reporting on the same story also highlights that their point of origin is “Eastern Europe,” seeking to link these instances of unwanted or disrespectful behaviour to a much broader body (Tonkin, 2016). The repeated mention of Eastern Europe therefore ascribes the behaviour of a few to an entire geographical region, suggesting that Eastern Europeans who emigrate to the UK should be perceived as a threat.

The intertext also seeks to emphasise the changing and damaged nature of the English/British societal fabric. The focus is on how immigration has changed things for the worse, through the actions, behaviour and livelihoods of the immigrant communities. Parker et al. (2016), discuss how a Polish man “was arrested for anti-social behaviour with gangs of beer-swilling Eastern Europeans thronging the centre of the troubled Derbyshire village of Shirebrook.” Another article focuses on how “Romanian immigrants” sleep rough in vehicles in a London carpark and have been seen “swigging whisky […] at 7:30am shortly after they had woken up” (Wells & Pollard, 2016). The tabloids are guilty of constructing what Imogen Tyler (2013) refers to as “revolting subjects”, abject bodies who evoke repulsion and disgust due to their characteristics and behaviour. The blame for their situation (e.g. sleeping rough in a car or park) is placed on the negative characteristics of the individual, rather than a broader look at structural inequality that may cause this living situation (Dhaliwal & Forkert, 2015).

Cox (2016), describes how the town of Boston “has become so overrun with eastern Europeans that it’s had to appoint the country’s first immigrant cop.” Indeed, his article contains a quote from a local which is a perfect encapsulation of societal security: “If immigrants want to come here then they should be willing to learn the language, our laws and our customs and be accountable to our police force” (ibid.). This quote is predicated on the notion that foreign-language signs and ethnic supermarkets indicate a lack of assimilation into the host society.
This threatens the host society, because it is believed that continued immigration will further undermine the societal fabric of England/Britain. Other articles lament the fact that a hotel is advertising with “a sign written in Polish” (Tweedie, 2016). Tweedie suggests to his readers that if you were to “close your eyes and listen to the voices” one would think they were in Poznan or Lodz (Poland). This discursive signification is specifically pointing to the degradation of British (English) towns due to immigration. The majority of this intertext is centred on Eastern Europe. The language suggests that towns are “overrun”, that “Eastern Europeans” are “thronging” them and that the Polish language has eclipsed the English language in use. This discourse is focused on a waning native identity and the incursion upon that identity by a stronger Polish/Eastern European diaspora identity. This is manifested in language, signs and businesses which the intertext suggest are taking over towns that were once authentically English. This works in combination with images to signify immigration as an existential threat to the identity, culture and customs of the UK; society itself becomes securitised.

5.5. Image Set D – Human with Voice and Agency

The intertext that surrounds the images in Set D is somewhat unique in terms of the dataset, because it involves speaking to migrants and refugees, rather than about them. The subjects of the images and articles are often named too. They are given an individual focus that is uncommon in migrant and refugee reportage and their experiences and narratives have a chance to be brought to the fore. This is a process that de-securitises migrants and refugees because they are seen as less of an “abstract and dehumanised political problem” (Bleiker et al., 2013: 411) and more on a human level. This kind of depiction represents “the perspective of others’ in [a way] that thematise[s] simple commonalities in our lives” which causes the reader to reflect on the universality of humanity (Villa, 1999: 96). They are able to recognise similarities and commonalities and readers may come to understand migrants and refugees as fellow human beings rather than securitised political issues.

This was the least common identifiable strategy of depiction employed by the tabloids, but there were some examples of a humanising method of reportage that spoke to migrants and refugees, rather than about them. Take for example an article published by The Mail Online on 05/05/2016, in which the exclusive focus is on the personal experience of Osama Abdul Mohsen, who came to Europe via the Mediterranean route (Glanfield, 2016). He is named and
several direct quotes are used, he discusses how he is “very tired” but he “sees his future” in Spain, where he was resettled (ibid.). The article has 17 photographs attached to it, which depict Mr. Mohsen at work, with his son and going about daily activities. He is given the opportunity to express his personal narrative. This means that in contrast to the first three sets he is neither depicted as a threat nor as suffering. He is seen exercising his personal will and agency. Similar depictions can be seen in other articles.

A young Afghan woman named Shirin is spoken to, and she expresses her fear over the conditions of the camp in which she is situated; “We are treated like animals. I’d rather be shot again than endure these conditions” (Newton, 2016). Several other anonymised women give testimony in this article, explaining the dangerous conditions of the camp and how they want conditions for transient women to improve. This is an example of a voice being given to the voiceless, something that critics of migrant and refugee journalism have called for repeatedly (Fraser, 2010). This is a particularly rare instance of women being given a voice within the media, because they are traditionally “represented without a voice or as passive victims in need of saving” (Holzberg et al., 2018: 540). This particular instance does seem to position Shirin and the other women as being under threat, but most importantly that sense of threat is being articulated from within by the women themselves which indicates their agentive capabilities. As Lisle and Johnson suggest regarding migrant and refugee agency, “it might be quiet, even constrained and momentary, but lives continue to be lived, choices continue to be made, demands, hopes and questions articulated” (2018: 16).

This kind of intertext was rare in the examined timeframe, but the above examples demonstrate what voice can do for migrants and refugees in the news. They can present their own narratives which frees them from the passivised, collectivised dichotomy of threatening and threatened. They can enact a process of human identification between witness and subject, which causes the witness to see similarities rather than difference (Villa, 1999: 96). This can bring them out of the above-politics realm, in which they are depicted as a political problem to be solved, rather than fellow human beings. This process can be understood as a process of de-securitisation, the migrants and refugees are depicted neither as threatening nor threatened. They are depicted as human with voice and agency, and able to express themselves however they may wish.
5.6. Conclusion

The accompanying intertext thus performed the four strategies of depiction identified, constructing migrants and refugees in heterogeneous fashion. Many of the texts emphasised the threat and danger posed by immigration. These texts either pointed to the unrestrained violence and barbarity of incoming migrants and refugees or the threat they posed to the identity and political community of England/Britain. However, there were other texts that bore a sympathetic tone with a particular focus on lone child refugees in Europe. This suggests that despite the assumption that the tabloid media is negative towards migrants and refugees, the reality of the reportage was far more nuanced. In some articles, the migrants and refugees were able to speak themselves and enhance the de-securitising potential of the images. They expressed individual narratives which rendered them human, rather than a threatening or passivised political problem. Overall, the texts worked in unison with the images to signify and create meaning. The intertext of the two tabloids performed heterogeneous strategies of depiction in co-constitution with the images, which spoke different kinds of security at different times.
Ch.6: Analysis Step 3: The Constitution of the Images

6.1. Introduction
The “specificity” of the visual in the context of securitisation owes to its immediacy, ambiguity and circulability. As was outlined in the theoretical framework, each of these aspects includes characteristics unique to visual securitisation. This thesis has already contended with the circulability of the analysed images, which was common across all four strategies of depiction. The degree of immediacy and ambiguity is not so straightforward. Immediacy is linked to the immediate emotive reaction provoked by an encounter with the visual, often due to a process of identification due to a face-to-face encounter. It is also linked to the depiction of graphic images of death. Ambiguity is linked to the inability of visuals to make specific policy demands, but instead, only leave themselves open to certain political interpretations.

The four different image sets display different levels and aspects of immediacy and ambiguity. In image set A, the immediacy is constrained by the absence of facial encounters between witness and subject. The ambiguity is constrained by the intertext and the images are open to be interpreted as evidence for choosing to leave the EU. The focus on individual faces in set B give these images a powerful affective immediacy because a face-to-face encounter takes place demanding an ethical response from the reader. However, the affective power of the graphic images in this set, depicting dead, drowned bodies, is limited due to the distancing and anesthetising effect such images have (Sontag, 1990). In set C, the depiction of inanimate objects does not allow for facial identification, which might limit affectivity. However, objects themselves can have an affective power that demands an emotional response from the witness, and in this case the audience of the securitisation (the tabloid readership) react emotionally to the sense of threat and loss surrounding their identity. The immediacy of the images in set 4 is predicated on a process of identification on a human level, the depictions create a sense of equality between witness and subject. Overall, the way in which these different image sets demonstrate immediacy and ambiguity is extremely varied which points to the complexity of visual securitisation.

6.2. Image Set A - Threatening, Barbaric and Dangerous
The immediacy of the images in this category is constrained by the fact that faces are often totally or at least partially obscured. A process of identification cannot take place between
spectator and subject, which limits the affective power of the image. The absence of a face-to-face encounter contributes to the dehumanisation of the migrant and refugee subjects. The lack of a facial encounter renders the migrant and refugee “outside reason and history, and, ultimately, outside the order of humanity” (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017: 617). It has been suggested that a confrontation with the face of the Other necessitates an ethical response from the spectator (Hansen, 2011: 56, citing Levinas). Levinas has suggested that the face “overflows images” and “obliges” the spectator (1979: 207, 297). Therefore, without a facial encounter, the spectator is more likely to be unmoved and unaffected. They are less likely to identify with the human in the photograph, but rather, they see the “abstract political problem” of the “faceless mass” with which they are confronted (Bleiker et al., 2013: 411). The examples below are but two images that demonstrate the lack of identification between witness and subject when migrants and refugees are depicted as threatening. The images show a violent protest and a clandestine attempt to enter the UK through the Channel Tunnel. The witness struggles to identify with the subjects and struggles to respond ethically. It becomes easier to see them as a security threat and a political problem more than anything else.

Unlike linguistic securitisations, visual securitisations do not make specific demands for action in relation to a threat. Hansen (2011: 58) argues that “visuals might be said to lend themselves to specific political interpretations or open up spheres for action, but they do not make an explicit policy demand.” The visualisation of migrants and refugees as threatening was linked by the tabloids to the EU referendum. Readers were urged to vote leave: “To Remain means
being powerless to cut mass migration” (The Sun, 2016) and that the UK Government has “never hit” its “target to reduce net migration to the tens of thousands – and […] never will if we remain inside the EU” (DailyMail, 2016). Others criticise remain voters for siding “with the people who said unchecked immigration is a positive thing for Britain” (Hopkins, 2016). The images themselves may not be capable of making explicit policy demands, but the political interpretations they are open to skew towards the negative framing of migration and that leaving the EU would alleviate this threat. The intertext attempts to constrain the ambiguity of the images by linking them towards this specific and exceptional course of action. The visual securitisation process thus aims to frame migration as the threat and the response should be a vote to leave the EU.

6.3. Image Set B - Threatened, Suffering and in Need of Rescue

In contrast to the images in Set A, the images in Set B often focus exclusively on individual faces which enacts a “grammar of face-to-face encounters” (Sahpiro, 1988: 124) subsequently demanding “an ethical response” from the spectator (Hansen, 2011: 56). This process of identification gives these images an affective immediacy that causes the spectator to feel sympathy for the subject(s) depicted. A relationship is created between spectator and subject and the face evokes an emotional reaction. This relationship then produces feelings of sympathy and compassion among the spectators and a desire to help. In the examples below we see clearly the faces of young children. In image 23, they are pressed up against a metal fencing and appear to be in discomfort. In image 24, we see a lone boy, his face is clearly visible and there appears to be no recourse to any parental support structure around him. He is isolated. The audience is drawn in by the focus on the face and confronted with the suffering that is being experienced. The visualisation of isolated children inspires “protective responses, a more ready identification of need and a greater willingness to respond to that need” (Lisle & Johnson, 2018: 16).

The images in set B also raise questions over the impact of graphic images. Several prominent theories regarding the use of graphic images have been proposed. Moeller (1999) has argued that an over-saturation of graphic images has resulted in compassion fatigue, in which people become indifferent to the suffering of others due to the frequency of witnessing such suffering (through the media). Sontag (1990: 15) has suggested that graphic images depicting dead bodies have a distancing and anesthetising effect. She argues that graphic images of death and destruction can “corrupt” the “conscience and the ability to be compassionate” (ibid.). Our
repeated encounters with graphic images of suffering “has given everyone a certain familiarity with atrocity, making the horrible seem more ordinary – making it appear familiar, remote ("it’s only a photograph"), inevitable” (ibid.). The graphic images of a drowned baby or bodies washed up on beaches have become so common to Western audiences that they have become distanced from the events. Image 10 displayed in this thesis is an extremely graphic and unsettling image and its inter-visual relationship to the Aylan Kurdi image is undeniable. The limp, lifeless body of an innocent young child. The cradling embrace of an aid worker. And yet, image 10 did not have anywhere close to the impact the Kurdi image had. The Kurdi image became iconic and crystallised the horror of the situation in the Mediterranean (Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2015). Image 10 was taken and published 9 months later. It did not seem to have the same impact that the Kurdi image had. It did not gain iconic status. The Mail Online published the unblurred image once and never returned or referred to it again in the timeframe. The Sun did not mention it specifically at all. This image, interlinked with the Kurdi image, appeared familiar, remote and inevitable, and thus its affective immediacy was constrained (ibid.).

Other images that depicted dead bodies did not seem to provoke change or even enter the mainstream political and societal discourse in the UK. The images seen below depict a tragic scene on a Libyan beach where several drowned migrants and refugees had washed up. The

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2 Aylan Kurdi drowned on the 02/09/2015 and his body washed up on a beach near Bodrum, Turkey. The image of his lifeless body became an iconic representation of the suffering and inhumanity occurring in the Mediterranean. The image was covered by media outlets around the world and he entered the global political discourse (See Laurent, 2016).
distancing effect that Sontag theorised appears to have occurred, as these deaths did not enter any kind of sustained or mainstream discourse in the UK. Therefore, it could be suggested that the immediacy of the graphic images published by the tabloids was constrained. They depicted passive suffering and securitised the migrant and refugee as under threat. But, the ‘in need of rescue’ depiction was perhaps limited in these images. Deaths in the Mediterranean came to have an inevitability about them to the spectator. The spectator had been anaesthetised to such horror. The visual immediacy and securitising potential of truly graphic images is therefore limited.

Image 25: Published by Mail Online, 03/06/2016
Image 26: Published by Mail Online, 03/06/2016

6.4 Image Set C – Inferior, Unwelcome and Undesirable

The affective immediacy of the images that depict migrants and refugees as inferior and undesirable initially appears to be limited. This apparent limitation stems from the depiction of inanimate objects. The theoretical underpinnings behind the affective power of images is that the spectator bears witness to the subject and they are confronted with a face-to-face encounter (Shapiro, 1988). When confronted with a foreign language sign or business, no such encounter can take place. The spectator is confronted with a physical manifestation of immigration and diaspora, but there is no face with which to engage.

Some academics have sought to grapple with the power of visualised objects and the potential affective immediacy they might possess. Lisle & Johnson (2018: 13) have contended that “objects are never inert containers or transmitters of stable meaning. Objects are deceptive: they appear closed off and mute, but are instead dangerous beasts that refract multiple, contradictory and incomplete meanings.” These inanimate objects that are being visualised thus carry meaning and must be interpreted. The interpretation that occurs in the context of the two
tabloids is likely to be negative, due to the scathing intertext that surround these images. To the reader, a Polish supermarket might become a negative manifestation of societal degradation. Sontag (1990: 12) has argued that “a photograph is both a pseudo-presence and a token absence.” Images that depict “the vanished past – are incitements to reverie” (ibid.). These images create a “sense of the unattainable” (ibid.). That unattainable past, in the context of this process of visual societal securitisation, is a past rooted in the specific conception of identity that drove the EU referendum. The sense of insular Englishness so aversive to foreign influences. The vote for Brexit can be understood as an attempt to recapture and protect that identity. And, it manifests itself visually through the securitisation of things that are as innocuous as a Polish language sign or supermarket. Therefore, to the correct audience, these images of inanimate objects do have an affective immediacy that is related to their conception of self and the threat they perceive their identity to be under.

6.5 Image Set D – Human with Voice and Agency

The images in Set D are somewhat similar to the images in set B, in that they predominantly feature a face-to-face encounter between witness and subject. However, in the case of the images in set D, this identification process evokes a response more akin to empathy than outright sympathy. The images are usually taken on an almost equal level with the subjects, they are usually looking directly and purposefully into the camera. This has an important impact on the identification process; “placing the viewer on an equal level to the subject depicted is often read as signifying equality, narrowing the cultural and spatial distance between the viewer and the viewed” (Kearns, 2017: 6). In this sense, the immediacy and identification process that occurs from the images in set D allows for the portrayal of the “simple commonalities in our lives” (Villa, 1999: 96). The process of identification here takes place in a more humanising fashion, where the witness can understand the subject as an agentive body rather than a passive and helpless body, like in Set B. The two examples below show Mr. Osama Abdul Mohsen and are demonstrative of the kinds of images that enact a process of humanising identification. Mr. Mohsen is seen in a language class and at his job. He is personally able to articulate that he is taking Spanish lessons and feeling settled at his new job. He has the ability to set and express his own narrative and history. And this allows for the witnesses to these images to see the “simple commonalities” they share with Mr. Mohsen (ibid.). He is no longer an abstract political problem, part of a threatening mass or a passive, suffering body. He is a human with voice and agency with whom readers can identify. Therefore, the immediacy of the images in
Set D contributes to an identification process in which the subjects of the images can be identified with on a human and universal level. They are able to go beyond the affective identification that renders them passive, as seen in image set B. The immediacy creates an instant relationship between spectator and subject at a human level, meaning that it is more difficult to see Mr. Mohsen, and others that are depicted like this, as a security threat. Instead, they are seen within the realm of normal politics as people exercising agency. Therefore, the visual immediacy of these images is crucial to their de-securitising potential.

Image 27: Published by Mail Online, 05/05/2016
Image 28: Published by Mail Online, 05/05/2016

6.6. Conclusion

To sum up, the constitutions of these images are varied in fashion. The specificity of visuals is what differentiates visual securitisations from linguistic securitisations. In such a varied corpus of images, there is no uniform immediacy to the images. The images in Set A are constrained in their affective immediacy by the lack of facial encounters between spectator and subject. In set B, the composition strategy centres on facial identification and thus the majority of these images bear a strong affective immediacy. However, the especially graphic images that visualise death actually have a distancing and anesthetising effect as postulated by Sontag (1990). The majority of those images contained within set C do not allow for face-to-face identification, because they are visualising inanimate objects. However, that does not mean that objects cannot evoke an emotional response from the audience. In this case, a sense of threat and loss is evoked from the audience for their own identity, which makes these seemingly innocuous photos of foreign influences in the UK extremely affective and evocative. Hence,
they do have a degree of immediacy. The images in Set D allow for a process of identification too, with a focus on identification but in a more humanising rather than passivising way. Overall, the constitutions of the images in this corpus are varied, ambiguous and impact the visual securitisation of migrants and refugees differently.
Ch.7: Conclusion

7.1 Summary

This thesis has examined the way in which images can link migration and security. To do this, the photojournalistic images published by two prominent British tabloids (The Sun and The Daily Mail) were examined during a time when immigration was an especially salient issue (01/05/2016-23/06/2016). The thesis utilised the framework for visual securitisation developed by Lene Hansen (2011) in order to grapple with the securitising potential of the selected images. In doing so, the thesis has evaluated the applicability of Hansen’s framework and whether it can be successfully applied to a large quantity of images. Hansen (2011: 69) called for “more case studies” and for scholars to engage her framework “both at the level of the soundness of its theoretical assumptions and through further empirical applications.” This thesis has done just that. Some aspects of the theory could be foregrounded because they were common across all the images. This thesis has attempted to contribute to the academic work on visual securitisation through further engagement with Hansen’s framework. The framework has been successfully applied but this success stems from its adaptation. The framework does not necessarily work as a one-size fits all guide, but rather indicates to the academic which theoretical aspects are important to visual securitisation. The challenge therefore is for the researcher to mould and adapt the framework based on the specificity of their case.

The first chapter of this thesis engaged with the academic and societal relevance of the work. It demonstrated that the intersecting issues of Brexit and immigration have inspired a host of academic works, but that visual securitisation has not yet been introduced into the fold (Gietel-Basten, 2016; Hobolt, 2016). This thesis’s contribution lies at the intersection of the pictorial turn, visual securitisation and the interlinked issues of Brexit and immigration. The contemporary visual age in which we live and the saliency of immigration in political and societal discourse renders this an original and informative contribution.

In chapter 2, the theoretical foundation of the thesis was outlined. To begin with, the pictorial turn was discussed. The main proposition that inspired this turn was that we did not have a suitable comprehension of what images are, what they do and how they interact with the world around them (Mitchell, 1994, 2018). The field of CSS took inspiration from this call to attend to the visual, and several different fields have emerged as academics have sought to infuse CSS with visual politics (see; Vuori & Saugmann, 2018). One outcome of this was the development
of visual securitisation theory; an attempt to understand how visuals speak security and several scholars have grappled with this issue (Campbell, 2003; Dodds, 2007; Moller, 2007; Vuori, 2010; Hansen, 2011, 2015; Heck & Schlag, 2012; Kearns, 2017). Hansen (2011) outlined a framework for visual securitisation in order to provide scholars with a way of theoretically engaging the visual and its securitising potential. Her framework stresses that visual securitisation must be analysed by examining, “the image itself, its immediate intertext, the wider policy discourse, and the texts ascribing meaning to the image” (2011: 53). This thesis unpacked and discussed her proposed analytical framework. Overall, this chapter aimed to give the reader an insight into the substantial theoretical backbone underpinning this thesis.

In chapter 3, the research design of the thesis was outlined. The method of data selection and collection was explained. The articles that referred to migrants/refugees in the selected timeframe were examined and their images saved. Then, in a preliminary phase of analysis conducted before the application of the framework, the images were categorised as either visualising migrants and refugees or not visualising migrants and refugees. They were further sub-categorised based on their strategy of depiction. This was an interpretive approach taken from the writer’s own perspective and informed by the concept of inter-visuality. The accompanying articles were also examined, and their prominent discourses noted. This process resulted in a large corpus of images and intertext to which the framework could be applied. The operationalisation of the framework involved the foregrounding of certain theoretical aspects. This adaptation of the framework and the decision on which aspects to prioritise engagement with resulted in the effective operationalisation of Hansen’s framework.

The next three chapters contained the analysis section of the thesis. In chapter 4, the images themselves were analysed. This was done by examining the dominant composition strategies, the larger collective bodies being depicted and the ambiguity of the images. The 703 collated images were analysed based on their strategy of depiction; Image Set A: threatening, barbaric and dangerous, Image Set B: Threatened, suffering and in need of rescue, Image Set C: Inferior, unwelcome and undesirable and Image Set D: Human with voice and agency. Images in Set A were composed of young, able-bodied males and large groups. Images in set B contrastingly centred on women and children. Image Set C showed perceived negative foreign influences in the UK. Finally, image set D showed migrants and refugees engaging in innocuous, everyday tasks or activism. The images carried much ambiguity in that it was unclear who the larger collective body being depicted was at times. The predominant focus on the Mediterranean
suggests a racialised larger collective body constitutive of the African and Arab Other. However, this collective was oftentimes split across gendered lines. At other times, the focus was on representing Eastern Europeans as undesirable and thus the larger collective body varies greatly. In Set C, the larger collective body for whom security is spoken is argued by the intertext to be British Society, but as discussed, the nationalist identity that drove Brexit was Englishness not Britishness (Virdee & McGeever, 2016). Despite the visualisation of British symbols, it was the insular and nativist English identity that was truly being represented during Brexit by the media, rather than a uniform British identity (O’Toole, 2016). The lack of an identifiable and common larger collective body reinforces the inherent and immense ambiguity that is attached to images. In a corpus with 703 images, this ambiguity is amplified with such a variety of depiction strategies and collectives being represented.

In Chapter 5, the texts that ascribed meaning to the images were examined. This was done by gleaning the most prominent discourses espoused by The Mail and The Sun throughout the selected timeframe from headlines, captions, articles and front-pages. It became apparent that the most prominent discourse these outlets sought to express was that migrants and refugees were threatening and dangerous, and that in order to alleviate this threat the UK had to take the exceptional decision to leave the EU. Sympathy and compassion were less prominently offered by the tabloids, but it was visible during the timeframe, particularly in relation to unaccompanied child refugees in Europe. The threat that immigration poses to society was discussed several times throughout the timeframe. The writers bemoaned how the EU’s open borders and freedom of movement would “have cultural and demographic repercussions for decades to come” (Littlejohn, 2016). The least common discursive modality was that in which the migrant and refugee were given voice. When this kind of intertext was identified, it enacted a humanising and de-securitising process that brought the migrant and refugee away from their threatening/passive dichotomous existence. This discourse allowed migrants and refugees to express personal narratives and histories. Overall, the texts that attributed meaning to the images performed and reinforced the strategies of depiction that were identified. They attempted to constrain the ambiguity of the images and convey meaning to the reader.

The final section of analysis examined the constitution of the images. To do this, their immediacy and ambiguity were scrutinised. In Set A, faces were often obscured which prevented identification between witness and subject from taking place, limiting the affective immediacy of these images. This dehumanised the migrants and refugees and rendered them an
“abstract political problem” (Bleiker et al., 2013: 411). The political interpretation that the images in Set A were open to was ambiguous, but the intertext worked to link the threat of migrants and refugees to the exceptional action of leaving the EU. In contrasting fashion, the images of Set B predominantly showed the faces of the ‘women and children’ depicted (Enloe, 1993: 166), enacting a “grammar of face-to-face encounters” and demanding an ethical response from the reader (Shapiro, 1988: 124; Hansen, 2011: 56). This enhances their depiction as vulnerable. The thesis also briefly engaged with theories behind graphic imagery, particularly the distancing and anaesthetising effect that such images have (Sontag, 1990). In Set C, it was suggested that despite no facial identification taking place, inanimate objects can carry meaning and these photos evoke a sense of loss. Therefore, these images had their own unique identification and immediacy. Finally, in set 4 the depiction of faces allowed for a process of identification between spectator and subject on a human level.

7.2. Discussion

The conclusions of this thesis suggest that the general assumptions that inspired an investigation of the tabloid press perhaps do not entirely hold up to closer scrutiny. They have been in part proven correct because migrants and refugees were predominantly depicted as threatening, but the tabloid coverage during the 2016 EU referendum was more nuanced than some suggest. There were heterogeneous and varied securitisations occurring in regard to migrants and refugees, which makes drawing a generalisable conclusion difficult. The clear result is that this interpretive research approach has shown that the tabloid coverage, despite being predominantly negative, is more nuanced than many political commentators and op-eds might lead one to believe (Bennhold, 2017; Buxbaum, 2019).

The research question that inspired this thesis was how did photojournalistic images published in the British tabloid media securitise migrants and refugees in the context of the EU referendum? This thesis shows that images link migration and security through the co-constitutive relationship between image and text in which the visual, intertext and wider policy and societal context work together to speak security in regard to a particular issue. The images and intertext of the two selected tabloids performed several different securitisations in relation to migrants and refugees. The most prominent was the linking of images depicting young men engaged in violent or forceful behaviour or large transient groups to notions of invasion and
bodily threat. The intertext further linked this to the EU and argued that the way to tackle such a security threat was to leave the EU. This thesis has not attempted to grapple with causality and is not doing so here either. There was also the less prominent visualisation of migrants and refugees as threatened and vulnerable. The images of helpless children early in the timeframe were linked to the untightening of asylum laws. The intertext in the third depiction positioned migration as a threat to British society and suggested that a vote to leave the EU would alleviate this threat. There was a less clear articulation of any sort of political discourse in the fourth strategy of depiction. This demonstrates that a heterogeneous reportage and visualisation was at the heart of the tabloid press during the selected timeframe on the issue of immigration.

This thesis also sought to make a conceptual contribution to the field of visual securitisation. This was done through an attempt to apply Hansen’s (2011) framework to a high quantity of images. In total, 703 images were collected for the application of the framework, which required some adjusting. This adjustment came in the form of a process of foregrounding. The framework appears not to be a one size fits all, it is malleable and must be adapted to the specificities of each case. For example, Hansen placed great emphasis on circulability because of the global nature of the Muhammad cartoon crisis. In the case selected in this thesis, circulability is much less of a pivotal issue, because the images are very much constrained within their newspaper context. Hansen also examined what could be considered an iconic visual. This thesis chose to focus on a longer period of continuous visualisation wherein the images were an omnipresent securitising force rather than a one-off iconic visual. Therefore, the larger quantity of images made ascertaining the specifics behind their immediacy and ambiguity difficult due to the tremendous variation in depiction strategies. The conceptual contribution is thus showing prospective future researchers that preliminary analysis and categorisation is crucial to the successful application of the framework, the aspects that become foregrounded are dependent on the selected case and that an application on a large quantity of images is likely to produce nuanced, complex and surprising results.

7.3 Limitations of the Thesis and Recommendations for Future Research

Although this thesis has made a relevant and valuable contribution to the literature on visual securitisation, there are some limitations that must be acknowledged. The first limitation lies in the selection of the tabloids. The thesis examined two sources that are well-known to be conservative and thus assumptions could be made prior to the research and analysis that the
predominant securitisation would frame migrants and refugees as threatening. This proved to be the case. There were instances of security being spoken on behalf of refugees and also humanising and de-securitising depictions. But perhaps the selection of a more left-leaning newspaper in a comparative approach would have yielded more data in image sets B, and D in particular. The visual de-securitisation of migrants and refugees is therefore a concept that could be explored further by analysing sources that are more likely to employ this strategy of depiction. A prospective researcher may even look to NGO or charity publications to seek out more data for this sort of analysis.\(^3\)

The images analysed in this thesis were also limited, almost exclusively, to images that contained human subjects. The section on societal security engaged with images that depicted signs, businesses and other inanimate objects, but the total number of such images was 24 out of a corpus of 703. Therefore, future research should focus on what the visualisation of objects can do and whether such objects can speak security. Some authors have begun to grapple with the issue of what objects can say in relation to migrants and refugees and this would be a fruitful avenue of research in the realm of visual securitisation (Lisle & Johnson, 2018).

Perhaps the most glaring limitation of this thesis is that it is guilty of doing what it has criticised the selected tabloids of doing. This thesis has spoken about migrants and refugees, rather than to them. The visual age in which we live has democratised the process of securitisation and thus future research should focus on how migrants and refugees are themselves visualising their existence (Hansen, 2011: 57). They have the agency and the capability to visualise their lives through social media, expressive art and a host of other platforms. Future research should examine the securitising or de-securitising potential of these visuals.

\[^3\] It must be noted that these sources have often come in for criticism regarding the way they depict migrants and refugees, because they reinforce negative perceptions of the Global South in the Global North. However, many NGOs are now focusing their marketing on more dignified and humanising campaigns (Musaro, 2011).
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