ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis:	Learning from the Past: An Examination of Discrimination & Progression in Italian and Syrian Immigration Narratives in the American Media
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Thesis directed by:	Doctor Kira Thurman

Historiography is a powerful tool to help society avoid making the same recurring mistakes over time. This thesis uses the philosophy of history to argue that the case of Italian immigration to the United States can provide us with a historical lesson in how to handle our current discussion of Syrian immigration today. This thesis seeks to answer why Italian media representations shifted away from discriminatory rhetoric, while animosity toward Syrian immigrants remains prevalent today. I first trace changing perceptions of Italian immigrants in American newspapers from the 1890s to late 1920s to outline the transition from rhetoric framing Italians as violent members of the mafia, towards beneficial members of society. I argue the evolution of Italian immigrants' position in American society can foreshadow the progress of Syrian immigrants if Americans think critically of media representations. I propose that September 11th and the Syrian refugee crisis inhibited the progression of Syrian immigrants by bolstering the discriminatory rhetoric that still lingers today, specifically in discussion of President Trump's travel ban. I encourage the American public to look critically upon the relationship between media's discourse, public perceptions, and public policy. Ultimately, I suggest bringing awareness to prejudiced media representation of immigrants can facilitate constructive discussion surrounding immigration policies in need of revision.

Learning from the Past:

An Examination of Discrimination & Progression in Italian and Syrian

Immigration Narratives in the American Media

By

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Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the College of Literature, Science, & Arts

at the University of Michigan in partial fulfillment

for the requirements for the degree

of Bachelor of Science

(International Studies with Honors)

2018

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<u>Acknowledgements</u>

This thesis would not have succeeded without the encouragement of my advisors, family, friends, and peers. Throughout the long writing process, each supporter played a key role in my dedication to completing my research. I thank Dr. Marcum for taking time out of his busy schedule to always make himself available for listening to my endless questions and concerns throughout the process, while also providing me invaluable feedback. I thank Dr. Thurman for devoting long hours during her time abroad to proofread my work, guide me on my research, and help me develop my writing skills throughout my time knowing her at the University of Michigan. I would also like to thank my international studies thesis cohort for the countless hours spent Friday mornings in class, and peer editing my work to reach its full potential.

I thank my family, specifically my mom, dad, and brother, for always keeping a positive outlook and encouraging me to stick it out because they knew my hard work would be worth it in the end. Mom, I would not have made it through this year without your love and endless delivery of cake pops to keep me motivated. I would also like to acknowledge my grandparents whose immigration stories from Italy to America inspired me to learn more about our heritage and the Italian immigration process. Finally, I thank my friends for encouraging me during my late nights writing at our house, and never telling me they are sick of hearing

me talk about my thesis. You guys are my #1 supporters and always knew how to cheer me up when the stress of completing this project was overbearing. Without these ambitious and loving people, I would not be where I am today with a completed project I am confident in.

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Chapter 1
Historiography, Literature Review, and Thesis Summary

Introduction

The goal of this thesis is to explore how racial and religious discrimination embedded itself in the portrayals of Italian and Syrian immigrants in the American Media. Furthermore, I will explore why the discourse surrounding Italian immigrants shifted after WWI, while depictions of Syrian immigrants still encompass prejudices in today's media discourse. I find that the media portrayed both the Italian and Syrian immigration waves coming to the United States as threatening to the American public. The resistance to both immigrant groups, I will argue, emerged from similar kinds of racial and religious discrimination they faced starting before WWI. In contrast to recent historical memory, Italians are now a respected immigrant group, illuminating inaccuracies in the past stereotypes promoted by the media. I suggest this shift in discourse occurred after WWI, when immigrants of different origins, such as Mexicans, overtook the negative spotlight and Italian immigrants rallied behind their united national identity as Italian Americans. The slow transition Italian immigrants underwent in the media foreshadows potential errors in rhetoric surrounding Syrian immigrants as terrorists in the media today. A goal of my thesis is to facilitate constructive discussion among the American public to think critically as to how perpetuated discriminatory rhetoric of Syrian immigrants may detrimentally impact their reputations, experiences, and legal status in America today.

1.1: Historiography

Leopold Von Ranke sparked the institutionalization of history, assigning history the role of judging the past to instruct the present and future ages (Bourne 1896). Von Ranke's philosophy of taking the past and applying it to the present day reflects my aspirations on how

the United States should handle current immigration debates. I argue that the study of history can prevent current misunderstandings and injustices from re-occurring if the American public takes a moment to step back and critically analyze past wrongdoings. Specifically, identifying and understanding the basis of past injustices towards immigrants can encourage society to foster a more accepting atmosphere for immigrants living in America.

The concept of learning from the past to develop new strategies in avoiding war, violence, and other disputes is nothing new, nor is historiography a new phenomenon in the handling of immigration policy. For centuries, historians have studied the first landings of immigrants in America. Journalists such as Tony Horwitz of the *New York Times* have also emphasized the connection between past animosities and the more recent fear of immigrants invading the United States (The New York Times 2006). The American public used past associations with minority groups and negative stereotypes to justify discrimination and the need for deportation of unwanted immigrants. In reality, Horwitz argued that the public was missing a 'full awareness' of history, specifically of Spanish presence in the United States, which resulted in a fundamental misunderstanding of minorities that still pervades American society today. I agree with Horwitz's opinion and encourage the nation to drop old, offensive associations by rejecting inaccuracies perpetuated in America through acknowledging the prejudices correlated with certain races and religions.

Historians such as Roy Rozenzweig focused on the prevalence of history in Americans' personal lives, especially its role in the formation of family identities. Families and individuals specifically rely on the history of their ancestors and their immigrant experiences to understand how they arrived at the identities they possess today (Rozenzweig 1998, 56). Newcomers to America faced opposition to their racial and religious affiliations, even since the colonial days of

American settlement (Reimers 1998, 5). Immigrants arriving to the United States often wanted to keep their customs and traditions alive in the new American atmosphere to maintain a connection to their homeland. Consequently, some people believed the influx of immigrants threatened the stability of the nation state's customs and traditions by bringing in differing nationalities, ethnicities, and religions (Meyer and Moors 2006). In response, the media depicted these outside beliefs as distinct, while bolstering the proper "American identity" that provided a familiar and comfortable atmosphere for citizens born in the United States (Meyer and Moors 2006, 13). At this time, the typical American identity structured by American perceptions and media portrayals was a white middle-class family associated with white picket fences, baseball, apple pie, and other "traditional" American customs, thus sheltering them from any social or political controversy.

In this thesis, I will trace the historical transition of Italian representation progressing from reputations as mafia members, toward a more accepting treatment of Italian immigrants still in place today. I argue that we should learn from the case of the "Italian mistake" by contemplating how current intolerant rhetoric surrounding Syrian immigrants as terrorists fosters discriminatory thinking and behavior. Furthermore, I will postulate that Syrian reputations may transition into a more positive treatment in the future if we understand the lessons of the past. As stated by *New York Times* journalist Helene Stapinski, "Italian-Americans who today support the president's efforts to keep Muslims and Mexicans out of the country need to look into their own histories- and deep into their hearts. After all, they're just a couple of generations removed from that same racism, hatred and abuse" (Stapinski 2017). In alignment with my argument, Stapinski encourages Americans to think critically about public discourse surrounding immigrants today. Stapinski also considers the current immigration debate through a historic lens, to incite a

sympathetic view towards immigrants dealing with similar hardships our past ancestors suffered from upon initial arrival. Throughout my thesis, the above ideological framework underlines why my contributions are significant in today's society.

1.2: Brief Method Summary

Historians of the past such as Leopold Von Ranke tended to focus on primary sources such as memoirs, diaries, manuscripts, and eyewitness accounts. In my analysis, I will focus on the media, specifically written articles, as a source to understand how social contexts play a role in the construction of media discourse surrounding immigrants. Similar to many previous researchers' reasoning for using newspapers, my methodological decision to focus on newspaper articles as my main source provides a broad lens to examine all of Americans' societal views of Italian and Syrian immigrants, in contrast to memoirs and personal accounts with a more individualistic lens. Newspapers are an interesting point of analysis because they often reflect the views of the authors, editors, and owners who published the piece, in addition to popular public opinions. To further explain my methods used in this thesis, each chapter will outline an additional methods summary, as each chapter required specific guidelines for choosing the appropriate primary source articles that accurately represented media dialogue of that time period. In the next section of this chapter, I will review past literature on each subject and underline their connections to gauge a deeper understanding of the media's role in immigration representations.

1.3: Literature Review

1.3.1. American Perceptions

Immigration, discrimination, and media representation are terms frequently found in today's public discussions on policy reform. The interconnected relationship of these three topics

can help us understand why topics such as controversial political policies, Supreme Court cases, and daily struggles of immigrants in the United States dominate the media today. Dialogue around racial and religious discrimination in news and entertainment media often focuses on minority populations that lack a dominant voice to combat prejudices. Building on previous research, I will examine how the American media portrays racial and religious prejudices of minority immigrant groups in correlation with public opinion.

Polling studies are a successful method of providing an understanding of popular ideologies circulating the 'public sphere'. The public sphere is a realm of daily social interactions that facilitates the formation of public opinion. According to Jürgen Habermas, the public sphere mediates interaction and discussion between the population, media, and culture, leading to one dominant public opinion (Habermas 1989, 137). Thus, the public sphere is a realm that illuminates how cultural contexts influence attitudes towards immigrants. Meyers and Moors argue that these 'publics' are constantly reconstructed and challenged through vocalization of different opinions (Meyer and Moors 2006, 12). Research conducted by *The Public Opinion Quarterly* periodically documented American perceptions of immigrants in the United States and European nations (Lapinski et al 1997). The research methods focused on assembling data from previous census databases, consisting of quantitative and qualitative interviews and surveys. *The Public Opinion Quarterly* polling study conducted by Lapinski et al in 1997 surveyed American public opinion of immigrants and identified that the sharp increase in the number of immigrants during the end of WWII "was accompanied by a distinct increase in negative attitudes toward immigration levels" (Lapinski et. al. 1997, 256). Segovia and Defever updated the review of public attitudes between 2001 and 2007 using the framework presented by Lapinski et. al. The updated study revealed less extreme attitudes in the public's view of immigration policy than in

the 1990s, but an increased lack of confidence in the country's leaders during the Clinton and Bush administrations to address immigration issues (Segovia and Defever 2010, 376). The public's disapproval of the government's decisions to either restrict or enable immigration led me to wonder what cultural and political changes between the two periods impacted the division of public opinion.

Although the polling studies conducted by *The Public Opinion Quarterly* are useful in providing data on public attitudes, they do not effectively signify what societal changes caused a shift in public opinion and why. Examining the negative rhetoric surrounding immigrants in the public sphere will allow me to analyze the transformations in discourse. My inquiry will help understand how to identify the ways in which patterns in public opinion may guide the representations of immigrants in the future. I will focus on how rhetoric in traditional news sources sensationalized racial and religious prejudices towards immigrants (Hauptman 2013, 15). Taking a step further than opinion polling, I will examine the media's coverage of the 'immigration question' to understand the correlation between current cultural atmospheres, American opinions, and media representations of immigrants.

1.3.2: Media Theories

The study of media representation has been a focus of the field of communication studies since as early as 1926, when the *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast caused nationwide panic and sparked the study of the psychological impacts media has on its viewers (Cantril 1940). In 1980, Stuart Hall classified the media as an 'ideological force' that defined political issues and social relations through producing and spreading 'popular' ideologies (Hall 1980, 117). These popular ideologies then gain attention in the public sphere, ultimately echoing the popular perception throughout culture. The media can create impressions of fear, animosity, or acceptance based on

their messages. Hall explains how programming encodes a certain framework of knowledge, creating "meaningful discourse", which is then decoded by the audience, solidifying a "gratification", or "realization" influenced by the social and economic framework in the program (Hall 1980, 130). Although media effects on audiences is an established research field, my study focuses solely on how prejudiced representations of immigrants relates to the immigrants' overall experience in the United States. In my research, I build upon Hazil Cantril's concepts established in the *War of the Worlds* broadcast study that concluded the dissemination of information, via media outlets, can cause fear among the American public, regardless of the story's validity. In my own qualitative analysis of newspapers, I will use Hall's methods to explore the intended meanings of the producers or journalists, and the impact publications have on American citizens' rhetoric surrounding immigrants.

Stuart Hall highlighted the problems of media credibility, its influence on politics and the state, and the increased power of dominating voices of the ruling class (Hall 1980, 119). In a 'mediated world', the media is held responsible for both informing and interpreting news for the public (Borchers 2002). Thus, the ruling class and media hold significant control on political discussion surrounding immigrants in the United States. According to Chermak, the media plays a crucial role of constructing the narrative surrounding historical events such as September 11th, 2001 (Chermak 2003, 5). Although I agree with Chermak's proposal that the media shapes public understandings of historical events, I refute his claim that newspapers' influence is solely based on the media's 'access' and 'comprehensive coverage' capabilities (Chermak 2003, 7). I argue that it is not just the physical and technological capabilities the media has, but also the ideological force and power held by the dominant opinion Habermas refers to, which I previously mention in the American perceptions section. The influence of the media lies in the

hands of both the producers, and the audience decoding the historical event. I will evaluate the American population's power and methods of decoding the media's construction of historical events. Specifically, I will demonstrate that audiences' use of different types of mainstream newspaper organizations functions as a factor in forming their own and other's identities.

1.3.3: Identity Formation

The study of how media influences "identity formation" is crucial in today's world increasingly mediated by the press. The professors represented in Mariel D'Atrey's summary papers compiled at a conference at the University of Chester in London Literature, generally agree that a certain group's representation in the media can impact their social, economic, and political position in society (D'Atrey 2010, 3). I agree with these arguments that the media plays a significant role in immigrants' personal experience in a new country. I will analyze the media's role in identity formation and how the process may change after significant historical events, specifically 9/11 and the Syrian refugee crisis, in which the public sphere called certain identities into question. I will contribute by narrowing in on how newspaper rhetoric impacts the development of immigrants' new national identities. My study differs from existing communication literature by scholars such as D'Atrey, Chermak, and Hall on the bases that they do not account for the outside economic, cultural, personal, and political influences and adjustments that immigrants, specifically, face in their new home when forming their new identity.

1.3.4: Race

Race is a theoretically constructed product of the different ideas and thoughts discussed in the public sphere (Gandy 1998, 34). The racial discrimination of minorities in the media is a potential factor highlighted in prior literature explaining why Americans have a negative

association with immigrants. Prior literature on racial discrimination of minorities in the media depicts race as a potential factor for why immigrants have negative associations (Cottle 2000). In the public sphere, the media promotes representations of "unequal social relations" and provides power to specific groups over others (Cottle 2000, 2). This structuring of the public sphere creates a division between 'us' and 'them', perpetuating immigrants' vulnerability to discrimination. Cottle argues that the media abuses their power of influence, depicting immigration as a threat in the news by sharing stories mostly about crime, drugs, and violence in association with minorities (Cottle 2000, 38). The International Federation of Journalists identified two conflicting media influences implemented by journalists. The proposed dichotomy is that journalists perpetuate ethnic and racial hatred by associating immigrants with violence, but also fight against racism by exploiting human rights abuses and discrimination throughout the world (D'Atrey 2010, 45). I disagree with the latter statement on the basis that the American media emphasizes international violations committed by foreign parties, such as Apartheid and Palestinian intifada, but fail to disclose the human rights abuses occurring within the boundaries of the United States. Therefore, the mainstream newspaper organizations do not successfully fight against racism as D'Atrey suggests, since they focus on international abuses that avoid implicating the United States as a guilty party in violating human rights. Instead, the media focuses on developing sentiments of mistrust by the public towards minorities about what danger the 'other' may impose (Hoggart 1992, 73). This hallmark racial debate also lacks the link between racial discrimination in the media and its influence on immigrant minorities trying to establish their identity in a new land. The media's public judgement of an immigrant group establishes a national understanding for those unfamiliar with their foreign customs and influences social construction of reality and policy (Gandy 1988, 243). I believe Gandy's study is

still relevant in today's contexts, and I plan to extend his study by incorporating more recent literature projecting that certain minority representations are slowly improving over time. The future drive towards breaking down the impact of media frames in political and social reality is a key question I will grapple with.

1.3.5: Religion

Since the emergence of mass media, changing stages of a societies acceptance or rejection of religious differences are represented in mainstream media publications. Various media publications provided religious movements with alternative outlets to foster belonging throughout the world (Meyer & Moors 2005). Consequently, the strengthened network of religious connections established by the media also created detrimental platforms for severe discrimination. Reimer's analysis is a reliable documentation of the religious discrimination immigrants faced after migration by outlining discrimination in the American media (Reimer 1998, 10). Although Reimers briefly mentions the religious discrimination in the American media, I will fill the gap in the overall lack of literature examining how religious discrimination in the media impacts the acceptance of immigrants in their new home. Stewart Hoover argues that the relationship between religion and media creates a 'double articulation' because religion is both a produced and consumed social practice (Hoover 2006, 26). Hoover argues that religion and media are not isolated phenomena, as a religion's specific characteristics are ridiculed or bolstered in media discourse. I connect his arguments to Stuart Hall's discussion of a "produced meaning" in media representation, which if applied to Hoover's framework can solidify a dominant representation of a specific religion (Hoover 2006, 30). I agree that the media circulates arbitrary representations of certain religions, consequently encouraging a common sense understanding of a religious group to media viewers. A flaw I find with previous scholars

such as Hall and Hoover are that they held far too optimistic views on the media's role in public discourse. The emphasis on media as a positive tool for forming religious identities does not acknowledge the stereotypes often reflected in the media. When analyzing religion in the media, Hoover focuses on an 'inside' view and how individuals experience and interact with the media (Hoover 2006, 230). In contrast to Hoover's individualistic focus, I am concentrating on the broader implications media has on the collective religious identity of an entire immigrant group. I will account for how negative rhetoric publicized in the media inflated and perpetuated negative characterizations of immigrant groups associated with a particular religion. The contexts of current society, especially after large national events like the September 11th terror attacks, are pivotal in understanding the relationship between media, religious identities, and the immigrant experience in the United States.

According to Hoover, the September 11th attacks sparked problematic religious representations in newspaper headlines across America (Hoover 2006, 236). Although current literature studying anti-Islamic sentiment often focuses on post 9/11 American media reactions (Asultany 2012) (Hauptman 2013) (Cainkar 2002), others like Reimers and Hoggart demonstrate the presence of anti-Muslim backlash prior to the attacks (Reimers 1998) (Hoggart 1992). In my view, I argue that the media was problematic prior to the terror attacks of 9/11 because making religious minorities scapegoats for national problems was a common strategy (Meyers and Moors 2006, 5). The scapegoat method used in 9/11 appeared far before the attacks. For example, the Italian immigrants in the 1890s were blamed for bringing filth and crime to the United States, when in reality crime was already prevalent in American society (Stapinski 2017). There is no prior research establishing the correlation between discrimination in the media of two different time periods of religious groups. Thus, my comparison of these time periods and

different immigrant groups will educate the American public on how inaccurate misrepresentations of the past detrimentally impacted immigrant experiences, to encourage the prevention or elimination of current negative rhetoric surrounding immigrants.

The relationship between religious and racial discrimination in the media, and the impact on immigrants requires further analysis. In order to understand these interactions, I will dive into two waves of immigration, the first coming from Italy and the second from Syria. These culturally specific historical experiences provide a platform for analyzing how racial and religious discrimination in the media impacted American public opinion, and in turn the daily lives of the two immigrant groups. More specifically, the daily lives of immigrants are impacted by how other Americans perceive and integrate immigrants into their communities. Although the Italian and Syrian influxes of immigration occurred in different time periods and originated from different countries, their struggle with racial and religious discrimination strongly impacted their social positions in America. The historical analysis of Italian immigrants' portrayals and progression in the media can provide a framework for how we understand current rhetoric surrounding the Syrian immigrants of today. Americans will then have the capability to question and engage with the news media, a crucial first step towards recognizing and addressing underlying issues with prejudiced media representations, discriminatory immigration policy, and increasing tolerance of immigrants.

1.4: Summary of the Thesis

The outline of this thesis will progress chronologically starting with the analysis of Italian representations in American newspapers. In chapter two, I will analyze representations of Italian immigrants in the American media during the 1890s to the end of WWI in 1918. The goal of this chapter is to critique American newspaper publications and analyze how historical racial and

religious categorizations fueled their discriminatory media portrayals. In chapter three, I will address the shift in Italian representation in the media that started to occur after WWI. I will attribute this shift in depictions of Italian immigrants, but not Syrian immigrants, to four main reasons. First, the strong presence of Italian national pride and customs they successfully established in America over time slowly overshadowed their supposed "less desirable" qualities. Secondly, the events of 9/11 and the Syrian refugee crisis inhibited Syrian immigrants from developing a national identity as strong as the Italians inside America. Thirdly, the respectability politics that came along with the immigrant influx of other minority groups to America trapped Syrian immigrants in an unwanted immigrant category, separate from immigrants thought of as advantageous to America. Finally, in the backdrop of each of these factors, is the differentiated amount of time each immigrant group has had to overcome their less advantageous depictions in American society. One way I will support my proposition of this shift is by analyzing more recent newspaper articles that portray Italian immigrants as beneficial members of society, in contrast to violent criminals in the past.

In chapter 4, I will transition my focus to the current representation of Syrian Muslim immigrants in the American media. I will once again use newspaper articles to exemplify how the media associates Syrian immigrants with terrorists after 9/11. Similar to the Italian case, I will trace current animosities towards Syrian immigrants back to racial and religious animosities from the pre-WWI immigration wave, which were amplified by the 9/11 attacks and Syrian refugee crisis. The purpose of my comparative structure between the Italian and Syrian immigrant cases is to emphasize how misrepresentation of Syrian immigrants persists, while the Italian reputation progressed and escaped pre-existing prejudices. A focal point of this section's newspaper analysis will rely on the media's focus on the travel ban enacted by the Trump

administration. Finally, in chapter 5, I will tie together my argument that we must learn from historical mistakes of Italian discrimination to avoid repeating history in today's public discourse. I will argue that by inaccurately representing Syrian immigrants as "terrorists," we are repeating the same errors that resulted in discrimination against Italians. The ultimate goal of this thesis is to encourage educated discussion on how representations of immigrants in public discourse impacts immigrant experiences, acceptance, and policy in the United States.

Chapter 2
Italian Discrimination in the Media

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to analyze how discrimination towards Italian immigrants' racial categorization and religious practices enabled newspaper organizations before the end of WWI to perpetuate prejudiced beliefs of Italians as violent members of society. I will analyze newspapers articles published throughout the 1880s to the end of WWI in 1918 to highlight the unjust rhetoric used to describe Italians. I critique American publications by collecting the discriminatory rhetoric used with the goal of revealing the different content and motivations behind varying sources. I explore historical prejudices of the American citizens toward Italians' racial and religious identities to recognize how it factored into media portrayals and the lack of Italian acceptance into society. Finally, I foreshadow why the connections between race, religion, and media portrayals account for the future shift in rhetoric surrounding Italian immigrants.

2.1: Article Selection Method for the Italian Case

In my primary source analysis section of this chapter, I selected articles from newspapers based on the news organization's size and popularity. I focused on both large and small news organizations to encompass how different reporters throughout the country played varying roles in reproducing racial and ethnic inequality by promoting certain discourses (Cottle 2000, 32), particularly in the case of Italian immigration. Additionally, another benefit of including smaller news organizations is an ability to analyze the local coverage throughout the United States. The distinction I draw between small and large news organizations is primarily based on the breadth of the audience they are targeting. Small organizations have a more local appeal, while larger news organizations reach a broader audience throughout the American public. Incorporating two distinct newspaper sizes also accounts for diverse methods reporters utilize within their

organization. Reporters at larger organizations, such as *The New York Times* and *The Chicago Tribune,* have the fortune of allocating the time and funds to repeatedly cover crime and news within the Italian population. Contrastingly, smaller newspaper organizations provide an alternative perspective on Italian immigration with a local, narrow angle. The different angle could be attributed to less exposure to the Italian immigrant community and less resources to explore the distant life of Italians immigrants. A limiting component of local organizations is that they less commonly cover Italian immigrants located in little Italies because there is less manpower in the organization to devote their time to 'non-American' areas considered outside of their local scope. Local newspapers, however, provide insight to how different parts of the country reacted to immigrants within their community. Therefore, although dominant news organizations typically have the larger readership and influence, it is also crucial to include local newspapers to understand the overarching power of all newspaper organizations with respect to influencing and reflecting the perceptions of the American public. Throughout all of the different types and sizes of news organizations I utilized, I kept the search terms consistent, focusing on headlines with "Italian Immigrants" and "little Italies", which often resulted in the appearance of words such as "crime" and "mafia".

A limitation I acknowledge of my article selection process is that it does not distinguish liberal from conservative news organizations. This limitation was an intentional decision stemming from the restrictive knowledge of the political party associations with certain newspapers organizations at that time. Trying to determine and account for political slants in each organization's publication could have led to inaccurate interpretations of what the reporters' intentions were for publishing the article at the moment. In addition, the American Newspaper Press at this time did not have such clear divides as in today's publications, but instead included

individual editorials with varying political slants (Kaplan 2002). Therefore, there could be certain newspaper organizations that included different pieces opposing each other on the political spectrum. The following section briefly outlines the initial flow of Italian immigration to America contextualizing rhetoric used in my newspaper analysis section.

2.2: A Summary of Italian Immigration in the Media from the 1890s-1920s

The United States was a difficult place for Italians to immigrate to, given the complexities of creating a successful life and avoiding maltreatment. A contributing factor to the strenuous adaptations faced by Italian immigrants was the portrayal of Italians in the American media (Vellon 2014). Controversy and drama sell readership for the American media (Barnhart 1939). Therefore, the media emphasized stereotypes of Italian immigrants held by a small percentage of Americans because it allowed them to maximize profit and popularity. The repeated discriminatory rhetoric utilized by the media correlated to American citizens learning to view Italian immigrants as violent, dangerous, disruptive individuals on the already-functioning American society. Both the American media and its citizens perpetuated these destructive portrayals, creating a vicious cycle that often correlated with the hostile environments Italians experienced, such as those described by Robert Ferrari. In his autobiography, Ferrari commends immigrants like his father and mother who "sacrificed their health and even their lives in the building of America" and "faced no misery […] comparable with that which [his] mother found in New York in the late nineteenth century" (Ferrari 1912-1965, 16). The obstacles Italian immigrants faced upon initial arrival created a difficult atmosphere to rise above their unfavorable social, economic, and cultural status associated with the new wave of immigration.

Regions across America, especially Chicago and New York City, experienced an influx of immigrants after WWI, making the 1890s to 1920s the ideal time to trace the shift in rhetoric

of Italian immigrants during and after the war. The influx in immigration from Italy and other regions overwhelmed the United States, resulting in Congress calling for an emergency immigration hearing in 1921 to address how the government should handle overbearing immigrant flows. This hearing ultimately placed a ban on Italian immigrants coming to America, claiming Italians were 'inimical' to the American government (Emergency Immigration Legislation 1921). The legal ban of Italian immigrants impacted the Italian population in two drastically different ways. Although the ban was developed based upon supposed threatening qualities of Italians, in chapter 3, I establish the ban and quota systems as evidence for eventually shifting media representations away from discriminatory portrayals. Although, I argue that the legal bans also initially provided a foundation to the American media to highlight the toxic associations which even government officials linked to Italian immigrants. Miniscule problems with violence and crime in Italian-American life did exist, similar to other immigrant communities (Dickie 2015). The public's initial fixation on criminality and violence, however, placed Italian immigrants in a solely pessimistic light. The media, specifically newspapers, ultimately promoted an Italian identity comprised of undesirable attributes of their race, religious beliefs, and traditional customs (Vellon 2014).

2.3: Questioning Italian 'Whiteness'

In this section, I will examine past racial discrimination against Italian immigrants as a preliminary factor explaining why newspapers publicized Italians as undesirable members of America's national fabric. I argue that the media's representation of Italian immigrants as destructive to American society reflects Italians' racial categorization as distinctly different from white because those afforded with white skin color ruled the racial hierarchy at this time (Ngai 1999, 70). "Racial unassimiliability", or the idea that a foreign race would not integrate with

American whiteness, was a growing sentiment among the American population, encouraging the exclusion of non-white populations to keep the native-born bloodstream clean from those who would not fit into American society (Ngai 1999, 80). Therefore, the acceptance of an immigrant group relied on their racial categorization, either as white or "other." The separation between Italian and American racial identities was a prominent factor explaining why the media perpetuated stereotypes of Italian immigrants. Coinciding with the start of WWI, an increased sense of hyper-nationalism throughout the American public led to the government implementing discriminatory immigration restriction based on race (Vellon 2014, 15). The media fed on the increased sense of the nation-state by widening the gap between "us", or the United States citizens, and "them," the Italian immigrant, deteriorating their social status.

Throughout the 1890s, heated debate ignited about the racial classification of Italians. In his book *White on Arrival,* historian Thomas Guglielmo grappled with this debate by illuminating an increased connection between racialization and criminalization of Italian immigrants. Scholarly literature that researched the relationship between criminology and immigrants highlighted the intersection of race, origin, and legal quotas to clearly outline the process that led to the normalization of the "criminal alien" (Albrego, Coleman, Martinex, Menjivar & Slack 2017) (Ngai 1999).

Although the quota laws existed against Italians on the basis of their origin, no laws explicitly banned Italian immigrants for their racial classification. Instead, newspapers and legal acts subtly insinuated racial inferiority of the Italian population. Guglielmo pointed out the secondary effects of Italian's lack of "whiteness" throughout the preconceptions they faced in their daily lives. At times, the *Mezzogiorno's* dark complexions caused racial inequalities with labor discrimination, unfair wages, and a general undesirability of their presence (Guglielmo

2003, 15). Overall, race differentiation played a distinct role in the media's patter of perpetuating the dismissive stereotypes of Italian immigrants as disruptions to the peaceful lives of Americans.

2.4: The *Mezzogiorno*

When newspapers reported the atrocities and murders Italian immigrants supposedly committed, they often specified the perpetrators as immigrants from southern origins, such as Sicily (Guglielmo 2003, 191). The historic inequality between the north and south, originally established within the confines of Italy, followed the Italian immigrants into their new lives. The "southern question" is a highly studied issue in Italian literature (Dickie 2015) (Guglielmo 2003) (Vellon 2014), that emphasized the inferiority of the darker-skinned Italians from the agricultural south with a less industrialized economy. Southerners, often called *Mezzogiorno*, were deemed "lesser" because of their ancestral association with people of African descent (Vellon 2014, 16). Americans maintained the racial discrimination forced on the Italian *Mezzogiorno* by referencing the southern descent of mafia members in newspapers. In a *Tribune* article that reported the security details at an Italian funeral, reporters described how "Chicago policemen rubbed against dark-skinned mourners seeking the feel of a pistol" (Guglielmo 2003, p. 192). In this article, reporters associated Italians and weapons such as pistols in the common discourse (New York Time 1893). In addition, it emphasized the fear police had of Italian mourners sparking violence with weapons, which sent a message that Americans should fear Italians. This article took the connection a step further by adding their dark-skinned racial categorization to the rhetoric. In this case, race was a backdrop that the media used to justify their criminalization of the Italian immigrant identity. *The Chicago Herald Examiner* article published in 1925 more explicitly depicted Italian racial differentiation when noting the "light complexion" of an assailant, which

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therefore meant he was most likely "not an Italian" (*Chicago Herald Examiner* 1925). Based on common quotes in the *Tribune* and the *Chicago Herald,* American media perceived Italian immigrants as lower class, dirty, violent immigrants who they would not want to bump into on the streets of their city. Newspapers promoted that Italian immigrants were not like the average American because of their dissimilar tone of "whiteness."

The darker skin complexion of Italians also called Italian race into question based solely on appearance. Guglielmo suggested that the constant representation of Italians as criminals inferred a hereditary aspect of immutable and undesirable Sicilian traits. For example, in 1928 *The Tribune* described kidnapping as a "custom inborn in Sicilians and some Italians" (Guglielmo 2003, 191). *The Chicago Tribune* also represented famous gangsters such as Al Capone in a vicious, savage, and animalistic way (Guglielmo 2003, 191-193). The prejudiced racial associations with criminals, along with legal quotas put in place to restrict immigration from origins "comprised of criminals" fueled the newspapers' representations of Italian immigrants. Americans also maintained the racial discrimination forced on the Italian *Mezzogiorno* by referencing the southern descent of mafia members in newspapers.

The division between the northerner and the *Mezzogiorno* perpetuated the stereotype of the mafia thriving in the agriculture system of the south (Dickie 2015, 38). Journalists used the less socially appealing agricultural, peasant reputation of the South in their depiction of Italy, and more reluctantly included Northern upper-class characteristics. Prominent sociologists at the time, such as Edward Ross argued that the "criminal instinct" in *mafiosi* traces back to southern Italians' because they were a "primitive stage of civilization" (Guglielmo 2003, 172). The separation between the north and the south all routed back to the southern question of their "whiteness."

2.5: Roman Catholic Religious Scrutiny

Another element that led to the American media's frequent publication of discriminatory rhetoric of Italian immigrants was the intolerance for their religious practices. The American media and public used the majority of Italian immigrants' dedication to the Catholic Church as reason to isolate and discriminate against them. Religion throughout the United States was an "arbitrator for admissibility" into the common culture (Bayoumi 2006, 282). This social regulation meant that if the religious practices of immigrants strayed from the average Protestant practices dominating the United States at the time, their acceptance was less likely. As a result of this standard, Italian immigrants suffered from staying loyal to their religious practices of the Roman Catholic Church. When the Italian population first arrived in America, American society perceived the Roman Catholics as a "menace" or threat to American society (Reimers 1893, 10). States even banned Roman Catholics from the naturalization process, only allowing certain religions permission of citizenship until 1875, when the Supreme Court held that state rules about immigration were unconstitutional (Reimer 1892, 11). The American public's dissatisfaction with Italian religious beliefs was evident in their resistance towards allowing Italian citizenship.

The threat of the growing Roman Catholic Church to "Americanization" was another reason I argue that the media publicized Italian immigrants as detrimental to society. The strong connection between Roman Catholicism and the Pope in Italy provided a path for protestant Americans to question Italians' loyalty to their new "melting pot" of a home (*New York Times* 1981). Although published in 1981, *New York Times'* summary of a Catholic conference still reinforces my argument because it effectively captured the American sentiments towards the Roman Catholic Church during the 19th century nativist period, which initiated during the period

I am analyzing. At this conference, Roman Catholic bishops publicly stated that "Americanization does not call for the abandonment of cultural differences, but for their wider appreciation", which the United States was failing to accomplish (*New York Times* 1981). The desires of the Roman Catholic bishops explicitly opposed the United States' goal of keeping immigrant customs contained in order to keep a homogenous American identity. The inherent connection between Roman Catholicism and Italians reinforced nativists' fear of religious "contamination" by "undesirable immigrants" flooding the United States in the 1900s (Hernandez 2010, 28).

Although the media rarely pointed at the Catholic religion as an explicit fault of the Italian population, I argue that religious differences from the common American at this time period fueled the media's focus on portraying immigrants as objectionable additions to the United States. Prior to Italian immigration, Catholicism was already established by the Irish immigration wave during the Potato Famine in the late 1840s, yet the practices of the Roman Catholic Church still faced extreme resistance (Reimers 1988, 10). Ultimately, I argue that the media subliminally drew on Italian religious difference to fuel prejudiced phrasing when reporting on Italian immigrants.

A criticism which may arise from my argument is that the Italians had an easier transition because the Irish Catholic community previously established Catholicism in the United States. I argue the existing presence of Catholic churches formed by Irish immigrants, however, actually inhibited the assimilation of Italian immigrants into the American community (Vellon 2014, 22). The Roman Catholics faced resistance of their "foreign" religion from the American public and were also excluded from previously developed churches established by the Irish. Italian Roman Catholic religious practices, such as church attendance and the manners of worshipping gods or

saints, slightly differed from Irish Catholic practices (Vellon 2014, 21). Therefore, the American public saw Italian religious customs as alien and threatening to both the Irish and their own dominant beliefs and rituals.

Forming their own communities where Italians could practice Catholicism freely seemed to only garner more ire from American media outlets. In an 1889 article in *The New York Times,* titled "Religion for the Italians", reporters published the Pope's order for Roman Catholic Italians to have their own isolated churches, in order to "look out for the welfare of the immigrants" (*New York Times 1889).* This article highlighted the Pope's role in associating Italians with their homeland, and further separated Italians from American customs. Both the emotional and geographical separation between Italians and the average American bolstered the discrimination of the media.

The mafia's religious affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church was a topic the media often drew upon to sustain their violent depictions. Religion was a fundamental component of the mafia's customs and traditions throughout Italy and America. The newspapers often reported on the mafia's code of ethics referred to as "*Omertà*" (Chicago Daily Tribune 1888). Part of the code of *Omertà* held religious value by cementing their relationships through sacred ceremonies. For example, a common relationship honored in the mafia was that of the "*compari*" or "godfather", which relied on a religious baptismal ceremony to officiate the bond (Dickie 2015, 90). The mafia's association with the Roman Catholic Church allowed the press to once again practice distasteful rhetoric regarding the Italian immigrants and their religion.

2.6: Racing Religion

American media depictions of race and religion were never in isolation from one another, but rather combined in their depictions of Italian immigrants. According to Moustafa Bayoumi,

religion defines race (Bayoumi 2006, 269). Thus, religious identification influences the formation of one's racial formation. Bayoumi outlined the role religion played in determining racial classifications by examining immigration law and judicial cases where immigrants challenged the naturalization requirements. Oftentimes in legal immigration cases, judges relied on both the racial and religious identifications of the immigrant seeking naturalization to decide their citizenship status (Bayoumi 2006, 279). Later, I will further outline how these legal immigration cases demonstrated how race and religion were held closely in line with each other, not only in media representations of Italian immigrants, but also in the legal statutes surrounding immigrants. I use Bayoumi's connection to support my argument that racial and religious classification influenced the hostile experiences of Italian immigrants. The pattern of racial and religious discrimination already founded in the American society facilitated the American media to successfully perpetuate discriminatory representations. In the next sections, I will dive more in-depth with my analysis of Italian prejudices in newspaper publications.

2.7: Discriminatory Rhetoric of Italian Immigrants in American Newspapers

The dramatic newspaper headings of crime and murder in the 1890s perpetuated the stereotypes developed in regard to Italian American immigrants. The rhetoric surrounding Italians throughout the United States consisted of terms such as gangsters, murderers, and members of the mafia when represented in the media. Although the mafia was active throughout parts of America, their specific criminal activity is less significant to my argument than the collective discriminatory identity of all Italian immigrants, including those uninvolved in the mafia. I argue that both mainstream and local organizations that published articles their readers would find appealing engaged in prejudiced descriptions to account for public racial and religious animosities. Communication theorists previously established that "media discourse is

the main source of people's knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies" (Cottle 2000, 36). Thus, news organizations like *The New York Times and The Chicago Tribune* spread reporters' opinions and provided a source of information to readers. Simon Cottle acknowledged that journalists did indeed "harbor racist views and sentiments" (Cottle 2000, 18), which at times resulted in the public misunderstanding reporters' views as factual.

The American media created the term "alien gangster" as a reference to the group of Italian immigrants that citizens and the police wished to eradicate from their population in hope of eliminating violence (Guglielmo 2003, 169). The term alien gangster reinforced Italian representations as outsiders that do not belong in American society. Newspaper articles often followed headline formats with titles such as "Ready with knife or pistol, Hot-blooded Aliens [...]"; and "[...] Recent Crimes which illustrate the lawlessness and vindictive impulses of many immigrants from Southern Italy [...]" (New York Times 1893). The previous typical 1893 articles published in the *New York Times* emphasized disadvantageous characteristics of Italian immigrants. A reader analyzing this article could infer that the Italians brought violence and sleaze with them to America. News organizations repeatedly published these adverse connotations, which could lead American readers to think Italians in general brought danger and death to American towns. The association between Italians and gangsters caused a Chicago man from the western suburbs to recall that during the Prohibition era, "a lot of times if you told people you were Italian, they'd look upon you and right away they thought you were a gangster" (Guglielmo 2003, 185). The experience of this individual man was not unique to the 1920s, as the dominant stereotypes of Italian immigrants often reflected the racism present in American culture.

Bolstering this association, most articles failed to distinguish the "*Mafiosi*" from other Italian immigrants, therefore tarnishing the reputations of all immigrants not even involved in the mafia. Other prominent news organizations such as *The Tribune* referred to Italians as "alien murderers" responsible for the endemic murder and crime problems in large cities like Chicago (Guglielmo 2003, 171). The repetition of the word "alien" in connection to derogatory characters like murderers and gangsters demonstrates the prominence of anti-Italian sentiment in American newspapers. *The New York Times* continued the discriminatory rhetoric by classifying Italian immigrants as "sneaky" and "cowardly" descendants from the bandits who brought the Sicilian 'pests' in which America cannot eradicate (Guglielmo 2003, 172). I argue that dialogue regarding Italians in this manner drew the attention of American readers because they often experienced Italians trying to assimilate into their businesses and culture as a disruption, which factors into why reporters continued to publish relatable stories. Reporters who used prejudiced language to describe Italian immigrants reinforced the discrimination already occurring throughout America.

The *Chicago Tribune* article published in 1888 titled "Has Chicago a Mafia? How the Deadly Sicilian Organization Works […]" also exemplified the exaggeration and dramatization the press associated with Sicilian immigration and the mafia. It claimed that American cities were full of Sicilian men who devoted their *Omertà* to the Sicilian Mafia. The article stressed that Sicilian citizens brought their secret societies and traditions of murder to America (Chicago Tribune 1888). "La Cosa Nostra" was the dominant and powerful mafia organization centralized in America, comprised solely of Sicilian immigrants (Dickie 2015, 24). The newspaper focused on the murderous dynamics of the mafia and failed to account for the Italian immigrant demographic uninvolved in mafia violence. A reader with little information about the Italian

population may infer that the only aspect Italians have to offer are their secret codes and societies. Headlines lumped Italian immigrants into one category, leaving little room for reader interpretation as to how the Italian immigrant group as a whole could contribute to American society.

Although the media's dialogue overemphasized Italian immigrants as "Italian assassins", this illustration was not completely inaccurate for some Italian immigrants (Guglielmo 2003, 195). As John Dickie outlined in his book *The Cosa Nostra*, there was significant evidence that the Sicilian Mafia was active throughout America from the 1900s until around 1941. Dickie traced the connections of the roughly eight million Italian immigrants coming to the United States to highlight the inevitable relationships between a handful of immigrants and the mafia established in Palermo, Italy (Dickie 2015, 162). While the number of mafia members who transitioned their work to America was relatively low in the larger scope of immigration, the media still fixated on the unpleasant attributes only true for a small portion of Italians. As a result of the media connecting attributes of this select group of Italian immigrants to the collective whole, the violent reports reflected poorly on Italian immigrants with no relation to the mafia throughout their daily lives.

The newspapers' depiction of Italians also impacted how immigrants in a new nation formed their individual identities. The continuous discriminatory portrayals of Italian immigrants led the immigrants to strengthen their Italian national identity and pride to cope with prejudices. The honor Italians associated with their homeland was a key agent in helping protect against the criticism they received from citizens or immigrants of other origins. Italians used their traditions and customs to empower their sense of unity by building confidence of their origination. I propose the pride throughout the Italian community offered a channel for immigrants to connect

to their homeland where prejudices of their culture were absent. The Italian immigrants then simulated this escape through colonizing little Italies. In chapter 3, I will detail how little Italies were utilized as a tool to strengthen their national heritage by concentrating their population in one geographical region to combat and defend against their reputations as criminals (Capitani 1891, 13).

2.8: Conclusion

Race and religion are key factors that explain why the media represented Italian immigrants as unwanted contributors to society. The discrimination they faced for their darker skin tone and 'alien' Roman Catholic practices were what separated Italian immigrants from the American community that practiced Christianity (Bayoumi 2006, 282). Many American citizens did not have the chance to commonly interact with Italian immigrants, and therefore never had the opportunity to properly meet Italians unaffiliated with the mafia during their initial wave of arrival. Instead, Americans understood the Italian persona solely through the media's representation as mafia members out to kill. The isolation provided the opportunity for the media to draw on the public's lack of exposure to the average Italian immigrant.

The media used the division between Italian immigrants and the typical American citizen to bolster the sense of national identity and homogeneity of Italians. The newspapers highlighted the differences of Italian immigrants with prejudiced images of Italians because they were 'different' than the standard, white-skinned Christian American. Racial and religion variance, although not always explicitly mentioned, constantly influenced the way reporters decided to represent Italian immigrants. As mentioned earlier, race is theoretically constructed (Gandy 1998, 34). Therefore, newspapers played a fundamental role in Italians, specifically *Mezzogiorno's*, ambiguity of 'whiteness'. Religious difference motivated reporters to paint the

violent picture of Italian immigrants in order to unite the nation by excluding minority races and religions. The threat of a new customs infiltrating American society resulted in discriminatory discourse. Consequently, the media ignored many accomplishments of Italian immigrants such as Robert Ferrari's father who established a new life in America, despite the obstacles of "everything dear to them being far away, and [being] exploited economically, as well as physically" (Ferrari 1912-1965, 12).

The media both reflected and influenced the public beliefs regarding Italian immigrants as detrimental to American society. Thus, if the media shifted public discourse of Italian immigrants to include more favorable attributes, the improved public awareness could favorably alter perceptions of Italians in America. In the next chapter, I will examine how the Italian reputation did improve in time with the eventual acceptance and tolerance of their racial and religious identities in the United States.

Chapter 3
The Italian-American Transition in the Media

Introduction

As I discussed in chapter 2, the initial representation of Italian immigrants in the media used discriminatory rhetoric to depict them as violent members of the mafia. The end of WWI altered the previous discourse surrounding immigrants. After WWI, America focused on rebuilding the nation-state by emphasizing the exclusion of immigrants. A general increased animosity towards immigrants transformed the United States from a nation of settlers, to an American community striving for one homogenous identity. In an attempt to maintain the racial order and American identity, the government implemented new legislation that limited the number of immigrants allowed to enter from each origin through a quota system. As a result, this forced immigration underground increasing the number of undocumented immigrants. The harsh realities of the new quota system reflected amplified anti-immigrant sentiments often held by Americans after the war.

In this chapter, I argue that after WWI, the media strayed away from their previous pattern of singling out the unfavorable attributes of Italian immigrants in their coverage due to the following reasons. First, the overpowering anti-immigrant atmosphere in America diverted the attention solely from Italian immigrants to other immigrant groups that American society deemed as less desirable. Second, I argue that the Italian population was able to endure the amplified immigrant animosities because of their previous exposure to American prejudices. Solidarity previously established by Italian immigrants allowed for a resilient community to develop by instituting Little Italies and Italian language newspapers. Finally, I argue that in this time period the acceptance of Italian racial 'whiteness', in addition to their religious practices,

partially expanded in popular opinion throughout America. All of these factors built a framework for the emergence of a prideful, powerful, and accepted Italian immigrant community today.

3.1: The Post-War Atmosphere in America

After WWI, immigration policy culminated into one word: Quotas. The animosity towards the general immigrant population heightened after the end of the first World War in 1918, resulting in immediate action in revising immigration policy. In an American society already fearful of foreign infiltration, WWI further inhibited immigrants' chances of trying to access and assimilate into the United States. The War unleashed a wave of hyper-nationalism, encouraging further discrimination based on foreign race, religion, and customs (Vellon 2014, p. 15). The anti-immigrant sentiments held by both citizens and politicians were apparent in the legislation passed after the war.

In 1921, Congress held an Emergency Immigration Hearing. At this hearing, the government looked at immigration from an international standpoint to limit migration from countries such as Austria, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Switzerland, Turkey, and of course Italy (United States 1921). Members of congress, such as Albert Johnson, expressed their anti-immigration sentiments by listing the unsuitable qualities of each origin for immigration to America. For example, he referred to Florence as "so honeycombed with socialist ideas and activities of every degree" so much that all emigration should be suspended from Italy (United States 1921). One of the main pieces of legislation materialized from this hearing was the Emergency Quota Act of 1921, which limited U.S. immigration to under 50% of the original number in 1920, capping the immigrant total at 300,000 immigrants per year ("Citizenship and Immigration Grant Program" 2017). In contrast to the early 1920's, there was no longer lenient policies allowing a more open flow of migration

after the implementation of current barriers such as literacy tests. Increased qualification requirements to legally immigrate developed from the goal to keep "new" immigrants out of America.

A distinction between "new" and "old" immigrants began to emerge within media rhetoric. The connection between the quotas put in place and the previous migration flow is particularly apparent when examining how Italian immigrants, often referred to as "new" immigrants in legal quotas, were allotted smaller quotas. Michael Greenwood and Zachary Ward analyzed how the immigration flow from 1908 to 1914 influenced the newly established quota system (Greenwood and Ward 2015). New migrants were classified as undesirable additions to America because they were less skilled and educated. They were also considered "birds of passage" since they supposedly did not try to assimilate into the American culture, and instead kept to themselves in their own colonies, such as Little Italies (Greenwood and Ward 2015). As a result of these disadvantageous sentiments, there was a significant decrease in Italian immigrants coming to America after the new legislation went into action.

Building on the new regulations, the 1924 quota focused on specifically limiting countries such as Italy and Spain due to their influx of immigration prior to WWI (Greenwood and Ward 2015). For this reason, I argue that other immigrants, such as the Mexican population, began to experience the negative spotlight as the window for Italian immigration dwindled in the late 1920s. A clear correlation exists between the decrease in number of Italian immigrants and the decreased frequency of Italians portrayed as mafia members. Since the Italian immigrant population was no longer rapidly increasing, American media outlets stopped portraying Italians as threats to American life. The Italian immigrants previously in America increased their determination to strengthen their own identities within the confines of a new home.

In an atmosphere of heightened animosity towards immigrants, it may appear as a mystery why the American media distanced themselves from representing Italian immigrants as detrimental to society. In this chapter I will continue to outline why the drop in Italian immigration and the rise of anti-immigrant animosity in post-war America toward immigrants from other origins led to a shift in rhetoric surrounding Italian immigrants.

3.2: Shift in American Press Coverage

Prior to analyzing reasons the American media strayed from portraying Italian immigrants as detrimental to society, I must support my argument by highlighting newspapers patterns indicating the gradual shift. The gradual transition away from representing Italian immigrants in a solely undesirable light was difficult to track. During intensive research combing through newspaper databases, it was no longer a simple task to find an article overgeneralizing Italian Immigrants as mafia members after the 1920s. Instead, the American media started to mention positive traits of the Italian population and articulated separations between immigrants and the few criminal mafia members still wreaking havoc in America. Another indicator of the decreasing animosity toward Italian immigrants is the decrease of articles on them in general.

After the 1920s, Italian immigrants were rarely singled out by the American media for their negative attributes, unless it was proven acts of violence of the mafia members. Instead, beneficial contributions from the Italian population appeared in headlines such as "Valentino's Allure Captivated America" and "Nonnas Pasta Blessing", which emphasized Italian immigrants as valuable members of society (Serluca 1998). The new attention drawn to the "Italian Nonna" also carried a gendered element, showing the transition of Italians from masculine members of the mafia, to feminized caring grandmas. Celebrating Italian traditions such as grandma's pasta at the forefront of the American media allowed the general public to see a more comprehensive

side of the Italian immigrant (Serluca 1998). In the later 1920s and early 1930s headlines even featured infamous mobster, Al Capone, in headlines such as "Al Capone Feeds 3,000 Jobless Daily; Fan Mail Grows", "Capone Gives out Soda Pop", and "Al Capone Host to School mates of his Son" (Guglielmo 2003, p.186). These headlines are examples of how the media strayed from the typical denouncing of Italian immigrants. Italians were no longer seen represented and understood solely as the distrustful mafia members, but now as advantageous members of an American society.

In contrast to past newspaper articles that connected the criminal acts of mafia members to the general Italian immigrant community, journalists began articulating the difference between *Mafiosi* and the average Italian. In one specific article on the attempted murder of a detective, the reporter highlighted the distinction between the mafia members and "the hard working and industrious Italians in the community" ("Former Famous Detective Ill" 1920). In another article published in 1964 titled "Only in America: The Wonderful Italians", the press again highlights the separation between the members of mafia organizations in the United States from the general Italian Immigrant community. The article referred to a New York radio broadcast that was "seeking to absolve honest Italians from grief and worry, and from guilt by association" during the large the mafia trial testimony of a powerful *Mafiosi*, Joe Valachi (Golden 1964). I argue the more comprehensive press coverage including beneficial attributes of the Italians slowly helped reshape their reputations as productive contributors in the public's mind.

3.3: Limitations

I do acknowledge a possible limitation of my argument, which is that the Italian immigrants are not completely removed from the unwanted immigrant reputation. It is a valid point that the media still focused on the general anti-immigrant sentiment spreading throughout

America. In a 1920 article headlined "American and Citizenship", the *Miami Herald* journalist solely focused on the concern of alien's ability to truly naturalize as a citizen of America. The article emphasizes the need for a "real spiritual allegiance […with] citizens who think and live only in the terms of American life" (The Miami Herald 1920). Although the discourse like this still perpetuated detrimental attributes of immigrants, the case of the Italian immigrant improved as time progressed throughout the 1900s. Italian immigrants were no longer singled out because of their specific racial classification or traditions. Instead, the media and government started paying attention to different flows of migration from regions such as Mexico. In the next section, I will argue that the attention diverted to other immigrant groups enabled the progressive shift in depictions of Italians.

3.4: Post- War Italian Immigration

I propose the structural adjustments of immigration law in the late 1920s correlates with the decline in Italian immigrant portrayals as violent barbarians. The quotas set in place to limit Italian immigration impacted the Italian population far beyond the natives stuck in Italy. I argue that the new limitations forced upon Italian immigration were a contributing factor to the constructive shift away from hurtful rhetoric in the media surrounding Italians.

From 1908 to 1914, the Italian immigrants dominated the composition of immigrants entering the United States, with a mean immigrant flow of 202,222 (Greenwood and Ward 2015). During the time of mass migration of Italians, America was still learning to deal with the emergence of foreign Italian customs in a new atmosphere. After this period of discomfort, the American government reduced this immigration flow by restricting the Italian population to low quotas in comparison to other smaller countries. For example, in 1921 the United States set quotas at 65,721 for the UK, 25,957 for Germany, and 5,802 for Italians (Greenwood and Ward

2015). The quota system was a sweeping attempt for the United States government to regulate the influx of immigrants to protect the white, educated, and superior 'American Identity'. I argue the resurgence of nationalism also sparked the strengthening of the Italian population in America, who already knew how to mitigate exclusion from the American population. The stability of large numbers of Italians from previous migration flows were enhancing during a time where immigrant groups who were not as established were still learning their new home. Italians strengthened their traditions and customs, which eventually gained popularity and attention from the American media. Ultimately, the previously established community of Italian immigrants created an atmosphere for Italian immigrants to enrich their reputation in the American media. One of the main mechanisms used by the Italian immigrants to enable a connected community was the Italian language newspapers.

3.5: The Italian Language Press

After WWI when the American population unleashed a harsh wave of discrimination towards immigrants, the Italian population constructively responded by honoring and celebrating their customs. Instead of accepting defeat, Little Italies across the country developed Italian language newspapers to unite their communities through publicizing the accomplishments of their fellow citizens. After the 1920s, America took in an increased number of diverse immigrants from around the globe. The Italians built upon the lack of unity between other immigrant groups by focusing on strengthening their national identity to support one another. Peter Vallon described the Italian language press as a "tool to navigate their new environment", especially in Little Italies throughout New York and Chicago (Vellon 2014, p. 26). Publications such as *Il Progresso* and *Belletino della Sera* allowed Italian immigrants, both inside and outside

of Little Italies, to receive information such as job listings, success stories, and current events from their homeland as a tool to bond the Italian population in America.

Certain immigrants who were considered well qualified and experienced were tasked with developing these newspapers. Leaders called "*prominentis*" were typically bilingual in Italian and English with successful businesses established in America (Vellon 2014, p. 23). *Prominentis* contributed to how the Italian population managed to rise to a superior position within the various immigrant groups. For example, *The New York Times* referred to a *prominenti* named Mr. Fragone as an Italian-born man of talent respected and esteemed by the men in America (Vellon 2014, p. 26). The recognition of prestigious Italian actions within the American press was a huge advancement towards Americans considering Italians as more competent. The work of *prominentis* also bolstered the Italian reputation by publicizing philanthropic efforts such as raising aid and awareness for those struggling in Italy. *Prominentis* spread the news of success of Italian Immigrants, which encouraged other Italians to strive for success in their new home. In addition, awareness spread to the general American public about the intelligence and prosperity of the Italian community when hearing about publications featuring powerful Italian immigrants.

Discussions of current political movements were also a central theme in Italian language newspapers, placing different subversive publications in debate with each other. One political debate that dominated the Italian language press was the controversial 'southern questions' that continued in the United States. Creating a platform for constructive discussion, the Italian language press newspapers ultimately succeeded at bonding Northern and Southern Italians in America to form one cohesive and powerful immigrant group (Vellon 2014, p. 16). Cohesion

between the wealthy industrialized Northerners and the lower class *Mezzogiornos* proved to the

Americans that Italians were a civil group able to organize and put aside their differences.

The newfound cohesion between the previously divided north and south would not be

possible without discussing the question of Italian racial classification. The Italian language

press found itself in the middle of many political movements due to various subversive authors

taking controversial stances regarding Italians position in America. One of the main political

debates addressed by Italian newspapers was the racial question of Italians. According to Vellon,

the Italian language press provided Italia immigrants power to establish themselves as white

throughout the United States (Vellon 2014, p.31). As I will further analyze in later sections, the

Italian language press was a prestigious tool utilized to bolster the reputation of Italians. The

impacts of the Italian language newspapers led far beyond improving the Italian identity in

America, but also beneficially altered American understandings of Italian immigrants as white.

3.6: The Racial Question

The evolution of Italian representations in America emerged during a period of increased

debate over racial categorization of whites. From 1790 until 1952, the naturalization process

sustained a racial pre-requisite allowing only "white persons" to gain citizenship (Lopez 1996, p.

1). Although certain qualifications of who is white fluctuated over time as the Supreme Court

grappled with the issues in naturalization pre-requisite cases such as *Ozawa and Thind*,

immigrants continued to fight for their 'white' classification. Immigrants desired this

categorization because it allotted them legal rights along with cultural acceptance. Upon arrival,

there was immediate debate of Italian 'white-ness' as mentioned in Chapter 2. However, with the

reduction of Italian immigration, the press dragged minority groups like Mexican and Asian

populations into the spotlight, slowly avoiding representing immigrants like the Italians who physically appear whiter as racially inferior in comparison to other minorities.

Two main ideologies dominated the classification of race during this period coined 'scientific evidence' and 'common knowledge'. Common knowledge referred to the popular opinion of the public, while scientific evidence relied on the specialized and biological classifications (Lopez 1996, p. 45). According to Lopez, from the period of 1878-1909, when the Italians' 'whiteness' was most significantly questioned, these two ideologies worked together to establish Italians as an alien race solely on their difference from typical skin colors of American citizens (Lopez 1996). During this timeframe, Italian sociologists such as Cesare Lombroso and Gabrielle Gribaudi referred to the south as filled with 'criminal savages from Africa' (Vellon 2000, p.17). The results of these studies were not isolated to Italy, and the ideas held by Lombroso and Gribaudi spread to America. However, in 1909, social pre-constructions of 'common knowledge' and physical analysis of 'scientific evidence' started to diverge (Lopez 1996, p. 48). As a result, scrutiny arose regarding theoretical inferiority of the Italian race for relying solely on 'scientific evidence', rather than the now preferred ideology of common knowledge. The courts switched to relying on common knowledge instead of connecting physical features with crime, which allowed Italian immigrants to escape their association with mafia members. The Italian reputation was thus improved and later perpetuated by the American public and media as an accepted white racial identity (Guglielmo 2003).

In chapter 2, I argued that perceived racial inferiority of Italians was a main factor in explaining why the media discriminated against Italians. After the Immigration Act of 1920 reduced the number of Italian Immigrants in large cities like Chicago, the Italian 'race' became less problematic as more 'threatening' immigration waves such as from Mexico began to

overpopulate (Guglielmo 2003, p. 168). Although Guglielmo acknowledges this shift was gradual, and that racist hostilities did not completely disappear, he argues it did have an effect on the Italian communities "trumpeting the glories of la razza italiana" by strengthening their personal identities (Guglielmo 2003, p.168).

The Italian language press empowered Italians to embrace their white identity, which at the time was a necessity for advancing in such a legally and socially discriminatory society. Although it came at a cost for immigrant groups left behind the color line of who is able to "pass" as white and who gets stuck in the "other" category, Italians eventually used this inconsistency to their advantage. Ongoing discrepancies between racial definitions in the judiciary branch provided an opportunity for Italians to gain status in a legal and social capacity. Diverse and robust Italian traditions spread throughout the United States, allowing the Italian immigrants to survive and thrive during a time of increased hyper nationalism. The historical questioning of who is white, and therefore qualified for naturalization, along with the sheer confusion of the United States legal system, will later support my encouragement of the public to skeptically analyze how we are associating race with Syrian immigrants as justification for current immigration policies.

3.7: Religious Resurgence

The religious experience of Italian Roman Catholics transitioned in a similar manner to that of race with the influx of new immigration waves. As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, Italians originally experienced extreme animosities for their foreign religious practices. Religion, along with race, was a legal criterion considered in naturalization cases throughout the United States (Bayoumi 2006, p.283). According to Bayoumi, religion was an arbitrator of admissibility into the United States without prejudice. Catholicism as a religion was initially not considered an

acceptable practice in the United States (Bayoumi, p. 282). However, with the new quotas placed on Italian immigrants, other even more unfamiliar religious practices overwhelmed Americans, leading to the gradual acceptance of familiarized Roman Catholic traditions. The influx of more threatening religious practices of groups like Armenian and Muslim immigrants uplifted Catholicism to a more acceptable religion (Bayoumi 2006, p. 282). Although American Protestantism was still the preferred religion for acceptance into the 'white' American community, Catholicism was no longer an inferior religion after WWI.

In conclusion, societal shifts in which religions are seen as tolerable versus taboo indicate the need for caution around discriminating against a certain religion. In the next chapter, I will extend my analysis of religion to argue we should not discriminate against immigrants from Syria because of pre-existing animosity of Muslim practices in America. The public should not assume that negative stereotypes associated with Muslims are applicable to all Syrian immigrants, nor to all those who practice the Muslim religion.

3.8: Conclusion

The end of WWI and mass immigration sparked a gradual change in representation of Italian immigrants in the American media during the late 1920s. I propose this shift occurred due to higher animosity towards other less "desirable" minority immigrant groups, such as Mexican, entering America. Resulting from the new immigrant composition, the Italian population already within the confines of America enriched and fortified their cultural identity on a larger scale. Over time, Americans learned to considered Italians as racially white, while Roman Catholicism also gained popularity. These developments originated from the new legal standards of discrediting scientific racism and encouraging reliance on common sense knowledge of Americans. I claim the reformed upbeat rhetoric the American newspapers started to use when

referring to Italian immigrants is a result of these factors. In the next chapters, I will extend my argument by applying the optimistic change in discussion surrounding Italian immigrants to the current struggles of Syrian immigrants. Ultimately, I will make the argument the United States media and public must enhance the awareness of potential inaccuracies of initial prejudices imposed on immigrant groups to prevent making the same mistake with Syrian immigrants.

Chapter 4
The Syrian Immigration Case

Introduction

Much like the Italian case, American media representations of Syrian migration, a controversial subject in American society, rely on tropes that reinforce historical and religious prejudices against an immigrant population. The context for discrimination towards Syrian racial and religious classifications initially started during the immigration wave prior to WWI. Later in time, two events bolstered the pre-established hostility towards Syrian immigrants: the attacks of the Twin Towers on September 11th, 2001, and the Syrian refugee crisis. In this chapter, I will argue that the media portrayed Syrian immigrants as fundamentally different to American culture, society, and values in response to these two events and spread fear among the American public of the stereotypical 'terrorist' Muslim immigrant. In this chapter, I will provide evidence that the aftermath of these events is still reflected in newspapers prejudiced dialogue of Syrian immigrants today.

I will begin this chapter by highlighting the historical issues of racial and religious discrimination Syrian immigrants have faced in America since the immigration influx prior to WWI. The similar racial and religious discrimination each immigrant group faced during their arrival to America warrants my comparison of the Italian and Syrian populations. I argue reporters used these racial and religious animosities as a basis for portraying Syrian immigrants as "monsters" whose arrival was detrimental to the cultivated culture within the United States (Arjani 2015). Next, I will outline how the September 11th attacks and the Syrian refugee crisis impacted the experience of Syrian immigrants within the United States. I propose each event strengthened the racial and religious animosity Americans felt towards Syrian immigrants. Following my evaluation of each event, I will analyze articles published by Fox News and

MSNBC to trace how hesitation and fear of accepting Syrian immigrants into American culture still motivate current reporting by the selected media outlets. Ultimately, unfavorable media representations of the Italians faded because they had no such events inhibiting their status in America.

The social contexts established by American society around race and religion, both in the past and present, help maintain levels of discrimination towards Syrian immigrants by the public and media outlets. In the past, the foundation of acceptance into the American society revolved around "normal," not "alien" societal statuses. The general population and legal institutions during the mass wave of migration before WWI often saw white and Christian as required attributes for Americanization (Gualtieri 2009). The establishment of Syrians as racially and religiously inferior during WWI migration served as a foundation for a rise in hostility following 9/11 and the Syrian refugee crisis. Therefore, WWI sentiments are still operable in the United States, considering they are commonly apparent in media outlet discussion of the Syrian immigration dilemma today. Although the same racial and religious prejudices persist, the emergence of humanitarianism concern with regard to the refugee crisis complicates Syrian refugees, which was not an obstacle in the pre-WWI period.

For the purposes of this thesis, I will focus on the specific demographic of Muslim Syrians. I narrow to this population on the grounds that 87% of Syrians are Muslims, with a more specific breakdown of 74% Sunni, and 13% Alawi, Ismaili, and Shia. I do acknowledge that 10% of the population is Christian, 3% Druze, and the remaining few Jewish. (Central Intelligence Agency 2018). For the purpose of this study, I collectively refer to one Muslim religion because according to Sarah Gualtieri, the journey to the United States unified Syrian individuals with different regional, local, and religious identities to seek solidarity in a new home

(Gualtieri 2009, 155). In addition to Syrian self-unification, Americans also lumped this new group of immigrants into one often stereotypical representation, whether the Syrian immigrants truly held the same religious beliefs or not. I use this perception as reason for referring to the Syrian immigrants as majority Muslim when analyzing the American newspaper portrayals, despite the existence of small minority followings.

Although I over-generalize the Syrian immigrant population as Muslim to account for how American media organizations collectively refer to the group, I quarrel with the lack of reporters' distinction between a qualities of a collective immigrant group versus their individual religious, racial, or cultural identities. I argue that American media perpetuates representations of Syrian Muslim immigrants as 'terrorists,' specifically in association to their racial and religious standings. In the Italian case, reporters later realized they misrepresented Italian immigrants as violent mafia members, and that not all Italians had affiliations with the mafia (Dickie 2015). Historical mistakes like the Italian case should draw skepticism when reporters generalize an immigrant group based on the damaging behavior of a few community members, specifically portraying Syrians as terrorists.

4.1: Historical Racial Precedent

Leading up to the start of WWI, Syrian immigrants immediately faced racial discrimination during their first influx of migration. American politics, law, and culture racialized Syrians and placed them in the lower ranks of a cultural hierarchy (Gualtieri 2009, 2). This cultural hierarchy privileged white-skinned individuals at the top, thus "deserving" higher levels of respect in various daily local interactions, such as in businesses transactions and other social community activities. Racial "in-betweeness" of Syrian immigrants in America complicated their experiences of integration into America. Discrepancies between legal

precedents labeling Syrians as white, in contrast to daily interactions in stores and restaurants where they experienced animosity for their racial differentiation, enhanced the instability of Syrian 'whiteness'. According to Gualtieri, the goal of Syrian immigrants was to gain recognition as white because white insinuated 'American,' which was the dream of Syrians who wished to assimilate into their new home (Gualtieri 2009, 5).

In several legal cases, the Syrian population accomplished their goal by successfully establishing themselves as legally white to gain citizenship and the social privileges that came with it. Syrian immigrants used these situations to combat their perceived racial inferiority. The 1909 Supreme Court case in which Costa George Najour petitioned he was a "free white person" to meet the Naturalization requirements of the time initiated the debate on Syrians' racial grouping (Gualtieri 2009, 1). In this particular Supreme Court case, Najour successfully naturalized into the United States on the grounds he was "Caucasian". Based off this ruling, the standard of classifying Syrians as "white persons" continued for cases decided in 1909, 1910, and 1915, drawing from the precedent that Syrians were considered white. In later 1913 and 1914 cases, however, Syrians lost their status as white because the term Caucasian was no longer sufficient for legal "whiteness" (Lopez 1996, 48). This shift resulted from the debate over whether courts should rely on scientific evidence or common knowledge to categorize immigrant races. Scientific evidence relied on genetic and physical data, while common knowledge centered on who the American public perceived as having "white" qualities (Lopez 1996). The disagreement over which type of evidence best decided if an immigrant met the racial requirements for naturalization into the United States was the foundation for why the two Supreme Court decisions I discuss next were an important precedent in American history.

The later Supreme Court decisions in *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind* and *Takao Ozawa v. United States* discredited the courts previous use of scientific evidence in Najour because the term Caucasian allowed for the naturalization of too many 'undesirable' immigrants (Lopez 1996, 48). The problems the courts faced distinguishing who was white or not served as a foundation for the problems Syrian immigrants would eventually face due to their "inconclusive" identification. Gualtieri argues that the "representations of the Old [Syrian] Country constituted an important component in the development of ethnic consciousness among immigrants" and public perceptions, exhibited throughout these cases (Gualtieri 2009, 77). Once the legal world declared that Syrians were no longer classified as a white race, their experience in America changed with it. No longer were Syrians granted the privilege of being white, which previously allowed them legal access to the naturalization process. Consequently, the elimination of legal documents proving their priority and "Americanization" over other non-white immigrants gave the public more reason to resist their assimilation into American culture.

I argue American newspapers' discriminatory portrayals of Syrian immigrants today, which I will underline later in this work, cultivate from the same hesitance from the WWI migration period. I argue the Supreme Court's series of naturalization cases, ultimately concluding in Syrian exclusion from "whiteness", correlated with the American public's resistance to the assimilation of Syrian immigrants. Next, I will propose religion as another possible explanation for why the media began publishing discriminatory rhetoric surrounding Syrian immigrants.

4.2: Historical Religious Discrimination

During the historical pre-requisite naturalization cases prior to WWI, religious discrimination played a key role. Muslim Syrian applicants found it difficult to gain citizenship

because they did not share the connection to Christianity, which was a valued attribute in the American naturalization process (Gualtieri 2009, 4). The ideal American citizen at this time was to practice Christianity, not a "foreign religion" like the Muslim immigrants. In alignment with my reasoning that the American identity had one acceptable religion, Sophia Arjani traced the creation of the term "Muslim Monster" through juxtaposing the American identity "rooted in a sense of divine agency and [Protestant] Christian destiny" (Arjani 2015, 134). Her study analyzed media such as medieval tales, paintings, dramas, horror novels, and Hollywood films to show how Americans inherently made enemies of the Muslim population based on their religious differences. Although she focused on a more imaginative creation of the "Muslim monster" formed through films rather than newspaper portrayals of Muslims, her analysis still represented how Americans decided to construct undesirable views of the Muslim religion. According to Arjani, animosity towards the "Muslim monster" was prevalent in America's understanding of Islam. The historical creation of the Muslim monster as a symbol outlined by Arjani is also reflected in United States' bureaucratic legal system (Bayoumi 2006, 287).

The legal systems in place prior to WWI often had religious discrimination embedded into immigration policies. The quota regulations in place were a prime example of the government trying to protect its borders by developing a "gatekeeping state" that excluded undesirables from the boundaries of the United States (Lee 2003). The quota regulation system is a "facially neutral" procedure that limits the immigration population on a "uniform basis", but in reality, created a loophole for the government to restrict access for immigrants with undesirable religious, racial, and political affiliations into the United States (Johnson 2008). The concept of a facially neutral law, which does not appear on the surface to discriminate against a certain group of immigrants, reappears during the Bush administration's implementation of requiring special

registration of certain non-European immigrants. According to Bayoumi, religious discrimination presented itself in the 'rational systems' established by American law and policy regarding special registration. Bayoumi argued the system of special registration "turned a religion, namely Islam, into a race" in order to restrict entrance of Muslim immigrants (Bayoumi 2006, 270). He argued that official opinions such as Lieutenant General William Boykin who believed "my God [is a real god]" and "a Muslim's God is "an Idol", are still embraced in religious prejudices today (Bayoumi 2006, 288). The historical animosity towards Syrian Immigrants for their Muslim practices is pivotal in the current-day discrimination. Traces of Muslim animosity are apparent in the current proposed travel ban, which I will later argue is facially neutral and discriminatory to Syrian immigrants. Later in this chapter I will draw connections between the facially neutral and discriminatory clauses of historical immigration policies prior to WWI, the Bush administration policies, and President Trump's proposed immigration policies by analyzing American newspaper articles.

4.3: Post September 11th Atmosphere in America

The terror attacks of September 11th, 2001 had a profound impact on the experience and representation of Syrian immigrants, specifically those identifying as Muslim, in both liberal and conservative American newspapers. I argue the historical event of 9/11 helped uphold the discriminatory rhetoric still present today. The already pre-existing discrimination toward Syrian race and religion peaked with the new affiliation to acts of terror. Discrimination against Muslims was no longer in the subliminal conscious of Americans once certain members of the United States started vocalizing their scrutiny by committing violent acts against Muslim Americans following 9/11 (Cainkar 2002). Discrimination in the work place, property damage, destruction of mosques, and hate mail demonstrated revitalized fury and racism of Americans (Alsultany 2012, 4).

Americans now used the threat of national security to justify their discrimination and viciousness towards Muslims, Syrian Muslims among them.

Social acts of exclusion committed by American citizens towards the supposed group that executed the terror attacks of 9/11 were later legalized in the government's response to the attacks. For example, the United States implemented racial and religious policies such as The National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS), which required the photography, fingerprinting, and address registration of males from twenty-four Muslim countries; and the Patriot Act, which ultimately enabled discrimination against Muslims (Alsultany 2012, 4). The same "special registration" policy outlined by Bayoumi, managed to detain 2,870 Muslim men and deport 13,7999 Muslim men in the two years following 9/11 (Alsultany 2012, 5). Government officials passed these regulations arguing they were necessary for national security. These new systems invoked by the government like the "voluntary interview" program assumed that Muslims would have information to aid national security because of their religion, gender, and national origin, which Americans now associated with terrorism (Alsultany 2012, 5). Regardless of a Muslim's personal affiliations, the government assumed they had relevant information to the 9/11 investigation because of their supposed ties to the terrorist organizations that executed the attacks. The environment immediately following 9/11 encouraged the United States government to act on these fears and use the opportunity to racialize immigration screening processes and normalize the act of racial profiling. The government proposed racialized tactics as a necessity to protect the nation. I suggest that the government and American newspaper representations vocalized the views of the United States citizens.

In Samantha Hauptman's analysis of the moral panic sparked by 9/11, she argued the United States public and government criminalized the act of immigration in a legal and moral

capacity to increase the gap between "them" and "us" (Hauptman 2013, 17). She constructed the amplified moral panic after 9/11 as a reaction to a socially constructed problem. The panic was contributed to reactions of the media, the public, police, politicians and the judiciary assembling heightened fear (Hauptman 2013, 12). I support her argument that media was an influential component that encouraged the spread of moral crises about the 9/11 attacks. Constant coverage of the American tragedy perpetuated a sense of uncertainty of what attack could come next and who it would impact. In days immediately following the attacks, organizations such as CNN covered the event using headlines such as "The Day After", which reflected language from Hollywood horror films, science fiction, and apocalyptic dramatizations (Arjani 2015, 176). The dramatization of the tragedy amplified citizens' alarm demonstrating how the media played an influential role in spreading fear. The media also acted as a source of information, especially in publicizing suspected terrorists that committed the attack.

In a national tragedy like 9/11 where the motives and tactics of the enemy are not well known, the media had to find a perpetrator to blame. Due to their religious affiliations, Muslims were often seen as the group to blame. Consequently, major media outlets such as Fox News, automatically reported on Muslims "as a threat to the well-being basic values [of Americans], and interests of the society" (Hauptman 2013, 14). In this quotation, Haumptman points to how the media outlets automatically assume that the Muslim values and interests are not in alignment with those of the American public. I argue reporters reflected the overtly discriminatory rhetoric used by fearful Americans, without properly justifying their link of Muslims as a threat to society. In the weeks following the September 11th attacks, the media attempted to cope with properly informing the public with the limited information at the start of investigation. The facts each news organization presented enhanced the moral panic by emphasizing the "war on terror." According

to Hauptman, the "war on terror" increased the American public's suspicion of immigrants as criminals, changed public opinion in support of limiting immigration levels, and shifted the type of immigrants Americans allowed into society (Hauptman 2013, 16). I extend her original analysis of the media and public's involvement in the war on terror post-9/11, to current immigration debates today. The previous public and government distortion of the racial and religious differences of the Syrian population was reinforced by post-9/11 hatred of Syrian immigrants identifying as Muslim. In the later section, I look specifically at media outlets' discussion of the travel ban to provide examples of how 9/11 hostilities still exist. Therefore, the historical event of 9/11 was one of the main factors maintaining the discriminatory representations that originated prior to WWI. Later in the chapter, I will propose the Syrian refugee crisis as the next event that reinforced prejudices sentiments towards Syrian immigrants. Before doing so, it is crucial that I acknowledge the difference between an immigrant and a refugee.

4.4: The Immigrant v. The Refugee

An immigrant and refugee are two distinct groups yet are often blurred as one in the minds of American citizens. For this thesis, it is crucial to distinguish between the two different categories of refugees and immigrants. The American publics' ignorance of this differentiation plays a key role in my argument for how the refugee crisis influenced discriminatory representations of Syrian immigrants in the media. One of the core differences of an immigrant and refugee is their purpose for migrating. At the 1951 convention in Geneva, the UN defined a refugee as a person who is "outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence who is unable or unwilling to return due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on his or her race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group" ("Asylum & the Rights of Refugees" 2012). In contrast to refugees, it is not necessary for immigrants to fear their lives or have any sort of

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threatening situation in their original country to qualify for admission into the United States. The differentiation of legal requirements for admittance into the United States on refugee status created the American perception of the "tragic" refugee (Garland 2014). Similar to immigrants, refugees suffered from laws that discretely favored European immigrants over those with certain religious and political beliefs, such as the Jewish and Muslim populations. I argue that the exclusion of certain refugee groups from the past is now enacted in the government's handling of the Syrian refugee crisis and subliminally in President Trump's proposed travel ban.

The lack of the public knowledge regarding the different reasons for refugees and immigrants to enter the United States supports my argument that the Syrian refugee crisis maintained prejudiced sentiments towards Syrian immigrants already in the United States. It is possible some Syrian immigrants in the United States left Syria far before the refugee crisis began but were still associated with the tragic status of Syrian refugees. In 2015, the lack of understanding by the American public became apparent in American citizens' reactions to the large wave of refugees coming from Syria, Afghanistan, and Eritrea. A *New York Times* article addressed the ignorance of the American public in a piece titled "Migrant or Refugee? There is a Difference, With Legal Implications" (*New York Times 2015)*. The reporter Somini Sengupta simulated a question and answer exercise demonstrating the unawareness of American citizens by asking questions such as "Does it matter what you call them", "Who is a refugee?", and "Who is a migrant" (*New York Times* 2015). A mainstream news organization's decision to publish this educational piece exemplifies the problem of Americans blurring the lines between an immigrant and refugee. The lack of clarity between the separate categories is prevalent to my study because the controversy and stigmas developed about refugees from the Syrian refugee crisis reflect onto the Syrian immigrant community. In the next section, I provide evidence that the Syrian refugee

crisis increased animosity towards Syrian refugees, and consequently to Syrian immigrants based on the lack of distinction in the minds of Americans.

4.5: The Role of the Syrian Refugee Crisis

Ten years after 9/11, the second event I propose bolstered animosity towards Syrian immigrants in the United States is the start of the Syrian refugee crisis in March of 2011. The conflict quickly intensified from its start in 2011, causing exponential growth of refugee populations in neighboring countries and throughout the world. The majority of refugees are seeking asylum in countries such as Jordan and Lebanon, which lack the infrastructure to accommodate the growing refugee population (Mercy Corps 2017). The massive refugee crisis continues as one of the largest humanitarian crises to date in need of assistance from powerful governments with the proper resources to fund emergency aid and establish long-term programs to end the Syrian crisis. According to the U.N., 5.4 million people have fled Syria since 2011, making Syrians the largest refugee population in the world (UNHCR 2018).

Despite the large numbers of displaced refugees in need of asylum, the American public is hesitant to support admission of Syrian refugees. In U.S. public opinion polls from October 2016, 54% of registered voters said the U.S. does not have the responsibility to accept refugees from Syria, while only 41% said the U.S. does (Pew Research Center 2016). These statistics indicate that the U.S. public has conflicting opinions on accepting large numbers of refugees (Pew Research Center 2016). I argue reluctance on behalf of Americans to provide relief during the Syrian refugee crisis is an example of the present-day lack of tolerance reflected by discriminatory rhetoric of Syrian immigrants. The public failure to distinguish between refugees and immigrants supports my argument that the Syrian refugee crisis is associated with the more general Syrian immigrant

population. Links between the two groups are still maintained today in the media's representations of the travel ban, which I will later analyze in detail.

The political divide between accepting and excluding Syrian refugees into America is an important component I considered during my later analysis of a liberal news organizations, such as MSNBC, in contrast to conservative news organizations, such as Fox News. Although most say the U.S. does not have the responsibility to accept Syrian refugees, the breakdown between Hillary Clinton supporters opposed to Donald Trump supporters during the election period differ drastically. Of President Trump's supporters prior to the election, 87% said the U.S. does not have responsibility, while only 27% of Clinton supporters held the same opinion (Pew Research Center 2016). Each respective news organization associated with each political party reflects the varying opinions of liberal and conservatives Americans. Later in the chapter, I will analyze Fox News and MSNBC articles to exemplify how American newspapers effectively maintained discriminatory rhetoric based on prejudiced established from the Syrian refugee crisis.

4.6: Media Selection Method

Analyzing the case of Syrian immigrants in the media required alternative methodology in comparison to the Italian case. The Syrian case had many more factors needing consideration when deciding my selection process, such as the political leans of each news organization. In order to control this complicated component as best possible, I selected articles solely from two news organizations. Only analyzing two news outlets allowed for direct comparison between how each politically charged media outlet handled specific decisions regarding the travel ban and the current situation in Syria. The two media outlets I chose were Fox News and MSNBC. I selected these particular organizations because they account for both sides of the political spectrum: Fox as the conservative organization, and MSNBC as the liberal news organization. I conducted my research

by searching on both home websites and filtering the search to only written articles. I excluded video news recordings, and blog posts to keep my methodology more consistent with the Italian analysis. Narrowing in on two organizations allowed me to efficiently sift through relevant articles to establish a stronger correlation between rhetoric used in each article with various public opinions. In addition, Fox and MSNBC have similar functions in society, as they both have televised reports along with printed reports. The change in current methods that Americans consume media justifies my shift in focus from newspaper corporations to larger scope media outlets. While printed newspapers were a popular form of media during the period of Italian immigration, media outlets today utilize online publications to include video and interactive features, which I excluded from this analysis. I also acknowledge that limiting my search to two news sources excludes middle-road perspectives, without heavy democratic or republican leans.

Another complicated component of the Syrian analysis was how to handle the intertwined terms of "Syrian" and "Muslim" in today's rhetoric. As it appears later in my analysis, the media does not explicitly distinguish between these two terms. Instead they often use Muslim as the generalized term for immigrants from Syria. The blurred lines between these terms made selecting a search term a difficult decision. Although the lack of clarity was a drawback at times, it helped me select Syrian as the key term to focus on because it was more specific and less likely to overshadow religious and geographical distinctions.

When finding the most relevant information to the topics I researched, I used the search terms "travel ban" and "Syria". I selected these terms because collecting articles from a broad scope of each news organizations reports was more important than digging for certain articles I thought would support my argument. I also chose these terms because each one gives a different perspective for how American newspapers construct the representation of Syrians. Although I did

not include the term Muslim in my search, it often appeared in headlines and articles of the top results. Therefore, I was still able to analyze how Syrian immigrants' Muslim religion linked to their immigrant identities. I criticize the media's decision to lump broad swaths of people in the term Muslim without offering nuance as to their identity, culture, history, or geographical origins. Consequently, it was difficult to decipher which distinct group reporters were referring to, even furthering the confusion between national origin and religious affiliations. Although, the difficulty of distinguishing between identities in my search results demonstrates my argument that race and religion are used by the media in connection with each other. I acknowledge the limitations of my methodology, but I am confident I constructed the most effective system possible for this thesis.

4.7: Fox News vs. MSNBC's Coverage of the Travel Ban

While analyzing reports of the travel ban by major American media outlets, I found that Fox News perpetuated discriminatory representations of Syrian immigrants in contrast to MSNBC, which frequently spoke out against discrimination. I propose the discriminatory rhetoric in Fox's coverage of the executive order by President Trump, referred to as the travel ban, draws upon the American citizens' sentiments from 9/11 and the Syrian refugee crisis. Unlike the Italian case where the media used explicit discourse calling out Italian immigrants for associations with the mafia, today's perpetuation of discrimination is far less overt. In the Syrian case, the prejudices reflected by American media, specifically by conservative organizations like Fox News, is most apparent when compared to liberal organizations like MSNBC. A contributor to different levels of overtness in discriminatory language between time periods is the wider spectrum of American perceptions in public discourse. By this, I mean Italian discrimination had less public resistance because the American public scarcely opposed the portrayals set by the media. As previously seen in the statistic that 47% of Americans believe the United States has

the responsibility to assist refugees, a portion of American citizens do support increasing Syrian's access to the United States. Ultimately, Americans held a more prejudiced sentiment toward Italian immigrants, whereas heated debate surrounds the Syrian immigrant narrative. Thus, accounting for political leans in my analysis of Syrian immigrants in the American media was necessary.

Immediately during my search using the term "travel ban" in each news domain, the results were different. Fox focused on updating the progress of President Trump's travel ban in headlines such as "What the travel ban victory means for illegal immigration", "State Dept. says Trump travel ban fully implemented" and "Trump travel ban to get day in Supreme Court" appeared in the search on Fox News' domain (Fox News 2018). Embracing the more liberal sentiments of Americans, MSNBC published headlines using politically fueled titles such as "White House simply can't overcome Trump's racist presidency"; "Did DHS skirt court orders while implementing Trump's Muslim Ban?"; and "Trump tries, fails to explain the basics of his latest travel ban" (MSNBC 2018). Headlines and text published by MSNBC outlined the travel ban as beneficial to the country for keeping out unwanted immigrants, without mentioning the controversial critiques of reinforcing Islamophobia and racial exclusion. In contrast to Fox's expansive coverage on the ban's successes in congress, they published significantly less articles after the ban faced resistance by the Supreme Court compared to the number MSNBC covered. During the initial proposal period of the travel ban in 2017, Fox News covered the ban periodically, if not daily, publicizing the "benefits" to the country. Now that the ban is under heated public criticism in 2018, the amount of reports has decreased significantly. For example, Fox news only published one Associated Press story that covered the Appeals Court declaring the travel ban unconstitutional on February 15th, in comparison to MSNBC who published

several headlines describing the decision as the "Appeals court deliver[ing] another blow to Trump's Muslim Ban" (MSNBC 2017). I argue that Fox News avoided assigning resources to the unfavorable decision toward President Trump by simply using a wire service, indicating the lack of importance or attention they wanted drawn to the decision. The division between topics covered by each organization is a prime example of the correlation between the type of articles published by new organizations and the opinions of their intended audiences.

From the drastically different reporting styles of the current travel ban, I argue that one can trace the diverse opinions held by Republican and Democratic parties. On one hand, the headlines used by Fox articles focused on the conservative's hope of the ban, failing to recognize the racialized backdrop and discrimination of the proposal. On the other hand, MSNBC in the lead of their article often attacked the President's motives to draw attention to potential flaws for the reader. Even when Fox News published a headline pointing at the defects of the travel ban, they made sure not to align it with their opinion. For example, in the title "Trump's travel ban exceeds presidential authority, court rules", the reporter Bradford Betz makes sure to clarify in the small allotment of space for the headline that this is the court ruling, and not necessarily a decision he agrees on (Fox News 2017). In addition to Fox News' headlines, specific rhetoric I found once diving deeper into the body of the articles that I later outline included subtle perpetuations of animosity towards Syrians immigrants: demonstrating the same hostilities originally found during the pre-WWI immigration wave.

Closely reading the specific rhetoric used in reports by Fox News and MSNBC, one of the leading differences I found revolved around the name used to reference President Trump's executive order. Articles published by MSNBC often referred to the order as a "Muslim ban", whereas Fox refrained from using this terminology. Instead, they typically cited the executive

order as the "travel ban against seven Middle Eastern and North African Countries" (Fox News 2017). I argue the decision of Fox News to avoid the term Muslim ban indicates their political motivations to pass this proposed ban and support the racialized sentiments of President Trump. Although I do acknowledge that MSNBC should not use opinionated terms as a strategy to engage their readers without acknowledging their subjective stance to their audience, I do think it is useful to use the word Muslim to outline the subliminal discriminatory motivations of the ban to the American public.

One of the main devices I found reoccurring in Fox News' reports on the travel ban was the strategy of distracting readers by focusing on irrelevant details of the topic that may not relate to the legal implications of the ban. For example, when Fox reported the announcement of the new controversial travel ban in 2017, they distract from "the criticism [the travel ban met] for only removing one country from the list" by criticizing lawmakers for commenting on Trump's inappropriate tweets regarding the NFL (Fox News 2018). In the announcement article, they mainly focused on the dramatic Twitter controversy instead of the ban itself. The decision to report on the President's tweet instead of flushing out the criticisms to his revisions once again opposed the style of MSNBC. MSNBC repeatedly and explicitly called out the weaknesses of President Trump and his proposed travel ban. Steve Benan, an MSNBC reporter, educated his readers on many of the troubling comments made by President Trump. For example, he analyzed concerning quotes from President Trump, such as his defense of racist activists as "very fine people" and his "preference to see immigrants from countries such as Norway- which is an overwhelmingly white country" (MSNBC 2018). The attention drawn to racially discriminatory rhetoric by MSNBC is yet another example of both news organizations tailoring their articles to accommodate their relevant political lean with details that would appeal to their specific

audiences. Whether in an attempt to fight against discriminatory rhetoric like MSNBC, or Fox's failure to highlight inappropriate prejudiced remarks by President Trump, both examples demonstrate how the overall controversial and discriminatory discourse surrounding Syrian immigrants persists today.

Although not explicit, I argue Fox News's role in perpetuating discriminatory rhetoric comes from their lack of reporting the prejudiced and controversial comments by President Trump. Failure to adequately include criticisms of Trump's travel ban reflects the sentiments of Fox News to appease their target audience. Ultimately, media outlet's tailoring to political polarization inhibits the readers ability to learn relevant information about the ban. Fox News' lacks a complete report of the criticisms to the travel ban, while MSNBC fails to objectively educate their reader on the facts of the travel ban. In both cases, however, Syrian immigrants find themselves in the center of controversy due to their racial and religious tied to the Syrian identity. In the next section, I will specifically look at the coverage of terrorist activities in Syria, to show how the past rhetoric established after 9/11 is still used today.

4.8: Portrayal of Terrorism in Syria by MSNBC and Fox News

At the foundation of controversy regarding the travel ban is the concern for current potential refugees. Specifically, the concern of Syrians bringing violence to America from a Syria influenced by ISIS powers. I include this section because it is necessary to analyze how both news organizations emphasize Syria's connection to terrorist groups, such as ISIS. I argue that the media's representation of the current events in Syria acts as a method for justifying their reporting on the travel ban. For example, MSNBC's reporting on terrorist activities in Syria all focus on Trump's inefficiency of delivering his promises of aiding suffering countries in need. On the contrary, Fox News focuses on reporting the activities of terrorist groups committing acts

of violence throughout Syria. Fox News published stories such as "Syria tries 'terrorist rehab' to de-radicalize ISIS militants', which highlighted the current movements of education within Syria by their own citizens (Fox News 2017). I argue this is a technique to show the American public the Syrian crisis will resolve itself without the need of United States intervention and acceptance of refugees for relief. In addition, including the term "rehab" insinuates that terrorism is a type of disease or disorder that is inherited. The idea of a terrorist rehab also insinuates that there are such a large number of terrorists in Syria, that there must be a terrorist rehab established to eliminate the violence inflicted by ISIS militants. The fearful impressions imposed by headlines such as these endorsed the travel ban by encouraging exclusion of immigrants from Syria and other "majority Muslim countries".

Using the term "Syria" in the second part of my research, I found the results to contain more similarities between MSNBC's and Fox News' reporting. One trend both news organizations have in common while reporting ISIS involvement in Syria and bordering states, is the constant association between terrorists, Syria, and violence (MSNBC 2017) (Fox News 2017). I argue that the intertwining of these terms is one of the largest indicators correlating the American public's views of Syrians abroad with the struggling Syrian identity within American borders.

While both of these news organizations report the involvement of terrorist organizations in Syria, they frame their stories in a way to facilitate their own political motives: either in support or against the travel ban. In both scenarios, I argue their decision to report on Syria in association with ISIS continues the discriminatory rhetoric developed post-9/11 and in the Syrian refugee crisis. If 9/11 and the Syrian refugee crisis did not add to the instability of Syrian immigrants' reputations, it is possible thy would have more favorable representations today. In

the next section, I will use the analysis of the newspaper headlines and articles to argue a correlation between media's prejudiced representations of Syrian immigrants and the discrimination they face in everyday life due to their Syrian identity.

4.9: The Syrian Immigrant Identity in Relation to Newspaper Representations

The travel ban is the current national event the Muslim community has had to deal with, in addition to 9/11 and the Syrian refugee crisis. As seen in articles published by Fox News and MSNBC, the terms Syrian refugee, Muslim ban, and terrorist populate public reporting surrounding the current violence in Syria. Reports of the travel ban by American newspapers sensationalized both the fear of certain government officials' of protecting the nation, and the "confusion and fear in the local Muslim community" as well (*Maryland Gazette* 2017). Imraan, a Muslim activist, who has followed anti-Muslim rhetoric for years in the mass media, politics, and social media, stated that "it hasn't been this bad since 9/11", and that "he recognized 9/11 […was] the day everything changed, the day some people started looking at him and his family differently, [and] started fearing his Muslim faith" (*Arizona Republic* 2012). The fear demonstrated in this quote presents 9/11 as a building block leading to perpetuating discrimination and controversy in the media and politics today. The Syrian case, in contrast to the Italian case, more directly demonstrates how the media published what profited them most because, as Hauptman argues, "media sensationalism" successfully "transmits information that feeds moral panics, but also ensures their continuance by exaggerating the threat and maintaining its prominence in the reporting" (Hauptman 2013, 15).

The newspaper publications did not develop their own stereotypes that misrepresented Syrian immigrants as terrorists, but simply reacted to American outrage and political actions to the terror attacks. Similar to Evelyn Alsultany's analysis of Muslim representations in news

reports and television, I argue that government and media discourse correlate with the complex

rhetoric surrounding Syrian immigrants used in the public sphere (Alsultany 2012, 7).

Government proposals for new legislation, in congruence with the support of newspaper

publications, establish a united front to the public. Proposed legislation that appears to have

support from popular newspaper organizations can lead the public to believe that this is the best

course of action. In the Syrian scenario, the constant questioning of whether Syrian immigrants

will harm the nation sends a message of fear that ultimately impacts the identity of Syrians

within America.

Despite partial support from liberal news organizations such as MSNBC, Syrian

immigrants are still portrayed as the center of controversy. In addition, the media's blurring

between Syrian immigrants and refugees causes the American public to assume all Syrian

immigrants are refugees, which is why I argue the Syrian refugee crisis influences their identity.

The repetition of terms such as refugee, terrorist, or victim of the "Muslim ban" by the

government and media bolster the instability of Syrian belonging in the United States.

Ultimately, I argue that the consistent representations of Muslims as monsters, terrorists, and

criminals, along with historical discriminatory legal policy impacting their family, school, and

work lives slowly culminated in American society tolerating the possibility of this travel ban

(Abrego, Coleman, Martinez, Menjivar, & Slack 2017). Without the previous events of 9/11 and

the Syrian refugee crisis, I do not think the racial and religious discriminatory rhetoric at the

foundation of the travel ban would endure in American discussion.

4.10: Interpretation of Race and Religion

Throughout each article I analyzed for discriminatory rhetoric, reporters consistently

emphasized the race and religion of the "suspected perpetrators" of the war on terror. The most

explicit example of the influence of religious affiliations was the use of "Muslim" to generalize an entire group in the travel ban. Identifying Syrian racial characteristics in rhetoric, however, was more difficult and less overt. Instead, race played a key role through the lens of historical progression from Syrians being viewed as "white," towards the common day understanding of Syrians as non-white others.

The racial precedent established in *Thind* and *Ozawa*, where scientific evidence was deemed no longer a strong enough argument to classify race as Judge Smith dismissed the idea that white-persons must include Syrians, serves as a basis for Americans to view Syrian immigrants as racially inferior (Lopez 1996, 48, 53). Historical Supreme Court cases such as *Dow v. United States* initially in support of Syrian whiteness (Gualtieri 2009, 77), are in stark contradiction to the "Arab" racial classification closely associated with Islam in the United States today (Gualtieri 2009, 189). The post-9/11 system "creat[ed] vast, new legal geography of suspicion for the United States government [and] drew a burdensome zone around Muslim-Majority countries" (Gualtieri 2009, 190). The concern surrounding majority-Muslim countries bolstered by 9/11 is still apparent in discussion of the travel ban. Therefore, the travel ban is a prime example demonstrating the convergence of historical racial and religious discrimination present in the opinions of governmental and public opinion. The pre-established inferiority throughout history of Syrians' race and religion illuminate how the discrimination is still present in current society.

4.11: The Conclusion: Stuck in the Past

The representations of Muslim immigrants in the United States discourse has yet to fade, unlike the Italian population. While the media became "more sensitive to negative stereotyping" by liberal organizations such as MSNBC between 2001 and 2009 (Alsultany 2012, 21), the

sensitivity was not enough to completely curb the fears and prejudiced sentiments the American public held towards Muslims. Alsultany highlighted that despite many attempts of media outlets to strategize against stereotypical representations, the viewer still obtained the dominant message that "the United States is at war against terrorism because Arabs and Muslims are a threat" (Alsultany 2012, 38). Despite MSNBC publishing more sympathetic views towards Syrian immigrants, I argue the viewer still develops fear from these articles, which further encourages discrimination. Terminology such as "crimmigration" and the "criminal immigrant" popular in public discourse strengthen the association between Syrian immigrants and crime (Abrego, Coleman, Martinex, Menjivar, & Slack 2017, 709). The elimination of these common terms is necessary if the media wishes to progress from presenting Syrian immigrants in a discriminatory light, and instead work towards facilitating public understanding of immigrants' role in America. A shift in media outlets' discourse is pivotal in expanding constructive discussion surrounding current immigration policies and their impact on immigrants already in America.

In the next chapter, I will dive more in-depth comparing the Syrian and Italian immigration cases to explain the evolution of Italian depictions, but not Syrian. Overall, it is the social, political, and cultural atmospheres surrounding the fear of Muslim immigrants as terrorists that still perpetuates the discriminatory media coverage. The two immigrant groups faced similar discrimination rooted in their racial and religious classifications, which alienated them and rendered them threats to the American society. The entanglement between the Syrian identity and America's fear of "the war on terror" complicates the Syrian immigration narrative. Tracing the differences between the Italian and Syrian experiences throughout time can facilitate the public understanding of how racial and religious discrimination persists for Syrian

immigrants in America media portrayals, and how the Italian immigration narrative can serve as a model for future regression from Syrian discrimination.

Chapter 5
The Conclusion: Drawing Connections
Introduction

On the surface, the similarities between the Italian and Syrian immigration waves to America may not seem apparent. After analyzing each immigrant experience through the lens of American newspaper organizations, the connection appears in the comparable prejudices suffered by both Italian and Syrian immigrants for their racial and religious affiliations. The discriminatory representations of Italians as gangster mafia members and Syrians as terrorists illuminated the harsh reality of the anguish both immigrant groups endured. As demonstrated in my previous analysis, the rhetoric used by American media scrutinized Italian and Syrian immigrants for certain characteristics, which I link to their racial and religious affiliations. During the early 1920s, Italians escaped their representation as mobsters bringing violence and crime to America (Dickie 2015), while Syrian portrayals as Islamic terrorists still remain today (Alsultany 2012). In the previous chapters, I established the correlation between American newspapers' undesirable representations of Italian and Syrian immigrants with the animosity American citizens held towards immigrants. In this chapter, I will establish the significance of comparing the Italian and the Syrian immigrant experiences in America in the context of today's immigration debates.

I draw similarities between the historical suffering of Italian immigrants of the past, to the Syrian immigration case today to stress the potential harm the American public is inflicting on Syrian immigrants by using rhetoric associating them with the "war on terror". As previously mentioned in chapter 1, one of the core purposes Leopold Von Ranke institutionalized history was to judge past events with the intention of instructing the present and future ages (Bourne 1896). Using this historical framework, I outline the earlier suffering of Italian immigrants to

bring awareness to the obstacles American citizens construct today by using rhetoric referring to them as risky additions to society. I urge the American public to learn from the slow progression and acceptance of Italian immigrants into American society as a model for Syrian immigration discussion today. I will specifically outline why although the initial experiences of discrimination were similar between the two immigrant groups, the paths of the two diverged as Italians escaped their harmful representations, while Syrian representations are still a source of controversy. In contrast to the early 1890s, Americans frequently refer to Italian immigrants today in connection with advantageous customs such as pizza, pasta, and a big Italian family in articles such as Nonna's pasta blessing (The Christian Science Monitor 1998). But one has to wonder, why did the Italian population escape from their violent reputations as *Mafiosi* and move towards a more constructive reputation of a big happy family?

I attribute the difference in the current state of the Italian and Syrian immigrants to 4 core factors: the stronger sense of the Italian pride within the United States, road blocks to the reputation of Syrian immigrants such as 9/11 and the Syrian refugee crisis, respectability politics, and the sheer need of time to escape discriminatory reputations. After outlining the proposed reasons for the delay in Syrian progression in the media, I will then suggest future research outside of the scope of this thesis for myself or others to consider

5.1: Time: The Necessary Factor

There is one constant factor at play in the backdrop of all of the previous reasons I propose to explain to the difference between the current state of Italian and Syrian immigrants: time. Time is a crucial component for immigrants trying to establish a favorable position in a new country. It is essential I acknowledge that assorted immigrant groups require different time periods of adjustment into a new society, justifying the variance in adaption periods between

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Syrian and Italian immigrants. Social cohesion between an immigrant group and their new nation is reliant on the levels of discrimination and degree of acceptance of a certain immigrant community ("Social Cohesion and Immigrants" 2015). In regard to the Syrian case, the perpetuation of discriminatory rhetoric surrounding Syrian immigration debates today are hindering social cohesion, which Italians successfully accomplished over a long enduring process. I argue that if provided a longer period of time, the American public and media outlets will realize the misconceptions in their representations of Syrian immigrants. Prejudiced reputations cannot dissolve overnight, but instead slowly fade from pre-existing stereotypes by avoiding the national spotlight. Although Italian immigrants escaped their unfavorable portrayals earlier than the Syrians, that does not mean that there is no hope in the future for a transition in rhetoric surrounding Syrian immigrants.

5.2: The Difference Between the Italian and Syrian Immigration Narratives

Despite the comparable prejudices Syrian and Italian immigrants faced as a result of their racial and religious affiliations, one extreme factor differentiates their comparison. In this section I trace the transformations between the current situations of Syrian and Italian immigrants to help understand why the Syrian identity in the eyes of Americans has yet to completely escape the reputation as detrimental additions to American society. The main factor that delineates the Italian case from the Syrian case are the "common knowledge" associations American citizens hold in regard to each identity. Ultimately, I argue the national identity Italians revitalized throughout America in their little Italies provided them the strength and confidence needed to outlast their unfavorable representations.

Italians established a united front in the United States through their Italian language newspapers, the unification of the previously divided northern and southern Italians, and their

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unique culinary customs, that gained popularity in America, even outside of little Italies. Italian language newspapers provided a platform for Italians to gain publicity on their accomplishments and bolstered the Italian pride to create a community in which immigrants were proud to identify with (Vellon 2014). As mentioned in chapter 3, powerful *prominentis* took the lead in the Italian community to spread the news of entrepreneurial successes throughout the American community. In addition to economic success in the business world, Italians also started gaining favorable representations regarding their migrant agency, or how minorities themselves fight back against their oppression.

In stark contrast to the previous masculine representations of mafia men, the Italian grandma was a new common figure accompanying the Italian identity. For instance, a newspaper article on an Italian immigrant grandma named Nonna Rosina described her desire to cook pasta and have the family gather around the table because "in Italia, during the war all I could make for my family was the pasta. It's all we had" (The Christian Science Monitor 1998). The same uniting qualities used in the war were now brought to America by those individuals like Nonna Rosina, once again creating a strong national Italian identity within the confines of America. The fortification of the Italian community did not go unnoticed by American citizens, therefore warranting their transition into society as beneficial members of the community with valued customs and traditions.

Unlike the Italian case, the strength of the Syrian immigrant identity went unnoticed by the American public. Consequently, Syrian immigrants have yet to progress from their reputations as threatening members through their association with terrorist organizations. The reason for the lack in development of the Syrian identity could be attributed to the detrimental barriers put in place in the eyes of Americans against the Syrians immigrants from the September

11th attacks and the Syrian refugee crisis. Prior to these two more contemporary events, strong Syrian stereotypes as terrorists were not as prevalent in American society. Thus, these events contribute to the increase in restrictions of Syrian immigration, similar to the restrictions placed upon Italians in the early 20th century, with the goal of limiting access to the United States by "threatening" immigrant groups. The Italian immigrants never experienced large-scale national events targeting their identities such as the Syrians, thus enabling them to remove themselves from public scrutiny over time. In the next section, I will outline how the two consecutive events trapped the Syrian immigrants in the lower hierarchal ranks of American society in the past, and still have yet to completely escape the damaging pre-conceptions of Americans.

5.3: Syrian Barriers to Progress in American Media Representations

The three events hindering the beneficial development of the Syrian immigrants' reputations in America are the September 11th attacks, the Syrian refugee crisis, and current discussion of the travel ban. The culmination of these events struck a blow to Syrian identities in America. The perceptions of Syrian immigrants in the United States after these two international tragedies deteriorated, thus allowing the press the opportunity to perpetuate unfavorable stereotypes. The roadblocks faced by Syrian immigrant communities is one of the crucial factors explaining the divergence of experiences between Italian and Syrian immigrants.

The first event that hindered the experience of Syrian immigrants in America was in 2001 with the September 11th attacks. Anny Bakalian and Medhi Bozorgmehr say it best in their book *Backlash 9/11* that "though stereotypes and discriminatory actions were not new to these minorities, the post-9/11 backlash was overwhelming and relentless" (Bakalian & Bozorgmehr 2009, 1). Newspaper organizations such as the *New York Times* went as far as to say "since the attacks, people who look Middle Eastern and Muslim, whatever their religion or nation of origin,

have been singled out for harassment, threats and assaults (Bakalian & Bozorgmehr 2009, 3). Syrian immigrants fell into this category of individuals suffering from backlash of the 9/11 attacks. The American public ostracized Syrians due to their inherent association with terrorists, which further perpetuated fear and prejudiced media representations.

The second event that upheld prejudiced rhetoric regarding Syrian immigrants used by the media was the Syrian refugee crisis starting in 2011. The Syrian population once again found themselves in the middle of heated debate in politics and the media, furthering their affiliation with unfavorable qualities such as poverty, violence, and disorder. For example, reporting on the Syrian refugee crisis in articles such as "UN warns Syrian refugee crisis could destabilize the region" highlighted the extreme state of poverty and risk of violence that can spill over into other regions (Associated Press 2014). The fear Americans held towards the possibility that Syrian refugees would bring their disorder and violence to America once again helped maintain the undesirable characteristics often associated with Syrian immigrants.

The September 11th attacks and the Syrian refugee crisis are two events Syrian immigrants had to cope with, while the Italian population was fortunate enough to not have any involvement with international events that put them in a critical spotlight. This difference between the Italian and Syrian immigrant group is why the Italian immigrants were able to slowly progress from their portrayals as harmful to Americans. Italians had the ability to focus on unifying their community, and gaining respect in the eyes of Americans, uninterrupted by events that threw their identity into question. Based on this reasoning, the Italian immigrants were seen as more "desirable" than Syrian immigrants in the United States. In the next section, I will explain respectability politics as another justification for the lack of Syrian progression in American society.

5.4: Respectability Politics

Another factor I contribute to the reason Syrian immigrants have yet to escape the controversial and unfavorable portrayals in the American media is their lower hand in relation to other immigrant groups. In today's discussion surrounding immigrants, Americans often distinguish between "deserving" and "good" immigrants (Sati 2017). According to Rebecca Sharpless, politics of respectability "depend on contrast with an 'out' or deviant group" (Sharpless 2016). I argue that Syrian immigrants' disadvantageous depictions in today's American discourse invoke a contrast to the more favorable immigrant groups, such as Italians in modern America. Due to events such as 9/11 and the Syrian refugee crisis, Syrian immigrants have repeatedly been used as the ideal deviant immigrant group to help bolster other immigrant groups to a more "favorable" and "deserving" status. Thus, the presence of respectability politics traps Syrian immigrants in the category of a "bad" immigrant due to their past associations with crime and the war on terror.

In the Italian case, I argue that the resistance towards Mexican immigrants increased in correlation with the decrease in animosity towards Italian immigrants. The correlation between these immigrant groups serves as evidence as to why the spotlight of the "undesirable" immigrant shifted from Italians to Mexicans. Mexican immigrants were represented as a "threat" to American society in media narratives well into the late 1900s, especially after the Immigration Reform Act of 1965 (Massey and Pren 2012). This transition came about due to systems such as the Bracero program that forced immigration underground, causing a rise in undocumented Mexican immigrants. The influx of undocumented Mexican immigrants led to a rise of anti-immigrant sentiment by the American public. Massey and Pren supported this argument by conducting research in four leading US newspapers, finding the frequency of paring of the terms

"flood", "crisis", or "invasion" with "Mexico" or "Mexican immigrants" between the periods of 1965-1995. They correlate the unfavorable discourse found in their searches of American newspapers, public opinions of anti-immigrant sentiments, with the increase in stricter immigrant legislation (Massey and Pren 2012). The evidence Massey and Pren outline bolsters my argument that public sentiments shifted, and citizens came to perceive Mexican immigrants as less desirable. After the period of Mexican animosity settled down in the later 1990s, I propose the Syrian immigrants in the 2000s, specifically after September 11th 2001, emerged as a more suitable symbol of an undesirable immigrant than Mexican immigrants.

I propose Syrian immigrants now are like Mexican immigrants in American discourse and are currently considered an undesirable addition to American society. The framework of respectability politics still resonates with immigration reformers in Congress today, causing current public policy to favor certain immigrants over others (Sharpless 2016). For example, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) even tends to arbitrarily favor "model" immigrants (Sati 2017). Although the act has protected over 800,000 undocumented immigrants from deportation, the protection granted by this act is extremely limited to a" model mold" based on Latinos, or more specifically Mexican immigrants (Scott 2017). Of the 787,580 DACA requests approved from 2012 to March 2017: 618,342 of the approved requests were from applicants of Mexican origin. While DACA does protect certain model immigrants, it still leaves Syrian immigrants outside the realm of protection.

Syrians are not considered the ideal immigrant based on the animosities toward Syrian racial and religious associations, thus preventing the progression of their reputations towards beneficial additions to the United States. Immigrant right activists such as Joel Sati believe that we must move beyond categorizing immigrants in policies like DACA by "admit[ting] that our

readiness to adopt damaging narratives damaged our long-term strategic gains for short-term objectives" (The Washington Post 2017). I apply Sati's argument that American citizens must realize the impacts of accepting a discriminatory narrative of Syrian immigrants as terrorists and not focus solely on short-term goals of exclusion after events such as 9/11 and the Syrian refugee crisis. Sati parallels my argument well in saying we must "look inward to determine where our movement went wrong" in historical cases, such as misrepresentations of Italian immigrants, to help abandon the inaccurate narrative of Syrian immigrants as threats to society. The focus on long-term impacts of discriminatory rhetoric raises time as the next factor contributing the lack of progression in discourse surrounding Syrian immigrants.

Although I support DACA's goal of relieving the "DREAMer" population from the threat of deportation, I do not believe DACA is a sustainable act in the long-term American policy. In history, we have seen the detrimental consequences of excluding immigrants through legislation such as the Chinese Exclusion Act, the quota system, and the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Massey and Pren specifically analyze the Immigration Reform Act of 1965 to argue that Congress "intervening forcefully in complex social and economic systems without understanding their dynamics can lead to unintended consequences and unanticipated policy feedbacks" negatively impacting both excluded immigrants and the very United States citizens policies exist to protect (Massey and Pren 2012). Overall, a main purpose of my thesis is to urge public opinion and policy to deviate from the current respectability politics common in today's immigration framework in order to establish equal immigration policies that do not favor one immigrant group over another. I acknowledge that this is not an easy task that requires patience and, most importantly, time by government officials, the American public, and immigrants themselves to develop a sustainable immigration infrastructure.

5.5: Future Research

In this chapter, I traced the differentiating factors between the Syrian and Italian immigrant movements to provide insight as to how discourse surrounding Syrian immigrants may eventually change. I conducted this analysis to encourage American citizens to read American newspaper publications critically and acknowledge subliminal discriminatory representations that may influence their opinions. Although I only argue there is a correlation present between prejudiced media representations and discrimination faced by immigrants in everyday life, I do so with the hope that this correlation is enough to spark the need for careful consideration when reading about immigrants in newspaper articles.

Beyond the scope of this thesis, there are vast amounts of research that could be done to enhance my claims and comparison between the Italian and Syrian immigration waves. If warranted more time and resources to conduct research surrounding media portrayals of Syrian and Italian immigrants, I would focus on establishing a causal relationship between media's prejudiced portrayals of each immigrant group with the racial and religious discrimination they suffered in their new American home. In this thesis, I do not establish a causal relationship between prejudiced media representations and discrimination towards Italian and Syrian immigrants, but I am confident if allotted the time and resources I would find certain causal factors within this relationship.

Keeping this study up to date with the development of current legislation would be especially interesting with the constant changes and proposals in immigration policy by the new Trump administration. The debates and discussions about immigration policies such as DACA and the proposed travel ban will continue in the future, and the need for insight into motivations behind these proposed laws will grow. In today's complex and politically charged atmosphere

surrounding the immigration narrative, the American public is in even greater need for scholarly

analysis to help navigate the relationships between American media outlets, public opinions,

immigrant experiences, and governmental policies.

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