

IMMIGRANT MEDIA:
THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-REPRESENTATION AND THE ROLE OF
ETHICAL COMMUNITIES IN ITALY

by

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ABSTRACT

Immigration to Italy, like several other European nations, skyrocketed in the last two decades leaving the country with many social and political questions and conflicts concerning immigrants—how to integrate immigrants socially, how to end marginalization, how to reduce violence between immigrants and native citizens, how to both keep open border and protect national security to name a few. Along with increased immigration there has been a rise in xenophobia across Italy perpetuated in part by the Berlusconi administration's policies and negative media stereotyping. This study explores the importance of immigrant self-representation in Italian media as a vehicle to promote understanding across ethnic and racial groups, as understanding is an essential component to maintaining peaceful relationships across communities and to promote just policies. By analyzing how media creates narratives of identity, I argue that the media has an obligation to create spaces of self-representation. I further argue that there exist ethical communities that bear responsibility to assist in creating spaces for immigrant self-representation in the media. These arguments are supported through examples of independent and mainstream immigrant reporting with a focus on African-born journalists.

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Introduction

The media is a globally powerful institution which is often the only or the most readily available tool we have to learn about countries and cultures far from our own. It is equally powerful in creating ideas of culture and politics within one's own home country, both shaping and shaped by what it means to be American, Argentine, Cambodian, or any other nationality. Often these representations become even more complex when depicting politically and identity-charged issues such as immigration, where the way the media shapes one another's image directly affects the way we act toward one another. The purpose of my research is to study the significance of immigrant self-representation in the Italian media.

Italy is an interesting case study for several reasons. First, there has been a significant rise both in immigration and xenophobic backlash both by the State and civil society over the past two decades; second, because of the presence of the neo-Fascist Alleanza Nazionale and xenophobic Lega Nord parties in powerful parliamentary positions; third, because of right-wing prime minister Silvio Berlusconi's ownership of a significant portion of Italian media; and lastly because of the presence of the Italian Mafia as an economic and political force.

I will argue that it is the responsibility of "ethical communities" to ensure that immigrants have access to avenues of and support for self-representation in the Italian media. Ethical communities, according to Avishai Margalit (2002), are communities that have thick relationships to one another. Thick relationships are "close" relationships, such as familial, communal, or national. Ethical communities are communities that act, or should act, toward a "greater good" in their community.

Immigrant, for the purpose of this study, will be taken to mean a person born outside of Italy who has migrated and become a permanent resident (through legal or illegal means). I will focus specifically on immigrant appearance in Italian-language news, with particular attention paid to media generated by African-born journalists¹. According to the organization Caritas Italiana, Africans make up approximately 23% of immigrants that arrived in Italy in 2008, which is the largest number of immigrants coming from non-European Union (EU) states (immigrants from EU states made up approximately 52% of immigrants in 2008). I will focus on African immigrant journalism also because of the relative success that African journalists have had in creating spaces of self-representation both in independent and mainstream media. Some examples of these individuals and news outlets include journalist Magdi Allam of *Corriere della Sera*, Asterisco Radio, the Nigrizia network, and the television program *Un Mondo a Colori*.

I will also argue, based on Roger Silverstone's *Media and Morality*, that although the rise of independent immigrant media is valuable in terms of accessing news relevant to immigrant communities, it is equally important for immigrant reporters to be integrated into the mainstream media to increase immigrant media appearance. Focusing on Margalit's *Ethics of Memory*, I will argue that there exist ethical communities that should bear responsibility to ensure spaces for immigrant self-representation in both mainstream and independent Italian media.

The spaces of representation that I analyze will be viewed from Western standards of journalism. This is partly because appearance in Italian media, which conform to Western standards of journalism, is a crucial component to creating narratives of identity

¹ African-born will be taken to mean born in any African country whether Northern or Sub-Saharan, in spite of the many linguistic and cultural differences between the North and the Sub-Saharan part of the continent.

and affecting the Italian and immigrant imaginaries of sameness and otherness.² The intention is not to suggest anything about the nature or value of non-Western forms of media.

One final crucial component to the media that I analyzed is each outlet's availability over the Internet. My research would not have been possible without the dynamic of global access. I must acknowledge the existence of many smaller local print and broadcast media outlets that may contribute to narratives of immigration, immigrant identity and immigrant self-representation but are not discussed because they are not available online.

² I will discuss the concepts of sameness and otherness according to Roger Silverstone's theories on media and morality in chapter one.

1. Representation and Identity

1.1 Narratives and Representations of Identity

I have always felt a sense of closeness with my Swedish roots because of my name. Even though I am only a quarter Swedish, when asked my background I often say “Swedish.” This answer is just a way to brush aside the conversation and avoid having to go into the real details. The real details are that I am American and do not identify with Sweden at all other than a hazy fondness for a country that gave me the origins of my name. This is usually an unsatisfactory answer in the United States, however, because the national narrative is one in which citizens are scarcely 100% American, but a melee of people who have immigrated from places near and far. But there is nothing other than my name linking me to that far away country that I know only through research and the occasional news story. Sweden is not part of my narrative except as a footnote. I have never been there, I have no real or imagined stories from there and I scarcely knew the grandfather that carried any true memories of the “homeland.” All of the events that shaped me and my life story as an adolescent were constructed through an American lens. My narrative of national identity was told through the political, social and cultural institutions of the United States. Thus my national narrative of identity leads me to identify as American, in spite of my Swedish name. Narratives of identity are stories carved from events lived, told, passed down generationally that build a notion of a community, a group to which individuals belong and feel a kinship with other members of the group, whether on a familial, local, national or international level.

Where does this notion of the United States even come from which informs my childhood memories of growing up American? Benedict Anderson (1991) explains that

nation, nationality and nationalism arise through imagined communities. These communities came about through a history of religious affiliations, language and texts. As religious texts and languages became modernized, technological advancements such as the print press became integral to creating notions of shared communities. Modern literature, possible through mechanical reproduction, reveals heroes that travel through streets intended for a public that could visualize the written space. Newspapers similarly began to link readers together in two distinct ways. First, through a common calendrical coincidence. Anderson's notion of calendrical coincidence is that the reader is most likely reading that newspaper on the same morning as other individuals that make up his or her national public. Second, they link people through market relationships. Purchasing a paper, a practice within a market system, becomes ritualized and allows one reader to imagine the many others like him or her doing the same. One can imagine this practice shared by millions of people across time and space. But this practice is itself a narrative. One morning newspaper reader cannot see the millions of other people doing the same. A narrative is constructed of such a ritualized event and lives on through its performance. As linguistic, cultural and geographic groupings create imagined communities whose narratives are perpetuated through ritual and advances in communications technologies, modes of representation become increasingly important to perpetuating group identity.

1.2 Identity and the Media

Anderson (1991) argues that creating a common language was central to the emergence of nations and a sense of nationalism. Print media have historically been central to creating common languages, unifying once-diversified vernaculars. Since the dawn of

communication, information dissemination has been altered by the invention of new technologies. Each landmark emergence of media technology has altered how people relate to one another because it changes who creates and receives which narratives and how. New information technologies' effects on imagined communities and the creation of narratives of identity have continued through the 21st Century; most notably in today's world is the advent of the Internet.

Information dissemination has never occurred within a vacuum. There is no single source that generates news feeds across the globe by a single author. Media dissemination is a complex system of power and control. Many communities exist within nations which have invested interests in controlling media messages and capital. Communities struggle for control within nations and nations struggle for control globally between one another. Thus control over information, memory and subsequently on identity is an issue of power. Through this struggle for power over information two channels of storytelling emerge: master narratives and counter narratives.

Master narratives are umbrella narratives, the upper tiered, "official" narratives about history, society and identity. On the level of the nation, there are many institutions that contribute to the production of master narratives, for example governments, academia, arts and cultural institutions, judiciaries and the media. The press is the institution of interest to this study but it is important to note that narratives are constructed by many actors that are all interconnected. An example of a national master narrative is that, in 1492, an Italian by the name of Christopher Columbus became a hero of exploration when he and his fleet landed in what today is known as the Americas. This

“discovery” of America is worthy of a national holiday in his honor and of historical preservation in history texts as part of the country’s past.

Counter narratives can originate from actors within these same institutions, but their current runs below the master narrative. It is an “unofficial” recounting of an event or history. Counter narratives run in opposition to or questioning the master narrative. An example of a counter narrative to our aforementioned master narrative is that Christopher Columbus was a lost explorer that landed on one continent that he mistook for another. Upon his arrival he brutalized the indigenous peoples, making him worthy of condemnation, not heroism. Sometimes the counter narrative can be more widely accepted among citizens but run counter to many of the institutions that piece together the master narrative. For example, circa 2006, during the final years of the George W. Bush presidency, it became clear to most Americans that the U.S. had not brought freedom and democracy to Iraq by toppling Saddam Hussein’s government, but had instead opened a quagmire of violence and religious division, counter to the administration’s tenacious narrative that America had liberated the Iraqi people. Eventually this counter narrative, which recounts a failed mission and an outbreak of irrepressible sectarian violence was adopted as the master narrative, partly through a change of administration and partly because of the irrefutable evidence that surfaced through channels such as the media.

Both master and counter narratives are constructed and disseminated in part by the media; the question of which narrative is master and which is counter, and how any of these ideas become popularized to the point of national narrative is a matter of power and control. Roger Silverstone (2006) invokes Hannah Arendt’s philosophies on power in his argument that power is gained through appearance in the public sphere, and appearance

in the public sphere in contemporary global society is achieved via the media. Silverstone coins the term “mediapolis,” the contemporary, media-driven version of the ancient Greek *polis*. It is the realm in which people are brought together “face to face” to create a public sphere based on visibility, appearance, performance and rhetoric (29-30). In Silverstone’s view, in the modern public sphere, appearing in public means appearing in the media. He argues that:

[The] space the media create, its omni-ever-present, indestructible, ephemeral, relentless, fractured, encompassing, intrusive, mediated space, is *the* public space, perhaps the only viable public space now available to us in a world of global politics and global interconnection. It is a public space grounded in appearance... (26).

Appearing is a key issue because appearing presupposes agency, the power to act, to construct a portrayal determined by the appearer rather than by the show-er. This power of appearing is lost when one becomes merely a subject who is reported on, who is shown rather than who creates his or her own appearance. In the case of being a shown subject, often the power of monstration³ is given to the show-er, who contextualizes the image and voice of the subject. When one subject is shown by another, the power to represent his or her identity is in the control of the show-er. When identities are linked to one public or another in a certain context often enough in the media, narratives of identity are formed. One blatantly stereotypical example of this is African-American monstration in the U.S. media. African-Americans are often portrayed as suspects, offenders and inmates, creating an identity of criminality through the narratives of poverty, violence and crime.

³ Monstration is a concept of being shown in the mediated public sphere. The term was brought to my attention by Daniel Dayan in a class lecture at the New School University on December 4, 2008, for the course Theorizing Visibility.

Narratives of identity are constructed through political, social and cultural institutions, one of which is the media, which creates these narratives by showing groups or by having space for groups to “appear” in the mediapolis. The Greek *polis*, Silverstone points out, was elitist and exclusive. He argues that similar market and power structures can lead to similar types of exclusion in the mediapolis (30). When a group is excluded from having agency in its appearance, it is excluded from taking part in public debate, from having input or political influence. To appear does not merely mean to have your image shown. Appearance is about having the authority to have a voice in the public sphere, to act as a group representative in the political, social, and cultural debates and discourses perpetuated and disseminated by the media.

Debates about media power and control often surface in the form of mainstream versus independent media. Although appearance in both forms of media is crucial, for the purposes of my argument I consider this a false dichotomy because both forms of media contribute in their own capacities to narratives and identity formation. For example, Rede Globo is Brazil’s most powerful and widespread news network, with national control over television stations, radio stations and newspapers. However, it is not the only network that dictates narratives of identity in Brazil. Local and specialized networks such as Viva Favela (novo.vivafavela.com.br), a web portal that focuses on news and images from the favelas (or slums) in Rio by favela residents, have a direct impact on the community in Rio (where it is based). Their power to mobilize as part of the Non Governmental Organization (NGO) Viva Rio has a local, and to a certain degree national reach on what it means not only to be Brazilian but what it means to be a favela resident. Favela residents are less “shamed” to have favela life as part of their identity as

evidenced through campaigns such as “Moro na favela” (“I Live in the Favela”),⁴ an extensive exhibit of photographs taken by favela residents to proudly display scenes from everyday life in favelas. One campaign of national importance was the disarmament campaign spearheaded by Viva Rio in 2001 which resulted in the elimination of about 100,000 small arms and helped push through a 2003 law on small arms control signed by President Luis Inácio Lula de Silva.⁵ Campaigns such as these create extensive visibility for favela residents as advocates for peace, countering popular sentiment that favela residents are violent and dangerous.

1.3 Immigration and Identity

The mediapolis to which Roger Silverstone refers is a global space. New media technologies have played a role in creating the illusion of condensing space through the mediapolis, of making the world a smaller place. Images, voices, and appearances that are available in the mediapolis have stretched the imaginary and opened spaces for new narratives of identity. The mediapolis, however, is by no means where this type of identity creation originated. It facilitates the production and movement of images and stories, but groups have been encountering others for centuries through global migration, colonization, exile, displacement and travel.

Exploration, travel, trade routes, colonization have all played roles in carving out notions of identity in part by exposing existing groups to those who, for social, cultural and historical reasons are excluded from such membership. The same systems that

⁴ Viva Favela, “Exposições,” *Foto Favela* (2006), <http://www.fotofavela.com.br/exposicoes/moronafavela/default.htm> (accessed April 23, 2009)

⁵ United Nations, “Rubim Cesar Fernandez, Viva Rio, Brazil,” *United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs*, (2006), <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/smallarms/statements/Ngo/viva.html> (accessed April 23, 2009)

Anderson described (religion, language, etc) carried notions of otherness, of distance between the narratives of events and rituals that tie one group together and separate it from another one half way across the globe, one up against its own borders, or even one within the same nation.

Global migration is scarcely a new phenomenon though its currents are viewed as changing in the 21st century. As European nations formed the European Union starting in 1993 with the Treaty of Maastricht, for example, its member states opened their borders in unprecedented ways to other member states, leading to movement especially from Eastern countries like Romania (who joined in 2007) to its Western neighbors such as Italy. It also changed the possibilities of migration from the global south into the EU. The effects of the history of colonialism on the southern nations cannot be understated, though I will not focus on them here. Rather, one effect directly related to colonialism is the creation of a historical relationship between two seemingly unrelated nations which often has a direct effect on migration, as evidenced by the Algerian population in France and the Indian population in Britain.

Immigrant communities have been growing in size across Europe as entry into one EU nation, like Italy, leads to greater possibilities of mobility and of economic stability afforded by EU's "friendly borders" and employment opportunities for migrant workers. War has also been a factor in the global movement to the EU, such as Sweden's absorption of 40,000 Iraqis between 2003 and 2008 after the start of the U.S.-led invasion (Jordan 2008).

Although migration is not a new phenomenon, immigration is treated with skepticism and uncertainty by governments and citizens alike in many EU nations that

see global migration as a threat that compromises their traditional narratives of identity. This skepticism is reflected in the media. Immigrant groups in EU nations are often viewed not as members of that country, part of the fabric of national identity, but as others, as outsiders brought together geographically but not socially or politically. They are in fact others, but others, as Silverstone points out, in the same way that everyone is an “other.” In fact, he argues, it is of the utmost importance not only to acknowledge otherness in publics whose identities differ from the group to which you are a member, but to also acknowledge your own otherness. He claims that:

The dialectic of sameness and otherness, for all its abstraction, is crucial. In the late modern world it is increasingly the acknowledgment of otherness, that *in* ourselves as well as that *of* others, that constitutes commonness... Mediated communication is only possible through a shared commonness of sense (36).⁶

Recognizing our universal otherness is what allows for shared experiences, narrative and communication. Allowing space for both sameness and otherness within ourselves and those around us, as well as those we come “face to face” with in the media, he argues, is a matter of morality. Silverstone’s main concern with the “other” is what he considers the moral responsibility that the media has to be hospitable to voices that differ from their own. In order to create a “genuine, meaningful and ethical civil society” this ethical society must be represented in the media through its willingness to be hospitable towards others. I will explore his arguments more extensively in the third section.

The issue of others and the mediapolis is partly an issue of imagination. In the current climate of financial cuts to traditional media, global media thrives but global media offices are being shut. Reporters are often “parachuted” in to countries with different cultures, traditions, religions, and must make sense of the stories they are

⁶ Italics in original.

covering often with linguistic barriers and dependency on translators. Constructing stories in this environment requires much imagination in terms of creating a cohesive story for an audience that most likely shares an identity more closely resembling that of the reporter. The same phenomenon also happens locally. Reporters are trusted to construct narratives about communities that they may know little about within their own city. There is, as Elaine Scarry (1996) describes, a great difficulty in imagining other people. The key significance behind this difficulty is that “the way we act toward ‘others’ is shaped by the way we imagine others” (40). The importance of appearance and representation lies within the way we imagine and subsequently act toward one another. If representations of groups to which we do not belong are perpetually negative, then our actions toward that group accordingly will most likely be negative.

The importance of imagination is global in reach and extensive in terms of the areas of life it affects. It affects the actions of individuals, communities and nations. The imagination and the narratives that affect the way we imagine one another deserve the attention of individuals and institutions. As Arjun Appadurai states,

The imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practices), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility (1996, 31).

The imagination’s influence on human relationships cannot be overstated. It allows for an aim toward a global commonness without homogeneity. Imagination reaches into many areas of life across borders. Although this is the case, the focus on imagination for our purpose will be on the issue of immigration, immigrants and immigrant communities, both real and imagined, in Italy. I will explore the effects of appearance, or lack thereof,

in the Italian mediapolis on political and social relationships between Italian communities, focusing on the relationship between “native” and immigrant communities.

2. The Case of Italy

2.1 Immigration in Italy

Although immigration is not new to Europe as previously mentioned, over the past two decades immigration has risen sharply in Italy, a country once defined by its large wave of emigration in the last century. According to the group Caritas Italiana, in 2008, between 3,800,000 and 4,000,000 immigrants legally resided in Italy, approximately 6.7% of the population (2008, 1). This is a dramatic increase over their figures just five years prior, showing that between 2002 and 2003, just over 1,500,000 residents were immigrants, or 2.4% of the population (2003, 3). In 2008, according to the report, 52% of immigrants came from other EU states (predominantly Romania), 23.3% were African, 16.1% Asian, and 8.6% from the Americas (1).

Italy, like other EU countries, has been straining over the past decade to absorb the rising number of immigrants and to figure out how to politically, socially and culturally facilitate integration. There has been political contention over the past several years as the Italian government flopped between the right-wing administration of Silvio Berlusconi and the brief left-wing rule of Romano Prodi from May 2006 through May 2008. Berlusconi, who had been in power since 1994 until Prodi's election in 2006, has traditionally taken a conservative stance on immigration, promoting Italian nationalism and cracking down on illegal immigration.

The history of Italy's laws that regulate the flow of immigration to the country is relatively new.⁷ According to Michele Totah (2003), the first laws concerning foreign citizens entering the country were enacted by the leader of the Fascist government,

⁷ This is partly because Italy only first became a unified nation in 1861 when its city-states came under the rule of King Victor Emmanuel. It became a democratic republic in 1946 after a constitutional referendum, following the fall of Fascism and the end of WWII. .

Benito Mussolini, in 1931.⁸ The laws were for public safety purposes and did not recognize individual or collective rights for foreigners. Italy's constitution, ratified in 1948, provides for "fundamental rights regardless of nationality" as well as acknowledgment of Italy's requirement to adhere to international standards of treatment (ibid. 1461). It wasn't until 1986 that Law n.943/1986 was passed giving equal treatment to foreign workers, but its scope was limited to those people already living in the country (ibid. 1467). The Martelli Law, passed in 1990, gave rights recognition to all foreign citizens entering the country and to set up protocol for naturalization or deportation for people entering the country illegally (ibid. 1468). In the early 1990s however, with a surge in Albanian refugees, the republic enacted its first overtly xenophobic decrees known as the Dini and Conso decrees respectively, which facilitated expulsion of foreigners living in the country (ibid. 1471). With the immigrant population reaching over a million by the late 1990s, the leftist Turco-Napolitano law was passed. It was the first law that took the well-being of immigrants into consideration and addressed issues such as employment, family reunification and integration (ibid. 1472-1473). Returning to a xenophobic vein, however, in 2002, Parliament altered the Turco-Napolitano law by enacting the Bossi-Fini amendment which makes it harder to get work sponsorship, residence permits and family reunification, it requires all immigrants to get fingerprinted, and fails to provide a provision specifically for asylum seekers which violates the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ibid. 1475-1499). The Bossi-Fini amendment gets its name from its two authors, the leaders of Italy's two most notoriously xenophobic parties—Umberto Bossi of the Lega Nord and Gianfranco Fini of the Alleanza Nazionale. Bossi's economic and racial divisionism is not limited to his

⁸ Mussolini was Italy's Fascist dictator from 1922 to 1943.

xenophobic sentiment but extends to a secessionist platform whose aim is to divide the wealthier industrial North from the more agrarian South. The Alleanza Nazionale is the party that was created from the Movimento Sociale Italiano, the party which grew directly out of the Fascist party under Mussolini's rule.

Another political dynamic that makes Italy a particularly interesting case in terms of immigration is the presence and economic and political muscle of the Italian Mafia. The Mafia is not unique to Italy, but is entrenched in the political system in a way that is not seen by other EU nations. What makes the Italian Mafia unique is that it is entrenched in the institutions that exist to eradicate it (Chubb 1989). According to Alexander Stille (2007) ties between Berlusconi and the Mafia date back to the 1970s, especially his links with Marcello Dell'Utri who hired several mafiosi to work directly as insiders of the Berlusconi business empire, including notorious mafioso, Vittorio Mangano. He explains:

At least thirty-seven former Mafia members have given testimony that Dell'Utri was the Mafia's main contact person in Berlusconi's financial empire and that the Mafia both extorted money from the business as well as invested millions of dollars in Berlusconi's business ventures during its early years (37-38).

Not only was Berlusconi implied in Mafia ties during his early years, but allegations have continued about Mafia support of his Forza Italia party as well as his Fininvest⁹ company's dangerously close links to organized crime rings (Willan 2002).

There is no single Mafia in Italy but rather pockets of mafiosi usually associated with specific geographical locations, the most notorious of which was the Sicilian Mafia but since the popularity of the film, *Gomorra*, based on the book with the same title by Roberto Saviano, now the Neapolitan mafia, the Camorra has gained greater notoriety.

⁹ Fininvest is a holding company that controls over 150 businesses.

The political and economic reach of the Mafia is deep. “Le mani della criminalità sulle imprese” (“The hands of crime on business”), a report by Confesercenti, an Italian business association, estimated that in 2007 Italy lost 7 billion Euros to the Italian Mafia due to commercial extortion (77). The Mafia is not only an economic force in Italy but a political one as well as evidenced by the January 2008 trash crisis in Naples. Due to the Mafia’s interest in controlling contracts of Italy’s garbage dumps and recycling centers, the area dumps reached capacity and garbage collection came to a halt. The crisis eventually required Prime Minister Prodi to send in the army to disperse riots, quell violence and take charge of removing the waste (Castelfranco 2008). In an incident more directly related to immigration, in September 2008, six African immigrants were killed by Camorra, in Castel Volturno, a town close to Naples in the Caserta Province. The reason behind the murders is unclear but there is speculation that they resulted from Mafia suspicions that the victims were involved in drug dealing and gang activity on their territory, as African mafiosi also live in Naples and around Italy (Ogongo 2008). A wave of riots broke out from the enraged African community in Castel Volturno causing the government to send 500 troops to Caserta to crack down both on Mafia activity and on illegal immigration (Owen September 20, 2008). Although police rounded up several suspects involved in the murders, often the Mafia’s crimes end with impunity.

The Castel Volturno case is not the only largely visible recent instance of violence against immigrants and minorities. Both xenophobic and racist crimes and policies have occurred over the last several years around the country. One of a slew of examples came in September 2008 in Milan, when African-born Abdul Salam Guibre was beaten to death by two men who caught him stealing biscuits from their snack bar. The incident was met

with protests from local residents outraged by the murder (Owen September 23, 2008). On a larger scale, in May 2008 in Ponticelli, outside of Naples, a 17-year-old Roma (sometimes called Gypsy) girl was caught trying to steal a 6-year-old Italian girl. The incident was a breaking point for mounting tensions among Italians and the Roma (often arriving to Italy from Romania and the Balkans) and subsequently a mob of Italians set fire to several Roma shanty towns, displacing hundreds of residents (U.S. Department of State 2009). Two examples of institutionalized xenophobia, other than the aforementioned government policies, came in 2007 and 2009 respectively. The mayor of Cittadella, a walled medieval town outside of Venice, posted a decree stating that foreigners wishing to move to the town may not do so if they are poor, unemployed or homeless in an attempt to keep immigrants from moving to the town. Mayor Massimo Bitonci, a member of the Lega Nord, received support from 40 mayors around the Veneto and Lombardia regions as well as from 4,000 supporters who entered the town after the Italian government deemed the decree illegal (Popham 2007). Separately, in Foggia, a province in the Puglia region, the bus line number 24 run by the company Ataf has started running two separate routes—one for immigrants and one for native Italian residents. The new 24 line will transport immigrants directly from Borgo Mezzanone, a town where a hostel houses approximately 800 immigrants, into Foggia without stopping at stops along the regular bus route. Although the company does not directly prevent immigrants from riding the regular bus route, the new line smacks of xenophobia and segregation; it has been protested by local immigrant rights groups who supposedly stand to benefit from the changes (*Africa News* 2009). A chilling indication of support for xenophobia came in the form of Gianni Alemanno's victory in the Roman mayoral

elections in 2008. Alemanno, who was once the youth leader of the Movimento Sociale Italiano, ran his electoral campaign on a promise to purge Rome of 20,000 illegal immigrants and to raze 85 Roma camps. The win was seen globally as a sign that Italy's politics were shifting further right (Moore 2008).

2.2 Immigration and the Italian Media

The rise of immigration to Italy has put immigrants increasingly in the Italian media spotlight, often in a negative light. Major news sources began reporting in the 1990s on the “immigration problem,” framing the notion of immigrants as a problematic population detracting from the rights of native Italians (ter Wal 2002, 23). As it became clear that immigrants were not merely passing through Italy, but were in fact becoming part of its citizenry, other portrayals of immigrants began to arise. Often, stories emerged in major newspapers and broadcasts highlighting crime caused by and between immigrant groups, along with a rise in violence, including aggression toward women and theft (ibid.). The “immigrant problem” became a safety issue as “native” Italians began to fear this growing population.

Italy, more than its EU counterparts, has a precarious power dynamic in terms of media ownership due to Berlusconi and his family's near monopoly over broadcast media. Berlusconi controls around 90 percent of Italy's broadcast media due to both private holdings and power over the government-run public broadcaster, Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI) (Freedom House 2006, 137-138). This stresses particular importance on the print media, including Internet publications, to allow space for alternative voices that are outside of the editorial control of the Berlusconi media empire. Media ownership is so

important that, in spite of his lucrative holdings, in 2005 Berlusconi tried to pass a law that would privatize part of the public broadcasting system so that his Mediaset company could gain even wider control over the broadcast media. The bill was rejected by President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi.¹⁰ Although the public broadcaster is technically under the control of the government, lending some power to Berlusconi over its administration, the premier has little control over its editorial content. Media ownership is important because it can have editorial influence over print and broadcast content, especially through intimidation if the owner holds an important government position. Editorial control can promote one side of a political issue such as immigration to try and gain popular support for policies and sway public opinion. In fact, Berlusconi's media control has such extensive real and potential effects on editorial content that it is one of the main reasons press freedom watchdog Freedom House ranks Italy as the only "partly free" Western European country when Berlusconi is in power, where the rest are "free." The only years when Italy was ranked "free" was under the Prodi administration (Freedom House 2008, 179).

Berlusconi's control over much of Italy's media is additionally significant because of the right-leaning platform of his party, Forza Italia, as well as the Parliamentary presence of the xenophobic political parties, Lega Nord and Alleanza Nazionale. Berlusconi appointed several members of his cabinet from the Lega Nord and Alleanza Nazionale, including Minister of the Interior Roberto Maroni (Lega Nord) who is responsible for matters of immigration. A month after being elected back into office after the departure of the failed Prodi administration, in May, Berlusconi authorized

¹⁰ In the Italian political system, the prime minister is the head of government and holds the most powerful political office but the president is the head of state, elected every seven years by the Parliament. The president has limited powers afforded to him or her by the state's Constitution.

police to perform a nationwide sweep of immigrant neighborhoods and camps, leading to the arrest of 400 immigrants accused of a variety of crimes (Vinci, 2008). That same month the government approved Law n.92, a tighter immigration law that makes it easier to expel illegal immigrants, allows the government to check the income of people migrating from other EU nations, and makes illegal immigration subject to imprisonment (Governo Italiano 2008). The news surrounding the two events put immigrants, both legally and illegally residing in the country, under the media microscope as criminals.

The discourse of illegal immigration in the mainstream press uses a criminalizing rhetoric and often uses this “illegality” to justify aggressive treatment of immigrants even if they are legal residents or Italian citizens. This is significant because the political intent of the Berlusconi administration is antipathetic to immigrants and falters in areas such as incorporating immigrants into Italian society. It is not within the interest of the Berlusconi government to give political power to immigrants. This makes the need for spaces of appearance in the media urgent, especially in mainstream media that reaches a broader audience, as immigrant groups need to reign in enough political clout to counter xenophobic and racist policies.

The combination of social and political xenophobia has been reflected in the media, creating a crisis of representation of the immigrant population. Non-immigrant reporting has characterized immigrants largely by violence, deviance and poverty. These portrayals cause negative stereotypes of immigration and immigrants, which can lead to bigotry and support for racist or xenophobic policies. Media have also focused on themes of exclusion from Italian society (ter Wal 2002, 240). Often there is a focus on illegal immigration and asylum camps or immigrant neighborhoods on the outskirts of cities,

portraying immigrants as physically outside of Italian society. In the 1990s, stories of immigration often showed communities being displaced by the police because of hostility by locals (ibid. 242). This type of coverage constructs a narrative of immigrants versus the state, in which the state acts as the protective hero and immigrant communities as villains living outside the state instead of as part of it. Portraying the state in a heroic light can lead to greater support for anti-immigrant action by the government and a greater “us” versus “them” divide between non-immigrant and immigrant Italians.

It surely is not the intent of the entire Italian media system to demonize immigrants. Immigration is a newsworthy phenomenon across the globe. However, studies have shown that many depictions of Italians in the non-immigrant-produced press are negative ones. This is due partly to the nature of news sensationalism and the 24-hour news cycle, but also because of the difficulty in stepping out of traditional notions of otherness and a failure to imagine immigrants as Italian citizens or even Italian residents. This phenomenon surely is not unique to Italy, but happens in many countries that absorb high numbers of immigrants such as the United States. Other EU nations fall into the same types of sensationalist news that criminalize or victimize immigrants. In Ireland, for example, in the late 1990s as immigration grew more prominent in the news, a majority of news headlines used negative language to refer to refugees and immigrants. Negative language became commonplace as media outlets grew accustomed to falling back on this type of portrayal (ter Wal 2002, 228).

Regarding the case of Italy, several essays in *Fuori Luogo: L'Immigrazione e i Media Italiani*¹¹ focus on the construction of negative identities in the Italian news. In “La Cronaca,” Marco Binotto (2004) shows that in the Italian print media, 70% of local news stories about immigration talked about crime and terrorism. In the national print news, 40.4% were about crime and terrorism and another 35.6% talked about “disembarkations and regulations.”¹² Similarly, in televised news, 40% of news about immigration talked of crime and terrorism and another 42% talked about disembarkations and regulations (49). The imagery in nearly half of the news stories on national television involves migrants arriving in overcrowded boats to Italian shores, particularly around Sicily, Lampedusa and Puglia. The image of the boat delivers latent messages that immigrants are mainly poor, from the global south and illegal. The imagery forms an imaginary of immigrants as homogenously falling into these categories and ignores the plethora of reasons for which and conditions in which people migrate to Italy. The prevalence of stories in Italian media focusing on crimes committed by immigrants creates the same culture of fear around immigrant identity discussed previously about African Americans in the United States. Finally, stories about victimized immigrants, although important to show injustices within society toward marginalized groups, portrays immigrants as powerless.

One method countries such as Denmark rely on to minimize negative stereotyping of immigrant and minority groups is to adopt laws on hate speech. However, these laws

¹¹ The essays in *Fuori Luogo: L'immigrazione e i Media Italiani* (Out of Place: Immigration and the Italian Media) give detailed accounts of the types of negative portrayals in Italian media; as the specifics of these depictions are not my focus, this is a good reference for studies on negative representation.

¹² Binotto’s description of disembarking and regulation shows that it is a series of negative depictions of illegal immigrants arriving to Italian shores in overcrowded boats. The image of the boat is used as a negative symbol of immigration as problematic and is generally linked to stories of overcrowding and strain on the Italian government and Italian Society.

are troublesome for two reasons. First, they are seldom enforced, which has the opposite intended effect—to accept negative stereotyping and bigotry—as seen in the cartoon row in Denmark in 2006. During the cartoon row, 12 cartoons satirizing the prophet Muhammad were printed in *Jyllands-posten*, a popular right-leaning Danish newspaper which ignited riots and boycotts across the Muslim world that have had lasting effects on Muslim-Danish relations. The Danish government rightly chose not to censor the cartoons by enforcing the hate speech law, deeming the row a matter of freedom of speech, although this verdict helps to perpetuate the visibility of stereotypes. Second, curbing hate speech often has the unintended effect of causing journalist self-censorship, and is feared by some as an open door to further restrictions on reporting. Negative representation should not so much be dealt with by censorship, but rather by encouraging spaces of self-representation. Many negative stereotypes are not caused by overt hate speech but by subtler methods of vilifying immigrants such as printing a person's nationality in a news story in which he or she is accused of a crime.

2.3 Self-Representation and Immigrant Media in Italy

Representation of others is a key issue in forming opinions, policies, and shaping the way groups act toward one another. The images and narratives that develop identities are equally effected by over representation of negative imagery as they are by omitting positive, neutral or even mundane imagery. Scarry explains that “monstrosity and invisibility are two subspecies of the Other, the one overly visible and repelling attention, the other unavailable for attention and hence absent from the outset” (48). By over-reporting the types of stories indicated by Binotto, immigrants are portrayed in terms of

monstrosity and divergence from normalcy which creates a sense of repulsion or fear by society at large. Invisibility on the other hand is a lack of reporting by and for immigrants. Self-representation has the effect of showing immigrant communities as relevant contributing members of society, rather than absent from it.

Given the nature of negative and sensationalist stories in the majority of Italian media, agency in appearing is crucial for immigrant populations, as it is for any minority within a larger society. As previously mentioned, appearing, much like being shown, constructs a notion of identity, an imaginary of others and of the self. Appearing, rather than being shown by another, gives the appearer agency in how he or she is shown, agency in creating the imaginary of his or her identity. How we imagine one another is crucial to how we act toward one another.

The issue of appearing versus being shown has to do with representation. Appearing is self-representation, while being shown is representation by another. Self-representation for the purpose of this research should not be taken to mean literally representing the individual person who is appearing, but considering that person as representative of a group, of a public, such as the immigrant community. One sole person cannot be wholly representative of an entire population. There should be opportunity for many representatives of that group to appear, especially depending on its size in relation to the total population. The greater number of representatives, the clearer the image becomes about the multidimensionality of that group. The clearer the image of a community, the better other groups will be equipped in their understanding of that group to act out of a sense of commonness rather than difference.

As we established, the media has significant influence over creating the imaginary of identity through constructing narratives and imagery. The best way for immigrant populations to appear with agency in the media is to become media producers themselves. This returns to the notion of power and control that was of concern to Silverstone in his arguments about the mediapolis. The best way to act as an agent in the mediapolis is to have control over content.

Italy has an interesting and recent history of immigrant journalism starting in 1980 with an Arab-language radio show called *Radio Shabi*, followed by two radio shows which focused on Latin America and were broadcast in both Italian and Spanish (Maneri and Meli 2006, 16). Print media appeared a bit later, in 1988, with the emergence of a monthly paper, *Assadakh*, that reported on news around the Mediterranean (ibid). The first collaboration between immigrant and non-immigrant journalists—similar to the network Nigrizia that I will focus on in the final section—came with the television program *Nonsoloneo* in 1988 on the RAI public broadcasting network, which focused specifically on issues of immigration in Italy (ibid). According to the NGO Cooperazione per lo Sviluppo dei Paesi Emergenti (COSPE), Italy's most active organization in tracking and promoting multiethnic and immigrant media, the number of media outlets run by immigrants rose continuously throughout the 1990s and sharply in the first part of the new millennium (ibid. 24). By 2002, COSPE recorded 16 television programs, 44 radio programs, and 31 newspapers dedicated to immigrants or themes of immigration (COSPE 2002, 33). By 2006, the numbers had risen to 24 television programs, 59 radio programs and 63 newspapers (Maneri and Meli 2006, 34).

Although immigrant reporting is not free from the same types of negative stories and stereotyping as non-immigrant media, the range of subjects covered about the life of immigrants and issues of import to immigrant communities is more inclusive than those covered in non-immigrant media. COSPE's 2006 study, *Un Diverso Parlare*, analyzes the types of content by immigrant news media. In the print media, it shows that 25.1% of stories reviewed were "traditional information," 18% were about services for immigrants, 10.4% were events of interest to immigrant groups, 15.3% was news from various countries of origin, 8.1% was about culture and integration, only 3.4% was about racism and discrimination, 5.8% about migration and asylum, and 13.8% about other social themes (Maneri and Meli 2006, 34). The need for self-representation is not a need for "positive" news per se, but rather for more accurate representation of group identity which is often understood most comprehensively by members of that group.

Like immigrant groups, immigrant media and journalists are far from homogenous. Many productions are targeted specifically toward the population that produces the media, often by making programs and newspapers in the original language of the immigrant group. The largest network of papers in this category comes from Stranieri In Italia, a publishing house with an online portal that prints 12 papers in original languages (www.stranieriinitalia.it). Another category of immigrant media in Italy is the multicultural press that prints and broadcasts in both Italian and languages of origin, often targeting immigrant populations as the main audience. One example was the 2001 Bolognese radio broadcast "Italia per Tutti" ("Italy for Everyone") broadcast in Italian, English, French, Spanish, Arabic and Albanian (COSPE, 2002). There is also a vein of Italian language press geared both toward the immigrant population as well as the

broader Italian population. It is through the integration of immigrant news into the larger media sphere that the immigrant community in Italy can begin to be acknowledged not as separate from Italian society but as a legitimate and permanent part of it.

Another form of self-representation is immigrant media producers in non-immigrant-specific media. The most visible example of this type of journalist is Magdi Allam, a controversial Egyptian-born journalist who became the first immigrant to receive his own column in the newspaper giant, *Corriere della Sera*. Finally, there has emerged Italian language news geared for immigrants but produced by non-immigrant journalists which often surface as separate inserts in newspapers. The problem with this type of production is that, although it creates visibility for issues and stories of concern to and about immigrant populations, it not only fails to promote self-representation, but adding issues of interest to immigrants as a separate insert perpetuates to idea that issues to immigrants are separate from issues of concern to the larger Italian society. These issues remain marginalized and sectioned off and lack of appearance is still relevant.

3. The Ethics of Representation

3.1 *Media Morality*

The problem facing the Italian media is that there is a crisis of representation of immigrants, immigration, and immigrant communities. One solution is to create space for immigrant self-representation. The question is not merely of access to news, as immigrants often have access not only to the national media within the country in which they reside, many have access to media from their country of origin (Silverstone 2006, 95). The question is one of power to become newsmakers and to appear in the news as agents of one's community. Media, as well as other institutions, have an ethical responsibility not only to act hospitably to the appearance of others in their news productions, they have the responsibility to ensure space for immigrants to create news programs. This is not merely a question of policy; it is a question of ethics. The problem is not limited to Italian media, but to the mediapolis as a whole. The Italian situation is in fact an example of a global crisis of representation of others.

In *Media and Morality*, Roger Silverstone argues that in the mediapolis, the global mediated public commons, the media has a moral responsibility to accommodate the appearance of the other. There are three main components, he argues, that are required in order to be able to call the mediapolis a moral community. First, there must be hospitality, second there must be proper distance, and third there must be truthfulness (159).

Silverstone applies Jacques Derrida's philosophy of hospitality to his theory of media morality. He explains, "the obligation to offer hospitality to the stranger in the symbolic space of media representation is a precondition for media justice" (139). The

idea is to deconstruct the power dynamics of the mediapolis. The “stranger” has a right to appearance, to be “hosted” by media without an invitation and without the precondition that he or she has to share a sameness with the host. It is through embracing the otherness between host and stranger and welcoming his or her voice without precondition that the media will become an ethical realm of representation.

Invariably tied to his notion of hospitality, Silverstone introduces a notion of proper distance required for a moral media system. Proper distance is a closeness to others that enables responsibility and care, but is not so close that it ends up over-identifying with others or precludes the possibility of moral judgment.

The last component to Silverstone’s media morality is truthfulness. Truth, he argues, is not one single meta-truth that should be searched for universally, but rather it should be “a practice of interpretation” within any given society that seeks to make sense of events and actions and to communicate them accordingly. Truth is not merely the responsibility of the individual but of institutions to take responsibility for their words and actions in a similar manner. Truth is also the responsibility of the audience, and this responsibility is dependent on media literacy. The audience must be literate to the degree of having critical viewing and listening skills. They should be able to identify and challenge untruths in the media, making the audience as much a part of the system of media morality as media producers themselves (160).

Silverstone’s arguments for media morality stem from the same principles as Scarry’s in terms of the significance of imagining others. One paragraph sums many of my arguments thus far in terms of the importance of representation, self-representation and the situation of immigrant representation in Italian media. Silverstone suggests that:

In both these environments [private and public] what is being fought over are the rights of, and control over, representation: of the availability of, and access to, the continuities and consistencies of both the immediacy, and the flow, of images and narratives. And in those representations what is at stake are the rights to define a relationship: between what is known and not known, between what is valued and not valued... What is at stake, in these moments and mechanisms of regulation is, essentially, a moral order (169-170).

The issue of representation, to Silverstone is a moral one. It is morally necessary to have a media structure such that there is space for groups to be authors of identity narratives.

Immigrants currently shape much of the Italian national narrative in the global mediascape (that is, how other nations perceive Italy's hospitality toward immigrants and minorities), but not often through their own representations. What is known and not known about immigrants both within and without Italy is largely communicated through narratives constructed by others. But it is a moral issue to create spaces, in part by sharing power and control of content, for self-representation so that immigrant can be, at the very least, co-authors of their stories.

3.2 Media Representation and Power

Media morality has to do with the issue of caring for others. To reiterate Elaine Scarry's belief, the importance of representation has much to do with the way we imagine others because the way we imagine others influences the way we act towards them. However, it would be overly utopian to believe that this cousin of the golden rule would lead to sweeping behavioral reforms across the media, audiences and institutions. That is why issues of individual and group power come into play. When power-holding groups do not have the best interest of others in mind, or if they consider communities outside the boundaries of their consideration and care, it is important for the excluded communities

to have access to power and resources for participation—both cultural and political participation. In many cases, these tools come from media appearance. The media is a key institution in democratic societies whose political center is self-representation. Self-representation is a key democratic principal and should therefore apply to the media as well. Most free contemporary democracies have constitutional safeguards for freedom of expression¹³ because silencing people is the first way to create invisibility, which allows for oppression. Expression is likewise safeguarded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, Art.19) making it internationally recognized as a human right, a component of human dignity, and an essential element for individual and group autonomy.

Safeguards for speech, expression and the press are necessary for all members of society. Sometimes spaces of representation, especially in the media, can become paternalistic in regards to minority expression by not acknowledging the inherent value of minority journalists and media but rather by treating minorities (especially immigrants) as guests in a predominantly Western media system. Scarry (1991, 52-53) differentiates between paternalistic power and genuine political power in her arguments on representation. She imagines two separate scenarios, Town One and Town Two. In Town One, the scenario is such that there is an enfranchised light-skinned group and a disenfranchised dark-skinned group. Before voting, the light-skinned group takes care to consider the position of the dark-skinned group. They imagine the needs of the dark-skinned group and try to make themselves like-minded. In Town Two, on the other hand, both light-skinned and dark-skinned groups are enfranchised. The light-skinned group no

¹³ Some have safeguards for both expression and freedom of the press. Repressive regimes also often have constitutional safeguards for expression but ignore their own governmental regulations in favor of repression and control.

longer needs to take special consideration for the needs of the dark-skinned group. This comparison in a sense applies to the behavior of the media. The current state of the mediapolis acts much in the same way as Town One. Even if media owners are hospitable to others per Silverstone's moral mediapolis, the scenario of Town Two is intuitively more powerful to those who embrace the notion of democracy. But this requires the space for appearance, for self-representation. The truly utopian version would of course be a scenario in which each group can vote and nonetheless take the considerations of the other group to heart.

There exists a vicious circle around the issue of power and appearance. Communities require appearance for power and they require power for appearance. For example, if a public rallies around an issue, say gay marriage rights, it will require power to utilize the resources available to create visibility, namely access to the media, around the issue of the right for gays to marry. However, the power to appear in the media requires the visibility to gain media attention. If the mediapolis is inhospitable to a public it will require care and support from an ethical community to lend voice to gay marriage rights supporters until the issue gains space in the mediapolis.

3.3 Moral and Ethical Communities

The space required for self-representation will not simply be handed over by those who currently hold power over media capital and content. Instead, the space must be ensured by communities of compassion who have the strength and resources to create outlets for self-representation. In *Ethics of Memory*, Avishai Margalit (2002) differentiates between an ethical and a moral community. He differentiates the two by what he calls thick and

thin relations. Thick relations are those tightly woven relationships that bind people together through common experience and memory, such as friends, family, and compatriots. Thin relations, on the other hand, are our relationships to strangers, those that on the surface we share little or nothing with save the virtue of being human. Thin relations, he says, guide morality and thick relations guide ethics. Moral communities are held together by thin relations. The moral community can be said to be all of humanity, as we are perhaps tied together through a commonness that does not necessarily lead us to action during instances of injustice toward one another. International treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights are examples of safeguards created by a global moral community whose concern is the basic rights of all humans held together by thin relations. Ethics, on the other hand, are held together by thick relations. The ethical community is more likely to act during cases of injustice, as we are more likely to feel sympathetic and called to action for those to whom we relate. Local protests, say for unjust police brutality against one's group or community, is an example of action by the ethical community.

Margalit's concern is with memory, which is an integral part of narratives and imagination. How narratives are constructed and who constructs them effect how communities remember events and people and how they are imagined in the future. His worry is that if the ethical community retains no memory of events or people, their narratives can be manipulated by evil forces that undermine morality by changing the collective memories of these events or people (83). Counter to ill-intentions by evil forces, ethical communities “ [make] an effort to channel the hazardous emotions of an involved society into emotions of care and caring” (144). In the case of Italy and

immigration, ethical communities should work to channel xenophobic and racist sentiments into concern for immigrant well-being, to facilitate policies of immigration, improve conditions for refugees and asylum-seekers and set up programs for easier integration into Italian society. Most importantly, however, is to create spaces of appearance so that immigrant communities have the means to develop power, such as a voice enabling them to put pressure on the government to adopt policy changes concerning immigrant treatment. This goes back to Appadurai's notion of the individual as a site of agency (1996, 31). The agency should not only belong to the immigrant in terms of her imagination and ability to construct her own narrative, but also the agency of each individual in the ethical community to act toward the aforementioned goals.

The larger ethical community of concern is the community of residents in Italy. Based on Anderson's notion of imagined communities, members residing in the same nation, held together by nationalism constitute a thick relationship with one another, whether they are from the same ethnic background or not. For example, a Moroccan-born resident has a thick relationship with a Florentine whose family has resided in Florence for centuries by virtue of being Italian residents. They now make up the same national community. However, within Italy there are also "sub-communities" that constitute ethical communities. One example is the government whose thick relation to immigrants is tied not only by immigration policy, but by immigrant constituents for those immigrants who have citizenship, and also by ensuring that those citizens have the opportunity to be integrated into government as representatives, parliamentarians, and the like.

Another ethical community is the Italian media. The media is a powerful community for all of the reasons outlined in section one. As an ethical community, journalists, editors, publishers, media owners should ensure spaces of self-representation for immigrants to portray themselves, their communities, and their stories of immigration and of daily life as citizens or as residents in Italy. Immigrants should also have space to take on these roles as media producers.

Audiences also need to acquire the media literacy in order to enable them to be critical of the imagery that proliferates in the mainstream concerning immigration. It is equally the responsibility of the audience to demand fair representation of others in the media. Other ethical communities include NGOs, businesses, community organizations and religious communities to name a few.

In the past several years in Italy there has been evidence of support for immigrant visibility by ethical communities. The emergence of COSPE in 1983 signifies action by the ethical community to establish currents of care. COSPE's "Media e Multiculturalità" (www.mmc2000.net) initiative deals directly with creating space for multiculturalism in the Italian media. Similarly, "Mediam'rad" (www.mediamrad.org) is a three year platform for pluralism and information diversity with a focus on minorities that COSPE joined along with other NGOs from France and the Netherlands. In 2004, COSPE was one of several organizations from across 15 EU member states to present the *European Manifesto of Multicultural Media* to Pat Cox who at the time acted as European Parliament Chair (Noordam 2004). This manifesto challenged the EU presidency to ameliorate the climate in which multicultural media exists. It consists of four distinct sections: First, it outlines the background societal conditions at the time in which it was

drafted; second, it describes the current state of journalism in the EU; third, it highlights the indispensable role that multicultural media plays in advancing the freedoms of European societies and the richness of their media; and fourth, it outlines the rights of multiethnic and multicultural journalists by invoking numerous human rights safeguards to freedom of expression, such as the European Convention on Human Rights (COSPE et al. 2004). Perhaps COSPE's greatest contribution to the cause of increasing immigrant media appearance is the release of *Come Dialogare Con i Media: Strumenti Utili Rivolti alle Associazioni di Immigrati in Toscana*,¹⁴ which teaches media literacy aimed at immigrant organizations in Tuscany and offers a guide on how to navigate local media as well as tools on how to penetrate the media.

Aside from COSPE, several organizations in Italy work to promote spaces of appearance in the Italian media, especially in the mainstream media. One example is the organization Centro Studi Immigrazione (CESTIM) who keeps a running list of studies concerning media and multiculturalism in Italy and around Europe.

Further movement from the ethical community includes the emergence of community centers in most of Italy's major cities that focus not only on aiding immigrants in their transition to Italian citizenship or how to survive healthfully if they do not have citizenship. Many community centers also produce publications for and about immigrants. One example is *Città Meticcia*, a publication offered by Casa delle Culture, the intercultural center of the city of Ravenna. The paper was started in 1998 and has 40 members from a variety of nationalities, including the editor, Tahir Lamri, who came to Italy from Algeria. The printed publication comes out every two months with a

¹⁴ *How to Dialogue with Media: Useful Tools Designed for Immigrant Organizations in Tuscany* (my own translation).

circulation of 6,000. A variety of stories are posted online along with an archive of past news (www.pergialtri.it/meticcia). Another example includes the Centro Interculturale della Città di Torino, a cultural center in Turin that produces an online magazine, *BAB Passaggi e Paesaggi Interculturali* (BAB Intercultural Passages and Landscapes).¹⁵

The opportunities that the Internet has afforded to immigrants for opening spaces of appearance have been vast. It has opened space for several web portals to spring up whose aim is to provide spaces of appearance and information to immigrants. Some examples include Melting Pot (www.metlingpot.org), a site that contains news articles, multimedia links, provides information specifically designed for NGOs and organizations dealing directly with issues of immigration—especially undocumented immigrants—and provides arts and cultural links for multicultural-related events. Another example is BaoBab (www.baobabroma.org), a site run by the Missionari Scalabriniani in Rome. BaoBab provides information about employment in Italy, provides news articles, provides links and information for refugees, and because it is missionary-run it offers information about immigration and the church.

The Internet has allowed immigrants to start news stations and publications without necessarily falling into the catch 22 that arises with mass media visibility. That is, immigrants don't need large amounts of funding to start a web-based radio broadcast in the same way that funds are needed for acquiring a radio station, broadcast license, access to a radio tower and advertising to support programming. Internet radio can be broadcast at very low costs, as can Internet publications. The downside is that it is much

¹⁵ Centro Interculturale della Città di Torino, "BAB Passaggi e Paesaggi Interculturali," *Centro Interculturale della Città di Torino* (2005), http://www.comune.torino.it/intercultura/s1.asp?p1=APPROFONDIMENTI&p2=Rivista%20BAB&temp=_home (accessed March 1, 2009).

more difficult to attract a web audience than it is to attract an audience through traditional media. According to the Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, Italy's official government statistics agency, in 2007 only 38.8% of households had Internet access compared to 95.9% of households that owned at least one television set (2008, 1).

Asterisco radio is a prime example of this obstacle. Asterisco (www.asteriscoradio.it) is a web-based radio station started by the Felsimedia group, the same group that publishes *Il Tamburo*, an online publication that has local, regional and national news with a focus on stories that pertain to immigrants and people concerned with diversity and multiculturalism. Asterisco plays an array of world music and has several news programs including *Slow News*, which reports the day's news in a manner easily understood by people whose native language is not Italian. In spite of the array of multicultural programming offered by Asterisco, in the several dozen times that I have logged on to their site, there have been less than ten current users tracked on their ticker. Although the number of site visitors has generally been very low, it does not necessarily reflect the number of users that utilize their extensive sound file archive that includes music, political and socially relevant recordings. One example of a sound file available from the site includes the 2006 ceremony of the Moustafà Souhir Prize for Journalism¹⁶ that was granted to Felsimedia's founders Raymon Dassi and Faustin Akafak (both Cameroonian journalists) who won the prize in both 2004 and 2006.

Akafak and Dassi started Asterisco in 2004 because, as Dassi explains:

We immigrants were always 'objects' of their [the mainstream media's] discussion. Obviously I believed, and I believe now that every group of

¹⁶ The Premio Giornalistico Moustafà Souhir was started in 2004 by COSPE to recognize outstanding journalists that promote multiculturalism.

people needs a mediated space to present their own views and thus contribute to the comprehensive representation of society.¹⁷

Although Asterisco does not necessarily reach a broad audience, Felsimedia is an important organization to broaden opportunities of immigrants interested in journalism. It offers courses in multimedia production and sound studies for radio programming, among many other courses geared toward integrating immigrants into the world of journalism.

3.4 Nigrizia: An Example of Self-representation and the Ethical Community

One example of a space opening for self-representation aided by a larger ethical community is the case of Nigrizia. Nigrizia is Italy's only African-centric web media portal produced for and from the Diaspora in Italian language. Its resources are truly extensive. Among those included on their website (www.nigrizia.it) is a collection of cultural resources aimed at tantalizing the five senses called "Africa 5." Each issue includes a recipe for the taste buds; books, films, or art for the eyes; proverbs, oral stories, music and sounds for the ears; information about the smells of places and things for the nostrils; and information about clothes and art for the touch; all these components stemming from different African countries. The section "Africa e Lode" posts graduate theses concerning Africa. There is an extensive archive that documents news, magazines, books and other print materials reaching back over a decade all concerning Africa, including Nigrizia's monthly print magazine by the same name. "Bacheca" is a section that lists events concerning Africa happening all across Italy. There is also an opinion section which includes contributions from renown figures including Igiaba Scego, an award winning Italian writer of Somalian origin. These are just a few of over a dozen

¹⁷ Raymon Dassi, "Re:Tesi," email message to author, March 4, 2009. My own translation.

categories offered on Nigrizia. Nigrizia.it is heavily trafficked for an African resource site in Italy. It receives approximately 1,600,000 hits per month, with 78% of those hits coming from within Italy.¹⁸

One prominent link on Nigrizia's website is for their broadcasting site AfriRadio (www.nimedia.it/afriradio.asp), an online radio station. AfriRadio offers news, information and cultural programming focused on Africa. Some examples of their programs run by African-born journalists are *Bamoyo*, which focuses on issues of Christianity and religious news from Africa, *Nsaka Sport*, which focuses on sports news of interest to Africans living in Italy, and *Kwanza*, a program that focuses on economic issues concerning Africa.

Kwanza is a weekly show hosted by Fortuna Ekutsu Mambulu, originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, who graduated from the University of Verona with a degree in economics.¹⁹ The show is 15 minutes long, is produced once a week and airs twice each week. The format is consistently comprised of an introduction to the week's topic, one to two professional interviews on the subject and the last two minutes devoted to news from each region of Africa. Topics for the show range from perpetuating war for economic means to the effects of global trade on different African countries, to Africa's often overlooked cultural economy. One particularly poignant and telling episode was titled "The New Rules of Global Finance Without Africa" (my own translation), that shed light on the fact that the meeting of 20 nations in Washington DC in November 2008 to discuss the future of global finance in light of the financial crisis invited South Africa as

¹⁸ Alexa, "Traffic Stats," *Nigrizia* (2008), <http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/nigrizia.it> (accessed March 1, 2009)

¹⁹ Nigrizia Multimedia, "Kwanza," *AfriRadio* (2009), http://www.nimedia.it/afriradio_programmi.asp?prgr=103 (accessed March 1, 2009)

the only representative of the continent. Interviewee Alessandro Volpi, a professor at the University of Pisa, suggested that part of the reason this is the case is that traditionally, Northern nations have considered themselves the decision makers on global issues, discounting the voices of the global south. This issue is telling because it echoes the same struggles that the Diaspora and other immigrant groups face in Italy—lack of visibility and a global mentality of being on the fringe.

There are several strengths in the type of reporting broadcast by *Kwanza* and its sister programs on AfriRadio. First, it creates a more complex and balanced image of Africa as a continent than is generally seen in non-immigrant reporting. One of the reasons that immigrants, especially from African countries, are seen as unwelcome in Italy is because the continent itself is undervalued in Italian society, partly due to a history of negative reporting and partly because of a deeper-rooted historical relationship with the continent as a former colonizer of Ethiopia, Somalia and part of Libya. In a post-colonial age, the images that created an air of inferiority are perpetuated through negative media representation. As Fortuna Ekutsu Mambulu expressed, “the big problem in my opinion isn’t only to raise the numbers of Africans in existing media; the most important thing is to promote a balanced image of the continent, and to create new networks.”²⁰ The imbalance of reporting on Africa as a continent plagued by war, poverty and famine overlooks the richness and variety of African countries and their individual histories. The diverse reporting for *Kwanza* helps to create a more balanced image of a complex continent, allowing space in the imagination for comprehension instead of stereotyping.

²⁰ Fortuna Ekutsu Mambulu, “Re:Ricerche per la tesi sui media africani in Italia,” email message to author, February 17, 2009. My own translation.

Another important component of AfriRadio is its diverse staff. The programs offered on AfriRadio are split down the middle in terms of African-born and Italian-born hosts. The mix of non-immigrant and immigrant journalists, as well as the diversity of national origin allow for a multiplicity of voices, programming and expertise. AfriRadio's existence is credited especially to the religious ethical community including Inblu, a Catholic radio network with whom AfriRadio has a broadcasting contract allowing it to air online. Nigrizia was started by Father Alexander Zanotelli, a member of the Combonian missionaries, in order to specifically to allow space for Africans to have a voice through media.²¹

3.5 The Importance of Self-Representation in Mainstream Media

All of the examples thus far of immigrant-produced media, self-representation and mobilization of ethical communities are important for diversifying public opinion on issues of immigration and for promoting immigrants' agency to create their own narratives of identity. These examples have the potential for impact especially on the local level. Broader national attention to immigrant appearance will not be achieved, however, unless immigrant self-representation reaches mainstream media in greater numbers, prominence and permanence. Appearing in the mainstream is indicative of a broader recognition that immigrants play an important part of the Italian narrative and exist as a legitimate part of the Italian social fabric.

Up to now, mainstream newspapers have been the most progressive medium to turn their attention to issues of immigrant appearance. A handful of papers have started

²¹ *Giovani e Missione*, "Provocazioni di P. Alex Zanotelli," *Giovani e Missione* (2009), <http://www.giovaniemissione.it/index.php?option=content&task=category§ionid=11&id=51&Itemid=142> (accessed April 23, 2009).

printing pages either in their daily editions or as special inserts that are either written by immigrants or that allow for greater appearance through interviews or by including immigrant perspectives in their stories. The first paper to do so was *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, a newspaper based in Puglia that has national distribution. Started by journalist Gianluigi De Vito in 1998, it began printing the *Gazzetta Mondo*, a weekly page dedicated to news about immigrant countries of origin, news and initiatives in immigrant communities, and useful information for immigrant communities in Italy (Maneri and Meli 2006, 80). In 2000, *TorinoSette* followed suit with a page in their Friday edition that held a similar idea to the *Gazzetta*. The most inclusive and visible edition by far is *La Repubblica's* offshoot *Metropoli* which is dedicated entirely to issues concerning immigrant communities and which is composed for the most part by immigrant journalists. It started in 2004 as a web edition and subsequently became a printed insert of *La Repubblica's* weekend edition (ibid. 82). Although there are problems with printing immigrant stories as a separate insert, as aforementioned, perhaps *Metropoli's* saving grace is its online edition (<http://temi.repubblica.it/metropoli-online/>). The website serves not only as a daily news source by and about immigrants; it also has extensive resources that benefit immigrants, such as links to important government documents.

Advances in the print media are crucial; however, television is the most popular news medium in Italy. Visibility on television entertainment programs has its own value in terms of narrative and identity construction, but my interest for the purpose of this study lies in news and current events programming. Few programs exist on mainstream

television, such as *Shukran*²² on the channel Tg3, and the only program that is easily accessible both on television and online is *Un Mondo a Colori*, broadcast on the public television channels RAI Due and RAI Educational that also has an episode archive available online (www.unmondoacolori.rai.it).

Un Mondo a Colori was launched in 1999 by Congolese journalist, Jean-Leonard Touadi, who was elected as one of only three foreign-born members of parliament in 2008. The program airs every Tuesday morning and evening and every Wednesday morning. The show started as an effort by a group of African immigrants to raise awareness of issues facing immigrants in Italy. Although it is an effort to open spaces of self-representation, the show is rife with problems and clichés of its own and covers several issues that sensationalize immigrant life in Italy. An example of the show's problematic representation is seen in the episode "Storia di Marius" ("Marius' Story") which first aired on October 23, 2008 and was rebroadcast on February 27, 2009. The episode profiles "Marius," a man who came to Italy from Romania when he was 16 and was lured into a crime ring. He was arrested and sent to rehabilitation, as Italian law favors the rehabilitation rather than the incarceration of minors. Although the episode is an interesting exploration of Italian law as it relates to minors, there is a thick air of Romanian criminalization. More noticeably is the explicit infantilizing throughout the episode as the show's hostess, Valeria Coiante, refers to "little Marius" and repeatedly references the story as a "fairy tale with a happy ending."

One example of a program that lends full appearance to a member of the African Diaspora in Italy was the program that aired on October 10, 2008 called "Peter Torna a

²² *Shukran* began in 1999 after it was urged by the minister of welfare to combat one-dimensional portrayals of immigrants (Maneri and Meli 2006, 77).

Casa” (“Peter Returns Home”) which documents the life of Peter Bayuku Konteh who grew up in Sierra Leone. Mr. Konteh came to Italy 18 years prior in order to study in Italian higher education and is gearing up to return permanently to the town that he left behind. He left Sierra Leone right before the outbreak of civil war. Now, as an Italian citizen, he has designed a program called Microcammino 2000 to build a school in his home town, Kabala, with the aim of expanding education as a means of combating the training of child soldiers. He sought out *Un Mondo a Colori* specifically to tell his story and to publicly thank Italy for the years that he spent there. This story not only gives full attention to the project developed by Mr. Konteh, but it gives a “face” to a city in Sierra Leone most likely unknown to the majority of Italians and other viewers.

Immigrants have started to emerge as mainstream print and broadcast journalists, especially in immigrant-specific programming, and as in-depth subjects. It is equally important for immigrants to take on ownership, editorial and administrative roles to ensure that programming that gives voices to immigrant and minority communities will continue and expand. A study done by Laurie Mason, Christine Bachen and Stephanie Craft (2001) shows the effects of minority broadcast station ownership in the U.S. on news programming diversity. The study finds that stations owned by minorities are more likely to hire minority staff (including on-air staff), more likely to air programming that aims at broader audiences, and broadcasts a more diverse range of news. Although the study is not specific to Italy, I suspect that similar trends would appear in the Italian media. If immigrant reporters, commentators and anchors were integrated into regular programming rather than immigrant-specific programming, it would normalize the notion of immigrants as Italians rather than as foreigners.

Conclusion

In the face of growing xenophobia supported through anti-immigrant government policies and negative portrayals of immigrants in non-immigrant-produced Italian news, there is an ever-pressing need for Italian ethical communities to create spaces for immigrant self-representation. There is also a growing need for immigrants themselves to step into the roles of journalists, media owners and editors in order to have agency to create their own narratives. These narratives are what drive forward the unfolding history not only of Italy and its old and new citizens but of Europe and the countries of the world that are becoming more closely intertwined through globalization and global migration.

Creating spaces for self-representation is part of a larger movement to generate understanding and care for others. It is an issue of human rights, of seeing others as part of your own community whose rights and dignity as humans should be protected, not demonized. Understanding others is partially a practice of understanding our own otherness, which creates the empathy needed for larger ethical communities that could perhaps one day, in a most utopian expression, expand to a global ethical community.

Understanding the importance of self-representation is not merely a question of understanding how minorities create narratives of identity or how majorities create narratives for them. There also lies a question of what the narratives created by majorities about minorities say about the majorities themselves. How this narrative—whether one of care or of oppression—aids to write their own narratives of identity.²³ It would be worthwhile to study more extensively the implications of xenophobia on Italian self-representation in the global mediapolis, and to give a closer look at what self-

²³ This idea was lent to me by professor Anna Di Lellio during a conversation about narratives of representation at the New School University on April 9, 2009.

representation means for under-represented Italian political and ethical communities, namely the left-leaning political communities.

Another area that this study was not able to include in its scope but which merits closer inspection is the role of audience on media morality and self-representation in the case of immigrant Italian media. There is a serious lack of data on audience demographics and consumption of immigrant-produced media, which might aid both in expanding immigrant media enterprises and to help mobilize immigrant-produced media consumers as part of the ethical community. It is important to know how immigrant self-representation aids empirically to expand understanding in non-immigrant residents toward immigrants and other minorities. This could partly be achieved through audience studies.

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