



The Immigrant's Journey: Race and Trauma in The Sopranos

Pouyan Tabasinejad

RCIS Working Paper No. 2016/3

June 2016

SERIES EDITOR

John Shields

Ryerson Centre for Immigration & Settlement
Ryerson University
Jorgenson Hall, 620
350 Victoria Street, Toronto, ON M5B2K3
<http://www.ryerson.ca/rcis>



RCIS Working Paper

No. 2016/3

**The Immigrant's Journey:
Race and Trauma in *The Sopranos***

Pouyan Tabasinejad
Ryerson University



Series Editor: John Shields

RCIS Working Papers present scholarly research of all disciplines on issues related to immigration and settlement. The purpose is to stimulate discussion and collect feedback. The views expressed by the author(s) do not necessarily reflect those of RCIS. For a complete list of RCIS publications, visit www.ryerson.ca/rcis

ISSN: 1929-9915



Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 2.5
Canada License

Abstract

David Chase's series *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) was a wildly successful and popular show which has attracted rich analysis from both critics and academics. However, what has not been adequately analyzed by scholars is the central role that race (specifically Whiteness and Whitening) plays within the series. By using theories of Whiteness (especially Sheshadri-Crooks's idea of Whiteness as master signifier), Whitening, and racialization, this paper shows how Italian-Americans' history of racialization, oppression, and eventual Whitening and deracialization expresses itself in complex ways within the series. Specifically, this paper focuses on how the trauma of historical Italian-American oppression and racialization are a constant theme within the seemingly Whitenized Italian-American communities and relations portrayed in the series. This inter-generational trauma is considered in the context of historical developments in the Italian-American community and dialogue and plot developments within the series.

Author Bio

Pouyan Tabasinejad is a Master's student in the Immigrant and Settlement Studies (ISS) program at Ryerson University. He received his BA and MA in History at the University of Toronto. His research interests include inter-cultural interactions, racialization, and immigrant entrepreneurship.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank my parents Farideh and Jalal for their support in all of my endeavours, academic and otherwise. I'd also like to thank Cheryl Teelucksingh, the instructor for my Race and Ethnic Relations course, for her support and guidance in this project, and the two anonymous adjudicators who picked this paper to receive the ISS MA Best Term Paper award.

Note

RCIS is pleased to publish the winning entry of the Masters in Immigration and Settlement Studies (ISS) program at Ryerson University essay prize for 2016.

Introduction

The Sopranos was an American series which ran from 1999 to 2007 (totalling 6 seasons) created by David Chase. It chronicles the life of the eponymous Soprano family, focusing on Tony Soprano, the boss of an organized crime organization. Despite initial reactions from academics and Italian-American anti-defamation organizations regarding the show's alleged perpetuation of Italian-American stereotypes, the show soon began to garner attention from analysts as a serious work of art (Kocela, 2005: 1). Such analysis has dissected the show's portrayal of Italian-Americans, gender, and class. However, the

show's treatment of race has not been as sufficiently analyzed, with the exception of a few authors. Regardless, the issue of race looms large over the entire plot and much of the dialogue of the Sopranos. Most of the existing analysis on the subject consists of authors analyzing the characters' selective identifications with whiteness (Kocela, 2005) (Ricci, 2014). While this analysis is strong, the ways in which Tony Soprano and other characters in the series interact with and negotiate race points to a larger and more significant picture of the dynamics of race in contemporary North American society. Specifically, the dominance of Italian-American characters (not to mention actors) in the series and their involvement in the stereotypical activity of organized crime reveals much about the dynamics surrounding Italians' (relatively) recent acceptance into whiteness. This paper will argue that the Italian-American characters' frantic and schizophrenic interactions with race in *the Sopranos* displays the trauma which Italian-Americans endured, and continue to endure, in their immigrant experience of subjugation, racism, exclusion, and, finally, assimilation through Whitening.

Theoretical Foundations: Racialization, Whitening, and the Centrality of Whiteness

An analysis of the racialization and deracialization (or "Whitening") of Italian-Americans requires intimate theoretical engagement with Critical Race Theory and specifically its offshoots, especially those concerned with Whiteness and theories of racialization. Also useful is the concept of Whiteness as expounded by Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks (2000), which analyses the centrality of whiteness in race and racialization (and deracialization), what she refers to as "race thinking." (Sheshadri-Crooks, 2000:1) Racialization is the process by which individuals, either as a group or separately, relationships, or practices become imbued with racial meanings when previously no such meanings existed (Omi & Winant, 2015). These racial meanings include constructed or perceived markers of difference, often phenotypic and physical, which are further extended into practices and beliefs, ultimately forming rationalizations of social difference. This process can occur at both micro and macro levels, shaping everything from popular depictions of different individuals to momentous world-historical events such as the Atlantic Slave Trade and colonialism (Omi & Winant, 2015).

Deracialization is the reverse of this process. It is closely related to the concept of "Whitening" (and indeed is often used interchangeably) (Gans, 2012), which is when those who were previously Othered through the prescription of racial meanings become accepted into Whiteness, which acts as the norm against which all groups are compared and ascribed racial meanings (Gans, 2012) (this concept and the centrality of Whiteness will be considered further below). In other words, deracialization, or Whitening, is when racial meanings are removed from individuals or groups and the previously racialized group becomes accepted as "normal," i.e. part of the dominant group (Gans, 2012). These individuals become White, and, regardless of their own self-conception, are treated as such by the dominant White class. Often, this is done with an aim to change the racial configurations of the population in favour of the interests of the

White majority, especially when the majority status of White people is threatened (Gans, 2012).

Fundamental to the concept of racialization and deracialization/Whitening, as it will be applied to the subject in this paper, is an understanding of the subjective and ontological centrality of Whiteness. This topic was thoroughly analyzed by Kalpana Sheshadri-Crooks in her 2000 book, *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race*. In this work, Sheshadri-Crooks asserts that Whiteness holds a privileged place in racial discourse, what she calls "race thinking" (Sheshadri-Crooks, 2000: 1). To Sheshadri-Crooks, Whiteness is the master signifier against which all symbolic positions (e.g. "Black", "Asian") are built in relation. As she puts it:

The system of race as differences among black, brown, red, yellow, and white makes sense only in its unconscious reference to Whiteness, which subtends the binary opposition between "people of color" and "white." (Sheshadri-Crooks, 2000: 20)

"White people," who have pledged allegiance to Whiteness, racialize others who are not defined as White, i.e. people of colour. Whiteness is therefore a central force, or a master signifier, which maintains racial difference and determines all racial classifications in relation to itself. This concept is important to better understand the acceptance of Italian-Americans into Whiteness as it occurs throughout the series.

A Brief History of Italian-Americans

Though Italian immigration to the United States dates back to the founding of the colonies which later formed the country, the highest levels of immigration occurred after the unification of Italy in 1861. Unification and the political instability that it brought ushered in widespread poverty in the region known as Southern Italy, since the new state favoured Northern Italy in terms of resources and services and instituted policies such as an unequal tax burden and trade tariffs on the South. As a result, the vast majority of the Italian immigrants to the United States came from Southern Italy. The period of most intense immigration occurred in the period from 1880-1920, when approximately 4 million Italians came to the United States (Pandolfi, 2009). These individuals were often uneducated and without substantial resources, and filled low-wage positions in their new country. They were often exploited by employers and lived in high-density and poorly kept tenement buildings in the urban areas of the North-Eastern United States. During this time, the dominant Northern European Protestant population in the United States developed specific racist attitudes to the new immigrants (Tamburri, 2011). Italians, though they themselves did not ascribe to the identity of "Italian," were constructed as inferior to Northern Europeans, occupying a space in the racial hierarchy in between Whites and Blacks, and often called Dagoes, Guineas, and Wops (Luconi, 2011).

Italian-Americans were marginalized in all areas of American life, occupying inferior positions in various sectors, including the labour market,

politics, and unions. This prejudice also resulted in spectacular acts of violence against Italian-Americans, most notably the 1891 mob lynching of 11 Italians in New Orleans (Vellon, 2014). They were blocked from living in certain areas and many languished in poverty (Guglielmo, 2003). Discriminatory immigration laws were also passed by the American government in the early 20th century (notably the 1921 and 1924 Quota Acts), in part to limit Italian immigration (Luconi, 2011). Though Italian-Americans were overrepresented in the US military in both the First and Second World War, Italian-Americans' loyalty was seen as suspect during the Second World War, and mainstream American opinion held a decidedly negative view of Italian-Americans, much more negative than the perception of German-Americans (Luconi, 2011). Furthermore, Italian-Americans were repeatedly denigrated and Othered in media representations (Tamburri, 2011). However, the trend began to change in the years and decades after the Second World War. During this period, Italians began to be accepted into the White majority, especially in the context of increased Black and Puerto Rican presence in American cities, and in turn exhibited prejudice against non-white minorities (Luconi, 2011).

Race in *The Sopranos*

Though there has been a considerable amount of analysis on themes of queerness, feminism, existential angst, familial relations, and psychology in the *Sopranos*, the role of race in the series has been far less thorough. This is despite the fact that the series is deeply steeped in the Italian-American community, with the show's creator (David Chase née DeCesare) and the majority of the cast spending most of their lives in the same New Jersey region where the series is set, with most tracing their ancestry to Southern Italy. Two works which do deal with the issue are an article by Kocela (2005) and a chapter in a book by Ricci (2014). These sources analyzing race in *The Sopranos* tend to focus on Tony Soprano's manipulation of his existence on the border between White and non-White. This phenomenon, while well-founded, is merely one aspect of the role of race in the series. I will instead assert that the main theme in the treatment of race in *The Sopranos* is one of trauma: specifically, the trauma of immigration, subjugation, exclusion, and, finally, (a highly selective and conditional) acceptance into Whiteness. This will be done by analyzing the dialogue and plot of the series with the theoretical lenses mentioned above, which will show the legacies of pain and trauma which form a consistent and unavoidable thread throughout the series. This analysis will be divided into three themes, namely legacies and instances of anti-Italian sentiment, the characters' situational identification with Whiteness, and self-awareness by Italian-American characters of their own recent and highly conditional acceptance into Whiteness.

Dagos, Wops, and Goombahs: Anti-Italianism in *The Sopranos*

The series repeatedly references past and present discrimination against Italian-Americans and the inferior position occupied by that community, as summarized by Tony Soprano in the passage below:

Tony Soprano [in response to criticism of his criminal activities]: When America opened up the floodgates and let all us Italians in, what do you think they were doing it for? 'Cause they were trying to save us from poverty? No, they did it because they needed us. They needed us to build their cities and dig their subways, and to make them richer. The Carnegies and The Ruckerfellers: they needed worker bees and there we were. But some of us didn't want to swarm around their hive and lose who we were. We wanted to stay Italian and preserve the things that meant something to us: honor and family and loyalty... and some of us wanted a piece of the action. Now we weren't educated like the Americans, but we had the *balls* to take what we wanted! And those other folks, those other... the, the JP Morgans, they were crooks and killers too, but that was the business right? The American Way. (Chase, *the Sopranos*, II, 9).

Clearly, despite Italian-Americans' acceptance into Whiteness, the memory of anti-Italian discrimination has not been forgotten by the Italian-Americans in Chase's world and constitutes a part of the trauma of racialization. To these characters, often occupying a highly racialized and stereotypical space in the so-called "mafia," the wounds of anti-Italianism are fresh and often re-opened. Anti-Italianism is displayed not only by the non-Italians in the series, but also by other Italian-Americans as well, creating tremendous narrative complexity and feelings of trauma past and present throughout the series.

These feelings are made explicit early in the series. After a morning raid on the Soprano home by the FBI, Tony Soprano and his wife Carmella give their children a lesson on Italian-American history, teaching them the contributions of Italians to America – such as the founding of the Bank of America, supplying the first American saint, the invention of the telephone by Antonio Meucci, and disproportionate contributions to the country's military efforts – despite the unfair treatment the community suffered at the hands of both law enforcement and wider American society (I, 8)¹. As in the passage above, this reference to anti-Italianism comes at a time of criticism and persecution for criminal activity. However, this does not take away from the fact that it speaks to deep feelings of exclusion on behalf of these characters. The speed with which both Tony and Carmella enter into complex and lengthy rationalizations and defences of their ethnic community is telling. The utterances and their quickness betrays a veritable siege mentality from a not so bygone era where Italian-Americans' place in American society was highly unstable and subject to constant attack.

Indeed, these attacks are not merely in these characters' imaginations. Anti-Italian sentiment is often portrayed in the series, not only from non-Italians, but also, indeed more often, from "assimilated" Italians. The most salient example of anti-Italianism from a non-Italian in the series comes in the form of Alan Sapinsky, the owner of a house that Tony was in the process of buying. A

¹ The Sopranos series is referenced in this paper according to a system by which the season of the series is given in Roman numerals first and the episode number is given in Arabic (i.e. standard) numerals second.

wealthy and cultured attorney, Sapinsly, despite his “ethnic” name, represents the dominant white American bourgeoisie which keeps an ever distrustful eye on newcomers. When Tony decides to back out of the deal to buy Sapinsly’s property, which adjoins the latter’s primary residence, after his sudden separation from his wife Carmella, Sapinsly resists and decides to keep Tony’s \$200,000 deposit. Tony attempts to threaten Sapinsly into releasing the deposit, but the latter resists, attempting to allay his wife’s concerns for their safety and rationalizing his choices with anti-Italian stereotypes and racial epithets (IV, 13). When Tony plays extremely loud Dean Martin songs from his boat outside of Sapinsly’s beach house in an effort to strong-arm the attorney, the latter refers to Tony as “fucking goombah trash,” (IV, 13) and remarks that the shoreline has turned into the “Gulf of Sorrento” (IV, 13) as a result of Tony’s actions, before finally giving into Tony’s demands.

While anti-Italianism from outside the community is the context in which anti-Italianism in the series takes place, interactions with non-Italians are relatively rare. What is much more apparent in the series is the anti-Italianism which occurs within the Italian-American community itself. The character of Tony, the Italian-American who identifies consciously and strongly with his Italian heritage stands in direct contrast to the character of his assimilated neighbour, Dr. Bruce Cusumano. As Tony puts it, he has little in common with Cusumano and his ilk’s Whiteness, describing the Doctor as a “Wonderbread Wop.” (I, 10) These deracialized Italian-American individuals are the silent majority in the series, simultaneously poking fun, living vicariously through, and mercilessly racializing the “stereotypical” Italians represented by Tony and his “family.” In one particular scene, Dr. Cusamano and his wife Jeanie host a dinner party with the Italian-American Dr. Melfi (also Tony’s psychologist) and a few seemingly White, wealthy individuals in attendance. There, the guests, excluding Dr. Melfi, engage in a racially charged conversation where they simultaneously ridicule and delight in Tony’s perceived hyper-Italianicity. The guests smugly look down upon the Sopranos, despite being no more wealthy than them, condescendingly describing the family’s “bar with the goombah murano glass” (I, 10), and expressing surprise that they did not find guns at the property when they attended a charity dinner, before going into an impassioned discussion of famous mob movies (I, 10).

Similar occurrences take place with other Italian-American characters, such as when Tony’s daughter Meadow Soprano’s fiancé Finn DeTrollo, a self-described “de-racinated” (VI, 6) Italian, refers to one of Tony’s associates as “Johnny Macaroni” (VI, 6), and whose father makes jokes about “Italian cheeses and smelly feet” (VI, 6), to which Meadow takes tremendous offence (VI, 6). Closer to home, Carmella Soprano’s mother Mary de Angelis expresses this anti-Italianism perhaps most strongly, seeking to hide her son-in-law’s stereotypical Italianicity, specifically Southern Italianicity, from her “cultured” Italian-American friends who identify more with Northern Italy (V, 8). This Northern Italian identification is important because of the equation of Northern Italy with Europe and Whiteness, while Southern Italy was identified with not-Europe and non-

Whiteness. Carmela chastises her mother for what she describes as her “closet self-loathing” (V, 8) in an especially poignant scene: describing how the latter despaired that her grand-daughter Meadow came out “so dark” (V, 8) when she was born, and was glad that her husband’s name, de Angelis, did not end in the stereotypical Italian vowel (V, 8).

Anti-Italianism is therefore an unavoidable reality for the Italian-American characters in *the Sopranos*. Whether they take part in or resist the prejudicial and stereotypical ideas of Italian-Americans inherent to anti-Italianism, all of the Italian-American characters in the series, except perhaps for the luxuriously unaware youngest child of the family (Anthony Jr., who will be analyzed further below), adopt a posture towards the phenomenon and interact with it intimately. This shows that the Whitening or deracialization of a subject population is never as simple as merely removing racial meaning from those individuals. Racialization leaves a trauma which is passed down to future generations, and which can create a group consciousness and identity resistant to dismantling once deracialization takes place. In other words, this racialization leaves scars both in the racialized population and in the population at large. Racial meanings cannot over a few generations be fully erased and instead remain with the newly deracialized population (though no doubt softened and weakened), whose members can often only escape these meanings by partaking in these discourses of racial meaning. David Chase’s nuanced and complex portrayal of anti-Italianism in *the Sopranos* therefore shows that the traumatic and scarring effect of racialization continue to be felt in the Italian-American community.

The Colour of Anxiety: Situational Whiteness in the Sopranos

Anthony Soprano, Jr.: Oh, right. I'm so special.

Tony Soprano: You're damn right you are. You're handsome, and smart, and a hard worker, and – let's be honest – white. That's a huge plus nowadays... (VI, 1)

Despite the too-fresh memories, and present realities, of anti-Italian discrimination, it would be misleading to ignore the fact that the Italian-American characters in *the Sopranos* consistently assert that they are – like other Italian-Americans – White. As displayed by the passage above, Tony Soprano and other Italian-American characters recognize, implicitly and explicitly, that they are given access to the privilege of Whiteness and that they should take advantage of it. While positive explicit affirmations of racism such as the one quoted above are rare in the series, the assumption that Italian-Americans are White is subtly but powerfully asserted throughout the series. Some of the most powerful assertions of Italian-American claims to Whiteness in the series are accomplished through the treatment of racialized minorities, events which both display explicit Whiteness and show one of the most important characteristics of Whitening – the racialization of other groups. However, even in the deracializing racialization of other minorities, the series shows the trauma and scars of racialization with which Italian-Americans continue to deal.

In Studs Terkel's oral history of the Second World War, an Italian-American is recorded as saying something which summarizes well the role that the racialization and discrimination of other groups has in both testing the Whiteness of a group or individual and as a Whitening act. The Italian-American in question rejoices when a group of Italian-Americans are asked by a group of Whites to join in their suppression of a riot in Harlem in 1943. It is at this moment that the speaker states that Italian-Americans became 'just' Americans, leading him to ask: "Now we're like you guys, right?" (Terkel, 1984: 142) These Whitening moments occur many times for the Italian-American characters in *the Sopranos*, from when Christopher, Tony's nephew, utters repeated racial slurs aimed at African-Americans, even in a restaurant with an exclusively Black clientele, to when Tony engages in what his psychologist describes as "a racist rant" against South Asians when he contracts food poisoning after eating at an Indian restaurant (II, 13). However, perhaps the most important occurrence of racialization is when Meadow, Tony's daughter, brings home a mixed-race (Black and Jewish) friend, Noah Tannenbaum. The exchange Tony has with this young man, and what occurs shortly afterwards, offers one of the richest looks into the treatments of race in the series (III, 2). After provoking a racist confrontation with Noah when Meadow is out of the scene, Tony explains why he will not allow Noah to see Meadow because of his Blackness; Noah storms out once Meadow returns. Once he is alone, Tony attempts to prepare a meal, and experiences a panic attack at the sight of an "Uncle Ben" package of rice which causes him to lose consciousness (III, 2).

The episodes related to above show how Italian-American characters use their recent acceptance into Whiteness to assert their superiority over other racialized groups, becoming White by doing so, and also gain resources and power by affiliation with the White majority. However, the last episode with Noah Tannenbaum speaks to the fact that even when engaging in the quintessentially White – and Whitening – act of racializing, the Italian-American psyche, as represented by Tony Soprano, is not free of the trauma it endured during its own racialization. Tony's panic attack at the sight of a famously racist image of Uncle Ben after engaging in his own racist abuse of a Black man is the most telling development. Taken in the context of the history of racialization of Italian-Americans, of which as shown in the previous section Tony is acutely aware and of which he is often the target, Tony's intense panic surrounding the incident makes more sense. As an Italian-American, he (at least through cultural memory) is a recent victim of racialization.

While Tony desperately wants to assert his Whiteness, and gain greater affiliation with it, he is doing so at the expense of racialized people while simultaneously occupying a cultural and psychological space of a racialized person which creates a contradiction that is too much to bear. The sight of the image of servile Black Uncle Ben, which stands much like the image of the foreign Dago or Wop, pushes Tony over the edge, and causes such intense anxiety that he loses consciousness, striking his head on the kitchen counter (III, 2). The situation is made even more complex when one takes into account

Southern Italians' historical connection with Africans and how this connection was used to racialize Southern Italians in Italy and to racialize them as a result (Sautman, 2011). Therefore, even in their efforts to occupy their newly-found space of Whiteness and become Whiter, the characters in *the Sopranos* are haunted by ghosts of their own racialized past, which subconsciously assert themselves through instances like Tony's panic attack.

Freshmen in the Club: the Precariousness of Italian Whiteness in *The Sopranos*

Tony Soprano: "Come on, you're Italian, you understand. Guys like me were brought up to think that *medigans* are fucking bores. The truth is the average white man is no more boring than the millionth conversation over who should've won, Marciano or Ali."

Dr. Jennifer Melfi [Tony's psychologist]: "So am I to understand that you don't consider yourself white?"

Tony: "I don't mean white like Caucasian. I mean a white man, like our friend Cusamano. How he's Italian but he's a *medigan*. He's what my old man would've called a Wonder Bread wop. You know, he eats his Sunday gravy out of a jar." (I, 10)

The above exchange between Tony and his psychotherapist Dr. Melfi, another Italian-American, during a discussion of whether Tony can expand his social circle outside of the "family," makes explicit a fact which lays underneath so much of what was discussed above – that Italian-Americans are newcomers to the club of Whiteness; they are Caucasian, but not White: White but not quite White. Furthermore, the above passage shows that Italian-Americans, especially for those like Tony who have opted to maintain a separate and often contested identity, even while benefitting from Whiteness, are aware of this fact and will not necessarily erase their identity in their quest to benefit from their newfound Whiteness.

Once again, this orientation can be traced to the Italian-American trauma of racialization, summed up aptly by Tony in a passage quoted in a previous section where he rationalizes the emergence of the mafia as a reaction to White American capitalist exploitation, by "the Carnegies and Rockefellers," of poor Italian immigrants in the early days of immigration. Tony connects himself to the original *mafiosi*, who "wanted to stay Italian and preserve the things that meant something to us: honor and family and loyalty" (II, 9). In this passage, Tony shows that he will not – or rather cannot – forget the violence of racialization suffered by him and his ancestors, even while he takes full advantage of his new status as a White man. This violence has not only been transmitted to him through generations, but it has also created a unique Italian-American identity; this is a violence which scholars of Italian-Americans have pointed to as something which created an Italian-American identity and solidarity where before there was only regionalism and diffuseness (Luconi, 2011). His use of the derogatory *medigan* when referring to non-Italian Whites speaks to this fact, as

the word was used by Italian immigrants in the United States to refer to the dominant group (either as a contraction of American, or of *merde de canne*, Italian for "dog shit") (Dottolo, 2015).

Here, once again the trauma of racialization shows itself in the main character of this Italian-American epic drama. Tony may play White when it is to his advantage, but he is always instinctively ready to defend his heritage, ready to be racialized and made into a Goombah. He carries with him the trauma of Italian-American immigrants and naturalized Italians who for decades were nothing but Wops, Dagos, and Guineas. Unlike his professional bourgeois neighbour Dr. Cusamano, Tony does not have the luxury of being able to disown and ridicule this trauma. His path to the American Dream is what James O'Kane calls the "crooked ladder to achievement," where individuals, blocked from legitimate means to economic and social success in the United States by discrimination and poverty, achieve this success by illegitimate means (O'Kane, 1992, p.20). Tony *must* take on and defend this legacy of trauma, because he *is* the legacy of trauma. His very existence as an Italian-American mob boss is only possible because of the historic and present discrimination faced by Italian-Americans as a whole. However, while other Italian-Americans wilfully ignore this legacy of trauma in order to become White, Tony represents a collective traumatic Italian-American past, one in which race, class, and religion combined to violently subjugate an already poor and disempowered people.

The Next Generation and the Luxury of Forgetting

This paper has thus far approached the topic of the racial trauma of Italian-Americans in *The Sopranos* from many different angles and from many different dimensions. However, one crucial dimension which has been excluded is that of time. The Italian-American community, like any other community, is constantly evolving and changing, as are its collective orientations towards the traumas it has endured and continues to endure. This paper has largely focused on the generations represented by Tony, Carmela, and, to a lesser extent, their parents. The attitudes and possibilities of the next generation of Sopranos, namely Meadow and Anthony Junior (the latter described as perennially unaware, above) deserve analysis as representative of the development of the community through time.

While Meadow, perhaps because of her closer relationship with her father and her status as the older child, exhibits the characteristics of a receiver of trauma, Anthony Junior occupies a completely opposing space. He has entered deeper into Whiteness than his parents' generation ever could. Unlike Tony (who has to carry the trauma) and Dr. Cusamano (who must distinguish himself from the trauma through wilful ignoring or ridicule), Anthony Junior has the luxury not only to not carry the trauma, but also to be completely indifferent to it. He represents the completely deracialized subject who has the ultimate mark of Whiteness: the power to not have an identity. Anthony Junior represents the completion of the deracialization of Italian-Americans. He is no longer an "Italian-American;" rather, he is, as his father Tony states, White. He has to neither deny

nor affirm his Italianicity – the question is not even posed. He embodies the master signifier of Whiteness, and is thus free of the trauma that his ancestors bore.

Conclusion

This paper has shown through the analysis of narrative and dialogue that the Italian-Americans in Chase's series *the Sopranos* are dealing with the trauma of past and present racialization in the context of a Whitening of their whole community. It has analyzed the roles that trauma and Whitening have played in past and present discrimination, situational Whiteness, and racialized self-identity in the series. However, this is not an exhaustive analysis of the topic of trauma in *the Sopranos*, nor indeed in the Italian-American community at large. Rather, this paper has been an attempt to draw more focus on the subject of trauma in Whitening generally, using *the Sopranos* as a deeply nuanced and complex look into Italian-America. Therefore, more research needs to be done on the role of trauma in deracialization past and present, and what trauma within the realm of deracialization can mean in terms of creating a racially equitable society.

Bibliography

- Dottolo, A. L. (2015). Slicing White Bread: Racial Identities, Recipes, and Italian-American Women. *Women & Therapy, 38*(3-4), 356-376.
- Ferraro, T. (2005). *Feeling Italian: The art of ethnicity in America*. New York: USA: University Press.
- Gans, H. (2012). "Whitening" and the Changing American Racial Hierarchy. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race, 9*(2), 267-279.
- Grey, B., Chase, D., Gandolfini, J., Bracco, L., Falco, E., Imperioli, M., Chianese, D., ... HBO Video (Firm). (2008). *The Sopranos: The complete series*. New York: USA: HBO Home Video.
- Guglielmo, T. A. (2003). *White on arrival: Italians, race, color, and power in Chicago, 1890-1945*. Oxford University Press.
- Kocela, C. (2005). Unmade Men: The Sopranos After Whiteness. *Postmodern Culture, 15*(2), 1-30.
- Luconi, S. (2011). Discrimination and identity construction: The case of Italian immigrants and their offspring in the USA. *Journal of Intercultural Studies, 32*(3), 293-307.
- O'Kane, J. M. (1992). *The crooked ladder: Gangsters, ethnicity, and the American dream*. Transaction Publishers.
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2014). *Racial formation in the United States*. Routledge.
- Pandolfi, K. (2009). Rushing from and hastening to: nationhood, whiteness, and Italian-Canadians. Master's thesis.
- Ricci, F. (2014). *The Sopranos: Born under a bad sign*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Sautman, F. C. (2011). Creolizing the lack: interpreting race and racism in Italian America. *The Status of Interpretation in Italian American Studies, 122-146*.
- Seshadri, K. (2000). *Desiring whiteness: A Lacanian analysis of race*. London: Routledge.
- Tamburri, A. J. (2011). Reflections on Italian Americans and Otherness. *The Status of Interpretation in Italian American Studies, 45-60*.
- Terkel, S. (1997). *The good war: An oral history of World War II*. New Press.
- Vellon, P. G. (2014). *A great conspiracy against our race: Italian immigrant newspapers and the construction of whiteness in the early 20th century*. NYU Press.