The Discursive Construction of Us *vs* Them:

A Critical Discourse Study of Migrant Representation in the Italian Press

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Abstract

In the West, discourse *on* and *about* migrants is often characterised by inclusive and exclusive discursive practices that contribute to constructing an "us" *vs* "them" dichotomy. In Italy, as well as in Europe, the rise of right-wing and populist parties has advanced an increasingly xenophobic and exclusionary rhetoric. Discriminatory ideologies are not innate, but they are produced and reproduced in society through discourse. The present thesis aims to uncover such discriminatory and exclusionary discourses and to understand how the dichotomous "us" and "them" relationship is constructed in a selection of Italian newspapers. This study investigates the discursive strategies employed in migrant representation in right-wing *Il Giornale* (IG) and centrist *Corriere della Sera* (CS) drawing from a combination of theoretical and methodological critical discourse study (CDS) frameworks, namely Wodak's (2001) Discourse-Historical approach, van Leeuwen's (1996) Social Actor approach, and KhosraviNik's (2010) systematisation of CDS analytical categories. A final total number of twenty-six newspaper articles were qualitatively analysed. The study found that topics such as "arrivals", "landings", and "irregular arrivals" are particularly salient in both newspapers. The findings fit in with macro-level discourse on migration in Italy (and the EU) as well as with their migration policies that are almost exclusively focused on managing irregular arrivals. Amongst the most common discursive strategies identified in both newspapers are *aggregation* (presenting migrants in large numbers), *objectivation* (naming migrants with terminology that lacks the semantic feature "human") and *classification* (naming social actors on the basis of their ethnicity, e.g. Tunisians vs Italians). Furthermore, *Il Giornale* was found to engage in explicitly anti-immigrant arguments drawing on *topoi* of financial burden, threat, law, and number.

Keywords: Critical discourse studies; migration; Il Giornale; Corriere della Sera; us *vs* them.

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Introduction

In the West, discrimination towards "ethnic minorities" is being increasingly documented by interdisciplinary research. In Italy, the rise of right-wing and populist parties has advanced an increasingly xenophobic, anti-immigrant, and exclusionary rhetoric. Indeed, racism does not only include overt, blatant discriminatory acts and discourses, but it involves "the everyday, mundane, negative opinions, attitudes and ideologies and the seemingly subtle acts and conditions of discrimination against minorities" (van Dijk, 1993:5). A "new" form of covert racism - not based on biology, but rather on *culture* and *difference* - is spreading (M. Colombo, 2013).

The processes of inclusion and exclusion towards ethnic minorities cannot be adequately addressed if issues of *power* are not taken into account. Indeed, social groups do not all hold equal power in defining both the "self" and the "other". Therefore, who holds the power to construct, produce, and reproduce "our" identity *vs* "theirs"? And how does the identity "we" construct and attribute to "them" contribute to legitimising and justifying discriminatory and exclusionary practices? In this regard, the press holds a particularly influential and powerful role in offering a lens through which to view reality. Given the lack of access to positions in the media industry for ethnic minorities in the West, these social actors have an extremely limited power in the construction of their own identity and representation.

With a geographical and socio-political focus on Italy, the present thesis aims to investigate the discursive strategies[1] employed in Italian newspapers *Il Giornale* and *Corriere della Sera* in their discourse on migrants[2] and migration. The newspapers were selected based on circulation figures, political stance, and type (national vs regional). A final total number of twenty-six newspaper articles from the year 2020 were analysed. Investigating the discursive strategies that underlie discourse on migrants and migration can contribute to better

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[1] As expressed by Reisigl & Wodak (2009), a "strategy" refers to "a more or less accurate and more or less intentional plan of practices adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic aim". In other words, a discursive strategy can be defined as a systematic way of using language.

[2] Throughout this thesis, the term migrant is used to refer to technically and inherently different subjects, namely immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. The term is used as an "umbrella term" to encompass the variety of subjects that take part in acts of migration. By so doing, I do not intend to eliminate or disregard the difference between these groups. A distinction will be made explicit when deemed most relevant.

understand how in-groups and out-groups are discursively constructed, as well as how discrimination, exclusion, and racism are produced, reproduced, and legitimised through discourse.

The present study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature in CDS and discourse studies on migration in the press from diverse socio-political and geographical contexts, e.g. van Dijk, 2008; Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008; KoshraviNik, 2010; Reisigl and Wodak, 2001; Koca-Helvaci, 2019. A common theme among these studies seems to be the negative representation of migrants. Numerous studies have shown that immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are frequently framed as a threat to the economy, security, national identity, and culture. Previous studies on the representation of immigrants in the Italian press found that immigrants are often qualified by their ethnicity, directly pointing to the important role played by ethnicity in the construction of "Italianness" (Triandafyllidou, 1999). Furthermore, Maltone (2011) found that, 78% of news related to immigrants is negative, reporting on topics such as criminality, drug dealing, thefts, murders, prostitution, and illegality.

The motivation for carrying out this research derives from the widespread misrepresentation and negative framing that dominates discourse on and about migration in Italy. My eagerness to investigate migration discourse, and understand the underlying ideologies that are being constructed, stems from the drive to understand, expose, and eventually challenge social inequality.

1.1 Research questions

The present thesis sets out to investigate the discursive strategies employed in the representation of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (henceforth referred to with the umbrella term *migrants*) in a selection of Italian newspaper articles from *Il Giornale* and *Corriere della Sera* in the year 2020. The research questions this thesis addresses are the following:

1. What are the main *discourse topics* through which the newspapers discuss migrants and migration?

2. What *social actors* are present in the texts? How are the social actors referred to and named?

3. What *social actions* are attributed to the social actors?

4. What *topoi* are employed in arguments for or against the social actors?

The discursive strategies identified in the texts will subsequently be contextualised within the inter-textual and socio-political contexts. The approach adopted is of qualitative nature. The analytical framework that this research builds upon is drawn from a combination of theoretical and methodological critical discourse study (CDS) frameworks, namely Wodak's (2001) Discourse-Historical approach, van Leeuwen's (1996) Social Actor approach, and KhosraviNik's (2010) systematisation of CDS analytical categories.

1.2 Outline of the thesis

The present thesis is broken down in four parts: Conceptual Framework (section 2), Methodology (section 3), Results and Discussion (section 4), and Conclusion (section 5). A brief overview of each section is hereby provided.

Section 2 introduces the conceptual framework that the present research builds upon. An introduction to the field of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) is given, as well as a review of previous studies carried out on discriminatory discourses in the press, in Italy and beyond. The concept of social identity is presented in order to better understand the dichotomous construction of "us" vs "them". Furthermore, I briefly introduce the Italian socio-political and historical context as a country of immigration.

Section 3 outlines the methodology and methods adopted to carry out the research. The rationale for data sampling, collection, and selection is provided as well the analytical framework that this study builds upon.

Section 4 presents the main results by addressing the study's research questions. An interpretation and contextualisation of the linguistic and discursive results is integrated as the results are introduced.

Section 5 offers some concluding remarks and reflections on the main findings of the research. Furthermore, it addresses some of the study's limitations and makes suggestions for future research.

2. Conceptual framework

This chapter outlines the conceptual framework for the present thesis, setting the stage for the investigation of the discursive strategies used for positive self- and negative other-presentation in a selection of Italian newspapers' discourse on migration. Before reviewing relevant literature on discourse studies on migration - in Italy and more widely - I introduce the field of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) and its key notions of *discourse*, *criticism*, *power*, and *ideology*. Subsequently, I briefly address the concept of social identity to better appreciate the "us" *vs "*them" dichotomy. To conclude, I set the historical and socio-political context of Italy as a country of immigration.

2.1 An introduction to Critical Discourse Studies

Critical discourse studies (CDS) - or critical discourse analysis (CDA) - can be defined as a "cluster of approaches"(Meyer, 2011) for the systematic investigation of language use beyond the sentence level. CDS is not a single methodology, method, nor theory for carrying out discourse analysis. On the contrary, it is a miscellaneous field[3] encompassing a variety of methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and grammatical approaches. There is widespread (mis)understanding that sees CDA as a special method of doing discourse analysis. For this reason, the label *Critical Discourse Analysis* is increasingly being considered misleading and the denomination *Critical Discourse Studies* is now preferred and more widely adopted[4] (van Dijk, 2015). Because of its heterogeneity, CDS can be understood as "a shared perspective on doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis"(van Dijk, 1993). Van Dijk (2015: 466) further defines it as follows:

> *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced,*

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[3] The definition of CDA/CDS as a discipline, a field, or an approach is in itself a matter of controversy. Wodak & Meyer (2009) suggest using the notion of "school" or "programme". On the other hand, KhosraviNik (2010) argues that the labels "discipline", "approach", or "school" may be restrictive and counterproductive as they contradict CDA's announced aims and ideals, turning it into a "full-fledged" academic discipline. Having acknowledged the controversy in its denomination, I decide to avoid the terminological conundrum, and hereby use the full range of these labels.

[4] Hence, the present study sticks to the CDS denomination. However, it seems that most studies continue using the more well-known abbreviation CDA.

legitimated and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such 'dissident research', critical discourse analysts take an explicit position and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately challenge social inequality. This is also why CDA may be characterised as a 'social movement' of politically committed discourse analysts.

In the extract above, van Dijk spells out some of the foundations of CDS, namely the discipline's function in uncovering power dynamics within the social order and the active role taken on by analysts in challenging this order and, often, advocating for the socially discriminated groups, such as "ethnic minorities" and migrants often are in Italy and the West.

CDS stands out from discourse analysis (DA) in several key principles - common to the broad field of CDS regardless of the different disciplinary backgrounds or approaches adopted - that van Dijk (2015: 467) summarises as follows:

- CDS primarily addresses social problems and political issues rather than just focussing on discourse structures outside their social and political context.

- Rather than merely describing discourse structures, CDS attempts to explain them in terms of social interaction and social structure.

- More specifically, CDS focusses on the ways discourse is used to enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power abuse in society.

- The critical analysis of social problems is usually multidisciplinary.

The principles outlined above characterise what sets CDS apart from discourse analysis; that is its problem-oriented, interdisciplinary approach, having the common goal of "deconstructing power and ideologies within a given society through the analysis of semiotic data whilst attempting to explicitly make one's interests and position (as a researcher) transparent" (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Before moving to discussing CDS approaches, it is worth clarifying some fundamental notions that have acquired different uses and meanings across various disciplines and schools. These are the concepts of *discourse*, *criticism*, *ideology,* and *power*.

2.1.1 The notions of discourse, criticism, ideology, and power

In this section, I introduce the key concepts of discourse, criticism, ideology, and power. These concepts are crucial to this research as they are all implicated in the production and reproduction of discriminatory and exclusionary practices. This section illustrates how discourse and ideologies are interconnected, as well as how power is implicated in processes of inclusion and exclusion towards ethnic minorities. Finally, what I mean by "being critical" – the basis of the critical discourse study approach - is addressed in this section.

2.1.1.1 Discourse

The term discourse describes the language used in written or spoken communication. Wodak (2001a:4) defines discourse as,

> *a complex bundle of simultaneous and sequential interrelated linguistic acts, which manifest themselves within and across social fields of action and thematically interrelate semiotic, oral and written tokens, very often as "texts", that belong to specific semiotic types, that is genre*.

Discourse is understood in CDS as a form of "social practice". As spelled out by Fairclough & Wodak (1997), there is a *dialogic* relationship between discursive events and the social context in which they are set. That is, discourse "is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned" (ibid.) - it is both determined by social structure and contributes to shaping it simultaneously. In order to understand discourse, one must understand the context in which it appears (van Dijk, 1997). Therefore, given that discourse is intrinsically tied to the social context it is embedded in, it is then inevitably bound to issues of power and ideology. As Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 258) note:

> *Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social class, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position things.*

The above excerpt elicits some of the foundations of CDS. In particular, the fundamental concepts of power and ideology. However, delimiting the borders of a "discourse" can be intricate. Its boundaries, such as for discourse(s) on migration, are fluid. Discourse, as an

object of investigation, "is not a closed unit but a dynamic semiotic entity constantly open to reinterpretation" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009:89).

2.1.1.2 Criticism

Another pivotal aspect of CDS is the "critical" element which can be traced back to the Frankfurt school and Habermas's work on critical theory (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). According to the Frankfurt school, social theory should not only be involved with offering clarifications and understandings but must aim to critique society and change it accordingly. However, the definition of what "being critical" signifies calls for further explication. Wodak (2001) wrote that the "critical impetus" should be understood as "taking distance from the data, placing it in its social context, explicitly taking a political stance, and focussing on self-reflection". Self-reflection involves reflection on the researcher's own position as an integrated part of the social system. In fact, "researchers, scientists and philosophers are not situated outside the societal hierarchy of power and status but subject to this structure" (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Adopting a critical perspective may essentially mean following specific ethical standards (ibid.), such as transparency of the researcher's position, research interests and values, "without feeling the need to apologize for the critical stance of their work" (T. van Leeuwen, 2006).

The term critical must not be understood in its common-sense usage meaning "negative" (Chilton et al., 2010). Furthermore, any social phenomenon is apt for critical investigation, for being challenged and not taken for granted. In fact, it is often the case that dominant structures stabilise conventions and naturalise them, that is, power and ideology are often "hidden" and taken as a given (Wodak, 2001:3).

2.1.1.3 Ideology

The notion of ideology has widely been used across disciplines, especially in social and political science. Since its inception in 18th-century France, it has seen a considerable number of scholarly interpretations. Given its broad - and potentially vague - spectrum of meanings, the present research follows the general multidisciplinary definition as offered by van Dijk (2000) that conceives ideologies as "the fundamental beliefs that form the basis of the social representations of a group".

In CDS, the focus is on the way ideologies are expressed - or concealed - in discourse, and how they are thus reproduced in society. Van Dijk (1991; 2000) observed how socially shaped representations may influence discourse structures and concluded that *discourse topics* are one of the most important forms of control and manipulation of a prejudiced ideology. In particular, the topics selected or avoided, the standard topoi of argumentation, the information left implicit or explicit, meanings that are foregrounded and backgrounded, and many other semantic properties of discourse. Indeed, not only do ideologies influence discourse but vice versa. As van Dijk (2000:88) puts it:

> *We acquire and change ideologies through reading and listening to large amounts of text and talk. Ideologies are not innate, but learnt, and precisely the content and form of such discourse may be more or less likely to form intended mental models of social events, which finally may be generalized and abstracted to social representations and ideologies.*

Similarly to the relationship between discourse and social context, the relationship between discourse and ideology can also be considered as dialogic. Figure 1 illustrates the encoding and decoding processes that link discourse and ideology. On one hand, ideology is realised (or encoded) into a concrete linguistic form, on the other, the concrete realised forms need to undergo "a process of decoding to render the ideology back into the society through a process of text comprehension" (KhosraviNik, 2010a).
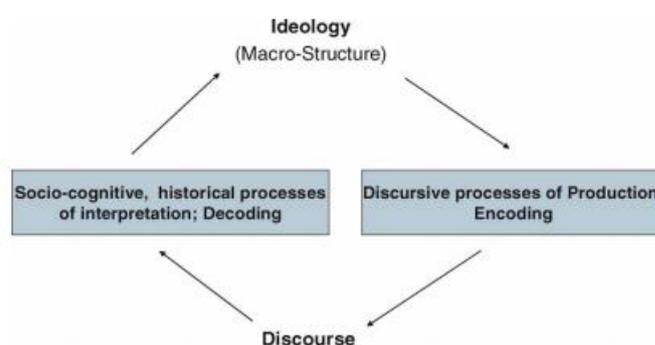
Figure 1. Relationship between discourse and ideology (taken from KhosraviNik, 2010)

2.1.1.4 Power

Power, another key notion in CDS, refers to an unbalanced relationship among social actors who belong to different social groups or acquire different social positions. The relationship between power and discourse is of particular interest to CDS scholars as discourse is seen as

crucial in conveying and implementing power dynamics in society (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Language represents a vehicle to express power differences, and although power mostly remains invisible, its linguistic manifestations can be analysed in CDS. As succinctly put by Wodak and Meyer (ibid.):

> *Language indexes and expresses power; it is involved where there is contention*
> *over and challenge over power […]. Language is not powerful on its own, it gains*
> *power by the use people make of it.*

In a nutshell, CDS is concerned with investigating both the hidden and visible structures of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as expressed through language use. Thus, a CDS study seemed to be the most relevant and fitting direction to take for the investigation of discourse on migrants and migration in the selected Italian newspapers.

2.2 Approaches within CDS

Given CDS's eclectic and interdisciplinary nature, there are a variety of existing approaches within the discipline that, in turn, draw from various theoretical models. A distinction can be made between more *deductive* approaches (e.g. van Dijk's Socio-cognitive approach, Fairclough's Dialectical Relational approach) and more *inductive* ones (e.g. Wodak and Reisigl's Discourse-Historical approach, van Leeuwen's Social Actor Approach). However, given that the approaches concerned are supposedly not fixed, but rather dynamic and flexible, it seems more fitting to place them on a continuum of induction and deduction. However, all CDS approaches are *abductive*, in other words they oscillate *retroductively* between theory and data (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). CDS conceives the relationship between theory and discourse to be circular and recursive-abductive (illustrated in Figure 2).
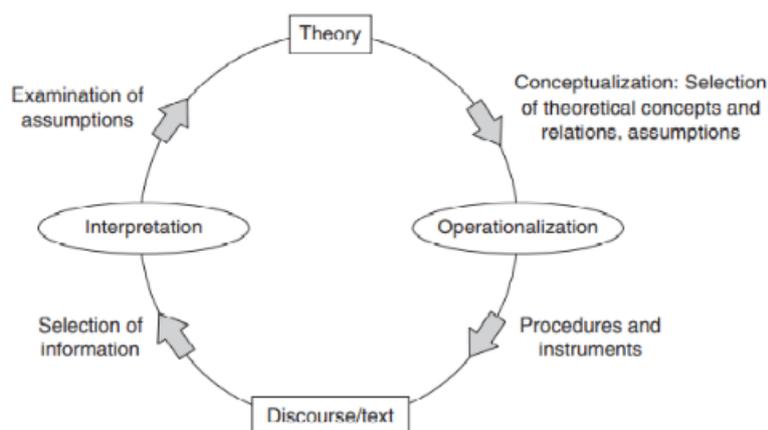
Figure 2. The circular process of CDS (taken from Wodak & Meyer, 2016)

As far as its theoretical grounding, various theoretical levels can be identified within the CDS approaches. These levels are: linguistic theories (e.g. semantics, pragmatics), discourse theories, sociopsychological theories, micro sociological theories, middle-range theories, general social theories (or grand theories) and epistemology. Which theories are adopted by whom seems to predominantly depend on the nature of the research questions (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Furthermore, scholars may draw from a variety of social and linguistic theories in an eclectic manner, thus making the mapping of distinct CDS approaches increasingly challenging.

In the present thesis, I have drawn from a combination of theoretical and methodological frameworks, namely Wodak's (2001) Discourse-Historical approach, van Leeuwen's (1996) Social Actor approach, and KhosraviNik's systematisation of CDS analytical categories for the representation of social groups. These approaches are briefly introduced in the sub-sections below.

2.2.1 The Discourse-Historical approach

The discourse-historical approach (DHA) first emerged in the study of anti-Semitic ideologies in public discourses of the 1986 Austrian presidential campaign (Wodak et al., 1990). Theoretically, it has its roots in the philosophical and sociological tradition of Critical Theory, as well as in Symbolic Interactionism.

One of the main principles of Wodak's (2001) discourse-historical approach is that of *triangulation,* which implies adopting a broad range of theories, methods, and empirical observations in the pursuit of a multifarious view of the object under investigation. In DHA,

triangulation is understood in relation to the concept of context which is constituted by four levels of analysis:

- the immediate language, or text-internal, co-text;

- the *intertextual*[5] and *interdiscursive*[6] relationship between texts, genres and discourse;

- the extralinguistic social level;

- the broader socio-political and historical context.

Furthermore, on the operationalisation level, the DHA proposes five discursive strategies for the systematic analysis of positive self- and negative other-representation that reveal the main elements establishing the discursive dichotomy between "us" *vs* "them" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

The present thesis draws from the DHA especially for the concept of "context". In fact, the linguistic strategies identified and analysed in my data sample are then contextualised within the intertextual, extra-linguistic, and socio-political level. The aim is to continually connect the micro-linguistic level (the specific discursive strategies) to the macro-level (the intertextual, and socio-political context in which the discourses are produced) in order to account for the dialogic relationship existing between discourse and ideology.

2.2.2 Social Actor Approach

The Social Actor approach, developed by van Leeuwen (1996), draws up a *sociosemantic* inventory of the ways in which social actors can be represented, mainly focussing on the representation of in- and out-groups. He holds that the analysis should start from social encapsulations and then be connected to micro-mechanisms that may be used to realise meanings (KhosraviNik, 2010a). Theoretically, the Social Actor approach draws from Critical Theory and Halliday's systemic-functional grammar (Halliday, 1985).

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[5] *Intertextuality* relates to the link among texts. A certain text may be connected to other texts in the past and/or present. For instance, a given text may explicitly reference a topic or specific actor, it may reference an event, or even be transferring a certain argument from another text (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

[6] *Interdiscursivity* means that discourses are connected to each other. In other words, if - for instance - we speak about discourse on migration, the discourse most probably will not only be related to the topic of migration, but it might relate to other sub-topics, such as finances or criminality.

Given the present thesis' focus on the discursive construction of "us" and "them", van Leeuwen's analytical framework revealed to be particularly suited to the aims of the study. Thus, the development of my code structure for analysing the data sample selected for this study largely draws from this framework. The specific analytical categories I adopted are presented in section 3.2.2.

2.2.3 KhosraviNik's systematisation of CDS analytical categories

KhosraviNik (2010) develops a three-level analytical framework for the discursive analysis of social group representation. The framework breaks down the analysis into three domains: social actors, social actions, and argumentation. KhosraviNik (2010:1) suggests looking at "*what* is – and is not - in the text in terms of the three domains" and "investigating *how* these domains are linguistically realised through a set of linguistic processes". This systematisation aims to clarify the different levels of discourse analysis on social group representation (going from a detailed micro-level analysis to the macro-level) as well as "to show how micro-level analytical categories are related to macro-structure within various levels of contexts" (ibid.).

The present thesis' analytical structure is largely influenced by KhosraviNik's three-level analytical structure. As evident from three of the four research questions driving this study, I aim to investigate migrant representation in a selection of Italian newspapers by addressing: *a)* what social actors are present in the texts and how they are named and referred to; *b)* what social actors are attributed to the social actors? *c)* what topoi are employed in arguments for or against the social actors?

2.3 Previous CDS research on migration

> *Migration as a social phenomenon does not only consist of participants, institutions, and other types of social and political (inter)action, but also - rather saliently - of many genres of migration discourse as social and political acts and interaction* (van Dijk, 2018).

The representation of refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and other ethnic minorities has attracted significant attention from CDS, and it has been investigated in a variety of socio-political and historical contexts, with diverse research aims. It can be said that the "us" vs "them" dichotomy is the starting point for most research on discourse *on* or *about* immigration and ethnic relations (Koca-Helvacı, 2019).

In his book *Racism in the Press*, van Dijk (1991) shows that the coverage of ethnic and racial affairs in the British and Dutch press has become less blatantly racist compared to the past, but stereotypes and the understanding of minorities as a "problem" or "threat" is still prevalent. Furthermore, ethnic minorities are continually associated with a confined number of topics, namely immigration problems, violence, crime, and discrimination.

Wodak (1996) looks at racist discourse in Austria by accounting for the argumentative strategies of in- and out-group construction through personal pronouns, depersonalisation, and generalisation. In her research, three elements stand out as constitutive of anti-foreigner discourse: "difference", "deviance", and "perceived threat". "Foreigners" are viewed as a cause of damage to the host country's socio-economic interests. Furthermore, in their study on anti-foreigner discourses around the *Austria First* petition campaign, Reisigl & Wodak (2005) observe that immigrants are represented with specific *topoi*, including topos of: advantage and usefulness, danger and threat, burdening and weighing down, law and right (these topoi will be expanded on in Section 3).

Drawing from the Socio-Cognitive Approach (van Dijk, 1991), the DHA (Wodak & Meyer, 2001) and the Social Actor Approach (van Leeuwen, 2008), KhosraviNik (2009) investigated the representations of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants (henceforth abbreviated to RASIM) in the British press between 1999 and 2006, as part of the large scale RASIM project[7]. He examined the topoi, topics, micro-linguistic features, and metaphors employed in their representation. KhosraviNik observed that the negative representation of immigrants predominantly draws on a number of common topoi namely numbers, threat, and danger. He notes that immigrants are systematically constructed as a homogenous group, "sharing similar characteristics, backgrounds, intentions, motivations, and economic status" through processes of aggregation, collectivisation, and functionalisation.

As part of the same project, Baker et al. (2008) examined the discursive construction of RASIM by adopting a corpus-based approach. The analysis of collocates and keywords showed that

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[7] A large-scale research project carried out at Lancaster University investigating the discursive representation of immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees is British newspapers between 1996 and 2005. The project combines methods usually associated with CDA (qualitative) to those normally associated with Corpus Linguistics (quantitative).

RASIM were generally represented in negative semantic fields such as terrorism, crime, and economic burden, through lexical associations like *bogus*, *illegal,* and *alien*.

From a Cognitive Linguistics perspective, Charteris-Black (2006) analysed metaphors in British right-wing political discourse prior to the 2005 general elections. His analysis showed that the most common categories of metaphors were those related to "natural disaster" and those related to "containment". These metaphors may conceptually be represented as "immigration is a natural disaster" and "Britain is a container". What the two metaphors have in common – he observes – "is that they discourage empathy with immigrants by treating them as objects, rather than as the subjects of life stories".

Taking an evolutionary psychology perspective, Hart (2013) looks at the cognitive aspects of argumentative strategies in the British media discourse on immigration. The frequent use of the topoi of finance, burden, displacement, and abuse. He shows that these recurrent anti-immigration argumentation schemes are related to two cognitive mechanisms suggested in evolutionary psychology, namely "the cheater detection and avoidance mechanism" and "epistemic vigilance".

Drawing from these previous studies, the present thesis aims to investigate the representation of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in the Italian press. *Representation* can be defined – following Spencer (2014) - as "the social process of making sense of the many signifying systems within a culture". Critically investigating commonplace representations allows to uncover the accepted "normal" order of things and to view it as a "product of culture".

2.3.1 Immigration as represented in the Italian media

Zooming into the geographical area of focus, an overview is given of previous studies on migrant representations in the Italian press.

Past relevant studies include Triandafyllidou's work (1999) that – adopting a more sociological approach – focused on the relationship between immigration and national identity. Triandafyllidou carried out an analysis of 44 articles from two Italian current affairs magazines (*Panorama* and *L'Espresso*) from 1990 to 1995. She found that the main dimensions used to

differentiate between Italians and *extracomunitari*[8] are territory and culture. Additionally, she observed fears being expressed about contact with "alien cultures" potentially blurring "the distinctiveness of the Italian lifestyle and threaten the people's sense of identity".

Furthermore, her analysis showed that immigrants are often qualified by their ethnicity, directly pointing to the important role played by ethnicity in the construction of "Italianness". As Triandafyllidou (1999) puts it, the national construction of identity based on ethnicity brings about:

> *de-individuation of immigrants who are then treated not as individuals but as members of a given group that is categorised aforehand. Thus, Albanians are criminals, Nigerians are prostitutes and Moroccans are dishonest, for instance. Moreover, such personality features are taken as genetically given and unchangeable. Therefore, the 'rational' solution is that these people remain in their countries.*

In another sociological study, Sciortino & Colombo (2004) carried out a large-scale content analysis of approximately 600 articles from current affairs magazines *L'Espresso*, *Panorama* and *L'Europeo* over the period 1969-1981, and on the daily newspapers *La Stampa* and *Corriere della Sera* over the period 1982-2001. In the former period, they found that migrants are most frequently categorised in discussions about economy or the labour market. In the latter, the most frequent context was politics, legislation, and deviance.

Further studies include Taylor's (2009) research – as part of the larger *IntUne* project[9] - where the author carried out a corpus-assisted analysis of discourse on immigration in Italian newspapers. Taylor examined the number of references to nationalities that collocate with (the Italian "equivalents" of) *refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers* and *migrants*. Interestingly, she found a mismatch between the amount of attention that certain nationalities (above all Chinese, followed by Moroccans) receive in the media and their official population estimates. She concludes that certain nationalities appear more visible and more

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[8] The term *extracomunitario* refers to any person who does not have EU citizenship. The term has racist connotations as it qualifies people solely on the basis of the community which "they" do not belong to, that is: "our" community.

[9] An EU-funded project called "Integrated and United: A quest for citizenship in an ever-closer Europe".

threatening. In particular, people of Chinese origin appear to be the subject of a "moral panic" story.

Other studies include Maltone's (2011) investigation of the representation of immigrants in Italian TV broadcasts and national and regional newspapers. Maltone found that, in television (TV) broadcasts, 78% of news related to immigrants is negative, reporting on topics such as criminality, drug dealing, thefts, murders, prostitution, and illegality. She also observes that in 76% of news instances, immigrants are designated by their nationality, ethnicity, or place of origin. This tendency – she states - produces dangerous stereotypes and tends to portray immigrants as representative of a 'category' rather than individuals with their own unique characteristics. Furthermore, despite the frequent presence of "immigration" as a topic of discussion on TV broadcasts, immigrants are seldomly given the chance to express themselves on facts or situations they are directly involved in. In 65% of cases immigrants are mentioned only, in contrast to 25% of cases in which they are consulted or interviewed.

As Maltone reflects:

> *A foreigner inevitably leads us to question our own identity, history and values.*
> *The relationship with the Other raises questions such as: Who are we? What*
> *does it mean to be Italian today? Who will we be tomorrow?* (ibid.).

Thus, the negative media representation could point to an underlying fear of losing one's own identity. It follows that confronting diversity may be more problematic for a country like Italy that has a more fragile identity[10]. The presence of an "Other" can reveal unresolved contradictions regarding the feeling of belonging to a national community (Maltone, 2011).

Processes of inclusion and exclusion towards ethnic minorities cannot be adequately addressed if issues of *power* are not taken into account. Indeed, it is those in positions of power who construct, produce, and reproduce "our" identity versus "theirs". In this regard, the press holds a particularly influential and powerful role. In the next section, I will provide a brief discussion on the role of the press – and more generically the media – in providing its readers with a lens through which to view reality.

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[10] Notably, but not exclusively, as a result of its relatively recent unification process of 1861.

2.3.2 The press' world view

The press – just like all forms of media and influential public discourse - plays a key role in our perception and construction of reality. In fact, not only does it contribute to shaping it, but it also conforms to its readers' world views. The relationship between readers and the press is bidirectional (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008). On one hand, newspapers are financially interested in reporting on issues that match its readers' concerns and reflect their views of the world and attitudes. On the other, readers are likely to read newspapers that are in line with their own views and perceptions of the world (Crawley & Sriskandarajah, 2005). Fiske & Hartley (1978) describe media broadcasts as a "series of consciously structured messages which serve to communicate to the members of that culture a confirming, reinforcing version of themselves".

As pointed out by van Dijk (1991), "the media have an immense influence on our understanding of ethnic relations". Just like all public discourse from the *symbolic elites[11]*, they are among the main sources of ethnic prejudices. "Prejudices are in fact not innate, but socially acquired" (van Dijk, 1993), and such acquisitions are predominantly discursive.

We largely build our own views and identity by interpreting the signs presented to us that contain "embedded views and national, cultural or common subcultural identities, as well as the identities of others with whom the communicative opportunities are often few", e.g. migrants and refugees (Spencer, 2014). Therefore, the media plays a large role in shaping some of the complex negotiated views that constitute our self-identity. As Spencer (ibid.) puts it:

> *It is important to examine and understand these interlinked discursive themes, images and stories circulating in the public arena because they exert influence, albeit perhaps less obviously because they are unspoken and mundane and are woven into the fabric of everyday life.*

The media, by way of careful linguistic and textual choices, offer a specific lens to view the reality through foregrounding or backgrounding certain aspects (Fowler, 1991). As Fowler (ibid.) stresses, the same thing can be expressed in significantly different ways, and these differences are not random or accidental, but rather they carry ideological distinctions – and

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[11] The term *symbolic elite* is used by van Dijk to refer to the people who have control over mass discourses such as politicians, journalists, scholars, writers, and so on.

thus constitute different forms of representation. The aim of the present thesis is to investigate and identify these differences in expression and representation in order to better understand how the Italian press contributes to shaping its readers' world view.

Not only does the press exercise power in *how* it decides to express events, but equally over *what* it decides to express. One of the most crucial forms of control and manipulation of an ideology is that carried out through *discourse topics* (van Dijk, 1991). Mass media institutions are, therefore, major gate keepers. As illustrated in the sections above, previous research has showed how ethnic minorities are systematically mentioned and represented via various negative topics such as crime, illegality and domestic violence (van Dijk, 1991). However, the worst form of backgrounding a certain social group is their *discursive absence* (KhosraviNik, 2010a).

The discourse produced by the media does not take place in a vacuum. Media interests are often tied to political and economic forces (Herman & Chomsky, 1994). This links back to Wodak's concept of 'context' and the importance of not only looking at intra-textual linguistic choices and strategies, but also at the socio-political and historical context they are embedded in and how they relate to other texts and discourses (*intertextuality*).

2.4 Theories of social identity and intergroup behaviour

In this section, I briefly explore the concept of identity. The discursive practices of inclusion and exclusion that I aim to investigate in the present research are based upon constructions of identity. Indeed, understanding the processes of identity construction is crucial for any research addressing issues of representation of in-groups vs out-groups. The construction of "our" identity vs "theirs" can serve as legitimisation for discriminatory or exclusionary practices as, for instance, legitimising repatriation based on a person's country of origin or ethnic identity.

The concept of identity is multifaceted and can be approached from numerous disciplinary perspectives. The term is growingly used as a buzzword and, as Coulmas (2019) puts it, is a product of modernity anchored in the Western world. The term can refer to extremely diverse concepts and spheres of life, representing almost anything related to what people think, feel, and do (Verkuyten et al., 2019). As such, this section does not intend to provide an exhaustive discussion of even the most important identity theories, but rather to succinctly explore the

main concepts of identity as rooted in sociology, with the aim of better understanding the relationship and dynamics underlying the "us" *vs* "them" dichotomy.

2.4.1 Social identities

Identity has been the subject of numerous discussions in logic, philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, sociolinguistics, politics, and possibly more. Here, the focus is on "social identity" – although a clear distinction between "fields of thought" is neither desirable nor achievable.

Bourdieu (1984) and Jenkins (1996) propose that socialisation and the dynamics of society cannot be clarified without examining collective identities based on shared qualities, however vague, real, or imagined. In order to socially exist, these identities require difference - counterparts that they *are not* and can distinguish themselves from. Thus, as expressed by Coulmas (2019: 72):

> […] *in contemporary sociology 'identity' is a relational concept that derives from the tension between self-sameness and other-difference, both of which, however, need not be that forever, but, being relational, are constantly under construction and renegotiation*.

Drawing from Tajfel & Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory and Turner et al.'s (1987) Self-Categorisation Theory, social identity refers to how people, as group members, place themselves in their social environment, and derive meaning and value from such positions (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity focuses on how the self identifies with a group, thus extending beyond the individual person to comprise the group (Verkuyten et al., 2019). Based on a process of social categorisation, we categorise the world into "us" and "them", or in other words, in-group and out-group.

The "other" plays a fundamental role in the process of self-identity formation. This process - both at the individual and the group level – is dependent on interaction with others (Spencer, 2014). Spencer (2014) defines "the other" as an "alien subjectivity, a being who exhibits characteristics notably different from our own, whether in gender, race, class, custom or behaviour".

Everyone is a member of a variety of groups and categories; therefore, everyone has *multiple* social identities. Often, these identities can be significantly independent of each other

because referring to different categories, domains of life, or levels of abstraction (Verkuyten et al., 2019). People, as well as collective groups (e.g. ethnic groups, nations), can be seen as holding *hybrid identities*, thus, as Wodak et al. (2009) state, "the idea of a homogeneous identity on the individual or collective level is deceptive fiction and illusion". By constructing one's own *multiple* identity, individuals have at their disposal a wide variety of sources of identification which inevitably involve some extent of social inclusion and exclusion. Thus, as stressed by Pelinka (1995), hybrid identities constitute a potentially "corrective element" for counteracting the practices of exclusion and differentiation.

When discussing the concept of identity in relation to individuals or groups of people, it is crucial to realise that it cannot refer to anything static or unchanging, but rather to an element located in the flow of time, constantly changing, and involved in a *process*. In fact, understanding the concept of social or personal identity as a static idea wrongly suggests that "people belong to a solid, unchanging, intrinsic collective unit because of a specific history which they supposedly have in common, and as a consequence they feel obliged to act and react as a group when they feel threatened" (Wodak et al., 2009).

However, collective identities are not just constructed by factors internal to a group but may also be imposed on a group from the outside. By forming social categories, we ascribe certain characteristics and attributes to individuals. Stigma typically arises when individuals with multiple characteristics are reduced to the characteristics that we have available for them – e.g. foreigner, homosexual, "illegal immigrant". Stigmas are characteristics that are socially devalued and can be used by the in-group to ostracise, marginalise, and even dehumanise the out-group (Coulmas, 2019).

In politics, identity often implies exclusionism, that is, a sharp boundary between "those who belong" and "those who do not", those who have the right to determine the identity of a place and those who should accept it, adapt to it, or leave (ibid.). In fact, in politics, identities are borders; borders that separate independent countries or distinct ethnic groups, or races – each unit erecting and defending their borders possessively. However fixed we may imagine them to be, these borders are fluid and shifting. "This is what identity apostles most fear; and it is hardly coincidental that the obsession with identity has reached new highs at a time when, in the Western world, migration across national borders is widely perceived as a threat" (Coulmas, 2019).

As Okolie (2003:2) reflects, the implications of contesting and assigning identity are profound:

> *[…] identity has little meaning without the "other". So, by defining itself a group defines others. Identity is rarely claimed or assigned for its own sake. These definitions of self and others have purposes and consequences. They are tied to rewards and punishment, which may be material or symbolic. There is usually an expectation of gain or loss as a consequence of identity claims. This is why identities are contested. Power is implicated here, and because groups do not have equal powers to define both self and the other, the consequences reflect these power differentials. Often notions of superiority and inferiority are embedded in particular identities.*

Okolie's words take us back to the goal of the present study, that is uncovering power differentials and discriminatory ideologies through the analysis of the discursive strategies used for representing "the other", in this case: immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees.

2.5 The socio-political and historical context

In the present section, I aim to outline the major milestones of immigration history and law in Italy, as well as introduce Italy's more recent socio-political context in order to provide a broad understanding of the happenings related to migrants and migration in the focus country for the present thesis.

2.5.1 A history of Italian immigration and immigration law

Historically, Italy has predominantly been a country of *emigration* rather than *immigration*. It is estimated that between 1876 and 1976, 24 million Italians emigrated (Rosoli, 1978). However, the shift to becoming a host country was a particularly sudden and unexpected one (Triandafyllidou, 1999).

The first immigrants arriving in Italy were former prisoners of war, or displaced people of the Jewish diaspora travelling to Palestine or the United States[12]. Further civilian groups arriving in Italy included displaced people from Istria, Dalmatia, as well as former Italian colonies in Africa and Greece[13] (Camilli, 2018a).

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[12] Many of the ships taking Jews from Europe to Israel between 1945-1948 left from Italian ports.

[13] Italy had ruled over a group of Greek islands (the Dodecanese) from 1912 to 1947.

The history of foreign immigration to Italy as a mass phenomenon can be traced to the 1960s (Colucci, 2019). It concerned students and workers from Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia (former Italian colonies). In fact, similarly to other European countries, a close link between Italian decolonisation and immigration exists (Colucci, 2018). A subsequent prominent flow of immigration occurred in the 1970s, around border areas such as the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region (the border with former Jugoslavia) and western Sicily, where in 1968 the ship owners of Mazara del Vallo started hiring immigrants of Tunisian origin to work on their fishing boats. At the end of the 1970s, South American exiles and political dissidents started reaching Italy in search of asylum. However, at that time and until 1990, the Italian government only granted international protection to newcomers from former Soviet Union countries; all other exiles were not eligible for political asylum (Colucci, 2018).

The first laws on immigration are known as the Foschi Law (1986) and the Martelli Law (1989). Until then, immigration was "regulated" by a 1963 circular letter from the Ministry of Labour. The two laws acknowledge rights for migrants and improve the status of foreign workers and their families. However, the laws were ineffective in regulating economic migratory flows and in reducing irregular migration. The failure to systematically address irregular migration resulted in mass amnesties (so-called *sanatorie*[14]) in order to "legalise" the status of foreigners living in Italy (Scotto, 2017).

Despite its significant shortcomings, the Martelli Law remained unchanged until the Turco-Napolitano Law of 1998. In 2002, the newly elected centre-right government passed the Bossi-Fini Act, which reduced the number of legal paths into the country and accelerated the expatriation process. Despite its aim to harden immigration law, it also introduced the largest *sanatoria* in the history of Italian immigration, known as *la grande regolarizzazione del 2002* ("the great 2002 regularisation") (Colucci, 2018).

In the two decades after 1991, immigration to Italy began to increase significantly. The 1991 census recorded 356,159 foreigners in Italy, which rose to 1.334.889 in 2001, and tripled to 3.769.518 in 2011 (Colucci, 2019).

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[14] The legal legitimation of an irregular state of affairs whereby the authority in question refrains from legally pursuing those responsible of illegal actions.

In 2008, the government introduced the so-called *pacchetto sicurezza* ("safety package"): a set of regulations aimed at guaranteeing "security" for Italian citizens, including via "la lotta all'immigrazione clandestina" ("the fight against illegal immigration").

In the same year, the Berlusconi government signed an agreement with Libyan President Ghaddafi aimed at curbing migratory flows to Europe. The agreement dictated that Italy provide funds[15] (3.4 billion euros a year) to Libya to support the interception of migrants and refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea. The process involved detaining migrants in centres where they were - and are still to this day - subjected to beatings, torture, extortion, and rape (Camilli, 2017b). The agreement was promptly criticised by human rights organisations who denounced the arbitrary detention of migrants, and the tortures and abuses carried out by the Libyan authorities[16]. Notwithstanding, Italy extended the agreement with Libya in 2012, in 2017 via the Memorandum of Understanding to "reduce illegal migratory flows", and then again in 2020. As Omer Shatz - quoted in the ActionAid report (2021) and who is fighting to bring the EU before the International Criminal Court (ICC) - holds: "at first we thought that the EU and Italy were outsourcing dirty work to Libya to block people, which in jargon is called "aiding and abetting" in committing a crime, then we realised that the EU was actually the conductor of the operations, while Libya was just executing".

In 2011, the geopolitical scenario in the Mediterranean drastically changed as a result of the Arab spring. The arrival of people fleeing from countries in turmoil dramatically increased as more people were prepared to cross the sea, risking their lives on a hazardous route using highly unsafe means of transport. In 2011, 64.261 people arrived in Italy by sea compared to 4.406 people in 2010 (Colucci, 2019). According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the recorded number of people arriving by sea kept growing, reaching its highest point in 2016

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[15] According to a report carried out by the NGO ActionAid, from 2015 to 2020, Italy has spent 1.337 billion euros aimed at curbing migration from Africa. Overall, the EU has invested approximately 700 million euros in Libya in the period 2014-2020. The negotiations for the funding of the next 7 years (2021-2027) are currently being held. However, the first drafts seem to suggest that the funding for migration, border control, and repatriation will increase (Camilli, 2020).

[16] As a matter of fact, Libya has not ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees.

with 181.436 arrivals[17]. Thereafter, in 2017, arrivals by sea dramatically decreased, reaching the lowest point in 2019 with 11.471 people (F. Colombo, 2021). It is not surprising that sea arrivals markedly decreased in the same year as the Memorandum of Understanding was signed with Libya aiming to "reduce illegal migratory flows"[18].

In the meantime, the 2017 Minniti-Orlando Law contained "*urgent provisions for the acceleration of proceedings in the field of international protection, as well as measures to combat illegal immigration*"[19]. The aim of the law was to accelerate the procedures for examining appeals on asylum applications and increase the rate of "expulsion of irregular migrants". Many jurists have declared that the law is incommensurate with both the Italian Constitution and the European Convention of human rights. In particular, the decree violates article 11 (right to a fair trial) and article 24 (right to counsel) of the Italian Constitution, as well as article 6 of the European Convention (right to adversarial trial). The most contested points are the abolition of the second degree of judgment for asylum seekers and the cancellation of hearings ahead of trial (Camilli, 2017a).

As Scotto (2017) reflects, the political arena has mainly considered immigration as a "security problem" and the legislation approved since the 2000s has primarily focused on restricting "illegal immigration". Centre-right and right-wing parties have politicised the issue, framing immigration as a threat. However - as the Minniti-Orlando Law shows - the "security narrative" has spread across the political spectrum, reaching other parties including the centre-left Democratic Party.

2.5.2 The present socio-political situation

In the last decade, similarly to the rest of Western Europe, Italian extreme-right parties have resurfaced as an electoral force. According to recent polls, the *Lega Nord* (Northern League)[20]

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[17] It is worth stressing that the figures represent "recorded" arrivals which cannot be understood as an entirely representative figure of "actual" arrivals.

[18] Furthermore, arrivals dropped following the 2015 agreement between EU and Turkey according to which migrants who do not apply for asylum, or whose claims were rejected, are sent back to Turkey (Campo et al., 2020).

[19] Translated from Italian, "Disposizioni urgenti per l'accelerazione dei procedimenti in materia di protezione internazionale, nonché misure per il contrasto dell'immigrazione illegale".

[20] Currently only referred to as *Lega.*

led by Matteo Salvini remains the most popular party in the country with 21% of electorate[21], followed by the increasingly popular far-right *Fratelli d'Italia* (Brothers of Italy) with 20%, and centre-left *Partito Democratico* (Democratic party) holding 19% (POLITICO, 2021). Anti-immigrant discourse has been at the centre of the Lega's campaigning, defined as the first "political entrepreneur" of xenophobia (Avanza, 2010). As Avanza observes, the League has skilfully built an apparently inoffensive racism which represents the core of its legitimisation strategy. Brothers of Italy – with a similar rhetoric to Salvini's party - traces its roots back to the Italian Social Movement, a party founded in 1946 in support of Benito Mussolini. Among the fifteen party priorities of the electoral programme, party leader Giorgia Meloni mentions "Italy and Italians first", "opposition to irregular immigration" and "safeguarding our [national] identity against the process of islamisation" (Fratelli d'Italia, 2018). As Mammone & Veltri (2010) suggest "the focus on immigration encourages the distraction of public opinion from an economy in serious trouble, and politics and society in general crisis". As highlighted by Rydgren (2008), the Western European extreme right parties share a fundamental core of ethno-nationalist xenophobia and anti-political establishment populism. Rydgren (2007: 242-243) states:

> *Their program is directed toward strengthening the nation by making it more ethnically homogeneous and by returning to traditional values. They generally view individual rights as secondary to the goals of the nation. They also tend to be populists in accusing elites of putting internationalism ahead of the nation and of putting their own narrow self-interests and various special interests ahead of the interest of the people. Hence, the new radical right-wing parties share a core of ethno-nationalist xenophobia and anti-establishment populism.*

In the following sub-section, an overview of the Security decrees and their modification is provided in order to better understand the current state of asylum laws in Italy.

2.5.2.1 Security decree modifications

On October 5th, 2020, the Council of Ministers approved the changes to the so-called "decreti sicurezza" (Security decrees) or "decreti Salvini" (Salvini decrees), two laws that had been wanted and introduced by Matteo Salvini - the former Interior Minister and leader of the right-

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[21] As of June 30th, 2021.

wing, populist Lega party - between 2018 and 2019. The laws profoundly transformed the rules on asylum in Italy, including the reception of asylum seekers, their rescue at sea, and citizenship requirements.

In particular, the Security decrees had abolished "humanitarian protection" (which had been introduced in Italy in 1998). The permit for humanitarian protection was granted to those who did not meet the requirements for political asylum or subsidiary protection. Hence, it included people with health or age-related problems, people who risked returning to situations of violence, political instability, famine or environmental disaster (Guerrieri, 2019). The Security decrees had introduced, in lieu of humanitarian protection, a temporary permit for "casi speciali" (special cases) which involved: medical treatment, natural disasters, victims of domestic violence and labour exploitation. As the Italian Council for Refugees explains, the "special permit" excludes all those people who, if repatriated, risk inhumane and degrading treatment, or are simply prevented from exercising their democratic freedom as guaranteed by the Italian Constitution and international rights (Camilli, 2018b). Not surprisingly, the number of people who were granted a special permit significantly dropped; in 2018, humanitarian protection was granted to 21% of asylum seekers, in 2019 special permits were granted to only 2% of asylum seekers (F. Colombo, 2020).

The Security decrees had a significant impact on Italy's reception system. In 2018 it had 133.552 available spots, while in 2019 the spots dropped to 87.201 (ActionAid & Openpolis, 2021). As noted by Camilli (2021), it is an effect of the decrease of migrant arrivals – a consequence of both the renewal of the Italy-Libya agreement to "reduce illegal migratory flows" and the Security decrees that cut spending on reception and abolished humanitarian protection, forcing many asylum seekers to be excluded from the reception system. The reduction of available spots in reception centres, and of spending, has caused both a reduction of active centres - that dropped from 8.145 to 5.480 - and a 38% drop of asylum seekers in reception systems (ibid.). However, as stated by ActionAid & Openpolis (2021) in their report on Italian reception centres, the effects of the Security decrees are not yet definitive: "in 2019, the system was still in transition. When the 2020 data will become available, we will be able to draw definitive conclusions".

In 2020, the Security decrees were modified. Among the most prominent changes were those on reception, with the reintroduction of a form of humanitarian protection. The humanitarian

permit of 1998 changed name to *special protection* (protezione speciale), granting the applicant with a 2-year permit that can then theoretically be converted into a working permit.

As far as rescue at sea, the old system of the decrees largely remains in place, whereby the Interior Minister - in agreement with the Defence and Transport Ministers - can prohibit non-military ships from entering and transiting in Italian waters. However, if these ships have carried out rescues following international conventions and have communicated their operations to the competent authorities, then this clause cannot be applied. Previously, anyone rescuing migrants at sea was liable to a maximum sanction of one million euros. Following the decree modifications, the threshold for sanctions dropped to 50 thousand euros, and can only be applied after a trial (Camilli, 2020).

It remains, however, that NGO ships continue to be criminalised for saving lives at sea. Moreover, NGO rescue ships continue to be criticised - especially by far-right politicians - for constituting a *pull factor* for irregular seaborne migration[22]. As *Amnesty International*, *Open Arms*, and *Médecins Sans Frontières* affirm: "in no circumstance should saving lives be considered a crime" (Camilli, 2020). Furthermore, although NGO ships are legally permitted to continue their operations of search and rescue at sea, *de facto,* in 2020 the majority of NGOs ships were blocked in ports[23], without the possibility of carrying out search and rescue operations, due to alleged administrative proceedings[24], vessel seizures, and other measures such as mandatory work (FRA, 2020). The Italian NGO *Emergency* stated, "we are still far from an organic reform aimed at managing migration as a structural phenomenon as opposed to an emergency one[25]" (Camilli, 2020). The decline of Italy's domestic population[26], paired with

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[22] However, studies have found no correlation between the number of Mediterranean crossings and the level of NGO rescue ship activity (e.g. Cusumano & Villa, 2019). On the contrary, in Cusmano & Villa (ibid.), a stronger link was found between the number of migrant crossings and either political stability in Libya or the weather.

[23] As of June 2021, only two search and rescue vessels are operating out of a total of fifteen ('Geo Barents' and 'Ocean Viking').

[24] As of June 2021, only two search and rescue vessels are operating out of a total of fifteen ('Geo Barents' and 'Ocean Viking').

[25] Translated from Italian, "Siamo ancora lontani da una riforma organica volta a gestire le migrazioni come un fenomeno strutturale e non più emergenziale".

[26] According to the latest demographic balance carried out by the Italian Statistics Office (ISTAT), the difference between deaths (700,000) and births (400,000) is of -300,000 units (a historical low previously reached only in

immigrant arrivals, have led some Italians to claim that "Italy is becoming less Italian". These trends are likely to cause anxiety among Italians who feel that their mores are threatened and must be protected from "foreigners" (Guterbock, 2020).

2.6 Summary

To conclude, this chapter has laid bare the conceptual framework that the present research builds upon. In section 2.1, I introduced critical discourse studies (CDS), an interdisciplinary and problem-oriented approach that aims to deconstruct power and ideologies in a given society through the analysis of discourse (or other semiotic signs). After clarifying the notions of "discourse", "criticism", "ideology", and "power", crucial to the understanding of CDS, I introduce – in section 2.2 - some of the existing approaches within CDS, with a special focus on the frameworks that the present research draws upon, namely Wodak's (2001) Discourse-Historical approach, van Leeuwen's (1996) Social Actor approach, and KhosraviNik's systematisation of CDS analytical categories.

In section 2.3 I introduced relevant literature that has previously addressed discourse on migration – including racist or xenophobic discourse – in a variety of socio-political and geographical contexts through diverse approaches and perspectives. Subsequently, I zoomed into previous studies on the geographical area of focus, Italy. Finally, the effects of the press – and more generally, of mass media - on society's worldview (and viceversa) were briefly discussed.

In section 2.5, the concept of "social identity" is succintly introduced to provide a better understanding of the dynamics that lie beneath the construction of the "us" *vs* "them" dichotomy. As we have seen, the existance of an "other" is essential for defining one's own identity, as a group or an individual. Furthermore, in the construction of a "self" and "other", power is often implicated, highlighting the crucial focus on power differentials as the foundation for the present CDS study.

To conclude, In section 2.4, I briefly outlined the history of immigration and immigration law in Italy, outlining the country's recent history of immigration as well as its focus (especially since the 2000s) on immigration as a security problem and on the restriction of "illegal

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1918). Covid-19 undoubtedly accelerated the already negative trend. From 2015 to 2019, in fact, the Italian population shrunk by 551,000 units (Blangiardo, 2021).

immigration". Then, the recent socio-political situation was briefly introduced, discussing the latest modifications in the legislation on asylum in Italy, concerning topics such as search and rescue at sea, reception of asylum seekers, and citizenship.

3. Methodology for Data Selection, Collection, and Analysis.

In this chapter, I outline and describe the methodology and methods used for data selection, collection, and analysis. Before going any further, I reiterate the key concept of *dialogicality* that relates discourse and ideology, or in van Dijk's (2015) terminology, the micro-structure (language and discourse) and macro-structure (power and ideology). Since discourse is simultaneously both socially *constitutive* and *constituting*, the analysis itself required dynamicity between the micro- and macro-levels of analysis.

With the concept of dialogicality in mind – and in line with CDS research - I aimed to maintain a holistic approach by continually moving through these levels of analysis. In the present study, two analytical levels can be identified. A *descriptive* level (or micro-level) which focuses on the intra-textual linguistic and discursive characteristics of the data, and an *explanatory* level (or macro-level) where the descriptive findings are contextualised and explained, drawing on linguistic and social theories (KhosraviNik, 2010) and on the multi-dimensional view of context. Crucially, the two levels of analysis need not to be conceived as linear or static, but rather *interactive,* dynamic, and perpetually connected to one another*.* In KhosraviNik's words (ibid.),

> *a CDA study needs to move back and forth between critical textual, topics and macro-structural analyses and attempt to establish how (micro) linguistic mechanisms at the textual analysis feed into (or fit into) a prejudiced macro-structure*.

This study aims to investigate the *discursive strategies*[27] employed in migrant representation in the Italian newspapers *Il Giornale* and *Corriere della Sera*. This broader research aim can be broken down into more focused sub-questions that I hereby reiterate:

1. What are the main *discourse topics* through which the newspapers discuss migrants and migration?

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[27] A *strategy* refers to "a more or less accurate and more or less intentional plan of practices adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic aim" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). In other words, a discursive strategy can be defined as a systematic way of using language.

2. What *social actors*[28] are present in the texts[29]? How are the social actors referred to and named?

3. What *social actions* are attributed to the social actors?

4. What *topoi* are employed in arguments for or against the social actors?

In addressing these questions, I strove to continually connect the micro-linguistic level (the specific discursive strategies) to the macro-level (the intertextual, and socio-political context in which the discourses are produced). In the following subsections, I outline the rationale and methods employed for data selection, collection, and analysis.

3.1 Data Sampling, Selection, and Collection

The data for the present research was sampled, selected, and collected following the principles of *purposive* (or purposeful) *sampling*. This term indicates a group of sampling strategies typically used in qualitative research. The fundamental idea in purposive sampling is to select instances that are "information rich" in order to answer the research questions (Schreier, 2018). There is a large variety of purposive strategies techniques described in the literature and the terminology has often been used interchangeably (as argued in Coyne (1997) for purposeful and theoretical sampling).

The present methodology aligned with *theoretical sampling,* as developed in Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Schwandt (2001:111) states that,

> *theoretical sampling means that the sampling of additional incidents, events, activities, populations, and so on is directed by the evolving theoretical constructs. Comparisons between the explanatory adequacy of the theoretical constructs and the empirical indicators go on continuously until theoretical saturation is reached (i.e. additional analysis no longer contributes to anything new about this concept).*

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[28] In my research questions, I use the terminology "social actor" as I am interested in the construction of the us *vs* them dichotomy. Indeed, the representation of migrants becomes increasingly relevant when compared to how we represent "ourselves".

[29] The term *text* is used to refer to any piece of linguistic product (KhosraviNik, 2010a). In the case of this research question, however, texts refers to the newspaper articles analysed.

The process of sampling was conceived as flexible and emergent. Indeed, as in theoretical sampling, data collection was not considered as a specific phase to be completed before analysis. On the contrary, after the first data collection, a first pilot analysis was conducted allowing the identification of particular concepts which then developed into categories and, on the basis of this initial analysis, further data was collected (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

3.1.1 Data Selection and Collection

In order to investigate migrant representations in the Italian press, I initially selected three national newspapers - *Il Giornale*, *Corriere della Sera,* and *Il Fatto Quotidiano*[30] - from which to draw data *on* or *about* migration. The newspapers were selected based on circulation figures, political stance, and type (national vs regional).

Firstly, newspapers with high national circulation figures were selected with the aim of striving for maximum representativity. In other words, it was assumed that by selecting newspapers with higher circulation figures, their articles would have been accessed, viewed, or read by a more substantial number of the Italian population compared to newspapers with lower circulation figures. Thus, newspapers with high circulation figures were deemed more relevant for investigating the discursive strategies used to represent migrants in the Italian press, especially in light of the assumed dialogic relationship between language and ideology. In particular, the larger the audience that a given type of language reaches, the larger its ideological effects can be assumed to be. Therefore, the newspapers I selected for data collection have among the highest average daily circulation figures[31] per political stance: the *Corriere della Sera* averages 260.760 distributed copies per day, *Il Fatto Quotidiano* averages 59.268, and *Il Giornale* 42.279. *Corriere della Sera* is the first Italian newspaper in terms of circulation figures and readership[32].

Secondly, the selection criteria aim to reflect the political orientations existing in the country. As Urso (2018) holds, the relationship between media and politics in Italy remains strong.

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[30] Il Fatto Quotidiano was initially selected but eventually excluded from my analysis. The reasons for this are explicated in section 3.1.2.

[31] Figures retrieved from Accertamenti Diffusione Stampa (http://www.adsnotizie.it/_dati_DMS.asp), updated to the 20th of April 2021. The figures include both paper and digital copies.

[32] Accertamenti Diffusione Stampa, http://www.adsnotizie.it/.

Corriere della Sera was selected for its centrist stance, *Il Giornale* for its right-wing, conservative-populist[33] orientation, and *Il Fatto Quotidiano* for its left-wing stance[34].

Furthermore, the selected newspapers are all national newspapers; no regional newspaper was selected for data collection. This decision was based on the assumption that national newspapers - with a high circulation rate - would yield a more accurate picture of migrant representation in the Italian press *in general*. On the other hand, the exclusion of regional newspapers may have led to disregard the probable divergence in the regions' political and social stances. Nevertheless, for the scope of the present research, the analysis of regional newspapers was considered out of scope and was therefore excluded. Future research with a focus on Italian regional press has the potential of yielding interesting results given the social and political diversity present in Italy's regions.

The newspaper articles were collected through an online interface of newspapers and periodicals called *Factiva* by way of the following search queries: *migrant**, *immigrat*, clandestin** and *stranier** (literally corresponding to the English words: "migrant", "immigrant", "clandestine", "foreigner/foreign"). The search queries were selected on the basis of being the most frequent terms used to refer to migrants in the press. The frequency of the terminology used to refer to "people migrating" was established through a *Factiva* search I carried out in a corpus of four Italian newspapers of high circulation (*Il Giornale, Corriere della Sera, Il Fatto Quotidiano* and *La Repubblica*) within a five-year time range (2015-2020). The terms I employed for the search were: *migrant*, immigrat*, clandestin*, extracomunitar*, rifugiat*, richiedent* asilo, stranier*, profug** ("migrant*", "immigrant*", "illegal*", "non-EU", "refugee*", "asylum seeker", "foreigner*/foreign", "displaced person").

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[33] Right-wing populism can be defined as "a political ideology that rejects existing political consensus and usually combines laissez-faire liberalism and anti-elitism. It is considered populism because of its appeal to the 'common man/woman' as opposed to the elites; this appeal to a quasi-homogeneous *demos* is regarded as salient for such movements" (Wodak, 2015:7).

[34] Eurotopics helped with establishing the newspapers' political orientation (https://www.eurotopics.net/en).

Finally, the four most frequently occurring key terms were chosen[35] as search queries for selecting newspaper articles *on* or *about* migration.

In order to focus my critical discourse study within a specific and narrow timeframe, only articles from the year 2020 were selected. Driven by the motivation of collecting discourse on migration that is being constructed "at present", I decided to draw my data from articles published in the same year as this research was initiated, that is 2020. My eagerness to investigate migration discourse, and understand the underlying ideologies that are being constructed, stems from the drive to advocate for the injustices that continue to be regularly played out towards migrants. My aim is to "take an explicit position and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately challenge social inequality"(van Dijk, 2015:466).

Furthermore, I believed that the present research would be of greater contribution to CDS studies on migration, and to the interdisciplinary understanding of contemporary migration issues, if based on the most recent data available.

The three months of February, June, and October 2020 were chosen for the collection of my data sample. In order to remain aligned with the aims of CDS research – connecting linguistics analysis with the socio-political context - the three months were chosen in relation to world events. In particular, given the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic in Europe at the beginning of 2020[36], I believed the selection of articles at equally distant points during the year would provide a more complete picture of the perspectives being constructed towards migrants. The output generated by searching the query terms *migrant**, *immigrat*, clandestin** and *stranier** (MICS) in the months of February, June, and October 2020 amounted to a total of 1397 articles.

3.1.2 Data-Downsizing Criteria

Some CDS studies have been criticised for "cherry-picking" data or picking "typical texts", thus leading to concerns of representativeness and susceptibility to the researcher's biases. With

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[35] The query terms occurred respectively 1695 times for *migrant**, 3298 times for *immigrant**, 1235 times for *clandestin** and 5966 times for *stranier**, only in the year 2020 (as calculated on 25-10-2020). The high frequency of results for *stranier** is due to the fact that the word can be both a noun and an adjective.

[36] Italy's first covid-19 patient was detected on February 21st. The country entered a national lockdown on the 9th of March.

the intention of minimising such pitfalls, the present data was sampled and downsized *purposefully*, that is to say, following specific inclusion and exclusion criteria that are addressed in this section.

Firstly, the initial sample of 1397 articles was reduced based on the content or topics of the articles. In particular, articles that were not *on* or *about* migration were considered irrelevant for the purpose of this study and were therefore discarded. This was the case for articles that, for example, only featured a mention of one of the MICS keywords but did not discuss or express any information or opinion related to migrants or migration. Furthermore, only newspaper articles discussing migration in/to Italy were selected. Hence, articles about migration outside of Italy were excluded from the data sample. For example, articles on migration in the US, discussions about migration related to US elections, and on terrorist attacks in France were found in my data sample and discarded.

Once the data was downsized per topic, in line with the principles of theoretical sampling, I began carrying out a pilot analysis of a small sample of articles. This procedure allowed the testing of analytical categories and first assumptions. Subsequently, I gradually analysed more articles until data saturation was reached. Similarly to Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), no clear line between data collection and analysis can be drawn (Meyer, 2011). The data was collected and analysed following an *iterative* process, that is to say, a circular process whereby, as the analyst, I followed the typical CDS cycle: theory – operationalisation – discourse/text – interpretation (as illustrated in Figure 2).

Data saturation can be defined as the instance in which no new data and no new themes can be found, no new coding created, and the study is suitable to be replicated (Fusch & Ness, 2015). In other words, as Mautner (2008) puts it "you continue looking until it becomes evident that you find more of the same". Crucially, data saturation is not given by the size of the corpus but rather by its contents. Dibley (2011) suggests that it is preferable to think of data as "rich and thick" rather than thinking of the size of the sample. A balance of thick (quantity) and rich (quality) is the ideal combination to strive for (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Throughout the iterative process of data analysis and selection, some decisions taken at the beginning of the process had to be revaluated. One modification was the exclusion of the left-wing newspaper *Il Fatto Quotidiano* from my investigation. The reason for this was that the

output of articles generated for *Il Fatto Quotidiano* - by searching with MICS query terms - was significantly lower compared to the other two newspapers[37]. Moreover, once the articles were downsized per topic, the number of articles was reduced further. In fact, after downsizing, the number of articles from *Il Fatto Quotidiano* was too small to carry out a satisfactory analysis or a comparison with the other two newspapers. Many articles, for example, only featured a mention of one of the MICS keywords but did not engage in any discussion about migration. The reasons for this may be numerous. The quasi-absence of migration discourse is in itself a potentially revelatory finding. However, I refrain from speculation as I believe that this assession cannot be made lightly and would require a deeper investigation. Future research on migration discourse in the Italian press could take into account *Il Fatto Quotidiano* with a view to understanding their role within the Italian migration discourse at large. Finally, therefore, this thesis is based on the analysis of centrist *Corriere della Sera* and right-wing *Il Giornale* newspapers.

Finally, only articles from the month of October were analysed given that data saturation was reached solely with articles from that month[38]. From a socio-political perspective, the month of October revealed to be rich in discussions *about* and *on* migration given that a new law on asylum was passed at the beginning of the month (Modification of the Security decrees, see section 2.4.2). A final total number of twenty-six newspaper articles were analysed (half from *Il Giornale* and the other half from *Corriere della Sera)*. A complete list of the newspaper articles analysed is provided in the Appendix.

3.2 Analytical Framework

In devising the methodological framework for analysis, I strove to align with the following key CDS principles:

- The concept of *eclecticism.* The present framework, as previously mentioned, draws from a variety of theoretical and methodological frameworks (e.g. Wodak's Discourse-Historical approach (2001), KhosraviNik's (2010) systematisation of CDS analytical categories, van Leeuwen's (1996) Socio-Semantic approach).

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[37] Based on searches for the whole month of October (before downsizing), the number of articles per newspaper were the following: 377 for *Corriere della sera*, 193 for *Il Giornale* and 85 for *Il Fatto Quotidiano*.

[38] The total number of articles generated by the MICS keywords in October was 655 (without downsizing).

- The concept of *multifariousness*. The present analysis can be divided into a descriptive and an explanatory level. More specifically, as part of the descriptive level, we may distinguish three intra-textual levels: social actors, social actions, and *topoi* analysis (see section 3.2.2). Under the explanatory level, we may identify the intertextual, and the socio-political level.

- The concept of *data triangulation*. The present thesis strives to draw data from a variety of empirical sources, with a variety of background information (historical, political, social), as well as drawing from different approaches and methodologies. Drawing from the DHA, triangulation is based on the concept of "context" that is characterised by an intra-textual, an inter-textual, an extra-linguistic and a broader socio-political and historical level.

These three concepts are related and difficult to separate. It is perhaps more constructive to conceive them as interconnected, as illustrated in Figure 3 below.
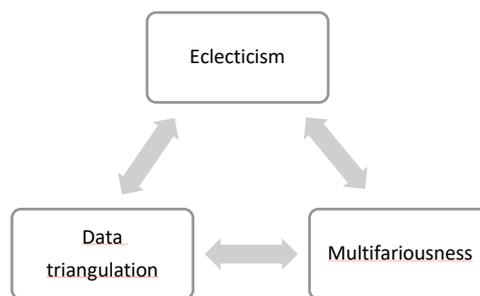
Figure 3. Interconnectedness of CDS principles of triangulation, eclecticism, and multifariousness

3.2.1 Developing a Code Structure

By *code structure* I refer to the totality of analytical categories employed for the present analysis, or in other words, the analytical skeleton guiding the analysis. The code structure was developed during the analysis of the first pilot sample and refined throughout the data analysis. The pilot sample allowed categories to be tested and concepts to emerge into categories. The analytical categories adopted in my code structure were drawn from a variety of frameworks, such as Wodak's (2001) Discourse-Historical approach (DHA), van Leeuwen's (1996) Socio-Semantic approach and KhosraviNik's (2010a) CDS category systematisation. The categories drawn from these frameworks provided a preliminary organising skeleton for analysis. The categories were then constantly revaluated, merged, eliminated, or added as the data sample grew and the analysis progressed. The analytical approach followed by this study

may be defined as *integrated* (Curry, 2015). That is to say, a combination of deductive and inductive approaches was followed. The advantage of such an integrated approach is that, on one hand, induction allowed me to approach the research with an "open mind", avoiding trying to fit any preconceived ideas or categories to the data at hand. On the other, given the wealth of previous CDS research on discriminatory discourse, deduction allowed me to draw from existing analytical frameworks in order to select relevant categories that helped to develop a code structure for the analysis of my data sample. Indeed, whilst preliminary codes were selected from existing frameworks, the analyst remained attentive to concepts emerging from the data. To ensure this, for instance, the texts were always read freely before starting the coding process.

The code structure was developed through an online platform called *consider.ly*. The platform provided a clear interface for gathering the data, and aided throughout the coding process, observation, and data analysis. In the following subsections, the descriptive and explanatory levels of analysis are outlined.

3.2.2 Descriptive Level

In this section, I outline the analytical categories developed and adopted in order to investigate discursive strategies for the construction of "us" and "them". This level of analysis, which constitutes the main analytical level of the thesis, focuses on the linguistic and discursive strategies used to represent *social actors* and *social actions* as well as the *discourse topics* present - and absent – in the newspapers' discourse on migration are analysed, and the *topoi* that the newspapers draw upon for their pro- or anti-immigrant arguments.

Section 3.2.2.1 introduces the first analytical stage, that is that of *discourse topics*. In this section I briefly present the concept of discourse topics and I illustrate how I coded for this category in my data sample. In section 3.2.2.2, I present the analytical categories I used to code and analyse how *social actors* are referred to and named in my data sample. Subsequently, in section 3.2.2.3, I introduce the categories I applied to investigate *social actions,* and more specifically, what social actions are associated to which social actors. Finally, in section 3.2.2.4, I present the *topoi* I detected in arguments for or against social actors in my sample of articles.

In line with the principles outlined in the DHA (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009), the analysis of my article sample starts by identifying the main discourse topics present in the newspapers' discourse *on* or *about* migration.

Topics indicate *what* information is discussed when talking about migrants and migration. Investigating what topics are discussed - and what topics are not - is essential to understand how newsmakers construct and reproduce stigmatising and discriminatory ideologies related to migrants. Indeed, the control and management carried out through discourse topics is an essential part of creating and manipulating a discriminatory ideology. This gate-keeping process is controlled, amongst others, by the press.

In order to account for the main discourse topics discussed in my article sample, I used the online portal *Wordclouds*[39] to calculate the word frequency. Frequency refers to a count of how many times a word occurs in the corpus and its analysis provides a good indication of the salience of certain topics, calculated in a more quantitative way. The top twenty-five most frequent words were selected per each newspaper (excluding stop words[40]). These words constituted the starting-point for defining the most frequent topics addressed.

Furthermore, the frequency calculation was combined with a more qualitative analysis of the topics or themes detected in each article analysed. In other words, themes or topics can be understood as the "gist" of the article. Each theme or topic identified was coded. For instance, in the Giannini article (2020, Oct. 11th), *"Demoliti i decreti Sicurezza? Riprendono gli arrivi"* ("Security decrees torn down? Arrivals resume"), the main macro-topic is evident from the headline, and it is coded as "Security decrees".

The macro-topics identified often showed a variety of sub-topics, that is to say, topics that are linked – by journalists – to the main topic of discussion. For instance, when talking about the macro-topic "Security decrees", the sub-topics discussed can be significantly varied. For example, "arrivals", "NGO ship sanctions", "mass landings" may all be sub-topics of the macro-topic "Security decrees".

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[39] https://www.wordclouds.com/

[40] *Stop words* refer to an extremely common set of words, including prepositions, determiners, and conjunctions.

Finally, I made an evaluation of the topics obscured or absent in the data sample. These topics were evaluated by looking at the bigger socio-political picture of migration in Italy.

3.2.2.2 Social Actors

This section introduces the analytical categories I used to investigate what *social actors* are present – and absent – in the texts and how they are named and referred to. The analysis of social actor representation is crucial in order to understand how in-groups and out-groups are discursively constructed. For categorising the linguistic and discursive strategies used, I predominantly followed van Leeuwen's (1996) framework.

Following van Leeuwen, the starting point of my framework is the dichotomy between *inclusion* and *exclusion*. Indeed, representations may include or exclude social actors depending on the authors' purpose in relation to their intended audience. An exclusion strategy largely detected in my data sample was *backgrounding*. Backgrounded social actors "may not be mentioned in relation to a given action, but they are mentioned elsewhere in the text, and we can infer with reasonable (though never total) certainty who they are. They are not so much excluded as de-emphasised, pushed into the background". An example of backgrounding as found in my data is given:

> "*accettano qualsiasi lavoro per non perdere il permesso di soggiorno*" ("[they] accept any job to avoid losing their residency permit"), (Bendinelli, 2020, Oct. 28th).

Here, the subject of the sentence is implied. The social actors of the sentence are in fact mentioned elsewhere in the text, as for instance in the tile that reads: "Foreigners earn 23% less than Italians". This strategy, as I will show in section 4.2.2.1, may be used to legitimise or justify discriminatory practices against migrants.

Inclusion, on the other hand, can be realised in a variety of ways. Social actors may be *activated* or *passivised*, In *activation*, "social actors are represented as the active, dynamic forces in an activity". In *passivation*, social actors are represented as "'undergoing' the activity, or as being 'at the receiving end of it'". For example, in the instance "*sbarcati altri 900 migranti*" ("another 900 migrants have landed") (Giannini, 2020, Oct. 12th), "migrants" are activated in relation to the action of "landing". On the contrary, in the instance "*la problematica della gestione dei migranti viene scaricata totalmente sulle loro spalle*" ("the

issue of managing migrants is completely dumped on their[41] shoulders") (Raffa, 2020, Oct. 8th),
migrants are passivised in relation to the action of "managing". They become the "patient" in
a sentence where the "agent" is left implicit. The complete inventory of van Leeuwen's
analytical categories can be seen in Figure 4 below. The categories selected for my analysis
are circled in black.
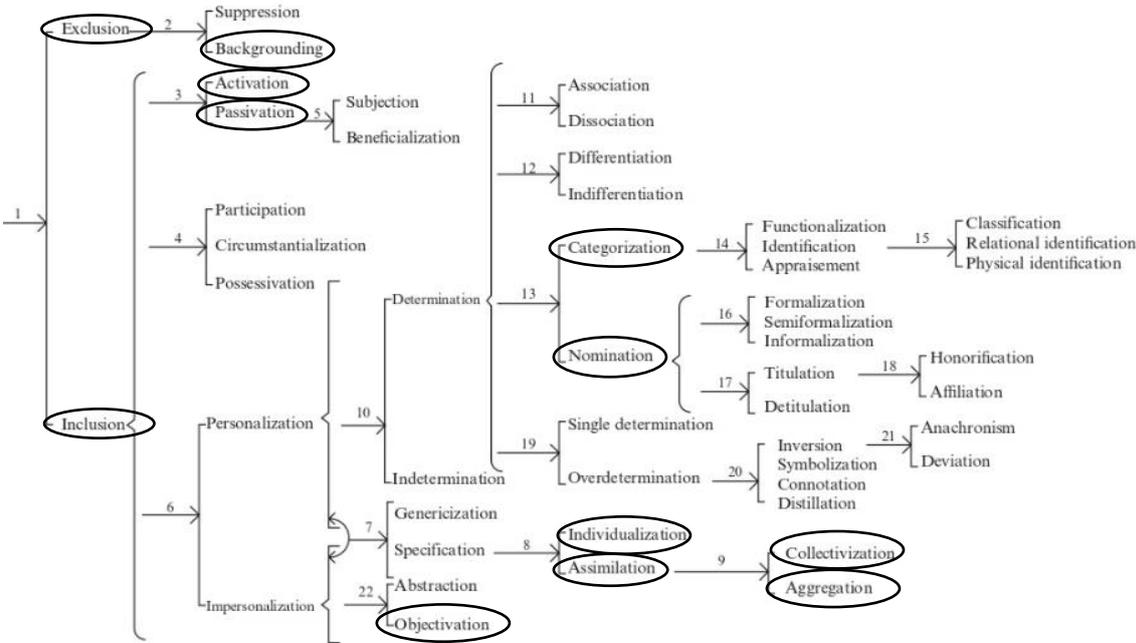
Figure 4. Van Leeuwen's social actor representation framework (2008:52)

In addition to the categories of exclusion vs inclusion and activation vs passivation, I have used
the following analytical categories to analyse my data sample:

a. *Assimilation* vs *individualisation*

Social actors are *individualised* when they are referred to as individuals, that is to say, when
their diversity as individuals is asserted (for instance in terms of their lifestyles, education,
professions, ages, sexes, etc.). *Assimilation*, on the contrary, refers to strategies of assimilating
individuals into a group that thinks and behaves alike. The two types of assimilation identified
in my data are *collectivisation* and *aggregation*. The former is an assimilation strategy that can
be realised with a mass noun or a noun denoting a group of people, e.g. terms like "this
nation", "Italy", "we", "the community". The latter "quantifies groups of participants, treating
them as statistics" and is realised through quantifiers or structures expressing "what most

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[41] "their" refers to "the police".

people consider legitimate". Although it may present itself as merely recording facts, the strategy is often used to regulate, practice and manufacture consensus opinion (van Leeuwen, 2008). As Kapuściński reminds us by referencing philosopher Lévinas' work *Le temps et l'autre*: "the Other is always an individual, a single person. However, man when he is alone is usually more 'human' than when he is a member of a crowd, an excited mass" (2008: 36).

b. *Nomination vs Classification*

The *nomination* category was applied when social actors are represented in terms of their unique identity, often realised through proper nouns. *Classification*, on the other hand, was used to code social actors represented "in terms of the major categories by means of which a given society or institution differentiates between classes of people"(van Leeuwen, 2008). Most commonly, classification was used to code social actors referred to on the basis of their belonging to a certain ethnic or racial group. For instance, classifications such as, "tunisini", "marocchini", "africani" ("Tunisians", "Moroccans", "Africans") were commonly found in my data sample.

c. *Objectivation*

A type of impersonalisation, o*bjectivation* refers to social actors that have been stripped of the semantic feature "human", often realised through metonymy. For instance, in my data sample, immigrants are often referred to as "arrivals" ("*arrivi*"). Furthermore, I coded for instrumentalisation when social actors were "represented by means of reference to the instrument with which they carry out the action"(van Leeuwen, 2008), as for instance, immigrants referred to as "*sbarchi*" ("landings").

d. *Naming strategies*

Naming strategies were coded in order to investigate how the dichotomous categories of "us" and "them" are named by the two newspapers throughout my sample of articles. For example, terms that I coded as *naming strategies* used to refer to migrants are, "*migranti*" ("migrants"), "*tunisini*" ("Tunisians"), "*stranieri*" ("foreigners"). Furthermore, I coded for explicitly derogatory naming strategies such as "*illegali*" or "*clandestini*" ("illegals") in order to account for - where and by whom - derogatory terminology was used to refer to migrants

This section introduces the analytical categories I applied in order to investigate what *social actions* are attributed to social actors, and how social actions are represented and associated to the in-group and out-group. These categories, presented below, were drawn from van Leeuwen's analytical categories for the representation of social action.

a. Transactive vs Non-transactive

In analysing my sample of articles, I coded for *transactive* or *non-transactive* social actions. Following Halliday's Functional grammar (1985), an action is considered *transactive* when it involves two participants, an actor and a goal. *Non-transactive* actions, on the other hand, involve only one participant, the actor. Crucially, this distinction draws a line between actions that have an effect on others and actions that do not. Transactive actions may further be identified as *instrumental*. I coded for *instrumental transactive* actions when the goal of the social action could have been either human or non-human. For example, the verb "*smistare*" ("to sort") - in reference to migrants – was coded as an instrumental transactive action given that the goal may be human or non-human, thus representing migrants as interchangeable with objects. The complete inventory of van Leeuwen's social action analytical categories is reported in Figure 5. The categories adopted for my social action analysis are circled in black.
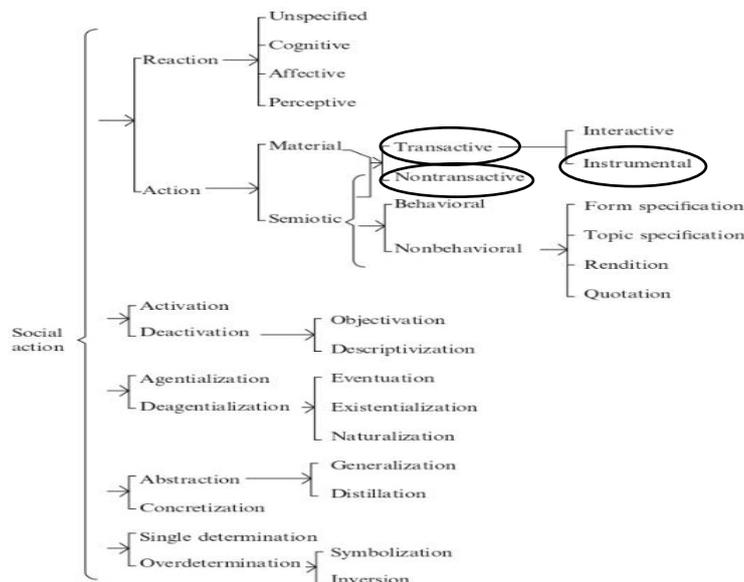

Figure 5. Van Leeuwen's social action representation framework (2008)

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3.2.2.4 Topoi

The present section introduces the *topoi* detected in my data sample in arguments for or against social actors. By conducting a topoi analysis I aim to understand how positive or negative attributions, towards the in-group or the out-group, are justified and legitimised through argumentation. Thus, the concept of *topos* is deemed relevant for deconstructing - sometimes reasonable and sometimes fallacious - arguments.

Topoi can be defined as "parts of argumentation which belong to the obligatory, either explicit or inferable, premises. As such they justify the transition from the argument or arguments to the conclusion" (Kienpointner, 1996). A *topos* is a type of argument where the premise is followed by a conclusion without providing any explicit evidence. On the contrary, the conclusion is taken to confirm the presupposed *endoxon*[42] (Wodak & Boukala, 2015). A *topos* can be made explicit by paraphrasing it into a causal or conditional sentence, as for instance "if x, then y" or "y, because x" (Wodak, 2001a). As Wodak and Boukala state: "topoi allow recognising and systematising arguments; they also illustrate important parameters in the discursive construction of identities, which are based on inclusion/exclusion strategies*".* (2015: 95)

For the present *topoi* analysis, I drew from Wodak's list of *topoi* (2001). The topoi detected in my data and selected for analysis are illustrated in Table 1.

Topos	Warrant
Usefulness	If an action will be useful, then one should perform it. E.g., *pro bono publico* ("to the advantage of all"), *pro bono nobis* ("to the advantage of us").
Threat	If there are specific dangers or threats, one should do something against them.
Financial burden	If a specific situation or action costs too much money or causes a loss of revenue, one should perform actions that diminish those costs or help to mitigate the loss.

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[42] The concept of *endoxon*, as used by Aristotele, describes "an opinion that can be accepted by the majority of people because it represents traditional 'knowledge'" (Boukala, 2016:253).

Numbers	If the numbers prove a specific claim, a specific action should be performed/not be carried out.
Law	If a law or an otherwise codified norm prescribes or forbids a specific politico-administrative action, the action has to be performed or omitted.

Table 1. A selected list of topoi and warrants (adapted from Wodak, 2001)

3.2.3 The Explanatory Level

3.2.3.1 Intertextuality

In order to account for the links made in my data to other texts and discourses, an interdiscursive and intertextual analysis was integrated in the so-called explanatory level of analysis.

Both intertextuality and interdiscursivity relate to the variety of "voices" present in a given text. Intertextuality is defined by Fairclough (1992) as "the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth". Intertextuality means that a given text is linked to other texts, both in the past and in the present. The connection may be made explicitly – by referencing a specific topic or actor - or by allusions and evocations, or by transferring arguments from one text to another (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). When discourse is taken out of its specific context, the process of de-contextualisation occurs; if that discourse is then inserted into a new context, it is being recontextualised. For instance, a journalist may select certain quotations that best fit with the purpose of the article. The quotations are thus de-contextualised and then recontextualised, or in other words, given a different frame.

Interdiscursivity, on the other hand, relates to discourses that are linked to each other in various ways. If *discourse* is mainly defined as "topic-related" – as stated in Reisigl & Wodak (2009) - then discourse on migration, for instance, frequently refers to topics or subtopics of other discourses, such as finances, criminality, or issues of security. Due to the closeness of the concepts of interdiscursivity and intertextuality, I will hereby refer to them under the comprehensive term *intertextuality*.

As suggested by Bazerman (2004),

Intertextuality is not just a matter of which other texts you refer to, but how you use them, what you use them for, and ultimately how you position yourself as a writer to them to make your own statement.

Intertextuality helps to zoom out of the specific text and view it in the wider context of the texts and discourses that are being produced – or have been produced – in society at large. Intertextual relations transcend the situational context and depend on the cultural one (Malinowski, 1923). As outlined by Wang (2006), "the immediate situation, while the most specific, is never the widest context for the meaning of text or discourse. The meanings made in different situation-types are connected in ways that are characteristic of a community's culture".

How will intertextuality be examined in this study? There is no one way to analyse the complex phenomenon of intertextuality (Wang, 2006). The present study follows the basic procedure of describing both the explicit (direct quotation) and implicit (mention of a belief, issue or event) instances of intertextuality. However, as Fairclough (1995) reminds us, it must be acknowledged that intertextual analysis is an interpretative endeavour which highly depends on the researcher's personal judgement and experience.

3.2.3.2 Socio-Political and Historical context

The data analysis carried out strove to be grounded in the socio-political context that the texts and discourses were produced in. This level of analysis aims to contribute to explicating the possible interpretations and linkages between a certain text and the public "knowings" that exist in society (KhosraviNik, 2010a). Throughout my analysis of the discursive strategies used for representing "us" and "them", I strove to integrate relevant and necessary socio-political information in order to contextualise my linguistic findings to the specific macro-context in which they were produced.

To sum up, the present research did not aim to follow a strict systematic order of analysis but rather an analytical process moving through the levels of analysis (KhosraviNik, 2010a). In some cases, the explication of the discursive strategies and linguistic manipulations required the provision of clarifications from socio-political or socio-historical domains. However, the explanatory level of analysis was not considered to be an imperative level to be followed for each discursive strategy, but rather a holistic approach in which I aimed to account for how

the macro- and micro-structures are interwoven, while maintaining an awareness of their dialogicality, in trying to investigate the link between discourse and society.

3.4 Methodological Reflections

As the researcher, I have adopted a qualitative approach for the investigation of discursive strategies used to represent migrants in the Italian newspapers *Il Giornale* and *Corriere della Sera*. As such, the aim was not to provide a quantitative objective description of migrant representations in the Italian press but rather to understand some of its essential aspects by investigating *what* and *how* linguistic strategies are used, as well as how they reflect and construct discriminatory or stereotyping ideologies present in a given society. The aim was not as much to generalise as it was to specify (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

The issue of generalisability in qualitative research has often been raised by critics. Contrary to quantitative research where generalisability is based on statistical logic, in qualitative research the notion is based on purposive sampling (or theoretical sampling)[43]. In the present research, generalisation is about the nature of the process (Gobo, 2011). Qualitative methods are generally intended to achieve depth of understanding, as opposed to breadth of understanding (more associated with quantitative research). Therefore, sampling must be consistent with the aims and assumptions inherent in the use of a given method (Palinkas et al., 2015). In addition to purposive sampling, some essential criteria for data validity were adopted in this study, namely data triangulation, multi-level analysis and eclecticism (in theory and methodology).

Future studies adopting a mixed method approach are likely to be advantageous for enabling a move beyond the borders of a single methodological approach and offering breadth, as well as depth, of results. For this reason, corpus linguistics methods are increasingly being used by critical discourse analysts (see Baker et al., 2008).

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[43] For a more in-depth exploration of reconceptualising generalisation in qualitative research you may refer to (Schreier, 2018).

3.5 Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodology and the methods adopted to investigate the discursive strategies used by the Italian newspapers *Il Giornale* and *Corriere della Sera* in representing "us" and "them". In section 3.1, I outlined the rationale for data sampling, collection, and selection which followed the principles of *theoretical sampling*. Specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were adopted. In section 3.2, the analytical framework adopted in the study was laid out. The analysis was divided into a *descriptive* level (section 3.2.2) and an *explanatory* level (3.2.3). The descriptive level focused on the intra-textual linguistic and discursive characteristics of the data, and the *explanatory* level contextualised and explained the descriptive findings drawing on linguistic and social theories as well as on the multi-dimensional view of "context". However, I aimed to maintain a holistic approach by continually moving back and forth between the levels of analysis. The analytical categories for the micro-linguistic level of analysis were primarily drawn from van Leeuwen's (1996) Socio-Semantic approach. In section 3.3, some methodological reflections are put forward regarding the nature of adopting a qualitative approach and the accounting of data generalisability.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and discussion of the research's key findings. The aim of the study is that of investigating migrant representation and the discursive construction of "us" and "them" in the press. The results are based on the analysis of a sample of articles selected from right-wing newspaper *Il Giornale* and centrist *Corriere della Sera* (henceforth IG and CS). This section is structured as follows: Section 4.1 introduces the main discourse topics that are present – or absent – in the newspapers' discourse on or about migration. The results show that certain information is put in the spotlight (such as "arrivals", "irregular arrivals", "security" and "the security decree modification") and other, on the contrary, is pushed in the background (such as Italy's and the EU's externalisation policies, migrants' diverse reasons for leaving their countries of origin, what migrants leave behind in their countries of origin, etc.).

In section 4.2, I present the main discursive strategies found for representing and naming social actors. The most common strategies found in both newspapers are *aggregation* (presenting migrants in large numbers), *objectivation* (naming migrants with terminology that lacks the semantic feature "human"), *classification* (naming social actors on the basis of their ethnicity, e.g. Tunisians vs Italians).

Section 4.3 presents the most common actions attributed to the social actors. In both newspapers, "we" are often attributed *transactive instrumental* actions (actions that may have a human or non-human goal) such as "to redistribute" and "to unload" whereas migrants are predominantly attributed *non-transactive* actions (actions that only involve and actor and not a goal) such as "to land" and "to arrive".

In section 4.4, I present the main *topoi* employed in arguments for or against social actors. IG engages in explicit anti-immigrant arguments drawing on *topoi* of financial burden*,* threat (threat to security and to health), law, and number. CS, on the other hand, was found to draw on *topoi of usefulness* for pro-immigration arguments.

Finally, in section 4.5, I introduce the links made with other texts and discourses. Here, I found that, in both newspapers, the people who are most frequently given a voice are those in positions of – mainly political - power. Migrants, on the contrary, are very rarely given a voice.

4.1 Discourse Topics

I hereby present the main discourse topics present - and absent - in the newspapers' discourse *on* or *about* migration. The research question addressed is: "What are the main discourse topics through which the newspapers discuss migrants and migration?". Topics are defined by van Dijk (1991) as semantic macro-structures. In other words, they indicate *what* information is discussed when talking about migrants and migration. Investigating what topics are discussed - and what topics are not - is essential to understand how newsmakers construct and reproduce stigmatising and discriminatory ideologies related to migrants. The control and management carried out through discourse topics is an essential part of creating and manipulating a given ideology. Newsmakers, in fact, not only have the power to manipulate *what* information or event to present, but also *how* to present it. The *how* is realised through a variety of linguistic or discursive strategies (discussed in sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.4), as well as through hierarchical positioning of certain topics "at the top" (headlines and leads) or "at the bottom" (or not there at all) of a newspaper article. Topics in newspapers are not commonly presented following a chronology of events, but rather their importance, or newsworthiness (according to the newsmaker's perspective). Given that readers tend to use headlines and leads to guide the comprehension process of a news article, biased topical structures may influence the way the reader interprets the text and, more generally, the world (van Dijk, 1991). Discourse topics therefore reflect many aspects of news psychology and sociology.

4.1.1 Topics present in the texts

In order to account for the main topics discussed in my article sample, I used the online portal Wordclouds to calculate the word frequency. Frequency refers to a count of how many times a word occurs in the corpus and its analysis provides a good indication of the salience of certain topics, calculated in a more quantitative way. Table 2 presents some of the most frequently occurring words found in my article sample[44]:

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[44] I (manually) excluded *stop words* from the list.

Corriere della Sera (CS)	Il Giornale (IG)
migrant* (32)[45]/ *migrant*￼	Italia (41)/ *Italy*
italiani (27)/ *Italians*	migrant* (33)/ *migrant*￼
Salvini (26)/ *Lega party leader*	decret* (31)/ *decree*￼
Italia (25)/ *Italy*	nav* (31)/ *ship*￼
decret* (22)/ *decree*￼	Salvini (30)/ *Lega party leader*
ministro (19)/ *minister*	accoglienza (23)/ *reception*
mare (18)/ *sea*	italian* (19)/Italian*
governo (17)/ *government*	governo (18)/ *government*
nav* (15)/ *ship*￼	quarantena (16)/ *quarantine*
sicurezza (14)/ *security*	tunisini (16)/ *tunisians*
permessi (13)/ *permits*	clandestini (16)/ *illegal immigrants*
mesi (12)/ *months*	immigrati (14)/ *immigrants*
Paese (12)/ *Country*	immigrazione (14)/ i*mmigration*
protezione (12)/ *protection*	bordo (13)/ *aboard*
stranieri (12)/ *foreigners*	Open Arms (13)/ *NGO Open Arms*
anni (11)/ *years*	giorni (11)/ *days*
giorni (11)/ *days*	Ong (11)/ *NGO*
mila (11)/ *thousand*	euro (10)/ *euro(s)*
soggiorno (11)/ *stay*	protezione (10)/ *protection*
sbarchi (10)/ *landings*	rischio (9)/ *risk*
persona (9)/ *person*	sicurezza (9)/ *security*
cittadini (8) / *citizens*	Covid (8)/ *covid-19*
euro (8)/ *euro(s)*	illegali (8)/ *illegals*
immigrati (8)/ *immigrants*	invasione (8)/ *invasion*
accoglienza (7)/ *reception*	sbarchi (8)/ *landings*

Table 2. The most frequently occurring words in my article sample.

The table shows that both newspapers display a high frequency for some of the same words. It can therefore be said that the newspapers share some common themes or topics. For example, the following terms occur with high frequency in both newspapers: *migrant*, decret*, Italia, Salvini, nav*, governo, sicurezza, protezione, euro, immigrati, sbarchi.*

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[45] The numbers refer to the number of times the words occur in my data sample.

The high frequency of these terms provides an indication of what topics are "at the top" of discourse *on* and *about* migrants. As van Dijk (1991:71) puts it, when topics are about ethnic minority groups, "they also express and reproduce the concerns and the agenda of the prevailing ethnic consensus of the white majority". As suggested by the high frequency of both *sicurezza* and *decreto/i*, a large number of articles focuses on the modification of the *Decreti sicurezza* ("Security decrees"), also referred to as *Decreti Salvini*[46]. S*alvini,* the surname of right-wing Lega party leader, also shows among the highest frequencies. The politician's surname occurs not only in relation to the *Decreti Salvini*, but he is also frequently quoted by both newspapers (IG journalists generally supporting his quotes whereas CS journalists usually just "presenting" the quote or implicitly criticising it).

Among the most frequent terms occurring in the IG sample are: *tunisini* (Tunisians), *clandestini* (illegal immigrants), *invasione* (invasion), *illegali* (illegals), *covid* (covid-19). These terms shed light on how migrants are viewed and represented by the newspaper that refers to migrants as "illegals" (*illegali* and *clandestini*). The term *tunisini,* referring to people of Tunisian origin, classifies people solely based on their country of origin, thus turning the reader's focus on their "foreigner status", evoking the difference between "us" and "them". Why are Tunisians mentioned more often than other nationalities? A likely answer is because Tunisians represent the first nationality per number of migrant arrivals by sea in Italy in 2020 (Colombo, 2021). It may be concluded that, if IG's strategic goal is to create "fear of an invasion", then Tunisians constitute an advantageous enemy candidate. Thus, in order to create a greater "threat", the actions IG attributes to Tunisians are predominantly negative and include the following: organising riots (a), escaping quarantine (b), not wanting to abide by the rules (c), and landing on Italian shores (d).

(a) "*tunisini hanno dato vita a una rivolta con materassi incendiati e oggetti scagliati contro i poliziotti*" ("Tunisians started a riot by burning mattresses and throwing objects at the police");

(b) "*i tunisini sono scappati violando la quarantena*" ("Tunisians escaped violating quarantine");

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[46] The modification of the security decrees relating to migration was formally approved by the Council of Ministers on October 5th, 2020 - see section 2.4.2.

(c) "*tunisini non vogliono sottostare alle regole*" ("Tunisians do not want to obey rules"), (Raffa, 2020, Oct. 8th);

(d) "*circa 300 immigrati, per lo piu' tunisini, sono arrivati a bordo di 6 barconi*" ("Approximately 300 immigrants, mainly Tunisians, arrived aboard of 6 big boats"), (Giannini, 2020, Oct. 11th).

In CS, on the other hand, terms that occurred frequently are *Paese* (country), *permessi* (permits), *soggiorno* (stay), *mare* (sea), *stranieri* (foreigners). The twelve occurences of the term *Paese,* featuring with a capitalised "p", always refer to *il nostro Paese* (our country), a *collectivisation* strategy further discussed in section 4.2.5. The frequency of the terms *permessi* and *soggiorno* – that together constitute the compound *permessi di soggiorno* (residency permits) – is an indication of the prominence of this discourse topic. Residency permits are a product of the in-group's laws relating to who has permission to stay in the nation-state and who does not; they function as a legitimisation of inclusion or exclusion practices for specific groups of people. As Wodak (2011:61) suggests, "someone who is excluded now might be included tomorrow, and vice versa. Neither inclusion nor exclusion in our societies can or should be seen as static phenomena".

Moving forward, the common macro-themes to both newspapers, as found in my sample, are the following: security decree modifications, riots, NGO ship sanctions, security, citizenship law, "arrivals" and "irregular arrivals".

4.1.1.1 Sub-topics

The major discourse topics presented have a plethora of sub-topics, that is to say, topics that are linked – by writers, or in this case journalists – to the main topic of discussion. For instance, when talking about the security decree modifications, the sub-topics chosen and discussed can be significantly varied. Observing some of the IG headlines that mention the "security decree modifications", we may notice that the topic of the decree modifications is associated to sub-topics such as financial burden (e), "illegal" arrivals (f), and mass landings (g), as the following IG headlines show:

(e) "*Cancellato Salvini, altri 88 milioni per l'accoglienza*" ("Salvini [decrees] cancelled, another 88 million [euros] for reception"), (Aldrighetti, 2020 Oct. 9th),

(f) *"Saremo la calamita degli <u>arrivi illegali</u>"* (*"*We will be the magnet for <u>illegal arrivals</u>"), (Biloslavo, 2020a, Oct. 7th),

(g) *"Ecco la svolta anti-Salvini: sbarcati <u>altri 900 migranti</u>"* ("Here is the Salvini turning point: <u>another 900 migrants</u> landed"), (Giannini, 2020b Oct. 12th).

In IG headlines, the topic of the decree modifications is associated with stigmatising and negative sub-topics. Furthermore, the frequency of the topic of security decree modifications in IG's headlines (60% of all headlines in my sample of articles) is indicative of the salience attributed to it by the newspaper. In CS, the topic only features in 15% of headlines[47]. Given that headlines usually express the main topic of a news article and they are at the top of the information pyramid of news reports (van Dijk, 1991), looking at the newspapers' headlines provides a relatively reliable indication of what information is considered the most important as well as providing the gist for the whole article.

The sub-topics of CS headlines do not largely differ compared to those of IG. Some frequently addressed sub-topics in CS are number of landings (h) and NGO rescue ship sanctions (i).

(h) *"Immigrazione, i decreti sicurezza di Salvini hanno davvero bloccato gli sbarchi? Ecco i numeri"* (*"*Immigration, have the Salvini security decrees really blocked landings? Here are the numbers"), (Gabanelli & Ravizza, 2020 Oct. 21st)

(i) *"Cambiano i decreti sicurezza. Stop alle supermulte per le Ong"* ("The security decrees have changed. No more huge sanctions for NGOs"), (Galuzzo, 2020 Oct. 6th)

Whilst the similarity of the sub-topics addressed by the two newspapers is likely due to the nature of the topics addressed by the decree itself, the communicative aim of the two newspapers appears profoundly different. Whilst the rhetoric of IG headlines seems to be aimed at constructing an enemy ("they will cost us money", "they are illegal", "they are

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[47] These percentages may not be representative given that my article sample only includes articles from the month of October (the same month as the decree modifications were approved). However, the difference in the topic frequency between the two newspapers – combined with *how* the topic is presented – goes some way to demonstrate the salience attributed to the topic and how the topic is used by newsmakers with manipulative aims.

numerous"), the CS headlines are more factual and generally refrain from any explicit qualitative judgment.

Both newspapers frequently reference the sub-topic *sicurezza* ("security"). The term does not only occur in collocation with *decreti*, but as a reference to the more general concept of security. The newspapers' concern with security seems aligned with public discourse that continues to focus on new arrivals and on the perceived security and cultural threat of migrants (Colombo, 2013). The focus on "security" is not exclusive to right-wing political or mediatic discourse but has come to encompass the whole political spectrum (Scotto, 2017), as evidenced by the frequent mentions found in the centrist newspaper CS. The name of the decrees itself is a strong indication of the centrality of "security" in discourse on or about migrants and migration. Furthermore, the constant evocation of security seems to fall within the security-opportunity interplay (Diener & Hagen, 2012). According to the current conception of borders, in fact, emphasising security at our borders ensures opportunity. This rationale may follow the separationist line of thought: "close your borders if you want to be more secure and retain more opportunities for *your* people". Security and opportunity are institutionally thought of as being mutually exclusive, when in fact it should not be the case.

Furthermore, in both newspapers, articles repeatedly discuss "arrivals" or "landings", as evidenced by the frequent occurrence of terms such as *sbarchi* (landings)[48] and *arrivi* (arrivals)[49]. The newspapers' focus on arrivals and irregular arrivals –often referred to as "illegal arrivals" in IG – seems in line with Italy's, and the EU's, wider socio-political approach to immigration. In Europe, since the late 90's when the EU adopted a common migration policy for all member states[50], immigration has been almost exclusively thought of in terms of managing irregular arrivals. Managing migration has predominantly been conceived in terms of border control, and the management of borders has become the expression of public order.

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[48] The verb occurs most often as a nominalisation *sbarch*i (10 times in CS and 8 in IG), but it also occurs as a plural past participle *sbarcati* (2 instances in CS and 3 in IG) and in the second person plural of the present tense *sbarcano* (1 instance in CS and 1 in IG).

[49] Occurs 6 times in IG and 6 times in CS. The verb also occurs as a past participle in its plural form *arrivati* (7 instances in IG and 1 in CS) and, in IG, in the second person plural of the present tense *arrivano* (2 instances).

[50] *Common European Asylum System* (CEAS) established in 1999.

Indeed, EU policies have been primarily externalisation policies[51]. These policies concern unilateral treaties – such as the Italy-Libya and the EU-Turkey treaties, and the closure of the Western Balkans migration route – where all agreements bypass national parliaments and where funds are never monitored (Camilli, 2021a). According to the Italy-Libya Memorandum of Understanding, migrants are prevented from reaching Europe, thus circumventing the principle of *non-refoulement*[52], which is key for seeking asylum, with the aim of avoiding responsibility by creating an area which is beyond reach of international human rights law.

On multiple occasions, IG evokes "an invasion" of migrants. This xenophobic and alarmistic rhetoric is characteristic of right-wing and populist political parties. However, landings are far from constituting the majority of "arrivals". Comparing the number of people arrived by sea to the total number of foreign arrivals in Italy in the period 2002-2014, Leogrande (2017) observes that migrants arriving by sea constituted less than 10% of total arrivals, yet they are often the main focus in discourse about arrivals.

Moreover, the frequent focus on arrivals reinforces the idea of national borders as static entities between "us" and "them". This common imaginary of borders however – as observed by Amigoni et al. (2021) - is challenged by diasporic movements of people who show an alternative "way of seeing, knowing and being"(Mainwaring, 2019:17) and who conceive of space as an area to be crossed, contrarily to the fixed and static idea advanced by border devices who attempt to control mobility. As Camilli (2021) reflects, the short-sighted and racist view of movements of people is based on the idea that freedom of movement only applies to certain nationalities. As Wodak (2011:75) puts it, "for some privileged migrants (academics,

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[51] The term is used to refer to a wide range of practices that include outsourcing of border controls to third countries - through visa procedures, readmission agreements or border checks -, as well as policies aimed at "migration management" in third countries, policies that often result in immobilising would-be migrants in their countries of origin or along the way in so-called transit countries (Schultz et al., 2019).

[52] The principle of *non-refoulement* is the cornerstone of international refugee protection. Recorded in article 33 of the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees, the article states: "No Contracting State shall expel or return ("refouler") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his [or her] life or freedom would be threatened on account of his [or her] race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." (UNHCR, 2007)

journalists, managers), mobility means cultural capital; for others, mobility is stigmatized and leads to the above elaborated forms of discrimination and exclusion."

Another sub-topic that occurs in both newspapers is that of "deaths at sea". In my sample, deaths are either presented in a highly emotive fashion – by focusing on the death of a young boy at sea as in IG article (Fazzo, 2020 Oct. 8th) - or in a dehumanising way through large numbers - as in "*gli annegati sono 1.369*" ("the people drowned are 1.369") (Gabanelli & Ravizza, 2020, Oct. 21st). Migrants have been dying at sea – and not only at sea – for many years. However, as Obasuyi (2021) expresses, deaths at sea continue to be talked about as part of an "emergency situation" without digging deeper to find or expose the EU's and Italy's responsibilities – "which sadly are the main causes for these deaths". Deaths of migrants from the Global South are often represented "as if they were the unpleasant but unavoidable condition for states' exercise of their sovereign right to control their borders" (Pécoud, 2020).

Focusing on narrating the death of one boy at sea can be a strategic way of turning the reader's attention to a humanitarian emergency whilst diverting the focus from facing the heart of the matter. In this respect, Camilli (2021) argues:

> *The images that we see generate discussion, but only for an increasingly limited time. Because when there is only emotional language present, there is never a real undertaking of a responsibility, or an understanding.*[53]

Although the sub-topics discussed by both newspapers may often be similar, there is a significant difference in *how* these sub-topics are discussed and presented. Broadly speaking, the main difference is the "alarmistic" or "sensationalist" tone adopted by IG in the narration of events which is not present in CS. A more in-depth analysis of the specific linguistic and discursive strategies employed by both newspapers is carried out in section 4.2.

4.1.2 What Topics are not Present?

There are numerous topics that could be addressed when talking about migrants or migration, but many of these are suppressed or backgrounded. In my sample, I observed a lack of in-

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[53] Translated from original: "Le immagini che arrivano fanno parlare di sé, ma per un tempo sempre più breve. Perché nel racconto quando c'è solo la parola emotiva, quando c'è solo una commozione, non c'è mai una presa in carico reale, una responsabilità, una comprensione".

depth studies on topics such as the causes of migration; what the conditions in which migratory movements occur are; what the social, political, or cultural reality of migrants' countries of origin are like; as well as what everyday life is like for people who have immigrated to Italy. In other words, as succinctly put by Camilli (2021), looking at the "*before, now, and after*" of a migrant's journey. These topics are likely to increase the reader's sympathy for the outgroup, especially in light of Italy's recent history of emigration.

In this respect, Maltone (2011:10) reflects, "the fact of focusing very little on migrants' ordinary lives, to getting to know their cultures, to acknowledging their contribution to the country of Italy contributes to slowing down, if not halting, their integration in Italian society"[54]. The newspapers' discourse, similarly to the public one, ignores the fact that many migrants are in fact long-term residents. Obasuyi (2021) further encourages us to reflect:

> *Migrants are often seen as something apart, that only concerns borders and not*
> *the everyday reality of people who were born and raised in Italy and that bear*
> *the brunt of institutional and everyday racism*[55]*.*

Furthermore, the topic of Italy's (and the EU's) externalisation policies is obscured in IG, but present in CS. IG makes no mention of the bilateral Italy-Libya treaty, according to which Italy entrusts the Libyan Coast Guard to keep migrants as far away from its coasts as possible (by providing technical assistance and training), and funds Libyan detention centres where migrants are imprisoned, and where torture and ill-treatments are institutionalised (Amnesty International, 2017). Again, IG's silence on the matter is in line with Italy's and the EU's silence at the macro-level[56].

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[54] Translated from Italian: "L'informazione nel prestare poca attenzione alla vita ordinaria degli immigrati, alla conoscenza delle loro culture, alla riconoscenza del loro contributo al paese Italia di fatto contribuisce a rallentarne, se non ad ostacolare il loro inserimento nella società italiana."

[55] Translated from Italian: "i migranti sono visti come una cosa a sé e che riguardano solo le frontiere e non la realtà di tutti i giorni di persone che nascono vivono e crescono in Italia, che subiscono una relata che spesso li schiaccia sia dal punto di vista di razzismo istituzionale (leggi sull'immigrazione) sia di tutti i giorni."

[56] Despite the UN explicitly declaring Libya an unsafe place for migrants.

CS, on the other hand, mentions the treaty on various occasions, such as,

> "*l'Italia ha stanziato dieci milioni per la guardia costiera libica*" ("Italy allocated
> ten million euros to finance the Libyan coast guard"), (Mieli, 2020 Oct.1st)

However, although CS does mention the treaty, it limits itself to presenting the information, without explicitly condemning or pointing the finger to the Italian government.

4.2 Social Actors

In this section, I present the main discursive strategies found for representing and naming social actors. The research question addressed is "What social actors are present in the texts? How are the social actors referred to and named?". The main strategies identified in my data sample are *naming* (section 4.2.1), *inclusion* vs *exclusion* (section 4.2.2), *activation* vs *passivation* (section 4.2.3), *assimilation* (section 4.2.4), *nomination* vs *classification* (section 4.2.5), and *objectivation* (4.2.6).

4.2.1 Naming strategies

In this section, I present the naming strategies used in the newspapers' discursive construction of the "us" *vs* "them" dichotomy. In Table 3, I list some of the most common *naming strategies* used in *Il Giornale* and in *Corriere della Sera*.

Il Giornale		Corriere della Sera	
us	**them**	**us**	**them**
i cittadini (the citizens)	*migranti* (migrants)	*italiani* (Italians)	*irregolari* (irregulars)
noi (we/us)	*chiunque arrivi* (whoever arrives)	*il Paese/il nostro Paese* (the Country/ our Country)	*"nuovi" italiani* ("new" Italians)
forze dell'ordine (police)	*gli scafisti* (smugglers)	*Italia* (Italy)	*migranti* (migrants)
italiani (Italians)	*tunisini* (Tunisians)	*cittadini* (citizens)	*stranieri* (foreigners)
Salvini (Lega party leader)	*migranti illegali* (illegal migrants)		*cittadin*non comunitari** (non-EU citizen*)
il Paese/ il nostro Paese (the Country/our Country)	*clandestin** (illegals)		*immigrati* (immigrants)

Italia (Italy)	immigrat* (immigrants)		

Dichotomous thinking is "a pervasive, ordinary, and often useful habit of mind". However, organising our realities in bipolar categories "highlights extremes, superimposes a value hierarchy, and neglects nuances of meaning" (Berlin, 1990:46). The dichotomous us *vs* them relationship can be reproduced by explicit or implicit reference. In CS, Bendinelli (2020, Oct. 28th) creates an explicit dichotomy between *stranieri* and *italiani* in his article "*Stranieri guadagnano il 23% meno degli italiani*". The author presents occupational data by constantly constructing a comparison between foreigners and Italians. "Foreginers" are referred to as *stranieri* ("foreigners"), *cittadin* stranier** ("foreign citizen*"), *lavoratori stranieri* ("foreign workers") or *immigrati* ("immigrants"). Only once does the article mention *cittadini nati all'estero* (citizens born abroad) that I assume refers to *"Italian* citizens born abroad". With this last, implicit instance as an exception, the two categories of "foreigner" and "Italian" never meet and are constantly represented as bipolar.

Another example of explicit us *vs* them construction from IG is the following:

> "[…] *i cittadini devono indossare la mascherina e i migranti girano indisturbati.*
>
> […] *Noi rischiamo ogni giorno di essere aggrediti o contagiati"*
>
> ("citizens need to wear face masks while migrants go around undisturbed. […]
>
> Every day we risk getting attacked or infected"), (Raffa, 2020 Oct. 8th).

This is an example of clear positive self- and negative other- presentation. "We", the citizens, abide by the rules (and wear face masks) whereas "they", migrants, are like an "unleashed dangerous animal" (a threat to our health and safety, but they are left free to roam). Not only is the dichotomy between (Italian) citizens and migrants constructed, but positive and negative associations are created in relation to the two categories.

And again, in the same article, we can find the dichotomous "Italians" and "whoever arrives".

> "*È il paradosso di un governo che da un lato annuncia di voler limitare la libertà*
>
> *degli italiani e dall'altro spalanca porti e tollera questi comportamenti da*
>
> *chiunque arrivi"* ("It is the paradox of a government that, on one hand, declares

it wants to limit the freedom of <u>Italians</u>, and on the other, opens its ports and

tolerates such behaviours from <u>whoever arrives</u> [in the country]".

The instances just presented from IG are clear examples of victim-victimiser role reversal. According to this line of narrative, Italians are the victims of immigration, because powerless (and betrayed by government/institutions) in the face of the uncontrollable immigrant "invasion". As put by Wodak (2001:13), "victims are made responsible for the prejudices directed against them". Systematically representing "the other" as threatening or dangerous contributes to the victim-victimiser role reversal.

Blaming the government for the current state of affairs is a common strategy in IG – that is absent in my CS article sample - as for instance,

> "*Qui sbarcano clandestini di cui non si sa niente, né della storia penale, né sanitaria, ma il governo resta immobile"* ("illegals are landing of whom we know nothing – not their health nor their criminal record - but the government remains still") (Giannini, 2020a, Oct. 12th)

> "*il governo pianifica l'insicurezza*" ("the government plans for insecurity") (Biloslavo, 2020b Oct. 7th).

4.2.1.1 Derogatory naming

Overall, the most common term used by both newspapers to name migrants is *migranti/migrante.* The term can function as an umbrella term to refer to "a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons" (IOM, 2019).

In IG, after the more neutral *migrant**, the second most common terminology is *tunisini* (which I address in section 4.2.5), followed by explicitly derogatory naming such as *clandestini* and *illegali*.

4.2.1.1.1 "Clandestino"

The term *clandestino* ("illegal") - used to designate "foreign people" that do not hold a residency permit – is highly criminalising, denigrating and juridically flawed. Maltone (2011) remarks that in the collective imagination the term evokes secrecy, shadiness and criminal behaviour. The term, originated from Latin *clam* ("hidden") and *dies* ("day"), literally "hiding

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during the day", holds the idea of secrecy and darkness. Although (since 2016) it has featured considerably less in newspaper headlines, this derogatory term still permeates everyday language use (Migrantes, 2020). Naletto (2013) highlights that the association of *clandestino* with migration has exacerbated the concept of "illegality" carried by the term. Furthermore, she states that the term acts as:

> *a trademark, a logo, a stigma, a key word used ever more extensively in*
> *xenophobic and racist rhetoric to construct symbolic walls and borders between*
> *"us" and "them", whereby "us" is made of autochthonous citizens and "them"*
> *anyone coming from a third country – where United States, Switzerland, Japan*
> *and Australia are naturally excluded*[57].

It is indeed crucial to consider that the concept of *clandestinità* ("illegality") is a product of Italian and EU legislations attempting to regulate the entrance and residency of people coming from third countries. "A person is not illegal by choice, they become it by obligation"[58], she states. If it were possible to reach Europe or Italy by means of scheduled transport, or if the right to immigrate was recognised as well as the right to migrate (article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights), the lives of thousands of people would be saved and the presence of undocumented migrants would decrease (Naletto, 2013).

4.2.1.1.2 "Illegali"

The term *illegali* ("illegals") is used by IG to refer to unauthorised or irregular migrants. The IOM (2019) states that it is inaccurate and incorrect to refer to a *person* as "illegal". As UCLA linguist Otto Santa Ana points out, other people breaking the law in different ways are not referred to as "illegal", which makes immigrants "an outlier in the naming system". Or again, Elie Wiesel – Nobel Peace Prize winner and Holocaust survivor – stated that "Human beings can be beautiful or more beautiful, they can be fat or skinny, they can be right or wrong, but illegal? How can a human being be illegal?"(Gambino, 2015). Wiesel's question invites us to reflect on the dehumanising power of the word "illegal" when associated to human beings,

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[57] "*Clandestino* è un marchio, un logo, uno stigma, una parola chiave utilizzata in modo sempre più estensivo dalla retorica xenofoba e razzista per costruire muri e frontiere simbolici tra 'noi' e 'loro' là dove il 'noi' identifica i cittadini autoctoni e il 'loro' chiunque provenga da un paese terzo - Stati Uniti, Svizzera, Giappone e Australia naturalmente esclusi".

[58] "Non si è *clandestini* per scelta, lo si diventa per costrizione".

and how, in turn, this terminology contributes to reproducing prejudiced and discriminating ideologies among society.

Furthermore, referring to migrants as "illegal" is deeply criminalising. Throughout history, the term illegal has been used to refer to disadvantaged groups (e.g., Quakers and Jesuits migrating to New England in the 17th century, or Jewish migrants escaping the Holocaust), but scarcely – if ever – in reference to privileged groups. The criminalising associations triggered by the word illegal may be deeply harmful, promoting a *normalisation* of punitive measures against "irregular migrants". It encourages a conceptualisation of immigrants as criminals, which incites ethnic discrimination and undermines social and multicultural cohesion. The above holds notwithstanding the number or accessibility of "legal" immigration pathways for entering a given country. It is, however, of particular significance when available "legal" routes are scarce, concealed, or impeded.

Another criminalising term used in IG to refer to migrants is *delinquenti* ("delinquents"). This is an additional example of the explicitly derogatory terminology employed by the newspaper.

On the other hand, CS only uses the term *illegale* once in my data sample to refer to *immigrazione illegale* ("illegal immigration"). The newspaper, in fact, predominantly refers to unauthorised migrants as *irregolari* ("irregulars"), as in the instance,

> "*parliamo di 37mila nuovi <u>irregolari</u> in due anni*" ("we are talking about 37
>
> thousand new irregulars in two years"), (Gabanelli & Ravizza, 2020 Oct. 21st).

Although the term does not carry the same derogatory and criminalising connotations as *illegali*, it still refers to migrants without including the semantic feature "human", thus reducing a category of people - who migrate (to a different country than their own) via irregular means - to merely "irregulars". The nomination *irregolari* is dehumanising, especially in light of the fact that certain categories of migrants - which may include refugees, victims of trafficking, or unaccompanied migrant children - may not have any other available itinerary than that of using irregular migration channels (IOM, 2019).

Furthermore, as it can be seen in the same CS article, an explicit association between "irregulars" and "crime rate" is created, thus perpetuating the association of irregular migration with threat.

"quando uno straniero passa da regolare a irregolare, il rischio che commetta un reato aumenta tra le 10 e le 20 volte" ("when a foreigner goes from being regular to irregular, the risk of them committing a crime increases 10 to 20-fold")

4.2.2 Inclusion vs Exclusion

In this section, my results show the inclusion and exclusion strategies found in my data sample analysis. In representing a social practice, such as migration, writers may include or exclude social actors to fit in with their interests. Van Leeuwen (2008) reflects that some exclusions may be "innocent" details that writers assume the audience already has knowledge about, whereas others are closely tied to the propaganda strategies of creating fear and representing migrants as "our" enemies.

4.2.2.1 Exclusion

If not categorically suppressed from the text, journalists may *background* social actors by not mentioning them in relation to a given action, but mentioning them elsewhere in the text, which allows to infer, with moderate (though never complete) certainty, who the social actors are. "They are not so much excluded as de-emphasised, pushed into the background" (van Leeuwen, 2008:29).

Backgrounding is extensively used in my data sample to background both "us" and "them". An example from CS is hereby provided:

> *"Si prescrive ad esempio il divieto di espulsione e respingimento nel caso in cui il rimpatrio determini, per l'interessato, il rischio di tortura, il rischio di essere sottoposto a trattamenti inumani. Si introduce poi una nuova fattispecie di divieto di espulsione che consegue al rischio di violazione del diritto al rispetto della propria vita privata e familiare."*

> ("For example, a ban on expulsion and refoulement is prescribed if repatriation entails the risk of torture for the person concerned or the risk of being subjected to inhumane treatment. A new case of ban on expulsion is introduced which follows the risk of violation of the right to respect for one's private and family life"), (Galuzzo, 2020 Oct. 6th).

Both agent and patient are backgrounded in the extract above. The journalist uses nominalisations such as "repatriation", "expulsion", and "rejection" that allow him to avoid specifying who the social actors concerned are. In other words, "whose repatriation, expulsion, or rejection are we talking about? And who carries it out?". The social actors "migrants" and "government" are mentioned in the previous paragraph,

> "*Sono molte le novità approvate ieri dal <u>governo</u> che cancellano o modificano i due decreti sulla sicurezza, per la parte relativa ai <u>migranti</u>.*" ("Yesterday, the <u>government</u> approved many changes that cancel or modify the two security decrees on the part relating to <u>migrants</u>").

Are the social actors backgrounded because the reader is expected to know who the writer refers to, or is the backgrounding aimed at reducing the knowledge of practices such as repatriation, expulsion, and rejection, which, if represented in detail might encourage compassion towards migrants? Although I cannot provide a conclusive answer to the question, the key point is that these practices are presented "as something not to be further examined or contested" (van Leeuwen, 2008:30). Here, the aim of backgrounding is likely that of justifying and legitimising such exclusionary actions by obscuring their social actors.

In IG, Giannini (2020a, Oct. 12th) excludes social actors from sentences like,

> "*redistribuiranno i clandestini in giro per comuni*" ("[they] will redistribute illegals around municipalities");

> "*hanno rimesso in moto il meccanismo degli scafisti*" ("[they] reactivated the smuggler mechanism");

> "*non hanno una politica di gestione*" ([they] don't have a management policy).

The agents of the sentences are left undefined and implicit, although it can be implied that "they" refers to "the government" or some other "higher authority" among "us". In this article, the journalist discusses some of the changes brought about by the security decree modifications. The journalist seems to clearly distance herself from the decisions legislated in the decrees, and implicitly criticises the decisions prescribed by the government. Thus, by referring to an implicit "them", the journalist refers to "other people" in the country who are

to blame for the "awful" modifications to the decrees that will bring about an "invasion" (j) and financial burden to "us" Italians (k).

> (j) "*che l'invasione dei migranti sia ripartita è innegabile*" ("it is undeniable that the migrant invasion has resumed")

> (k) "*gli italiani dovranno sborsare miliardi di euro*" ("Italians will have to cough up billions of euros")

Furthermore, in the Raffa (2020 Oct. 8th) IG article,

> "[…] *noi rischiamo ogni giorno di essere aggrediti o contagiati*" ("every day, we risk getting assaulted or infected")

the agents of the verbs "assault" and "infect" are backgrounded. It can be inferred from the previous sentence – where the social actors are mentioned - that the actions of assaulting and infecting are carried out by migrants. The sentence seems aimed at creating a victim-victimiser dynamic where the victims "us" are clearly stated whereas the victimizer "them" are left to the reader to make sense of.

Furthermore, a common backgrounding strategy is that of passive agent deletion, as in the CS example,

> "P*rovvedimenti limitativi o impeditivi dovranno essere adottati*" ("Limiting or impeding measures must be adopted"), (Gabanelli & Ravizza, 2020, Oct. 21st).

The sentence informs the reader about limiting or impeding measures being adopted but it (conveniently) does not specify who adopts them. Furthermore, the sentence does not mention who will be affected by the limiting or impeding measures, although it can be inferred by the previous sentence that the social actors concerned are migrants. The previous sentence, however, does not explicitly mention "migrants" but it refers to them as "ships",

> "*l'attribuzione al ministro dell'Interno del potere di limitare o vietare l'ingresso, il transito, o la sosta di navi nel mare territoriale*" ("the Interior minister is attributed the power of limiting or denying entrance, transit or stopping of ships in territorial waters").

The *objectivation* of migrants – performed through the metonymy "ship" – contributes to distracting the reader from the real human actors affected by "the limitation or denial of entrance, transit or stopping", i.e. migrants travelling by sea on ships. The main goal being that of legitimising such actions.

Moving on, the categories presented henceforth will be inclusive strategies. Accordingly, when social actors *are* included, how are they referred to?

4.2.3 Activation vs Passivation

The activation and passivation categories look at which social actors are represented as *agents* and which as *patients*. Social actors may be activated in relation to certain actions and passivised in relation to others.

    a. Activation

In activation, "social actors are represented as the active, dynamic forces in an activity" (van Leeuwen, 2008:33). In IG, migrants are commonly activated in relation to violent actions, such as in the following instances,

> "*la sommossa organizzata da almeno 75 tunisini*" ("the uprising organised by at least 75 Tunisians").

> "*gli immigrati hanno cominciato a spaccare vetri, porte, finestre e rubinetti*" ("immigrants started breaking glasses, doors, windows and taps"), (Immigrati; una rivolta in via Corelli: molti danni e tentata fuga, 2020 Oct. 13th)

> "*65 tunisini, dopo un giorno di tensione, hanno dato vita a una rivolta con materassi incendiati e oggetti scagliati contro i poliziotti*" ("65 Tunisians, after a day of tensions, gave rise to a riot with inflamed mattresses and objects thrown at the police") (Raffa, 2020 Oct. 8th)

The social actors who are most repeatedly activated in carrying out violent actions - such as riots, burning matrasses, throwing objects at the police, organising riots – are *tunisini* and *immigrati*.

On the contrary, in CS, the association of migrants with violence is rare. In fact, in my article sample, it occurs only in one instance, "*Migranti in rivolta*" ("Migrants rise up") ("Prenestino

Intervento della polizia in un centro d'accoglienza; Migranti in rivolta, presi otto ostaggi" - 2020, Oct. 23rd). However, although the term *rivolta* ("revolt") does imply a form of violence, it also implies information about the context of the action, that is to say, an uprising against an authority or the establishment. Furthermore, in the same article, the actions of the migrants involved in the uprising are not activated,

> "*Otto dipendenti di una società che gestisce il centro sono stati tenuti chiusi in una stanza e minacciati anche con assi di legno chiodate*" ("all employees of a company that manages the centre were kept locked in a room and threatened with wooden boards with spikes")

Migrants are backgrounded in relation to the actions of "locking in a room" and "threatening" the employees. The backgrounding of migrants' violent actions, paired with the rare association of migrants with actions of violence, suggests that CS - contrarily to IG – seems not to engage in creating or exploiting narratives of fear.

After violence, the most common action for which migrants are activated in IG is that of landing or arriving, as in

> "*novecento clandestini arrivati in 24 ore a bordo di 26 barchini*" ("nine hundred illegals arrived in 24 hours on board of 26 boats"), (Giannini, 2020b, Oct. 12th)

In CS, too, migrants are predominantly associated with the action of landing or arriving, as in,

> "*in Italia sbarcano 16.778 immigrati*" ("16.778 immigrants land in Italy"),
>
> (Gabanelli & Ravizza, 2020 Oct. 21st)

Ironically, in the same CS article, migrants are activated in the sentence,

> "*quando uno straniero passa da regolare a irregolare*"
>
> ("When a foreigner goes from regular to irregular")

The activation of migrants in the process of passing from "regular" to "irregular" seems to infer that migrants have some degree of agency in the process, whereas de facto, what constitutes a regular or an irregular migrant entirely depends on the receiving country's legislations.

In IG, *le forze dell'ordine* (the police) are activated for actions such as "defending themselves [from migrants]" and "managing critical situations [caused by migrants]",

> "*le forze dell'ordine che possono solo difendersi. […] il cerino resta sempre in mano alle le forze dell'ordine che devono gestire le criticità*" ('the police can only defend themselves. […] the police, who need to manage the critical situations, get the short end of the stick'), (Raffa, 2020 Oct. 8th)

The examples above clearly portray the police as those who suffer the effects of a given (undesirable) situation, which is created by migrants, thus perpetuating the image of police as the victims and migrants as the victimisers.

Furthermore, in IG, the inhabitants of Lampedusa[59] are activated in relation to their feelings, as evident in the examples,

> "*i lampedusani iniziano a non poterne più*" ("the people of Lampedusa can't take it anymore") (Giannini, 2020b Oct. 12th)
>
> "*Lampedusa non ne può più*" ("Lampedusa can't take it anymore")
>
> "*lampedusani esasperati dalla situazione*" ("the people of Lampedusa are exasperated by the situation"), (Giannini, 2020 Oct. 11th)

Thus, "we" are activated in relation to the process of "feeling", whereas "they" are activated in relation to the action of "besieging". Moreover, this is interesting considering that most Italians will have likely never been to Lampedusa - which is located almost halfway between Sicily and Tunisia - yet IG empathises with *lampedusani* and not with *tunisini*.

b. Passivation

In passivation, social actors are represented as "'undergoing' the activity, or as being "at the receiving end of it"(van Leeuwen, 2008:33). In CS, migrants are often passivised in relation to actions such as "to detain" or "send back", as in the examples,

> "*gli stranieri potranno essere trattenuti nei centri di permanenza*" ("foreigners may be detained in reception centres")

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[59] The Italian island of Lampedusa is one of the main arrival points for migrants reaching Europe.

"*non si rimandano indietro i migranti*" ("migrants cannot be sent back"), (Galluzzo, 2020 Oct. 6th);

Migrants, deprived of any agency, become the "patient" in sentences where the "agent" is backgrounded. Similarly, in IG, migrants are often passivised in relation to actions such as "to be managed", as for instance,

"*la problematica della gestione dei migranti*" ("the problem of managing migrants") (Raffa, 2020 Oct. 8th)

The agents of the action are backgrounded – by nominalising the action of managing – and migrants are represented as passive patients.

Furthermore, in both newspapers, "we" are passivised in relation to the landing of migrants, as in the following examples:

"*in Italia sbarcano 16.778 immigrati*" ("16.778 immigrants land in Italy"), (Gabanelli & Ravizza, 2020 Oct. 21st)

"*qui sbarcano clandestini*" ("illegals are landing here"), (Giannini, 2020a Oct. 12th)

4.2.4 Assimilation vs Individualisation

Another pervasive discursive strategy found in my data is that labelled by van Leeuwen (2008) as *assimilation*. This category refers to strategies of assimilating individuals into a group that thinks and behaves alike. Assimilation may be achieved by way of collectivisation or aggregation (as developed by van Leeuwen, 2008).

Collectivisation, frequently found in both newspapers of my data sample, is realised by plurality, as for instance referring to the in-group as "*gli italiani"* ("the Italians"), or with a mass noun or a noun denoting a group of people, as for instance "*questo Paese"* ("this country"), "*il nostro Paese"* ("our country"), "*l'Italia"* ("Italy"). The most common form of collectivisation detected in my data is "*Italia*". Referring to the in-group with the collective "Italy" plays on reinforcing an Italian sense of identity.

Instances where irregular migrants are collectivised were found in IG, as in the instance,

> "*sicuramente tutti i migranti illegali faranno richiesta*" ("Certainly all illegal
> migrants will request it [referring to the "special" residency permits introduced
> by the security decree modifications]), (Biloslavo, 2020 Oct. 7th)

Here, "illegal migrants" are depicted as a homogeneous group of people who thinks and behaves alike.

Aggregation, on the other hand, quantifies groups of people, treating them as statistics. Van Leeuwen (2008) explains that this category is often used to regulate practice and manufacture consensus opinion, although it may seem as if it is merely - and "objectively" - recording facts. Examples of aggregation strategies to represent migrants were found in CS (Gabanelli & Ravizza, 2020 Oct. 21st),

> "<u>*centinaia*</u> *di tunisini che [...] sono scesi dall'imbaracazione della flotta Gnv*" ("<u>a
> hundred</u> Tunisians descended from the Gnv fleet's ship")

> "*hanno scaricato almeno <u>trecento</u> migranti*" ("they unloaded at least <u>three-
> hundred</u> migrants") (Bianconi, 2020, Oct. 30th)

> "<u>*37mila*</u> *nuovi irregolari in due anni*" ("<u>37-thousand</u> new irregulars in two
> years")

and in IG,

> "<u>*24.435*</u> *sbarchi quest'anno, tre volte tanto il 2019*" ("<u>24.435</u> landings this year,
> three times more than 2019") (Biloslavo, 2020b, Oct. 7th)

> "*sbarcati altri <u>900</u> migranti; a Lampedusa invasione di barchini*" ("<u>900</u> more
> migrants have landed; in Lampedusa there is a boat invasion") (Giannini, 2020b,
> Oct. 12th)

> "*si torna [...] agli <u>sbarchi a migliaia</u>*" ("we go back [...] to <u>a thousand</u> landings"),
> (Borgia, 2020 Oct. 7th).

As can be gauged from the examples above, aggregation is predominantly used within topics of landing. The aggregation of migrants that arrive on "our" shores perpetuates the idea of migrants as a "large horde", thus legitimising fear and anti-immigrant sentiments and actions among "us". Furthermore, aggregation shows that often events are *quantitively* not

qualitatively presented, that is to say, the focus lies on numbers instead of looking at what pushes migrants to leave in the first place or what they leave behind them in their journeys.

At times, aggregation is accompanied by quantity adverbs that serve the purpose of intensifying the statements, such as in CS article, "*almeno trecento migranti*" ("at least three-hundred migrants") (Bianconi, 2020 Oct. 30th) and in IG articles, "*oltre 130 clandestini*" ("more than 130 illegals") (Giannini, 2020b Oct. 12th), "*almeno 75 tunisini*" ("at least 75 Tunisians") ("Immigrati; Una rivolta in via Corelli: molti danni e tentata fuga", 2020 Oct. 13th).

KhosraviNik (2010:14) reflects on the aggregation and de-humanisation strategies found in his data sample of UK press articles on migration:

> *The assumption of unanimity is a major quality of negative representation of RASIM* [Refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, migrants] *group which is more frequently pursued by conservative newspapers. This is to linguistically or socially construct and perpetuate the assumption that all members of these groups are somehow the same in terms of their nationalities, education, health conditions, sexes, reasons for coming, intentions for future, their modes of travel, their economic status, social class, professional skills and probably their look.*

On the opposite end of the spectrum, are *individualisation* or *humanisation* discursive practices. Unfortunately, it seems common for both newspapers to overlook the human dimension of migration. Migration discourse largely centres on numbers (statistics) or political/bureaucratic issues, thus disregarding the fact that these social actors are individual human beings, with their "subjective practices, desires, expectations, and behaviours" (Mezzadra, 2010:121). Individualisation can be achieved through *nomination*, a strategy presented in section 4.2.6.

4.2.5 Nomination vs Classification

In this section, I present the main classification and nomination strategies detected in my data sample. *Classification* denotes how social actors are referred to "in terms of the major categories by means of which a given society or institution differentiates between classes of people"(Theo van Leeuwen, 2008). *Nomination*, on the other hand, occurs when social actors are represented in terms of their unique identity, often deployed through proper nouns.

Starting from the social actor representing "them", migrants, from my article sample it seems that they are mostly classified based on their belonging to a certain ethnic group. The most common example, as found in IG, is *tunisin*.* The term, generally used as an isolated noun, refers to migrants of Tunisian origin. In IG, the most common association I found with the term *tunisini* is that of actively carrying out violent actions, such as "organising riots", as in,

> "*la sommossa organizzata da almeno 75 tunisini*" ("the uprising organised by at least 75 Tunisians"), (Immigrati; Una rivolta in via Corelli: molti danni e tentata fuga, 2020, Oct. 13th).

In IG, the second most common action that Tunisians are associated with is that of landing in Italy, as in,

> "*i tunisini sono la prima nazionalità dei migranti sbarcati in Italia*" ("Tunisians are the first nationality of migrants landed in Italy"), (Biloslavo, 2020a Oct. 7th).

In IG, classification is predominantly used with negative or stigmatising topics. More examples include topics such as "law infringement" - "*tunisini che non vogliono sottostare alle regole*" ("Tunisians who don't want to obey rules") (Raffa, 2020, Oct. 8th) - and "not having the right to stay in the country" - "*tunisini che non hanno diritto a restare*" ("Tunisians who don't have the right to stay") (Giannini, 2020a Oct. 12th).

In CS, on the other hand, the identifier *tunisin** is only used in the Bianconi article (2020 Oct. 30th) which tells the story of a Tunisian bomber named Brahim. Throughout the article he is referred to as "*il tunisino*", e.g., "*il giorno dopo il tunisino scende dalla nave."* ("the next day the Tunisian got off the ship"). As Maltone (2011:8) reflects, "this ethno-labelling through geo-cultural belonging risks ascribing an injurious value to that nationality and becoming a discriminatory factor"[60]. Thus, the common use of nationality as only reference for the actors - or victims - of the narration reinforces the association of entire ethnicities with criminality and illegality. Furthermore, on several occasions, the term *cittadini non-comunitari* ("non-EU citizens") is used in the CS article "Permessi Extra UE Brescia resta stabile" (2020 Oct. 27th).

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[60] Translated from Italian, "Questa etichettizzazione attraverso l'appartenenza geoculturale rischia di attribuire alla nazionalità una valenza ingiuriosa e di diventare un fattore discriminante".

The term, in collective imagination, distances itself from its original legal meaning and becomes commonly used to refer to "non-white people", often with discriminatory connotations (Occhipinti, 2020). Thus, defining these social actors as "non-EU" contributes to othering "them" based on their (different) place of origin. The risk with systematic classification based on ethnic or racial identity is that the constant reference to a migrant's place of origin brings them back to his or her foreigner dimension, "it relocates them in their country of origin, it isolates them from the receiving society, it excludes them by almost suggesting the existence of two opposed worlds, ours, characterised by a positive self-presentation and, their world, loaded with negativity[61]"(Maltone, 2011:11).

In CS, additional classification devices used are skin colour "*donne nere*" ("black women") and other labels related to ethnic identity such as "*afrofrancesi*", "*africana*", "*francomaghrebine*" ("afro-French, African, Franco-maghrebi"). It must be noted that the aforementioned labels occur within success story articles. Interestingly, in these articles (Scardi, 2020 Oct. 15th; Cappelli, 2020 Oct. 6th), classification coexists with nomination strategies. As evident from the headline "*Manda Touré l'afrofemminista «In difesa delle donne nere»*" ("Manda Touré, the afro-feminist in defence of black women) (Scardi, 2020 Oct. 15th) where the social actor is introduced by her first name and then classified as "afro-feminist". These classification instances may be interpreted as motivated by a wish to specify, or to talk about diverse cultural backgrounds. This example shows that classifying people based on ethnicity is not *inherently* negative but rather can have negative and stigmatising consequences if used systematically or if systematically associated with negative topics.

Ethnic classification is also used to represent "us", with terms such as *italiani*. This is predominantly the case in IG, where Italians are represented as those who need to spend money for welcoming migrants,

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[61] Translated from Italian, "Il costante richiamo al luogo d'origine, infatti, riconduce l'immigrato alla sua dimensione di straniero, lo ricolloca nel suo paese di provenienza, lo isola dalla società d'accoglienza, lo esclude e sembra quasi suggerire l'esistenza di due mondi contrapposti, il nostro, caratterizzato da un'autopresentazione positiva e, il loro mondo, carico di negatività."

> "[*clandestini*] *saranno a carico degli <u>italiani</u> che dovranno sborsare miliardi di euro*" ("[illegals] will be borne by <u>Italians</u> who will have to cough up billions of euros"), (Giannini, 2020a Oct. 12th).

or as the victims of migrant arrivals,

> "*il nostro paese diventerà ancora più attraente per i trafficanti con un effetto disgraziatissimo per <u>gli italiani</u>*" ("our country will become even more attractive for smugglers with a devastating effect on <u>Italians</u>"), (Biloslavo, 2020a Oct. 7th).

In CS, the label "*nuova italianità multicolore*" ("new multicoloured Italianness") (Cappelli, 2020, Oct. 6th) used by an Italian actress of Ethiopian origin to define herself, further encourages reflection on the interaction between the concepts of "Italianness" and "skin colour", or in other words, the link between nationality/ citizenship and race/ ethnicity in Italy. By defining herself as a "new multicoloured Italian", the actress implies that the norm is "monochromatic Italian", or rather "white Italian". This implication seems in line with Italian policies for second-generation immigrants, such as the Italian citizenship law (Law n. 91, 1992). The law prescribes that Italian citizenship can be acquired only if a person holds blood ties with an Italian citizen (hence the law is referred to as *ius sanguinis*). Contrarily to other countries - such as the US - where the *ius soli* ("right of soil") principle applies, being born in the country does not automatically lead to acquiring Italian citizenship if both parents are foreign citizens.

Once children come of age, they can formally request citizenship, although only under specific conditions (e.g., having resided in Italy continuously for their entire life, parents applying for residency status upon birth, amongst others). Throughout history, the *ius soli* principle has been proposed multiple times by the Italian Democratic Party (PD)[62], often taking centre stage in the political debate and polarising the country's opinion (Palladino et al., 2020). However, the last bill proposed in 2017 is currently still waiting to be approved by the Senate (Monella, 2021). At present, second-generation immigrants do not hold the right to be Italian citizens until they turn eighteen years old.

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[62] First time being in 1999 by Livia Turco.

4.2.5.2 Nomination

As far as *nomination* goes, migrants are rarely nominated. In CS, the only instances in which they are nominated are the article on attacker Brahim Aouissaoui (Bianconi, 2020 Oct. 30th) – falling within the terrorism macro-topic-, and the success story articles on Manda Touré (Scardi, 2020 Oct. 15th) and Liliana Mele (Cappelli, 2020 Oct. 6th). IG also uses nomination in a success story article on actor Alberto Boubakar Malanchino (Giani, 2020 Sept. 28th).

In IG, one of the few instances of nomination is found in Fazzo's article (2020, Oct. 8th) that tells the story of a boy who died aboard the NGO rescue ship *Open Arms*. The boy is nominated throughout the article by his first name "Abou". The article tells the story of a humanitarian tragedy, and therefore probably uses nomination in order to boost empathy in the reader. Once again, the narration of migration falls within an emergency rhetoric, in this case that of a humanitarian disaster. Furthermore, the journalist uses Abou's story to put the blame on the current government for the humanitarian disaster, evident in the following statement:

> "*a impedire a Abou di scendere dalla Allegra è stato il governo Conte 2*" ("it was the Conte 2 government that stopped Abou from descending from the [ship] Allegra").

As Obasuyi (2021) expresses, migrant deaths are talked about as part of an emergency situation without digging deeper to find or expose the EU's and Italy's responsibilities – "which sadly are the main causes for these deaths".

On the other hand, in both newspapers, the social actors representing "us" are often nominated. It is often people in high positions of power or with institutional roles that are nominated. Examples include, *Matteo Salvini* (Federal secretary of the right-wing and populist Lega party), *Andrea Delmastro* (group leader of right-wing Brothers of Italy), *Valter Mazzetti* (General Secretary of the police), *Giuliano Pisapia* (Italian centre-left politician), *Zingaretti* (Secretary of the Democratic Party). Although their functions are not always specified, almost all cases of nomination of "us" concern people in positions of political or executive power. As Mautner (2008) reflects, referencing elite sources serves as a legitimising action and bolsters the author's credibility. The evident contrast between the specific representation of "us", achieved through nominalisation, and the vague and categorising representation of "them"

seems in line with previous research on the discursive representation of migrants (e.g. Wodak, 2016).

4.2.6 Objectivation

Objectivation, a form of impersonalisation in van Leeuwen's (2008) framework, refers to social actors that have been stripped of the semantic feature "human". Migrants are pervasively objectivated in both newspapers of my data sample. *Instrumentalisation*, a form of objectivation, refer to social actors who are referred to "by means of reference to the instrument with which they carry out the action"(Theo van Leeuwen, 2008). The most common instrumentalisation found in my data sample is the use of "s*barchi"* (landings) to refer to migrants, as in the following instances:

> "*una notte d'inferno con sbarchi che non finivano più*" ("a hellish night with
> infinite landings"), (Giannini, 2020b Oct. 12th);

> "*gli sbarchi iniziano a risalire intorno ai mille al mese*" ("landings start to go up
> to a thousand a month again"), (Gabanelli & Ravizza, 2020 Oct. 21st).

As it can be seen in the examples, "landings" refers to "landings of migrants", but migrants are not mentioned, thus distancing the reader from the human dimension of landings that are actually carried out by social actors. By stripping them of their human dimension, migrants are dehumanised. Consequently, dehumanisation leads to a loss of empathy in the reader, further strengthened by the fact that – in IG - objectivation is often paired with aggregation, as in,

> "*sbarchi a migliaia*" ("a thousand landings"), (Borgia, 2020 Oct. 7th);

> "*24.435 sbarchi*" ("24.435 landings"), (Biloslavo, 2020b Oct. 7th).

Similarly to "landings", both newspapers in my data sample refer to migrants as "arrivals" and "requests", as in,

> "*si è raggiunto un record di arrivi*" ("we have reached a record of arrivals"),
> (Biloslavo, 2020a Oct. 7th);

> "*Grazie alla «cura» Salvini le domande respinte erano salite al 69%*" ("Thanks to
> the Salvini "treatment" the [asylum] requests increased to 69%"), (Biloslavo,
> 2020b Oct. 7th).

Furthermore, an explicitly dehumanising objectivation is used in IG where Biloslavo (2020a, Oct. 7th) refers to migrants as "human goods",

> *"i trafficanti convoglieranno sempre più la loro <u>merce umana</u> verso l'Italia"*
> ("traffickers will increasingly involve their <u>human goods</u> towards Italy").

In CS, migrants are also referred to as "entrances" (l) and as "permits" (m),

> (l) *"diminuzione degli <u>ingressi</u> per lavoro stagionale"* ("decrease of entrances for seasonal labour")

> (m) *"i <u>permessi</u> per richiesta asilo sono diminuiti"* ("the asylum permits have decreased") (Bendinelli, 2020 Oct. 28th).

Objectivation may be viewed as a form of backgrounding, that is to say that migrants are not explicitly mentioned but referred to by an object or instrument. On the other hand, in my data sample, "we" are never objectified.

4.3 Social Action

This section presents my findings in relation to the *transactive* and *non-transactive* actions identified. The research question that the results aim to addresses is: "What social actions are attributed to the social actors?".

4.3.1 Transactive vs Non-transactive

Following Halliday's Functional grammar (1985), an action is considered *transactive* when it involves two participants, an "actor and a "goal". Transactive actions may on one hand be *instrumental*, when they refer to actions that may have a human or non-human goal or, in other words, when they represent people "as interchangeable with objects" (Theo van Leeuwen, 2008). On the other hand, transactive actions are *interactive* when actions are referred to through verbs that can only take a human goal. Additionally, actions are *non-transactive* when they involve only one participant, the "actor".

In both newspapers, immigrants predominantly carry out *non-transactive* actions such as "to land" or "to arrive". This is evident in the following IG examples,

> *"qui <u>sbarcano</u> clandestini di cui non si sa niente"* ("illegals of whom we know nothing are landing here") (Giannini, 2020a Oct. 12th);

> "*cinque tunisini e marocchini <u>sbarcati</u> nei giorni scorsi a Lampedusa sono stati arrestati*" ("five Tunisians and Moroccans landed in the past few days have been arrested") (Giannini, 2020 Oct. 11th).

and in CS,

> "*in Italia <u>sbarcano</u> 16.778 immigrati*" ("16.778 immigrants land in Italy") (Gabanelli & Ravizza, 2020 Oct. 21st);

> "*la diminuzione dei flussi <u>in ingresso</u> nel nostro Paese*" ("the decrease in flow entering our Country") ("Permessi Extra UE Brescia resta stabile" - 2020, Oct. 27th).

Furthermore, in IG, migrants' *non-transactive* actions are often paired with aggregation and criminalising naming strategies, as in the following examples where the agents of the verb "to arrive" are "illegals" that are "numerous":

> "[…] *sono <u>arrivati numerosi</u> clandestini*" ("[…] <u>numerous</u> illegals have <u>arrived</u>");

> "*<u>Novecento</u> clandestini <u>arrivati</u> in 24 ore*" ("<u>Nine-hundred</u> illegals <u>arrived</u> in 24 hours"), (Giannini, 2020b Oct. 12th).

The combination of non-transactive verbs and aggregation bolster the image of migrants as a threatening horde, thus representing them as a threat to "our" security and feeding into the narrative of fear that seems to characterise IG.

Both in CS and in IG, "we" are often the agents of *transactive instrumental* actions where the role of patient is taken up by migrants. Some examples follow:

> (CS) "*<u>redistribuzione</u> dei migranti sbarcati in Italia*" ("<u>redistribution</u> of migrants landed in Italy") (Bianconi, 2020, Oct. 2nd);

> (CS) "*<u>hanno scaricato</u> almeno trecento migranti*" ("[<u>they] have unloaded</u> at least three hundred migrants") (Bianconi, 2020 Oct. 30th).

> (IG) "*i migranti […] <u>sono stati trasferiti</u> in un'altra struttura*" ("migrants <u>have been transferred</u> to another building") (Raffa, 2020 Oct. 8th);

(IG) "*redistribuiranno i clandestini in giro per comuni*" ("[they] <u>will redistribute</u> the illegals in each municipality") (Giannini, 2020a Oct. 12th).

Thus, "our" relationship with migrants is often represented as calculated operations "upon" people, rather than interaction "with" people. As van Leeuwen (2008: 60) observed in his findings, "clearly, the ability to 'transact' requires a certain power, and the greater that power, the greater the range of 'goals' that may be affected by an actor's actions."

4.4 Topoi

This section presents the most common *topoi* found in arguments *for* or *against* social actors. The topoi identified show how positive or negative attributions, towards the in-group or the out-group, are justified and legitimised through argumentation. The newspapers employ different types of topoi: IG mainly employs topoi of *financial burden*, *threat* (to *health* and *security*), *law*, and *number* whereas CS primarily employs the topoi of *usefulness* and *number*.

4.4.1 Topos of Financial Burden

The warrant of this topos may be expressed as: *If a specific situation or action costs too much money or causes a loss of revenue, one should perform actions that diminish those costs or help to mitigate the loss.*

This topos is frequently used in IG to support anti-immigrant positions, as in the following example:

"*Accoglienza di nuovo ampia che farà lievitare i costi*" ("[migrant] reception expands which will increase costs"), (Biloslavo, 2020b Oct. 7th).

The argument, drawing on the topos of finacial burden, may be restated as a conditional paraphrase: if expanding migrant reception will increase costs – and "we" do not want costs to increase – then, we should perform actions in order to reduce the increase of migrant reception.

The words of the Lega leader Salvini, quoted in Borgia (2020, Oct. 7th), also implicitly draw on the topos of financial burden,

"*porti, e portafogli, aperti per scafisti e clandestini. Li fermeremo anche grazie alle firme dei cittadini. L'Italia merita di meglio*" ("open ports, and wallets, for

smugglers and illegals. We will stop them thanks to the citizens' signatures. Italy deserves better").

The argument may be paraphrased as: opening ports to "illegals" and "smugglers" costs too much money, therefore "we" will stop "them" thanks to the citizens' signatures. The argument constructs a dichotomy between "illegals and smugglers" and "us citizens" where the former is a financial burden for the latter that needs to react (by signing a petition) in order to stop the undesirable situation. The us *vs* them dichotomy is reinforced by using the collective "Italy" in the last sentence "Italy deserves better". The use of the collective reinforces an Italian sense of national identity which is not compatible with being "illegal" or "smuggler".

In CS, on the other hand, the topos of financial burden was not detected.

4.4.2 Topos of Usefulness

A common topos found in my sample of CS articles is that of usefulness that can be explicated as: *If an action will be useful, then one should perform it.*

Some pro-immigration arguments in CS were found to draw from this topos. An example is the *pro bono nobis* argument ("to the advantage of us"), as evident in the following extract:

> "*se non vogliamo che il nostro paese scompaia abbiamo bisogno di "nuovi" italiani*" ("If we don't want our country to disappear, we need 'new' Italians"), (Galli della Loggia, 2020 Oct. 22nd).

In this argument the author states that welcoming migrants is an advantage for "our country", "if we don't want the country to disappear".

Another instance of a topos of usefulness found in CS is given,

> "*Devi dare ai loro figli un senso di accoglienza migliore, le seconde generazioni possono aiutarci, sentendosi italiane*" ("you [meaning 'we'] need to give their children a better reception, second-generation [immigrants] can help us, if they feel Italian"), (Buccini, 2020 Oct. 19th).

This argument may be paraphrased as follows: "if we make them feel more Italian, then they can be helpful for us". Although this topos supports pro-immigration arguments, it incites a

view of immigrants as "transactional goods", focusing on the advantage to "us" and backgrounding the advantage for "them".

4.4.3 Topos of Threat

The *topos of threat* can be explicated as follows: *"If there are specific dangers or threats, one should do something against them".* In my article sample, this topos was found as *topos of threat to health* and *topos of threat to security* as the following examples show:

a. *Topos of threat to health*

"*sull'isola è stata chiusa una scuola, sei bambini e due maestre sono risultati positivi. Poi dicono che non sono i migranti a portare il covid*"

("a school was closed on the island, six children and two teachers resulted positive [to covid-19]. Then they say it's not migrants who bring covid"), (Giannini, 2020b, Oct. 12th).

In this extract, the author is inferring that migrants are "the ones to bring covid-19 to Italy". This topos was only found in IG.

b. *Topos of threat to ("our") security*

"*centinaia di migliaia di irregolari a spasso per l'Italia non ne accrescono certamente la sicurezza*" ("a hundred thousand irregulars roaming Italy definitely do not increase its security"), (Buccini, 2020 Oct. 19th).

Drawing on the topos of threat, the author associates irregular migrants with increased insecurity which evokes feelings of fear and insecurity in the audience. This topos was only found in IG. The strategy of representing "them" as a common threat to "us", attempts to cultivate a sense of national identity based on a (fictitious) cultural homogeneity and the construction of fear of the other.

4.4.4 Topos of Law

The *topos of law* may be expressed as: "*if a law or an otherwise codified norm prescribes or forbids a specific politico-administrative action, the action has to be performed or omitted*". This topos, used to legitimise actions or behaviours carried out against migrants, was only

found in IG. For example, repatriation is justified here by reference to the EU's asylum procedures directive (2013/32/EU),

> *"tunisini pronti per essere rispediti nel loro Paese non avendo diritto a rimanere in Italia"* ("Tunisians are ready to be sent back to their country given that they do not have the right to stay in Italy"), (Immigrati; Una rivolta in via Corelli: molti danni e tentata fuga, 2020, Oct. 13th).

The repatriation of Tunisians is considered legitimate based on the fact that, according to the EU's asylum system, Tunisians are rarely able to acquire refugee status (because not considered to be fleeing from persecution or serious harm) and can therefore only apply to become so-called *economic migrants*[63] towards whom States have no obligations of reception. Therefore, Tunisians cannot apply for international protection – as refugees do – and are either expatriated or they fall into the "irregular" category. As Simpson (1939) stresses, asylum is a privilege granted by a State, not an individual's inherent condition.

Furthermore, in IG, Giannini (2020, Oct. 14th) draws on the *topos of law* to justify racist deeds and discourse. The article, based on an interview with League senator Candiani, quotes his words,

> *"Chiunque rispetta le regole per noi è nostro fratello, qui il razzismo non c'entra niente"* ("Whoever respects the law is our brother, it has nothing to do with racism").

The senator Candiani uttered these words in an interview with the journalist about an accusation he received for instigating racial hatred[64]. By stating that it has "nothing to do with racism", the Senator attempts to distance himself from being labelled as "racist". As Wodak (2011) notes, the denial of racism frequently accompanies and introduces discriminatory rhetoric. The sentence "I am not racist" can be labelled as a "disclaimer" manifesting the

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[63] The use of the term has been discouraged because it categorises migrants by a single reason for migration. This is rarely representative of the complex and diverse drivers that push people to migrate. The term *migrant worker* is preferred for referring to migrants who primarily move across borders motivated by economic opportunities

[64] The Senator was accused of racial hatred for the content of a video he shared on Facebook where he visited a neighbourhood of Catania that he claims is "run by illegal immigrants".

denial of racism and emphasising positive self-presentation (van Dijk, 1989). In such debates, speakers seek to justify the practices of exclusion without employing the related overt rhetoric (Wodak, 2011: 65). In fact, more subtle and less blatant forms of racism are currently being adopted by the extreme right.

The racist claims – for which the Senator was accused of racial hatred - are, conveniently and for the most part, excluded from the article. The video, which was full of negative-other representations, included comments like the following:

> "*qui dentro cosa ci troviamo? Ci troviamo essenzialmente solo immigrati clandestini, pseudo-richiedenti asilo, dediti allo spaccio, dediti a tutti i tipi di criminalità*" ("what do we find here? Essentially, only illegal immigrants, pseudo-asylum-seekers who deal [drugs] and are devoted to all sorts of criminality"),

and again,

> "*che i clandestini se ne stiano al loro paese. Se entrano in Italia vanno rispediti e se commettono crimini vanno messi in galera, o peggio, espulsi proprio*" ("Illegals should stay in their country. If they enter Italy, they should be sent back, and if they commit crimes they have to go to jail, or even worse, be expatriated"), (Catania Today, 2018).

4.4.5 Topos of Number

When an argument draws on the *topos of number*, it may be expressed as the following: *If the numbers prove a specific claim, a specific action should be performed/not be carried out.* Arguments based on this topos were found in both newspapers. For instance, in CS, Buccini (2020, Oct. 19th) states:

> "*centinaia di migliaia di irregolari a spasso per l'Italia non ne accrescono certamente la sicurezza*" ("a hundred thousand irregulars roaming Italy certainly don't increase its security").

Here, the fact that irregular migrants do not increase Italy's security seems justified by the large quantity of migrants. The number, in fact, creates a frightful state of affairs, and encourages the impression of threat. The *topos of number* is not inherently negative but

rather it may be used to constitute negative representations depending on the macro-structure of the given discourse.

4.5 Intertextuality

In this sub-section, I will provide an overview of who is given a voice in my article sample or, in other words, whose words are quoted and for what purpose.

Indeed, a key aspect to consider when approaching discourse *about* or *on* migrants - or of inclusion vs exclusion – is the issue of power, and how it is involved in access to discourse. Who has access to which orders of discourse? Or, in other words, who has the power to define and discursively construct the in-group and out-group?

In my article sample, the people who are most frequently given a voice are those in positions of – mainly political - power. IG predominantly quotes far-right figures such as *Lega* leader Matteo Salvini, *Brothers of Italy* leader Giorgia Meloni, *Lega* coordinator Attilio Lucia, to name but a few. People with opposing political views are rarely quoted and, when they are, the journalists usually - explicitly or implicitly - criticise, blame, or make fun of "the left" or the government. The quotes used in IG seem to serve a legitimising purpose, supporting the journalist's point of view and bolstering their credibility (Mautner, 2008). CS, on the other hand, appears more balanced in quoting people that hold different political views. The newspaper often quotes opposing views or interpretation of events in the same article.

Migrants are very rarely given a voice. In my article sample, "minority speakers" are only quoted in articles that have to do with culture, arts, or folklore, that is to say, in van Dijk's words (1995:93) "soft and less risky topics". Only on one occasion does IG quote a person of immigrant origin. In Giani (2020, Sept. 28th), actor Alberto Boubakar Malanchino is quoted about a film he features in. The actor states,

> "*Ho fatto fatica a imparare a parlare come un immigrato appena arrivato dall'Africa. Talvolta l'aspetto inganna*" ("I struggled to learn to speak as an immigrant who just arrived from Africa. Sometimes appearance can be deceiving").

The journalist introduces the quote by saying "*a buttarla sul ridere è Alberto Boubakar Malanchino…*" ("Alberto Boubakar Malanchino jokes…"). The fact that the journalist frames

the actor's quote as "something funny or amusing" may be an indication that, for him, the situation is a novelty or something unusual. A similar attitude may be recognised in other sections of the article, such as when the journalist states,

> "*nero ebano ma accento italianissimo*" ("ebony black <u>but</u> with an extremely Italian accent").

And again,

> "*non ci sono più i milanesi di una volta […]. Oggi si chiamano Miyakawa e Boubakar Malanchino <u>ma</u> la parlata è quella con la e apertissima*" ("the Milanese of the past no longer exist […]. Today, their names are Miyakawa and Boubakar Malanchino <u>but</u> their speech is the one with the very open 'e'[65]").

By affirming that "the Milanese of the past no longer exist", the journalist activates a feeling of "our culture is in danger of disappearing". The journalist further draws on this sentiment by creating a contrast between skin colour/accent, and proper names/accent. Moreover, the journalist focuses on the elements of difference, thus putting the stress on how "they" stand out from the (imaginary) homogeneous "us" for skin colour and proper names. The excerpts presented seem to be a case of a new, more subtle, racism that can be paraphrased as, "I'm not racist but…". As Maltone (2011:12) reflects, "in Western society, racism takes a new shape: the defence of our values, our way of life, our traditions […]. This cultural racism ends up legitimising a different economic, juridical and social treatment of the aliens to our culture".[66]

Another important aspect to consider in the discursive production and reproduction of racial/ethnic discrimination is the lack of access for "minorities" to positions in the media industry. As van Dijk (1995: 93) puts it,

> *Due to the limited minority access to the definition of the situation, issues and topics that are directly relevant for minorities are less covered or made less*

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[65] The Milanese accent in Italian is known in lay culture for pronouncing closed "e" as an open "ɛ".

[66] "Nelle società occidentali, il nuovo razzismo assume una forma nuova, la difesa dei nostri valori, del nostro modo di vita, delle nostre tradizioni […]. Questo razzismo culturale finisce con legittimare un diverso trattamento economico, giuridico e sociale degli alieni alla propria cultura".

prominent. This is the case for issues such as discrimination, racism, police brutality, shortage of jobs, miserable working conditions, the failures of minority education, and so on, especially when the white elites are to blame for the situation.

Additionally, van Dijk notes that the limited access to journalist positions for ethnic minorities predicts that they are less quoted than white majority speakers, as indeed was found in my article sample.

The IG article Biloslavo (2020a Oct. 7th) - as the title suggests *Saremo la calamita degli arrivi illegali ("*We will be the magnet for illegal arrivals*")* - centres on the topic "illegal arrivals". The article is structured as an interview with Nicola De Felice, Navy admiral and executive of the Lega party. Here, the journalist explicitly positions himself against migration, by asking questions such as,

> "*I tunisini sono la prima nazionalità dei migranti sbarcati in Italia quest'anno in maniera autonoma. <u>Come si fermano</u>?"* ("Tunisians are the first nationality of migrants autonomously landed in Italy this year. <u>How do we stop them</u>?).

When discourse producers express their involvement in discourse, such as in the instance above, we may speak of *perspectivisation*. However, perspectivisation does not only include explicit and implicit positioning of the text producer's point of view, but rather all the choices made, extending from choosing (or not) a certain word to a macro-topic (KhosraviNik, 2010a).

Another example of explicit perspectivisation can be found in the CS article Mieli (2020, Oct. 1st). Here, Sea Watch[67] spokesperson Giorgia Linardi is quoted commenting on the event of a shipwreck where a hundred and ninety people died just off the Libyan coast. Giorgia states,

> "*sono cambiate le modalità e i toni ma non è cambiato l'obiettivo di cacciare le Ong dal Mediterraneo. […] Le nuove policy italiane ed europee menzionano il soccorso in mare, ma poi, a leggere bene, si coglie che l'unico cambio di passo è il rafforzamento di Frontex e dei respingimenti verso la Libia*" ("The manners and tones have changed but the objective of chasing NGOs from the Mediterranean Sea has not changed. [...] The new Italian and European policies mention rescue

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[67] An NGO that operates in the Mediterranean Sea through search and rescue ships.

at sea, but then, if you read carefully, you can see that the only change is the strengthening of Frontex[68] and pushbacks to Libya")

To this, the journalist comments,

> "*Le critiche mosse da radicali, da sparuti elementi di sinistra varia e dalla rappresentante di Sea-Watch all'attuale governo ci sembrano esagerate. Siamo persuasi che nel suo intimo il presidente del Consiglio sia cambiato dall'agosto 2019, che a lui sarebbe sufficiente qualche sollecitazione per dar prova di quanto gli stia a cuore la causa dei migranti."* ("The criticisms put forward by radicals, by scattered elements of the left and by the representative of Sea-Watch, to the current government seem to be exaggerated to us. We are convinced that the Prime Minister has changed in his heart since August 2019, that some solicitation would be enough for him to prove how much he cares about the cause of migrants").

Here, the journalist explicitly justifies the Italian government's anti-immigrant policies. The justification is based on "a conviction that the Prime minister has changed in his heart" and that "he just needs some solicitation to show how much he cares about migrants". In order to further dismiss Giorgia Linardi's comments, the journalist categorises her as a "radical" and defines her words "exaggerated". Here, the CS journalist perspectivizes and frames the information introduced by Linardi with the aim of "face-saving" the Italian government by legitimising and justifying their deeds.

4.6 Summary of Results

This section presented the results of my critical discourse analysis of a selection of Italian newspaper articles from right-wing *Il Giornale* (IG) and centrist *Corriere della Sera* (CS).

In section 4.1, I introduced the main discourse topics identified in my article sample. Discourse topic analysis allowed to shed light on how newsmakers construct and reproduce reality by selecting *what* information to discuss (and what *not* to discuss) as well as deciding where to place it hierarchically (headlines and leads). The word frequency of the selected article sample

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[68] The EU border agency Frontex is considered responsible for systematic human rights violations (Bautista & Rojas, 2021).

showed that both CS and IG frequently discuss topics such as the *Security decree modifications* and sub-topics of *security*, *money*, *landings*, and *irregular arrivals*. The newspapers' focus on arrivals and irregular arrivals –often referred to as "illegal arrivals" in IG – seems in line with Italy's, and the EU's, wider socio-political approach to immigration. As evidenced by Italy's and the EU's policy focus on externalisation, since the late 1990s immigration has been almost exclusively thought of in terms of managing irregular arrivals.

Both newspapers often discuss similar sub-topics, however, whilst the rhetoric of IG seems to be aimed at constructing the image of migrants as enemies, CS is more factual and generally refrains from any explicit qualitative judgment.

In both newspapers' discourse on migration, many topics likely to encourage empathy and understanding in the reader are not present. For instance, topics such as the causes of migration, what the conditions of migratory movements are like, or what the socio-political or cultural realities of migrants' countries of origin are. Furthermore, the topic of Italy's (and the EU's) externalisation policies is obscured in IG but present in CS. IG makes no mention of the bilateral Italy-Libya treaty, according to which Italy entrusts the Libyan Coast Guard to keep migrants as far away from its coasts as possible (by providing technical assistance and training), and funds Libyan detention centres where migrants are imprisoned, and where torture and ill-treatments are institutionalised (Amnesty International, 2017)

In section 4.2, I presented the main discursive strategies found for representing and naming social actors. The discursive strategies used to construct the in-group and the out-group vary in the two newspapers. In both IG and CS, the most common term to refer to migrants is the neutral *migrante/i*. IG often uses the term *tunisini/o, clandestino/i, illegal/i* ("illegal/s") whereby the first classifies migrants solely based on their ethnicity and the last two are deeply criminalising and derogatory terms. CS, on the other hand, generally refrains from such terminology, and most commonly uses the term *straniero/i* ("foreigner") that, although significantly less criminalising than the terminology used in IG, still labels and confines the social actor as "external to the country".

Subsequently, I described the inclusion and exclusion strategies employed in my sample of articles. *Backgrounding*, an exclusion strategy, is often employed by both newspapers to represent both "us" and "them". Both migrants and the government are backgrounded when

they are (respectively) patient and agent of actions such as "repatriation", "expulsion" or "rejection". Furthermore, I observed that in IG migrants are often *activated* in relation to violent actions such as riots or burning matrasses. In both CS and IG, migrants are often *passivised* in relation to actions such as "to detain", "send back" or "to be managed" whereas "we" are passivised in relation to the landing of migrants. *Assimilating* people into a homogeneous group that thinks and behaves alike is another common strategy which I found in the form of *collectivisation* and *aggregation*. *Aggregation*, the most extensively used in both newspapers, is employed to treat migrants as statistics and predominantly within topics of landing, thus perpetuating the idea of migrants as a "large horde" and serving to legitimise anti-immigrant sentiments among "us". Contrarily, the humanisation or individualisation of migrants seems rare in my data sample. In both newspapers, *nomination* - a strategy that represents social actors in terms of their unique identity - is used to refer to migrants predominantly in success story articles, but also in articles on terrorism (CS) and one on the death of a boy at sea (IG). Another common strategy is *objectivation*, whereby social actors are stripped of the semantic feature "human". Migrants are commonly referred to as "landings" or "arrivals", thus dehumanising them and causing a loss of empathy in the audience.

Going further, in section 4.3, I presented the main findings in relation to *social actions*, that is to say, what actions are attributed to social actors and how the actions are represented and associated to the in-group and out-group. I found that, in both newspapers, "we" are often the agents of *transactive instrumental* actions (actions that may have a human or non-human goal) where the role of patient is taken up by migrants, such as with verbs like "to redistribute" and "to unload". "Our" relationship with migrants is thus mainly represented as operation "upon" people instead of interactions "with" people. Migrants, on the other hand, are predominantly attributed *non-transactive* actions such as "to land" and "to arrive". In IG, these actions are often paired with aggregation strategies, as in "nine-hundred illegals arrived", thus bolstering the image of migrants as a threatening horde.

Finally, in section 4.4, I presented the most common *topoi* employed in arguments *for* or *against* social actors. IG was found to engage in explicit anti-immigrant arguments drawing on *topoi* of financial burden, threat (threat to security and to health), law, and number. CS, on the other hand, draws on *topoi of usefulness* for some pro-immigration arguments.

Finally, in section 4.5, I introduce the links made with other texts and discourses. Here, I found that, in both newspapers, the people who are most frequently given a voice are those in positions of – mainly political - power. Migrants, on the contrary, are very rarely given a voice. In my article sample, they are only quoted in articles that have to do with culture, arts, or folklore, that is to say, in "soft and less risky topics" " (van Dijk, 1995:93).

5. Conclusion

The present research aimed to investigate the discursive strategies employed in migrant representation in a selection of Italian newspaper articles from right-wing Il Giornale (IG) and centrist Corriere della Sera (CS). This thesis addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the main *discourse topics* through which the newspapers discuss migrants and migration?

2. What *social actors* are present in the texts? How are the social actors referred to and named?

3. What *social actions* are attributed to the social actors?

4. What *topoi* are employed in arguments for or against the social actors?

In addressing these questions, I strove to continually connect the micro-linguistic level (the specific discursive strategies) to the macro-level (the intertextual, and socio-political context in which the discourses are produced). This research drew from a combination of theoretical and methodological critical discourse study (CDS) frameworks, namely Wodak's (2001) Discourse-Historical approach, van Leeuwen's (1996) Social Actor approach, and KhosraviNik's (2010) systematisation of CDS analytical categories. In this thesis, I adopted a qualitative, predominantly inductive, approach that I integrated with some deductive reasoning. The advantage of adopting an integrative approach was that on one hand, induction allowed me to approach the research with an "open mind", avoiding trying to fit any preconceived ideas or categories to the data at hand. On the other, given the wealth of previous CDS research on discriminatory discourse, deduction allowed me to draw from existing analytical frameworks in order to select relevant categories that helped to develop a code structure for the analysis of my data sample.

5.1 Reflecting on results

It can be concluded that the two newspapers significantly differ in their discursive representation of migrants and migration. However, multiple common discursive strategies used to construct a positive self- and negative other-presentation were found in both CS and IG.

In line with previous studies on discriminatory or racist discourse (e.g. Maltone, 2011; van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 2011), the newspapers – but especially IG - employ discursive strategies that focus on difference, as for instance the classifications "tunisini" ("Tunisians") or "extra-comunitari" ("non-EUs"). This is an example of a "new" form of racism, covert and less blatant, that is based on difference. Indeed, focusing on difference - instead of similarity - between "us" and "them" seems to be a strategy for justifying and legitimising a different treatment for "others". The focus on "diversity" may also be seen as a symptom of a more general fear of losing one's sense of social, political, or ethnic identity. As Kapuściński (2008) - influenced by philosopher Lévinas - puts it "the self is only possible through the recognition of the other". Therefore, when we encounter people that are "different" from us - whether for the colour of their skin, their language, their culture, or their clothes - we are encouraged to question our own identity. Confronting diversity may be more challenging for a nation like Italy with a weak sense of national identity (Maltone, 2011) and a relatively recent history as a united nation-state.

Furthermore, the risk with systematic classification based on ethnic or racial identity is that the constant reference to a migrant's place of origin brings them back to their foreigner dimension and isolates them from the receiving society. Given that ethnic classification is often accompanied by negative or stigmatising topics – such as crime, violence, or law infringement -, the common use of nationality as only reference for the actors - or victims - of the narration reinforces the association of entire ethnicities with criminality and illegality.

Moreover, IG engages in explicit anti-immigrant arguments that draw on topoi of financial burden, threat (threat to security and to health), law, and number. The anti-immigrant discourse found in IG seems aligned with the general rise in nationalism and xenophobia in Italy (and the West), particularly stemming from right-wing populist movements such as Lega and Brothers of Italy. On the contrary, no explicit anti-immigrant arguments were found in my sample of CS articles. On the contrary, some explicit pro-immigration arguments drawing on the topos of usefulness were found in CS. However, although in support of pro-immigration arguments, drawing on the topos of usefulness incites a view of immigrants as "transactional goods", or rather an advantage to "us".

In both newspapers, discourse on migration focuses on topics such as "arrivals", "landings", and "irregular arrivals" – referred to in IG as "illegal arrivals". These topics seem in line with

Italy's, and the EU's, wider socio-political approach to immigration. As evidenced by Italy's (and the EU's) policy focus on externalisation, since the late 1990s, immigration has been almost exclusively thought of in terms of managing irregular arrivals. Indeed, the Italy-Libya Memorandum of Understanding ensures that migrants are prevented from reaching Europe, thus circumventing the principle of non-refoulement, which is key for seeking asylum, with the aim of avoiding responsibility by creating an area which is beyond reach of international human rights law.

Not only does the topic of arrivals reduce "the other" to people arriving on "our" shores – pushing to the background all those "others" who already live in the country - but the people arriving are often objectivated by being referred to as "arrivals" or "landings", terms that do not hold the semantic element "human", thus contributing to de-sympathising with the actors of the story. In both newspapers, migrants are often aggregated, that is to say, represented in large numbers, as if they were statistics. This strategy contributes to perpetuating the conception of migrants as a homogeneous and unanimous group of people who share similar characteristics, backgrounds, motivations, future goals, looks, etc. Instead, the goal should be to individualise and humanise by telling individual stories and not systematically representing migrants as a large horde. The positive strategies of humanisation and individualisation are rarely used, and predominantly within the context of "success stories".

The findings of this research shine a light on how the press constructs and represents "us" and "them", and how these representations fit into wider socio-political practices. Whilst on one hand, discourse allows the production and reproduction of discriminatory opinions, stereotypes, and prejudices, on the other it can offer the opportunity to criticise, de-legitimate and contend discriminatory opinions and practices, that is, "to pursue anti-racist strategies" (Wodak, 2011:56).

5.2 Limitations & Future studies

In the present thesis, I adopted a qualitative approach for the investigation of discursive strategies used to represent migrants in the Italian newspapers IG and CS. As such, the aim was not to provide a quantitative "objective" description of migrant representations in the Italian press but rather to understand some of its essential aspects by investigating what and how linguistic strategies are used, as well as how they reflect and construct discriminatory or stereotyping ideologies present in the Italian socio-political context. However, the limitation

of the approach taken is the lack of generalisability that could have been achieved through more quantitative methods. Indeed, the sample size I analysed is too limited to be able to generalise my findings. Future studies adopting a mixed method approach are likely to be advantageous for enabling a move beyond the borders of a single methodological approach and offering breadth, as well as depth, of results. Furthermore, given that my data sample was selected within a limited timeframe, i.e. the month of October 2020, my findings cannot be considered a representative sample of the newspapers' output of the year. Selecting articles from different months of the year may have yielded considerably different results. A larger sample-size is needed to be able to assess whether the patterns of discursive strategies found in my study are indeed representative of the two newspapers' narrative on migration.

Future research could include regional newspapers in the data sample. Regional newspapers are likely to yield insightful results given the social and political diversity present in Italy's regions. Moreover, taking into account regionality would allow for a more complete and multi-facetted understanding of the concept of Italianness, thus digging deeper into how Italian national identity is constructed and understood by the press.

5.4 Contributions

The present study has contributed to providing novel data from two Italian newspapers *Il Giornale* and *Corriere della Sera* with divergent political views (right-wing vs centre). The similarities detected in the discursive strategies used for positive self- and negative other-presentation indicate that certain dehumanising or exclusive representations are present in migration discourse at large and spread throughout the political spectrum.

The present study has aimed to contribute to the growing body of literature in CDS and discourse studies on migration in the press from diverse socio-political and geographical contexts (e.g. van Dijk, 2008; Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008; KoshraviNik, 2010; Reisigl and Wodak, 2001; Koca-Helvaci, 2019). Understanding the relationship between media, politics and "laypeople" is a challenging endeavour, and one to which there are no easy answers. Advancing the interdisciplinary research on understanding such complex relationships is likely to provide more clarity. By largely confirming previous findings, this study hopefully contributes to improve the understanding of how in-groups and out-groups are discursively constructed, as well as how discrimination, exclusion, and racism are produced, reproduced, and legitimised through discourse.

Appendix[69]

Newspaper articles from *Il Giornale*

Aldrighetti, Antonella (2020, Oct. 9th). "Cancellato Salvini, altri 88 milioni per l'accoglienza". Il Giornale.

Biloslavo, Fausto (2020a, Oct. 7th). "Saremo la calamita degli arrivi illegali". Il Giornale.

Biloslavo, Fausto (2020b, Oct. 7th). "Il governo pianifica l'"insicurezza": tolti divieti e multe. E già ritornano le navi quarantena". Il Giornale.

Borgia, Pier Francesca (2020, Oct. 7th). "Protesta il centrodestra. "Ora le firme per fermare questi decreti clandestini". Il Giornale.

Del Vigo, Francesco M. (2020, Oct. 7th). "E i salotti chic brindano ai porti riaperti: "Torna la democrazia, ora tocca allo ius soli"". Il Giornale.

Fazzo, Luca (2020, Oct. 8th). "Processano Salvini ma ignorano il 15enne morto dopo lo sbarco dalla nave-quarantena". Il Giornale.

Giani, Stefano (2020, Sept. 28th). "I nuovi milanesi sul set con occhi a mandorla e una mamma africana". Il Giornale.

Giannini, Chiara (2020, Oct. 11th). "Demoliti i decreti Sicurezza? Riprendono gli arrivi". Il Giornale.

Giannini, Chiara (2020a, Oct. 12th). "L'isola è ancora usata come hotspot. È ripartito il business dell'accoglienza". Il Giornale.

Giannini, Chiara (2020b, Oct. 12th). "Ecco la svolta anti-Salvini: sbarcati altri 900 migranti." Il Giornale.

Giannini, Chiara (2020, Oct. 14th). "Quartiere di illegalità", leghista a processo". Il Giornale.

"Immigrati; Una rivolta in via Corelli: molti danni e tentata fuga", (2020, Oct. 13th). Il Giornale

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[69] The researcher retrieved all articles from the newspaper database *Factiva*.

Raffa, Valentina (2020, Oct. 8th). "Rivolta nel centro migranti. Rogo e fuga: 3 agenti feriti". Il Giornale.

Newspaper articles from *Corriere della Sera*

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Bianconi, Giovanni (2020, Oct. 2nd). "Accusa e difesa; Sequestro di persona o legittima scelta politica Così si giocherà la partita su Salvini". Politica, Corriere della Sera.

Bianconi, Giovanni (2020, Oct. 30th). "L'attentatore Brahim, il viaggio sul barchino e la fuga «sempre al telefono». Primo piano, Corriere della Sera

Buccini, Goffredo (2020, Oct. 19th). "Alessandro Gassmann: «Dire sì ai migranti non è da radical chic»". Cronache, Corriere della Sera.

Cappelli, Valerio (2020, Oct. 6th). "«Una nuova italianità multicolore, la mia»". Tempo Libero, Corriere della Sera.

"Permessi Extra UE Brescia resta stabile", (2020, Oct. 27th). Cronaca di Brescia, Corriere della Sera.

"Prenestino Intervento della polizia in un centro d'accoglienza; Migranti in rivolta, presi otto ostaggi", (2020, Oct. 23rd). Cronaca di Roma, Corriere della Sera.

Ferrarella, Luigi (2020, Oct. 13th). "Uber sapeva del caporalato tra i rider. «Creato un sistema per disperati»". Cronache, Corriere della Sera.

Gabanelli, Milena & Ravizza, Simona (2020, Oct. 21st). "Immigrazione, i decreti sicurezza di Salvini hanno davvero bloccato gli sbarchi? Ecco i numeri". Cronache, Corriere della Sera.

Galli della Loggia, Ernesto (2020, Oct. 22nd). "Il caso Paty insegna: attenzione allo «ius culturae»", Opinioni, Corriere della Sera.

Galluzzo, Marco (2020, Oct. 6th). "Cambiano i decreti sicurezza. Stop alle supermulte per le Ong". Politica, Corriere della Sera.

Mieli, Paolo (2020, Oct. 1st). "Il processo a Salvini. I migranti tra silenzi e amnesie". Prima Pagina, Corriere della Sera.

Scardi, Rosanna (2020, Oct. 15th). "Ospite d'onore all'Integrazione Film Festival; Manda Touré l'afrofemminista «In difesa delle donne nere»", Tempo Libero Bergamo, Corriere della Sera.

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