

**Comparing the “De-Othering” of Immigrants in American and British  
Popular Television**

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## **Introduction**

### **Introduction**

#### *Immigration as a Political “Problem”*

There are few issues that have occupied as large a space on the American sociopolitical consciousness as immigration. For almost as long as there has been a United States of America, there has been a loud and passionate anti-immigration discourse. From the creation of the Know Nothing Party to labeling the situation as “the immigration problem” by current members of the House of Representatives, American politicians have continuously struggled with and debated immigration policy throughout the U.S.’s 237 year history (Kaplan 2013). This debate has been exacerbated by “media spectacles” that “play on misguided public fears” (Longazel & Fleury-Steiner 2011:48). The sensationalized and oftentimes xenophobic approach to reporting on immigration taken by the American news media has aggravated anti-immigrant sentiment, bleeding into popular culture, where representation of immigration and immigrants (documented or otherwise) has been varied and typically problematic.

American discourse about immigration resonates with similarly expressed debates in the United Kingdom, where journalists and politicians have debated immigration with equal vigor and, usually, vitriol. The United Kingdom has seen a similarly large influx of immigrants in the post-war period through to the present day and hosts similarly inflammatory anti-immigrant sentiment from politicians and the media alike. In the most recent edition of its manifesto, the British National Party, a minor political party with elected officials in local government but none

at the national level, calls immigration “an unparalleled crisis” and claims that letting (notably non-white) immigrants into the United Kingdom has created a “poorer, more violent, uncertain, disorientated, confused, politically correct, ill-educated, dependent, fractured society” (BNP 2010:17). From a more influential perspective, Prime Minister David Cameron in his definitive 2011 speech on immigration acknowledges that “some immigration is a good thing” but that immigration is a “problem” and the government had (at that time) taken steps not simply to “be much more selective about how many people come in” but also “who actually comes in” (Cameron 2011). Even Opposition leader Ed Miliband told the press, “It is not wrong or prejudiced to worry about immigration” (Telegraph Reporters 2013). In their chapter in 2010’s *Immigration Worldwide: Policies, Practices, and Trends*, Migration Policy Institute members and immigration researchers Will Somerville and Betsy Cooper describe the (predominantly news) media’s role in public discourse and concern about immigration. According to Somerville and Cooper, “public anxiety over immigration” has been “fueled by media attention” (Somerville & Cooper 2010:128). Discussions about the effects of large scale immigration, therefore, do not simply dominate discussion between politicians and government officials, but also the country’s media as a whole.

### *Media Response*

Politicians, journalists, writers, and citizens of both the U.S. and the U.K. have responded resoundingly in the news and entertainment media in each country surrounding the issue of immigration. As with other major social and political issues, public discourse about immigration has bled from the governmental offices and newsrooms to mainstream popular culture in the U.S.

and U.K. Producers of and participants in popular culture employ it as a framework wherein social and political ideas that dominate the spheres of politics and journalism can be expressed and discussed. As comparative literature and American culture scholars Rachel Rubin and Jeffrey Melnick observe, “Popular culture...has long been an important collective processing site for questions concerning the politics and ethics of immigration” (Rubin & Melnick 2007:1).

Throughout pop culture history in both countries, e.g. the first American “talkie” *The Jazz Singer* and its protagonist Jakie Rabinowitz, writers, directors, and other visual artists of popular culture have represented, intentionally or not, the ever-changing ideas about identity, policy, and society that all intersect when talking about immigration. Author and philosopher Albert Camus once famously defined culture as “the cry of men in face of their destiny.” Applying that definition to popular culture and the continued importance of the immigration debate in the United States and United Kingdom, pop culture can then be considered the cry of a society in the face of its collective destiny of a sustained influx of immigration. This extension of Camus’s definition dovetails with popular culture’s oftentimes uneasy representation of the many perspectives and contentious issues surrounding immigration. As both countries continue to receive large numbers of immigrants, the creators and consumers of popular culture have reacted. In this way, popular culture can be used to study the ways in which the societies described unpack and represent the debate over immigration, shifting national demographics, and multiculturalism. This thesis seeks to analyze these representations and better comprehend the cultural ideas surrounding immigration and immigrants. Understanding the ways these identities and issues are discussed and constructed will help to contextualize the cultural effects of immigration in the U.S. and U.K. as well as to draw conclusions about sociocultural beliefs and expectations for

immigrants and immigration of the producers and consumers of popular culture in each country's specific social environment.

### *The Value of Direct Comparison*

In analyzing anti-immigrant political rhetoric from the United Kingdom, I was struck by several key similarities and differences to public discussion of immigration in the United States. Similarly, both countries have experienced a serious influx in immigration, predominantly of people of color, in the past 20 years. Both countries share a language and significantly overlap in their cultural history. In the context of each country's political debate over immigration, both even host a large amount of anti-immigrant sentiment, often tied to recent arrivals' specific country of origin. On April 20, 2013, for example, *The New York Times* published an editorial called "Immigration and Fear" describing the anti-immigrant arguments expressed in the national debate (The Editorial Board 2013). Three weeks previously, *Guardian* political editor Toby Helm published a piece on the European Union's condemnation of Prime Minister David Cameron's described "knee-jerk xenophobia" in a recent speech (Helm 2013). Each country's anti-immigrant faction also cited decline in quality of life for American/British citizens as the source of their ire, however, the specific tangents of each argument manifest themselves differently. Primarily, the national, cultural, and ethnic demography of immigrants in each country is very different. Furthermore, while Arizonan politicians have spoken at length about security and the loss of jobs of real Americans (Longazel & Fleury-Steiner 2011:45), BNP members (who also lament the perceived loss of jobs and increase of crime) mostly focus also on the cost of immigrant families on the National Healthcare System, British schools, and at the

expense of British culture (BNP 2010). By comparing the British political discourse to the debate in the United States, it is possible to gain insight on the motives and beliefs of the people involved in a way that would have been impossible by only approaching the issue from the perspective of one country. By seeing what is the same and what is different, it is possible to isolate the parts about the arguments that were the specific product of each countries' social, cultural, and political history and context. For the purposes of this paper, I hope to use representations of immigrants and immigration in popular culture as the lens through which to better see these particular, nuanced ideas and what they say about American and British society on the whole.

## **Methods**

### *Why Television?*

Within the vast and varied media that fall under the term “popular culture,” I have chosen to focus on mainstream television programming that was either an original American program that has been adapted for a British audience or vice versa (e.g. *Law & Order*, *Law & Order: UK*, the British and American versions of *Skins*). All programs and episodes have aired in the past ten years, except for the one case specified in the appropriate chapter. The majority of the programs chosen are produced by and carried on nationally accessible networks. I have chosen to study visual entertainment media because of its ability to represent aspects of presentation and identity accessibly and from a multi-faceted perspective (compared to visual arts or music). Television is especially fitting for this project because of the nature of its programming. Unlike movies, which can take over a year to produce, film, and edit, one season of television production

typically takes less than 5 months to make. Most fictional, feature length films are also designed to communicate one major story arc over the course of two hours, on average.

Television series, on the other hand, can deal with several parallel arcs at once, over the course of an episode, season, or full series run. The extra hours and story lines allow the people involved to flesh out characters more entirely and go into greater detail about individual stories.

Additionally, because television series depend on consistently high ratings to stay on the air, the material is designed to be as current and socially relevant as possible to continuously resonate with its audience. Watching television, furthermore, is cheaper (and more often free, with an internet connection) than attending movies and thus is able to attract a wider socioeconomic audience than cinema does. Due, then, to its accessibility to a national audience and the scope of time allotted to developing characters and completing story arcs, television is a natural choice for analyzing mainstream political and social issues as they are expressed in American and British popular culture.

### *Why These Shows?*

I have chosen these television programs for their popularity and accessibility. All of the shows described enjoy moderate to big ratings and, for the most part, a positive critical response. I also chose them based on inclusion of immigrant characters, immigration- and immigrant-centric plot lines, and other narrative devices through which cultural ideas about immigration can be studied. To directly compare the tone, messages, and cultural beliefs expressed in these shows, I specifically picked adaptations so as to better directly compare them. Direct comparison is especially effective considering the close political and cultural relationships

between the U.K. and the U.S. Not only does the media for the adaptation not change (unlike, for example, book to movie), the adaptation in and of itself does not require any major transformations of plot structure or scale. The financial desire to capitalize on the elements that led to the original show's success, moreover, means producers and broadcasters are unlikely to change or compromise major details during the process of adaptation. Because these shows share a reasonably positive critical and audience reception, representation of immigrant characters or issues highlighted in public discourse about immigration, and the majority of their structure and story, I can use direct comparison to better pinpoint the different national and cultural attitudes at play.

## **Framework and Theory**

### *Adaptation Theory*

Most adaptation theory treats the concept as part of a binary with appropriation. Appropriation is shaped by the tensions between sources/cultures/adaptors/adaptees in different parts of a social or economic hierarchy. Because the U.S. and the U.K. share a language and cultural history and because their similar economic and political status does not make one dramatically dominant over the other, the ideas about appropriation are less relevant here. I will be focusing on adaptation theory exclusively. Adaptation theory is considered by many adaptation scholars, including English literature and theater professor Julie Sanders, to be a facet of Kristeva's theory of intertextuality (Sanders 2006:17). Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, as defined by Sanders, dictates "that all texts invoke and rework other texts in a rich and ever-evolving cultural mosaic" (Sanders 2006:17). According to this theory, no text or material exists

as new or original output but is rather a product of its relationship to preexisting works.

Adaptation in particular examines the relationship between source and adapted material. Students of adaptation are encouraged to focus on differences between the source material and the adapted final product, because the differences between the two belie much of the producer/author/artist/director's intent. In her book *Theory of Adaptation*, literary theory and criticism scholar Linda Hutcheon claims that, above all, adaptation theory assumes although the expression of a narrative is different, "the story is the common denominator, the core of what is transposed" (Hutcheon 2006:10). Because of the consistency of the source material, the basic premise of an adaptation is the same as the source material while the narrative power comes from the tweaks and changes. As Julia Sanders argues in her book *Adaptation and Appropriation*, "it is usually at the very point of infidelity that the most creative acts of adaptation...take place" (Sanders 2006:20). According to Sanders, the differences between the two are what make adaptation valuable to study because they display the specific intention of the adaptor. This "infidelity" is also called "commentary" by Sanders and other adaptation theorist Deborah Cartmell. In many instances, Sanders claims, "the process of adaptation starts to move away from simple approximation towards something more culturally loaded" (Ibid. 21). In this way, adaptors use audience familiarity with the source material to subtly highlight what they believe to be the more important parts of the work, which will stand out to the audience because it is different from the original (Ibid. 21). Hutcheon's and Sanders's explanation of adaptation theory fits effectively with the premise of this thesis. Comparing the adaptations for the chosen shows is important because the differences between the two countries' versions showcase the differences in intention and perspective between adaptor and adaptee. Understanding where the adapted

episodes diverge from the original is crucial to analyzing the significance of creative and representational choices in the shows. Furthermore, by keeping my research to the same form of media, I am able to understand and compare them in a more direct way than if I was looking at a book to movie or play to movie adaptation, for example. In his chapter in *Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation: Literature, Film, and the Arts*, English literature and performance scholar Rainer Emig describes the difficulty in comparing media for “a film maker [sic], an architect, a fashion designer, or a celebrity chef” (Emig 2012:16). Because there are so many fields from which to adapt material, there is no way to be an expert in every aspect. Emig’s conclusion supports my decision to focus strictly on television adaptations.

In her book *Theory of Adaptation*, Susan Hutcheon (who is cited extensively by the other two authors mentioned), claims that, above all, adaptation theory assumes although the expression of a narrative is different, “the story is the common denominator, the core of what is transposed” (Hutcheon 2006:10).

### *Orientalism, and Other Non-Western “Othering”*

In his seminal work *Orientalism*, comparative literature scholar Edward Said describes the ways in which Western society fetishizes, discriminates against, and creates essentialist stereotypes of “Oriental” societies. Because his theory can be applied to the understanding of all non-Western societies, I will be applying Said’s framework and use of the word “Oriental” to cultures outside of Asia and the Middle East (the “Orient”). Said defines orientalism as “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’” that is treated by writers of culture “as the starting point

for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind,' destiny, and so on" (Said 1979:2). In this way, a specific interpretation and representation of non-Western peoples and societies is created and reproduced throughout Western culture. Orientalism then is less an accurate or inaccurate depiction of non-Occidental peoples but rather a specific vision of those peoples employed in European and North American culture. Said does not see orientalism as a "political subject matter" or "field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions" employed as a "nefarious 'Western' imperialist plot to hold down the 'Oriental' world" but rather as "a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts" (Said 1979:6). Orientalism then is the lens through which producers of culture in the Western world view and reproduce non-Western societies.

Orientalism as a worldview also facilitates the classification of non-Western peoples as "other" through the expression of geopolitical power hierarchies. According to Said, orientalism should not be treated as a "veridic discourse" but rather a "sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient" (Said 1979:6). Said refers to the European-Atlantic's place in this power structure as "positional superiority," where Western individuals and societies are put "in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing...the relative upper hand" (Said 1979:7). Representations of non-Western culture in the West are therefore profoundly influenced by this relationship. In treating perceived "positional superiority" as fact, Western producers of culture are able to create a sociocultural binary between the Occident and Orient, depicting non-Western individuals and peoples as an inferior, oversimplified other.

Applied to the discourse surrounding immigration, a dominant, domestic, Western group's identification of immigrating, non-Western groups shapes the way the identities and agencies of international, non-Western peoples are viewed socially and culturally. I will argue in this paper that immigrants as a group are marginalized and otherized as Said describes in American and British popular culture (specifically television), what their status as "other" reflects about cultural attitudes towards immigration and identity. In using Said's framework about representations of non-Western peoples in Western culture to better analyze the role of essentialist understandings of immigrants and immigration in popular culture, I will make the argument that many of the creative choices in the television shows chosen, as well as American and British television programming more generally, rely on these limited and often racist views of immigrants and non-Western peoples which, as will be explained in subsequent chapters, are often conflated.

Although I will be relying on Said's theories for the general construction of my argument, I will also be using Fatima El-Tayeb's book *European Others* and Arlene Dávila's books on Latino public image in American popular culture to localize the important points of Said's arguments. Like Said, both authors believe that non-Western peoples (here, immigrants to the Europe and the United States, respectively) are otherized in mainstream culture of the places described. In *European Others*, El-Tayeb describes the relationship between racialized communities of non-Western citizens and immigrants alike and western Europe's more socioeconomically powerful white and Christian component. *European Others* deals with the historical and modern contexts that helped create these hostile environment towards the non-Western "other" through case studies in different countries throughout the region. Because of its

cultural affiliation with the European Union and western Europe, I am comfortable applying many of the general conclusions of *European Others* to the U.K. as well as her specific mentions of British society. Beyond explaining the power structures that dominate Western and non-Western, non-immigrant and immigrant interaction in western Europe, El-Tayeb also focuses on several forms of cultural resistance and activism, predominantly by Afro-Caribbean and Muslim (from the Middle East and South Asia) groups. In covering the push and pull between racist social factors and non-Western assertion of agency, *European Others* adds further context to Said's conclusions about the relationship between the West and "the other" as well as showcases the disparity between representation of non-Western people in politics and culture in the U.K. and other parts of western Europe.

Dávila's books, conversely, deal with Latino identity in the United States. Per her books *Latino Spin* and *Latinos Inc.*, mainstream American culture (and the political and socioeconomic factors that shape it) uses reductive and racist categorizations of Latino immigrants and American citizens to further the agenda of the producer/advertising agency/etc. Dávila writes that Latinos' status as the most visible ethnic group in public understanding of immigration has created a "friend or foe" binary that either relies on negative and racist or simplistically positive stereotypes. Beyond looking at representation of Latinos in the U.S. in popular culture and advertising, she looks at political discourse, urban planning and geography, and economic factors to more effectively dismantle popular myths about Latino identity. By presenting a more realistic and, sometimes, ethnographical, alternative to the widely disseminated stereotypes in the American media and political arena, she further highlights the issues inherent in the power dynamic between Latinos and non-Latinos in the U.S., non-Western and Western. Her books are

apropos for this project because of their focus on unpacking stereotypes about Latinos as immigrants and citizens in the U.S. and what their continued use in popular culture says about American ideas about immigration.

## **Conclusion**

### *The American Dream vs. The British Dream*

Despite the similar elements in the public debate about immigration and representations of immigration in popular culture in each country, there are several key thematic differences that are highlighted through side-by-side comparison. Comparing original and adapted versions of popular television shows not only showcases the trans-national differences in representations of immigrants and immigration (dependent on differences in demographics, immigration policy) but is indicative of different cultural ideas surrounding them. Analyzing these depictions of immigrant characters and immigration facilitates an understanding of popular perceptions about immigrants immigration and their role in each country's respective society. Most significantly, these examples showcase specific elements of a suggested values system for immigrants to each country. In the United States, this is referred to as the American Dream. In his 1931 book, *The Epic of America*, historian James Truslow Adams defined the American Dream as "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement" (Adams 1931:405). The American Dream, therefore, is the belief that the United States is an economic meritocracy, where those who sufficiently capable and hardworking will achieve economic mobility. This belief is especially cited in relation to American immigrants, implicating that any arrivals to the U.S. are given the same chance at

financial success and encouraging the pursuit of upward mobility as a societal value. Attempting to achieve the American Dream is regarded, specifically here in the context of media and popular culture, as a patriotic activity and also serves the function of successfully de-otherizing immigrants to the United States. In her book *Latino Spin*, Dávila describes the measures taken by upper- and middle-class Latinos in the U.S. to distance themselves socially from low income, undocumented immigrants (Dávila 2008:29). In the examples employed by Dávila, the middle class Latinos she describes use semantic identity markers such as “Hispanic,” “Mexican,” and “Latino” to distinguish between themselves and other Latino immigrants who do not have legal immigration status or who are employed in poorly paid occupations (Dávila 2008:29). This distinction is important, says Dávila, because it enables the upper- and middle- class Latinos to advertise their assimilation to American society and Americanness while the lower income immigrants are still a non-American other. By their perceived successful following of the American Dream, these first and second-generation immigrants are able to fully de-otherize themselves in the eyes of culture and society.

The same principle applies to the U.K. equivalent, what I will heretofore refer to as the British Dream. Unlike its American equivalent, literature about the British Dream as a similarly structured concept is limited. In his article “Multicultural Race Relations in Britain: Problems of Interpretation and Explanation,” sociologist Adrian Favell describes the limitations of British literature in dealing with cultural expectations or a suggested values system for immigrants. Despite the “copious home-grown” resources on immigration and ethnic minorities in the U.K., there is a “lack of any parallel dimension” or cultural trope describing expectations towards immigration in British culture (Favall 1998:319). Literature on the British Dream, therefore, is

not frequently as one comprehensive idea like the American Dream but is rather referenced thematically in social and cultural studies on immigration in the U.K. The British Dream, further unlike its American counterpart that focuses on the pursuit of material wealth and professional success, deals with aspirations of cultural Britishness. As it relates to immigration, aspirations of Britishness encourage British immigrants to engage in British cultural and social practices (e.g. language, clothing, food), specifically those pertaining to higher social class. In her ethnography studying South Asian communities in London, Gillespie describes the importance of consumption of British television and news media as a way for first and second-generation South Asian immigrants to express their Britishness. By joining in watching the most popular television programs in the country, Gillespie's interviewees' participated in a "national daily ritual" which "address[ed] them as citizens and members of the British nation" (Gillespie 1996:98). Actively pursuing British culture, here through television but also through the wearing of Western clothing, is a way for immigrants to the U.K. to identify their Britishness, thus de-otherize themselves.

### *Crime, the Economy, and Cultural Identity*

To further explore the way these values systems for immigrants are expressed and pursued in American and British television, each chapter will deal with a specific element of the American and British Dreams. Chapter 1 focuses on the concepts of crime and illegality as they relate to immigration and immigrants and as shown in *Law & Order* and its adaptation *Law & Order: UK*. Both versions are especially relevant for their sustained popularity with audiences in both countries, an expressed commitment to "realness," and frequent incorporation of plots

pertaining to immigration from the perspective of the American and British justice systems. In this chapter, I will explain how behavior perceived as contrary to the American and British Dreams is considered illegal or immoral and otherized and is subsequently punished while those who are seen to adhere to the values of the American and British Dreams are rewarded socially and professionally.

Chapter 2 focuses on perceptions of immigrants' and immigration's respective roles in the national economy of each country. By using episodes from the politically focused *The Thick Of It* (U.K.) and *Veep*, as well as the British and American versions of *The Office*, I will discuss the ways in which immigrants and immigration are portrayed from the perspective of characters written holding serious political power as well as characters written to be "ordinary" citizens. In this chapter, I will explain how the American and British Dreams are expressed in the context of employment and the economy and its relation to how immigrant characters are otherized and de-otherized in the context of political correctness and immigration discourse.

Chapter 3 transitions from the perspective of non-immigrant characters to that of second-generation immigrants in the U.S. and U.K. Analyzing material from the British and American versions of *Skins*, I will compare assertions of different elements of cultural identity of the Pakistani-American and British protagonists and how their subscription or rejection of the tenets of the American and British Dreams affects their social lives. In both versions, cultural identification with the values encouraged as part of the American and British Dreams facilitates social interaction and acceptance while expression of cultural identity that is seen to contradict the values of the American and British Dreams leads to social tensions and otherness.

## Chapter 1 - Immigration, Otherness, and Illegality

### Introduction

In this chapter, I will focus on the intersection between immigration and illegality as expressed in the episode “Heaven” of *Law & Order* and the adapted “Paradise” in *Law & Order: UK*. The criteria for studying media adaptation (as set out by adaptation theorists in the Introduction) require that the intended audience is familiar with the source material, that the adaptor has made changes to the source material while maintaining the overall narrative of the original, and that the original and adapted material are comparable, if not the same, kind of media. Comparing these immigration-centric episodes of the original *Law & Order* and its British adaptation *Law & Order: UK* meets these three requirements. American episodes of *Law & Order* aired for years on public channels in the U.K. before the British version began, and its popularity among a British audience is what originally inspired the production of *Law & Order: UK*. Regarding the second requirement that adaptor changes not compromise the story of the original, every episode of *Law & Order: UK* is directly adapted an original *Law & Order* teleplay, where the names of places and people, legal terms, and cultural references are changed to reflect the change in location from New York to London. Thirdly, because both are television shows, they satisfy the criterion of comparable source material.

These episodes of *Law & Order* also suit the other major theoretical framework I have employed for this thesis which describes the otherization of non-Western peoples and cultures

within Western (here, American and British) society. By drawing on Edward Said's *Orientalism* and works by literature and ethnic studies academic Fatima El-Tayeb and anthropologist Arlene Dávila, I will be able to show how representational choices made during the production of these shows express the idea of a non-Western other, associated here with immigration in Western society.

Incorporating these two theoretical frameworks in my analysis of these episodes of *Law & Order* and *Law & Order: UK* allows me to more precisely identify the different elements represented in each version that correlate with the American and British Dreams for immigrants. An examination of the cultural differences between the American (pursuit of economic mobility) and British (aspirations of cultural Britishness and high societal class) Dreams for immigrants as shown in these episodes is furthermore useful in understanding how perceived subscription to or rejection of these values systems relates to concepts of illegality and reflects and immigrant character's status as a fully assimilated cultural citizen or an other.

## **Program History**

### *Law & Order (U.S.)*

On September 13, 1990, *Law & Order* aired for the first time on NBC. Affectionately dubbed "The Mothership" after the development of its five spinoffs, the original *Law & Order* ran for 20 seasons and was regarded as a "tent pole" by NBC employees and executives (Braxton 1999). To understand how *Law & Order* came about, however, one must understand the behind the scenes ministrations of producer Dick Wolf. "Part of the appeal of [television]," writes *Television and American Culture* and Middlebury professor Jason Mittell, "is [its] reputation as a

producer's medium" (Mittell 2006:31). Unlike "film's director-centered model," the television model assigns much of the creative and financial responsibilities of projects to the producer or production company (Mittell 2006:31). More writing and production duties overlap in television than in film as well. In her chapter of *The Contemporary Television Series*, University of Nottingham professor Roberta Pearson describes the dawning of the age of the "television writer-producer, hyphenate" (Pearson 2005:11). As the classic network system of contemporary television in the United States waned, networks were forced to give the producer, and later the writer-producer, more autonomy to target the specific demographics of increasingly fragmented markets. Pearson cites the 1980s NBC drama *Hill Street Blues* as the turning point that "epitomised the coming era" (Pearson 2005:16). NBC ceded producer Stephen Bochco an unprecedented level of producer autonomy for his "dangerously innovative show," allowing Bochco to flout previous censor restrictions and airing through "initially disastrously low ratings" (Pearson 2005:16). As Pearson tracks the evolution of "writer/auteur" to the aforementioned hyphenate, she cites American television producers like Gene Roddenberry of *Star Trek* and Joss Whedon of *Buffy* as major proponents for this paradigm shift. Pearson and other scholars credit these hyphenates with changing "producers' [and networks] conception of and relationship with their audience" (Pearson 2005:22). As networks and advertisers changed their focus from universal, cross-audience appeal to focusing on specific demographics, hyphenates cultivated more intense relationships with their fans. Although Roddenberry is credited with creating the television fandom as media theorists currently understand it, Pearson points out that Roddenberry's pattern is "particularly appropriate for the producers of genre shows" (Pearson 2005:22). Although Pearson's chapter predominantly uses Roddenberry and

Whedon as examples, her description of the genre show writer-producer perfectly matches Dick Wolf. Thanks to the unprecedented success of *Law & Order*, Wolf has built up both his production company and his reputation as one of the most influential hyphenates in the crime/police procedural industry.

When Wolf first developed the concept of *Law & Order* in the late 1980s, he designed the show to give viewers a realistic, gritty look at the work of the New York Police Department and New York County's (Manhattan's) District Attorney's office. This commitment to realism included creating and focusing on stories that were "ripped from the headlines," a practice that would soon become one of *Law & Order*'s hallmarks. Although specific anecdotes about *Law & Order* casting are mostly limited to industry reports and fan-written publications like *Law & Order: The Unofficial Companion*, Wolf is largely credited with most of the casting decisions. Wolf himself has explained his role in the casting process in the press saying, "I am very involved in all principal casting for my shows. I work very closely with [director] Lynn Kressel and her team, as well as the network and studio executives...The proper casting can make or break a show" (Lowenstein 2011). Wolf is also credited with the show's longevity, not only due to quality and ratings appeal but also to Wolf's own pugnacity in defending the show to NBC. At 20 seasons, *Law & Order* ties with *Gunsmoke* as the longest running drama in American television history. In his announcement about the final end of the mothership *Law & Order*, Wolf told the press, "In the 23 years I've been continuously on the air, we've never failed to make a deal when there was a deal to be made" (Andreeva 2010).

By understanding producer Dick Wolf's level of influence on the content of *Law & Order*, it is possible to analyze the expressed intention of the sociocultural tenets of the program.

Because Wolf and his production company are such integral figures in the plot, staging, character development, and tone of *Law & Order*, examining his methods and commentary provides insight on the belief system that informs the show itself. Wolf's stated focus on making *Law & Order* as immediately apropos to current events as possible combined with the show's ratings success show that Wolf and the rest of the screenwriters, directors, and producers' reading of major sociopolitical issues and subsequent reproduction of said issues in the program are both informed by the mainstream culture in which they operate but also that their interpretation strongly resonates with a large, national audience. *Law & Order* can therefore be used as a tool to analyze the depiction of prevalent social and political issues (here, immigration) as well as the discourse they represent.

#### *Law & Order: UK (U.K.)*

When *Law & Order: UK* began to take shape in the early 2000s, Wolf kept his place in the forefront of the production process. From 2000 to its first airing in 2009, Wolf was credited as one of the driving forces behind *Law & Order: UK*'s development and production. During the interview circuit while promoting the show, Wolf was interviewed by several national and international media outlets alongside the starring actors of the program. In 2010, he was quoted in the *Manchester Evening News* as saying, "This has been a dream for a long time" (Wylie 2010). When asked about issues in adapting the source material Wolf answered, "I think the biggest difference is the wigs. The law is not really that dissimilar and, you know, murder is murder. We've done 430 episodes and there's been a murder in every one" (Wylie 2010). American television has been imported for British audiences since the 1950s and in recent

decades, networks on both sides of the Atlantic have increased production of transnational adaptations. Although, as a drama, *Law & Order* was considered more of a risk to broadcasters and producers, several elements of the British television industry and the nature of *Law & Order* as a show enabled NBC Universal, Wolf Films, and ITV to develop the show for British audiences. British television critics have traditionally been wary of American television as “the lowest common denominator” created by “large corporations seeking profit. It was not there to stimulate the people, to create beautiful art” (Rixon 2006:140). Despite the fact that the BBC and ITV are both collectively worth billions of GBP, the attitude taken by most people in the industry is that domestically produced television is superior to foreign, and an especially “derogatory view of American imports,” because of its art for art’s sake focus (Rixon 2006:83).

When American shows are aired in or adapted for the UK, networks endeavor to British-ize them through selection of episodes (the average British television season includes about 7-15 episodes, the average American season includes over 20) and by adding network large logos and insignia in the top corners (Rixon 2006:129). Britishness is also asserted through the agency of the production company or broadcaster in choosing which series to adapt and which to pass over. Rixon describes one anonymous BBC buyer who claims that “British television only creams off the best American series” (Rixon 2006:95). Rerairings of the original *Law & Order* series had enjoyed critical and ratings success on channel C5, thus setting the precedent for its adaptation for a British audience (Rixon 2006:129). *Law & Order*’s British success indicated its ability to fill a niche within the British market. As Rixon notes, “Sometimes American programmes are brought to complement those being made in Britain or to fill a gap in supply” (Rixon 2006:98).

While the aforementioned BBC buyer derided many of the American shows proffered to

him as irrelevant, he conceded that shows will be picked up if they meet a specific demand within the market. *Law & Order*'s previous success on Channel 5 (C5) showed that there was in fact a demand for a procedural of that nature. This focus on specific demographics echoes Pearson's findings above about the value of particular markets within the television industry. Rixon explains that this focus facilitates the airing and adaptation of American television in the UK because it allows broadcasters to focus on "its supposed popularity and its viewers" (Rixon 2006:156). *Law & Order* further benefited from its image as a gritty, realistic take on modern crime and punishment. One of the largest criticisms of American programming is its perceptions as being "slick" and "glossy" (Rixon 2006:94). *Law & Order* was able to sidestep this stereotype by showing flawed (unprecedentedly for a police procedural) characters, setting episodes in real life city locations, and using plots "ripped from the headlines." A separate adaptation of an American television show, moreover, is the ultimate assertion of Britishness.

The network Channel 5, which airs the original *Law & Order*, was the last terrestrial network to launch in the United Kingdom and is known chiefly for its airing of foreign programs such as *Neighbours* and *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* and for reviving other channels' previously canceled reality television programs like *Celebrity Big Brother*. American (and to a lesser extent, Australian) programming is the logical choice to maintain Channel 5's image as entertainment television where "guilty pleasures" are given a home. *Law & Order: UK*, conversely, airs on the ITV1 Network (part of the ITV Company which owns several television channels) which is the primary competition to the BBC in television programming. ITV1 is more professionally successful and widely watched and largely airs more critically acclaimed

programs than Channel 5. *Law & Order: UK* then, in becoming British, was able to secure a contract with a more prestigious and widely watched network than the original.

Wolf, Wolf Films, and ITV were able to successfully adapt *Law & Order* due to the same creative and business power producers enjoyed on the other side of the Atlantic. One of the most serious forms of the “Americanisation” of British television Rixon notes, is the change due to competition in specialization (Rixon 2006:102). These developments created the same role for writer-producers like Wolf to “shape their programmes to attract niche groups,” exerting more influence over the production process and artistic aspects of their projects than had previously been the case. Although this evolution began in the United States, the hyphenate model for television has also changed the way television programming is created in the United Kingdom. Wolf and NBC Universal hired British screenwriter Chris Chibnall to write the pilot and first season of episodes. Unlike the original *Law & Order*, which has a 22 episode-long season typical for American television, ITV airs about seven episodes *Law & Order: UK* per season. Wolf, the writing staff, and the producers have all been able to choose the episode topics however, as each episode of *Law & Order: UK* has been adapted from an original *Law & Order* teleplay. The decision to adapt the episode “Paradise” I will be discussing in this chapter is therefore the result of a careful selection process based on what the British screenwriters and producers involved believed to be the highest quality, easily adaptable, and most relevant for attracting a British audience during the first season of the program.

Ratings group estimated around seven million people watched *Law & Order: UK* when it aired for the first time on February 23, 2009, putting it in the top 30 television episodes on ITV1 and top five of the BBC1 that weekend (BARB 2009). According to figures from *The Guardian*,

*Law & Order: UK* held about a 26% of viewers in the 9:00 PM hour (Holmwood 2009).

Complaints from critics largely focused on the show's cast as Andrew Billen of *The Times* negatively compared the new cast to American originals like Jerry Orbach and Sam Waterson and warned, "Wolf's touch is not infallible" (Billen 2009). Other critics questioned whether such an American/a Hollywood framework would be able to accurately represent life and crime in London. Sarah Dempster of *The Guardian* charged the series with an over-abundance of "razzle-dazzle" and accused producers of "trying to fit a rain cloud into a tuxedo" (Dempster 2009). Negative reviews aside, media reaction to *Law & Order: UK* was largely positive and the show has sustained above average ratings so far during its six season run.

Like the original *Law & Order*, the production process for *Law & Order: UK* validates the program as a tool for understanding the depiction of mainstream sociopolitical issues. Continued involvement of Dick Wolf and his production company shows the similarities between the structure of the two shows, i.e. their focus on incorporating realistic and politically relevant stories in the public consciousness into the context of the show. The influence of British screenwriters and directors, as well as the network broadcaster's decision to limit the amount of content produced, indicates the precision with which U.K.-resonant material was chosen. The British television industry's aforementioned priority to British-ize imported content in order to insure quality and relevance also showcases the expressions of cultural difference present in the adaptations.

## Episode(s) Summary

I chose to compare the season two episode “Heaven” of *Law & Order* (1991) and the season one episode “Paradise” of *Law & Order: UK* (2009) because, at over 40 minutes each, there was sufficient material about immigration and its relation to illegality to compare and analyze. Each episode uses the same source material: the teleplay for “Paradise” was adapted by Chris Chibnall from the original “Heaven,” written by Dick Wolf and Nancy Ann Miller. Comparing what was essentially the same episode helped highlight the differences made, specifically in representations of immigrated characters. Beyond street names and legal details, the most visible difference from the original story is the changing of the representations of the characters depicted as foreign-born/immigrated. In “Heaven,” the immigrant characters shown are mostly from El Salvador or Cuba. In “Paradise,” the equivalents of these characters are Turkish or of Turkish descent. This change in “Paradise” seems to be for purely adaptive reasons as there is no mention of the 7/7/07 attacks, “terrorism,” “radical Islam,” or the UK’s involvement in war in the Middle East. Although both episodes use religion to represent a perceived facet of characters’ cultural identity (as Latino or Turkish), the characters’ religious beliefs do not play a role in major relationships or the execution of the crime. Furthermore, despite the time difference between “Heaven” and “Paradise,” plots of episodes in the 2009 season of *Law & Order* include more references to Latin American immigration than from any other country or region and similarly connect wrongdoing immigrated characters to facilitating the border crossing of undocumented immigrants. This continued preoccupation with the idea of American immigration, most often shown as undocumented, having a Latino face shows the prevalence of this belief in popular television despite the near twenty years separation.

The summary provided by NBC Universal for “Heaven,” reads, “A deadly arson fire in an illegal nightclub uncovers a scam involving phony green cards for illegal aliens.” ITV Company, in their description for “Paradise,” goes into more detail but the gist is the same. “Heaven” and “Paradise” are the English translations of the names of the club, called “El Cielo” in the original and “Cennet” in the adaptation. Each episode begins with the reporting of the arson to the authorities, in “Heaven” by a Spanish-speaking man who lived nearby and in “Paradise,” by a blonde father and daughter duo leaving a Turkish restaurant. Both sets of detectives arrive to the scene joking but are immediately sobered by the sheer number of murder victims in each club. They are both also plagued throughout the episode with issues in investigating described by other characters as part of dealing with undocumented immigrants: reticence to talk to the police, problems in identification due to forged or copied paperwork, and gaps in the tax or business records of the immigrant-owned nightclub. The initial line of questioning leads the police to a woman working at the club, in “Heaven” Christina Montalbano and in “Paradise” Leyla Bilgin. Each woman gives the police the name of her ex-boyfriend seen causing trouble at the clubs, who both have alibis putting them at home during the arson. Upon returning to their respective police stations, the writers introduce an external factor putting pressure on the men in charge of the investigations. In “Heaven,” NYPD Capt. Cragen must handle pressure from higher ups within the department, public outcry, and attacks by the press. Although Cragen and his detectives have been shown investigating the crime since the crime scene was safe enough to enter, Cragen must hold a press conference inside the police station fielding allegations of disinterest. This episode depicts the public as heavily involved throughout although Cragen notes post-press conference, “Everybody’s feeling a lot of righteous indignation

over the tragic loss of a lot of people who ordinarily they wouldn't have the time of day for." In "Paradise," this external pressure is represented by Birsan Ozkan, the mother of one of the club victims. Throughout the episode she appears in the police station and outside of the court room accusing the police and prosecutors of not caring about her son. She criticizes the approach of the police department and Crown Prosecuting Service saying that they do not "see" her son or their community. She repeatedly emphasizes her son's humanity by bringing some of his things to the police station for the detectives to look at and later chastises the prosecutor for protecting the arsonist's "human rights" asking, "Didn't my son have human rights?"

After the introduction of external pressure, the detectives follow a convoluted line of questioning about false immigration documents that leads them to the arsonist, named Cesar Pescador in "Heaven" and Nazim Kasaba in "Paradise." Pescador and Kasaba both limp with a recognizable leg injury caused by the fire that only the arsonist could have. Both characters need surgery to remove the debris in their legs or the infection will grow and eventually lead to death. The debris, however, is evidence in the case and though both initially refuse surgery, they eventually go through with it (Pescador through legal obligation, Kasaba through an emergency hospital visit).

When faced with airtight evidence naming them as the arsonists, Pescador and Kasaba each turn on the man who hired them, revealed to be powerful and respected businessmen Domingo Guerra and Ediz Kilic, respectively. In order to implicate Guerra and Kilic, ADA Ben Stone/SCS James Steel must contact an old, college friend who works for the immigration department is a member of the community in question. Stone and Steel both get into arguments with their respective friends and are accused of racism. While both are eventually able to

provide the most damning evidence in each case, only Stone's relationship with his friend remains intact while Steel's is permanently ended. Once indisputable evidence has been mounted against Guerra and Kilic, they both reveal a white American/British accomplice within the immigration department. In "Heaven," Guerra is considered less legally responsible than his accomplice while in "Paradise," Kilic is almost exclusively responsible. Both are held accountable to the communities and families affected in open court. The shows close with a guilty verdict and a memorial for the victims.

## **Differences**

### *Representations of Immigrant Community*

The major transnational changes from show to show are the aforementioned differences in national background of immigrant characters and details about the legal system of each country. Use of CCTV presents an issue as well in *Law & Order: UK* where most whodunits can presumably be solved by checking the tapes. While in most episodes the CCTV footage is nefariously taken or tampered with, "Paradise" deals with the issue more realistically. When the police go to check CCTV, it is revealed that the club was situated in a gap between cameras, a common issue. Later in the episode, CCTV serves the purposes of additional witnesses in the original "Heaven" to place Kasaba walking towards the club.

In culturally adapting the episode, however, the choices for visual representation of each group shown changes dramatically. In "Heaven," Latino identity is almost exclusively conflated with being born outside of the United States. "Latino" is also treated predominantly as a pan-national/pan-regional/pan-cultural identity for the purposes of this episode, excluding a few

specific examples I will explain below. For the purposes of this comparison, I will be applying “Latino” and “immigrant” as they were used in the show and providing additional detail where possible. Latino characters then are delineated from non-Latino characters through their presentation.

The depictions of Latino/immigrant characters in “Heaven” is almost uniform. Almost every character identified as a Latino is assumed or found to have entered or is staying in the United States illegally. All of the immigrants shown are assigned assumed nationalities from Latin America, but only El Salvador and Cuba are specifically mentioned. The non-Latino characters, aside from one question from Logan to Christina Montalbano, exclusively speak English throughout, while the Latino characters speak either exclusively in Spanish (e.g. Guillermo, the hapless first suspect), alternating between Spanish and English (e.g. Guerra, who spoke to his lawyer and employees in Spanish before addressing Stone in English), or incorporating Spanish words into sentences spoken predominantly in English (e.g. Guillermo’s landlord, who secured Guillermo’s alibi for the arson by telling detectives, “this borracho was passed out all night”). Only comparatively dark-skinned, brunette actors were chosen to play members of the predominantly El Salvadoran community. Secondary characters who are identified (by name or as a member of the community) as Latinos strictly wear patterned and brightly colored clothes, regardless of setting or profession. Non-Latino counterparts in similar settings are dressed in beige or neutral solid-colored clothing. Almost all of the Latino characters identified as such are assigned a level of criminality. The spectrum runs from working in one of main villain Guerra’s numerous and shady businesses to obtaining a false green card. These visible and aural markers are used to associate characters’ Latino identity with a continued

national/cultural relationship with their home country, and to make it clear that most if not all were not born in the United States.

These representations correlate to a similar analysis of representation of Mexican identity in film conducted by Latino studies scholar Rosa Linda Fregoso. In Chapter 5 of her book *MeXicana Encounters*, Fregoso discusses the prevalent trope in American popular culture of Latinos (specifically Mexican-Americans) and Latino communities with extensive ties to illegal activity and the informal economy. She specifically cites the example of the film *Mi Vida Loca* about Chicana gang members which was controversial amongst critics for its seeming confirmation of negative stereotypes about Chicanas (Fregoso 2003:98). Although Fregoso defends *Mi Vida Loca* as an accurate depiction of Chicana gang life, she acknowledges the prevalence and power of the stereotypes shown. These stereotypes, employed pervasively in “Heaven” associate Latino identity in New York with aspects of illegality and criminality that define representation of Latino characters throughout the episode.

There is, however, a serious exception to that rule: the character of Roberto Diaz, immigration official and college friend of Executive ADA Ben Stone. When Stone’s office begins going over financial records for Guerra implicating him in several illegal business ventures as well as the arson, Stone and ADA Paul Robinette find documents suggesting involvement with Diaz’s office. Stone’s boss, DA Adam Schiff, tells Stone to begin investigating Diaz. Stone demurs and visits Diaz in his office first to set the record straight. Diaz is immediately identified as Cuban-American (“the first Cuban on fraternity row,” according to Stone, musing about their time at Dartmouth) and jokingly describes his own status as a Latino at an Ivy League school (and later, in a government office) as “a novelty.” Diaz rebuffs Stone’s

accusations about Guerra claiming that Guerra is a well-respected figure within the Latino community and that he could not possibly be involved in something so shady. Stone leaves, convinced Diaz's unwillingness to prosecute Guerra stems from political ambitions and a desire to build support within Guerra's community. When Robinette finds evidence of Diaz and Guerra spending time socially, however, Stone is forced to return and confront Diaz about his relationship with Guerra and Guerra's alleged criminal activity. Diaz becomes angry and accuses Stone of racism and assuming that "All Latinos are on the take...Tinhorn dictators." Stone responds by calling Diaz "Bobby" and telling Diaz not to "start that oppressed minority crap with [him]." This reference to "oppressed minority crap" is referenced in Arlene Dávila's book *Latino Spin*, in her chapter "The Times-Squaring of El Barrio" about gentrification and urban construction projects. In the discussion about the Uptown N.Y. project, Dávila describes project organizers and managers' reticence to address the area's established cultural identity: "Developers and bureaucrats tend to be 'scared to death' to talk about arts and culture because it is too 'loaded' with issues of ethnicity" (Dávila 2008:101). In discussions of gentrification, the topic of loss of or infringement on cultural identity is avoided where possible as it is considered "mess[y]," sensationalist, and often irrelevant by the city planners in charge (Dávila 2008:101). Like the protestors of gentrification described by Dávila, Roberto Diaz is criticized for introducing the idea of sociocultural repression of Latinos in America into the conversation by Stone, who sees it as a purposeful distraction from the issue at hand.

Continuing, Stone repeatedly insists that he is talking to Diaz at the behest of DA Schiff and wants to prove that Diaz's "hands are clean." As Diaz elucidates further on his relationship with Guerra ("He helped me get my first job out of law school") and asks if their conversation is

“on or off the record,” Stone becomes more angry and accuses “Roberto” of not understanding the gravity of the situation. After continued back and forth, Diaz gives Stone a lead on where the police can find Guerra. When they find James Collins, Guerra’s accomplice within the immigration office and an employee of Diaz, Stone and Diaz interview Collins together, taking turns speaking. As Collins leaves the room the camera pans to the name plate on Diaz’s desk which reads “Robert Diaz.” His identity as Cuban-American is treated as fluid by other characters throughout the program. When Stone tries to remind him of their shared history and friendship, he calls Diaz “Bobby.” When Diaz is being uncooperative, Stone calls him “Roberto” and asks if he wants to be investigated as one of Guerra’s accomplices. Finally, when the Diaz is assisting Stone and the rest of the prosecution through questioning Diaz, he is identified again by the Anglophone “Robert.” Despite Diaz’s self-proclaimed involvement with Guerra and his community, he is clearly shown as different from other Latinos represented. He speaks English with no accent and is one of two Latino characters in the episode not involved in criminal activity. The other, arsonist Pescador’s public defender, speaks slightly accented English and initially encourages her client not to cooperate with the ADA Robinette. Except for potentially Guerra before his arrest, Diaz is the wealthiest and most professionally successful Latino character in the episode. Initial mystery of his connection with Guerra aside, he also is the lone Latino character with no ties to criminal activity.

In her book *Latinos, Inc*, Dávila describes the pressure on Hispanic Americans to a) self-identify within a pan-Latino community or “nation of Hispanics within a nation” (Dávila 2001:90) and b) fit neatly within the binary of “Latinos as thugs and criminals” or as Latinos in hot pursuit of upward economic mobility (Dávila 2001: 98). Those who remain for whatever

reason in a predominantly Latino community and work in lower to middle income jobs in predominantly Latino businesses are tied to elements of criminality and illegality. Only Diaz, by living and working outside of the community escapes complicity with the rest of the Latinos in “Heaven.” Diaz represents the idealized form of the Latino immigrant to the United States, because of his perceived “immigrant aspirational stance and greater conservatism” and “supposed complicity with the status quo,” he is rewarded with minimal professional trouble, a senior position during the interrogation of Collins, and identification as an insider and colleague by Stone (Dávila 2008:39). Whatever Diaz’s connections to Latino community described (he is only said to have attended a businessmen’s philanthropy fundraiser with Guerra), he is foremost an aspirant of the American Dream and his commitment to success in the mainstream is rewarded.

In “Paradise,” conversely, only one character (Kasaba), besides the victims of the fire, is identified as being an undocumented immigrant. Other characters, and even many of the arson victims, are identified exclusively as Turkish with either vague or no mention of their immigration status in the UK. Instead, other Turkish characters are assigned markers of low social class. Young men are shown wearing exclusively sweatpants and other wardrobe indicators, speak either with Turkish or London accents associated with low-income areas, and either have no or unspecified employment. One of the victims’ mothers Birsen Ozkan is depicted as the moral voice of the investigation through her pursuit of justice for her son. Although her English grammar is perfect, she speaks with a Turkish accent that becomes more pronounced when she becomes angry. She is shown visiting the police department unannounced during the middle of a work day so it is presumed she does not have full time employment.

Unlike for any other character, a separate instrumental track plays every time she speaks and at a much louder register than any other music in the episode. The music, a Western take on “Middle Eastern” as described by Said in *Orientalism*, is composed of wind instruments and intensifies as she speaks. Not only is she the only character for whom this happens but the style of music played differs sharply in tone, rhythm, and style from the rest of the score.

In Chapter 1 of *Orientalism*, Said describes Orientalism as “a political vision whose structure promoted the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”)” (Said 1979:43). In this way, non-Western peoples are conceived as occupying a separate cultural space than Western peoples, otherizing them. According to Said, this binary reinforces the idea of Western cultural superiority and it is thus the “Westerner’s privilege” to represent non-Western cultures as he or she sees fit (Said 1979:44). “Because his was the stronger culture, he could penetrate, he could wrestle with, he could give shape and meaning to the great Asiatic mystery” (Said 1979:44). Thus, producers of culture in the West are allowed within their artistic tradition to employ their own interpretation of non-Western cultures in depicting them. Such is the case with the musical track associated with Birsen Ozkan. Using her dialogue, characterization, and the musical backing track as a British reproduction of her Turkishness, Ozkan is represented as distinctively other from surrounding British characters.

The characterization of Ozkan differs starkly from Roberto Diaz’s “Paradise” equivalent, Faruk Osman. Osman, like Diaz, differs from the other Turkish characters described in his accent-free English and social status. He is identified immediately as a fellow Oxbridge alum, like Steel. Unlike Diaz, however, evidence found by Senior Crown Prosecutor James Steel and Assistant Crown Prosecutor Alesha Phillips directly links Osman and main villain Kilic. After

Steel's first visit, Osman is confused about the accusations and vows to investigate. Steel later instructs Phillips, shocked at Steel's lack of trust, to look into Osman's personal and professional life for ties to Kilic. When, similar to Stone and Diaz, Steel finds a picture of Osman and Kilic embracing at a fundraising party, he reopens his line of questioning with Osman. Osman is visibly offended and asks Steel if he believes "all Turks are crooks." As Steel continues to question Osman and Kilic's relationship, Osman becomes increasingly upset and sarcastically tells Steel, "No they're not like us are they, with their Turkish Delight and their belly dancing." Although Osman has done nothing wrong and later finds and brings Steel the evidence necessary for convicting Kilic, he informs Steel that their friendship has been irrevocably damaged. He also tells Steel he is now under investigation himself and has been forced to take a hiatus off of work.

The representations of Turkish characters differ here in several ways from those of Latino characters in "Heaven." Most of the characters identified as Turkish have either been born in the UK or most likely have legal residential status. When Ozkan brings items of her son to the police station to humanize the case, she includes his British passport. When arsonist Kasaba steals legal documents to anonymously visit a hospital, he has stolen a "Turkish" neighbor's UK passport, unlike the green card used by American equivalent Pescador. Although most of the Turkish characters are tied to some kind of criminal activity, it usually relates to low social standing (e.g. squatting, loitering) than to immigration issues or Kilic's illegal business dealings. Unlike Diaz, however, professional success does not preclude criminal suspicion and implication. Osman's lack of involvement is not acknowledged by investigators nor is rewarded

for providing the necessary evidence to indict and convict Kilic. To compare, Kilic's white, English lackey who provided the car parts necessary to commit the arson is not even arrested.

This sense of "otherness" within British society is described by Fatima El-Tayeb in *European Others*. Status as an immigrant or non-Brit has less to do with official documentation or years in the country than it does to embracing of Anglophone society and rejection of the non-English. Although Osman was professionally capable and ethical on the job, his continued involvement with the Turkish community and different background has "otherized" him from the rest of his colleagues and makes him a naturally suspicious target for superiors. Non-white Brits are here, as El-Tayeb explains, denied access to a common cultural history (El-Tayeb 2011:4). Because of their status as non-white and not belonging to England's cultural history, people like Osman and other Turkish characters are "excluded from the terrain of cultural homogeneity constructed through the internalist narrative of national and supranational Europeanness" (El-Tayeb 2011:21). Thus white British characters' assertions of Turkishness on other characters have less to do with their citizenship to one country or the other and more with their perceived non-Britishness, warranting an exclusion from middle and upper level society. British identity here is being attacked by "Others-from-Within" (El-Tayeb 2011:14) who, especially practitioners of Islam, pose a "cultural threat" to British society as it is understood by the hegemony (El-Tayeb 2011:4).

### *Nature of Villain*

In the original *Law & Order*, Domingo Guerra's criminal activity centers around forging documents that allow people who are already living in the United States to continue to do so.

For *Law & Order: UK*, the issue is predominantly Kilic's role in bringing illegal immigrants to the United Kingdom, which other characters refer to several times as "smuggling." The nature of the forgeries also differs. While Guerra deals in copies of stolen Permanent Residency Cards, Kilic is dependent on a stamp stolen from the Immigration Office by Linden. Kilic also deals exclusively with other Turkish immigrants while Guerra's organization works with Latino immigrants of all backgrounds.

Most importantly, however, are the respective characterizations of Guerra and Kilic. Both are depicted as profiteers in an illegal industry that thrives on the desperation of its customers. Both are criticized repeatedly throughout the show for betraying their "own people." The fundamental difference between them is their varying levels of involvement in the arson. There is no doubt that Guerra orchestrates the attack on El Cielo. The dirtiest work, however, is committed by Collins who arranges the crime and even consults with a retired arsonist about the best way to set a building on fire inconspicuously. Guerra never reneges his ties to the Latino community. He belongs to a Latino mens club, he smokes Cuban cigars, and he works consistently as a community leader to support local business and talent, often so that he can exploit it later as a resource. Guerra, nevertheless, maintains his Cuban identity. Pescador actually refers to Guerra as "*El Cubano*" throughout his confession. He speaks Spanish to his colleagues and defense attorney and when finally confronted with all of the evidence, maintains consistently that he only intended to send a message. While Guerra continues to see himself as a part of the Latino community, Kilic indirectly disassociates himself with his Turkish equivalent. Although other characters pay lip service to his involvement in philanthropy and support of local Turkish businessmen, Kilic is never shown interacting with other Turkish people except in his

picture with Osman. He does not live in the same area as the people affected by the fire. He does not, unlike Guerra, own a different nightclub of his own that caters to the Turkish community. His club is filled exclusively by older white men. While Guerra's clothes and sunglasses and choice in cigar mirror the depiction of other Latino characters in the episode, albeit a more expensive version, Kilic is totally detached from other members of the Turkish community. During his initial interview, Kilic asks Steel how he can dare question him about such a violent act committed against his people. Steel responds by saying he does not consider them Kilic's people at all and challenges Kilic to name one of the victims. When he cannot, Steel continues aggressively questioning by asking Kilic when he will attend the memorial services. When Kilic is finally put on the stand in during the trial, he refers to only to his customers and the victims of the club fire as "these people" and asserts that his dealings gave them a chance to better their lives. While the Collins character in "Heaven" is prosecuted more intensely than Guerra, the Linden character in "Paradise" is not a part of the arson in any way minus the appropriation of his former car and his status as Kilic's subordinate. These differences even extend to the nature of the crime. While Collins is held ultimately responsible in "Heaven," Kilic is the one who enlisted Kasaba and created the incendiary device in "Paradise." His self-view of above the rest of the Turkish community enabled him to be cruel in a way that Guerra was not.

Guerra's ultimate criminal act, per the good immigrant/bad immigrant binary described with Diaz, was not only following an economic dream outside of the mainstream but also making it impossible for other Latino immigrants to do otherwise. Similarly to the way Latino gangs are vilified in the American media, Guerra's black market businesses flouted the paradigm proposed

by the American Dream that by working hard in the mainstream economy, anyone could succeed. Of course, extensive studies of American gang involvement have shown that domestic gangs are almost exclusively comprised of non-white members who feel that gang life and the community it represents is not just a way to get rich quick but the only way to get rich at all. Once involved professionally with Guerra (presumably in the obtaining of false documents), most of his clients become employees or are forced to sustain the relationship. Pescador explains to the detectives that the only reason he went through with the arson was because he owed Guerra money. Guerra's status as villain is cemented by seemingly taking advantage of low to no income, Latino immigrants, a group fetishized by supporters of the American Dream for their seemingly hard work ethic, core family values, and middle class aspirations (Dávila 2008:37).

Kilic, on the other hand, is a villain for facilitating the further immigration of non-white people to the United Kingdom. Although he is alleged to have several illegal businesses, the audience is only privy to his false document and human trafficking industry, unlike Guerra who is predominantly represented as a nightclub and bar owner. "Fortress Europe," says El-Tayeb, "means that non-Europeans may break the law - and accordingly might be treated as criminals - simply by being present" (El-Tayeb 2011:23). Before Kilic's arrest and conviction, he embodied the gold standard of British immigration. Although described as a "Turk" after two generations of his family had lived in the UK, he surrounds himself with all the trappings of "old money" and high social class possible. Despite being the only person of color in the room most of the time, Kilic is shown attending an almost exclusively white men's club, he wears expensive-looking and visibly tailored suits and considers his first interaction with the CPS to be beneath him. His "betrayal" of "his people" is then less an act of violence against the arson victims but

rather a betrayal of the xenophobic ideals he aspired to as an upperclass Brit. As his crimes become public, his adopted community is quick to turn on him, labeling him nothing more than a businessman and categorizing him with the immigrant victims secondary characters have repeatedly labeled “invisibles.” Like Guerra, who was demonized for spiting the American Dream, Kilic is vilified for metaphorically paying lip service to high society while sneaking in more “cultural threat[s]” through the back door.

## **Conclusion**

Both “Heaven” and “Paradise” fully express the beliefs of the American and British Dreams as well as demonstrate the consequences for those characters who do not subscribe to these individual values systems. In “Heaven,” immigration officer Roberto Diaz is rewarded socially and professionally for his cooperation and assistance with the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office’s persecution of Cuban businessman Domingo Guerra’s criminal enterprise and involvement in a fatal arson. By working with the District Attorney’s Office, Diaz reaffirmed his commitment to his professional aspirations in the economic mainstream and is both cleared of any sense of illegality and also, as “Bobby,” treated as a fully assimilated cultural citizen of the United States. Domingo Guerra, conversely, for his perceived rejection of the American Dream, is deemed criminal, associating his pursuit of economic mobility outside of the formal economy with concepts of illegality. In *Law & Order: UK*, perceived rejection of the British Dream is similarly punished. Faruk Osman, an immigration officer with cultural, professional, and social ties to the Turkish community is punished professionally and socially for his non-Britishness and continued identification as other by his colleagues and superiors. The

villain of “Paradise,” Ediz Kilic, is also assigned illegality and criminality for his work assisting in the undocumented immigration of low-income, low social class Turkish immigrants into the United Kingdom. Kilic’s actions are seen as evidence of cultural non-Britishness, and his failure to subscribe to the values system of the British Dream have negated all other attempts at assimilation (e.g. membership in the prestigious men’s club) and reaffirmed his otherness. In the next chapter, I will further examine the ways in which these ideas of immigration and social standing are negotiated politically and in politically correct public discourse as well as the social and professional consequences of immigrant otherness.

## Chapter 2 - Immigration and the “Politically Correct”

### Introduction

In this episode, I will focus on the ways in which immigration is addressed through political correctness, specifically as expressed in the workplace in the episode “Spinners and Losers” of the British *The Thick Of It*, the episode “Chung” of the American *Veep*, and the pilot episodes of both the American and British versions of *The Office*. In these episodes, I will demonstrate how the atmosphere of political correctness aspired to in the shows chosen is an extension of the principles of the American (pursuit of economic mobility) and British (aspirations of cultural Britishness and higher class) Dreams for immigrants. Despite expressed intentions to the opposite, these principles reinforce non-Western immigrants’ status as other in the societies shown. By relying on the same stereotypes that create a sense of other for non-Western and immigrant characters, societal articulation of political correctness emphasizes the imperative to subscribe to the values systems implicit in the American and British Dreams.

### Program History

#### *The Thick Of It (U.K.)*

In late 2012, the word “omnishambles,” deployed mid-rant by fictional public relations despot Malcolm Tucker in the BBC2’s (previously BBC4’s) *The Thick Of It*, was named Oxford English Dictionary’s word of the year (BBC 2012). Later, Leader of the Opposition Ed Miliband

would use the term to describe the United Kingdom's coalition government further making, in reporter John Plunkett's words, "the fine line defining art and real life...more gossamer-like than ever" (Plunkett 2012). Since the airing of its first episode on May 19, 2005, *The Thick Of It* has come to dominate the political satire genre in British television, prompting *Guardian* reporter Mark Lawson to remark after the show's final episode in 2012, "Come back, we need you" (Lawson 2012). Throughout its four season run (shown intermittently between 2005 and 2012), *The Thick Of It* was greeted with almost universally rapturous reviews, multiple BAFTAs and British Comedy Awards for its cast and crew, and consistently good to high ratings. For the most recent season, *The Guardian* website has kept a post-episode list of the best lines of the week, encouraging readers and fans of the show to provide their feedback and add their favorites as well. This success is mostly attributed by those involved with the program to writer and director Armando Iannucci, whose stated pledge to creating a forthright depiction of the British society and government has been resonated with viewers who have credited the show with a seemingly prophetic ability of portraying the political climate.

Iannucci, a successful Italian-Scottish comedy writer, has been described by as "behind practically everything on TV that makes [people] laugh" (Aitkenhead 2009). Iannucci's work on *The Thick Of It* has been hailed as master satire in the press and by fans and has even been credited with predicting future unpopular policies or politicians' gaffes before they happen in real life (Aitkenhead 2009). The fourth season, for example, focused on a fictional inquiry about politicians leaking confidential information to the press that closely mirrored the Leveson Inquiry, where some revelations (including David Cameron's use of "LOL" in texting to mean "Lots Of Love") were deemed by the public as "too outlandish" even for *The Thick Of It*

(Plunkett 2012). In response to the fourth season's striking similarities between fact and fiction, *The Thick Of It* writer Will Smith commented to *The Guardian*, "It doesn't make us feel we have to match that. Armando [Iannucci] is always very keen to make it believable, to feel real. It feels more like they copy us" (Plunkett 2009).

### *Veep (U.S.)*

Iannucci's work on *The Thick Of It* led to critical success in the United States as well. In 2009, BBC Films, the UK Film Council, et al released *In The Loop*, a movie about the events leading up to the armed conflict in Iraq from the perspective of British and American ministers and senators working together in Washington DC. Starring a significant part of the actors of *The Thick Of It* (including Peter Capaldi reprising his role as press secretary and rage-addled anti-hero Malcolm Tucker) as well as an additional American cast, *In The Loop* borrowed characters from the original show and showcased their floundering and general incompetency as go-betweens between the U.S. president and U.K. prime minister who are intent to start a war. *In The Loop* was positively received throughout the U.S. as well as the U.K., winning at the Scottish BAFTAs, the British Comedy Awards, and the Empire Awards and garnering critical acclaim at the Sundance Film Festival and an Oscar nomination. During production of the film, which was filmed in Washington D.C., Iannucci used a connection with a Washington blogger to meet and speak with ex-CIA, Pentagon, State Department, and Senate staff and toured the actual departmental buildings that would be featured in the film (Aitkenhead 2009). Iannucci admits including actual quotes from British and American politicians in the film, including a quote from the diary of then-Labour MP Clare Short who decided, regarding her previous pledge to leave

office if the United States and United Kingdom invaded Iraq, “it would be the braver thing not to resign” (Aitkenhead 2009). Iannucci’s commitment to creating realistic absurdity through the success of *In The Loop* eventually led Iannucci to his “full-blown attempt to take on American politics” (Harris 2012).

*Veep*, which aired on HBO for the first time on April 22, 2012, follows the career of inept vice-president Selina Meyer, whose equally incompetent staff are, like their British counterparts on *The Thick Of It*, both trying to perform as politicians while constantly cleaning up the executive branch’s most recent mess or spinning the most recent gaffe. Despite suspicion in the British press about an American audience’s willingness to watch a warts-and-all depiction of the federal government and the American press’s suspicion that any adaptation from a British show will live up to the original (Rixon 2006:140), Iannucci’s *Veep* received overwhelmingly positive reviews from the airing of its pilot episode, has enjoyed large ratings (especially for HBO, a subscription network), and was nominated for both a Golden Globe and two Emmys. *New York Times* reporter Carina Chocano reviewed that *Veep* “comes not to justify Caesar, but to goose him...a black-humor vision of politics at its weakest...Naturally, it’s hilarious” (Chocano 2012). *Entertainment Weekly* referred to the show as “corrosively cynical and very funny” while critics at *Time* called it “acerbically entertaining” (Brunner 2012, Poniewozik 2012). On the show’s tone, Iannucci told an interviewer that he believes “Americans are cynical enough about their politics and their national leaders to embrace it. Or at least, get the joke” (Harris 2012).

While Iannucci’s continued involvement with the show as head writer and director first season (he has since become less involved), viewers of the show, especially those familiar with *The Thick Of It*, immediately registered major differences between the American and British

versions. *Time* critic Paul Harris describes *Veep* as “zanier, more snarky” to *The Thick of It*’s “sardonic” (Harris 2012). Despite the majority British writing staff, specifically during the first season, *Veep*, like *The Thick Of It*, has been shaped by the actors’ consistent ad-libbing of dialogue. The “tightly disciplined” American “cast of energetic improvisors” have been used by Iannucci and the other British writers on staff “to portray the back-stabbing, internecine world of US politics” (Patterson 2012). Like *The Thick Of It*, which has also relied on cast improvisation for material, the off-the-cuff comedy of *Veep*’s American staff serve to supplement the script with whatever comments or remarks feel most appropriate at the time. In that way, Iannucci and company have been able to maintain the same desired level of authenticity and cultural relevance as they were in the original *The Thick Of It* while adapting the material for the United States.

*Veep* is a structural and thematic adaptation of the original *The Thick Of It* rather than a literal one because, as pointed out during the adaptation process, the political systems in which the main characters operate are structured too differently for a literal adaptation to work (Poniewozik 2012). The switch from focusing on a government minister in charge of the Department for Social Affairs and Citizenship to the Vice-President of the United States were chosen by Iannucci as similar positions with a similarly tension-filled relationship with their government executive (the U.K. prime minister, the U.S. president). I will not be able, therefore, to compare two episodes based on the same teleplay but will instead be comparing the special episode of *The Thick Of It* “Spinners and Losers” (2007) with “Chung” (2012), the fourth episode of the first season of *Veep*. Both use themes of immigration controversy and reform as central themes and share several plot points. Taking these similarities into consideration, I will be able to compare and analyze these episodes in the same manner as in other chapters.

## **Immigration as a “Political Football”**

*The Thick Of It (U.K.)*

“The Rise of the Nutters” and “Spinners and Losers” document the misadventures of the fictional government, based on the New Labour administration of 1997-2007, as the prime minister, based on Tony Blair, abruptly resigns after long-term unrest and sabotage within the government on behalf of “Tom,” based on Gordon Brown, and his supporters within the party, called “Nutters.” The prime minister’s long-term press secretary Malcolm Tucker is blamed for the prime minister’s early retirement announcement, long before anyone else “in the loop” was aware of and months before the establishment of his legacy, and Tucker, along with the rest of the major players, spend the night in a state of near-chaos attempting to figure out who will be named the next leader of the government (from within the fictional Labour party) and to establish themselves as a member of the inner circle before the dust clears. Tucker and others spend the night in various offices attempting to find alternate candidates while the Nutters retreat to a clandestine hotel room so as to constantly gauge inter-party approval for Tom. Throughout the night, Tucker and others leak information to press in order to create buzz about certain candidates or to discredit them before their internal campaigns gain any momentum.

More than halfway into “Spinners and Losers,” Tucker, having been officially recruited by the Nutters to effectively sell Tom to the national press as the next national leader, is distracted from his attempts to make Tom (and himself) look better by a highly publicized staff walkout at an immigration center in Watford. Furious, he storms back to the Department of

Social Affairs and Citizenship (DoSaC), and shouts at the remaining characters to take care of it in the press:

“Tomorrow, from broadsheets to wank rags, I want pages one, two, and three to be a profile of Tom looking like a fucking political colossus. Y’know, Tom meeting the Pope, Tom in an NHS hospital, chatting to little, baldie kiddies. I want pages four and five to be a timeline of British politics with me in the center looking fucking indispensable and fucking benign. And I want page six to be fucking...Israel or some bullshit, not a fucking DoSaC, dipshit, legacy-distracting cock-up!”

The character of Malcolm Tucker here exemplifies the attitude taken by all of the characters of *The Thick Of It* towards immigration issues and policy. Members of DoSaC and Tucker’s press office are usually shown dealing with major systemic problems in the immigration system associated with overcrowding and the entry of undocumented immigrants. When Shadow Defense Minister Peter Mannion later works at a similar immigration center (as a public relations ploy), he describes several problems with the current system. While these problems include commodities issues such as overly long waiting times and system errors that result in indefinite detention, the largest crisis is the failure to process thousands of undocumented immigrants, and felons, Mannion specifically includes, who have now been able to enter the United Kingdom immediately.

Like the “legacy-distracting” walkout at the Watford immigration center, DoSaC’s issues with immigration are usually attributed to a bloated and ineffectual system that is unable to handle the current numbers of incoming immigrants. Immigration here is seen exclusively as a problem for the characters of *The Thick Of It*. Immigrants themselves are described as having entered the U.K., often without appropriate documentation, for the specific purpose of joining low-income communities. With this view of all U.K. immigrants collectively, immigration itself is treated like a political game piece by the press and policy-makers. When Tucker visibly loses

his temper about the situation in Watford, it is because a major story about an immigration error, moved to the front page by a vindictive press, could outshine the positive public relations message that Tucker and other press agents have been convincing newspapers to print about the departing prime minister and Tom, his replacement. When immigration “cock-ups” happen, and those are the only situations in which immigration is discussed on the program, minimal to no attention is paid to the people affected and the story becomes rather about its effect on the politicians involved.

The “legacy” that Tucker mentions in his rant refers to the previous prime minister’s attempted legacy, the commission and creation of an independent board to legislate and review immigration policy, thus removing immigration from the equation as a “political football” for one political party to toss back to the other. Of course, this attempt is a farce because immigration is the most highly contested and widely-publicized issue of contention between members of the two parties. The walkout at the immigration center in Watford in “Spinners and Losers” is a particularly relevant example of this commodification of immigration controversy. After spending all night “fire-fighting” the Watford story in the press, Tucker’s number two Jamie feels confident he has the situation covered. The scene cuts away and the audience finds out, through a conversation between economic advisor Julius Nicholson and ministerial aide Glenn Cullen, that Nicholson has been leaking the immigration figures throughout the night. Present in the office but not fully in the loop regarding the power struggles taking place within the party, Nicholson has secluded himself in a conference room alone to listen to a cricket match on the radio and cause trouble for the other characters by disclosing the immigration figures to the national press. As Nicholson and Cullen sit, listening to the radio, Cullen jokingly remarks

that Nicholson is “the Wild One.” Nicholson chuckles and responds that he is a new Che Guevara, he just needs a mustache and some laser correction eye treatment. Nicholson’s involvement in causing the Watford walkout is treated as a punchline by other characters throughout the episode, despite the serious consequences for the people on the ground in that area.

Public discourse around immigration is used throughout *The Thick Of It* by characters attempting to downplay the negative public response to government policy or immigration itself or to deflect dissatisfaction towards the opposite party. In the political and journalistic rhetoric of *The Thick Of It*, the immigrant other in the U.K. inspires resentment in British citizens as well as causes problems for the administration. This attitude is made possible by the cultural othering of non-Western immigrants in the U.K. Like the political advisors in *The Thick Of It* who are shown at a loss of what to do about the continuing influx of non-white, non-English speaking immigrants, British society treats immigration as a constant problem that must be addressed. As Fatima El-Tayeb writes in *European Others*, migration is presented “as something that happens to Europe without the continent having any active part in it” (El-Tayeb 2011:166). Here, immigration is presented as some sort of onslaught against the British government’s bureaucracy rather than as part of the increasing flow of migration between countries in Europe and around the world. At the immigration centers described in *The Thick Of It*, the motives of immigrants as they arrive to the U.K. are generalized and assumed by the powers that be.

Those in the politics and media are shown treating new arrivals to the United Kingdom as a social problem. The immigrants at the Watford center affected by the strike are not treated as people, stuck in trans-national limbo while power plays are made between officials in London.

While they wait at the immigration center that has been paralyzed by the strike, the ministerial staff of the show describe the situation as being “dealt with” once someone from the press secretary office has promised the press on behalf of the DoSaC minister to take a hard stance against the strikers. As new arrivals to the country, the immigrants being kept in the Watford immigration center during the strike have little to no legal status at this stage in the process. They also do not have any cultural or social status. Because they have not officially started assimilating, they are not treated as people but rather as an other that represents an administrative difficulty for policy-makers. Their perceived lack of Britishness, the key element of the British Dream for immigrants, has allowed those in charge to dehumanize them enough to treat them, unlike the ex-prime minister’s staff intended, like a “political football.”

*Veep (U.S.)*

The categorization of immigrant communities as other is also employed as a political tool in *Veep*. The episode “Chung,” follows Vice-President Selina Meyer attempting to maintain support for her filibuster reform bill, while dealing with the new threat for her position in Gov. Danny Chung of Minnesota. The Oval Office has decided Meyer’s filibuster reform campaign is useless, asking her instead to push a harder line on immigration, despite the more tolerant stance she had taken during her presidential campaign in the primary season. When she specifically asks what line the president is asking her to push, White House aide Jonah responds, “Uh, Americans losing jobs to illegals.” Outside of pressure from the president, Gov. Chung, a Purple Heart awardee, is both a well-liked governor and a war hero and has started building steam for a potential vice-presidential campaign through the publicity at his book launch. Meyer,

exasperated by the buzz surrounding Gov. Chung, commissions her staff to find as much politically compromising information as possible on the governor. Amy, her chief of staff, informs Meyer that, according to Amy's research, Gov. Chung was born in China. During *Meet the Press* later in the episode, Meyer forgets she is still wearing her microphone and comments to the host that Gov. Chung was born in China, thus he can never be president (or vice-president) of the United States. The debate over Gov. Chung's birth location is a clear reference to the "birther" controversy surrounding President Obama during 2011 and is a continued example of Iannucci's, his writers', and production team's commitment to making the show as resonant with American politics as possible.

Meyer's comments are later made public, causing an accidental anti-immigrant fringe response, including several diatribes about the loss of jobs and one bystander shout of "It's the White House not the Yellow House," among the patients and staff of a hospital where she is visiting the victims of a serious industrial accident. Her accidental anti-immigrant stance is treated as a potential win by her team as a racist, socially conservative senator, Bill O'Brien has now reached out to join her filibuster reform campaign. In a long lunch with Sen. O'Brien, Amy, Meyer's chief of staff, compromises her previous ethical stance about O'Brien and promises that the vice-president will oppose immunity for "illegal immigrants" who have been in the country for more than five years. When she and a co-worker return to the vice-president's office, Amy insists on delivering the news herself as she was the one who made the deal happen. Because of the number of senators O'Brien can contribute to the filibuster reform bill, Meyer's team treats his involvement as a positive development, despite their previous jokes about Sen. O'Brien's involvement in the Ku Klux Klan and references to the movie *Deliverance*.

In her book *Latinos, Inc.*, Arlene Dávila discusses the creation of a Latino immigrant other in American culture as influenced by the dominant racial framework. This way of viewing Latinos in the U.S. is “directly implicated in U.S. racial categories” that are “predicated on the dominant view that there are indeed some essential and intrinsic commonalities that are shared by all” members of this community (Dávila 2001:41). Here, like in *The Thick Of It*, we see the same treatment of non-white immigrants, categorized in this episode mostly as Latino, as a societal and cultural other that can be employed again as a “political football” in the context of immigration discourse. Just as in *The Thick Of It*, public debate about undocumented immigrants entering the U.S. is seen as a political tool that Meyer can wield to build support for her personal crusade, a filibuster reform bill that would only directly affect other politicians. In this episode, Meyer as well as Sen. O’Brien employ the stereotype that (undocumented) Latino immigrants have entered the U.S. in order to work at low-income, blue collar jobs that would have otherwise gone to American citizens. This dehumanized, otherized way of looking at undocumented immigrants in the U.S. allows Meyer to, with admittedly ambiguous moral standing, treat the support of Sen. O’Brien as a key success for filibuster reform.

While the harsh laws Sen. O’Brien and the “pro-Caucasian caucus” will use Meyer’s support to implement could seriously affect the lives of the individual lives of immigrants described, they are seen as par for the course in getting support for the filibuster reform law. As Meyer’s pet project all season, the audience is supposed to root for her as she works to pass this reform in spite of anti-reform lobbyists and other senators jaded about the whole process. When Meyer accepts Sen. O’Brien’s support for the filibuster reform, it is seen as potentially morally wrong by the characters involved but also as politically savvy and necessary for the advancement

of Meyer's project. Like the immigrants stuck at Watford in *The Thick Of It*, otherized and made problematic for the characters in charge through their perceived lack of Britishness, the immigrants described in this episode of *Veep* are otherized and made problematic for the characters in charge through their perceived association with the informal economy and the loss of American jobs it represents. In depicting recent immigrants this way, they are punished for their assumed rejection of the American Dream, joining the informal economy through documented immigration and pursuing financial mobility.

In each of these examples, continued otherization of immigrants who have rejected the aforementioned values frameworks in each country has tied directly to anti-immigrant rhetoric about the national economy. In the U.K., the presence of immigrants and immigrant communities is seen as a burden on British society. As El-Tayeb explains, "Faced with the public image of their free-floating, nomadic, unattached...presence, marginalized communities need a historical anchoring to 'prove' their belonging: the failure to do so has very material spatial consequences, namely exclusion through...incarceration, or deportation" (El-Tayeb 2011:176). In a journalistic discourse that associates British immigrants with high rates of unemployment, low rates of education, and as having more children than the average "British" family, recent immigrants are treated as a thorn in the British people's side before they are even officially admitted entry to the country.

In the American example, the otherized immigrants are associated with undocumented men and women from Mexico who have entered the United States to perform low-income or manual labor positions. This culturally-generated image of American immigration accuses immigrants of "stealing" jobs, making it impossible for hard-working Americans who are

currently unemployed to get back on their feet. The economic burden of immigration is here mostly tied to the alleged prevention of American citizens from finding work, as they believe all of the jobs have been taken by undocumented Mexican immigrants who have chosen to work for less than the minimum wage to make themselves more competitive than their American counterparts, like the xenophobic and racist anti-immigrant protesters encountered by Meyer at the hospital, rather than for other socioeconomic reasons. Perceived rejection the American Dream, here in the form of participating in the informal economy, is tied directly to creating economic issues for American citizens which thus helps create and reinforce the previous idea of non-white immigrants as a non-Western other.

### **Stereotypes from Top to Bottom**

#### *Perspectives of the Politically Powerful*

The otherizing stereotypes described in the previous section are problematic on two levels. While the shows poke fun at the racist, ignorant, and inarticulate comments of the episodes' of characters, or "bad" guys from a politically correct standpoint, the "good" guys in each program rely on the same stereotypes for their own dialogue. In *The Thick Of It*, Malcolm Tucker later enters the conference room where prime ministerial advisor Julius Nicholson has been sitting listening to the cricket match with ministerial advisor Glenn Cullen. When Cullen asks Tucker if he wants anything to eat, Tucker responds with a joke about ordering Indian food earlier that has never arrived. He speculates that when the building's security saw a dark-skinned person of color approaching a government building with a bunch of chapatis, they must have shot him. As Cullen and Nicholson groan at Tucker's joke in disapproval, Nicholson responds,

“Oh Malcolm, not in the current climate.” The problem with Tucker’s comment, per his audience, is not the content of what he has said but rather the fact that someone else might hear it, creating another metaphorical fire to put out. Despite criticizing Tucker (and later Ben Swain, please see subsequent section), the “good” guys or moral voices in this scenario have not challenged his joke as crude or intolerant or disrespectful but rather as inappropriate and potentially embarrassing, thus relying on the same stereotype.

Also in *The Thick of It*, incompetent ministerial advisor Phil Smith, when asked by his party’s chief public relations officer about reaching out to immigrants, comments that because he takes mini-cabs and eats take-away dinners, he is “down with them.” Smith’s character consistently puts his foot in his mouth throughout the series and is treated by other characters as a reminder of how out of touch the U.K.’s Conservative party is with those in low to middle income brackets. Smith’s inability to connect with non-white, low-income immigrants the public relations department now wants to target is less of an independently comedic incident but rather an extreme example of the whole party’s issue in getting their message out to this demographic. While Smith’s association of British immigrants with driving taxis and working at take-away restaurants is treated with rolled eyes by his coworkers, everyone in the office is similarly interested in better relating to this perceived bloc. *The Thick Of It’s* take on the Conservative party is attempting to sway what they see as a large, similarly minded group and, despite Smith’s swing and a miss, are mired in the same principle that a) all British immigrants are a part of a low-income bracket and b) that the multinational, multicultural, and multiethnic demographics that make up the U.K.s immigrated population can be treated as a single bloc that is wholly separate and other from white or upper class British voters.

Similarly, in *Veep*, Meyer's aide Dan attends the long lunch with chief of staff Amy and extremist Arizonan senator Bill O'Brien, "the one," according to one of Meyer's aides, "who wants to randomly search people in ponchos." Sen. O'Brien's aide asks the Amy and Dan for the government to fund a 3,000 mile fence along the U.S.-Mexico border claiming it will generate profit for the American construction industry. Dan counters that it will not because, "ironically, the only affordable option would be immigrant labor." Through this statement, Dan has excluded the undocumented workers employed by construction companies from "the American construction industry." Despite the fact that undocumented workers who have chosen to work in construction are, in fact, unregistered employees of American construction companies, they are treated as outside of the American construction industry. Dan's comment about immigrant labor is made in the same vein of Nicholson's weak protestation of Malcolm Tucker's joke in *The Thick Of It* or the disdainful eye roll from Phil Smith's coworkers to his answer about reaching out to immigrants. Dan is considered the "good" guy in this scenario, and morally superior to Amy because of his lack of compromise to Sen. O'Brien's team, but he still employs the same stereotypes as Sen. O'Brien. While the "bad" Sen. O'Brien's metaphorical definition of Mexican immigrants as "bad neighbors who [come] into your garden every night to crap a butt-full of drugs and beans on your flowers" is supposed to inspire disgust in the audience, Dan and other characters incorporate similarly reductive stereotypes into their own dialogue, just in a less inflammatorily phrased manner.

Both shows are set in environments that aspire to extreme political correctness. When the "bad" characters make extremely racist and xenophobic comments, the "good" characters punish them with a negative response, usually through taking offense or publicly reproaching them. The

“good” characters, however, presumed to be politically correct, incorporate the same stereotypes into their own lines with no pejorative feedback from other characters. These stereotypes surrounding the immigrant other, therefore, serve as extensions of the American and British Dreams for immigrants. When the rest of the Conservative party members (the “good” guys) criticize Smith for his insensitive remarks without correcting him, they implicitly support his description of British immigrants as a low-income, low social class other. Similarly, when the Vice President’s aide corrects the “bad” Sen. O’Brien, he also treats as fact the stereotype that all immigrants to the U.S. are undocumented Latinos looking for blue collar employment. By expressing these sentiments, even the “good” characters reinforce the otherization of immigrants in each context.

### *Perspectives from The Office*

In looking at the way these stereotypes were employed by characters at the top of the political totem pole, I was interested in seeing whether there were any examples of people outside of the government using this comedic framework where an exaggerated anti-immigrant comment is made to highlight oafishness or “badness” of a character, and the perceived veracity of that stereotype is used through intelligent or “good” characters is used as a punchline. To compare, I used the British and American versions of *The Office*. Both versions were extremely well reviewed and sustained high ratings through most of their respective runs. Because of their mutual popularity, they are the most accessible for looking at these stereotypes at a median socioeconomic level. Furthermore, since none of the characters have any professional involvement in government policy or politics, the comparatively less pronounced expression of

these ideas serves as an effective supplement for the narrative expressed in *The Thick Of It* and *Veep*. Both versions follow the verbal gaffes of the manager at a small paper supply firm, David Brent in the U.K., Michael Scott in the U.S., whose inability to be respectful or politically correct in their office space makes them a source of ridicule for their coworkers.

In the pilot episode of both series, adapted almost exactly frame for frame, regional managers David Brent and Michael Scott tell their favorite boss story about an employee that had recently immigrated to the country. In the British version, David Brent tells the story of a “young Greek guy, hardly spoke a word of English, first job in the country.” This young man, according to Brent, was so emotionally moved at this professional opportunity that he asked Brent to be the godfather of his child. Brent waits a beat and admits that the story did not happen and that the company actually fired the employee because “he was rubbish.” In the American version, Michael Scott recounts the same tale about a young, recently immigrated Guatemalan man who similarly asked Scott to be the godfather of his child. Scott tells the camera that, shortly after that request the man’s position was terminated since “he sucked.” In both versions, the social assumptions made by the Brent/Scott character are seen as comedically inappropriate. The punchline of the story however, is that a recently immigrated employee with poor language skills and minimal office experience was fired because for poor performance. While the humor is mostly based in the farce of Brent/Scott’s romanticized account of the boss-employee relationship, the fact remains that the joke lands because of its exemplification of a stereotype the ridiculously ignorant or “bad” character had indelicately tried to avoid.

This use of stereotypes by “good” characters can be seen in other small jokes in each version of *The Office*. In the pilot episode of the British *Office*, David Brent is showing a new

temporary employee around the office and introduces him to another, South Asian employee who is identified in the credits as Sanj. The joke is that Brent, over the course of the conversation, keeps asking Sanj to perform a party trick Sanj is not familiar with. Brent eventually realize that the man he is thinking of is not Sanj but “the other one.” When Sanj replies, “What?...The other Paki?” and laughs uncomfortably, Brent walks away. The character of Sanj is never given that similar screen time again in any other episode and is only credited as performing in the pilot. Despite Brent’s clear racism and social awkwardness, the character Sanj, who Brent cannot remember in the context of working in an office with two South Asian men, is never seen again. “The other one” never appears. After this uncomfortable exchange, the character of Sanj ceases to play a part in the program and the audience leaves knowing less about him than even Brent does. While Brent is made buffoonish for not knowing or recognizing his coworker who is a person of color, Sanj, or any other first or second-generation immigrant characters, do not appear in the series again. The presence of Sanj seemingly served the single purpose of setting up a joke. Once the joke had been executed, there was no further use of Sanj’s character. Despite “bad” David Brent’s racism, the character of Sanj is given less than five minutes of screen time and is assigned additional detail beyond uncomfortable Pakistani employee. While the joke is on Brent for not being able to tell two South Asian coworkers apart, he is also not shown interacting with either man in any way beyond that initial conversation. In an environment that socially punishes David Brent for being politically incorrect, the only South Asian character ever represented on the show is less a fully developed character and more of an otherized setup to a punchline.

Similarly, in the “Diversity Day” episode of *The Office*’s (U.S.) first season, boss Michael Scott derails a diversity seminar that the company’s corporate office has made mandatory after Scott performed a racial epithet-loaded Chris Rock monologue for his coworkers. Scott’s behavior throughout the day offends his coworkers, non-white and white, as well as the “Diversity Day” coordinator, a counselor hired by the corporate office for the specific purpose of running this event. During the climax of the episode, Scott, crudely imitating an Indian accent and using made up, faux-Hindi words to relate to an Indian-American employee, is punched in the face when said employee, Kelly Kapoor, finally loses her patience.

Despite the harsh nature of the episode towards Scott, as he is very clearly in the wrong throughout the day, the ultimate punchline of the show is that he has made no serious efforts to change his behavior and eventually causes the diversity coordinator to quit. While Kapoor and the diversity coordinator completely lose their patience with the ignorant Scott, the audience is encouraged to laugh at how far Scott’s idiocy will take him. After a full day of attempting to constructively discuss racism and xenophobia in the workplace, it becomes totally clear Scott has not learned any of the lessons intended by the seminar. When he drives the diversity coordinator away it is the most important and darkest joke of the episode. Scott’s ignorance has even driven away a man that deals with ignorance as a profession. While Scott is “bad,” the camera immediately pans away from the hurt feelings and frustrated reactions of Kapoor and the diversity coordinator and shifts back to Scott’s obliviousness in his wrongdoing. While Scott is superficially punished for his actions, one of the most significant takeaways from the episode is that the mocking of and frustration felt by Scott’s second-generation American coworkers can be used as a vehicle for humor rather than a serious recognition of wrongdoing.

Using these examples, the major conclusions drawn in the above section about the deployment of stereotypes and their relationship to the otherizing process associated with the American and British Dreams are supported in television representing characters with no political capital or influence. In office environments that hold a more everyday standard for political correctness, the stereotypes offensively spouted by “bad” characters are not fully challenged by the other characters and are often ignored or indirectly supported by the show’s direction.

### **Political Correctness and De-Otherization**

Returning to the core argument supported by *The Thick of It* and *Veep*, the individuals who have recently immigrated to the U.K. or U.S. respectively are treated as otherized immigrants until they are seen to have subscribed to the values systems of the American and British Dreams. In the “Immigration as a “Political Football” section of this chapter, I analyzed references to immigrants who are established by other characters as other through perceived social rejection of specific elements of the American (participation in the informal economy) and British (becoming a welfare burden through non-British lifestyle) Dreams. In this section, however, I will explore instances in *The Thick Of It* and *Veep* where characters identified as part of the immigrant other managed to use aspects of the American and British Dreams expressed in environments of political correctness to subscribe to these Dreams and de-otherize themselves.

By the end of “Spinners and Losers,” every character involved is tense and exhausted, having spent the night politicking at a hundreds of miles per hour. In one of the final scenes of the episode special, the ex-prime minister’s advisor Julius Nicholson and ministerial advisor

Glenn Cullen are joined by another advisor Oliver Reeder, junior minister Ben Swain, the prime minister's press secretary Malcolm Tucker and Tucker's immediate subordinate, Jamie. The table in the middle of the conference room where they are gathered is covered in food from pizza boxes to lo mein to empty cookie wrappers to a bag of shredded cheese. The men in the room discover that Nicholson is the one that had been leaking information about the immigration figures that caused the walkout at the Watford Center and immediately become incensed. Tucker starts throwing cheese at Nicholson telling him to eat it while the others slowly join in, throwing whatever is available at the protesting Nicholson. They are interrupted from their food fight by the entrance of a member of the janitorial staff. She and the rest of the members of the building's cleaners have also been working all night and she wants to finish her job and go home. When Cullen asks her for a few more minutes, she insists on staying inside. She explains, in good but accented English, that she will not wait a few more minutes because she has been waiting all night to clean this room. Junior minister Ben Swain, shocked and disappointed that he has been used as a political pawn over the course of the night, speaks up to ask her condescendingly and exasperatedly, "If you want to clean, why don't you just get in there and clean?" When the maid reports that she will clean, Swain responds with "Oh well good that's in your job description isn't it?" At this most recent remark the woman becomes extremely upsets at Swain. "Don't be so rude. How dare you?" she asks. She continues lecturing Swain about his rudeness and what a mess the men have made in the room that she now has to clean. Swain begins on a sputtering rant about all of the people all night who have been telling him what to do and concludes by saying he does not need another "arseache" from "Mrs. Fucking Mop."

After Swain's outburst, the camera cuts away to Tucker talking with the cleaner one on one. After a night of shouting and intimidating, he has to be polite and professional in order to convince the woman not to go to the press with the story, as she says she intends to do. Tucker asks repeatedly if there is anything he can do for her and continues to berate Swain in her presence. She repeatedly chastises Tucker for Swain's rudeness and tells him repeatedly that Swain had no right to talk to her like that and that the "world" should know. When Tucker realizes she means the newspaper *News of the World*, he becomes even more accommodating. The woman continues to fan herself and asks for a glass of wine and a magazine.

She is the first immigrant character in the episode to have a speaking role although the other characters playing janitorial staff are ostensibly marked as immigrants as well, specifically through their dress, presentation, and mode of employment. In her ethnography, *Television, Ethnicity, and Cultural Change*, Marie Gillespie talks about her research into South Asian communities living in London. In her chapter on Punjabi youth and television representation, she asserts, "distinctions of social class and status are expressed through distinctions of taste" (Gillespie 1995:175). For example, she defines the word "pendu," used by the kids she interviewed to mean "someone who has just stepped off the plane" (Gillespie 1995:186). According to the kids, pendu are easily identified through their clothing that is made of materials associated with low price and cheapness (e.g. satin-feel fabric for women) and by dressing in a less British way than other people their age. Although borne from the Punjabi community, the term pendu can be applied as an extension of Gillespie's equation of social class and aesthetic taste in her London-based example.

In this episode of *The Thick Of It*, the cleaner at the end of the episode is mostly wearing a janitorial uniform but her shoes and jewelry indicate that her wardrobe is less expensive than the male politicians working around her. Like a couple of the other members of the cleaning staff, she wears her hair in braids rather than straightening it. There are few examples of black women in *The Thick Of It* but other black women shown working at a desk job or in a high paid office setting wear their hair straightened. This woman is therefore identified with aesthetic markers signifying her immigration status and, in her expression of non-Britishness, status as other. Unlike the other female members of the cleaning crew clean around the actions of other characters but who do not speak, however, the woman at the end is provided a platform to demand being treated like a human being. In catching a junior minister in the act of being messy, rude, racist, and classist, she has the opportunity to expose his untoward behavior to the rest of the world. The various men's conversations throughout the night about how their respective bosses care about low-income British people or immigration issues satisfy the requirements of political correctness while still treating the immigrant characters surrounding them as other. She has engaged Tucker and the others in a culturally resonant way, specifically through the power of the British media and its interconnectedness with British politics, *The Thick Of It's* major theme. She has embraced this aspect of cultural Britishness (selling a dramatic political exposé to a tabloid newspaper) and therefore de-otherized herself in the eyes of the other characters. By citing Swain's violation of political correctness and exerting political pressure on the men in the room do the same, she differentiates herself from her other coworkers and plays a large role in the episode's conclusion.

In *Veep*, Vice-President Selina Meyer and her staff attempt to learn everything they can about Gov. Danny Chung of Minnesota after his perceived aggressive gesture to Meyer (spelling her name incorrectly when signing his book). Due to her chief of staff Amy's shoddy internet research, Meyer believes that Chung was born in China, meaning he can never be president or succeed her as vice-president. In a later post-interview with *Meet the Press*, Meyer is asked a question about Gov. Chung that she answers with an awkward, halting account of his birth in China ("I didn't say he was bad because he's part Chinese!"), not realizing her microphone was still on. Meyer's comments are leaked, and she accidentally gains a new faction of anti-immigrant racists who are happy Meyer is "finally taking a stand" against the described onslaught of job-stealing immigrants. While Meyer eventually trades in this newfound, xenophobic political capital with an Arizona senator willing to support her filibuster reform bill, Gov. Chung holds a press conference during which he speaks confidently, emotively, and articulately about his American identity, regaining the political upper hand from Meyer.

"I'd like to say a few words about comments that were made earlier today," Chung began. "Despite what is said in some dark corners of the internet, when I was born, both my parents were fully naturalized American citizens...I am a second-generation Chinese-American. I have a Purple Heart on my chest but the one that beats inside of me is red, white, and blue...and that's why this is the greatest country on Earth!"

While Chung's speech is greeted with eye rolling and faux-vomiting noises in Meyer's office, it is considered a political coup elsewhere. By first of all clarifying his status as American-born, Gov. Chung reestablished himself as an individual of political power and significance rather than part of the immigrant other cited during Meyer's visit to the hospital. In

*Latino Spin*, Arlene Dávila asserts that citizenship and class in America for Latino (here applied to include all non-Western) immigrants are inexorably linked (Dávila 2008:37). Gov. Chung's initial reassurance that he is, in fact, a natural born citizen is to establish immediately into his speech, that he has a right to speak (also to subtly and personally attack Meyer). He then takes the next step to validating his genealogy, which is to point out that his parents were naturalized citizens by the time he was born. In establishing his parents' citizenship status, he is undertaking the important step, according Dávila in her book *Latinos, Inc*, of framing his ethnicity in a way that "does not present a problem" to other American citizens (Dávila 2001:35). Gov. Chung's Chineseness has now been designed to inform his identity less publicly than his Americanness, making the rest of his speech even more accessible to his audience. He continues by reminding those watching of his serious accomplishments while serving as a part of the military and especially as a way to emphasize his renewed commitment to American values. As Dávila points out, "dreams and aspirations are always in; talk of poverty and injustice is always a downer" (Dávila 2008:43). By focusing on his achievements and reminding the audience of his potential, Gov. Chung is serving the audience as a feel-good reminder of the nicer tenants of the American Dream. He has worked hard, sacrificed much, and is now standing before the audience today as a state governor and potential vice-president, showing the audience what he believes to be possible if one applies oneself. It is through this final testament to his status as war-hero politician and socioeconomic success that officially de-otherizes him.

By offering himself as a success of the American Dream, Gov. Chung is saying that he not only subscribes to the set of values promoting economic (and in his case, political) mobility, but that he embodies them. He plays on the concept Pawan Dhingra calls the "model minority"

who has managed to “‘out-white’ whites” with his pursuit of excellence and success (Dhingra 2012:90). By succeeding so completely in such a public field of achievement, Gov. Chung is considered not only special and accomplished among regular people but also among politicians, especially Meyer. Gov. Chung’s speech is an effective way of expressing his own personal power because of its ability to restore his agency that was temporarily lost in a “dark corner of the internet” and damaged by shouts of “It’s not the Yellow House.” By de-otherizing himself he has not only made himself American in the eyes of the public but has assumed the position of great American.

In their own separate ways, both the woman on janitorial staff in *The Thick Of It* and Gov. Danny Chung are able to use atmospheres of political correctness (and the values systems they represent) to de-otherize themselves as immigrants. By ostensibly claiming participation in the American and British Dreams in a politically correct environment, both characters were able to shed their status as other and successfully engage with surrounding characters. This method of de-otherization, however, necessitates the rejection of the previous otherized community. The woman in *The Thick Of It* does not speak on behalf of the other cleaning staff, who have spent the night in the situation that she has. When she exerts leverage over Malcolm Tucker and Ben Swain, she uses it to continue their conversation about her report to the tabloids as well as to negotiate her return home before the cleaning of the conference room. In the scenes after her discussion with Tucker, other members of the janitorial staff from earlier in the night are shown cleaning well into the morning although she has gone home. In *Veep*, Gov. Chung dissociates himself from Chinese-Americans born in China and de-legitimizes the Americanness of citizens born outside of the United States.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, areas of political correctness were used both to reinforce the values systems inherent in the American and British Dreams as well as to de-otherize individuals who appropriately rejected their previously assigned community. Racist and xenophobic jokes made by oafish characters in the sitcoms described were criticized by surrounding characters who in turn used the same stereotypes in their own dialogue. By employing de-otherization through political correctness, these characters are seen to “earn” individuality in the eyes of society, including freedom from association with economic, social, and political problems. In the next chapter, I will explore immigrant characters’ expression of non-Western identity as depicted in the British and American versions of the teen-oriented drama *Skins*, further exploring the relationship between de-otherization and social belonging referenced here.

### **Chapter 3 - Otherness and Expression of Cultural Identity**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I will focus on the expression of cultural identity of second-generation immigrant characters in the British and American versions of the show *Skins*. In each version, the young character of the British Anwar Kharral and the American Abbud Siddiqui self-identifies as Muslim, with differing social consequences. As in the other chapters, studying the major differences between the original and adapted materials is the key to understanding major cultural differences between the two societies described, specifically how non-Western immigrants to each country are otherized through their perceived participation in or rejection of the American (pursuit of economic mobility) or British (aspirations of cultural Britishness and high societal class) Dream. When the British Anwar expresses a disapproval of gayness that he attributes to Islam, he is punished socially and otherized for his refutation of what is depicted as cultural Britishness (tolerance towards the LGBTQ community). Conversely, the American Anwar, by coming from the same socioeconomic background and subscribing to the same level of consumption and economic participation as his peers is not excluded or otherized. By comparing these episodes, I will continue synthesizing adaptation theory and the idea of non-Western otherization to understand how the values of the American and British Dreams for immigrants are represented in the context of cultural identity.

## **Program History**

### *Skins (U.K.)*

Teen dramas have long been a staple of modern television in the United States and United Kingdom. One of the most controversial of the past decade is the UK version of *Skins*. *Skins*, which aired for the first time on January 25, 2007, focuses on the lives, loves, and misdeeds of sixth form (equivalent to American high school years 11 and 12) students in Bristol, England. *Skins*'s head producers and writers father-son duo Bryan Elsley and Jamie Brittan have written predominantly for *Skins* as well as several less known, teen-centric television programs and films. Elsley and Brittan, who was 20 when *Skins* first aired, created the show with the intention of showing an honest take on British teen life. Young characters are shown navigating the waters of substance use and abuse, sexual activity (with each other, strangers, and even a teacher), and mental disorders. Elsley and Brittan, who both also have acting experience, have written predominantly for *Skins* as well as several less known, teen-centric television programs and films. Rather than follow its young characters to college and beyond, as many other teen dramas do, *Skins* has its main characters graduate every two years and cycles out its teenaged cast, bringing in new actors and story lines to maintain realism and freshness. Elsley and Brittan have also included teen writers on staff to help inform situations and plots for the characters as well as draft parts of dialogue. Some of the teen writers even included cast members, who were encouraged to provide their take on the material. By emphasizing a commitment to showing the most authentic and up to date possible teen experience, *Skins* is informed not only by the cultural perspective of creator and writer Elsley but also the lives of the show's young writers who have been commissioned by the network to represent the social issues that shape their own experience

in order to make *Skins* an accurate a depiction of teenage life in the United Kingdom. Inclusion of Anwar and Abbud, second-generation Pakistani-American and -British, is therefore a reflection of the demographics and cultural exchanges that influence the lives of everyday teenagers.

Although *Skins* technically began airing on E4, a pay-for digital network, its runaway success caused broadcasters to move it to Channel 4, the public channel in charge of E4. *Skins* followed the same pattern as other hits *ER* and the original *Shameless* that aired first on the private channel and then in a narrative repeat on the main network (Holmwood 2008). The show has been so consistently popular during its now seven season run that *The Guardian* newspaper has a special online archive for *Skins*-related articles. Its success, especially among younger audience blocs, showcases the relevance of *Skins* depiction of teenage life and the resonance of the experiences shown with the show's audience.

### *Skins (U.S.)*

Public debate surrounding the appropriateness (or inappropriateness) of *Skins* subject matter and general aesthetic followed Elsley to the United States when he was approached about making an American adaptation. By the time *Skins (U.S.)* aired for the first time on January 17, 2011, on MTV, Elsley had been involved in the adaptation process for over eighteen months, despite initial apprehension about how the show would perform in an American format (Barshad 2011). As Brittan, his son, and a friend stayed on to keep the original *Skins* going, Elsley focused his attentions on the American remake. Although he did not keep at least one teen member on his writing staff as in the British production, American *Skins* was written with the

help of a “Teen Advisory Board” (MTV 2011). According to Elsley, the teen advisors would join him and the rest of the writing staff on Thursdays: “They hang out with us, we read the scripts around the room, we do whatever we think. We eat pizza and talk about stuff” (Barshad 2011). In this way, says Elsley, the American *Skins* would be able to resonate with American teenagers the way the original had with its British audience.

Although several American networks (cable and otherwise) expressed interest in the show, Elsley eventually decided on MTV. “[The other networks] were missing a commitment to the core values of the show...[They] were basically saying, ‘We love the sex, drugs, and rock and roll, and can we have all that without the sex, drugs, and rock and roll?’” (Barshad 2011). In this interview and others, Elsley credits MTV’s willingness to take a risk as well as their accessibility to “the markets that [Elsley’s] interested in...young people” (Barshad 2011). Elsley also mentions his interest in and respect for American teen dramas in multiple interviews, specifically *Gossip Girl* and *Buffy* (Berman 2011). Like *Gossip Girl*, however, *Skins* became an immediate target for groups like the Parents Television Council (PTC) which called the show “dangerous” and accused it of violating child pornography laws. “*Skins* is definitely not the most dangerous program ever on television,” Elsley counters, when asked by an interviewer about the PTC’s response, “*Skins* is not about how crazy teenagers are -- it’s about how great they are” (Berman 2011). Elsley’s decision to adapt *Skins* with MTV over the other interested networks, as well as to challenge the PTC’s assertions about the show’s content, is further evidence of Elsley’s commitment to creating a show that would accurately reflect the teenage experience and to working with a network that had the same vision for the program.

Despite this optimistic description of the show's intentions, *Skins* (US) was canceled after less than a season on the air. Starting with the ad campaign, groups like the Parents Television Council angrily protested the airing of *Skins* and MTV as a network, claiming that much of the show's content was offensive, promoted casual sex and drug and alcohol use, and constituted child pornography. As some of the cast members were as young as fifteen, MTV executives held several meetings throughout the airing of the first season to debate the issue. No charges from the federal government were filed, but continued negative feedback from the PTC and others caused problems for the show and MTV throughout the year. After the first two episodes aired, Elsley published an op-ed on the MTV website that was circulated throughout other outlets in the American press, addressing the criticisms and defending his show. In this article, he defends the core values of his teenaged characters and refers to *Skins* multiple times as "traditional" or having "traditional values" (Elsley 2011). He cites the show's acceptance by a worldwide audience and encourages readers to look beyond the media sensationalism surrounding the show's premiere and to focus on the story (Elsley 2011). Despite the debate about the show's content, *Skins* premiered to strong numbers and middling reviews. Many reviewers in the mainstream print and web media who had seen the original cited disappointment tempered with optimism for what the rest of the season would hold (Nussbam 2011). Others attacked what they perceived as a faux-edginess and Ken Tucker of *Entertainment Weekly* even interrupted his summary of the show's premise with "z-z-z-z-z...oh sorry, my head hit the keyboard while I was typing phrases familiar to describing so many 'daring' teen shows" (Tucker 2011).

Despite the perceived boredom of most reviewers, continued protestations about the show's inappropriate subject matter from the PTC and other groups caused serious problems for

the network and producers of the show. The resulting edits only bolstered audience criticism of *Skins*'s insufficient edginess. Although there was a dip in viewership after the first two episodes, network executives were most nervous about losing sponsorship from major companies. "Blue-chip" companies like General Motors, Subway, and Taco Bell pulled funding from the show and asked MTV to stop running their advertisements during the program (Elliot 2011). Although MTV was still able to fill ad time with material from second and third tier advertisers (video games and entertainment media, fast food chains, acne medication), media analyst Stuart Elliot claimed *Skins* lack of big name advertisers does not ever bode well for a cable channel (Elliot 2011). Controversy with watchdog groups and issues with sponsors proved to be too challenging for MTV. Unfortunately for fans, MTV, and Elsley, and company, positive audience reception and improving ratings (59% higher than for the same period in 2009, according to MTV) could not save the show and *Skins* (US) was canceled after its first season (Elliot 2011).

Ratings inconsistency aside, *Skins* was one of the most talked about shows of 2011 both in entertainment media as well as television viewers, especially with young people, Elsley's target audience. Young people, the show's desired audience, watched in large numbers at the show's outset. Media analyst David Carr, in an article about the business potential of a show like *Skins* on MTV, wrote that even just after the pilot episode, his fourteen year old daughter had already saved it to the DVR and informed her father that "yes, everybody at school was talking about it" (Carr 2011). Like the original *Skins* (UK), *Skins* (US) struck a chord with young people, its writers and audience, who saw something valuable and resonate in the vision of teenagers it represented. Both versions of *Skins* dealt very heavily in issues of identity as the audience followed the characters' attempts to find themselves. Looking at sexuality,

relationships with family, relationships with friends, religion, and other categories, *Skins* has been, most of all, a show about identity creation and definition for young people in the United Kingdom and United States.

Keeping this in mind, I have decided to focus on the social life of the same character in the first season of each show, Anwar Kharral in the original, Abbud Siddiqui in the American remake. With one exception, the American version of *Skins* kept the same general personality traits (if not names) of the Abbud character of the original Anwar. Anwar/Abbud is the son of Pakistani immigrants and identifies as Muslim. Anwar/Abbud, however, behaves in ways that are described as contradictory to Islam such as eating pork, drinking alcohol, using drugs, and engaging in premarital sex. Throughout the season, Anwar/Abbud's major plot points hinge on his near constant pursuit of sex and a serious argument with his best friend.

### **Episode(s) Summary**

Episodes of *Skins* in the British and American versions almost always focus on and are named after a single character. While most on-screen time is devoted to the title character, each episode's protagonist continues to interact with the rest of the main cast and incorporates long term story lines into the episodes plot. The only episode of *Skins* (UK) in the first season to focus on two people is "Maxxie and Anwar." Its American equivalent, "Abbud," shares the same major plot points with "Maxxie and Anwar" and it is most likely that the separation of the two characters' episodes is due to the larger number of episodes in an American television season overall.

Both episodes take place during a class trip outside the country (Russia in the original, Canada in the remake). Major plot points remain the same, while there is also a subplot of Anwar/Abbud seeing things that his classmates do not. In Anwar's case, he sees a semi-clothed Russian girl living in the compound next door. For Abbud, the visions are a psychotic serial killer hiding in the Canadian woods. The episode-defining event, however, is the fight between Anwar/Abbud and his best friend about tension caused by his friend's gayness. Despite the overall similarity, these stories pan out in a profoundly different way.

## **Differences**

### *Representations of Muslim Communities in the U.S. and U.K.*

In both shows, other characters' treatment of Anwar/Abbud's Muslim identity is significantly different cross-culturally. In his book *How Does It Feel To Be A Problem?*, literature scholar Moustafa Bayoumi describes public preconceptions about Muslims in the United States before September 11th. Before the 9/11 attacks, Bayoumi claims, "the American popular imagination was essentially blind to Arabs and Muslims" (Bayoumi 2008:133). Representations of Arab-Americans and American Muslims after 9/11, continues Bayoumi, mostly reference terrorism or the conflict in the Middle East (Bayoumi 2008:117). Outside of presentations of Arab-American or American Muslim as terrorist, Arabs and Muslims, according to Bayoumi, either occupy the role of "model minority," following the American Dream of economic mobility, or "remain largely out of view" (Bayoumi 2008:133). Because Abbud's Muslimness is visible but not actively linked to terrorism in *Skins* (U.S.) (in both versions, Anwar/Abbud has trouble passing through border control during the school trip because of racial

profiling and unvalidated assumptions of terrorism), he and his family meet Bayoumi's qualification for the third type of Muslims prevalent in American popular culture: the hardworking immigrant and de-otherized "model minority."

Conversely, the United Kingdom has historically had a higher rate of immigration from South Asia and a larger Muslim population than the United States. Representations of South Asian and Muslim identity have therefore been more prevalent in the U.K. compared to the United States. In her ethnography on Punjabi communities in London, anthropologist Marie Gillespie discusses the numbers of South Asian immigrants in London during the 1990s as well as cultural preconceptions about South Asian or Muslim peoples. According to Gillespie, South Asians and Muslims in the U.K. are viewed as very different and separated from the rest of the national population, otherized by their perceived decision to live with other South Asians and to continue practicing and participating in South Asian culture or the Islamic faith (Gillespie 1995:29). Representations of Anwar's Muslimness in *Skins* (U.K.) is therefore consistent with Gillespie's conclusions about popular culture presentations of South Asian and Muslim communities in the United Kingdom. Through his expression of Muslim identity, Anwar reaffirms his status as other within his group of friends as well as British society.

#### *Anwar (U.K.)*

Like the examples in previous chapters, some of the changes made over the course of adapting one show or episode are a result of trans-national differences. These differences mostly deal in differing standards and practices, e.g. there are fewer episodes per television season in the United Kingdom. *Skins* (U.S.), because of decency limits, features less profanity and nudity than

the original. Both are set in major cities with populations smaller than 700,000, Bristol in the original and Baltimore in the adapted American version. Both versions also represent other people of color besides Anwar/Abbud. In the British version, classmate Jal Frazer identifies as black while in the American version characters Daisy Valero and Cadie Campbell both identify as young women of color. For Jal, Daisy, and Cadie, expression of non-white identity does not play a significant role in their interactions with social life and is rarely referenced throughout the show. Also, because of the American *Skins* uncertain future on MTV, story lines from the second season are incorporated into the first although that is not the case with the episodes “Maxxie and Anwar” and “Abbud.”

More tellingly, the major plot differences in this episode showcase the major cultural differences between the United States and the United Kingdom. In “Maxxie and Anwar,” characters Maxxie and Anwar get into a very serious fight because of Anwar’s disapproval Maxxie’s homosexuality. Anwar believes and tells Maxxie that being gay is a sin. The ensuing argument causes a rift between them for the rest of the season, despite their continued loyalty and friendship. At the outset of their school trip to Russia, the students arrive to their hostel where their history teacher reminds them (and the audience) that this trip is about understanding “other people’s culture.” Once the students settle in, Maxxie and Anwar pick a room to share. As Maxxie rummages through Anwar’s bag, Anwar flips through Maxxie’s sketchbook, complimenting Maxxie on his ability. He sees a picture of the two of them and Maxxie tells him he can keep it. When Maxxie is called out of the room, Anwar tears the drawing out and is surprised and uncomfortable to discover a detailed drawing of a penis on the next page. He contorts his face in confusion and discomfort and then looks down his own pants to compare.

Maxxie returns to the room and when he and Anwar are alone Anwar asks Maxxie not to bring any guys back to their room that night to “do stuff” together. Because Anwar, as Maxxie’s best friend, has been aware of Maxxie’s gayness before the time frame when the show began, Maxxie initially plays off Anwar’s comment as a joke, saying he will help Anwar find a Russian woman to bring back so he does not have to be so jealous. As Anwar continues, Maxxie becomes offended at Anwar’s tone and phrasing and claims that if he brought a girl back himself, Anwar would be ok with it. As their argument escalates, Anwar quietly asks Maxxie if he has ever “been with a girl.” Maxxie becomes even more upset and asks Anwar if he has ever been with a man to which Anwar replies, “Don’t be sick.” Maxxie, even more upset than before asks if that means Anwar thinks he is sick. “No...” Anwar tells him, hesitatingly, “I don’t know what I think, yeah? I’m just a Muslim, gay’s, just wrong.” In Chapter 3 of his book *Desiring Arabs*, modern Arab politics and intellectual history scholar Joseph Massad describes the cultural belief, attributed by Massad to the West, that Islam and all Muslims, specifically in the Arab world, condemn gayness outright (Massad 2008:187). This essentialist view of the world’s Muslim community is used by the West as part of the justification for anti-Islamist sentiment, particularly in the United States. Tying Anwar’s discomfort with homosexuality to his Muslimness further serves to otherize Anwar through this specific expression of Islam that is depicted as contradicting British cultural values, which in the context of the show include acceptance of and tolerance towards gayness.

Maxxie retorts that Anwar must not want anything to do with him then and leaves to switch rooms. He arrives to Tony and Sid’s room and asks them to switch saying, “Anwar’s decided to become a Muslim.” Sid asks if Anwar is becoming more Muslim than he was already

to which Maxxie responds, “A bit more Muslim, yeah.” Anwar is shown alone in the room, clearly upset by what has just transpired. By describing Anwar as “more Muslim” than he was before, the other characters on *Skins* identify intolerance towards gayness as one of the important tenets of practicing Islam. Because Anwar is previously described as drinking alcohol, consuming pork, using recreational drugs, and engaging in premarital sex, Anwar’s homophobia’s ability to make him “more Muslim” signifies the other characters’ belief that discriminating against gay people is a more significant part of Islam than abstaining from alcohol, pork, and premarital sex. Intolerance of gayness is further associated with Islam and Anwar’s expression of Muslim identity, and thus Anwar is placed even further outside of the values system assigned to cultural Britishness.

The next day, Maxxie confronts Anwar and hands him another drawing, where Maxxie has drawn him with a group of busty, scantily dressed women. As Anwar thanks Maxxie for the drawing, Maxxie gets angry and vents at him, ultimately tearing up the drawing of Anwar and the women and throwing it in Anwar’s face.

MAXXIE. You fucking prick. I can’t believe YOU were putting that Muslim bullshit on me.

ANWAR. What?

MAXXIE. What I do is against God? You’re the fucking worst Muslim ever!

ANWAR. I pray five times a day.

MAXXIE. For what? More pork chops? Oh fuck it, let’s get a drink. Of course God wants you doing [drugs]!

ANWAR. Shut up, yeah, you’re talking about my religion.

MAXXIE. How come I was ever friends with such a fucking hypocrite? Happy fucking Ramadan.

ANWAR. It’s not Ramadan!

Throughout the episode, Anwar’s Muslim identity is seen as a source of tension between him and Maxxie. The beliefs Anwar attributes to being a part of a Muslim run counter not only

to what other characters believe makes someone a Muslim (e.g. abstaining from pork and alcohol) but also to morals other characters treat as a universal (tolerance towards the LGBTQ community). Throughout the argument, and despite other characters' declarations that Anwar is in the wrong, his belief that homosexuality is wrong is never attributed to willful ignorance or intolerance on Anwar's part. He makes it clear throughout the series that he sincerely cares about Maxxie, even telling his parents, in a different episode, that Maxxie is gay. Anwar's badness here, uncharacteristic for a character who has no other social conflicts for the rest of the season, is not an ascribed personality trait or a result of growing up in the still systemically homophobic British society. Anwar's discomfort with Maxxie's sexuality, and therefore his wrongdoing, is tied exclusively to his Muslimness. This expression of Muslimness separates him from the rest of the characters on the program, who all openly sympathize with Maxxie and criticize Anwar for his behavior. Even near the end of the episode, after Maxxie saved Anwar from a cuckolded husband, furious at Anwar's sexual relationship with his wife (the semi-clothed girl next door), their conversation on the subject is fruitless. After the ensuing melee, Maxxie finds Anwar outside thinking, and offers him the bottle of vodka he is carrying. Anwar thanks Maxxie but turns down the vodka, saying he is, in fact, a hypocrite and that "it's just not right." Maxxie becomes upset again.

MAXXIE. It's religion, Anwar. It's just stuff. You don't have to believe in it.

ANWAR. But where does that leave me, Max? I'm a Muslim boy. I don't get to choose.

MAXXIE. Well then where does that leave us?"

That question is met with silence. On the plane ride back from Russia, Maxxie and Anwar are now sitting in different rows, far apart from each other. Despite maintaining their closeness, the fight between Anwar and Maxxie remains unresolved, presumably until Anwar

apologizes to Maxxie and changes his views on homosexuality. When Maxxie tells Anwar that religion is “just stuff,” he is asking Anwar to shed the part of his identity that is causing tension between them. When Anwar maintains that he cannot just stop believing, he reaffirms his Muslimness as a crucial part of his identity, once again making his religion culpable in the eyes of the audience for separating the two friends.

In *European Others*, Fatima El-Tayeb describes the view that Islam and European identity are incompatible (El-Tayeb 2011:81). As in the *Skins* (U.K.) example, Muslim communities “appear as by default homophobic and heterosexual...reflecting the global discourse of progress and human rights in which the white west inevitably takes the lead” (El-Tayeb 2011:120) By making the fight about sexuality, Islam is made the villain in a way that would be most palatable to the audience, intolerance towards Maxxie. Because Anwar has cited homosexuality as wrong, the audience is given permission to become anti-Muslim and view this character as bad. El-Tayeb refers to this western sense of superiority about human rights as “progressive Islamophobia” which stipulates that there are no “articulate” Muslim feminists or Muslim queer activists, only those “who have left the repressive culture of Islam” and “are brave enough to speak up” now that they have completely broken “with their religion and community in order to be liberated” (El-Tayeb 2011:116).

This especially applies to Anwar’s family. In the last episode of the season, during Anwar’s birthday party, Maxxie gives Anwar an ultimatum to tell his parents about Maxxie’s sexuality or Maxxie will not attend. After Anwar tells his father, Mr. Kharral, who has said on previous occasions that Maxxie is his favorite of Anwar’s friends, does not treat Maxxie any differently, telling him and Anwar that there are things in the world that “[his] religion” cannot

explain, i.e. Maxxie being a good person and also gay. When Anwar and his father finally accept Maxxie's gayness, it is not because either character now views queer identity as compatible with the moral code of Islam, but because Maxxie's dual identity as a gay man and a good person cannot be understood through "[his] religion." This behavior ties into El-Tayeb's previous explanation that acceptance in European society requires "liberation" from a Muslim identity. Anwar and Maxxie's relationship problems would have never fully resolved if Anwar's father had not separated himself (and Anwar by extension) from an Islamic ethical framework and subscribed to the same mindset as the rest of the characters.

### *Abbud*

This incompatibility is not represented in the American episode. In "Abbud," Abbud decides he wants to spend the trip to Canada romantically pursuing his lesbian best friend Tea (the Maxxie character). Abbud attempts to share a bunk with Tea (who declines), interrupts the girls' "girl talk" to talk to her, and rejects his friend Chris's suggestions that he should focus on seducing less attractive or intelligent girls than Tea as the best chance of losing his virginity. When he eventually tries to kiss her, she rebuffs his advances saying, "What you want...isn't how I'm built." Abbud becomes intensely embarrassed and leaves her alone. Later, while pursuing the "serial killer" (the subplot only he can see, equivalent to the Russian girl in "Maxxie and Anwar"), he finds Tea and Tony, another boy on the trip, in a barn in the middle of having sex. Abbud becomes extremely angry and upset and runs away from the barn, eventually to the top of a wooden climbing post and platform the kids had tried to climb earlier. When Tea leaves Tony to find Abbud and explain, he is mostly uninterested in talking to her. When she eventually

describes her confusion about her feelings for Tony, Abbud asks her angrily, “What don’t you get about being a lesbian?” His attempts to get away from Tea again are foiled when he falls off the post and needs to be taken to the hospital. Tea runs for help and then waits by his side until he regains consciousness and is boarded into a truck to be taken to see a doctor. Once he awakes and sees Tea’s concerned face, Abbud immediately apologizes for his behavior and asks if Tea is now angry with him. She says that of course she is not, both tell the other one they love them, and the episode ends with them perfectly resolving their issue.

In this episode, the source of tension between the friends is not Abbud’s Muslim identity (represented in a previous episode) but rather his immaturity as a spurned teenage boy. Because Abbud’s current emotional soreness is not assigned in other episodes as a permanent part of his identity, he is able to immediately resolve the issue. Abbud’s status as Muslim is never problematic with his relationship with others and does not play a major role in any of the plots of which he is a part. For example, later on in the first season of *Skins* (U.S.), Abbud becomes sexually involved with Daisy Valero. After his father has discovered and disapproved of his relationship with Daisy, Abbud jokingly laments to a friend that his father is considering sending him to “Muslim rehab” in Bangladesh. The two exchange jokes about the subject, e.g. that Abbud’s inability to grow a full beard will preclude him from becoming a more devout Muslim, and then move on. Abbud’s relationship with Daisy continues unimpeded until the two decide to become boyfriend and girlfriend in the final episode.

In fact, Abbud’s Muslim identity, is not a large part of his representation at all. Unlike Anwar, who wears a kurta and/or taquiyah/topi on several occasions outside his home or mosque, Abbud exclusively wears t-shirts, jeans, and sweatshirts, just like his classmates. He

also wears a gold watch and chain necklace, and carries a more expensive cell phone than his classmates. In one episode, where a different character's mother has left her son an envelope full of cash, Abbud picks up the money and starts throwing it out of his hands, pretending to be a rapper at a gentlemen's club. His other friends laugh and take part as well, rapping about money and cars and other material aspirations. This, more so than his Muslim or Pakistani identity, defines Abbud in the context of his friends. For example, both Anwar and Abbud are similarly racially profiled by security in their attempts to pass through border control during their school trip. In the British version, Anwar is immediately brought to a second room for questioning by officials who Anwar claims are "disappointed" to discover he is not a terrorist. One of Anwar's classmate Tony responds by chiding that Anwar is a "very dull Muslim." Although Tony is joking, he equates Muslimness with further negative cultural associations, i.e. terrorism. Conversely, in the American version, Abbud is detained at border control after successfully passing through initially because a classmate joked to the security officer that Abbud was hiding a bomb in his rectum. When Abbud is released from his cavity search, he tells another classmate who had, in fact, been smuggling drugs in his rectum, that he was taking a bullet for him. Unlike in the U.K. version, there is no direct association of Abbud's Muslimness with terrorism. Here, stereotypes that affect Muslim men while traveling are manipulated by other characters (successfully, because Abbud is not carrying explosives) to distract from the actual illegal activity. While Anwar's classmates shouted jokes about terrorism after Anwar as he was being dragged away by security, Abbud's complicity in this manipulation of the Canadian guard's racial profiling shows that his expression of Muslimness is not a source of tension or social isolation but rather an additional way to relate to his friends and classmates.

This phenomenon is discussed by academic Pawan Dhingra in his book *Managing Multicultural Lives*. In a section called, “Victims of their Own Success,” Dhingra describes the weakening of cultural heritage in the face of the American pursuit of consumer culture. “The distinction between what is ‘ethnic’ and what is ‘American’ blurs as popular institutions become more cultural” (Dhingra 2007:202). While Dhingra warns that a growingly blended American society can weaken links between second and third generation children and their ties to their “home” culture, he also makes the point that many cultural practices not found originally in the United States (e.g. henna) are accepted and even practiced by people with no blood ties to that culture (Dhingra 2007:203). As part of his chapter on leisure activity, Dhingra’s writing in this section describes the way people in American society (comparatively to the British example) relate more to each other on a socioeconomic level than a cultural one. The families Dhingra mentions have the same means to participate in leisure activities that their friends do and are therefore culturally categorized in the same way. Such is the case with Abbud. The only time in the show Abbud is shown praying is in the pilot episode, an almost shot for shot remake of the British original. Unlike Anwar, who is wearing full Pakistani-style salwar kameez, Abbud is praying with his family wearing the same kind of t-shirt and jeans he wears in every other scene or episode. Because he comes from the same generally middle class background as his classmates, he is not shown as different from them in any significant way due to his cultural identification. Abbud’s Muslimness is treated as a fact by his friends, but not a part of him that causes any sort of problems or impedes his social life.

## Conclusion

These attitudes are part of the overarching themes of these shows, as seen in the two previous chapters, of de-otherization of immigrants through subscribing to the values' set of both countries described. Abbud (U.S.) is represented as a second-generation "model minority." Also referenced by Bayoumi, sociologist Pawan Dhingra defines the "model minority," specifically referring to East and South Asian individuals, as seeming "hardworking...and accommodating" (Dhingra 2007:136). In the capacity of "model minority," immigrants (Dhingra focuses on first and second-generation), "do not threaten the status of White men even as they help uphold the nation's economy" (Dhingra 2007:136). This stereotype supports the idea of de-otherization through the American Dream. Because the men and women described are seen as valuable participants in the working economy, they are de-otherized through their perceived pursuit of the American Dream, although, in reality, the racism and xenophobia inherent in the "model minority" trope limit chances of professional success. In Abbud's case, like the "model minority" described by Dhingra, his assigned acceptance of the same values system as his peers (the American Dream) means that his expression of non-Western identity does not make him an other in the social situations portrayed by the show.

In *Skins* (U.K.), contrarily, Anwar's expression of his Muslim and non-Western identity is seen as a source of tension between him and his friends. Only partially subscribing to British cultural practices (e.g. eating sausages, drinking alcohol) does not ensure full acceptance into his social group and any assertion of non-British values becomes a problem when interacting with others. In the case with his argument with his best friend Maxxie, Anwar's articulated discomfort with Maxxie's sexuality is equated with Anwar's Muslimness and both concepts, now

treated as a single declaration of thought, are treated as morally wrong by the other characters on the show. Anwar's fight with Maxxie exemplifies the West-East binary described by El-Tayeb wherein non-Western cultural practices, specifically Islam, are associated with intolerance or discrimination in order to justify discrimination and otherization from the West. "The claim...is not framed as a conflict between a Christian majority and a Muslim minority, both of whom are European, but between European humanism, committed to the protection of rights, namely those of gender equality and sexual freedom, and a hostile, ignorant, foreign culture" (El-Tayeb 2011:82). By connecting Anwar's Muslimness with homophobia, which is subsequently treated as a universal injustice by other characters, Anwar is excluded socially and otherized for his articulation of non-Western, and thus, non-British, identity.

Furthermore, like the examples cited in the two previous chapters and despite the focus on non-Western, immigrant protagonists, Anwar and Abbud's status as other or de-otherized is determined by other characters' responses to their actions. Even as starring characters, the main plot-drivers of the episode, Anwar and Abbud's respective otherness or non-otherness was determined by non-immigrant characters. Although the story was largely told from Anwar and Abbud's perspectives (each were given the most screen time and lines in their respective episodes), they are still required to submit to the same external frameworks encouraged by the British and American Dreams or face the social consequences.

## Conclusion

By comparing the British and American entertainment television's takes on specific issues surrounding immigration it is possible to better understand the similarities and differences between the principles encouraged through the American Dream and its British equivalent, as well as ideas about immigration and diversity in the United States and United Kingdom. The American Dream, as posited in the introduction to this thesis, glorifies the pursuit of economic mobility above all else while the British Dream, as it could be described, insists on a cultural assimilation to a specific standard of Britishness typically assigned to the highest social class. Immigrants to each country must then subscribe to these respective values systems in order to rid themselves of their otherness and, in doing so, become "American" or "British."

Studying adapted material has also provided a special insight into looking at this major difference. While both television shows deal in the same superficial aspect of immigration, the changes between the original and adapted material belie the different perspectives of the writers/directors/producers involved. In her book *Hamlet's Arab Journey*, scholar of Arabic and comparative literature Margaret Litvin describes this process of trans-national or cross-cultural adaptation as a "global kaleidoscope." The "global kaleidoscope" rejects what Litvin sees as an overly simplistic binary of influencer/influencee that she believes is overused in adaptive and intertextual studies. By looking at adapted material through a "global kaleidoscope," scholars can better understand the "active dialogue" that informs the rewriting of any story (Litvin 2011:6). In adapting material, Litvin claims, the decisions of what to keep and what to change are "circumscribed by audience considerations: what would make sense lexically, resonate

culturally, and pay off politically” (Litvin 2011:7). In each of the adaptations studied, the core writer, director, or producer, additionally shaped by their own experience, sits down to write what he or she believes will strike a chord most effectively with the show’s audience, what is most relevant to his or her own life and the lives of people watching. The dissimilarities between the original material and its adaptation are then the nexus of cultural differences between the perspectives of the adaptee and adaptor, here the two countries studied.

### **Thematic Reflection**

The adaptive changes made in the shows described herein show the powerful differences in cultural views on immigration in each context. In Chapter 1, I explored the ways in which the American and British Dreams were expressed in *Law & Order* and its adaptation, *Law & Order: UK*. Here, operation outside of the values systems encouraged for immigrants in each country equates to criminality or a criminal element. For example, criminality is expressed in the actions of the villain, shown in *Law & Order* as impeding the economic mobility of other immigrants (e.g. demands for bribes) and in *Law & Order: UK* as facilitating in the undocumented immigration of middle to low income Turkish people who identify more strongly with a Turkish community than a British one. In each episode, the involvement of each villain in the central crime is exposed and they are punished both legally for conspiring to commit arson and metaphorically as violators of the American and British Dreams.

For the second chapter, the television programs chosen showcase the stereotypes in each country about the roles of undocumented immigrants in each country’s greater economy and how they are employed by the politically and non-politically correct. “Immigrant” in these episodes

is exclusively applied to non-white, undocumented arrivals who have exclusively traveled to the United States or United Kingdom for employment in low-skilled areas. Gaffe-prone politicians and office bosses are designed to be chastised for their comments on undocumented immigrants although the comments made by the episodes “good guys” or actual representation of immigrants rely on the same stereotype. In the British *In The Thick Of It* and its American cousin *Veep*, junior minister Ben Swain and Senator Ben O’Brien, respectively, are depicted as ignorant and racist for what they have said to or about undocumented immigrants. Characters portrayed as intelligent or tolerant however also rely on the same stereotypes in their conversation. For example, the aide in *Veep* who counters another aide’s claim that building a 3,000 mile fence on the U.S.-Mexico border would boost America’s construction industry by claiming the project would require labor from all the immigrants the other aide is attempting to exclude to remain cost-effective. Here, immigrants’ perceived refusal to secure documentation and join the formal economy is taken as fact by “good” characters. Remarks made by “good” characters in the British *The Thick of It* and other shows described in Chapter 2 also line up with this treatment of immigrants in each country’s economy as an undocumented monolith seeking only to work in low-paid, menial positions with little possibility of or desire for promotion (in the American version) and to work and live in communities with other non-British immigrants without aspiration to cultural Britishness.

The third chapter deals in the social tensions surrounding representation of cultural identity through the British and American versions of the show *Skins*. In the British version, episode protagonist Anwar gets into a major fight with his best friend. The source of the conflict is attributed by other characters, and eventually Anwar, as an intolerant aspect of his Muslim

faith. Anwar's identity as Pakistani and his interpretation of being Muslim is an important factor in his interactions with his friends and other students, who, throughout the first season of the show, ignore it, criticize it, or treat it as a joke. His cultural non-Britishness here is often classified as a problem afflicting his social life and only by participating in activities the show identifies as normal and British (e.g. drinking alcohol, eating pork sausages) is he able to make his place in the group. Conversely in the American version, episode protagonist Abbud's identity as Muslim is mentioned rarely throughout the entire series (and not even once in "Abbud," his titular episode) and is not treated as a crucial part of his person. He relates to his group of friends without any issue related to his Muslim-ness and its rather his status as being on the same socioeconomic level is more of a source of connection and resonance than any other cultural part of his identity. The differences in the social lives of these two characters exemplify the difference in the American and British dreams previously described. Perceived non-British aspects of Anwar's identity are a source of tension between Anwar and his friends that is only solved when Anwar more fully subscribes the set of values identified as British. Abbud on the other hand, because his family is a part of the same socio-economic level his friends, and has therefore successfully subscribed to the financially-oriented American Dream.

## **Conclusion**

The core of these differences however, also highlight the aspects of these adaptations that have remained the same. While the significance of cultural difference is found in the changes made during the adaptation process, the unchanged elements also serve the important function of

highlighting the ideas that resonate cross-culturally. In the shows studied, representation of immigration is crucial because it shows how immigrant otherness manifests itself through perceived rejection of the values systems characteristic of the American and British Dreams. The specific creation and perpetuation of the immigrant other is also important in each of these adaptations because it shows the consistency of the same fear: that the immigrant other, by operating outside of the values systems proscribed, represents a threat to the values system overall. Despite the differences in expression of this fear, the same sentiment is prevalent throughout British and American popular culture. In each of the episodes chosen, the negative qualities assigned to immigrant characters and immigration represent the xenophobic defensiveness of immigrant rhetoric in general. The representation of non-white, non-English speaking, and often undocumented immigrants in these stories speaks to the prevalence of non-white, non-English speaking others in both societies, where this otherness is seen as detrimental for their own benefit (preventing them from fully achieving American or British cultural citizenship) but also, and most importantly, as an infringement on others' ability to pursue these "dreams" for themselves.

For example, when the British National Party (BNP) articulates why the immigration is an "unparalleled crisis," they equate multiculturalism (e.g. speaking languages besides English at British schools) with a weakening of British society, leading to crime, over- "politically correct [ness]," and dissolution of the cultural values they identify as British (BNP 2010:17). In the United States, public anti-immigrant discourse usually centers around a perceived loss of jobs for "real" Americans (Porter 2012). In each, these fears represent a perceived violation of American and British citizens' ability to pursue the set of cultural ideals held as the national standard. In

the U.K., the BNP and others fear challenges to their Britishness and the loss of a cultural identity they feel should define country as a whole. In the U.S., public outcry about immigrants “taking” jobs exemplify a national fear of unemployment wherein their desire to fulfill the American Dream of climbing the economic ladder. While discourse in the news media serves to sensationalize and often exacerbate these fears, their manifestation in entertainment television embodies an attempt to allay these fears. In entertainment television in both industries, comparatively similar in their size, scope, and audience to the rest of the world, immigrant characters shown accepting the values systems intrinsic to the American and British Dreams are shown as de-otherized and assimilated, while those seen as rejecting them remain otherized and suffer social, professional, and cultural consequences. For these shows, and many others, the American and British Dreams are employed as an informal cultural citizenship test wherein those who pass are proved to hold the same values as those already living in both countries and those who fail continue to be stigmatized. The values systems of both nations are thus safe from the threats represented by the immigration of non-Western peoples.

Representations of (predominantly non-Western) immigration in popular television in the United States and the United Kingdom, therefore, not only entertain but also serve as a method of addressing and soothing the specific societal fears that dominate each country’s public discourse about immigration. Entertainment television creates a safe space where its writers, producers, directors, and viewers are able to express and process their different ideas and feelings about immigration and other significant social issues. At its most insightful, popular culture, and specifically entertainment television, serves as a stage where a society’s fears, hopes,

and anxieties are allowed to play out and are eventually resolved to the satisfaction of its producers, distributors, and consumers.

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