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**Faith and Assimilation:
Italian Immigrants in the US**

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Abstract

We study the effects of religious organizations on immigrants' assimilation. We focus on the arrival of Italian Catholic churches in the US between 1900 and 1920, when four million Italians had moved to America, and anti-Catholic sentiments were widespread. We combine newly collected Catholic directories on the presence of Italian churches across years and counties with the full count US Census of Population. We find that Italian churches reduced the social assimilation of Italian immigrants, lowering intermarriage rates and increasing ethnic residential segregation. We find no evidence that this was the result of either lower effort exerted by immigrants to “fit in” the American society or increased desire to vertically transmit national culture. Instead, we provide evidence for other two, non-mutually exclusive, mechanisms. First, Italian churches raised the frequency of interactions among fellow Italians, likely generating peer effects and reducing contact with other groups. Second, they increased the salience of the immigrant community among natives, thereby triggering backlash and discrimination.

Keywords: Immigration, assimilation, religious organizations.

JEL codes: J15, N31, Z12.

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1 Introduction

Rising international migration flows have sparked a heated debate on the effects of immigrants in host societies. While some point to the potential economic benefits of immigration, such as increased dynamism and faster growth, others worry about its impact on culture and social norms.¹ The anti-immigration rhetoric prevailing in many Western democracies argues that cultural differences between immigrants and natives, together with the lack of immigrants' integration, pose fundamental threats to social cohesion and may erode national identity.

Concerns over the cultural effects of immigration are often linked to religion – a dimension along which immigrants and natives tend to differ, and an important determinant of culture, beliefs, and moral values (Bisin et al., 2004; Enke, 2019; Herberg, 1983). Irrespective of their specific characteristics and of the faith they are linked to, religious organizations are frequently blamed for perpetuating ethnic practices and for slowing the adoption of norms prevailing in the host society. In recent decades, Muslim immigrants have increasingly become the target of episodes of violence perpetrated by natives (Abdelgadir and Fouka, 2020; Bansak et al., 2016; Bisin et al., 2008; Müller and Schwarz, 2020). Although the religious groups that trigger natives' hostile reactions may differ across time and space, the current animosity is not a new phenomenon. In fact, between 1850 and 1920, when more than 30 million Europeans moved to the United States during the Age of Mass Migration (Abramitzky and Boustan, 2017), Catholic immigrants led to similar, hostile reactions (Alsan et al., 2020; Higham, 1955; Spiro, 2009).

Despite the salience of the topic, however, the effects of religious organizations on immigrants' assimilation have remained surprisingly under-studied, at least within the field of economics. Moreover, such effects are *ex-ante* ambiguous. On the one hand, ethnic religious organizations may keep alive the legacy of national culture either directly (e.g., by encouraging immigrants to stick to their social norms and reminding them of their “roots”) or indirectly (e.g., by favoring the expansion of ethnic networks, or increasing the salience of the immigrant community and triggering backlash among natives). On the other hand, they may alleviate the cost of immigration by providing spiritual and material support, thus favoring the permanence of immigrants in the

¹See Burchardi et al. (2020), Hunt and Gauthier-Loiselle (2010), and Ottaviano and Peri (2012) among others for the positive effects of immigration on innovation and economic growth. See Alesina and Tabellini (2020) for a review of the literature on the political effects of migration.

destination country and making adaptation smoother. In addition, religious organizations may provide key public goods to their members, such as education and informal insurance. This can, in turn, foster the economic and social integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities.

In this paper, we study the effects of ethnic religious organizations on the cultural and social assimilation of immigrants. We examine the role of Italian Catholic churches in the United States between 1900 and 1920, at the peak of the Age of Mass Migration (Abramitzky and Boustan, 2017). We focus on the Italian experience for at least three reasons. First, between 1892 and 1925 more than 4 million Italians migrated to the United States, representing the single largest national group at the time (Ferenczi, 1929; Spitzer and Zimran, 2018). Moreover, while Italian immigrants were homogeneously Catholic, the US was predominantly Protestant at the time because of the heritage from the Anglo-Saxon settlers (Gillis, 2000).² Second, we collected and digitized detailed historical records on the arrival and the presence of Italian Catholic churches and priests. By combining this novel dataset with the full count US Census of Population, we can trace out the effects of religious organizations on immigrants' integration. Third, anecdotal and historical evidence highlights both the importance of the Catholic Church for Italian immigrants (Herberg, 1983; Vecoli, 1969) and the hostile reactions that it triggered among natives at the time (Higham, 1955).

We consider the universe of Italian immigrants living in the United States between 1900 and 1920, and estimate a generalized difference-in-differences (DD) model that compares individuals living in counties that were differentially exposed to the presence of an Italian Catholic church. This strategy nets out any county fixed and any state time-varying characteristics that might have jointly influenced the assimilation of Italian immigrants and the establishment of an Italian Catholic church. That is, the effects of Italian churches are estimated within the same county over time, as compared to other counties within the same state in a given Census year. Our most preferred specification also interacts Census year dummies with several 1900 county characteristics and restricts attention to counties that received at least one Italian church between 1890 and 1920 – something that reinforces the parallel trends assumption – and includes county-specific linear trends – which guarantees that we only exploit variation in the *timing* of the arrival of an Italian church within a given decade.

The identification assumption would be violated if, conditional on controls, counties

²Notable exceptions were the (Catholic) Irish and the Jewish communities. These were, however, minority groups, also opposed by natives because of their religious affiliation (Higham, 1955).

where the assimilation of Italian immigrants was otherwise declining (or, happening faster) received an Italian church earlier within the same decade. As discussed in more detail below, historical accounts suggest that the supply of priests from Italy was limited and highly uncertain (Francesconi, 1983). Hence, although demand for Italian priests may have been stronger in counties that were on different trajectories for immigrants’ assimilation across decades – something that we take care of by including county-specific linear trends – the timing of their arrival within a decade was hard to predict, and highly dependent on conditions prevailing in Italy.

We corroborate the validity of our identification strategy in two ways. First, we test whether church arrivals within a decade are systematically related to changes in county characteristics between 1880 and 1900. Reassuringly, there is no evidence that the timing of first exposure to an Italian church can be predicted by pre-1900 changes in county characteristics. Second, we exploit the granularity of church data, combining them with *yearly* variation in the ethnic content of names chosen by Italian parents for their offspring (Abramitzky et al., 2020). We conduct an event-study exercise and verify that, within the same decade, Italian churches did not arrive earlier in counties that were experiencing a differential change in immigrants’ assimilation.

We find that exposure to Catholic churches slowed down the assimilation of Italian immigrants, as proxied by either intermarriage or residential integration. The former is defined as a dummy equal to one if an Italian immigrant was married to a native of native parentage. The latter is an indicator for having at least one native neighbor (of native parentage), and is constructed with a methodology similar to that in Logan and Parman (2017). Both variables are “equilibrium outcomes”, which are influenced not only by immigrants’ desire to fit in, but also by natives’ attitudes and behavior. According to our most stringent specification, five additional years of exposure to an Italian Catholic church – slightly less than the sample average – reduce intermarriage rates by .4 percentage points, or 50% relative to the 1900 mean. Similarly, being exposed to an Italian church five years earlier reduces residential integration by 2 percentage points, or 12.5% relative to the baseline mean.

We complement the analysis of social outcomes by considering two economic variables – labor force participation and occupational income scores – that also depend on the actions of both immigrants and natives.³ While church exposure did not have any

³Until 1940, the US Census did not collect data on wages or income. Following the existing literature (Abramitzky et al., 2014), we focus on occupational income scores that assign to an individual the median income of his job category in 1950, and are used as a proxy for lifetime earnings.

impact on immigrants' labor force participation, it reduced their occupational income scores. One interpretation is that churches helped Italian immigrants by providing employment opportunities within their ethnic network (Edin et al., 2003). This, however, may have limited the chances for skill upgrading and economic integration in the society at large (Eriksson, 2019), either because of lower incentives among immigrants or because of higher discrimination among natives (or, both).

The reduction in social and economic assimilation could be driven by different forces. First, the presence of Italian churches might have reduced immigrants' incentives to exert effort to assimilate. To test this possibility, we examine the impact of Italian Catholic churches on naturalization rates and on the ability to speak English of immigrants – two variables that depend more heavily on the behavior of immigrants than on that of natives. As such, we interpret them as, though imperfect, measures of immigrants' effort to assimilate (Fouka et al., 2020).⁴ We find that church exposure had no impact on Italian immigrants' naturalization rates, and, if anything, marginally improved their ability to speak English.

Second, the presence of churches may have directly increased incentives to preserve national culture, for instance by reminding parents about their roots. These direct effects may have been reinforced by the fact that churches increased the probability of endogamous marriage as well as the likelihood of living in Italian enclaves. Exploiting yearly variation in church exposure and in kids' birth, we show that this mechanism was unlikely to be at play in our setting. Indeed, we find that immigrant parents did not give a more Italian sounding name to children born after the arrival of an Italian church, relative to the name chosen for children born (from the same parents) before the arrival of the church.⁵

These patterns suggest that the negative effects estimated for equilibrium outcomes likely depend on forces other than the sheer individual desire to assimilate. We conjecture that Italian Catholic churches may have reduced immigrants' integration through two different, non-mutually exclusive, forces. First, they may have fostered the interaction with other Italians, reducing that with other groups – either natives or immigrants from other nationalities. This is because Italian churches may have acted as a coordinating device, inducing Italians to attend the Mass and to live closer together.

⁴Applications to obtain citizenship were very rarely rejected at the time (Biavaschi et al., 2017; Fouka, 2019).

⁵The ethnic content of names chosen by parents for their offspring has become widely used in the literature to measure immigrants' assimilation (Abramitzky et al., 2020; Fouka, 2020).

While a higher desire to retain own culture does not imply that immigrants simultaneously reduce effort to integrate, church-induced coordination may have nonetheless reduced mixing between groups, ultimately leading to lower assimilation. Second, Italian Catholic churches may have increased the salience of the immigrant community in the eyes of natives. The presence of Italian churches may have also reinforced the stereotypical association between Italian immigrants and Catholicism, fueling natives' backlash and retarding assimilation (Higham, 1955).

To test the “backlash hypothesis”, we exploit the local press, which we take as a proxy for natives' attitudes, since systematic surveys do not exist for this historical period (Fouka et al., 2020; Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010). We show that the presence of Italian churches increased the joint appearance of references to the Catholic Church and Italians in local newspapers. At a time when nativism and anti-Catholicism were tightly connected (Higham, 1955), a higher association between Italians and the Catholic Church may have fueled natives' backlash, in turn lowering Italians' possibilities to integrate. In line with this idea, we find that exposure to churches raised the frequency of negative stereotyping against Italians. For instance, Italians were mentioned more often in articles that also included words such as “mafia”, “alcohol”, or “crime”. These trends, however, were evident only in counties with a larger 1900 Italian population, consistent with the idea that Churches catalyzed natives' attention in areas where the visibility of the Italian community was initially higher.

Consistent with natives' backlash, we additionally document that churches lowered social assimilation more in counties that, in 1900, had a larger Italian population. One interpretation is that Italian churches increased the salience of (Italian) immigration more in areas where Italians were more visible to begin with. In turn, this may have generated stronger backlash among natives, who became less likely to accept Italians in their in-group. The heterogeneous patterns just described are also in line with the idea that churches exerted a stronger coordination effect in counties with larger Italian communities. We provide further suggestive evidence for such (church-induced) coordination by showing that exposure to churches reduced Italian intermarriage rates not only with natives, but also with other immigrant groups.

Interestingly, however, church exposure had no differential effect either on our proxies for immigrants' effort or on economic outcomes. In interpreting these patterns, we are thus somewhat more inclined to view natives' backlash as more important than coordination and horizontal interactions. Note, of course, that the two mechanisms

need not be in contrast with each other. In fact, it is possible that the two forces complemented each other: as natives' backlash grew, Italian immigrants increasingly isolated themselves from other groups (including natives); this, in turn, fueled natives' prejudice and stereotypes, leading to even more isolation.⁶

Although the findings described thus far suggest that Italian Catholic churches reduced the social and, to a lesser extent, economic assimilation of Italian immigrants, they may have at least in part helped immigrants integrate in the host society. One specific channel highlighted by the historical literature is the provision of education, since Catholic churches often had annexed schools that immigrant children could attend (Vecoli, 1969). In line with this view, we show that immigrant kids born in Italy and growing up in counties with an Italian church for a longer period of time had a significantly higher probability to speak English and to be literate. Interestingly, the effects for ability to speak English – but not those for literacy – are stronger in counties belonging to states that had compulsory English laws in place. Moreover, our estimates for ability to speak English exhibit an inverted U-shape pattern: the effects are strongest for Italian kids that were in the age range 11 to 15 when the church arrived; coefficients decline for both younger and older cohorts, who were respectively too young and too old to (fully) benefit from the presence of Catholic schools.

Our paper speaks to different strands of the literature. First, we complement the papers on immigrants' assimilation. Existing works have considered a number of forces – from time spent in the host country (Abramitzky et al., 2020) to ethnic enclaves and group size (Edin et al., 2003; Eriksson, 2019) to the arrival of new groups (Fouka et al., 2020) to education and other government policies (Bandiera et al., 2019; Fouka, 2020; Lleras-Muney and Shertzer, 2015) – that shape the inclusion or exclusion of minorities into the majority group. To the best of our knowledge, we are the first to examine the impact of ethnic religious organizations, which are anecdotally viewed as an important factor in the process of integration of minorities. To the extent to which, as we show, ethnic churches mediate the transmission of values and the persistence of national culture, our paper is also related to works on cultural transmission (Alesina et al., 2013; Bisin and Verdier, 2001; Fernandez and Fogli, 2009; Giuliano and Nunn, 2020).

Second, our paper is related to the broader literature on the economics of religion (Barro and McCleary, 2003; McCleary and Barro, 2006). Since the seminal contribu-

⁶It is also possible that churches first increased Italians' propensity to isolate themselves, and then, partly as a consequence, led to natives' discrimination.

tion of Weber (2002), many authors have examined the role of the Protestant reform on economic growth and economic activity (Becker and Woessmann, 2009; Cantoni et al., 2018; Dittmar and Meisenzahl, 2020). Botticini and Eckstein (2012), Squicciarini (2020), and Valencia Caicedo (2019) among others have analyzed the conditions under which religion can promote or hinder human capital accumulation, scientific knowledge, and, in turn, long run economic development.⁷ In studying how religious organizations can influence the integration of immigrants, our work links this vast literature to that on immigrants’ assimilation.

Finally, we complement the recent and growing literature on the Age of Mass Migration, which has studied the selection and the assimilation of European immigrants (Abramitzky et al., 2012, 2014, 2020), their economic and political effects in the short run (Abramitzky et al., 2019; Tabellini, 2020), and their long run impact on economic growth and political ideology (Sequeira et al., 2020; Giuliano and Tabellini, 2020).⁸

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 discusses the historical background and the role of Italian Catholic churches in the US during the Age of Mass Migration. Section 3 describes the data, and Section 4 lays out the empirical strategy. Section 5 presents the main results. Section 6 discusses the mechanisms, and Section 7 examines the effects of churches on immigrant children. Section 8 concludes.

2 Historical Background

2.1 The Age of Mass Migration

During the Age of Mass Migration, from 1850 to 1920, around 30 million Europeans migrated to the United States (Hatton and Williamson, 1998).⁹ The Age of Mass Migration was triggered by a number of factors, including innovations in steam technology that reduced the cost of shipping (Keeling, 1999) and rising per capita income

⁷See also Becker et al. (2020), Iannaccone (1998), and Iyer (2016) for comprehensive reviews.

⁸See also Abramitzky and Boustan (2017) for a review. Goldin (1994) is an early contribution on the political economy of the immigration restrictions. Spitzer and Zimran (2018) and Spitzer and Zimran (2020) consider specifically the patterns of selection and the determinants of Italian immigrants during the Age of Mass Migration.

⁹During this period, another 20 million Europeans moved to Latin America or Canada. The Age of Mass Migration was characterized by the lack of legal restrictions for European immigrants to migrate to the United States. Immigration to the US was instead restricted for Chinese and Japanese immigrants, following the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and the 1908 Gentleman’s Agreement respectively (Abramitzky and Boustan, 2017).

in Europe (Hatton and Williamson, 1998). Between 1850 and 1890, most immigrants came from Northern and Western Europe, but, after 1890, their composition shifted increasingly towards Southern and Eastern Europe (Figure A.1).

The change in the composition of immigrants was coupled by a dramatic increase in their number, especially after 1900 (Figure A.2). These forces, together, raised natives' concerns about the assimilation of immigrants, particularly those from new and culturally more distant countries. In 1917, US Congress introduced a literacy test requiring immigrants to be able to read and write (Goldin, 1994). Somewhat ironically, when the literacy test was introduced, European immigration was very low, because of World War I. After the war, immigration flows returned to their pre-1914 levels, fueling again natives' backlash. As a result, in 1921 and 1924, the Quota Emergency and the National Origins Acts introduced temporary and, then, permanent immigration restrictions.¹⁰ The combined effects of WWI and the quotas were dramatic, and marked the end of the Age of Mass Migration. Immigration to the United States collapsed, and remained negligible until 1965 (Abramitzky and Boustan, 2017).

2.2 Italian Immigrants and Italian Churches in the US

The rise in European immigration and the shift in its composition after 1890 were driven by immigrants from new sending countries, with Italy playing a pivotal role (Hatton and Williamson, 1998). Soon after the completion of Italian unification in 1871, and until 1914, about 13 million Italians left the country, in what is known as the largest voluntary emigration in recorded world history (Foerster, 1919; Livi-Bacci, 1961). Although many went to South America, possibly because of lower language and cultural barriers, more than 4 million Italians migrated to the United States, eventually becoming the single largest immigrant group in the country (Spitzer and Zimran, 2020).

The original Italian settlements, dating back to the early and mid-nineteenth century and driven by the 1859 gold-rush, were concentrated in the South-West. Other early Italian communities were found in Louisiana and other Southeastern states (Connell and Pugliese, 2017). This distribution remained almost unchanged until the end of

¹⁰The 1921 Emergency Quota Act mandated that the number of European immigrants from each country entering the US in a given year could not exceed 3% of the stock from that country living in the US in 1910. With the 1924 National Origins Act, the limit was lowered to 2%, and the base year was moved to 1890, so as to further restrict immigration from new sending countries. Furthermore, the total number of immigrants that could be admitted in a given year was capped at 150,000 (Goldin, 1994).

the century. Yet, following the growth of large cities at the beginning of the twentieth century, the North-East became the epicenter of Italian immigration (Figure 1).

The unprecedented exodus of migrants triggered an immediate reaction among Italian institutions (Connell and Pugliese, 2017). While the Italian government was not particularly concerned about the departure of its citizens, Catholic institutions were more worried to lose followers, both in Italy and abroad. This led to systematic efforts and initiatives, coordinated by Pope Leo XIII, to increase the presence of (Italian) Catholic churches in the US. In 1887, the Pope approved the foundation of a new religious institute, the Missionaries of St. Charles Borromeo, also known as Scalabrinians. By 1900, the order had dozens of parishes, schools, and missions, both in the US and in South America. Soon after, Pope Leo XIII urged another institute, the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, founded by Mother Theresa Cabrini in 1880, to help Italian immigrants moving to the US. Mother Cabrini and her Sisters arrived in New York City in 1889, opening several hospitals, orphanages, and schools. Many other religious institutes reached the US independently between 1890 and 1920 (Vecoli, 1969).¹¹

At first, Italian churches were confined to large urban centers like Boston, New York, Chicago, or San Francisco. However, over time, churches and priests reached many more locations, with no apparently obvious geographic pattern. It may not be surprising that the arrival of missions and churches resembled, at least in part, the settlements of Italian immigrants. Figure 2 plots the presence of Italian churches across US counties between 1900 and 1920. We define a church as Italian if at least one of the following three conditions were met: *i*) if it was an Italian national church; *ii*) if the church was run by the Scalabrinians; or, *iii*) if it was a church with at least one Italian priest.¹² The map also reveals that church arrivals did not necessarily follow the footsteps of Italian migration. For example, Italian churches remained completely absent from the South-West, which had instead been the target of Italian migration until the end of the nineteenth century. We return to the diffusion of Italian churches across US counties in Section 4, when describing the empirical strategy.

It is worth noticing, though, that just as some Italian churches arrived in a county, some others left or disappeared. For instance, an Italian national church might have

¹¹Among them, the most notable ones were the Society of the Catholic Apostolate (better known as Pallottines), the Orders of Friars Minor (better known as Franciscans), and the Society of Jesus (better known as Jesuits).

¹²See Section 3 for more details.

lost its ethnic official identity, the Scalabrinians might have abandoned a mission and moved, or an Italian priest might have died or been relocated somewhere else. This helps explain why, although we observe an overall increase in the presence of Italian churches in the US between 1890 and 1920 – with many churches settling down permanently – we also register a non-negligible turnover, with multiple entries and exits across counties and decades. Specifically, we observe 559, 109, and 10 single, double, and triple church entries per decade respectively. There were also 465 single exits, 99 double exits, and 11 triple exits within each decade.¹³

2.3 Italian Churches and Immigrants’ Assimilation

In the intentions of Pope Leo XIII, Italian churches should have preserved the faith and reinforced the legacy of the Catholic culture among Italian immigrants. As the Pope wrote in the 1888 Encyclical *Quam Aerumnosa* (whose literal translation is “How Sad”), specifically addressing the Italian migration to the Americas, “*Among all these evils, however, that is by far the most calamitous which [...] renders it not as easy as it should be to obtain the saving assistance of God’s servants who are unable to speak to them the word of life in the Italian tongue, to administer the sacraments, or to uphold by the aids whereby the soul is raised to the desire of heavenly things, and the life of the spirit is strengthened and nourished.*”

When establishing the religious institute of the Scalabrinians in 1887, the Pope also noted that the Catholic Church was “[...] determined to send from Italy to that land many priests to console their countrymen in their own tongue, to teach the faith and the obligations of the Christian life, which were unknown or neglected, to administer to them the saving sacraments, to spread among the rising generation religion and charity [...]” Led by Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini, the Missionaries of St. Charles Borromeo, soon started their missions in the US. One of the main goals of the institute, consistent with that of Pope Leo XIII, was to preserve “*the Christian traditions and principles of Catholicism [...] in the millions of Italians living in the American Continents.*”¹⁴ Special attention was paid to young migrants, who were considered by the Church at risk of abandoning their Italian culture for the American one.¹⁵

¹³We return on this point when discussing the empirical strategy in Section 4.

¹⁴Letter by Bishop Scalabrini to Archbishop of Ireland, 1889, in Francesconi (1983).

¹⁵For instance, Father Morelli wrote in a letter to Bishop Scalabrini in 1888: “*If we do not quickly establish kindergartens and schools to prevent our children from falling into their (protestants) hands, the future of our community, its faith and national character, will be destroyed*” (Francesconi, 1983).

These and similar accounts suggest that Italian Catholic churches may have hindered the Americanization of Italian immigrants. Through the lens of standard models of cultural evolution (Bisin and Verdier, 2001), Italian churches may have favored the transmission of Italian culture both vertically and horizontally. For one, priests reminded immigrants about their roots, reducing incentives to exert effort to assimilate. This may have lowered English proficiency and the propensity to apply for citizenship, and induced parents to give more Italian sounding names to their kids. Moreover, ethnic residential segregation and intermarriage likely increased, as fellow Italians interacted with each other more often. Successful assimilation may have declined even further if Catholic churches raised the salience of the immigrant community among (Protestant) natives, in turn triggering their backlash.

Yet, the intent of the Scalabrinians, as well as of other similar institutes, was also to take care of the Italian community abroad: “*How well did they know [...], always tormented by that fatal disease we call homesickness? They were dreaming of their native country that could not provide their livelihood, imploring for the ministers of their ancestors’ religion to mitigate the agony.*”¹⁶ Moral and material support may have increased immigrants’ prospects for a permanent stay in the US, inducing them to exert more effort to fit in the American society.¹⁷ In addition, missionaries often emphasized that more schools were needed to facilitate the adaptation of Italian immigrants.¹⁸ Especially after 1910, many US states required public and private institutions, including ethnic schools, to teach also – if not exclusively – in English (Edwards, 1923).¹⁹ Since Italian immigrants often sent their kids to ethnic and religious schools, Catholic churches may have promoted skill acquisition and favored successful assimilation, more so in states where schools were required to teach (also) in English. These effects should have been stronger for pupils born in Italy and arrived in the US while in schooling age.

All in all, despite the intents of Pope Leo XIII, it is *ex-ante* unclear whether Ital-

¹⁶Lecture by Bishop Scalabrini, 1898, in Francesconi (1983).

¹⁷Return migration rates were especially high among immigrants from new sending regions (Bandiera et al., 2013), to the point that they were often labelled “birds of passage”, and blamed for being unwilling to assimilate (Ward, 2017).

¹⁸“*An English-Italian school was opened, with the Archbishop’s blessing, at the beginning of the school year, 1892-1893. It was attended by one hundred pupils - and it was the only thin thread of hope for the betterment of our colony*”, wrote Father Gambera in 1892 in a letter to Father Roller (Francesconi, 1983).

¹⁹Some states also introduced more stringent measures, banning foreign language (especially German), during and after WWI (Fouka, 2020).

ian Catholic churches hindered or promoted immigrants’ assimilation. Our empirical analysis below aims at answering this question, examining the various forces at play.

3 Data

3.1 US Census Data

Data on socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of Italian immigrants, as well as on county historical variables (e.g., the Black, the urban, and the immigrant share of the population), come from the full count US Census of Population (Ruggles et al., 2020). In our analysis, we restrict attention to the universe of Italian immigrants living in the US in each Census year 1900, 1910, and 1920.²⁰

To measure successful social assimilation, we consider *i*) intermarriage between an Italian immigrant and a native spouse of native parentage, and *ii*) a measure of residential integration. The former is considered in the sociology literature “the final stage of assimilation” (Gordon, 1964). The latter is constructed adapting the procedure developed in Logan and Parman (2017), and can be interpreted as the probability that an Italian immigrant had at least one native neighbor (of native parentage). Both variables are equilibrium outcomes, influenced not only by immigrants’ willingness to fit in but also by natives’ attitudes.²¹ We complement these measures with two variables that capture economic assimilation: labor force participation and the log of occupational income scores.²²

Next, we construct two proxies for immigrants’ effort to fit in the host society. The first one is an indicator if an Italian immigrant was naturalized. We restrict attention to immigrant men who were at least 21 years old and who had spent at least 5 years in the US, since only these individuals were eligible to apply for citizenship.²³ Even

²⁰Since county boundaries changed over time, we fix them to 1930 using the procedure developed in Perlman (2016).

²¹When defining intermarriage, we restrict attention to married individuals who were at least 15 years old. Appendix B.1 describes in detail the construction of our proxy for residential integration, which, to avoid double-counting, is defined only for Italian immigrants who were household heads.

²²As noted above, the US Census did not collect data on wages or income until 1940. We thus rely on income scores that assign to an individual the median income of his job category in 1950 (Abramitzky et al., 2014). Following the literature (Abramitzky et al., 2019; Tabellini, 2020), when defining economic outcomes we restrict attention to men in working age (15-64).

²³Specifically, immigrant men would file a Declaration of Intent, also known as “first papers” upon arrival or shortly thereafter. Then, within five years, they were eligible to file a Petition for Naturalization (or, “second papers”). This was the last step required for the court to finalize the naturalization

though, in principle, applications for citizenship could be rejected, this very rarely happened in practice. For instance, Biavaschi et al. (2017) show that, in a sample of around 3,300 naturalization petitions filed in New York City in 1930, only 2.6% were rejected.²⁴ The second proxy for effort is ability to speak English. At the time, this was assessed by the census enumerator with a binary yes-no answer, and thus masks important heterogeneity in English proficiency. Yet, English knowledge still represents an important indicator of assimilation. In our baseline analysis, we consider individuals (of either gender) who were at least 15 years old.

Finally, we consider the willingness of immigrant parents to transmit the (Italian) culture to their offspring. Following a large literature (Abramitzky et al., 2020; Fouka, 2020; Fryer and Levitt, 2004), we construct an index that captures the ethnic distinctiveness of the name given by parents to their kids. The index, whose description is detailed in Appendix B.2, ranges from 0 to 100, with lower (resp. higher) values for names that were relatively less (resp. more) common among Italians living in the US.

Table 1 reports the summary statistics, presenting county and individual or household characteristics in Panel A and in Panels B to D respectively. Reflecting the propensity of Italians to settle in counties with a large foreign born population, the average immigrant share in our sample is 27%. Italians accounted for an important fraction of immigrants, as the Italian share of the county population was, on average, 4%. Consistent with historical accounts, immigrants in our sample were disproportionately located in urban areas.

Turning to the main outcomes of interest, only 1% of Italians who were married had a native spouse of native parentage; only approximately one in five Italian household heads had a native (of native parentage) neighbor. Both variables indicate that social assimilation was not common among Italians at the time. While natives' discrimination certainly acted as a barrier to the integration of Italians, lack of incentives to assimilate might have played a role too. Indeed, only 32% of eligible Italian men were naturalized, and only 61% of Italians (who were at least 15 years old) could speak English between 1900 and 1920. Similarly, the average Italianness of names given to their offspring by Italian parents was around 39 (Panel D).

process. See also Fouka et al. (2020) for more details.

²⁴Fouka (2019) finds similar numbers for a sample of petitions from Pennsylvania and Illinois.

3.2 Catholic Directories

We combine the Census data described above with newly collected and digitized data on the presence of Catholic churches and priests in the US, which were obtained from a variety of sources. First, we digitized *The Official Catholic Directory* of the United States for the period 1880-1920 to recover information on the presence of Italian Catholic organizations across counties and over time. The first *Catholic Directory or Catholic Laity's Directory*, as it was called, was published by Matthew Field in 1817 (Meier, 1915), when the presence of Catholic churches in the US had become more important, and covered all English-speaking countries (including Canada and the Great Britain). Although the official denomination (*Ordo*, *Almanac*, *Clergy list*, etc.), as well as the editing company (Sadlier; Hoffmann; Wiltzius; Kenedy, etc.), changed more than once, the structure remained similar over time. All directories consistently reported: *i*) a list of Catholic institutions (chapels, churches, missions, education and health related institutions), including address and list of available clergy, divided by city and diocese (see the example in Figure 3);²⁵ *ii*) a complete list of clergymen, with related rank, order, and place of service (see the example in Figure 4).²⁶

We were able to recover a PDF version of the almanacs for all years between 1880 and 1920, except for 1882, 1894, 1895, 1913, 1915, 1917 and 1918. From the sources that could be located, we collected information on: *i*) the number of Italian national churches, with annexed schools; *ii*) the number of churches with Italian priests; and, *iii*) the number of Catholic churches.²⁷ In all cases, we refer to a church as a physical entity like a parish, a chapel, or a building where the religious activities were administered. We replaced the information for missing almanacs – something that never happened for more than two consecutive years – by linearly interpolating between available years.²⁸

We complement the data from the directories with archival records from the Missionaries of St. Charles Borromeo (Francesconi, 1983, Volumes II and IV). Even though

²⁵In the Catholic Church, a diocese is an ecclesiastical district under the jurisdiction of a bishop.

²⁶Some directories also reported a list of Catholic papers (including frequency, city and language), as well as a list of places in which are located Catholic churches with resident pastors.

²⁷National churches were labelled after a specific ethnic community, to which they could ensure the service of priests who could speak the homeland language (Italian, German, French, Polish, etc.). The presence of a priest that could speak Italian represented a pre-requisite to hear Confession and to administer the sacraments (i.e., Eucharist, Confirmation, Matrimony, etc.) among Italian immigrants. Appendix B.3 describes in detail how Italian priests were identified in the data.

²⁸By doing so, we are implicitly assuming that changes in treatment happened smoothly between non-consecutive years with different treatment values, while there was no change in between years with the same treatment value.

these records were not systematically organized as directories, we were nonetheless able to recover the presence of parishes and schools run by the Scalabrinians from the beginning of their first mission in New York City in 1888, up to 1920.

In Panel A of Table 1 we report summary statistics for our most preferred treatment variable, i.e., the number of years between two Censuses with at least one of the following Catholic institutions: an Italian national church, a church with an Italian priest, or a Scalabrinian church.²⁹ On average, the number of years of exposure of a county to an Italian church was about 6 years.³⁰ This figure may seem relatively high; yet, note that our sample is restricted to counties with at least one Italian immigrant, that is, where the Italian community was present and the arrival of an Italian church more likely.

4 Empirical Strategy

4.1 Difference-in-differences

To study the effects of Italian churches on the assimilation of Italian immigrants, we match the county of residence of an individual in a given Census year to the arrival of Italian priests and churches within the previous decade. Concretely, as an example, the outcomes of an Italian measured in the 1910 Census are matched to her exposure (if any) to an Italian church between 1901 and 1910. We restrict attention to first-generation Italian immigrants, stacking repeated cross-sectional individual datasets for 1900, 1910, and 1920. We then estimate a generalized *difference-in-differences* (DD) model of the form:

$$y_{iht\tau} = \alpha_c + \gamma_{s\tau} + \beta_1 T_{c\tau} + \beta_2 X_{i\tau} + \beta_3 X_{h\tau} + \beta_4 X_{c\tau} + \epsilon_{iht\tau} \quad (1)$$

where $y_{iht\tau}$ is the outcome of immigrant i belonging to household h residing in county c in Census year τ ; and $T_{c\tau}$, the key regressor of interest, is the number of years between Census year τ and $\tau - 1$ with at least an Italian church (as defined in Section 3.2 above) active in county c .³¹ $X_{i\tau}$ and $X_{h\tau}$ are vectors of individual (gender and fixed effects for

²⁹Since the three measures are not mutually exclusive, in our baseline specification we combine them together. In Appendix C, we present results considering each measure separately, and show robustness to different measures of exposure.

³⁰As noted in Section 2.2, this masks heterogeneity in entry and exit of churches across counties and over time.

³¹We denote a Census year (or decade) with τ to distinguish it from the exact calendar year, t ,

marital status, years in the US, and age) and household (size and number of children) level controls. $X_{c\tau}$ includes the European and Italian immigrant share in each county-decade (relative to county population) predicted using a leave-out shift-share approach (Card, 2001; Tabellini, 2020), the number of years between Census year τ and $\tau - 1$ with at least a non-Italian Catholic church or a school annexed to an Italian church, as well as a vast set of 1900 county characteristics interacted with Census year fixed effects.³² Finally, α_c and $\gamma_{s\tau}$ are county and state by decade fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the county level.

The inclusion of county and state by decade fixed effects implies that the coefficient of interest, β_1 , captures the effects of Catholic churches and priests within the same county over time as compared to other counties within the same state in a given Census year. Controlling for interactions between Census year dummies and 1900 county characteristics assuages the concern that Italian churches may have arrived earlier in counties that were more urban and had better employment opportunities in a key sector like manufacturing – characteristics that may have independently influenced the pattern of assimilation of Italian immigrants. Similarly, including the (predicted) share of Italian and European immigrants deals with the possibility that Italian priests and churches systematically targeted areas with growing (or declining) immigrant communities, where the assimilation of Italians may have been evolving differently.

Our most stringent specification restricts attention to counties that received at least one Italian church during our sample period – which reinforces the parallel trends assumption – and includes county linear trends – which implies that we only exploit variation in the *timing* (and not the location) of arrival of an Italian church within a given decade. The identification assumption would thus be violated if, conditional on controls, counties where the assimilation of Italian immigrants was otherwise declining (or, happening faster) received an Italian church earlier within the same decade.

Historical accounts suggest that the demand for Italian Catholic churches and priests was not random (Francesconi, 1983). For instance, in a letter to Bishop Scalabrini in 1888, the Irish Bishop McMahon wrote: “*There are several thousand Italians in my diocese who live in very deplorable spiritual conditions...I hope that Your Excellency will consider my petition with benevolence, and assign at least one priest to*

which we introduce in Section 4.2 below. If an individual migrated after the arrival of the church, $T_{c\tau}$ is replaced with the number of years spent in the US by the individual.

³²These are the urban and Black share of the population; employment share in manufacturing; railroad connectivity from Sequeira et al. (2020); and total population. Results are unchanged when adding further baseline characteristics.

my diocese.” On the other hand, in a letter to Bishop Scalabrini in 1889, Father Morelli noted that “*Following the [Scalabrinian] Missions, however, five hundred families agreed to found an Italian Church, and formed a committee to collect funds.*”

Yet, the settlement of a church in a given county was far from being a deterministic process. At times, even the size of the Italian community was uncertain.³³ Most importantly for our identification strategy, the supply of priests from Italy was limited and erratic, as documented in a number of anecdotal accounts.³⁴ In several cases, it was hard to predict if and when vacancies would have been filled.³⁵ Hence, although demand for Italian priests may have been stronger in counties that were on different trajectories for immigrant assimilation across decades – something that we take care of by including county-specific linear trends – the timing of their arrival within a decade was hard to predict, and highly dependent on conditions prevailing in Italy. Consistent with this idea, we verify that changes in county characteristics in the “pre-period”, between 1880 and 1900, do not systematically predict the entry of churches within subsequent decades.

One remaining concern is that, not only church entries, but also exits might be endogenous to trends in assimilation of Italians within a given county (see also the discussion in Section 2.2). Yet, anecdotal accounts suggest that, as for entries, also the timing of church exits was largely determined by factors orthogonal to county conditions. For instance, church exits were often caused by priests’ deaths.³⁶ Additionally, bishop’s decisions to “denationalize” a church or to assign it to another religious institution may have resulted from organizational choices made at the diocese level, rather than being the response to specific demands from the Italian community. Reassuringly, and consistent with this anecdotal evidence, we show that all results are robust to fo-

³³For example, in a letter to Father Vicentini in 1893, Father Gibelli wrote: “*I spoke with the Bishop and the Vicar who wish to have an Italian Missionary in Erie [...] but I am not sure about the number of Italians. Some people say there are six hundred, others eight hundred, and others over one thousand.*”

³⁴Among others, Father Morelli wrote a letter to Bishop Scalabrini in 1894 noting that “*The Church’s trustees [...] agreed [...] on condition that its present clergy be replaced by others. Bishop Scalabrini procrastinated, stating that he would do his best to fulfill their demands, when he had other Missionaries to send to New York.*”

³⁵See, for instance, Father Gambera, *Memorie*, 1900 “*There remained the problem of finding a priest [...] willing to daily carry out the delicate and responsible task at Ellis Island. No one wanted to accept it, so that I had to take upon myself this task as well.*”

³⁶As Father A. Demo wrote in a letter to Father D. Vicentini in 1907, “*The East Cleveland mission always had a meager existence, because of the few Italians there, poor financing, and above all, we think, Father Gibelli’s administrative ineptitude. When he died, in 1907, the Bishop assigned the Church to a diocesan priest.*” (Francesconi, 1983).

cusing on a sample of counties with at least one church entry but no exits within the decade – a demanding statistical test, since the sample size drops significantly.

4.2 Event-Study: Exploiting Yearly Variation

The granularity of the data collected from the *Official Catholic Directories* allows us to exploit yearly variation in church arrivals across and within counties. We combine this with yearly variation in birth dates of children born in the US from (first-generation) Italian parents. We reshape the data from census-year-individual to calendar-year-household level, taking into account the year of arrival of the household head when expanding the dataset at the yearly level. This makes it possible to implement a proper event-study analysis, adding transparency to our DD design and further probing the validity of our identification strategy.

Restricting attention to first-generation Italian married couples over the period 1890-1920, and denoting with t_0 the calendar year of a church arrival, we estimate the following regression:

$$y_{hct} = \sum_{t=t_0-4}^{t_0+6} \beta_{t-t_0} T_{c,t_0} + \beta_2 X_{ht} + \beta_3 X_{ct} + \alpha_c + \gamma_{st} + \theta_h + \epsilon_{hct} \quad (2)$$

where y_{hct} is the average “Italianness score” of children born in household h in calendar year t , and T_{c,t_0} is a dummy for a church arrival. As we can only identify ten coefficients out of eleven, we restrict the coefficient in the year before entry ($t = t_0 - 1$) to zero.³⁷ Since counties could have experienced multiple entries per decade, to make the exercise sharper, we restrict attention to the first church arrival in the county over the entire 1890-1920 period. This leaves us with a sample that is about one fifth relative to the one used when estimating equation (1).

The model additionally includes: interactions between state and (calendar) year dummies, γ_{st} ; a vector of household level controls (household head fixed effects for gender, years in the US, and age, as well as household size and the number of children), X_{ht} ; the vector of 1900 county level controls, interacted with year dummies, and the predicted Italian and European immigrant share, X_{ct} , as defined in Section 4.1; and, county-specific linear trends. Following Abramitzky et al. (2020), we also include household by decade fixed effects (θ_h). This implies that, since we only observe the

³⁷The model also includes a dummy, not reported, for any church arrival before $t_0 - 4$, and a dummy for any church arrival after $t_0 + 6$.

Italianness score in the presence of children, we are *de facto* comparing the ethnic content of names of siblings born from the same parents before and after the arrival of an Italian Catholic church in a given county within a decade.³⁸

This setting also allows us to test the validity of our identification assumption. Indeed, if the latter holds, the effects at each lead ($t - t_0 = -4, \dots, -1$) should be statistically indistinguishable from zero, ruling out anticipatory effects. One would also expect effects (if any) to manifest at the year of entry ($t = t_0$), or later ($t - t_0 = +6, \dots, +1$), and possibly to change over time as the message of the church spreads across the immigrant community.

5 Main Results

5.1 Social Assimilation

We begin our analysis by focusing on the social assimilation of Italian immigrants. Table 2 reports results from DD equation (1), focusing on intermarriage and residential integration in Panels A and B respectively. Column 1 estimates a parsimonious regression that only includes individual controls (gender and fixed effects for age, marital status, and years in the US) as well as county and state by decade fixed effects. In both cases, the coefficient is negative and statistically significant, indicating that a longer exposure to Italian churches reduced intermarriage and increased Italians' propensity to live in ethnically more segregated neighborhoods. Results remain unchanged when including the predicted Italian and European immigrant share and interactions between 1900 county controls and decade fixed effects (column 2).

In column 3, we add county-specific linear trends, and in column 4 we further restrict attention to counties that received at least one church during our sample period. Again, the point estimate remains highly statistically significant and strongly negative. According to our preferred specification (column 4), five additional years of exposure to an Italian Catholic church – or, 75% of the sample mean – reduced the probability that an Italian immigrant married a native of native parentage by .4 percentage points, or almost 50% relative to the baseline mean. Similarly, five extra years of church exposure

³⁸In principle, one could run a similar exercise for church exits. However, as shown in Appendix C, we do not find any effect of exits on assimilation in the DD framework. One possible explanation for this is that, even after a formal exit, the very same church remained open, even though it was no longer considered Italian by the Catholic directories.

reduced the probability of having a native neighbor of native parentage by roughly 2 percentage points, or 12.5% relative to the 1900 mean.

Since residential segregation and intermarriage are equilibrium outcomes, these patterns likely reflect both the direct effect of churches on the actions of Italian immigrants and the indirect impact on natives' attitudes and behavior. The presence of ethnic churches and Italian priests may have increased the propensity of Italians to intermarry and to live closer to each other. For instance, Mass celebrations might have raised the frequency of contact between fellow Italians, either because immigrants jointly attended the service or because they chose to locate closer to each other to live nearby the church (or both). Moreover, the direct influence of churches and priests may have increased the value of retaining the Catholic and Italian culture, thereby reducing effort exerted by immigrants to Americanize. At the same time, the presence of Catholic churches may have increased the salience of the immigrant community among natives, triggering their backlash. These forces, together, might have led to lower inter-group contact and higher (residential and social) segregation.

Note that, in order to overturn the causal interpretation of the estimates in Table 2, it should be the case that Italian churches were opened earlier in places where Italian communities were becoming more insulated from the American society. Yet, as discussed in Section 2.3, anecdotal evidence suggests that, if anything, Italian churches and priests were moving first to places where Italians were becoming *more* assimilated (Francesconi, 1983). For example, in a letter to the Archbishop of New York in 1893, Rev. Vicentini wrote: *“In general I approve the idea of using the Italian priests as assistants in the American parishes, either because the Italians don't know how or do not want to support their own churches, or because of the prevailing idea that the Italians must be Americanized.”*³⁹

5.2 Economic Assimilation

We complement the analysis of social assimilation by turning to economic outcomes. Table 3 replicates Table 2 focusing on labor force participation (Panel A) and log occupational income scores (Panel B). Following the existing literature (Abramitzky et al., 2019; Tabellini, 2020), and because of the low rates of female labor force participation

³⁹Along similar lines, while discussing the urgency of opening a Catholic parish in Somerville (Massachusetts), Father Properzi wrote in 1916: *“Headed by an Italian minister, a group of apostates is now hard at work for many years already at the spiritual ruin of this colony. By God's help, Catholicism has won back quite a few families, which had declared themselves Protestant because of poverty!”*

(Goldin, 1990, 2006), we restrict attention to men in working age (15-64). For brevity, we focus on the most stringent specification (column 4). While exposure to Italian Catholic churches did not alter immigrants' labor force participation, it did reduce their occupational income scores.

These results suggest that, although ethnic networks – possibly reinforced by the presence of Catholic churches – may have provided immigrants with more job opportunities within their group, they may have lowered those in the broader economy. Since labor market opportunities and, in particular, prospects for occupational upgrading, are usually more limited within the immigrant community, Italians may have remained stuck in relatively low-paying jobs. In Appendix Table A.2, we corroborate this interpretation by examining the effects of Italian churches on additional labor market outcomes. In columns 1 and 2, we show that church exposure had a positive, albeit imprecisely estimated (and quantitatively small), effect on the probability that Italian immigrants were employed in the manufacturing and in the unskilled sectors – two of the most “immigrant intensive” sectors at the time (Fouka et al., 2020; Tabellini, 2020). Perhaps not surprisingly, church exposure did not have any significant effect on Italian men's literacy (column 3). Nonetheless, it did increase the probability of working in occupations that were “Italian dominated” (column 4).⁴⁰

Taken together, results in Tables 2 and 3 indicate that church exposure reduced the assimilation of Italian immigrants. Even though we cannot rule out the possibility that the reduction in economic assimilation was the main cause behind the drop in social integration, we view this interpretation as unlikely. For one, immigrants did not experience any change in labor force participation. Moreover, comparing the estimates in Table 3 (Panel B) with those in Table 2, the former are an order of magnitude smaller than the latter. Specifically, five additional years of exposure to an Italian church would lower occupational scores by around 6% (as compared to a 12% or 50% reduction for residential integration and intermarriage, respectively).

Our preferred interpretation is instead that church exposure jointly lowered social and economic assimilation of Italians. It is also possible that the social and the economic effects reinforced each other, further amplifying the initial impact of Italian churches. As noted above, these effects may have been influenced both by immigrants'

⁴⁰We define the index of Italianness as the ratio of the probability that an Italian immigrant were employed in an occupation relative to the same probability for a non-Italian man. As for the INI, the occupation index ranges from 0 to 100, with higher (resp. lower) values referring to more (resp. less) Italian occupations).

actions (e.g., lower investment in skills like English proficiency) and by natives' discrimination. They may have also been driven by peer effects and increase in coordination among members of the Italian community. We return to these issues in Section 6, when discussing the mechanisms.

5.3 Summary of Robustness Checks

In this section, we briefly summarize the checks performed to test the robustness of our results. These are described in detail in Appendix C.

First, we verify that pre-period (1880-1900) changes in county characteristics do not predict the timing of church arrivals within a decade in our sample (Table C.1). Second, we document that results are robust to focusing on counties that did not experience any church exit (Table C.2, Panel A). Third, we address concerns raised by the recent econometric literature on DD settings with staggered treatment adoption (de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfoeuille, 2020, Goodman-Bacon, 2020), following Cengiz et al. (2019) and Deshpande and Yue (2019) in implementing a stacked by event strategy (Table C.2, Panel B). Fourth, we check that the statistical significance of results is unchanged when clustering standard errors at the commuting zone and at the state level (Table C.3). Fifth, we show that our results are driven by Italian churches and priests, rather than by other Catholic institutions (Table C.4), and are robust to measuring exposure in different ways (Table C.5). Sixth, to address potential concerns about "white flight" or compositional effects, we check that church exposure was not systematically associated with changes in county demographic characteristics (Tables C.6 and C.7). Finally, as in Sequeira et al. (2020) and Tabellini (2020), we verify that results are robust to including a measure of predicted industrialization (Table C.8).

6 Mechanisms

The reduction in social and economic assimilation documented in Section 5 above can be explained by at least three, non-mutually exclusive, forces. First, the presence of Italian churches might have reduced immigrants' incentives to exert effort to assimilate, such as learning English and applying for citizenship (Fouka et al., 2020). Relatedly, church exposure might have increased immigrant parents' desire to transmit their culture to their offspring, for instance by choosing more ethnic names (Abramitzky et al., 2020). Although these actions are linked to each other, they are conceptually distinct,

since ability to speak English and naturalization can impact the assimilation of both parents and (indirectly) children, whereas names only affect integration of the offspring. For this reason, below, we analyze ability to speak English and naturalization rates on the one hand, and naming patterns on the other separately.

Second, Italian churches may have increased the salience of the immigrant community, raising the association between Italian immigrants and Catholicism and religion (Colussi et al., 2021). Given the strong anti-Catholic sentiments prevailing at the time, this may have triggered natives' backlash and discrimination (Higham, 1955). Thus, even if churches did not alter immigrants' assimilation effort, successful integration may have declined because of the higher barriers erected by natives.

Finally, churches may have increased coordination within the Italian community, acting as an attraction point and raising the frequency of contact among fellow Italians (Lazear, 1999). While assimilation effort and coordination may have acted simultaneously, possibly reinforcing each other, the latter might have operated independently from the former. For instance, as Italians became more concentrated around the church, they may have reduced the frequency of contact with members of other groups (e.g., natives), even if they did not change their propensity to learn English or to apply for citizenship.

6.1 Immigrants' Effort

As noted above, the arrival of Italian churches may have reduced immigrants' incentives to exert effort to assimilate. First, churches and priests may have reduced the cost – social and economic – from not assimilating, by offering informal insurance and providing immigrants with jobs within the ethnic enclave. For instance, if churches acted as a catalyst for the Italian community, immigrants might have been able to find a job even without learning English (Edin et al., 2003). Similarly, the presence of Catholic and Italian institutions may have lessened the benefits that immigrants obtained from applying for citizenship, which often came in the form of patronage jobs (Shertzer, 2016). Second, priests may have increased the psychological cost for Italian immigrants to abandon their national culture, for example by reminding the community of social norms and values prevailing in Italy during sermons.

If immigrants reduced assimilation effort following the arrival of Catholic churches, this can explain (at least in part) the negative effects identified in Tables 2 and 3 above. The direct impact of immigrants' actions might have been amplified by discrimination,

as natives may have become less likely to accept immigrants who were perceived as not interested in pursuing assimilation. Lower effort may have also fueled negative stereotypes among natives, further hindering prospects for integration.

In Table 4, we proxy for immigrants' effort with, respectively, an indicator equal to one if an Italian man was naturalized (Panel A) and a dummy for being able to speak English (Panel B).⁴¹ Focusing on the most stringent specification (column 4), exposure to Italian churches had no statistically significant effect on either naturalization rates or on ability to speak English. For naturalization rates, the point estimate is negative, but (besides being imprecisely estimated) quantitatively small. For ability to speak English, the point estimate is instead positive, but quantitatively small and, in the most stringent specification, not statistically significant.

6.2 Evidence from Children's Names

Results in Table 4 are consistent with the idea that Italian churches did not affect immigrants' assimilation effort. However, it is possible that the presence of Italian churches increased the desire to vertically transmit national culture from parents to children. We examine this possibility by focusing on the ethnic content of names chosen by immigrant parents for their offspring, as commonly done in the literature (Abramitzky et al., 2020; Fouka, 2019). We implement the event-study design described in Section 4.2. This strategy exploits yearly variation in church arrivals across and within counties, combined with yearly variation in birth dates of children born in the US from first-generation Italian parents.⁴²

As a preliminary step, we test whether the arrival of a church altered parents' decision to have children in the first place. When performing this exercise, the sample is restricted to married couples only.⁴³ This leaves us with a total of 103,707 households, and 711,808 yearly observations. Figure 5 plots the estimated coefficients (together with 95% confidence intervals) for the effects of church arrivals on the number of children. The vertical line refers to the year of church arrival. Reassuringly, there is no apparent difference between treated and non-treated counties in trends of fertility

⁴¹As discussed above, since only men who were at least 21 years old and had spent at least 5 years in the US were eligible to apply for citizenship, we restrict the sample to this group when analyzing naturalization rates. For ability to speak English we instead include immigrants of either gender of age 15 or older.

⁴²As explained above, we restrict attention to the first church arrival in the county over the period 1890-1920. See Section 4.2 for the full set of controls included when performing this exercise.

⁴³At the time, out of wedlock births were extremely rare.

before the entry of a church. This evidence rules out anticipation effects or spurious correlation between the decision to have children and the arrival of an Italian church. As one can see, the arrival of Italian churches did not have any effect on the number of children, suggesting that changes (if any) in the Italianness score of names are not driven by changes in family size.⁴⁴

In Figure 6, we turn to our main outcome of interest: the average Italianness score of children. In this case, we consider only married couples who had children before and after the arrival of a church, for a final sample size of 15,343 households, and a total of 135,754 observations. As before, there is no evidence of anticipatory effects. This indicates that churches did not arrive earlier in counties that were on differential trends for the assimilation of Italian immigrants. Coefficients on the right of the vertical line reveal that immigrant parents did not change the ethnic content of names chosen for children born after the entry of an Italian church (relative to children born, from the same parents, prior to the arrival of the church). These patterns are consistent with the idea that Italian churches did not increase the desire among parents to vertically transmit their culture to the next generation.

One potential concern, when interpreting these findings, may be that they are due to the small sample size and the demanding specification. To address this possibility, we turn to the DD analysis described in Section 4.1, using as dependent variable the average Italianess score of names chosen by Italian parents for their (US born) kids. This approach no longer exploits year-to-year variation in naming patterns (corresponding to children's births). Yet, it allows us to perform the analysis with a significantly larger sample size, since we now only need to restrict attention to households with at least one newborn kid within the decade (and not, as in the event-study, both before and after a church arrival).⁴⁵ Also in this case, results, reported in Panel B of Table A.3, show that church exposure has no statistically significant effect on the pattern of children's names. Moreover, and confirming the findings from the event-study design, the coefficient on church exposure in our preferred specification (column 4) is quantitatively close to zero, with a point estimate of -0.034 (and standard errors of 0.068).⁴⁶

Together with results on ability to speak English and naturalization rates, these

⁴⁴As a further robustness check, not reported for brevity, we restrict attention to first-ever entry episodes only, additionally excluding counties that had already been exposed between 1880-1890. Although the sample size falls remarkably, results remain qualitatively similar.

⁴⁵Indeed, the sample size increases to 664,846 observations.

⁴⁶Results in this section are obtained focusing on families with both parents born in Italy. All findings are robust to considering the case in which only one of the two parents was born in Italy.

findings suggest that exposure to Italian churches did not significantly lower Italians’ effort to assimilate. We cannot rule out the possibility that our proxies for either effort or desire to vertically transmit culture are noisy. This may prevent us from identifying the effects of churches on immigrants’ effort and identity. It is also possible that our null results mask countervailing forces. On the one hand, churches may have reduced immigrants’ incentives to assimilate by reminding them of their national culture. On the other hand, they may have offered key public goods, such as schooling, thereby increasing children’s ability to speak English. It is also possible that churches raised the benefits from naturalization and from being politically organized. These forces may have – partly or completely – offset the potential, negative effects of church arrival on immigrants’ effort, triggered by the reminiscence of the Italian identity as a by-product of the Catholic preaching.

All in all, we do not take the evidence in this and the previous section as complete lack of an effect of Italian churches on immigrants’ assimilation effort. However, our analysis indicates that the negative effect of churches on social and economic assimilation are unlikely to stem (solely) from a reduction in effort exerted by Italians. It is instead possible that other forces – such as increased coordination, peer effects, and natives’ discrimination – played a more important role in explaining why the presence of churches reduced the assimilation of Italian immigrants. We turn to these mechanisms next, starting from natives’ discrimination.

6.3 Natives’ Backlash: Evidence from Local Newspapers

Since we lack systematic survey data to measure natives’ attitudes at the beginning of the twentieth century, we rely on the local press, as recently done in Fouka et al. (2020). Because the language used and the sentiments expressed in newspapers largely respond to readers’ demands (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010), the local press should capture, though imperfectly, the public’s attitudes towards Italians in a given county and decade. For the counties for which data were available, we compiled a list of articles from the website Newspapers.com.⁴⁷ For each Census decade, 1900, 1910, and 1920, we compute the number of articles in which selected terms appeared together with the word “Italian” during the preceding 10 calendar years.⁴⁸ To account for different

⁴⁷We were able to retrieve data on local newspapers for 1,071 of the 2,164 counties in our sample. Reassuringly, Appendix Table A.4 shows that our baseline results are unchanged when restricting attention to the counties for which newspapers data were available.

⁴⁸For instance, for 1900, we count the number of appearance of terms from 1891 to 1900 (included).

circulation over time and across counties, we scale the joint frequency of terms by the number of articles in the county-decade.

In Table 5, we estimate county-decade panel regressions that control for state by decade and county fixed effects as well as for predicted immigrant share and all the interactions between decade dummies and 1900 county characteristics.⁴⁹ To capture the potential role of salience, we augment the baseline model with an interaction between church exposure and the 1900 number of Italians in the county, which is standardized by subtracting its mean and dividing through the standard deviation. The intuition is that churches should have triggered natives’ backlash more in places where the Italian community was already more visible to begin with (Blalock, 1957; Herda, 2010).

In column 1, the dependent variable is the relative frequency of the joint occurrence of the term “Catholic” and the term “Italian”. While the coefficient on the main effect is close to zero and imprecisely estimated, that on the interaction term is strongly positive and highly significant. That is, church exposure increased the association between Italian immigrants and Catholicism in counties where the Italian population was larger and, arguably, more noticeable. Given that nativism was often linked to anti-Catholicism (Alsan et al., 2020; Higham, 1955), the increased association between Italian immigrants and the Catholic Church may have fueled natives’ prejudice and (explicitly or implicitly) favored negative stereotyping.

Columns 2 to 8 examine this possibility, focusing on a number of disparaging and stereotypical terms. We begin by showing that exposure to Italian churches increased the joint association between Italians and the word “mafia” (column 2). As for the term “Catholic”, this pattern is driven by counties with a higher Italian population at baseline. Along the same lines, church exposure raised the probability that newspapers mentioned the word “crime” when talking about Italians, but only where the 1900 Italian population was larger (column 3). Subsequent columns of Table 5 present similar results for other words. Except for the terms “alcohol” (column 4) and “revengeful” (column 7), in all cases, church exposure increases the prevalence of negative stereotyping against Italians in counties with a larger ethnic enclave at baseline.

These results are consistent with Italian churches increasing the salience of the immigrant community, in particular where the latter was already more visible to begin with. They also suggest that church exposure both raised the association between

⁴⁹To ease the interpretation of results, we standardize all outcomes by subtracting their mean and dividing through their standard deviation. Regressions are weighed by the number of individuals in our sample; as before, standard errors are clustered at the county level.

Catholicism and Italians and worsened natives' attitudes towards Italian immigrants. This, in turn, likely reduced natives' willingness to accept Italians within their group. While other mechanisms (for instance, peer effects and coordination) may have been at play, this analysis indicates that natives' backlash was an important force behind the results reported in Table 2 above.

6.4 Heterogeneous Effects

We continue with our analysis of the mechanisms by testing whether churches had a differential effect depending on the size of the immigrant community. On the one hand, the coordination role exerted by churches may be more relevant when the size of the immigrant enclave is larger. Similarly, in a larger community not only the message of the Church might get amplified via peer effects; but also, the (actual or perceived) payoffs to assimilation effort may be lower and the cost of abandoning national culture higher (Lazear, 1999). On the other hand, as shown above, churches may be more visible to natives in counties with a larger Italian population (Cikara et al., 2020; Herda, 2010), in turn leading to stronger backlash and more discrimination.

In Table 6, we replicate our preferred specification by adding the interaction between church exposure and the 1900 number of Italians in the county, again standardized to ease the interpretation. Focusing on equilibrium outcomes (columns 1 and 2), we note that churches reduced both intermarriage and residential integration more in counties with a larger Italian community. Interestingly, however, there is no penalty on the labor market (columns 3 and 4) – if anything, the interaction between churches and the 1900 number of Italians is positive, albeit not statistically significant. Also, there is no differential effect of church exposure on either naturalization (column 5) or ability to speak English (column 6) depending on the size of the enclave.

One interpretation for these results, consistent with the estimates reported in Table 5, is that natives' discrimination, triggered by the entry of Italian churches, was stronger in places where the Italian community was larger to begin with. Higher discrimination, in turn, may have hindered immigrants' ability to integrate. That we do not find more negative effects on labor market outcomes in places with larger enclaves might be due to the fact that immigrants' networks offered insurance and jobs to members of their group, at least in the short run (Edin et al., 2003). Another possibility, not in contrast with the previous one, is that peer effects and coordination within the immigrant community led to the decline in social integration.

6.5 Integration with Other Immigrant Groups

If churches lowered Italians’ assimilation by increasing the frequency of interactions with members of their own group, for instance by providing more opportunities to meet with each other (e.g., during or after the Mass), one might expect integration to fall not only with natives but also with other immigrants as well. In Appendix Table A.5, we estimate our preferred specification considering intermarriage (Panel A) and residential integration (Panel B) between Italians and members of different ethnic groups. Column 1 replicates our main results reported in column 4 of Table 2. Next, in columns 2 and 3, we show that church exposure increased the probability of endogamous marriage and of living in residentially segregated enclaves.

Reflecting the increase in endogamous marriage, we also observe a steep decline in the probability of intermarriage with non-Italian first and second generation immigrants (column 4). Interestingly, and possibly reflecting the stickiness of residential patterns, we do not observe a corresponding reduction in the probability of having non-native (non-Italian) neighbors. The remaining columns of Table A.5 show that the reduction in intermarriage reported in column 4 seems to be driven by (lower) marriage with Germans, Central Europeans, and Western Europeans.⁵⁰

Even though we view the estimates in Table A.5 as merely suggestive, they are consistent with churches reducing Italian immigrants’ willingness to integrate with other groups. This clearly does not rule out the possibility that natives’ backlash also played a role (as, in fact, we showed above). Moreover, it is possible that other immigrant groups became more reluctant to socialize with and more likely to discriminate against Italians, in order to signal to natives that they were “different” (Fouka et al., 2020). That is, another interpretation for results in Table A.5 is that church arrivals increased discrimination against Italians not only among natives, but also among other immigrant groups.⁵¹

7 Italian Churches and the Provision of Education

Our results thus far indicate that the presence of Italian Catholic churches – directly or indirectly – reduced the assimilation of Italian immigrants. Yet, religious organiza-

⁵⁰The coefficient on residential integration is, instead, never statistically significant and, in most cases, positive.

⁵¹In addition to strategic signalling effects, Italian Catholic churches may have triggered animosity among Protestant immigrants, and even among other dominant Catholic enclaves, such as the Irish.

tions tend to provide their community with important public goods, such as (formal or informal) insurance and, more often, education (Bazzi et al., 2020; Cantoni et al., 2018; Meyersson, 2014; Valencia Caicedo, 2019). Italian Catholic churches in the early twentieth century US were no exception (Francesconi, 1983; Vecoli, 1969). Education and skill accumulation may, in turn, exert a positive effect on the prospects of integration of ethnic minorities. Even though the average Italian immigrant was typically too old to be in schooling age, Catholic schools, often annexed to churches, might have nonetheless been important for those immigrants arriving as kids. Not only Catholic schools may have raised children’s literacy; but also, they may have increased their ability to speak English, since the Catholic Church and many Italian priests were aware of the benefits that learning English would have offered to immigrants.

In Table 7, we focus on first-generation immigrants who, in a Census decade, were between 10 and 14 years old. Estimating our most stringent DD specification, we find that church exposure had a strong, positive effect on the probability of speaking English. This effect is quantitatively large: according to the coefficient reported in column 1, five additional years of exposure to an Italian church increased the probability of speaking English for first-generation Italian children in the age range 10-14 by 3.5 percentage points, or around 5% relative to the baseline mean. Interestingly, the effects are somewhat larger for females (column 3) than for males (column 5), even though the difference between coefficients is not statistically significant.

In column 2 of Table 7, we exploit the fact that several states introduced laws requiring English to be a language of instruction between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century.⁵² In particular, we interact church exposure with a dummy equal to one if the state of residence of the child required (also) English to be the language of instruction (Edwards, 1923). The coefficient on the interaction term is positive, economically large, and statistically significant, indicating that the effects of churches were larger where English was required as a language of instruction. Yet, the main effect remains positive and statistically significant, suggesting that, even in states without compulsory English laws in place, church exposure was associated with an increase in immigrant children’s ability to speak English.⁵³

In Appendix Table A.7, we replicate the analysis of Table 7 using as dependent variable an indicator for being able to read and write. Consistent with our previous results, church exposure had a positive effect on first-generation Italian immigrants’

⁵²Some, but not all, states also banned the use of foreign languages in all schools (Fouka, 2020).

⁵³The additional effect of English laws is similar for girls and boys (columns 4 and 6).

literacy (column 1). As before, the effect is slightly larger for females (column 3) than for males (column 5). Notably, the impact of churches on literacy did not vary with the presence of English language requirements (columns 2, 4, and 6). This is to be expected if the effectiveness of churches in instructing children were independent of a state’s English laws.

Finally, in Figure 7, we return to ability to speak English, and ask whether the effects estimated above vary by individuals’ age at exposure. Panel A considers both genders together, while Panels B and C turn to females and males respectively. The figure shows that the effects are strongest for the cohort exposed to churches while being between 11 and 15 years old. Instead, there is no effect for those who were exposed earlier. One possible explanation for this pattern is that kids whose age was below 6 when the church arrived were too young to attend schools annexed to the church. Furthermore, kids who were exposed to churches while very young may have been still “too young” to learn English or become literate by the next Census year. For males, the effects are actually slightly larger among those who were 16 to 25 when the church arrived. However, as expected, the point estimate drops to zero and is no longer statistically significant for individuals who were older than 25 when the church arrived in the county.⁵⁴

Overall, these results paint a nuanced picture of the role of Catholic Italian churches. On the one hand, churches increased both the probability of endogamous marriage and the likelihood of living in ethnically segregated enclaves, slowing down the assimilation of Italian immigrants. We showed above that this at least in part stemmed from the (negative) effect of Italian churches on natives’ attitudes. On the other hand, however, Italian Catholic churches provided important skills to first-generation immigrant kids. Not only Italian immigrant children exposed to Catholic churches were more likely to be literate. But also, and perhaps surprisingly, they were more likely to speak English – something that might have favored their economic and social integration in the American society later in life.

Results in this section also suggest that Italian churches were not mere “attraction points”, which simply increased the frequency of contact among fellow Italians. Rather, churches likely transmitted values to their community. Moreover, and contrary to the rhetoric prevailing at the time (Higham, 1955), Italian churches seem to have provided immigrant kids with tools and skills that may have eventually promoted their

⁵⁴Appendix Table A.6 reports the results plotted in Figure 7.

assimilation.

8 Conclusions

The anti-immigrant rhetoric often blames religious organizations for perpetuating ethnic norms and for slowing down immigrants' integration in host societies. Despite these claims, however, little evidence exists on the relationship between religious organizations and immigrants' assimilation. In this paper, we provide one of the first pieces of empirical evidence on this issue. We examine the impact of Italian Catholic churches in the early twentieth century US, when more than 4 million Italians had moved to America, and when nativist sentiments were widespread. To study this question, we combine data from the full count US Census of Population with newly collected and digitized archival directories on the presence of Italian Catholic churches and priests across US counties over time.

Exploiting plausibly exogenous variation in the timing of church arrivals, we find that Italian churches reduced the social, and to a lesser extent economic, assimilation of Italian immigrants. However, and in contrast with the nativist rhetoric prevailing at the time, we do not find evidence that this was the result of either immigrants' lower effort to fit in the American society or their higher desire to vertically transmit the Italian culture to the next generation. We instead document that Italian churches increased the salience of the immigrant community among natives, raising the prevalence of (negative) stereotyping and triggering backlash and discrimination. Our results also suggest that churches may have acted as a catalysts for Italians, reducing contact with other groups.

We acknowledge that it is hard to draw policy prescriptions for nowadays society based on historical evidence. Yet, we believe that the lessons from the Italian experience in the US may apply to other contexts as well, including the contemporary period. For one, the rampant anti-Catholicism prevailing during the Age of Mass Migration is comparable to recent backlash against Muslims. Furthermore, religious organizations were key in the past as much as they are today. We stress that our paper has no normative implications. That is, our findings do not imply that immigrants should (or should not) assimilate. We instead view our paper as a first important step to inform the current debate on immigration, assimilation, and the role of a key institution such as ethnic religious organizations.

Our findings also raise a number of intriguing questions. First, it would be important to study the long-run effects of religious organizations on immigrants' assimilation and, more broadly, on social cohesion, especially in multicultural societies like the United States. Second, we have not examined how the arrival of Italian Catholic churches influenced other ethnic groups. While other immigrant groups, especially non-Catholic ones, may have benefited from the change in natives' perceptions, the opposite scenario may have occurred as well. Finally, more evidence is needed from other contexts, in order to assess the external validity of our findings, and compare patterns obtained across time and space. We leave these, and more, questions for future research.

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Tables

Table 1. Summary Statistics

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Min	Max	N
<i>Panel A. County level characteristics</i>						
Years w/ Italian church	5.873	3.993	7.000	0	10	3,160,269
Immigrant share	0.272	0.108	0.282	0	0.540	3,160,269
European immigrant share	0.246	0.105	0.242	0	0.500	3,160,269
Italian share	0.043	0.025	0.041	0	0.129	3,160,269
Urban share	0.776	0.282	0.912	0	1	3,160,269
Black share	0.035	0.072	0.017	0	0.945	3,160,269
Share native men 15-64 in labor force	0.873	0.055	0.893	0	0.964	3,160,269
Share native men 15-64 in manufacturing	0.150	0.067	0.147	0	0.473	3,160,269
<i>Panel B. Main outcomes (individual level)</i>						
Married to native	1.121	10.53	0	0	100	2,156,953
Residential integration	21.13	40.71	0	0	100	1,092,915
Naturalized	32.72	46.92	0	0	100	1,454,692
Speak English	61.04	48.76	100	0	100	3,160,269
Log Occupational Score	197.6	271.2	299.6	-461	438.2	1,846,402
In labor Force	94.06	23.65	100	0	100	1,963,121
<i>Panel C. Additional individual characteristics</i>						
Male	0.636	0.481	1	0	1	3,160,269
Years in the US	12.21	9.059	10	0	90	3,160,269
Literacy	64.18	47.95	100	0	100	3,160,269
In manufacturing	18.96	39.2	0	0	100	1,963,121
Married	68.26	46.55	100	0	100	3,160,269
Married to Italian	91.95	27.20	100	0	100	1,889,827
<i>Panel D. Main outcomes (household level)</i>						
Number of children	2.401	1.921	2	0	15	407,661
Average INI of children	38.64	32.57	44.09	0	100	407,661

Table 2. Social Assimilation

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Panel A.</i>				
	<i>Dep. Variable: Married to Native</i>			
Years w/ Italian church	-0.108*** (0.011)	-0.108*** (0.011)	-0.139*** (0.013)	-0.085*** (0.013)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	6.238(3.899)	6.238(3.899)	6.238(3.899)	6.842(3.542)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	1.080	1.080	1.080	0.802
Observations	2,156,953	2,156,953	2,156,953	1,966,440
<hr/>				
<i>Panel B.</i>				
	<i>Dep. Variable: Residential Integration</i>			
Years w/ Italian church	-0.344*** (0.073)	-0.304*** (0.074)	-0.413*** (0.073)	-0.373*** (0.084)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	6.702(3.821)	6.702(3.821)	6.702(3.821)	7.361(3.344)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	19.92	19.92	19.92	16.86
Observations	1,092,915	1,092,915	1,092,915	995,053
<hr/>				
State \times Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls \times Decade		Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans		Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends			Yes	Yes
Ever Treated				Yes

Notes: The sample includes first-generation Italian immigrants 15+ who were: *i*) married (Panel A); *ii*) the household head (Panel B). Column 4 restricts attention to individuals living in counties that received at least one Italian Catholic church between 1890 and 1920. *Years w/ Italian church* is the number of years with at least one Italian Catholic church in the county over the ten years before a Census. *Married to Native* (resp. *Residential Integration*) is a dummy, multiplied by 100, for being married with a (resp. for having at least one neighbor) native of native parentage. *Individual controls* include gender and fixed effects of years in the US, marital status, and age. *Household controls* include the household size and the number of children. *County controls* include: *i*) 1900 county characteristics (total population, urban share, Black share, labor force share, manufacturing share, presence of a railroad station) interacted with year dummies; and, *ii*) number of years with at least one non-Italian Catholic church, and with a school annexed to an Italian church. *Predicted Fr. Italians* and *Predicted Fr. Europeans* are the Italian and European immigrant share of the county population in each decade, predicted using a Bartik approach. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10.

Table 3. Economic Assimilation

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Panel A.</i>				
	<i>Dep. variable: In Labor Force</i>			
Years w/ Italian church	-0.030 (0.067)	-0.046 (0.061)	-0.018 (0.047)	-0.005 (0.059)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	5.483(4.023)	5.483(4.023)	5.483(4.023)	6.190(3.727)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	85.79	85.79	85.79	85.87
Observations	1,846,402	1,846,402	1,846,402	1,635,225
<hr/>				
<i>Panel B.</i>				
	<i>Dep. variable: Log Occupational Score</i>			
Years w/ Italian church	-0.015*** (0.004)	-0.014*** (0.003)	-0.015*** (0.003)	-0.013*** (0.004)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	5.503(4.015)	5.503(4.015)	5.503(4.015)	6.213(3.713)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	3.061	3.061	3.061	3.070
Observations	1,846,402	1,846,402	1,846,402	1,635,225
<hr/>				
State \times Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls \times Decade		Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans		Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends			Yes	Yes
Ever Treated				Yes

Notes: The sample includes first-generation Italian men 15-64. Panel B restricts attention to those men who were in the labor force or with non-missing occupational scores. Column 4 further restricts the sample to individuals living in counties that received at least one Italian Catholic church between 1890 and 1920. *Years w/ Italian church* is the number of years with at least one Italian Catholic church in the county over the ten years before a Census. *In Labor Force* (resp. *Log Occupational Score*) is a dummy, multiplied by 100, for being in the labor force (resp. the log of the income occupational score). *Individual controls* include gender and fixed effects of years in the US, marital status, and age. *Household controls* include the household size and the number of children. *County controls* include: *i*) 1900 county characteristics (total population, urban share, Black share, labor force share, manufacturing share, presence of a railroad station) interacted with year dummies; and, *ii*) number of years with at least one non-Italian Catholic church, and with a school annexed to an Italian church. *Predicted Fr. Italians* and *Predicted Fr. Europeans* are the Italian and European immigrant share of the county population in each decade, predicted using a Bartik approach. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.01$.

Table 4. Immigrants' Effort

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Panel A.</i>				
	<i>Dep. variable: Naturalized</i>			
Years w/ Italian church	-0.228** (0.115)	-0.097 (0.121)	-0.137 (0.206)	-0.234 (0.212)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	6.678(3.784)	6.678(3.784)	6.678(3.784)	7.458(3.189)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	53.71	53.71	53.71	53.45
Observations	1,454,692	1,454,692	1,454,692	1,302,406
<i>Panel B.</i>				
	<i>Dep. variable: Speak English</i>			
Years w/ Italian church	0.191* (0.101)	0.224** (0.100)	0.383*** (0.116)	0.141 (0.139)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	5.789(3.965)	5.789(3.965)	5.789(3.965)	6.423(3.657)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	57.16	57.16	57.16	57.01
Observations	3,160,269	3,160,269	3,160,269	2,848,387
State \times Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls \times Decade		Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans		Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends			Yes	Yes
Ever Treated				Yes

Notes: The sample includes first-generation Italian immigrants who were: *i*) men 21+ and in the US for at least 5 years (Panel A); *ii*) at least 15 years old, for both genders (Panel B). Column 4 restricts attention to individuals living in counties that received at least one Italian Catholic church between 1890 and 1920. *Years w/ Italian church* is the number of years with at least one Italian Catholic church in the county over the ten years before a Census. *Naturalized* (resp. *Speak English*) is a dummy, multiplied by 100, for being naturalized (resp. able to speak English). *Individual controls* include gender and fixed effects of years in the US, marital status, and age. *Household controls* include the household size and the number of children. *County controls* include: *i*) 1900 county characteristics (total population, urban share, Black share, labor force share, manufacturing share, presence of a railroad station) interacted with year dummies; and, *ii*) number of years with at least one non-Italian Catholic church, and with a school annexed to an Italian church. *Predicted Fr. Italians* and *Predicted Fr. Europeans* are the Italian and European immigrant share of the county population in each decade, predicted using a Bartik approach. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.01$.

Table 5. Relative Frequency of Anti-Italian Terms in the Press

Dep. Variable	Relative frequency of joint mentions of “Italians” and keyword							
	Catholic (1)	Mafia (2)	Alcohol (3)	Crime (4)	Dirty (5)	Lazy (6)	Revengeful (7)	Violent (8)
Years w/ Italian church	0.004 (0.021)	-0.001 (0.002)	0.037 (0.033)	-0.006 (0.017)	-0.014 (0.012)	-0.013 (0.012)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.029 (0.021)
Years w/ Italian church × No. Italians 1900	0.045*** (0.014)	0.002** (0.001)	0.012 (0.015)	0.033*** (0.008)	0.018** (0.007)	0.005 (0.005)	0.002 (0.002)	0.027** (0.012)
Mean (s.d) Treatment Observations	7.974(3.429) 2,113	7.974(3.429) 2,113	7.974(3.429) 2,113	7.974(3.429) 2,113	7.974(3.429) 2,113	7.974(3.429) 2,113	7.974(3.429) 2,113	7.974(3.429) 2,113
State × Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls × Decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The table estimates county-decade panel regressions for counties with at least one Italian immigrant for whom outcomes are observed in Tables 2, 3 and 4. The dependent variable is the frequency of joint mentions of the root of the word “Italian” and the keyword reported at the top of each column, scaled by the number of occurrences of the word “and”, in local newspapers of a county in a decade. To ease interpretation, the dependent variable is standardized by subtracting its mean and dividing through its standard deviation. *Years w/ Italian church* is the number of years with at least one Italian Catholic church in the county over the ten years before a Census. *No. Italians 1900* is the number of Italians in the county in 1900, standardized by subtracting its mean and dividing through its standard deviation. For the definition of controls, see the notes to Table 2. All regressions are weighed by number of individuals included in the analysis reported in column 3 of Tables 2, 3, and 4. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.01.

Table 6. Heterogeneous Effects

Dep. Variable	Married to Native (1)	Residential Integration (2)	In Labor Force (3)	Log Occ. Score (4)	Naturalized (5)	Speak English (6)
Years w/ Italian church	-0.080*** (0.012)	-0.326*** (0.079)	-0.008 (0.058)	-0.014*** (0.004)	-0.271 (0.226)	0.114 (0.146)
Years w/ Italian church × No. Italians 1900	-0.012** (0.005)	-0.132*** (0.035)	0.009 (0.018)	0.002 (0.001)	-0.283 (0.205)	0.058 (0.042)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	6.842(3.542)	7.360(3.344)	6.190(3.727)	6.213(3.713)	7.458(3.189)	6.423(3.657)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	0.802	16.86	85.87	3.070	53.45	57.01
Observations	1,966,440	995,198	1,738,775	1,635,225	1,302,406	2,848,387
State × Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls × Decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ever Treated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The table replicates the specification reported in column 4 of Tables 2, 3, and 4, augmented with the interaction between *Years w/ Italian church* and the 1900 number of first-generation Italian immigrants in the county. *Years w/ Italian church* is the number of years with at least one Italian Catholic church in the county over the ten years before a Census. *No. Italians 1900* is the number of Italians in the county in 1900, standardized by subtracting its mean and dividing through its standard deviation. See Tables 2, 3, and 4 for the sample considered in each column, the definition of the dependent variable, and the description of controls. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.01.

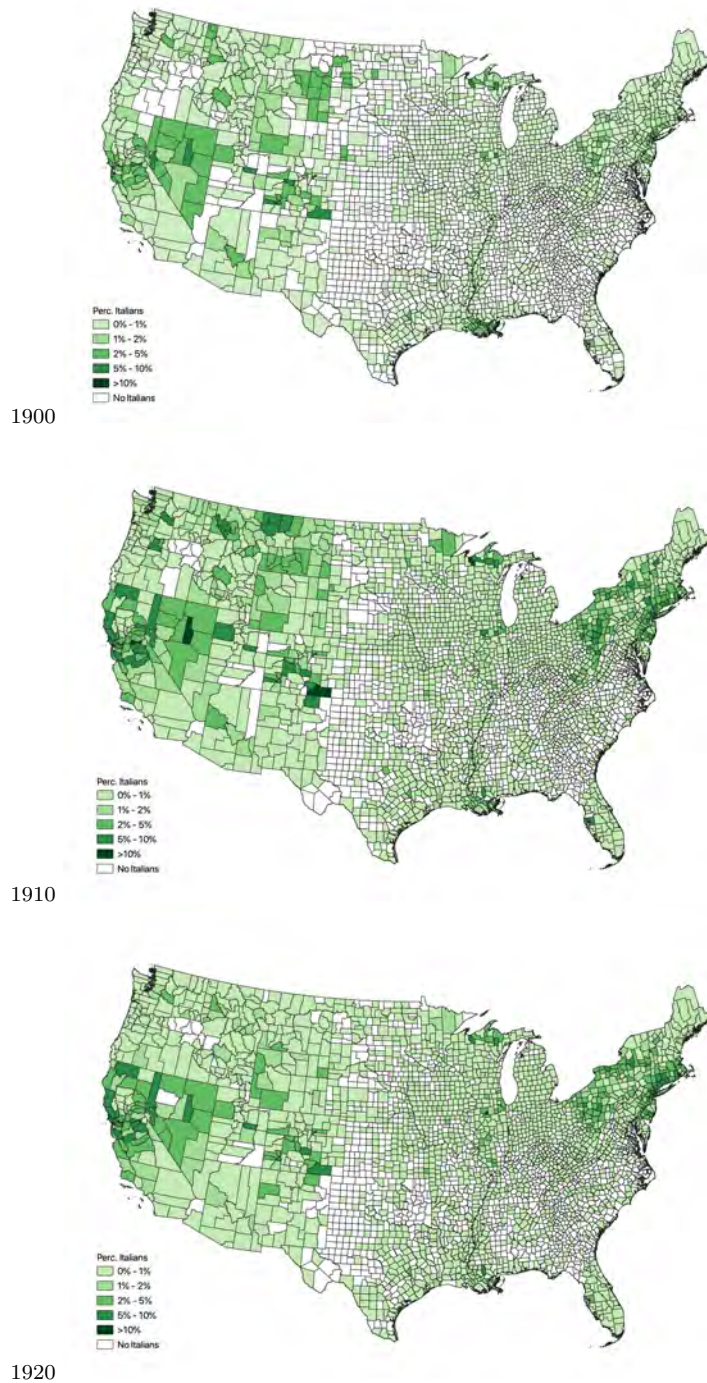
Table 7. Ability to Speak English: Italian Immigrant Children

Dep. Variable	Speak English					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<i>Sample</i>	<i>Males and Females</i>		<i>Females</i>		<i>Males</i>	
Years w/ Italian church	0.711*** (0.181)	0.572*** (0.171)	0.892*** (0.222)	0.754*** (0.215)	0.543** (0.216)	0.397* (0.217)
Years w/ Italian church × 1[English laws]		0.417*** (0.149)		0.405** (0.167)		0.442** (0.173)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	5.301 (3.413)		5.353 (3.397)		5.257 (3.426)	
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	73.88		72.50		75.07	
Age	10-14		10-14		10-14	
Observations	139,739		66,907		72,782	
State × Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls × Decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ever Treated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The sample includes first-generation Italian immigrants of age 10 to 14. The dependent variable is a dummy (multiplied by 100) equal to one if the individual is able to speak English. *1[English laws]* is a dummy equal to one if the individual lives in a county belonging to a state with the requirement to teach (also) in English at the time of the Census year. The data comes from Edwards (1923). The table estimates the same specification reported in column 4 of Tables 2, 3, and 4. See the notes to those tables for the description of controls. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.01.

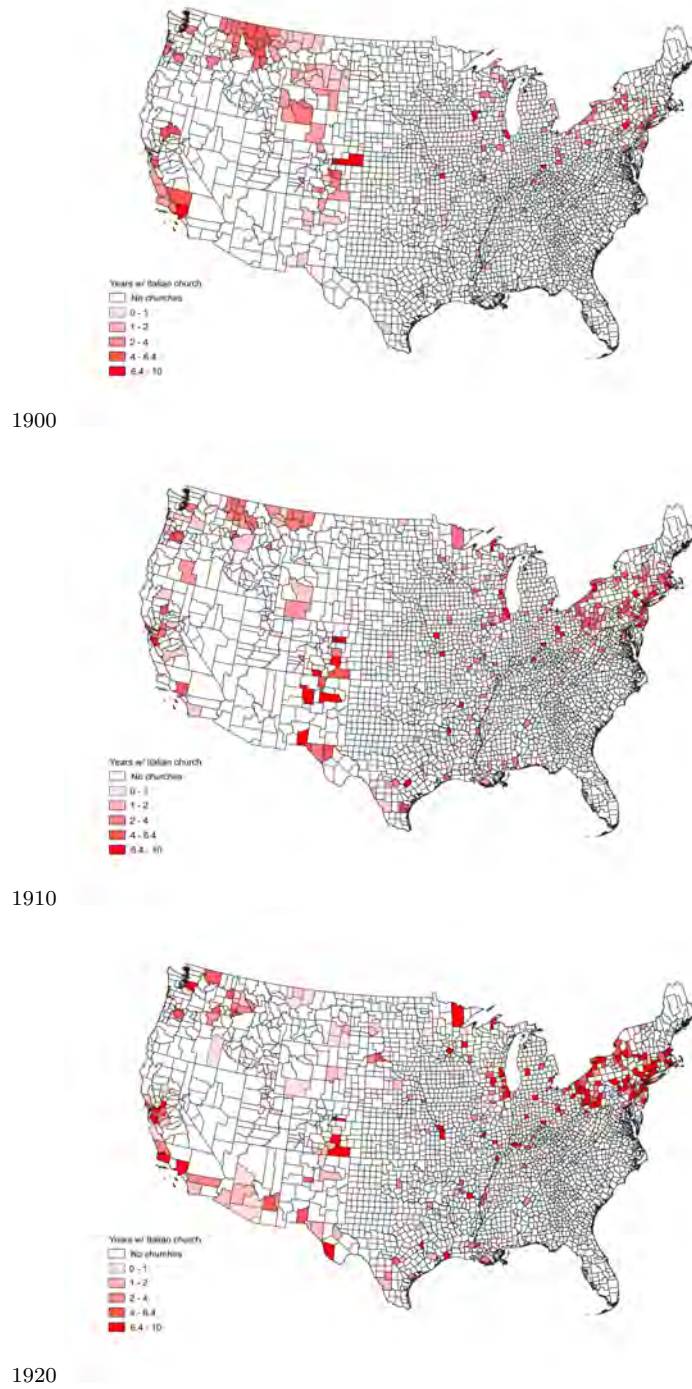
Figures

Figure 1. Italian Immigrants over County Population, by Decade



Notes: The figure plots the share of (first-generation) Italian immigrants relative to total county population in each Census year. County boundaries are fixed to 1930 using the procedure in Perlman (2016). *Source:* Authors' calculation from Ruggles et al. (2020).

Figure 2. Italian Catholic Churches



Notes: The figure plots the number of years with at least one Italian Catholic church (*Years w/ Italian church*) during the ten years prior to each Census year. A church is defined as “Italian” if at least one of the following conditions is met: *i*) it is an Italian national church; *ii*) the church belongs to the order of the Scalabrinians; or, *iii*) the church has at least one Italian priest. See also Section 3.2. Source: Authors’ calculation from the *The Official Catholic Directory*.

Figure 3. Sample of the 1902 Catholic Almanac: List of Churches

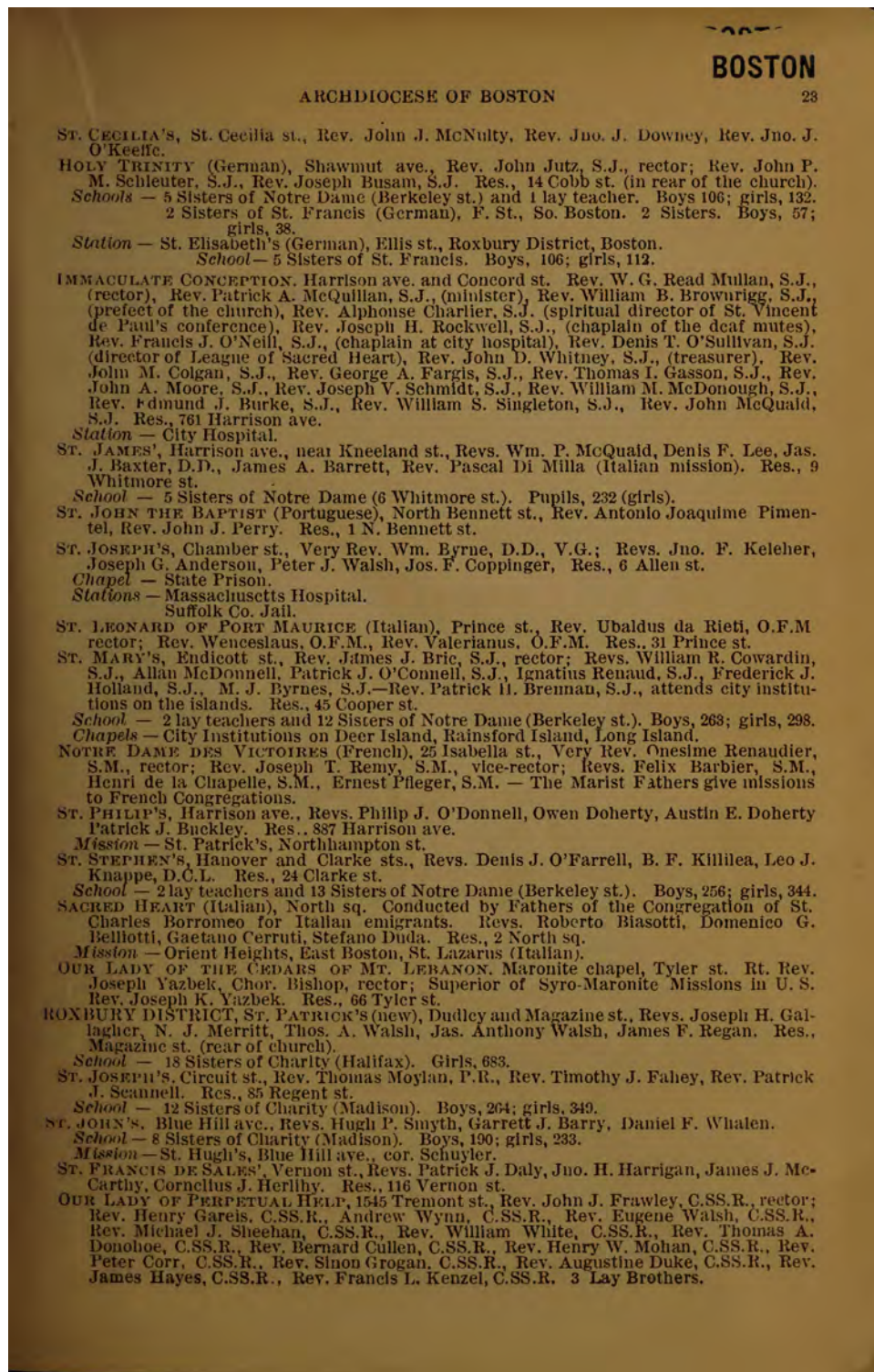


Figure 4. Sample of the 1902 Catholic Almanac: List of Clergymen

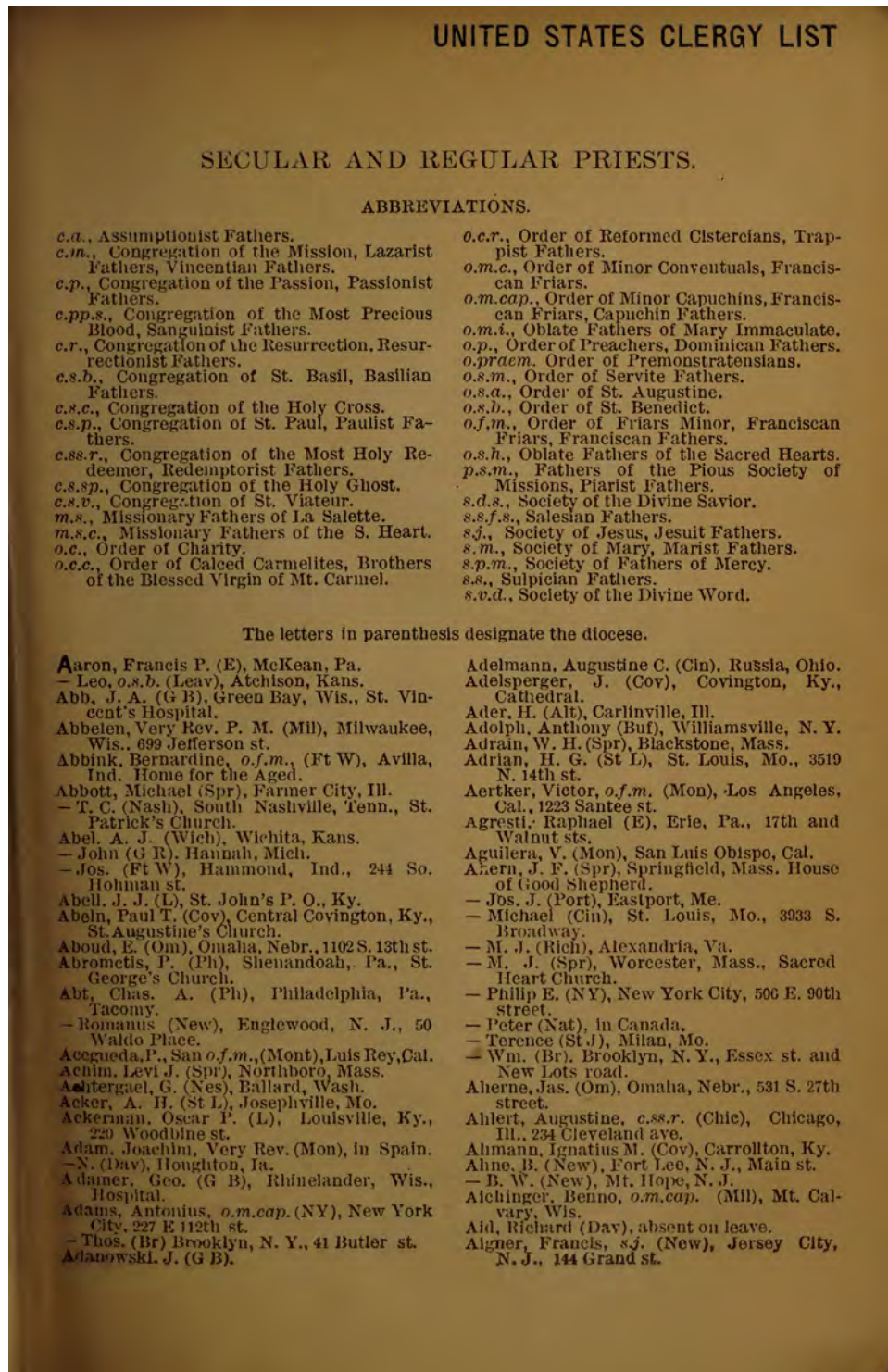
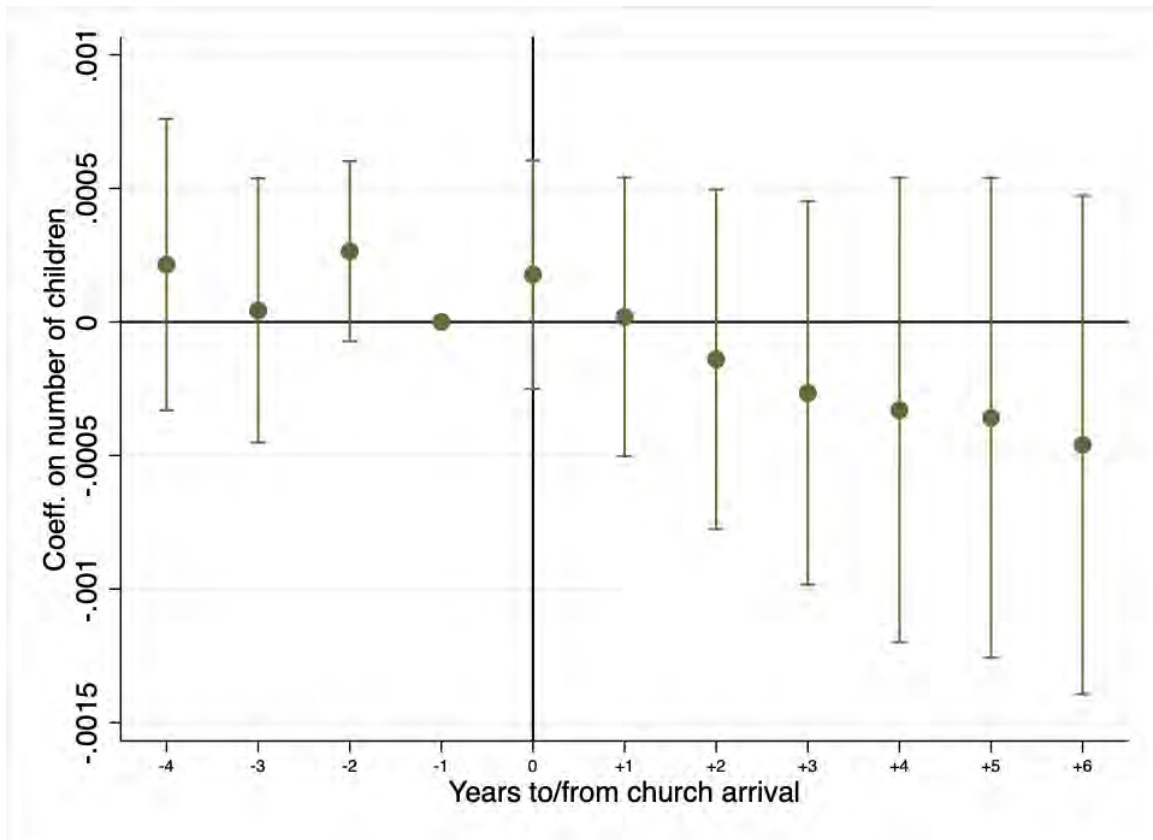
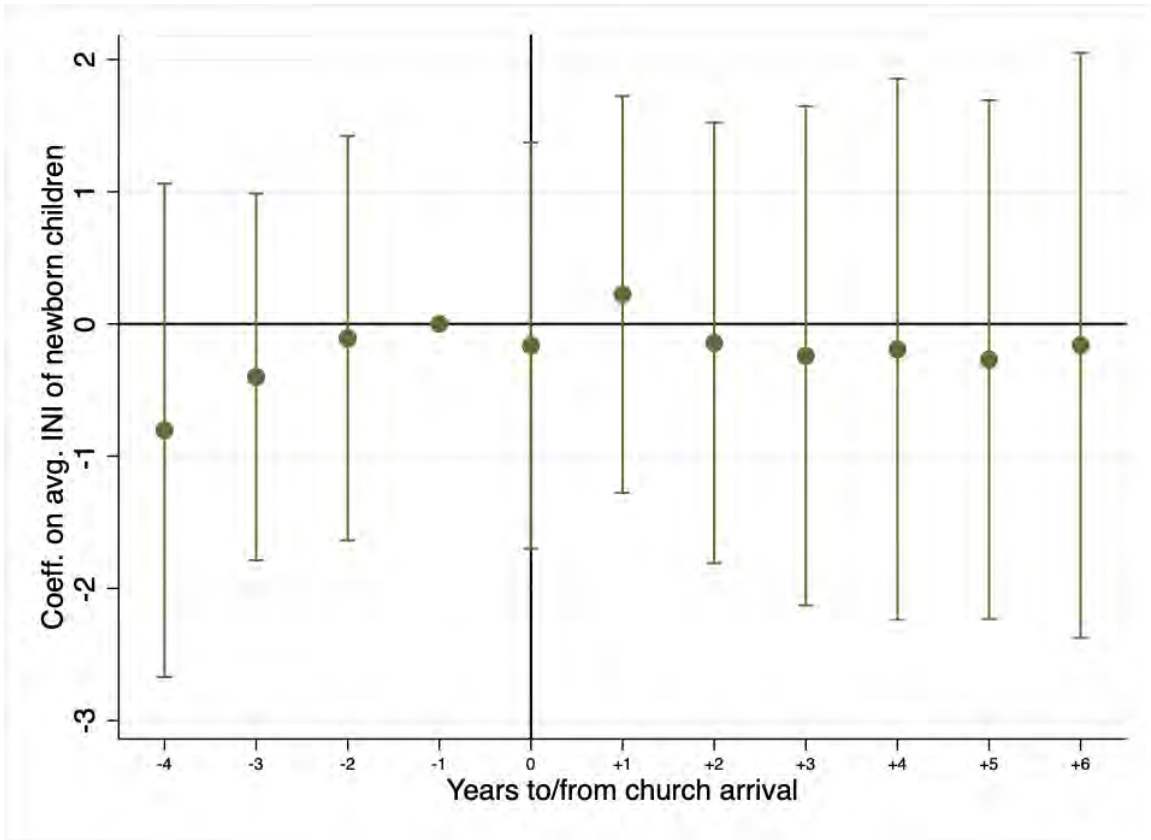


Figure 5. Number of Children



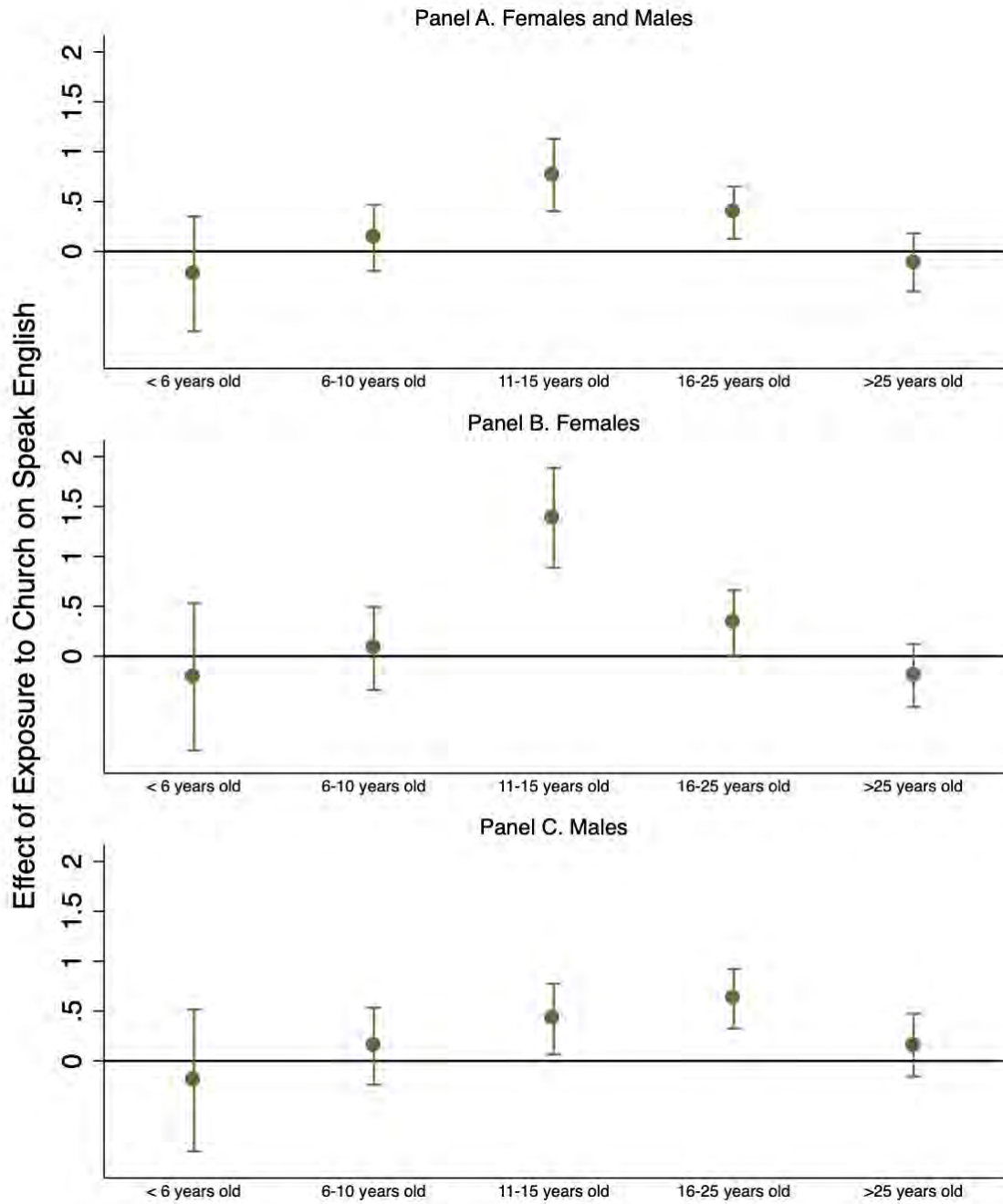
Notes: The figure plots the coefficient, with 95% confidence intervals, on leads and lags of a dummy equal to one for the entry of an Italian Catholic church in each county-(calendar) year. The dependent variable is the number of children in the household. The sample is restricted to households with both parents born in Italy and whose children were born in the US living in counties that, over the sample period, experienced only one church arrival, and no church exit. The regression includes all controls listed in column (4) of Table 2, and the following additional variables: household fixed effects; fixed effects for gender, age, and years in the US for the household head. The vertical black line refers to the actual arrival of the church in the county.

Figure 6. Average INI of Children



Notes: The figure plots the coefficient, with 95% confidence intervals, on leads and lags of a dummy equal to one for the entry of an Italian Catholic church in each county-(calendar) year. The dependent variable is the average score of Italianness of children born to (first-generation) Italian parents in a given year. The sample is restricted to households with both parents born in Italy and with at least one child born (in the US) before and at least one child born after the entry of the church who lived in counties that, over the sample period, experienced only one church arrival, and no church exit. The regression includes all controls listed in column (4) of Table 2, and the following additional variables: household fixed effects; fixed effects for gender, age, and years in the US for the household head. The vertical black line refers to the actual arrival of the church in the county.

Figure 7. Ability to Speak English: Italian Immigrant Children



Notes: The figure plots the coefficients, with 95% confidence intervals, for years of exposure to Italian churches (*Years w/ Italian church*) from regressions that estimate the same specification described in the notes to Table 2, column 4. The horizontal axis refers to the “age at exposure” of (first-generation) Italian immigrants. Table A.6 reports the estimates plotted here.

A Appendix – Additional Tables and Figures

Table A.1. List and Description of Main Variables

Variable	Description
<i>Panel A. County level characteristics</i>	
Years w/ Italian church	Number of years with at least one Italian church in the previous decade
Fraction of immigrants	Fraction of immigrants over county population
Fraction of European immigrants	Fraction of European immigrants over county population
Fraction of Italians	Fraction of Italian immigrants over county population
Urban share	Urban share of the county population
Black share	African American share of the county population
Share native men 15-64 in labor force	Share of native men (15-64) in the labor force
Share native men 15-64 in manufacturing	Share of native men (15-64) employed in manufacturing
<i>Panel B. Main outcomes (individual level characteristics)</i>	
Married to native	Dummy=1 if the individual is married to a native of native parentage; restricted to married individuals 15+ years old
Residential integration	Dummy=1 if the household head has at least one native neighbor of native parentage
Naturalized	Dummy=1 if citizen is naturalized; restricted to individuals 21+ years old who have been in the US for at least 5 years
Speak English	Dummy=1 if the individual speaks English; restricted to individuals 15+ years old
Literacy	Dummy=1 if the individual can read and write; restricted to individuals 15+ years old
Log occupational score	Logarithm of (0.01+occupational score); restricted to men 15-64 years old in labor force
In labor force	Dummy=1 if a man (15-64) is in labor force. For 1900, due to data limitations, non-missing occupational scores is used
Number of children	Number of children in the household; restricted to households with both parents born in Italy, whose children were born in the US and were living in counties that, over the sample period, experienced only one church arrival, and no church exit
Average INI of children	Average score of Italianness of children born to first-generation Italian parents; restricted to households with both parents born in Italy with at least one child born in the US before and at least one child born after the entry of the church. The sample is further restricted to individuals living in counties that, over the sample period, experienced only one church arrival, and no church exit
<i>Panel C. Additional individual characteristics</i>	
Male	Dummy=1 if the individual is male
Years in the US	Number of years spent in the US
Manufacture	Dummy=1 if a man (15-64) works in manufacturing
Married	Dummy=1 if an individual is married
Married to Italian	Dummy=1 if an individual is married to a first or second generation Italian immigrant; restricted to individuals 15+ years old

Table A.2. Additional Economic Outcomes

Dep. Variable	In Manufacturing	Unskilled	Literacy	Italian Occupational Index
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Years w/ Italian church	0.139 (0.112)	0.154 (0.142)	0.133 (0.113)	0.025** (0.012)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	1,738,775	1,738,775	1,738,775	1,394,990
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	11.67	60.35	59.85	4.143
Observations	6.190	6.190	6.190	6.067
State \times Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls \times Decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ever Treated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: the table replicates the specification reported in column 4 of Table 2, focusing on first-generation Italian immigrant men of age 15 to 64. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to 1 (multiplied by 100) for being: *i*) in manufacturing, (column 1); *ii*) unskilled (column 2); *iii*) literate, (column 3). *Italian Occupational Index* is the fraction of Italian men in labor force holding a specific occupation over the fraction of the rest of the male population in the labor force, holding that occupation. This variable is defined for individuals who reported an occupation that was classified by the Census as of 1900. Individuals in the labor force, but with a “non-classified” occupation are excluded from the analysis for this variable, explaining why the number of observations in column 4 is lower than in previous columns. See Table 2 for the definition of regressors and controls. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.01$.

Table A.3. Cultural Transmission

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Panel A.</i>				
<i>Dep. Variable: Number of Children</i>				
Years w/ Italian church	-0.001 (0.006)	-0.006 (0.006)	-0.009 (0.008)	-0.015* (0.008)
Observations	1,114,356	1,114,356	1,114,356	1,013,515
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	1.640	1.640	1.640	1.669
Avg. Years w/ Italian church	6.671	6.671	6.671	7.334
S.d. treatment	3.834	3.834	3.834	3.360
<i>Panel B.</i>				
<i>Dep. Variable: Average INI of Children</i>				
Years w/ Italian church	-0.008 (0.054)	0.008 (0.044)	-0.017 (0.064)	-0.034 (0.068)
Observations	720,271	720,271	720,271	664,846
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	31.14	31.14	31.14	31.29
Avg. Years w/ Italian church	6.900	6.900	6.900	7.475
S.d. treatment	3.726	3.726	3.726	3.278
State \times Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls \times Decade		Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans		Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends			Yes	Yes
Ever Treated				Yes

Notes: the table replicates the analysis conducted in Table 2, focusing on first-generation Italian immigrants with both parents born in Italy. Panel B restricts attention to families with at least one child born in the US. *Number of Children* (resp. *Average INI of Children*) is the number of children (resp. the average INI of children) in the household born during the decade. See Table 2 for the description of regressors and controls. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.01$.

Table A.4. Baseline Results, Newspapers Sample

Dep. Variable	Married to Native (1)	Residential Integration (2)	Labor Force (3)	Log Occupational Score (4)	Naturalized (5)	Speak English (6)
<i>Panel A: Baseline Sample</i>						
Years w/ Italian church	-0.085*** (0.013)	-0.373*** (0.084)	-0.005 (0.059)	-0.013*** (0.004)	-0.234 (0.212)	0.141 (0.139)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	6.842(3.542)	7.361(3.344)	6.190(3.727)	6.213(3.713)	7.458(3.189)	6.423(3.657)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	0.802	16.86	85.87	3.070	53.45	57.01
Observations	1,966,440	995,053	1,738,775	1,635,225	1,302,406	2,848,387
<i>Panel B: Sample with Newspapers Data</i>						
Years w/ Italian church	-0.077*** (0.017)	-0.334*** (0.101)	-0.104 (0.086)	-0.010** (0.005)	-0.353 (0.271)	0.203 (0.176)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	7.084(3.402)	7.588(3.174)	6.474(3.607)	6.495(3.591)	7.735(2.966)	6.674(3.539)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	0.798	15.55	85.41	3.083	53.49	57.86
Observations	1,451,255	741,263	1,273,868	1,196,572	962,380	2,105,543
State × Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls × Decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: the table replicates results reported in column 4 of Tables 2, 3, and 4 (also presented here in Panel A) restricting attention to individuals living in counties for which newspapers data are available (Panel B). See notes to Tables 2, 3, and 4 for the description of regressors and controls. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A.5. Integration with Other Groups

Ethnicity	Native (1)	Non-Native (2)	1st Gen. Italian (3)	1st or 2nd Gen. Italian (4)	Irish (5)	German (6)	Russian (7)	Central European (8)	Northern-European (9)	Western-European (10)
<i>Panel A.</i>										
<i>Dep. Variable: Inter-marriage</i>										
Years w/ Italian church	-0.085*** (0.013) [-0.028]	-0.104*** (0.023) [-0.008]	0.160*** (0.043) [0.020]	0.222*** (0.031) [0.031]	-0.001 (0.005) [-0.001]	-0.020*** (0.006) [-0.017]	0.000 (0.001) [0.001]	-0.010** (0.005) [-0.007]	-0.002 (0.005) [-0.004]	-0.035*** (0.008) [-0.022]
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	6.842(3.542)	7.140(3.400)	7.140(3.400)	7.140(3.400)	7.140(3.400)	7.140(3.400)	7.140(3.400)	7.140(3.400)	7.140(3.400)	7.140(3.400)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	0.802	2.684	94.19	95.92	0.286	0.416	0.0135	0.201	0.058	0.434
Observations	1,966,440	1,740,854	1,740,853	1,740,853	1,740,853	1,740,853	1,740,853	1,740,853	1,740,853	1,740,853
<i>Panel B.</i>										
<i>Dep. Variable: Residential Integration</i>										
Years w/ Italian church	-0.373*** (0.084) [-0.035]	0.008 (0.117) [0.001]	0.372*** (0.104) [0.031]	0.375*** (0.103) [0.032]	0.046 (0.044) [0.008]	0.049 (0.034) [0.009]	-0.018 (0.033) [-0.003]	0.051 (0.039) [0.008]	0.012 (0.028) [0.004]	0.002 (0.016) [0.001]
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	7.361(3.344)	7.361(3.344)	7.361(3.344)	7.361(3.344)	7.361(3.344)	7.361(3.344)	7.361(3.344)	7.361(3.344)	7.361(3.344)	7.361(3.344)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	16.86	41.21	67.61	68.02	9.837	9.551	2.974	4.203	2.025	2.183
Observations	995,053	995,053	995,053	995,053	995,053	995,053	995,053	995,053	995,053	995,053
State × Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls × Decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ever Treated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: Notes: the table replicates the specification of Table 2, column 4, for intermarriage (Panel A) and residential integration (Panel B) between an Italian immigrant and individuals belonging to the group reported at the top of each column. Column 7 includes spouses born in either Russia, Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania; column 8 includes spouses born in either Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia; column 9 includes spouses born in either Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Lapland, Norway or Sweden; column 10 includes spouses born in either Belgium, France, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Switzerland. See Table 2 for the sample considered in each Panel, the definition of the dependent variable, and the description of controls.

Table A.6. Heterogeneous Effects, by Age of Exposure

Dep. Variable	Speak English				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Panel A: Both Females and Males</i>					
Years w/ Italian church	-0.226 (0.293)	0.136 (0.169)	0.766*** (0.185)	0.389*** (0.134)	-0.110 (0.148)
Age at church arrival	<6yo	[6-10yo]	[11-15yo]	[16-25yo]	>25yo
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	8.376(2.669)	7.199(3.284)	6.856(3.495)	6.091(3.650)	6.079(3.755)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	84.91	80.54	70.75	56.37	53.11
Observations	156,995	208,874	328,987	1,123,858	1,169,284
<i>Panel B: Females</i>					
Years w/ Italian church	-0.208 (0.375)	0.077 (0.211)	1.386*** (0.254)	0.334** (0.166)	-0.194 (0.161)
Age at church arrival	<6yo	[6-10yo]	[11-15yo]	[16-25yo]	>25yo
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	8.389(2.645)	7.220(3.257)	6.880(3.446)	6.387(3.530)	6.436(3.631)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	84.28	78.48	66.13	48.56	41.56
Observations	75,239	97,945	135,387	398,825	427,197
<i>Panel C: Males</i>					
Years w/ Italian church	-0.195 (0.360)	0.147 (0.196)	0.419** (0.181)	0.623*** (0.152)	0.159 (0.160)
Age at church arrival	<6yo	[6-10yo]	[11-15yo]	[16-25yo]	>25yo
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	8.368(2.683)	7.184(3.307)	6.840(3.528)	5.928(3.704)	5.873(3.810)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	85.46	82.33	74.08	60.55	58.90
Observations	81,684	110,870	193,540	724,986	742,058
State × Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls × Decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ever Treated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

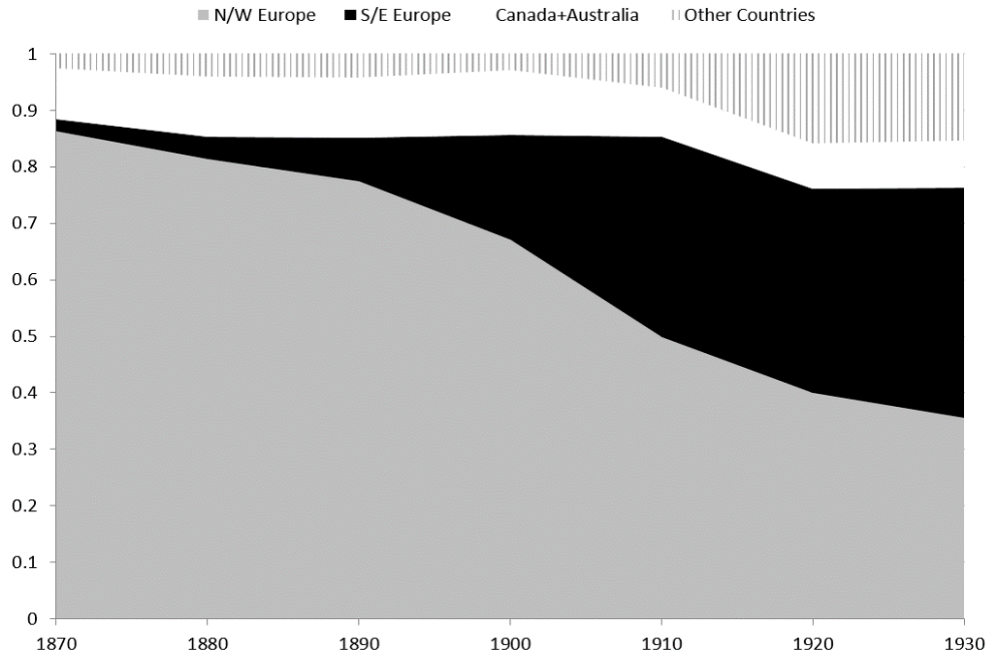
Notes: The table replicates the specification reported in column 4 of Table 4, Panel B. *Speak English* is a dummy, multiplied by 100, for being able to speak English. The sample includes first-generation Italian immigrants who were in the age group reported in the corresponding column (see *Age at church arrival*) when the Italian church first arrived in the county within the decade. See the notes to Tables 2, 3, and 4 for the description of controls. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.01.

Table A.7. Literacy: Italian Immigrant Children

Dep. Variable	Literacy					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<i>Sample</i>	<i>Males and Females</i>		<i>Females</i>		<i>Males</i>	
Years w/ Italian church	0.321** (0.137)	0.326** (0.134)	0.392** (0.163)	0.398*** (0.151)	0.280* (0.162)	0.279* (0.169)
Years w/ Italian church × 1[English laws]		-0.013 (0.096)		-0.016 (0.120)		0.002 (0.115)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	5.238(3.392)		5.289(3.378)		5.195(3.404)	
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	76.17		75.55		76.69	
Age	10-14		10-14		10-14	
Observations	139,739		66,907		72,782	
State × Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls × Decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ever Treated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

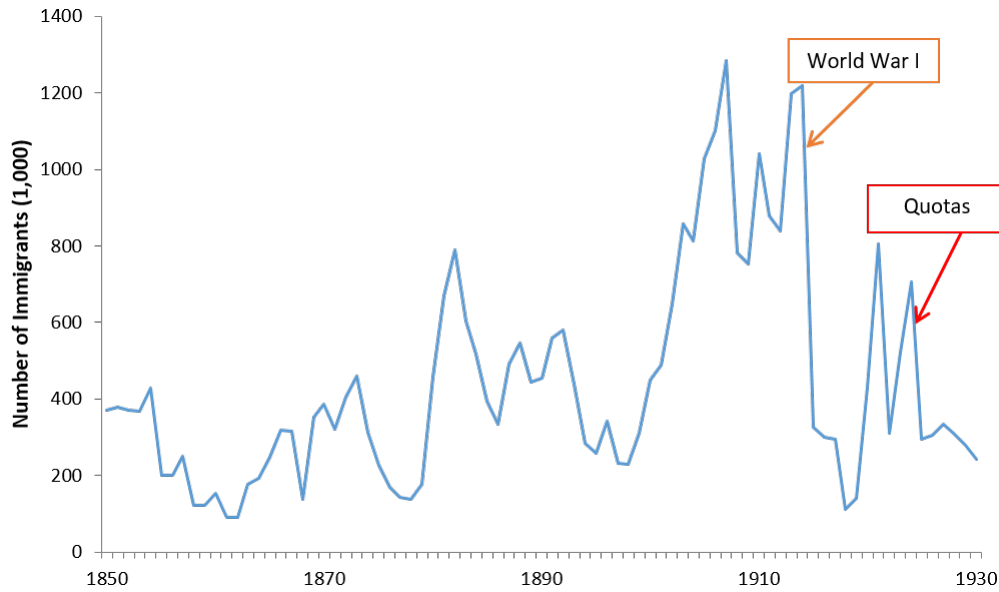
Notes: The sample includes first-generation Italian immigrants of age 10 to 14. The dependent variable is a dummy (multiplied by 100) equal to one if the individual is able to read and write. *1[English laws]* is a dummy equal to one if the individual lives in a county belonging to a state with the requirement to teach (also) in English at the time of the Census year. The data comes from Edwards (1923). The table estimates the same specification reported in column 4 of Tables 2, 3, and 4. See the notes to those tables for the description of controls. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.01$.

Figure A.1. Immigrants by Region



Notes: Share of immigrants (relative to the total foreign born population) living in the United States, by sending region and by decade. Source: Authors' calculations from Ruggles et al. (2020).

Figure A.2. Total Number of Immigrants (in Thousands)



Notes: Annual inflow of immigrants to the United States (1850-1930). Source: Adapted from (Tabellini, 2020).

B Appendix – Data

B.1 Residential Integration at the Individual Level

To estimate the effects of Italian Catholic churches on the social assimilation of Italian immigrants (Table 2), we construct a measure of residential integration at the individual level. To construct this variable, we follow Logan and Parman (2017), taking advantage of a peculiar characteristic of historical full count US Census manuscript files. Since enumeration occurred door-to-door up until 1960, it is possible to infer the identity of a given household’s neighbors relying on the ordering of respondents in manuscript records. Using this logic, we construct a variable that takes on the value of one if a first-generation Italian immigrant has at least one neighbor who is native of native parentage. The variable is defined for all households with at least one (and not necessarily both) observed neighbor. In Table A.5, we construct a similar index, to measure the residential integration of Italians with other groups (e.g., non-native, non-Italian individuals; immigrants from different regions of origin; other Italians; etc.).

B.2 Italian Sounding Names

As discussed in the main text, we consider the “Italian content” of the name chosen by Italian immigrant parents for their offspring (born in the US). Since this choice involves their children and not immigrants themselves, naming might capture an indirect effect of Italian churches on assimilation, and may well follow from other assimilation outcomes, such as intermarriage with native-born spouses. Moreover, rather than reflecting assimilation “effort”, naming patterns should better capture the desire to transmit vertically the national culture.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, as long as parents are attached to their culture, choosing a non-ethnic name for their offspring is a costly assimilation decision. Moreover, there might be a penalty in the labor market, and more broadly in the social life, associated with a foreign-sounding name (Biavaschi et al., 2017). If parents were aware of this, such a penalty may proxy for the monetary value they assign to their children having a name indicative of their ethnic origin.

To capture the ethnic content of names, we compute an index of name distinctiveness that builds on what was first used in Fryer and Levitt (2004) for African Americans and, more recently, in Abramitzky et al. (2020), Fouka (2019), and Fouka et al. (2020)

⁵⁵This approach is widely used in the literature (Abramitzky et al., 2020; Fouka, 2019).

among others for European immigrants. Since we are specifically interested in Italian immigrants, we construct an Italian Name Index (INI). This index measures the frequency of a name within first-generation Italian immigrants relative to its frequency among both natives and first-generation immigrants of every nationality.⁵⁶ For each decade τ , we consider individuals born 20 years before as a reference group.

Formally, the index is computed as follows:

$$INI_{Name,\tau} = \frac{Pr(Name|Italians_\tau)}{Pr(Name|Italians_\tau) + Pr(Name|Not\ Italians_\tau)} \times 100$$

where *Italians_τ* refers to Italians born between τ and $\tau - 2$, and *Not Italians_τ* refers to natives and first-generation immigrants of every nationality (other than Italian) born between τ and $\tau - 2$. The index ranges from 0 to 100, with names never encountered among, respectively, Italians and non-Italians having a value of zero and 100.

We construct the INI for US-born children of an Italian-born father using the full count US Census (Ruggles et al., 2020) for the three decades between 1900 and 1920. Note, also, that we consider only first-generation immigrants as reference groups in order to capture what parents perceived as a “distinctive Italian” name when making the naming decision, without contamination from changes in naming patterns among US-born Italians. In practice, we construct a household-level average INI for each calendar year t . As explained in Section 4.2, we control for household fixed effects as well as for the number of kids in each year. Thus, the change in the household-level INI before and after the arrival of the church captures precisely the impact of the church on the name given by parents to the kid(s) born after the arrival of the church.

B.3 Identifying Italian Priests in the Catholic Directories

Italian priests were identified from the original Catholic directories *via* their last name. Almanacs reported for each year and parish the clergy list, i.e., the full names of all serving reverends preceded by the title “Rev.” (as an example, see Figure 3). Last names were then classified as Italian according to a Jaro-Winkler 99% similarity match with all last names of Italian immigrants recorded on the Ellis Island archives for the

⁵⁶Consistent with our definition of intermarriage, we define as natives those individuals who were born in the US from native parents. To avoid potentially confounding effects due to naming patterns among African Americans (Fryer and Levitt, 2004), we restrict attention to native whites.

period 1892-1924 (Florio, 2019).⁵⁷

The original Ellis Island list includes 421,826 distinct Italian last names, the three most frequent being Rossi, Russo, and Esposito. Since these records suffer from a high rate of misspellings, we only keep Italian last names that were still present in the Italian 2009 *Whitepages* directory.⁵⁸ This is supposed to be mistake-free, although it may miss last names which have disappeared during the 20th century. By doing so, the number of surnames on the list drops to 48,371. We also exclude last names terminating with a consonant, which was very unlikely for Italians who were migrating at that time (mostly from the South of Italy, Spitzer and Zimran, 2020). This further reduces the final list to 45,535 last names.

⁵⁷The Jaro-Winkler similarity index is the inversion of the Jaro-Winkler edit distance between two strings (i.e., how dissimilar two strings are to one another by counting the minimum number of operations required to transform one string into the other), normalized between 0 and 1.

⁵⁸The *Whitepages* is the official telephone directory, which provides a complete list of all names associated to a landline telephone number. See also Gagliarducci and Manacorda (2020).

C Appendix – Robustness

This section describes the checks we performed to assess the robustness of our results.

Testing the identifying assumption. Following the discussion in Section 4.1, we first start by addressing the possibility that the timing of church arrivals within a decade was not as good as random. To do so, in Table C.1, we regress the year corresponding to the first church arrival within a decade (i.e., 1 if the first arrival happened in the first year of the decade, 2 if it happened in the second year, etc.) against the interaction between Census year dummies and the 1880 to 1900 change in a number of county characteristics.⁵⁹ When performing this exercise, unfortunately, we are constrained by data availability.⁶⁰ However, we are able to consider the following variables: the Italian and European immigrant share of the population, total county population, the Black and the urban share of the county population, the share of (men) in the labor force, the employment share in manufacturing, and the years of presence of railroads from Sequeira et al. (2020).

Our hypothesis is that, if the timing of arrival within a decade was as good as random, changes in county characteristics before exposure should not have any predictive power. When only controlling for county fixed effects, only the coefficients on change in the Italian share and in the share in manufacturing are marginally statistically significant (column 1). However, and reassuringly, when we consider our most preferred specification, where we also include county-specific linear trends, all coefficients become very noisy and statistically insignificant (column 2).⁶¹ Moreover, and reassuringly, no obvious pattern seems to emerge.

Next, we tackle the possibility that church exits might be endogenously determined by trends in assimilation of Italians within a given county. Although we lack a direct strategy to address this issue, we can nonetheless test whether results are robust to focusing on a sample of counties with at least one church entry but no exits within the decade. Reassuringly, Panel A of Table C.2 shows that this is indeed the case.⁶²

⁵⁹Regressions are weighed by the number of observations used in the individual-level analysis.

⁶⁰We cannot conduct this exercise using the 1890 Census, because it was destroyed in a fire. Also, some variables are not available in the 1880 Census. Moreover, since very few Italians were living in the US as of 1880, it is not possible to formally test for “pre-trends” using the outcomes of Italian immigrants, as this would leave us with very few observations.

⁶¹Clearly, since column 2 includes county-specific linear trends, we could only estimate the interaction with the 1910 dummy.

⁶²Here, we estimate our preferred specification (column 4) reported in Tables 2 to 4, restricting

That considering only entries – but not exits – leaves our results unchanged needs not be surprising. For one, even after a formal exit, the very same church may have remained open, even though it was no longer (formally) Italian. As long as the Italian community still represented the majority of that church, the fact that the church was not run by an Italian clergy anymore did not stop the mechanisms described in Section 6. Relatedly, even after the physical disappearance of a church, its legacy may have remained both within the Italian community and among natives (e.g., in the form of persistent negative stereotypes).

We then address recent concerns on DD settings with staggered treatment adoption. Specifically, de Chaisemartin and D’Haultfoeuille (2020) and Goodman-Bacon (2020), among the others, have shown that in a generalized DD framework already-treated units are kept as controls – something that might introduce bias in the presence of heterogeneous effects across groups experiencing treatment at different points in time. As explained in the main text, our setting is further complicated by the fact that we observe multiple church entries and exits within the same decade. This feature makes it impossible to implement the framework proposed by de Chaisemartin and D’Haultfoeuille (2020).

Yet, we focus on first church arrivals and follow Cengiz et al. (2019) and Deshpande and Yue (2019). We create separate datasets where counties with a first church arrival in a Census year are considered treated, while counties that would eventually experience a first church arrival in following decades (or never experience a church arrival) serve as controls.⁶³ In this setting, event-time dummies are specified relative to the specific year of treatment for that cohort. We then append all datasets to create a unique panel, and estimate our preferred DD specification. Results, reported in Panel B of Table C.2, verify that almost all coefficients are robust to this approach. The only exception is the point estimate on ability to speak English (column 6), which becomes larger in magnitude and statistically significant.

Definition of “exposure”. Next, we present results for different definitions of “exposure” to Italian Catholic organizations in Table C.4. As discussed in Section 3, our baseline specification considers the years of exposure to an Italian Catholic church (within a decade), defining the latter as an institution that meets at least one of the

attention to the sample just described.

⁶³Estimates are not sensitive to the exclusion of never-treated counties. These results available upon request.

following conditions: *i*) it is an Italian national church; *ii*) it is a Scalabrinian church; *iii*) it is a church with an Italian priest. Clearly, these conditions are not mutually exclusive. Table C.4 replicates results reported in column 4 of Tables 2, 3, and 4, running a horse-race between each of the three conditions. It shows that most of the effect is driven by the presence of either an Italian national church or an Italian priest. Perhaps surprisingly in light of historical and anecdotal accounts, Scalabrinian churches do not seem to have any effect on cultural assimilation. Yet, these patterns may be due to the fact that there were only about thirty churches run by Scalabrinians during the observed period.

As an additional robustness check, in Table C.5, we experiment with two alternative measures of exposure to Italian Catholic churches. First, we consider the average number of Italian churches per year in each decade (Panel A). Second, we focus on the average number of Italian priests per year in each decade (Panel B). Differently from our baseline measure, which captures only the length of exposure, these alternative measures combine both the length and the intensity of exposure. Yet, with the exception of naturalization, the message remains very similar to our main specification.

White flight and additional robustness checks. In this paragraph, we address the potential concern that the arrival of Italian Catholic churches may have triggered white flight and other compositional changes between counties. For instance, one may be concerned that, after the arrival of a church, natives (or other immigrant groups) decided to leave the county. Alternatively, one may be worried that churches attracted Italians from other counties. While any change happening within a county would be captured in our analysis, between-county changes would threaten the interpretation of our results.

In columns 1 to 3 of Table C.6, we estimate county-decade panel regressions for our most preferred specification, where the dependent variable is the log of county, immigrant, and Italian population respectively. The main regressor of interest is the baseline measure of exposure to Italian churches in a county-decade.⁶⁴ Reassuringly, exposure to Italian churches is not associated with any change in the total, immigrant, or Italian population. In columns 4 to 6, we also verify that exposure to Italian

⁶⁴Since regressions are at the county-decade level, we cannot include individual and household level controls. To keep the weighting scheme as close as possible to the individual level analysis, regressions are weighed by the number of observations included in the tables in the main paper (e.g., Tables 2, 3, and 4).

churches did not alter the immigrant (column 4) or Italian (column 5) share of the county population, or the share of Italian immigrants, relative to the foreign born population (column 6).

Next, we explore the possibility that Italian churches changed sex ratios, i.e., the number of women relative to the number of men, in the county. This may be problematic in light of our results for intermarriage (Table 2). In Table C.7, we again estimate county-decade panel regressions for our preferred specification considering as dependent variable different measures of sex ratios. Reassuringly, exposure to Catholic churches has no impact on sex ratios defined for: the whole county (column 1), natives of native parentage (column 2), first and second generation Italians (column 3), first-generation Italians (column 4), all first and second generation immigrants (column 5), and all individuals in the age range 18-35 (column 6).

Additionally, we deal with the possibility that Italian Catholic churches may be selectively opening (earlier or later) in counties that were experiencing faster or slower economic growth. We proxy for the latter by constructing a measure of predicted growth using a Bartik approach, as in Sequeira et al. (2020) and Tabellini (2020) among others. Specifically, we interact the 1900 employment share in each 3-digit industry in the county with the decadal national growth in that industry, and we then aggregate this over all industries within the same county (in each decade). We then augment the baseline specification (column 4) of Tables 2, 3, and 4 with this additional control, reporting results in Panel B of Table C.8. Reassuringly, all our estimates remain very close to those from our preferred specification, reported in Panel A to ease comparisons.

Finally, Table C.3 documents that the statistical significance of our estimates is unchanged when clustering standard errors at the state (Panel A) and at the commuting zone (Panel B) level.

Table C.1. Predicting the Timing of a Church Arrival

Dep. Variable:	Time in the Decade	
	(1)	(2)
Year 1910 \times Δ of:		
Fr. Italians	66.560* (34.232)	30.027 (34.622)
Fr. Europeans	-3.609 (12.973)	-7.009 (12.840)
Population	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Urban share	0.696 (2.638)	0.155 (2.756)
Labor force share	11.227 (11.941)	2.776 (17.242)
Manufacturing share	10.154 (7.753)	5.367 (8.629)
Railroad years	0.021 (0.048)	-0.022 (0.059)
Year 1920 \times Δ of:		
Fr. Italians	-7.615 (29.605)	
Fr. Europeans	16.207 (12.015)	
Population	-0.000 (0.000)	
Urban share	-0.575 (2.955)	
Labor force share	11.650 (10.269)	
Manufacturing share	12.022* (6.942)	
Railroad years	0.050 (0.050)	
Observations	568	568
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	6.923	6.923
State \times Decade FEs	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends		Yes
Ever treated	Yes	Yes

Notes: The sample includes all county-decade observations with a church arrival over the 1890-1920 period. *Time in the Decade* is the year of first arrival of an Italian Catholic church (see Section 2.2 for the definition) in the county over the ten years before a Census. Δ s refer to changes between 1880 and 1900 of each variable reported in the corresponding row. Regressions are weighed by the number of observations used in the individual level analysis. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.01$.

Table C.2. Robustness of DD Strategy

Dep. Variable:	Married to Native	Residential Integration	Labor Force	Log Occ. Score	Naturalized	Speak English
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<i>Panel A. Excluding Exits</i>						
Yrs w/ Italian church	-0.106*** (0.015)	-0.409*** (0.096)	-0.001 (0.062)	-0.018*** (0.004)	-0.431 (0.342)	0.097 (0.168)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	0.740	15.21	85.99	3.075	53.67	57.15
Mean (s.d) Treatment	5.814(4.643)	6.282(4.681)	5.178(4.632)	5.217(4.640)	6.272(4.653)	5.464(4.624)
Observations	1,570,512	797,056	1,358,646	1,277,336	1,021,881	2,259,498
<i>Panel B. Stacked by Event Design</i>						
Yrs w/ Italian church	-0.117*** (0.013)	-0.380*** (0.077)	0.002 (0.059)	-0.012*** (0.004)	-0.047 (0.197)	0.158 (0.149)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	1.139	21.83	85.42	3.052	53.42	57.09
Mean (s.d) Treatment	2.822(3.369)	3.075(3.472)	2.333(3.154)	2.355(3.172)	3.014(3.463)	2.560(3.253)
Observations	1,741,585	845,582	1,713,631	1,604,371	1,142,664	2,642,388
State × Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls × Decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ever Treated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The table replicates the specification in column 4 of Tables 2, 3, and 4. Panel A restricts to counties that ever had an Italian church over the sample period, and never experienced an exit; Panel B duplicates non-treated county-decade observations for each treatment cohort, and additionally includes event-time dummies relative to the specific year of treatment. See the notes to Tables 2, 3, and 4 for the description of controls. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.01.

Table C.3. Robustness Inference

Dep. Variable:	Residential Integration	Married to Native	Labor Force	Log Occ. Score	Naturalized	Speak English
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<i>Panel A. State Level Clustering</i>						
Yrs w/ Italian church	-0.087*** (0.018)	-0.376*** (0.073)	-0.005 (0.035)	-0.013*** (0.004)	-0.221 (0.196)	0.141 (0.160)
Mean (sd) Treatment	4.998(4.650)	5.415(4.742)	4.363(4.543)	4.394(4.554)	5.313(4.711)	4.668(4.588)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	0.802	16.86	85.87	3.070	53.45	57.01
Observations	1,966,440	995,053	1,738,775	1,635,225	1,302,406	2,848,387
<i>Panel B. Commuting Zone Level Clustering</i>						
Yrs w/ Italian church	-0.086*** (0.013)	-0.374*** (0.076)	-0.005 (0.046)	-0.013*** (0.004)	-0.221 (0.209)	0.140 (0.138)
Mean (sd) Treatment	4.998(4.650)	5.415(4.741)	4.364(4.543)	4.395(4.554)	5.313(4.711)	4.669(4.588)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	0.801	16.85	85.87	3.070	53.44	57.01
Observations	1,966,284	994,950	1,738,594	1,635,055	1,302,275	2,848,127
State \times Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls \times Decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ever Treated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The table replicates the specification in column 4 of Tables 2, 3, and 4. Standard errors, in parentheses, are clustered at the state level in Panel A, and at the commuting zone level in Panel B. See the notes to Tables 2, 3, and 4 for the description of controls. Significance levels: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.01.

Table C.4. Heterogeneity by Treatment Type

Dep. Variable:	Married to Native	Residential Integration	Labor Force	Log Occ. Score	Naturalized	Speak English
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Years w/ Italian national church	-0.068*** (0.012)	-0.234*** (0.066)	-0.010 (0.055)	-0.017*** (0.005)	-0.188 (0.160)	-0.017 (0.157)
Years w/ Scalabrinian church	-0.003 (0.012)	-0.187** (0.095)	-0.112 (0.091)	0.000 (0.004)	-0.580 (0.593)	0.090 (0.162)
Years w/ Italian priest	-0.023** (0.011)	-0.232*** (0.063)	0.010 (0.073)	0.009* (0.005)	-0.222 (0.242)	0.170 (0.152)
Mean (sd) Italian ethnic church	6.298(3.890)	6.776(3.796)	5.638(3.720)	5.664(3.997)	6.820(3.004)	5.894(3.952)
Mean (sd) Scalabrinian church	2.298(3.937)	2.486(3.632)	2.017(3.566)	2.026(3.592)	2.461(3.727)	2.145(3.559)
Mean (sd) Italian priest	4.373(3.614)	4.715(4.099)	3.944(4.007)	3.953(3.558)	4.718(4.080)	4.132(3.584)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	0.802	16.86	85.87	3.070	53.45	57.01
Observations	1,966,440	995,053	1,738,775	1,635,225	1,302,406	2,848,387
State \times Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls \times Decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ever Treated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The table replicates the specification in column 4 of Tables 2, 3, and 4, replacing the main regressor *Years w/ Italian church* with the following three regressors: *i*) the number of years with at least one Italian national church (*Years w/ Italian ethnic church*); *ii*) the number of years with at least one Scalabrinian church (*Years w/ Scalabrinian church*); *iii*) the number of years with at least one Italian priest (*Years w/ Italian priest*). See the notes to Tables 2, 3, and 4 for the description of controls. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table C.5. Heterogeneity by Exposure

Dep. Variable:	Residential Integration	Married to Native	Labor Force	Log Occ. Score	Naturalized	Speak English
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<i>Panel A. Average Churches per Year</i>						
Italian churches per year	-0.076*** (0.017)	-0.446*** (0.090)	0.091 (0.060)	-0.009** (0.004)	-1.067** (0.458)	0.109 (0.156)
Mean (sd) Treatment	4.998(4.650)	5.415(4.742)	4.363(4.543)	4.394(4.554)	5.313(4.711)	4.668(4.588)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	0.802	16.86	85.87	3.070	53.45	57.01
Observations	1,966,440	995,053	1,738,775	1,635,225	1,302,406	2,848,387
<i>Panel B. Average Priests per Year</i>						
Italian priests per year	-0.032*** (0.010)	-0.250*** (0.056)	0.059 (0.040)	-0.003* (0.002)	-0.709** (0.295)	-0.022 (0.112)
Mean (sd) Treatment	7.972(8.824)	8.663(9.069)	6.892(8.434)	6.937(8.457)	8.400(8.953)	7.475(8.667)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	0.802	16.86	85.87	3.070	53.45	57.01
Observations	1,966,440	995,053	1,738,775	1,635,225	1,302,406	2,848,387
State × Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls × Decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ever Treated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The table replicates the specification in column 4 of Tables 2, 3, and 4 replacing the number of years with at least one Italian church (*Years w/ Italian church*) with the average number of churches (resp. priests) per year during a decade in Panel A (resp. Panel B). See the notes to Tables 2, 3, and 4 for the description of controls. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.01.

Table C.6. County Demographics and Church Exposure

Dep. Variable	Log county population (1)	Log immigrant population (2)	Log Italian immigrant population (3)	Immigrant share of county population (4)	Italian share of county population (5)	Italian share of immigrant population (6)
Years w/ Italian church	0.001 (0.005)	0.005 (0.006)	0.01 (0.007)	0.071 (0.047)	0.031 (0.021)	0.071 (0.077)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment Observations	8.119(3.208) 1347	8.119(3.208) 1347	8.119(3.208) 1347	8.119(3.208) 1347	8.119(3.208) 1347	8.119(3.208) 1347
State × Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls × Decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ever Treated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: the table estimates county-decade panel regressions for counties with at least one Italian immigrant for whom outcomes are observed in Tables 2, 3 and 4. For the definition of the main regressor and the definition of controls, see the notes to Table 2. All regressions are weighed by number of individuals included in the analysis reported in column 3 of Tables 2, 3, and 4. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.01.

Table C.7. Sex Ratios

Dep. Variable:	(Women/Men) Ratio					
	All (1)	Natives (2)	Ita (1st&2nd gen) (3)	Ita (1st gen) (4)	All Immigrants (5)	Young (6)
Years w/ Italian Church	-0.000 (0.002)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.003)	0.001 (0.003)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.000 (0.002)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment Observations	7.318(3.889) 5,275	7.318(3.889) 5,275	7.319(3.888) 5,168	7.319(3.888) 5,150	7.318(3.889) 5,275	7.318(3.889) 5,275
State × Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls × Decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The table estimates county-decade panel regressions for counties with at least one Italian immigrant for whom outcomes are observed in Tables 2, 3 and 4. The dependent variable is the number of women relative to the number of men in a county-decade, for each group reported at the top of the column. Sex ratios are computed focusing on individuals, belonging to each specific group, who are at least 15 years old in columns 1 to 5. Sex ratios in column 6 are computed only for individuals in the age range 15-36 (included). See the notes to Tables 2 for the sample considered and the description of controls.

Table C.8. Baseline Results, Controlling for Predicted Industry Growth

Dep. Variable	Married to Native (1)	Residential Integration (2)	Labor Force (3)	Log Occupational Score (4)	Naturalized (5)	Speak English (6)
<i>Panel A: Baseline</i>						
Years w/ Italian church	-0.085*** (0.013)	-0.373*** (0.084)	-0.005 (0.059)	-0.013*** (0.004)	-0.234 (0.212)	0.141 (0.139)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	6.842(3.542)	7.361(3.344)	6.190(3.727)	6.213(3.713)	7.458(3.189)	6.423(3.657)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	0.802	16.86	85.87	3.070	53.45	57.01
Observations	1,966,440	995,053	1,738,775	1,635,225	1,302,406	2,848,387
<i>Panel B: Controlling for Predicted Industry Growth</i>						
Years w/ Italian church	-0.085*** (0.013)	-0.373*** (0.084)	-0.005 (0.059)	-0.013*** (0.004)	-0.233 (0.212)	0.141 (0.139)
Mean (s.d.) Treatment	6.842(3.542)	7.361(3.344)	6.190(3.727)	6.213(3.713)	7.458(3.189)	6.423(3.657)
Mean Dep. Variable (1900)	0.802	16.86	85.87	3.070	53.45	57.01
Observations	1,966,440	995,053	1,738,775	1,635,225	1,302,406	2,848,387
State × Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls × Decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fr. Italians/Europeans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Linear Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ever Treated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: the table replicates the specification in column 4 of Tables 2, 3 and 4 (also reported in Panel A), augmented with the predicted industry growth constructed using a Bartik-approach as described in the text (Panel B). See the notes to Table 2, 3 and 4 for the sample considered and the description of controls. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.