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Ethnicity, socialization, and academic achievement of Italian-American college students at the City University of New York

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ETHNICITY, SOCIALIZATION, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF ITALIAN-AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS AT THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

by

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CHAPTER ONE: DESIGN OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on ethnicity, socialization, and academic achievement of Italian-American freshmen at The City University of New York.

The Italian-Americans have been in the past singled out as a low achieving group when compared to other groups composing the American ethnic mosaic. The low educational achievement of Italian-Americans in the first half of the century was evidenced by their high rates of drop-out from secondary school (Steinberg 1974; Covello 1967). Italian-Americans, as other Catholic groups, were also under-represented among faculty at American institutions of higher education, whereas Protestants were fairly represented and Jews were over-represented, if each group's percentages in academia were compared to the actual population's ethnic composition nationally.

Scholars of Italian background pointed to cultural values discouraging the pursuit of formal education as the cause of Italian educational and occupational lagging behind more successful ethnic groups. Others pointed to situational factors and social class

background as temporarily slowing down the educational achievement of the Italian-Americans (Steinberg 1974). In his field study on Italian-Americans in Boston, Gans (1962) pointed to cultural values related to social class, rather than to ethnicity, as the main cause of the West End children's low school achievement and occupational aspirations.

Recent evidence (Alba 1985) suggests that later generation Italian-Americans are reaching educational and occupational attainment comparable to that of their Protestant counterparts. This seems to support the contention that situational factors (e.g. lack of means to support children's higher education) were the main cause of the initially low achievement of the group.

Among the aims of the present study was an assessment of academic motivation, academic achievement, educational aspirations, and occupational aspirations of Italian-American college students. It was of interest to assess the extent to which academic motivation and achievement, and educational and occupational aspirations, are influenced by background variables such as socio-economic status and ethnicity. Socialization variables which have been found in

previous studies to relate to ethnic and social class background, and to academic motivation and achievement, were also introduced in the study; the aim was to establish whether there is any link between ethnicity, socialization practices, and academic achievement.

Another focus of the study pertains to ethnicity, ethnic attitudes, ethnic behavior, and ethnic identification of young Italian-Americans. In light of the contention of some scholars (e.g. Greeley 1974) that ethnicity is far from disappearing for the ethnic groups of European ancestry; and of recent theorization on 'symbolic ethnicity'(Gans 1979), it was of interest to assess the degree of ethnic identification of later generation Italian-Americans, as well as the extent to which they would espouse pro-Italian ethnic attitudes. Moreover, assimilation theory (Gordon 1964) was tested with regard to different degrees of maintenance of ethnic identity and behavior cross generations.

In the remainder of this chapter the methodology of the study, operationalization of main variables, and the nature of the sample, will be presented. Ethnicity of respondents has been operationalized as generation of residence in the United States (see Section 1.4). Thus intergenerational comparisons are made within the

Italian-American group, rather than comparing it with other ethnic groups on variables of interest. Several reasons can be adduced for this choice. The educational attainment of Italian-Americans of younger cohorts does not seem significantly lower than that of other whites of Anglo-Saxon background nationally (Alba 1985). No differences in academic performance between Italian-American and other white ethnic freshmen were found at The City University of New York (Blumberg and Lavin 1985).

A comparison of Italian-American college students at The City University with other whites of European ancestry would have required introducing a series of control variables for the comparison group (such as socio-economic status, length of stay in the United States, mixed versus single ancestry) so as to match it to the Italian-American group. Achieving such a comparison group seemed neither feasible nor advisable. A main aim of this study was to test assimilation theory with regard to ethnic identification, ethnic attitudes, and ethnic behavior. And to verify whether differences in socialization practices, academic motivation and achievement, educational and occupational aspirations, are discernible across

generations of Italian-Americans. A sample of Italian-Americans of different generations seemed the most appropriate sample for the purposes of the study.

In Chapter 2 I will review the previous literature on ethnicity, assimilation, and socialization practices; and I will describe the main findings of the study with regard to these variables. In Chapter 3 I will introduce main hypotheses and findings with regard to academic achievement and educational and occupational aspirations. In Chapter 4 a summary and discussion of results will be presented.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was sent to a sample of Italian-American freshmen at four of the CUNY Colleges. Two sets of data were analyzed in the study: a) Information collected from respondents who replied to the survey of demographic and psychological variables; b) Information on Academic Achievement obtained from the colleges attended by respondents. The latter consists of scores on the three Basic Skills Assessment Tests (Mathematics, Reading, Writing) administered by the colleges as part of the admission process, and high school grade point average in college

preparatory courses (CAA) of respondents.

Information on academic performance variables was collected both for those who replied to the survey and those who did not. Those who responded to the social survey are more academically prepared than those who did not on all measures of academic achievement (see Table 1.2.1). Differences between the means of the two

Table 1.2.1

Comparison on Academic Performance Variables of Those Who Did and Did not Reply to The Social Survey

	Replied (N=314)			Did Not Reply (N=774)		
Academic Performance	Mean	SD	% Missing	Mean	SD	%Missing
Mathematics	27.6	7.05	1.6%	26.3	7.55	2.2%
Reading	17.7	4.09	3.5%	16.8	4.95	7.7%
Writing	7.4	1.38	1.9%	7.2	1.62	2.6%
CAA	79.7	6.44	10.9%	77.6	7.08	16.1%

groups on the four academic performance variables are all significant at probability of .05 or smaller. Moreover, more missing cases are reported for those who did not reply than for those who replied to the survey. Differences in number of missing cases between those who replied and those who did not are significant only for the Reading Test and the High School Grade Average

(p=.008 and p=.02 respectively).

Better academic preparation of those who reply than those who do not is a common occurrence reported in most mail surveys (see Lavin, Alba, & Silberstein 1981).

Questionnaires were coded to permit sending a second wave of questionnaires if necessary. The same identification number used to code questionnaires was used to code academic performance records obtained from the colleges to permit merging of academic performance records and survey information for each individual case. Such a procedure was implemented so as to keep confidentiality of records and anonymity of respondents. The project was reviewed and approved by the Committees on Human Subjects of the four Colleges participating in the study.

1.3 THE SAMPLE

The population of interest was defined as first-year, non- transfer, full-time students of Italian ancestry at four colleges of The City University of New York. The colleges were selected on the basis of their location in boroughs with a fairly high concentration of individuals of Italian ancestry.

They were three senior Colleges (Brooklyn, Queens, and Lehman) and one junior College (Staten Island). The latter College has implemented a two tier system in which most applicants earn an associate degree before being allowed to work for a Bachelor's degree.

The sample was screened on the basis of Italian sounding last names from the general list of first year non transfer students at each of the four Colleges. Such a procedure has the the following drawbacks: a) Respondents of mixed ancestry whose mother, but not father, is of Italian ancestry, are left out of the survey; b) Women of Italian ancestry married to a man of non Italian ancestry are left out of the survey; c) Women of non Italian ancestry married to men of Italian ancestry may be erroneously included in the sampling; d) Respondents of ancestry other than Italian (e.g. Hispanic) with Italian sounding last names may be erroneously included in the sampling. With regard to points b) and c) we note that only the 3% of the present sample were married. Moreover, non Italian women married to Italian men, as well as respondents with Italian sounding names who are not of Italian ancestry (e.g. Hispanics), either declared themselves not to be Italian on the front of the questionnaire, or

were screened out on the basis of their replies on the items pertaining ethnic ancestry (see questionnaire, items 10 to 12). Thus the only serious shortcoming of this sampling procedure, in the present case, regards the virtual absence of individuals of mixed ancestry whose mother, but not father, is of Italian ancestry.

The first mailing of the questionnaire took place in Fall 1986. A second mailing to all those who did not return the questionnaire by the deadline was implemented two months after the first, in Spring 1987. Table 1.3.1 presents the response frequencies and percentages of the total population (both waves).

Table 1.3.1

Response Rate of Population

Status	N	Percentage
Replied, Not Italian	61	5.2%
No Reply	693	60.1%
Missing Label and/or Address	81	7.1%
Replied,Italian (Sample)	318	27.5%
Total	1153	99.9%

Also shown is the percentage of individuals who were missed because of missing labels or wrong addresses.* Of the 318 usable questionnaires returned, 4 were discarded because respondents were over 39 years old. A total of 314 cases were analyzed. The age of respondents ranges from 17 to 37, with only 12 older than 25. The mean age was 18.8 years.

Table 1.3.2 shows the percentages of the sample (Italian ancestry, replied to survey) attending the four Colleges, and compares these with the percentages attending the four College of those who did not reply to the survey. Those who replied but were not of Italian ancestry are eliminated from all computations. On the basis of this table it does not seem that any bias has occurred in response rate at the four Colleges.

The representativeness of the present sample can be tentatively assessed comparing it to a previous sample of Italian- American freshmen in the class 1980

* The colleges were unable to provide labels, either during the first or the second mailing,for some students selected for sampling from the list of first-year enrollees. Other prospective respondents were missed because addresses printed on the labels provided by the colleges were wrong, and envelopes were returned unsealed to the sender.

Table 1.3.2

Comparison of Those Who Replied and Those Who Did Not by College Attended

	Replied		Did Not Reply	
College	Percentage	N	Percentage	N
Staten Island	44.6%	140	46.6%	361
Brooklyn	29.3%	92	24.0%	186
Queens	21.7%	68	20.9%	162
Lehman	4.5%	14	8.4%	65
Total	99.9%	314	99.9%	774

(see Blumberg and Lavin 1985). In Table 1.3.3 the sample of this study is compared to the 1980 freshmen sample on a measure of academic achievement, grade point average in college preparatory courses. Although performance of respondents in the Senior Colleges does not differ appreciably for the 1980 and the 1986 samples, the 1986 freshmen were better prepared academically than the 1980 class in the Community Colleges. However, the only junior college represented in this study is the College of Staten Island. (Differences between the 1986 and the 1980 samples on variables of interest could not be tested statistically since numbers of missing cases on each variable were

not available for the 1980 sample).

Table 1.3.3

Comparison of The Sample With a Previous Sample of Italian American Freshmen at CUNY on High School Grade Point Average in College Preparatory Courses (CAA)

	Senior Colleges**		Community Colleges**	
CAA	Freshmen 1986	Freshmen 1980*	Freshmen 1986	Freshmen 1980*
Less Than 70	0.4%	4%	14.5%	25%
70 - 74.9	6.6%	5%	30.8%	33%
75 - 79.9	18.4%	10%	28.2%	24%
80 and Over	74.5%	82%	26.5%	18%
Sample Size	174	323	140	521

* Source: Blumberg and Lavin 1985.
** For the 1986 sample Senior Colleges include: Brooklyn, Queens, Lehman; Community Colleges include only Staten Island.

Tables 1.3.4 and 1.3.5 show the educational attainment of parents for the 1980 and the 1986 samples. Differences between the two samples on parental educational attainment seem to be negligible in senior colleges, whereas the 1986 freshmen have considerably better educated parents than the 1980 class in the community college.

Table 1.3.4

Comparison of This Sample with a Previous Sample of Italian-American Freshmen at CUNY on Father's Education

	Senior Colleges**		Community Colleges**	
Father's Education	Freshmen 1986	Freshmen 1980*	Freshmen 1986	Freshmen 1980*
Less Than High School	40.2%	39%	19.9%	50%
High School Graduate	38.2%	38%	52.9%	32%
Some college or More	21.5%	23%	27.2%	18%
Sample Size	168	323	136	521

* Source: Blumberg and Lavin 1985.
** For the 1986 sample Senior Colleges include Brooklyn, Queens, Lehman; Community College includes only Staten Island.

Table 1.3.5

Comparison of This Sample with a Previous Sample of Italian-American Freshmen at CUNY on Mother's Education

	Senior Colleges		Community Colleges	
Mother's Education	Freshmen 1986	Freshmen 1980	Freshmen 1986	Freshmen 1980
Less Than High School	37.2%	32%	21.2%	41%
High School Graduate	41.1%	51%	51.8%	49%
Some College or More	21.5%	18%	27.0%	10%
Sample Size	172	323	137	521

Table 1.3.6 shows the gender composition for the sample of the present study; and the Italian-American freshmen in the class 1980. As in the previous sample, and in the CUNY population at large (Lavin, Alba, & Silberstein 1981), in the sample of this study females outnumber males.

Table 1.3.6

Gender Composition by College Type: Italian-American Freshmen 1986 and Italian-American Freshmen 1980

	Italian-American Freshmen 1986		Italian-American Freshmen 1980*	
Gender	Senior Colleges	Community College	Senior Colleges	Community Colleges
Males	32.4% (64)	33.6% (47)	39%	47%
Females	67.5% (100)	66.4% (93)	61%	53%

* Source: Blumberg and Lavin 1985.

1.4 MAIN VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

Socio-Economic Status. A series of variables was employed to measure the socio-economic status of the family of respondents. The variables are: parents' education (item 54 of the questionnaire); parents' occupation* (item 52); family income (item 55).

Table 1.4.1

Educational Attainment of The Parents of Respondents

	Father		Mother	
Education	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
8th Grade or Less	47	15.5%	44	14.2%
Some High School	38	12.5%	40	12.9%
High School Graduate	137	45.1%	147	47.6%
Some College	54	17.8%	51	16.5%
College Graduate	16	5.3%	15	4.9%
Post-Graduate Degree	12	3.9%	12	3.9%
Missing Cases	10		5	

* In the process of scoring the returned questionnaires it became apparent that, for item 52, some respondents had misplaced father with mother so that the former was checked in the housewife occupation and the latter was checked in the manager or professional category. In all these cases (21) positions were switched by the coder, under the assumption that respondents erroneously misplaced parents' occupation. Since items 10, 11, 12, and 54, were also built in a way which might have caused respondents to misplace mother with father, a small number of parents' misplacement can not be ruled out on these items too.

Table 1.4.2

Occupation of The Parents of Respondents

	Father		Mother	
Occupation	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
Housewife,Homemaker, Not in the Work Force	20	7.0%	86	29.3%
Labor	24	8.4%	27	9.2%
Service	14	4.9%	11	3.7%
Operative	22	7.7%	16	5.4%
Craft	34	11.9%	19	6.5%
Sales	15	5.3%	12	4.1%
Clerical	32	11.2%	52	17.7%
Business	30	10.5%	10	3.4%
Manager	47	16.5%	29	9.9%
Semi-Professional	25	8.8%	17	5.8%
Professional	22	7.7%	15	5.1%
Missing Cases	29		20	

The frequency distributions of the Education and Occupation of Parents are reported in Tables 1.4.1 and 1.4.2. Family income has not been included among background variables analyzed because of the large number of missing cases (48, or 15.3% of the total number of cases). To include the variable in a socio-economic status index would have further reduced

the number of cases available for analysis. To consider relations between income and dependent variables of interest did not seem appropriate since income, per se, can hardly be considered a meaningful measure of socio-economic status.

Because of the low number of cases falling in some categories, both education and occupation of parents were re-categorized. Parents' education was categorized in three groups: the first group includes parents who did not graduate from high school; the second group includes parents who graduated from high school; the third group includes parents who did some college work as well as those who got graduate or post-graduate degrees.

Parents' occupation was categorized in three groups: the first group includes parents who are housewifes/homemakers or are employed in the sectors of labor, service, and operative; the second group includes parents employed in the sectors of craft, sales, and clerical; the third group includes parents who own a business, or who are managers, semi-professionals, or professionals. The categories just presented for education and occupation of parents were developed both on substantive ground and to

achieve an approximately equal number of cases in each group. The same categories are utilized when these variables are presented in cross-tabular form in the ensuing sections.

Socio-Economic Status of the Mother is a variable developed as a composite of mother's education and occupation. This variable takes value of 1 (low) when both education and occupation of mother are in the lowest categories described in the preceding paragraphs; 3 (high) when education and occupation are both in the highest categories or either one is medium and the other is high; value of 2 (medium) in all other cases. A potential problem was represented, in the determination of mother's socio-economic status, by all those cases in which the mother fell into the occupational category of housewife. Two strategies were available: a) Placing housewives in the occupational category assigned to their husbands, on the assumption that wives take the status of their husbands when not employed outside home. b) Retaining the category of housewife and assigning to this a low value, on the assumption that more recently women acquire a social status of their own, regardless of their husbands' occupation. The second strategy was

employed in this study. Table 1.4.3 shows the crosstabulation between the variable of Socio-Economic Status as here adopted and a second variable in which the category of housewife has been recoded so as to take the value of housewives' husbands. The two ways to categorize socio-economic status do not differ appreciably. Crosstabulations were also performed in which the alternative way to categorize socio-economic status of the mother was related to dependent variables of interest and relations were found to remain unchanged.

Table 1.4.3

Crosstabulation Between Two Alternative Measures of Socio-Economic Status of Mother

	Mother SES, Housewife takes the value of husband's occupation		
Mother SES, Housewife takes value of 1	1	2	3
1 (Low)	45 *	11	0
2 (Medium)	0	105	39
3 (High)	0	0	83

* Number of cases falling in each cell

Socio-Economic Status of the Mother, instead of Father, will be used throughout the study since the former includes fewer missing cases and more often bears significant relationships with dependent

variables than the latter. The relationship between socio-economic status and college attended is presented

Table 1.4.4

Socio-Economic Status of The Mother by College Attended

	College Attended				
SES	St.Island	Brooklyn	Queens	Lehman	Total
Low	16.4%	18.2%	23.8%	50.0%	20.1% (59)
Medium	51.6%	59.1%	44.4%	35.7%	51.5% (151)
High	32.0%	22.7%	31.7%	14.3%	28.3% (83)
Total	128	88	63	14	

χ^2=12.77 df=6 p=.04

in Table 1.4.4. Since considerable differences in socio-economic status seemed to exist among groups attending the four colleges, partitioning of chi square was performed to determine which groups significantly differed from the others. No significant differences were found among the groups attending Staten Island, Brooklyn, and Queens College (χ^2=4.54, df=4, p=.33), but the three groups, collapsed into one category, had a significantly higher socio-economic status than Lehman College (χ^2=8.24, df=2, p=.01).

Ethnicity. Extensive information was collected on Ethnic Ancestry of respondents, their Ethnic Identification, Ethnic Behavior, and Ethnic Attitudes pertaining to Italian-American ethnicity. The area of migration from Italy (item 9 of the questionnaire) for the sample of this study is predominantly the South (66.3%); a minority of respondents report the area of origin of their family to be North Italy (15.5%); and more than 15% of respondents report area of origin in Italy as mixed or not known.

Three items (10 to 12) measured the ethnicity of respondents. These were classified according to more recent usage (e.g. Alba 1976) as second-generation, third-generation, mixed-ancestry, or fourth-generation. Second-generation respondents are those who have all grandparents and at least one parent Italian-born; third-generation respondents are those who have all four grandparents Italian-born, and American-born parents. All cases in which one or both parents are not of wholly Italian parentage (i.e. their parents were not all Italian-born) are classified as Mixed Ancestry; fourth- generation respondents are those who have all parents and grand- parents American born. This way to classify respondents differ from

that of others (e.g. Crispino 1980) who include individuals of mixed ancestry in the appropriate generational category. The present way of classifying respondents presents the advantage of separating individuals of mixed ancestry from individuals of wholly Italian parentage. This is an important distinction because intermarriage is itself a step into the assimilation process.

However, two shortcomings are readily apparent in the classification adopted in the present study: a) Individuals of different generation (e.g. second or third) who are not of wholly Italian parentage are all lumped together in the 'Mixed Ancestry' category; b) Respondents classified as Fourth Generation might well be of mixed ancestry, as the nationality of their great grandparents is not known (information about ancestry was obtained for parents and grandparents only). More generally, it has to be taken into account that later generations are more likely to be composed of individuals of mixed ancestry, as intermarriage rates increase in later generations (Alba 1976; Crispino 1980).

Table 1.4.5

Relations Between College of Attendance and Generation of Respondents

	College Attended				
Generation	St. Island	Brooklyn	Queens	Lehman	Total
Second Generation	12.5%	31.5%	22.1%	46.7%	21.8% (67)
Third Generation	11.0%	13.5%	13.2%	13.3%	12.3% (38)
Mixed Ancestry	52.2%	41.6%	44.1%	33.3%	46.4% (143)
Fourth Generation	24.3%	13.5%	20.6%	6.7%	19.5% (60)
Total	136	89	68	15	

Table 1.4.5 shows the relationships between college attended and generation of respondents. Staten Island College is attended predominantly by respondents of mixed ancestry and fourth-generation Italian-Americans, whereas the other Colleges include higher percentages of second-generation respondents. The row total percentages of table 1.4.5 also reveal that more than half of the sample consists of mixed-ancestry or fourth- generation respondents. The low number of third-generation respondents of wholly Italian parentage is probably due to the increase of intermarriage across later generations (Alba 1985).

To obviate to the shortcomings just outlined, as well as to obtain a continuous, more discriminating measure of ethnic ancestry for the sample, a second variable was created on the basis of information on country of birth of the parents and grandparents of respondents. This variable, labelled Ethnic Ancestry, consists of the number of parents who were not born in Italy (0, 1, or 2) times four plus the number of grandparents who were not born in Italy (0, 1, 2, 3, or 4). Parents were weighted more heavily than grandparents because they contribute more to the upbringing of their children; and to counteract the imbalance in terms of number of parents (2) and grandparents (4) who add up to make the variable. The weight assigned to parents is, to some extent, arbitrary. Furthermore, no information was collected as to the presence of grandparents in the home of respondents when they were grouwing up; the latter information, if available, could have increased the accuracy of the measure.

The variable can range from 0 to 12. Given the lack of independence between the components making up the variable (e.g. parents and grandparents' country of birth), some of the variable values have a very low

frequency of occurrence. Table 1.4.6 shows the frequency distribution of the sample for the variable Ethnic Ancestry.

Table 1.4.6

Ethnic Ancestry of Respondents

Ethnic Ancestry	N	Percentage
0 (Italian)	49	15.6%
1	5	1.6%
2	0	0.0%
3	0	0.0%
4	11	3.5%
5	6	1.9%
6	15	4.8%
7	3	1.0%
8	38	12.1%
9	15	4.8%
10	60	19.1%
11	45	14.3%
12 (American)	67	21.3%
N	318	

Three other variables were created pertaining to ethnicity. Ethnic Attitudes is the sum of six items (Items 36 to 41). The variable is an attempt to measure an attitudinal or 'symbolic' component of ethnicity. Items were mostly drawn from Crispino's work (1980) in his original or in slightly modified form. While most items express support for Italian ethnic maintenance, two of them express the opposite

point of view (items 37 and 39). Scores for these items were reversed in the actual coding. Scores for all items range from 1 to 5. For this variable, as well as for the two ethnic variables next to follow, a low score corresponds to the endorsement of the 'Italian pole', and a high score corresponds to endorsement of the 'American pole'. The reliability of the Ethnic Attitudes scale was found to be satisfactory (alpha=.68). The correlation of each item with the total scale score (another measure of internal validity of the scale) was also found to be reasonably high for all items, ranging from r=.33 to r=.47. Table 1.4.7 presents the frequency distribution of responses on the items forming the scale.

Table 1.4.7

Frequency Distribution of the Sample on the Items Composing the Ethnic Attitudes Scale

Item Wording	Score	N	Percentage
The public schools should teach more about the contribution of Italian people to America	1 (Strongly Agree)	56	18.1%
	2	54	17.5%
	3	142	46.0%
	4	40	12.9%
	5 (Strongly Disagree)	17	5.5%
Item Wording	**Score**	**N**	**Percentage**
We do not need stronger organizations to express the views of Italian-Americans	1 (Strongly Disagree)	57	18.6%
	2	73	23.8%
	3	126	41.0%
	4	35	11.4%
	5 (Strongly Agree)	16	5.2%

Table 1.4.7 (Continued)

Item Wording	Score	N	Percentage
An effort should be made to preserve the Italian neighborhood	1 (Strongly Agree)	131	43.0%
	2	83	27.2%
	3	59	19.3%
	4	23	7.5%
	5 (Strongly Disagree)	9	3.0%

Item Wording	Score	N	Percentage
People of Italian background need not stick together	1 (Strongly Disagree)	99	18.1%
	2	73	17.5%
	3	67	46.0%
	4	38	12.9%
	5 (Strongly Agree)	31	5.5%

Table 1.4.7 (Continued)

Item Wording	Score	N	Percentage
It is important for me to marry someone of Italian background	1 (Strongly Agree)	48	15.6%
	2	53	17.3%
	3	76	24.8%
	4	37	12.1%
	5 (Strongly Disagree)	93	30.3%

Item Wording	Score	N	Percentage
Organizations which carry on the Italian culture are important	1 (Strongly Agree)	119	38.8%
	2	81	26.4%
	3	85	27.7%
	4	15	4.9%
	5 (Strongly Disagree)	7	2.3%

Ethnic Identity (Appendix 1, item 42) is a one-item variable with scores ranging from 1 to 5. The variable measures a subjective component of ethnicity, the feeling of belonging to one's own ethnic group.

Ethnic Behavior is a scale constructed by summing seven items (items 43 to 49), and measures an objective or behavioral component of ethnicity. Two items (50 and 51) originally devised to be part of the scale were not included because variability in the responses is very low in both cases. Approximately 90% of the sample were not married, and did not plan to move out of the parents' house in the near future (score of 1 or 2 on item 50); and 85% of the sample were never associated with any Italian American organization (score of 5 on item 51). Scores for items included in the scale range from 1 to 5. The alpha coefficient of reliability is .71, and item-total correlations range from .31 to .54 for the items composing the scale. Table 1.4.8 shows the frequency distribution of responses on the items composing the Ethnic Behavior scale. Table 1.4.9 shows the frequency distributions of the sample on Ethnic Attitudes, Ethnic Behavior, and Ethnic Identity.

Table 1.4.8

Frequency Distribution of the Sample on the Items Composing the Ethnic Behavior Scale

Item Wording	Score	N	Percentage
When you were growing up how many of your friends were of Italian background?	1 (All)	27	8.8%
	2 (More than half)	127	41.2%
	3 (About half)	76	24.7%
	4 (Less than half)	70	22.7%
	5 (None)	8	2.6%

Item Wording	Score	N	Percentage
Thinking about the friends you have now, how many of them are of Italian background?	1 (All)	15	4.9%
	2 (More than half)	114	37.0%
	3 (About half)	86	27.9%
	4 (Less than half)	84	27.3%
	5 (None)	9	2.9%

Table 1.4.8 (Continued)

Item Wording	Score	N	Percentage
The language spoken at home, by your family of origin, is:	1 (Italian only)	6	1.9%
	2 (Mostly Italian)	25	8.0%
	3 (Italian & English	42	13.5%
	4 (Mostly English)	76	24.5%
	5 (English only)	160	51.7%

Item Wording	Score	N	Percentage
How would you rate your proficiency in Italian?	1 (Very Good)	18	5.8%
	2 (Good)	37	11.9%
	3 (Fair)	74	23.8%
	4 (Poor)	86	27.7%
	5 (Non-Existent)	96	30.9%

Table 1.4.8 (Continued)

Item Wording	Score	N	Percentage
Have you ever been to Italy?	1 (I visit once a year)	7	2.3%
	2(more than once)	34	11.0%
	3 (Yes,once)	32	10.3%
	4 (No but I plan to visit)	201	64.8%
	5 (No and I do not plan to)	36	11.6%

Item Wording	Score	N	Percentage
When you were growing up, how many people in your neighborhood were of Italian background?	1 (Almost All)	87	28.1%
	2 (More than half)	71	22.9%
	3 (About half)	81	26.1%
	4 (Less than half)	64	20.6%
	5 (None)	7	2.3%

Table 1.4.8 (Continued)

Item Wording	Score	N	Percentage
How many people in your present neighborhood are of Italian background?	1 (Almost all)	48	15.5%
	2 (More than half)	69	22.3%
	3 (About half)	85	27.4%
	4 (Less than half)	96	31.0%
	5 (None)	12	3.9%

Table 1.4.9

Frequency Distribution of the Sample on Ethnic Attitudes, Ethnic Behavior, and Ethnic Identity

	Ethnic Attitudes		Ethnic Behavior		Ethnic Identity	
Score	N	Percent.	N	Percent.	N	Percent.
1 (Italian)	54	18.1%	4	1.3%	24	7.8%
2	103	34.2%	56	18.6%	35	11.4%
3	116	38.6%	114	37.6%	114	37.1%
4	26	8.6%	112	37.0%	58	18.9%
5 (American)	2	.6%	17	5.6%	76	24.8%

A series of variables pertaining to the way respondents were socialized by their parents when the respondents were adolescents was constructed, each composed by summing three or more items. The variables, and their relationships with ethnicity and other background variables, will be presented in Section 2.7.

Four variables measuring the academic achievement of respondents were introduced in Section 1.2. Table 1.2.1 shows means and standard deviations of the sample on these variables. In Appendix II a brief description of the three Basic Skills Assessment tests in Mathematics, Reading, and Writing is provided, along

with sample items. The relationships between academic achievement and other background and dependent variables are covered in Chapter 3. Two variables measuring the educational and occupational aspirations of respondents are also presented in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER TWO: ETHNICITY

2.1 ETHNICITY AND ASSIMILATION

The most influential theory of white ethnic groups' adjustment in the United States has been extensively developed by Gordon (1964), according to whom the white non Anglo- Saxon immigrants and their offspring had been undergoing a process of assimilation to the Anglo-Saxon Protestant majority.

The first step in the process was cultural assimilation: the adoption of English language, life-style, and other cultural items of the majority's culture. A later step was that of structural assimilation: the entrance of the immigrants and later generations into organizations and cliques of the dominant majority. This was closely followed by marital assimilation, or intermarriage between individuals of the ethnic group and members of the majority. Upon the dissolving of group boundaries caused by widespread intermarriage, identificational assimilation, or loss of sense of peoplehood with one's own ethnic group, would eventually occur. The process of assimilation, Gordon pointed out, went hand in hand with the coming of age of later generations and with the development of a sizeable middle-class within the

group. The model above outlined has been espoused by many scholars of the immigrants' experience, and considerable evidence has been gathered to support it.

More recently, a controversy has developed regarding the saliency and viability of ethnicity in contemporary American society. Some authors point out that the ethnicity of groups of European ancestry is far from disappearing, and that they are not destined to get absorbed into the white Anglo-Saxon majority. Early proponents of this position maintained that the cultural heritage of the immigrants might get progressively lost, but ethnicity remains a powerful means of political mobilization, especially in the urban setting (e.g. Glazer and Moynihan 1963). Stronger advocates of cultural pluralism hold that Old World cultural features are transmitted from generation to generation, and contribute to shape the unique make-up of each ethnic group (e.g. Greeley 1974).

At a more psychological level, the law of the 'third generation return' was originally proposed by Hensen (1952, cited in Gans 1979). While the offspring of the immigrants, in their eagerness to get assimilated, turned away from their parents' cultural heritage, third generation individuals could afford to

take an interest in it, and to assert loudly their newly discovered ethnic identification. Although the hypothesis of an increased ethnic identification of third generation individuals has received only weak support so far (e.g. Crispino 1980; Alba and Chamlin 1983), the phenomenon of second generation's rejection of parental culture, and feelings of inferiority related to ethnic background, seem to be fairly well documented in the literature (for the Italian case see Child 1943; Covello 1967; Gambino 1974).

The controversy between cultural pluralists and assimilationists also touches upon the nature of the relation between social class and ethnic maintenance. Cultural pluralists such as Greeley maintain that the cultural heritage of each ethnic group survives in later generations regardless of their social class position. Assimilationists point out that the life-style of the immigrants survives longer among the less educated working-class members of the ethnic group (Steinberg 1981; Crispino 1980; Alba 1976; Gans 1979).

The assimilation of Italian-Americans was the focus of Crispino's wide survey in the Bridgeport Connecticut area (Crispino 1980). The questionnaire developed for the study contained items assessing the

degree of assimilation of the group in several areas of life, following Gordon's theorization. The sample included first, second, third, and fourth generation Italian-Americans, and it was drawn from the city phone directory, on the basis of Italian sounding family names. According to Crispino, the results of the study overall support assimilation theory, with later generations showing a greater degree of cultural, structural, and marital assimilation to white Anglo-Saxon Protestant majority than their first generation counterparts. Moreover, social class proves to be strongly associated to ethnic maintenance in the expected direction: third generation working-class individuals maintain cultural traditions and ethnic friendship ties to a greater extent than their middle-class counterparts; indeed on these variables they closely resemble second generation working-class individuals. As Crispino points out, it is not possible to establish on the basis of the available evidence whether working-class individuals cling more tenaciously to their ethnicity, presumably as a consolation for lack of social mobility, or whether maintenance of ethnic heritage and values represent an impediment to movement into the middle-class.

Turning to identificational assimilation, Crispino (1980) found some evidence of a third generation return for his sample. With regard to age, it was found that younger cohorts identified themselves as Italian or Italian American, as opposed to American, to the same extent as the oldest cohorts, even though these were more likely to be Italian-born or the children of the immigrants. With regard to generation, it was found that the decrease in Italian or Italian-American ethnic identification was more pronounced from the first to the second generation than from the first to the third.

According to Crispino, two types of ethnicity are discernible today: working-class ethnicity is displayed in family ties, friendship network, preference of food, adherence to traditional religious feasts. This form of ethicity is expressed primarily at a behavioral level, and it needs the supportive environment of the ethnic urban neighborhood in order to be maintained. Indeed working-class ethnicity overlaps almost completely with working-class culture. Middle-class ethnicity, or the 'new ethnicity', is espoused by middle-class, usually third-generation individuals, and it is expressed at a non behavioral level. The form it takes is that of ethnic

identification and ethnic pride. Less frequently, middle-class ethnicity may be manifested as interest in cultural heritage of one's own ethnic group, sporadic attendance of ethnic lectures or social gatherings, trips to the homeland of the ancestors. What is peculiar to this type of ethnicity is that it is voluntary and does not require a deep, time consuming commitment (Crispino 1980).

The phenomenon of middle-class ethnicity has been described in similar vein by Gans (1979), who calls it 'symbolic ethnicity'. Part of the explanation for it seems to lie in the changed attitudes toward being 'ethnics' in American society: historical and structural factors have favored a re-evaluation of the ethnic experience, to the point that ethnicity is becoming fashionable (Crispino 1980). Moreover, ethnic identification might satisfy more subtle, psychological needs of individuals who feel threatened by the increasing homogenization of contemporary mass society (Gans 1979; Gambino 1974; Greeley 1974).

2.2 ETHNICITY AND ASSIMILATION:MAIN HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

In constructing the ethnic variables presented in Section 1.4 an effort was made to include both objective and subjective components of ethnicity. Objective components pertain to ethnic ancestry of individuals as well as to items of behavior (e.g. language) defining the group in question. Subjective components refer to sense of peoplehood and ethnic identification, as well as to attitudes toward one's own group.

In general it was hypothesized that the most objective measure of ethnicity, ethnic ancestry or generation, would predict Ethnic Behavior and, to a lesser extent, Ethnic Attitudes and Ethnic Identity. Thus, in line with assimilation theory, it was hypothesized that later generations of Italian-Americans would: a) report a lower amount of Ethnic Behavior; b) show less support on the Ethnic Attitudes scale for Italian ethnic maintenance; and c) report lower Italian Ethnic Identity than the earlier generation respondents. In light of recent theorization on symbolic ethnicity as a peculiarly middle class, attitudinal type of ethnicity, and in

line with recent findings of a lack of decrease in ethnic identification with one's own ethnic group for younger cohorts of white ethnics (Crispino 1980; Alba and Chamlin 1983), it was expected that assimilation theory predictions with regard to Ethnic Attitudes and Ethnic Identity might not be confirmed for this sample of young, educated Italian-Americans.

It has been said that a certain type of behavioral ethnicity is a working-class phenomenon, whereas attitudinal and identificational ethnicity would be peculiar to middle-class ethnics (Crispino 1980). Items composing the Ethnic Behavior scale in the present study do not seem to necessarily represent the cultural heritage of working-class Italian-Americans. On the contrary, maintenance of Italian language and trips to Italy might well be expected to occur in middle-class families with first or second generation parents. Thus no predictions were made in this study with regard to the relations between socio-economic status of respondents' parents and their reported ethnic behavior. Some degree of relationship was expected, however, between socio-economic status of the parents and generation of respondents, in the direction of lower socio-economic status for earlier generations.

This expectation was generated by knowledge of the structural characteristics of the Italian-American population at large (Alba 1985).

2.3 RELATIONS BETWEEN ETHNICITY AND PARENTAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Ethnicity of respondents was operationalized in two ways: a) The categorical variable Generation of Respondents which includes the four groups of Second Generation, Third Generation, Mixed Ancestry, and Fourth Generation; b) The continuous variable Ethnic Ancestry, which takes values of 0 for wholly Italian ancestry, to 12 for wholly American ancestry (see Section 1.4). In this section the relations between education of parents, status socio-economic of the mother, and generation of respondents will be examined.

Tables 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 show the relationships between father and mother's education and generation of respondents. As expected, later generation and mixed ancestry respondents report their parents to be more educated than earlier generation respondents.

Table 2.3.1

Relations Between Generation of Respondents and Education of the Father

Education of Father	Generation				
	Second Generat.	Third Generat.	Mixed Ancestry	Fourth Generat.	Total
Less Than High School	76.2% (48)	24.3% (9)	17.3% (24)	6.8% (4)	28.5% (85)
High School Graduate	15.9% (10)	56.8% (21)	48.2% (67)	61.0% (36)	45.0% (134)
Some College or More	7.9% (5)	18.9% (7)	34.5% (48)	32.2% (19)	26.5% (79)

χ^2=96.17 df=6 p<.001

Table 2.3.2

Relations Between Generation of Respondents and Education of the Mother

Education of Mother	Generation				
	Second Generat.	Third Generat.	Mixed Ancestry	Fourth Generat.	Total
Less Than High School	65.6% (42)	31.6% (12)	20.0% (28)	3.4% (2)	27.9% (84)
High School Graduate	28.1% (18)	47.4% (18)	50.7% (71)	59.3% (35)	47.2% (142)
Some College or More	6.3% (4)	21.1% (8)	29.3% (41)	37.3% (22)	24.9% (75)

χ^2=69.66 df=6 p<.001

The same trend is evident with regard to the relation between socio-economic status of the mother and generation of respondents (see Table 2.3.3).

Table 2.3.3

Relations Between Generation of Respondents and Socio-Economic Status of the Mother

	Generation			
Mother's SES	Second Generation	Third Generation	Mixed Ancestry	Fourth Generation
Low	55.7% (34)	30.3% (10)	9.8% (13)	1.8% (1)
Medium	36.1% (22)	51.5% (17)	55.6% (74)	59.6% (34)
High	8.2% (5)	18.2% (6)	34.6% (46)	38.6% (22)

χ^2=74.02 df=6 p<.001

2.4 ETHNICITY, ETHNIC ATTITUDES, ETHNIC BEHAVIOR, AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

In this section the relations between the three dependent variables measuring ethnic attitudes, ethnic identity, and ethnic behavior, on the one hand; and the background variables measuring ethnicity and socio-economic status of respondents, on the other, will be considered. (For the frequency distribution of responses on items composing the Ethnic Attitudes and Ethnic Behavior scales, and the one-item variable Ethnic Identity,see section 1.4).

Table 2.4.1 reports means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of the three ethnic variables for the sample. Variables all range from 1 to 5 and are coded in the same direction, with a low score meaning adherence to Italian ethnic identity, attitudes, or behavior; and a high score meaning lack of commitment on the same variables.

Table 2.4.1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of Ethnic Attitudes, Ethnic Identity, and Ethnic Behavior

	Ethnic Attitudes	Ethnic Identity	Ethnic Behavior
X	2.50	3.41	3.19
SD	.73	1.20	.64
N	301	307	303
	Intercorrelations*		
Ethnic Attitudes	1.00		
Ethnic Identity	.36 (297)	1.00	
Ethnic Behavior	.29 (293)	.32 (298)	1.00

*Numbers in parentheses represent number of cases on which correlations are based.

Table 2.4.2 reports the relations between generation of respondents and ethnic attitudes. The latter variable has been divided, for cross-tabulation purposes, in three categories: High pro-Italian attitudes (scores of 1, 2), medium pro-Italian attitudes (3), low pro-Italian attitudes(4,5). This way of categorizing the variable has been adopted to obtain an approximately equal number of cases for each category. (The same criterion has been adopted throughout the study whenever variables have been re-categorized in cross-tabular analysis). It is

Table 2.4.2

Relations Between Generation of Respondents and Ethnic Attitudes

	Generation			
Ethnic Attitudes*	Second Generation	Third Generation	Mixed Ancestry	Fourth Generation
High	27.4% (17)	45.7% (16)	28.5% (39)	25.0% (15)
Medium	46.8% (29) (29)	40.0% (14) (14)	34.3% (47) (47)	43.3% (26) (26)
Low	25.8% (16)	14.3% (5)	37.2% (51)	31.7% (19)

χ^2=11.07 df=6 p=.08

*In this and subsequent tables the variable was broken into: High (scores of 1,2), Medium (score of 3), Low (scores of 4,5).

apparent that the groups of second generation, mixed ancestry, and fourth generation respondents do not differ appreciably among each other, whereas third generation respondents show the greatest support of Italian ethnic attitudes of any group. To test this trend a partitioning of chi square was performed in which groups were compared among each other. The three groups of Second generation, Mixed Ancestry, and Fourth Generation respondents did not differ significantly from each other (χ^2=4.36, df=4, p=.35), while the three groups collapsed into a category significantly differed from the group of Third Generation respondents (χ^2=7.09, df=2, p=.02).

Such a finding seems to support the 'third generation return' hypothesis (see section 2.3), while it is not in line with Crispino's findings (1980) of a straight-line decline across generations on his scale of 'cultural heritage' and 'nationality'. Since the items constituting the Ethnic Attitudes scale in the present study were drawn from Crispino's scales, the discrepancy in findings is somewhat puzzling. However, the present sample is composed of young respondents only, whereas Crispino's sample was composed of respondents of all ages. Thus, in his sample early

generation Italian-Americans tend to be old and later generation Italian-Americans tend to be young, whereas in the present study there is no association between age and generation of respondents. Moreover, Crispino included respondents of mixed ancestry in their generational category, while in the present analysis individuals of mixed ancestry form a separate category.

To test whether the same trend would be found for all items composing the Ethnic Attitudes scale, a cross-tabular analysis was performed examining the relationship between generation of respondents and ethnic attitudes for each item composing the scale. Trends were weak and inconsistent, with the exception of the item pertaining the desirability of marrying within the Italian group. For this item generation of respondents meaningfully related to ethnic attitude in the direction postulated by assimilation theory (see Table 2.4.3).

Table 2.4.4 shows the relations between generation and ethnic identity of respondents. In line with assimilation theory, a downward trend in ethnic identification is discernible across generations, with mixed ancestry and fourth generation individuals not appreciably differing from each other.

Table 2.4.3

The Relationship Between Generation of Respondents and Attitude Toward Marrying Within the Italian Group*

Important to Marry Someone of Italian Background	Generation: Second Generat.	Third Generat.	Mixed Ancestry	Fourth Generat.
Strongly Agree	51.6% (33)	33.3% (12)	25.4% (35)	33.3% (20)
Moderately Agree	18.8% (12)	38.9% (14)	25.4% (35)	18.3% (11)
Strongly Disagree	29.7% (19)	27.8% (10)	49.3% (68)	48.3% (29)

χ^2=20.18 df=6 p=.002

* For exact item wording see Appendix 1, item 40. Scores on the item were broken into: 1,2 (Strongly Agree); 3 (Moderately Agree); 4,5 (Strongly Disagree).

Table 2.4.4

Relations Between Generation of Respondents and Ethnic Identity

Ethnic Identity*	Generation: Second Generation	Third Generation	Mixed Ancestry	Fourth Generation
Italian	32.3% (21)	26.3% (10)	14.6% (20)	13.3% (8)
Italian American	43.1% (28)	44.7% (17)	32.8% (45)	35.0% (21)
American	24.6% (16)	28.9% (11)	52.6% (72)	51.7% (31)

χ^2=21.83 df=6 p=.001

*In this and subsequent tables the variable was broken in: High(scores of 1,2),Medium(score of 3),Low(scores of 4,5).

The same trend of a decrease in ethnic maintenance across generations is evident in Table 2.4.5 which presents the relations between generation of respondents and their reported ethnic behavior.

Table 2.4.5

Relations Between Generation of Respondents and Ethnic Behavior

	Generation			
Ethnic Behavior*	Second Generation	Third Generation	Mixed Ancestry	Fourth Generation
High (Italian)	64.6% (42)	39.5% (15)	23.0% (31)	18.6% (11)
Medium	27.7% (18)	36.8% (14)	37.8% (51)	30.5% (18)
Low	7.7% (5)	23.7% (9)	39.3% (53)	50.8% (30)

χ^2=50.43 df=6 p<.001

*In this and subsequent tables the variable was broken into: High (scores of 1,2), Medium (scores of 3 through 3.5), Low (scores of 3.6 through 5).

With regard to the impact of socio-economic status on the three ethnic variables of interest, no relation was found between socio-economic status of the mother and ethnic attitudes (Table 2.4.6). This finding is also not in line with what reported by Crispino (1980), who found an increase in ethnic support, on his 'cultural heritage' and 'nationality' scales, at lower

levels of education and occupation. Once again differences in the characteristics of the sample might explain the inconsistency of the results: while Crispino collected information on education and occupation of respondents, in the present study socio-economic status of respondents is operationalized as their parents' education and occupation.

Table 2.4.6

Relations Between Socio-Economic Status of the Mother and Ethnic Attitudes of Respondents

	Mother's Socio-Economic Status		
Ethnic Attitudes	Low	Medium	High
High	30.4% (17)	29.0% (42)	26.8% (22)
Medium	44.6% (25)	37.2% (54)	42.7% (35)
Low	25.0% (14)	33.8% (49)	30.5% (25)

χ^2=1.88 df=4 p=n.s.

A significant relation was found between the socio-economic status of the mother on the one hand; and ethnic identity and behavior of respondents on the other (see Tables 2.4.7 and 2.4.8). The relationship in both cases is such that lower levels of socio-conomic status of the mother correspond to higher

ethnic identity and ethnic behavior reported by respondents. This relation is most probably spurious and due to the high association between generation of respondents and mother's education and occupation. To test this contention correlations were calculated between socio-economic status of the mother and the two ethnic variables, partialling out Ethnic Ancestry of respondents. The moderate zero-order correlations of Socio-Economic Status of the Mother with Ethnic Behavior and Ethnic Identity (r=.28, p=.000; and r=.16, p=.004, respectively) are considerably reduced when Ethnic Ancestry is introduced as the control variable (r=.08, p=n.s.; and r=.05, p=n.s.).

Table 2.4.7

Relations Between Socio-Economic Status of Mother and Ethnic Identity of Respondents

Ethnic Identity	Mother's Socio-Economic Status: Low	Medium	High
High	36.2% (21)	17.7% (26)	12.2% (10)
Medium	29.3% (17)	42.9% (63)	30.5% (25)
Low	34.5% (20)	39.5% (58)	57.3% (47)

χ^2=19.06 df=4 p=.0008

Table 2.4.8

Relations Between Socio-Economic Status of Mother and Ethnic Behavior of Respondents

Ethnic Behavior	Mother's Socio Economic Status: Low	Medium	High
High	49.1% (28)	32.4% (48)	21.3% (17)
Medium	36.8% (21)	37.8% (56)	27.8% (22)
Low	14.0% (8)	29.7% (44)	50.6% (40)

χ^2=23.63 df=4 p=.0001

2.5 THE RELATIONS BETWEEN ETHNICITY, ETHNIC ATTITUDES, ETHNIC IDENTITY, AND ETHNIC BEHAVIOR: A MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

To analyze relations between background and dependent variables by means of multivariate techniques, the continuous variable Ethnic Ancestry (described in Section 1.4) was developed on the basis of country of birth of parents and grandparents of respondents. Table 2.5.1 shows the results of a multiple regression analysis with ethnic ancestry and socio-economic status as predictors and ethnic behavior as the criterion variable.* Only ethnic ancestry has a significant effect on ethnic behavior of respondents; as already found in crosstabular analysis, the relation is such that greater maintenance of ethnic behavior is reported by respondents with greater number of parents and grandparents who were born in Italy.

* Multiple regression analyses and other analyses involving more than two variables at a time have been all performed with pairwise deletion of missing cases. Thus all cases were retained for each correlation equation in the matrix when data on both variables were available. The alternative method, listwise deletion, involves discarding all cases for which information on even one variable is missing. Given the small size of the sample, the latter method would have resulted in an unnecessarily low number of cases. The average percentage of missing values for all variables employed in multiple regression analyses is around 5% and range of missing values is from less than 1% to 11%.

Table 2.5.1

Multiple Regression Analysis: Ethnic Behavior as the Criterion Variable

Predictors	B	Beta	p
Ethnic Ancestry	.07	.46	.000
Socio-Economic Status of Mother	.08	.08	.14
Constant	2.46		
Multiple R	.50		
R Square	.25		

A multiple regression analysis was also performed with Socio-Economic Status of the Mother and Ethnic Ancestry of respondents as predictors and Ethnic Attitudes as the criterion. Both predictors had non-significant weights, and the amount of variation explained for the criterion was negligible (Table 2.5.2). As shown in crosstabular analysis (Table 2.4.2) the relation between generation of respondents and their ethnic attitudes is not linear,with third generation respondents differing significantly from the other groups. Even so, a regression analysis with the categorical variable generation of respondents represented by dummy variables turns out to explain a

negligible portion of the total variation of the predictor (Table 2.5.3).

Table 2.5.2

Multiple Regression Analysis: Ethnic Attitudes as the Criterion Variable

Predictors	B	Beta	p
Ethnic Ancestry	.01	.07	.28
Socio-Economic Status of Mother	-.02	-.02	.71
Constant	2.45		
Multiple R	.06		
R Square	.004		

Table 2.5.3

Multiple Regression Analysis: Generation of Respondents as the Predictor, and Ethnic Attitudes as the Criterion

Generation *	B	Beta	p
Second Generation	-.04	-.02	.75
Third Generation	-.37	-.16	.01
Mixed Ancestry	-.004	-.003	.96
Constant	2.55		
Multiple R	.16		
R Square	.02		

* The omitted category is Fourth Generation.

In sum, neither socio-economic status nor ethnicity of respondents seem to have an appreciable influence on ethnic attitudes of respondents for this sample.

Table 2.5.4 shows the results of a regression analysis for the variable Ethnic Identity, with Ethnic Ancestry, Ethnic Behavior, Ethnic Attitudes, and Socio-Economic Status of Mother as predictors. Only the latter variable is not significant. The standardized weights indicate that Ethnic Attitudes is the best predictor of Ethnic Identity.

Table 2.5.4

Multiple Regression Analysis: Ethnic Identity as Criterion Variable

Predictors	B	Beta	p
Ethnic Attitudes	.51	.31	.000
Socio-Economic Status of Mother	.10	.05	.33
Ethnic Ancestry	.04	.16	.01
Ethnic Behavior	.26	.14	.02
Constant	.70		
Multiple R	.46		
R Square	.21		

Table 2.5.5

Oblique Factor Analysis Solution for the Variable of Ethnic Ancestry and the Items Composing the Ethnic Attitudes, Ethnic Identity and Ethnic Behavior Scales

	Factor Loadings		
Items *	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Ethnic Ancestry	.90	-.00	-.13
Ethnic Attitudes (36)	-.07	.02	.52
Ethnic Attitudes (37)	-.01	.05	.38
Ethnic Attitudes (38)	-.05	-.00	.62
Ethnic Attitudes (39)	-.03	.06	.37
Ethnic Attitudes (40)	.19	.04	.54
Ethnic Attitudes (41)	.02	-.10	.60
Ethnic Identity (42)	.34	-.02	.35
Ethnic Behavior (43)	.01	.78	.08
Ethnic Behavior (44)	-.01	.58	.19
Ethnic Behavior (45)	.81	.00	.00
Ethnic Behavior (46)	.70	.09	-.04
Ethnic Behavior (47)	.67	-.03	.05
Ethnic Behavior (48)	.04	.73	-.05
Ethnic Behavior (49)	-.01	.65	-.07

Factors Intercorrelations

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Factor 1	1.00		
Factor 2	.11	1.00	
Factor 3	.18	.32	1.00

*Numbers in parenthesis are the questionnaire item number

A factor analysis was performed for the continuous variable Ethnic Ancestry and the items composing the three dependent variables Ethnic Attitudes, Ethnic Identity, and Ethnic Behavior. It was expected that

items forming a scale would all load on the same factor. Thus it was expected that all items constituting the Ethnic Behavior scale would load on one factor, and those constituting the Ethnic Attitudes scale would load on another factor. There was some expectation that the variable Ethnic Ancestry would load on the same factor as Ethnic Behavior items, since both measure objective components of ethnicity. Factors representing different components of ethnicity on an objective/subjective continuum were expected to be moderately intercorrelated, as subjective components are to some extent related to objective components of ethnicity. No specific predictions were made for the one-item variable of Ethnic Identity, although it was expected it might load on one factor only. Table 2.5.5 presents the results of an exploratory factor analysis in which three factors were extracted, and factors were rotated obliquely to allow for correlations among them. The three largest eigenvalues were 3.73, 2.52, and 1.79; all the rest were less than 1. The intercorrelations among the factors are also in Table 2.5.5.

The first factor partly conforms to expectations, in that Ethnic Ancestry as well as three of the items composing the Ethnic Behavior scale load heavily on it. These items all pertain to Italian language proficiency and trips to Italy reported by respondents (see Appendix 1, items 45,46, and 47). The three items, being strongly related to number of parents and grandparents who were born in Italy, represent, at least for this sample, the core of an objective type of ethnicity.

The second factor has four items that load highly on it. These items, also part of the Ethnic Behavior scale, pertain to ethnic composition of the respondents' childhood neighborhood and present neighborhood; and the ethnic composition of their childhood and present friendship network (see Appendix, items 43,44,48, and 49). While it is hardly surprising that these items all load on the same factor, their lack of relation with Ethnic Ancestry and the other three items composing the Ethnic Behavior scale is unexpected. Thus the prediction that items composing the Ethnic Behavior scale would all load on the same factor was not confirmed.

The third factor clearly represents a subjective, attitudinal type of ethnicity, as all items composing the Ethnic Attitudes scale load on it. Table 2.5.5 shows that the one-item Ethnic Identity variable loads moderately on the first and the third factors. The most plausible interpretation of this seems to be that the variable involves both subjective and objective components of ethnicity. Again somewhat unexpected is the lack of relation between Ethnic Identity and the cluster of Ethnic Behavior items loading on the second factor.

The most unexpected finding of the factor analysis is the weak relationship between ethnic friendship and ethnic neighborhood on the one hand, and measures of ethnic ancestry and ethnic identity on the other. Such a finding is unexpected both on theoretical grounds and on the basis of previous findings. Thus Crispino (1980) found ethnic friendship to be related to ethnic ancestry and ethnic identity of his respondents, as well as to maintenance of Italian language. Two explanations come to mind with regard to the present findings: the lack of centrality of the ethnic enclave as the milieu for ethnic maintenance for the young white ethnics constituting the sample of this study; or

the possible inaccuracy of respondents in reporting the ethnic composition of their neighborhood and friendship network.

2.6 ETHNICITY AND SOCIALIZATION PRACTICES

Early literature on ethnicity, social class, and achievement emphasized the differential achievement of ethnic groups in American society (e.g. Rosen 1959; Strodtbeck 1958). Such differential achievement was attributed to the different socialization practices adopted by parents in different ethnic groups. Different socialization practices would differentially foster the achievement motivation of children and thus their academic achievement.

More recent research performed by educational psychologists has focused not only on ethnicity but also on social class to explain differential achievement of children. Moreover the focus of attention has shifted from achievement motivation as an enduring personality trait to academic motivation as a more situational determinant of academic achievement (Elder 1962; Marjoribanks 1980). In general the results of these studies show that a series of socialization practices, such as achievement training

and independence training, are differently emphasized in families with different ethnic and socio-economic background; and that these variables, in turn, are related to academic motivation and academic performance of respondents.

A somewhat unrelated strain of studies on the Italian American experience has also pointed to socialization practices which would be peculiar to Southern Italian culture and would constitute an hindrance to Italian American's children academic achievement. An early observer of the Italian-American school child (Covello 1967) described Southern Italian culture as biased against the pursuit of formal education. The bias was rooted in the uselessness of prolonged formal schooling in the peasant society the immigrants left; and in the threat American public schools represented in terms of the loss of authority of the elders on their American educated children. Formal education for second generation adolescents also conflicted with the encouragement on the part of their foreign born parents to get employment, and thus support the family financially. In a biographical account on the Italian- American experience, Gambino (1974) also points to the peculiarly Italian bias

against formal education; such bias would wither away in later generations of Italian-Americans who realize that low levels of schooling translate into low-paying and low-skilled positions in contemporary society.

An extensive analysis of the lack of inclination of Italian American children for formal education was also provided by Gans (1962). In his field study on the West Enders in Boston, he pointed to the parents' inconsistent discipline, impulsive child-rearing, and cultural values discouraging academic achievement, as the causes of the low motivation and high drop-out rate in high school of West End children. While Italian-American scholars pointed to an Italian ethos discouraging the pursuit of formal education, Gans concluded that the low academic achievement of West Enders was related to the working-class subculture in which they were raised.

2.7 ETHNICITY AND SOCIALIZATION

In the present study a series of socialization variables were created drawing both on previous literature on ethnicity, family environment, and academic achievement; and on the biographical accounts or field studies focusing on the Italian American experience. Of interest was the hypothesis that

certain socialization practices are the cultural heritage of first generation Italian parents, and that they get progressively lost across generations through a process of assimilation to middle-class American culture. A second general hypothesis pertains to the link between socialization practices and academic achievement: it was expected, on the basis of previous literature, that socialization practices would influence academic motivation and achievement of respondents. Findings related to this hypothesis will be discussed in Chapter 3.

The accounts of the Italian-American experience mentioned above all refer to the Italian-born generation who migrated to the United States around the second decade of the century, and to their second generation offspring. More recent migration from Italy might well involve better educated Italians who are more attuned to middle-class cultural values and style of life. Moreover, even in the early accounts (e.g. Gans 1962) a controversy developed as to the cultural or class related origins of socialization practices, cultural values, and style of life. Thus in this study both ethnic ancestry and socio- economic status of respondents will be taken into account with regard to

their influence on socialization practices. The separate contributions of ethnic ancestry and socio-economic status will be assessed through statistical control. However, a fairly high amount of collinearity is present between the two variables for the sample of this study (see Section 2.4). The influence of sex of respondents on socialization practices will also be considered, as past research has found that parents socialize their male and female offspring differently (e.g. Elder 1962; Escovar and Escovar 1985). The interaction between gender and ethnic ancestry will be considered, with the expectation that Italian-born parents might socialize their female offspring in a more traditional way than American-born parents.

A series of scales was developed covering the socialization variables. A variable concerning the amount of physical and social independence parents allowed respondents was created by summing items 13 to 15. For this, as for all subsequent socialization variables, respondents were instructed to report parental behavior, on a 5 points scale, when respondents were adolescents. Reliability for this three-item scale was acceptable (alpha= .60);

item-scale correlations range from .28 to .47. A multiple regression analysis was performed with Gender, Ethnic Ancestry, and Socio-Economic Status of Mother as predictor variables, and Physical Independence as the criterion variable. Gender of respondents was included in the equation using dummy coding.

Table 2.7.1

Multiple Regression Analysis: Physical Independence as the Criterion Variable

Predictors	B	Beta	p
Gender* (A)	.54	.27	.02
Ethnic (B) Ancestry	.07	.33	.000
Socio-Economic (C) Status of Mother	-.07	-.05	.40
(AB)	-.02	-.12	.32
Constant	2.34		
Multiple R	.25		
R Square	.06		

*Males=1, Females=0

The Ethnic Ancestry and Socio-Economic Status of Mother variables are described in Section 1.4. As Table 2.7.1 shows, sex of respondents and ethnic ancestry, but not socio-economic status of mother, are significantly related to physical independence. The relation is such

that boys report having been allowed more physical independence than girls; and individuals with more Italian-born parents and grandparents report having been allowed less physical independence than individuals with more American born parents and grandparents. No interaction between gender and ethnic ancestry was found in this or in any subsequent analysis.

A variable measuring the age at which respondents were allowed freedom to engage in certain outside activities (formed by summing items 16 to 18) was found to be unrelated to background variables. This finding was unexpected, as previous research found similar scales to be associated with ethnicity (Marjoribanks 1980) and social class of respondents (e.g. Psathas 1957).

A scale measuring training in intellectual independence provided by parents to their offspring is composed of items 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24. Coefficient alpha was .82 and item-total correlations ranged from .35 to .61. Since Italian parents have been depicted as authoritarian in their relations with children (Gans 1962; Covello 1967; Gambino 1974), it was expected that respondents with more Italian parents and grandparents

would report less intellectual independence training than their more American counterparts. Table 2.7.2 shows the results of a multiple regression analysis with Gender, Ethnic Ancestry, and Socio-Economic Status of Mother as predictors and Intellectual Independence Training as criterion. The interaction of gender and ethnic ancestry was also tested.

Table 2.7.2

Multiple Regression Analysis: Intellectual Independence Training as the Criterion Variable

Predictors	B	Beta	p
Gender (A)	.20	.13	.28
Ethnic (B) Ancestry	.04	.24	.002
Socio-Economic (C) Status of Mother	-.04	-.04	.50
(AB)	-.01	-.02	.86
Constant	3.51		
Multiple R .25			
R Square .06			

Only Ethnic Ancestry is significantly related to the criterion, while Socio-Economic Status of Mother and Gender are not. The relation is the same as the one uncovered for Physical Independence, so that

respondents with greater number of Italian-born parents and grandparents report less intellectual independence training than their more American counterparts.

Two scales were developed pertaining to the amount of achievement training parents provided to their children. Items all pertain to the encouragement of parents for their children to do well in school. The Negative Achievement Training scale (items 25, 28, 29) covers items of behavior related to punishment for lack of good performance, and encouragement to competition with schoolmates. The Positive Achievement Training Scale (items 26, 27, and 30) covers items of behavior related to help, praise, and interest in children's schoolwork. The reliability of the first scale was .84, with item-total correlations ranging from .57 to .67. The reliability of the second scale was .79, with item-total correlations ranging from .46 to .63. The correlation between the two scales was low (r=.10).

Two scales, instead of one, were devised as previous studies had yielded inconsistent findings with regard to the relation between achievement training and academic achievement. Thus Elder (1962) found that achievement demands on the part of parents were negatively related (instead of positively as expected)

to the academic achievement of respondents. In the present study it was hypothesized that positive achievement training would be related to ethnic ancestry of respondents. Since Italian-American scholars have stressed the low support of Italian parents for their children's academic pursuits, it was expected that respondents with more Italian-born parents and grandparents would report having been provided less positive achievement training by their parents than their more American counterparts.

Table 2.7.3

Multiple Regression Analysis: Positive Achievement Training as the Criterion Variable

Predictors	B	Beta	p
Gender (A)	-.04	-.02	.84
Ethnic (B) Ancestry	.05	.23	.001
Socio-Economic (C) Status of Mother	.22	.15	.01
(AB)	.00	.01	.97
Constant	2.73		
Multiple R	.33		
R Square	.11		

It was also expected that a positive relationship would

be found between the socio-economic status of the mother and the criterion variable. As Table 2.7.3 shows, both predictions were upheld, while gender did not have a significant effect.

Table 2.7.4 shows that the relation between Negative Achievement Training and Ethnic Ancestry of respondents is in the opposite direction from the one

Table 2.7.4

Multiple Regression Analysis: Negative Achievement Training as the Criterion Variable

Predictors	B	Beta	p
Sex (A)	.42	.20	.11
Ethnic (B) Ancestry	-.04	-.17	.02
Socio-Economic (C) Status of Mother	.23	.14	.02
(AB)	-.01	-.06	.63
Constant	3.09		
Multiple R	.24		
R Square	.05		

uncovered for Positive Achievement Training: respondents with a greater number of Italian-born parents and grandparents report more negative achievement training than their more American

counterparts. Socio-Economic Status of Mother also bears a significant relation with the criterion. Higher socio-economic status respondents report more negative achievement training than lower socio-economic status respondents.

Although the relationships uncovered were often weak, the traditional depiction of Italian parents as authoritarian and not supportive of their children's academic efforts receive some support from the data just examined. Of particular interest is the pattern of high negative achievement training and low positive achievement training which characterizes Italian parents compared to their more American counterparts. Also, the effect of ethnic ancestry is more pronounced than that of socio economic status of the mother on socialization variables. Thus the data do not support the notion of ethnicity as a working class phenomenon.

Finally, a scale pertaining to academic motivation of respondents was developed (items 31 to 35). Coefficient alpha for this scale was .86; the item-total correlations ranged from .56 to .77. The scale was developed on the basis of previous work (Elder 1962) which found academic motivation of respondents to be related to the way they were

socialized by their parents, and to their academic performance. In the present study the variable was hypothesized to be related to the socialization variables described above as well as to ethnic ancestry of respondents and mother's socio-economic status. The effect of gender was also analyzed since it has often been found that females are more academically motivated than males.

Table 2.7.5 shows the results of a multiple regression analysis performed with all predictors. The only socialization variables positively influencing academic motivation of respondents are Intellectual Independence Training and Positive Achievement Training. As found in previous research (Elder 1962), females were more academically motivated than males. Ethnic ancestry was not found to relate to academic motivation of respondents. More will be said about the lack of relation between ethnic ancestry and academic motivation and achievement in the chapter on academic achievement.

Table 2.7.5

Multiple Regression Analysis: Academic Motivation as the Criterion Variable

Predictors	B	Beta	p
Gender	-.33	-.19	.002
Ethnic Ancestry	-.01	-.08	.24
Socio-Economic Status of Mother	-.03	-.02	.70
Physical Independence Training	.03	.04	.55
Age Related Independence Training	.03	.04	.42
Intellectual Independence Training	.18	.15	.02
Negative Achievement Training	.04	.05	.42
Positive Achievement Training	.13	.15	.02
Constant	2.76		
Multiple R	.31		
R Square	.09		

CHAPTER THREE: ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in section 1.2, four measures of academic achievement were obtained. Three of these are the tests in Mathematics, Reading, and Writing that the Colleges administer to students during the admission process to determine whether remedial work is needed. The fourth measure of academic performance consists of High School Average on college preparatory courses. This is collected for each student before admission and it is utilized, if necessary, to place students into a college other than that of their first choice.*

Educational and occupational aspirations (items 5 and 53, respectively) were also obtained. In the following pages main hypotheses and findings will be presented with regard to academic performance and educational and occupational aspirations of respondents.

* Students are assigned to college of first choice, regardless of educational background, if a place is available; if a place at college of first choice is limited, assignment is made on the basis of high school rank and grade average in college preparatory courses (Lavin, Alba, & Silberstein, 1981).

3.2 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

A general hypothesis of this study was that academic performance of respondents would be related to socialization practices and academic motivation (these variables are described in section 2.7). It was also expected that academic performance would be either directly or indirectly related to background variables such as ethnicity, education of parents, and socio-economic status, and to gender of respondents.

Crosstabular analyses of background and socialization variables, on the one hand, and academic performance variables, on the other, reveals that the dependent variables of interest bear no relation to any of the independent variables considered. Several reasons for this are possible. Most previous studies examining the effect of background variables and socialization practices on academic achievement utilized respondents who were not yet in college. The present sample resulted from self-selection on the basis of respondents' choice to attend college and their academic motivation. Such a bias might have attenuated the relation between predictors of academic achievement and actual performance of respondents. A better test of the hypothesis would involve sampling

high school respondents.

A somewhat different interpretation of the results might point to the lack of centrality of good performance in school for the young adults attending a public institution such as CUNY, who constitute the sample of this study. As college enrollment has increased through the years, life chances and future career might be less perceived to be closely related to academic performance per se. Thus academic motivation might be more strongly related to choice of major, persistence in college, and final occupational attainment rather than to high school average or scores on the basic skill assessment tests. To test this contention would involve following up respondents in a longitudinal design to determine their subsequent life outcomes.

The only variable which had significant relationships with all academic performance measures was college attended. Table 3.2.1 presents the mean scores of Mathematics, Reading, Writing tests; and High School Grade Point Average for the four Colleges. With the exception of scores on the Reading Test, means are always higher for Brooklyn and Queens College than for Lehman and Staten Island. The association is probably

Table 3.2.1

Means of Mathematics, Reading, and Writing Tests, and High School Grade Point Average in College Preparatory Courses (CAA) for the Four Colleges

Academic Variables	Colleges: Staten Island	Brooklyn	Queens	Lehman	F	p
Mathematics	24.67	30.92	29.45	27.07	19.07	.000
Reading	16.25	19.06	19.29	16.35	14.57	.000
Writing	7.38	7.27	7.90	7.57	3.04	.02
CAA	75.68	82.13	83.35	81.39	37.16	.000

due to the different popularity of the CUNY Colleges: Queens and Brooklyn are both senior colleges with a strong academic reputation, whereas Staten Island is a community college, and Lehman is a senior college more recently established than Brooklyn and Queens (for a distinction between 'elite' and 'nonelite' senior colleges at CUNY, see Lavin, Alba, & Silberstein, 1981). As applicants are assigned to colleges both on the basis of their choice and of their grade point average, it is likely that better prepared students end up in the most popular colleges more often than their less prepared counterparts. But differences in academic preparation at the four Colleges do not

coincide with differences in socio-economic status of respondents; in fact, for this sample students attending Staten Island College do not differ significantly on socio-economic status from two of the senior Colleges, Queens and Brooklyn (see Table 1.4.3).

3.3 EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

The educational and occupational aspirations of respondents are presented in Tables 3.3.1 and 3.3.2, respectively. There are no appreciable gender differences on these two variables, although females tend to aspire to higher occupations than males. Possibly the male population at the CUNY colleges might not be representative of the Italian-American male population at large. The low representation of males at the CUNY colleges, which is found for Italian-Americans as well as other white ethnics, suggests that males are more often sent to private, more prestigious institutions when they are sufficiently prepared academically and if family finances can afford it (Lavin, Alba, & Silberstein 1981).

Table 3.3.1

Educational Aspirations of Respondents by Gender

Educational Aspirations*	Males	Females	Total	
None	2.8%	1.1%	1.7%	(5)
Associate	6.6%	8.6%	7.8%	(23)
Bachelor	55.7%	63.6%	60.8%	(178)
Master and Ph.D	34.9%	26.7%	29.7%	(87)
Total	106	187		

* Those respondents who answered 'Don't know' or 'Undecided' (n=21) are not included in this or subsequent tables.

In general, the occupational aspirations of both males and females are high, as expected, whereas educational aspirations are somewhat lower, considering the near necessity of a post-graduate degree to hold professional positions. The correlation between educational and occupational aspirations was .36.*

Background variables such as education of parents, socio- economic status of the mother, and ethnicity

* In all analyses the variable Occupational Aspirations has been recoded into three categories (see Table 3.3.4). This has been done not only to achieve a greater number of cases in each category, but also because ranking adjacent categories of the variables in an ordinal way did not seem theoretically sound.

Table 3.3.2

Occupational Aspirations of Respondents by Gender

Occupational Aspirations*	Males	Females	Total	
Housewife, Homemaker	.0%	1.7%	1.1%	(3)
Labor	2.9%	.0%	1.1%	(3)
Service	1.0%	.0%	.4%	(1)
Operative	1.0%	.0%	.4%	(1)
Craft	6.7%	.6%	2.8%	(8)
Sales	.0%	2.8%	1.8%	(5)
Clerical	2.9%	5.6%	4.6%	(13)
Business Owner	9.5%	1.1%	4.2%	(12)
Manager	17.1%	17.8%	17.5%	(50)
Semi Professional	21.0%	25.6%	23.9%	(68)
Professional	38.1%	45.0%	45.5%	(121)
Total	(105)	(180)		

* Those respondents who answered 'Don't Know' or 'Undecided' to the item (n=29) are not included in this or subsequent tables.

were not found to be related to educational aspirations and occupational aspirations of respondents. However the two variables were found to be associated with college attended. As Tables 3.3.3 and 3.3.4 show, respondents attending Queens and Brooklyn have overall higher educational and occupational aspirations than respondents attending Lehman and Staten Island. Such relationships might be partly explained by academic performance of respondents attending the different Colleges, although academic performance is only weakly related to educational and occupational aspirations. As the survey was implemented when respondents were beginning their freshman year of college, it seems highly unlikely that differences on the dependent variables in question are due to a contextual effect of college attended.

Table 3.3.3

Educational Aspirations by College of Attendance

Educational Aspirations*	Staten Island	Brooklyn	Queens	Lehman	Total	
Low	12.0%	8.1%	6.6%	7.7%	9.6%	(28)
Medium	70.7%	51.2%	50.8%	69.2%	60.8%	(178)
High	17.3%	40.7%	42.6%	23.1%	29.7%	(87)
Total	133	86	61	13		

χ^2=20.27 df=6 p=.002

* For crosstabulation purposes the variable has thus been recoded: Low (None; Associate Degree); Medium (Bachelor); High (Master and Ph.D.).

Table 3.3.4

Occupational Aspirations by College of Attendance

Occupational* Aspirations	Staten Island	Brooklyn	Queens	Lehman	Total	
Low	14.4%	5.9%	11.3%	30.8%	11.9%	(34)
Medium	50.4%	43.5%	40.3%	38.5%	45.6%	(130)
High	35.2%	50.6%	48.4%	30.8%	42.5%	(121)
Total	125	85	62	13		

χ^2 =12.17 df=6 p=.05

* In these and subsequent analyses the variable has thus been recoded: Low (Housewife, Labor, Service, Operative, Craft, Sales, Clerical); Medium (Business' Owner, Manager, Semi-Professional); High (Professional).

In Tables 3.3.5 and 3.3.6 multiple regression analyses are presented for the two criterion variables Educational Aspirations and Occupational Aspirations. It was expected that both variables would be influenced by socialization practices, academic motivation, gender, and academic performance of respondents. It can be seen that two of the Basic Skill Assessment tests are each related (although weakly) to one of the dependent variables. The predictor most strongly associated with the Educational and Occupational Aspirations of respondents is their Academic Motivation.

Table 3.3.5

Multiple Regression Analysis: Educational Aspirations as the Criterion Variable

Predictors	B	Beta	p
Physical Independence Training	-.08	-.12	.09
Age-related Independence Training	.01	-.03	.58
Intellectual Independence Training	.07	.08	.23
Negative Achievement Training	.05	.08	.21
Positive Achievement Training	.01	.01	.81
Academic Motivation	.17	.22	.0004
Mathematics Test	.01	.08	.25
Reading Test	.02	.13	.04
Writing Test	.01	.03	.55
CAA	.001	-.01	.92
Gender*	.11	.08	.19
Constant	1.54		
Multiple R	.35		
R Square	.12		

*Males=1, Females=0.

Table 3.3.6

Multiple Regression Analysis: Occupational Aspirations as the Criterion Variable

Predictors	B	Beta	p
Physical Independence Training	-.06	-.09	.21
Age-Related Independence Training	.002	.005	.93
Intellectual Independence Training	-.005	-.005	.93
Negative Achievement Training	.02	.04	.57
Positive Achievement Training	.01	.01	.85
Academic Motivation	.18	.22	.0007
Mathematics Test	.01	.20	.007
Reading Test	.01	.06	.38
Writing Test	-.04	-.09	.17
CAA	-.004	-.04	.54
Gender	-.10	-.07	.27
Constant	1.66		
Multiple R .31			
R Square .09			

CHAPTER FOUR: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

4.1 ITALIAN-AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS AND ETHNICITY

The moderately high support expressed by the young respondents for attitudes endorsing Italian-American ethnicity seems a confirmation of the contemporary fashionability of ethnicity in American society. This is especially so considering that the sample is composed by a majority of mixed ancestry and fourth generation Italian-Americans. Closely related to this finding is the failure of structural variables, such as ethnicity and socio-economic status to predict ethnic attitudes of respondents. If the Ethnic Attitudes scale is taken as a measure of 'Symbolic Ethnicity' (Gans 1979), it might well be concluded that this subjective component of ethnicity remains high for young Italian-American college students of all generations. The conclusion could be called into question as bias might have operated in a sample self-selected on the basis of response to a mail survey. Since 85% of the sample claimed they were never associated with any Italian-American organizations (item 51 of the questionnaire) it seems safe to conclude that such a bias is unlikely to have occurred.

Assimilation theory predictions received strong support with regard to Ethnic Behavior and Ethnic Identity of respondents: for both variables a monotonic decline in ethnic adherence was found across generations. Less support was received for the contention (Crispino 1980) that behavioral ethnicity, or the retention of ethnic items of behavior, is a working-class phenomenon. Socio-economic status is associated with ethnicity of respondents, so that earlier generation individuals are more likely to be of lower socio-economic status than later generation individuals. But once this is taken into account, no relation is found between socio-economic status and ethnic behavior and identity. It may be argued, of course, that the influence of socio-economic status of the mother is somewhat attenuated since respondents are all college students; and that, therefore, the effect of social class on ethnic behavior and identity can not be here fully appreciated.

The lack of relation between socio-economic status and ethnic behavior might also be due to the items of ethnic behavior employed in this study. Trips to Italy and proficiency in Italian language were found to constitute the core of an objective type of ethnicity

(see Table 2.5.5). These behaviors do not seem restricted to working-class Italian-Americans. More generally, changes in contemporary United States, as well as in Italy, might have favored a reevaluation of ethnicity and ethnic behavior which makes the ethnic phenomenon no longer an exclusively working-class experience. Thus the so called 'ethnic revival' of the white ethnics, along with earlier trends of racial pride of American minorities, might have produced a more sympathetic attitude toward ethnicity on the part of the white Anglo-Saxon majority. With regards to the Italian-American group, moreover, rapid industrialization in the land of the ancestors has made Italian cultural products and items of behavior acquire a higher status than the one commonly associated to Italian ethnicity at the turn of the century.

4.2 ETHNICITY, SOCIALIZATION, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Some socialization practices were found to be associated with ethnicity of respondents in the expected direction: earlier generation respondents report having been allowed less social and physical independence than their more American counterparts. Earlier generation respondents report less intellectual

independence training, less positive training for achievement, and more negative training for achievement in school related activities than their later generation counterparts. These differences, although weak, were all significant. In all cases ethnic ancestry has more weight in the prediction of socialization practices than the socio-economic status of the mother. Such results point in the direction of specific socialization practices which are the heritage of first generation Italian parents and get progressively lost across generations.

Academic achievement was not found to be related to ethnic ancestry, socio-economic status of the mother, academic motivation, or any of the socialization variables employed in the study. The failure of ethnic ancestry and socialization variables to predict academic performance of respondents might be taken as a lack of confirmation of the existence of a peculiarly Italian bias toward formal education. This conclusion must be somewhat tentative as the sample of this study is self-selected in terms of college attendance. It seems reasonable to hypothesize that the distrust of American schools which characterized the Italian group in the first half of the century

(Covello 1967) has given way to a more realistic appraisal of the advantages of formal education for individuals' life chances in contemporary society. In fact, considering the modest occupational and educational attainment of respondents' parents, the sample of this study can be characterized as upwardly mobile in educational and occupational aspirations, and reasonably motivated and prepared for academic work.

It might well be that Italian-Americans are still characterized by an attitude toward higher education which stresses vocational goals to a greater extent than other ethnic groups attending The City University of New York. This hypothesis was not tested in the study. A vocational attitude toward higher education would be hardly surprising as social mobility, or access to well paid and prestigious jobs, is pointed to by the society at large as one of the main goals to be achieved through the pursuit of higher education.

APPENDIX I

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

1) How old are you? ___ (Years)

2) Your Sex: ___M ___F

3) Did any of the following occur in your family of origin?
___ Death of a parent
___ Death of both parents
___ Divorce of parents
___ Separation of parents
___ None of the above

4) How many brothers and/or sisters do you have?
(Write in number) _____

5) What is the highest college degree you want to earn?
(Check one)
___ None
___ Associate Degree
___ Bachelor Degree
___ Ph.D., Ed. D., M. D.
___ Other (Specify) .....

6) What was your high school grade point average? (F=0 to A=4) ___

7) What is your nationality?
___ Italy
___ Other (Specify) .....

8) In what country did you live when you were a child?
___ United States
___ Italy
___ Other (Specify) .....

9) What part of Italy are your ancestors from? (Check one)
___ North
___ South
___ Do not know
___ Other (Specify) .....

10) Where were your parents born? (Check one for each parent)

F	M	
___	___	United States
___	___	Italy
___	___	Other (Specify) .....

11) Where were your father's parents born?

F	M	
___	___	United States
___	___	Italy
___	___	Other (Specify) .....

12) Where were your mother's parents born?

F	M	
___	___	United States
___	___	Italy
___	___	Other (Specify) .....

Please answer the following items thinking about your parents' behavior toward you when you were 12 to 18.

13) Did your parents interfere with your choice of friends? (Circle a number)

Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All

14) Before you went out, would your parents expect an account of how and with whom you were going to spend your time?

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

15) Did your parents try to limit the amount of time you could spend with your friends outside home?

Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All

At what age were you allowed to do the following things? (For each item numbers represent age; check one number for each item).

16) To freely explore the neighborhood you live in:

8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

17) To freely explore the city you live in:

8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

18) To take care of yourself for few days when your parents were away from home:

8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

For each item below rate your father and mother's behavior separately:

19) When your parents wanted you to do something, would they explain the reasons?

Father:

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

Mother:

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

20) When your parents punished you, would they explain the reasons?
Father:
Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
Mother:
Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

21) Were your parents consistent in how they expected you to behave?
Father:
Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
Mother:
Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

22) Were your parents consistent in the way they disciplined you?
Father:
Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
Mother:
Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

23) In family discussions,did your parents encourage you to express your opinion?
Father:
Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
Mother:
Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

24) Did your parents encourage you to solve your everyday problems relying on your own judgement?
Father:
Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
Mother:
Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
Mother:
Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

25) Did your parents insist that you get good marks in school?
Father:
Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All
Mother:
Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All

26) Did your parents help you with your schoolwork when you need it?
Father:
Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All
Mother:
Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All

27) Did your parents praise you when you did well in school?
Father:
Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All
Mother:
Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All

28) Did your parents scold you when you did not well in school?
Father:
Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All
Mother:
Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All

29) Did your parents keep after you to do better than your classmates?
Father:
Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All
Mother:
Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All

30) Did your parents take interest in the topics you were studying at school?
Father:
Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All
Mother:
Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All

Please answer the following items thinking about your behavior, at the present time, in the school setting.

31) On the whole, how interested are you in your schoolwork?
Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All

32) Do you really try to get good grades?
Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All

33) When you get a grade with which you are not satisfied, how hard do you work to improve?
Very Hard 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All

34) How likely are you to keep up to date with all your schoolwork?
Very Likely 1 2 3 4 5 Not at all Likely

35) How important is it for you to do well in school?
Very Much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All

Below is a series of statements. Possible answers range from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5).Please indicate your stand by circling a number.

36)The public schools should teach more about the contributions of Italian people to America.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

37) We do not need stronger organizations to express the views of Italian Americans.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

38) An effort should be made to preserve the Italian neighborhood.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

39) People of Italian background need not stick together.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

40)It is important for me to marry someone of Italian background.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

41)Organizations which carry on the Italian culture are important.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

42)On an 'ethnic continuum' going from Italian to American, how would you rate yourself?

Italian 1 2 3 4 5 American

43)When you were growing up,how many of your friends were of Italian background?
___ All
___ More than half
___ About half
___ Less than half
___ None

44)Thinking about the friends you have now,how many are of Italian background?
___ All
___ More than half
___ About half
___ Less than half
___ None

45)The language spoken at home, by your family of origin,is:
___ Italian only
___ Mostly Italian,some English
___ Italian and English
___ Mostly English
___ English only

46)How would you rate your proficiency in Italian?
___ Nonexistent
___ Poor
___ Fair
___ Good
___ Very good

47) Have you ever been to Italy?
___ No,and I do not plan to visit
___ No,but I plan to visit
___ Yes,once
___ Yes,more than once
___ Yes,I visit at lest once a year

48) When you were growing up, how many people in your neighborhood were of Italian background?

___ Almost all
___ More than half
___ About half
___ Less than half
___ None

49) How many people in your present neighborhood are of Italian background?

___ Almost all
___ More than half
___ About half
___ Less than half
___ None

50) Are you living with your family of origin? (Check only one)

___ Yes, and I plan to live with them until I get married

___ Yes, but I plan to move out sometime in the future

___ Yes, but I plan to move out soon

___ No, I no longer live with my family but see them often

___ No, I no longer live with my family and rarely see them

___ No, because I got married and live with my spouse

51) Are you formally or informally associated with any Italian American organization? (Check one)

___ Yes, I am actively involved in organizing group activities

___ Yes, I often participate in group activities

___ Yes, but I rarely participate in group activities

___ No, I am not associated with any but I was in the past

___ No, I am not associated with any and I never was

52) What is the occupation of your parents? (Check one for each)

F	M	
___	___	Professional, for example: lawyer, doctor, engineer
___	___	Semi-Professional, for example: nurse, accountant
___	___	Manager, official, executive in business or other organization
___	___	Runs a business of his own
___	___	Clerical, for example: bank teller, secretary
___	___	Sales, for example: salesman, real estate broker, insurance
___	___	Craft, for example: baker, printer, tailor
___	___	Operative, for example: assembler, welder
___	___	Service, for example: barber, waiter, household service
___	___	Labor, for example: construction worker
___	___	Housewife or homemaker
___	___	Other (Specify).....

53) Referring to the occupational categories listed in 52), in which do you expect to work as an adult?

___ Professional
___ Semi-Professional
___ Manager,official or executive
___ Runs own business
___ Clerical
___ Sales
___ Craft
___ Operative
___ Service
___ Labor
___ Housewife or homemaker
___ Other (Specify) .....

54) What is the education of your parents?

F	M	
___	___	8th grade or less
___	___	Some high school
___	___	High school graduate
___	___	Some College
___	___	Graduate from college
___	___	Postgraduate degree

55) What is your parents' gross annual income?

___ Under $ 10,000
___ $ 10,000 to $ 20,000
___ $ 20,000 to $ 30,000
___ $ 30,000 to $ 40,000
___ $ 40,000 to $ 50,000
___ $ 50,000 to $ 60,000
___ Over $ 60,000

APPENDIX II

DESCRIPTION AND SAMPLE ITEMS FOR THE THREE BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT TESTS ADMINISTERED BY THE COLLEGES OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK TO ENTERING FRESHMEN

I) THE MATHEMATICS SKILLS ASSESSMENT TEST

Description of The Test

The CUNY Mathematics Skills Assessment Test time is fifty minutes. The test consists of forty multiple-choice questions, evenly divided between arithmetic and algebra. The arithmetic questions cover such topics as: operations with whole number; ratio and proportion; percent; measurement; and word problems. The algebra questions cover topics selected from ninth-year algebra, such as factoring, equation-solving, and graphing.

Sample Mathematics Questions

1. 6804 : 21

   (A) 404 (B) 304

   (C) 324 (D) 314

2. Which of the following fractions is largest?

   (A) 3/8 (B) 1/2 (C) 5/12

   (D) 4/9 (E) 3/7

3. .893 x .2 =

   (A) .1686 (B) 1.686

   (C) .1786 (D) 1.786

   (E) 1786

Answers:

1. C
2. B
3. C

II) THE READING SKILLS ASSESSMENT TEST

Description of The Test

The CUNY Reading Skills Assessment Test time is thirty minutes. The test consists of 45 multiple-choice questions, based on a series of short passages that students read. The test is intended to indicate how well students understand what they read. It covers three aspects of reading comprehension: understanding main ideas, understanding direct statements, and drawing inferences.

Sample Reading Questions

During the '50s, each TV season offered 39 weeks of new shows, and 13 weeks of repeats. Slowly, the ratio has reversed. The ultimate goal may be a one-week season, 50 weeks of repeats, and one week off for good behavior.

Understanding Main Ideas
1. The main point the writer is making is that:

(A) Television shows are being repeated more often than ever
(B) Shows must be repeated to allow time to prepare new shows
(C) Repeated shows are used to gain good ideas for new shows
(D) Repeating shows cuts down costs

Understanding Direct Statements
2. When did the change that the passage describes take place?

(A) During the past year
(B) Only very recently
(C) Over a period of time
(D) Several years ago

Drawing Inferences

3. What does the writer most probably think of the situation in television that she is telling us about?

(A) It is better than it was before
(B) It cannot be helped
(C) It may soon improve
(D) It is becoming ridiculous

Answers:

1. (A)
2. (C)
3. (D)

III) THE WRITING SKILLS ASSESSMENT TEST

Description of The Test

The CUNY Writing Skills Assessment Test time is fifty minutes. The test requires students to write an essay responding to one of two topics. The topics are drawn from the common experiences of those taking the test. A short passage introduces each topic and students are then asked to take a position about what is discussed in the passage and to support or explain their position by drawing on theirown experience, their observation of others, or their reading. The test instructions suggest that students allot part of their time to planning and proofreading their essays.

All essays are rated according to CUNY Evaluation Scale, a one-to-six sclae in which six is the highest rating. Each essay is read by two readers. The essays meets the CUNY writing standard if each reader rates the essay at least four, for a total score of at lest eight. If one reader rates the essay at three or below and the other rates it at four or above, a third reader resolves the difference. All readers participate in preliminary reding sessions using essays previously evaluated by the University faculty committee that prepared the test.

Sample Writing Topic

It always strikes me as a terrible shame to see young people spending so much of their time staring at television. If we could unplug all TV sets in America, our children would grow up to be healthier, better educated, and more independent human beings.

Do you agree or disagree? Explain and illustrate your answer from your own experiences, your observations of others, or your reading.

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