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THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF A MYTH: ITALIAN AMERICAN WOMEN  
AND THEIR COMMUNITY

*City University of New York*

PH.D. 1985

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THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF A MYTH:  
ITALIAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND THEIR COMMUNITY

by

Dorothy M. Cali Balancio

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology  
in partial fulfillment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,  
The City University of New York.

1985

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## Preface

This research analyzes Italian American women, contrasting how they see themselves and their community against the popular images held by non-Italians. This research is an intergenerational and intragenerational analysis which places women center stage.

The first-generation grandmothers were the ruptured group because they were between two cultures: the rural peasant Italian culture of Southern Italy, and the urban ghetto of the turn-of-the-century American cities. The second-generation children were characterized by close sibling bonding and a move toward Americanization. The third-generation grandchildren were influenced by the networking of their parents' generation.

Family is the most important part of the Italian Americans' culture. This research presents the differences and similarities across generations of Italian Americans as seen by the women. There are variations, and there are unchanged, mummified culture complexes which are still unwrapped

In this research I study thirty-eight families, starting with seventy-six oral histories of first-generation women. The second- and third-generations were also interviewed.

This study gave the Italian American women a forum to describe the reality of their characters.

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The Missing Voices and Misunderstood Images  
of Italian American Women

Overview

The world of our immigrant fathers was not such a dark secret, but we did wonder where the women were in our migration history.<sup>1</sup>

It is widely recognized that there is a paucity of records and documentation in the field of women's research. My research efforts, constrained by this reality, were further handicapped by the sexist bias in the material which exist. For example, the women were missing from the labor figures because much of their work was not statistically recorded. The work women did, such as cooking, shopping and cleaning for boarders; piece work at home; keeping the books for the family businesses; and working with their men in the family businesses was not part of the official numbers.

I used to have eighteen boarders that I took care of... this extra money helped us to buy our own home...  
(a 88 year old first generation woman)

I would get up at four thirty in the morning and begin my day by opening the bakery... by the time my husband came down to start the bread, I had his breakfast made and the coffee was on...  
(a 94 year old first generation woman)

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The women were not recognized for the work they did by those officially recording this information. The Italian American women were appreciated within the family and their work was part of the internal subculture.

Females in stratification statistics, until recently were not considered independently. The women were more often than not categorized as being on the same level as her husband, she was classified with her father, or she was a footnote. Even the media portrayed the Italian American women, when they were mentioned, in a simplistic, shallow way. This first chapter will address the missing voices of the Italian American women and the misunderstood images.

Historical information in all field is constantly reevaluated for accuracy and completeness, but usually is limited to reconstruction and re-interpretation of secondary and tertiary data. For reasons already mentioned, this would not be the most productive methodology in the field of women's studies, particularly for the Italian American women. Consequently, to correct the errors, historical omission and misconceptions, it was necessary to undertake a research program designed to develop primary source material.

The method selected was in-depth interviews with three generations of Italian Americans, starting with the original immigrant women and continuing with their children's and grandchildren's generations. The findings are significant

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because they fill an historical void, but more importantly because the opportunities to collect this data diminish each day. Death is on the horizon for many of our surviving first-generation foremothers and this reality establishes a sense of urgency that cannot be ignored.

The foundation of this research is constructed from the responses received during the one on one interviews. The total reconstruction of the Italian American women's experiences could not be completed, however, without the years of encounters, observations, and notations. The interviews provided responses, the follow-up provided conversation, and dialogue. This data was the springboard for the theoretical and historical material used in this study. I used secondary sources to complete the information referred to by my respondents.

The data analysis includes an appreciation of the ethnomethodological and phenomenological focus. Additionally, the importance of "talking," social interpretation and orientation, selected attention and the accounting of social practices are each assessed regarding the impact on the Italian American community and the resulting Italian American image.

#### Introduction: Imagery and Myth

Experience, Perception, and Reality. We are born with a

capacity to organize our perceptions, but acquire the ability to categorize and classify them from the people in our immediate environment. Although we perceive differences; e.g. color and shape, temperature and texture, height and weight, special and ordinary, important and trivial, etc.; the labels we assign to individual items is frequently a function of external influences. Soon we take the meaning of our classification system for granted and begin perceiving reality through our culture's interpretation of it as relayed to us by significant others. As children, our experiences are filtered through a cultural apparatus which shades the meaning of incoming imagery and symbolism. Consequently, our perceptions of what is "out there" are strongly regulated by the way we have been taught to interpret reality. The images are social creations, and must be explained in order to understand Italian American women.

Notions of what these Italian American women are like have been shaped by social imagery and myths. Broader American society, as well as the Italian American subcommunity, convey imagery through novels, films, television, and other creative works. The first half of this chapter will address the images of Italian American women in media. Many of these images are shallow oversimplification of some characteristics of Italian American women which reduce them to narrow, simple mythical creatures. The images of the Italian American women as either earth mother, madonna, or sex object reduces them to something

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less than whole human beings. The Italian American women are influenced by these demeaning images which could shape their perceptions of reality and affect their self esteem. This can alter who they choose as a marriage partner, when they marry, whether they prepare for a career, whether they have children, the number of children and how they socialized their offsprings.

Imagery, symbolism and myths are of great importance in shaping perceptions of reality. Being a social scientist, I am interested in the ways scientists and scholars have perceived women and specifically Italian American women and their community. Therefore, I will address the methodology and research techniques used in this study in the second half of this chapter.

### The Images of Italian American Women

#### Introduction: The Italian American Women and Their Image.

Both Italian American and old country Italian traditions pertaining to family, religion, and community provide a great deal for the self-image of Italian American women. Unlike their Anglo-American counterparts, the Italian Americans' role definitions, particularly the wife/mother role, include positive characteristics which support a distinctly powerful self-image. This generalization applies to three generations of women

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interviewed: immigrants to the United States arriving between 1880 and the 1920s, their children and grandchildren.

In a contemporary society which downplays the role of family and defines success in personal and individual terms, these Italian American women are faced with stressful conditions and contradictions. The third generation Italian American women were taught by their mothers and grandmothers to be serious, active and practical people always within the family context. These characteristics are an asset to the career-oriented individual, but the guilt and nagging sense of obligation is destructive to the sense of self-esteem that mobility upward might try to develop. The family has positive and very negative impact on these upwardly mobile women who have internalized the core Italian American traditions which translate into "family first." Success, ambition, loyalty, support, respect, obligation, tradition, love, duty, rights, and work have varied in the significance of their meaning from one generation to another. The images of Italian American women reflected in popular media is reflexive with the self image by these women in the three generations.

#### Italian American Women in the Media

Novels with Italian American Women. This analysis will begin with a discussion of novels. When looking at the past in

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order to discover meanings of events that occurred, the novel contributes rich data about the atmosphere of the social world at the specific periods of time. Also, the novel affects readers who may identify with certain characters in the story or associate them with familiar people in their network.

History aims at telling what happened in the past and novels tell how it felt.

Helen Barolini, a sensitive, articulate Italian American author, wrote a wonderful novel Umbertina<sup>2</sup>. This book gives a vivid picture of the lives of three generations of Italian American women. Many of my respondents who read the book felt that they could corroborate the descriptions of the women characters as presented. "The characters in Umbertina were like the people I knew as a girl," said a second generation 54 year old woman. Umbertina graphically presents the daily life of women by letting the characters of the story define the world as they saw it. The Italian American community is seen through the eyes of these three generations of women. The character Umbertina is a strong woman who raises her children in a tough urban setting. She is hard-working, practical, and family centered. There are descriptions of the children playing in the streets under the watchful eyes of the neighborhood women. It is made perfectly clear that the adult females fit into the nurturing, mother role. There is a biographical dimension to this novel which adds a realism along with a deep sensitivity to

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the women characters.

The Missing Voices. The place women have had in American literature varies according to whether the writers, journalists, and television/radio producers/directors were Italian Americans or non-Italian Americans. Actually, the non-Italian American authors have almost not noticed the Italian American women.

Italian Immigrant Women in American Literature. There are several works in which some constants about the portrayal of Italian immigrant women in American literature can be found, whether the characters have been created by Italian Americans or in some cases by other Americans who seem to have a sincere perception of Italianism. The basic traits which surface are those which help the Italian immigrant women to overcome restrictions. These first generation women are depicted as future oriented and therefore, flexible.

Characters such as Maria Corbo in Mario Puzo's The Fortunate Pilgrim<sup>3</sup>, Rosa Cavalleri in Rosa, The Life of an Italian Immigrant<sup>4</sup>, or Serafina delle Rose in Tennessee Williams' The Rose Tattoo<sup>5</sup>, portray Italian immigrant women as productive Americans. Each of these characters encounter, accept and overcome challenges in straightforward fashion.

Other literary works portray Italian American women differently. Eugene Mirabelli creates a wistful prototype of

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the grandmother in The Way In<sup>6</sup>. Mirabelli features grandma as the stereotypical food-oriented little browned-eyed woman in black who, through the tradition of Sunday visits by the extended family, is defined as the heart of the family. She is the "nonna" and oversees the activities of the family.

Pietro DiDonato presents a contrasting figure in Annunziata of Christ in Concrete<sup>7</sup>. DiDonato depicts the Italian American woman as the prototypical earth mother. Here 'mother' ranges from stroking away a boy's fears to orchestrating a larger family identity by connecting them to broader social areas.

In Three Circles of Light<sup>8</sup> she is the resisting force against the superstition that La Smorfia excites in the neighborhood. With resolve, she confirms the belief that the Italian American woman lives for her family by remaining a loyal mother and wife, despite knowledge of her husband's mistress. Undaunted, she plays the visible role of sacrificial moral leader without ever disclosing her inner struggle.

Francis Pollini presents an opposite view of mother. In Night<sup>9</sup>, we meet mother through recollections her son experiences while being brainwashed by the Chinese. Her son, Marty, is an Italian American soldier whose mind is pushed back to his boyhood days on Trent Street. The image evoked by the inquisitor's torture shows mother as a woman enslaved, degraded and crying for the better life in Italy where she had known love and respect. The subsequent narration of her collapse and

despair provides a vivid description of a psychological conflict between the new American culture and that of the old country. This value conflict, experienced by many first generation Italian American women, partially illustrates the effects of the rupture. Marty's mother was a woman between two worlds.

Italian American Women in American Literature. Although there are a variety of books concerning Italian Americans, I selected only those featuring Italian American women as prominent characters. Most of the American novels are authored by men and as a result portray the Italian American woman in an acceptable, fixed relationship surrounded by a man-centered world. There are, however, a few exceptions. For example, the grandmother in Marion Benasutti's No Steady Job for Pappa<sup>10</sup> is the beloved leader of the family, home and neighborhood. She enchants everyone on Black Street with her charming folk tales and stories of Italian poets, while incorporating her understanding of life and death. The delicate nuances woven into this novel are due, obviously, to the perception of the writer who is relaying the story of a woman she has known not a figment of her imagination. This sensitivity of portrayal is not unusual, however it is unusual for an Italian American woman writer to be introspective and self revealing in her work.

Another example is the extremely negative characterization of mother (Filomena Faustino) in Rocco Fumento's Tree of Dark

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Reflections. Here we see a woman who is neither the leader nor the heart of the family. On the contrary, Filomena's corrosive subservience destroys herself and everyone around her. Her acceptance of her husband Dominico's invectives with meekness and self degradation is an insult to all womanhood, her misplaced sanctity is a source of disgust for the reader, and her tolerance of Dominico's infidelities unacceptable and practically immoral. In return, her husband raves against her strangling pity and choking tears. While she places her problems before the Blessed Virgin, she never clears the air with decisive action. This Filomena is an exaggerated portrayal of the immigrant woman who, deserted by her husband's betrayal or her children's independence, has no alternative but to withdraw into dreams of the past.

There is no self-obliteration in Lucia Santa Angeluzzi-Corbo, a woman in Mario Puzo's The Fortunate Pilgrim<sup>11</sup>. Puzo's Italian immigrant woman in America is a transplanted Roman hearth goddess who guards the family, especially the children playing in the dark streets of the big city ghetto. Describing her as "...healthy, fearless, alert, and wary", Puzo presents an image of a woman whose only weakness is a lack of natural cunning and shrewdness that is "...more profitable than a virtue". Despite this flaw which causes a lack of rapport with her son Geno, she assumes her role as matriarch and holds the scale of power and justice in performing the duties of

living. Informing her children that only the mother makes the decisions in the family, she rears proper Italian sons who are respectful to elders, industrious, sober and law abiding.

More than as a self projecting personality, Puzo creates her as the dramatization of a staged ethnic code: guidance of children, control of personal love, measure of honor, expedition of duty and, most importantly, perpetuation of the family in the American society. Actually, this image is of a strong, powerful woman in her own world, and a tragic figure whose children don't understand her when she tries to speak to them. She doesn't "...hear them when they cry". Puzo concludes the book by having the Italian American woman triumph as she rides in the limosine to her new home on Long Island.

Generally speaking, Italian American writers have assigned Italian immigrant women to the central position in the family; be it moral, heroic, strong, tragic, weak or merely pathetic. None of these portrayals has yet emerged as a breathing, life-struggling ethnic presentation. Even non-Italian writers who have created Italian American women in their writings have done so from the confines of the subjects' place of origin and the limitation of the writer's own life experiences.

Films with Italian American Women. Italian Americans have been involved in many movies, however I selected only those films featuring Italian American women in prominent or

supporting roles. The Italians on the silver screen were originally either in 'togas' or 'rubbing out someone', but regardless of the era Hollywood cut the Italian American woman's role according to a stereotypical pattern.

Ben Hur first made in 1932 and remade in 1959, and Cleopatra, once billed as the most expensive movie ever made, are representative of the toga Italian. Little Cesare, made in 1930 and still popular with late night television viewers, and The Godfather and The Godfather II both made during the 1970's are typical of the 'rub em out' Italian.

Italian Americans were also portrayed in everyday life with such films as Marty from the TV play written in 1955 and Saturday Night Fever made in 1978.

Additionally, there were light romantic musicals and comedies which focused on the European Italian culture as depicted in such films as Holiday, made in 1953, Three Coins in a Fountain made in 19 , and a series of Mario Lanza musicals throughout the 1950's.

Images of the Italian American women emerged from these popular films, starting with Little Cesare. That film, first to feature the 'mob', was also the start of the ganster genre. Little Cesare focused on male activities, the countercultural expression of the American dream of success through extortion, the norms of the underworld, syndicated corruption and wanton killing. Along with the presentation of the archtypical film

ganster, Cesare Enrico Bandello, the portrayal of Italian women in America had its mass audience communication debut.

The first woman in Little Cesare is Mamma, the anguished figure pf Antonio's mother. She consoles her distraught son, the now-repentant driver of a mob get-away car. She is gray, grandmotherly and in silhouette as she enters her son's room to the accompaniment of sentimental Italian music. Francis Faragoh, the screenwriter, has her speak a stereotypical dialogue in broken English. To her son she says, "...remember when you sing in the church, 'caro mia'" and she offers an appropriate eghnic antidote to despair, "...I have some spaghetti for you on the stove...you feel better...eat somethin'...do you good". With a tearful embrace and a kiss she inspires her son to tell all to the priest, thought it is on the pillared steps of the church itself that Antonio is killed by Rico, a man without any family, a man without a Mamma.

Another woman in this film is Ma Magdalena, a harsh and brutal person who moves easily in the underworld. Ma Magdalena, the femal ganster is a special creation that is an interesting mixture of maternalism and moral corruption as her name suggests. Though we see the stereotype of Antonio's mother in later films, Ma Magdalena doesn't surface anymore.

Only an Italian could be both Ma and Magdalena at the same time because the core of every female is believed, by stereotype, to be maternal while her basic nature is sensual.

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In the case of Ma Magdalena, corruption is not complicated by female sexuality. We would do well to remember that our popular culture only immortalizes the whore who has a good and sensitive heart.

It is important to investigate the image of Ma Magdalena and other types of Italian American woman as presented on the screen in order to understand what was popularly accepted by the American public. As anthropologist Clad Levi-Strauss agrues, "a myth cannot be understood in isolation from the full repertoire of the mythology of the society".<sup>12</sup>

Unlike the Italian American men who seem to get caught up in the excitement of the ganster films, the women manage to remain dispassionate and more aware of the limited stereotyping associated with such productions. Regardless, films are a persuasive medium in America and the possible long-range effects of ethnic stereotyping is significant and worthy of discussion. The imagery and symbolism presented in films plays an important role in shaping Americans' perceptions of reality. When ethnic stereotypes are projected on the screen, they serve to personify the subjects, especially for those outside the protrayed ethnic group.

#### Caricatures of Italian American Women in Movies.

Caricatures are merely a collection of stereotypes rolled into a single character and consequently have a distinct ethnic

predictability. For example, Serafina in The Rose Tattoo, both the mother and the aunt in Marty, and both Mamma and Connie Corleone in The Godfather and The Godfather II are caricatures. Other caricatures run throughout the Renee Taylor and Joseph Bologna films, Lovers and Other Strangers and Made for Each Other.

In thematic overview, the women in these films and dozens of others not mentioned here, offer poignant testimony to the tensions between the traditional ways (via vecchia) and the new life in an American urban society. Their roles may not be depicted as dramatically as the men's, but at least they are not restricted to the same image originally projected in the 1930's. One sees little difference between Rico, Frank Nitti and Don Corleone. Nonetheless, caricatures are a form of stereotype and perpetuate myths.

The Meal. The meal, both as a setting and symbol, plays a major role in films about Italian Americans. In Lovers and Other Strangers, Made for Each Other, Marty and The Godfather, the meal is the setting around which much of the theme is developed. Mealtime in popular films can be, and usually is, stereotyped. These scenes make many statements expected by the outside world through the use of large numbers of children, loud discussions, heavy laughter and excessive amounts of food being served to the men by wives and mothers in aprons. However, no

matter what the menu or where the location, mealtime is an important scene for emotional transactions and plot development.

The meal time cannot be accomplished without the woman intricately involved as creator. This image spotlights the central place the foodgiver has in the family. For example, in The Godfather the major confrontations over questions of loyalty when Mike enlisted during World War II, or the introduction of Carlo to Connie, both issues being significant parts of the story, were done over dinner.

In Lovers and Other Strangers Richard Castellano has only a tradition of good eating to console him in his old age. When seen in The Godfather as Clemenza, Castellano himself is again in the kitchen. This time he's teaching a novice, Mike, how to make spaghetti sause because the family is at war and the women have been displaced because the kitchen is the temporary command post. Regardless of the situation, it's not merely a matter of grabbing a bite to eat, it's the meal.

The Image of Mother in Italian American Films. Mamma, although sometimes a minor role regarding spoken lines, is significantly integrated into the story. The Godfather is a case in point. Michael has an important mission to accomplish, one that normally would not be sidetracked by anything, instructs his bodyguard to make sure nothing happens to Fredo as long as his mother is alive. Mamma's presence is a

reaffirmation of the old ways, the New York ways, and the Sicilian ways. Only after she is dead can Michael exact retribution by having Fredo assassinated on a Nevada lake.

An Italian American Slice of Life in Films. Another film which shows an ethnic slice of life is Paddy Chayefsky's Marty. The film is about the lonely and attenuated life of Marty, a dutiful son and neighborhood butcher who seeks some human relief from his urban life. As an Italian, Marty becomes a true oddity because he isn't married at thirty-six and is still living with his mother. This film was made in the fifties and reflects the changing values and times for the middle aged Italian American widows as they related to their grown children who had been caught up in the process of Americanization. A speech delivered by Marty's mother late in the film describing the situation of her sister Catherine is very relevant animating this point:

It's a very sad thing. A woman, fifty-six years old, all her life she had her own home. Now, she's just an old lady, sleeping on her daughter-in-law's couch. It's a curse to be a mother I tell you. Your children grow up and then what is left for you to do? It is a very cruel thing when you son has no place for you in his home.

Saturday Night Fever is a more contemporary film dealing with the everyday lives of Italian Americans. The working class

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image projected in this film is consistent with other films, such as Made for Each Other and Lovers and Other Strangers, and like them, perpetuates stereotyped images.

In Lovers and Other Strangers the Italian American women are set against a turbulent backdrop of intermarriages between Italians and non-Italians, divorces, and the casual infidelities of the American contemporary middle and upper middle classes. Within this environment the Italian American woman is not confined to the kitchen and is moved not only to the living room but also to the bedroom. We must, however, look beneath the stereotypical chandeliers, plastic slipcovers and ornate wallpaper if we are to project the real roots of their immigrant ancestors.

The message of the film can be defined in terms of the recurring catchline spoken by Richard Castellano when questioning his soon-to-be-divorced son: "Richie, so what's the story?". That same question permeates the whole film regarding the future of third generation Italian Americans caught up in the moral and material tides of American culture.

Moving to an even more contemporary backdrop, Made for Each Other presents both Italian and Jewish second and third generation through two characters who meet in group therapy and fall in love. Generational transitions in this film are played off of the analyst's couch instead of mamma's stove.

Italian Americans as portrayed on Television. From the Untouchable series, referred to by many as 'cops and wops', to the present we find little substantive change in the presentation of Italian Americans. Although no longer confined to racketeers and hit men, the roles have not outgrown the stereotypes. In such shows as Welcome Back Kotter, Happy Days and Baretta for example, the Italian American image is usually blue-collar working class, primitive and sensual.

The Mamma Imagery on Television. Television is greatly responsible for perpetuating the pervasive Mamma image. For years it has supplied us with an endless stream of Mamas, distinguished by the ample breast of motherhood, the flowered housecoat of domesticity and the ever present stirring spoon ready to mix and taste the perpetually brewing spaghetti sause.

This image is prevelant in commercials as well as in the programming. Some show a plump Mamma telling her all important philosophy of "abbundanza" in the making of pizza, others show Mamma tasting and commenting on the quality of spaghetti sause and some have only a broken English voiceover of a mother calling her 'Ann-toe-knee'to come home for spaghetti dinner.

The ethnic mother in the kitchen insisting that we eat is a deeply seated stereotype. Whether in sitcoms or commercials, Mamma's contribution is regularly defined in terms of her ability discuss the thickness and quality of tomato sause.

In the Spring of 1984 television brought us a situation comedy named after the main character, Mamma Malone. This mamma was an overweight, loud, Italian American who was the star of a T.V. cooking show. The theme of the program was written around her weekly broadcast. This program played-up every stereotype to the the point of tastelessness. Mamma Malone was obsessed with food, overweight, loud, overbearing, and lived in a house that was over decorated with religious statues, holy pictures, family protraits, flowered wallpaper and ornate furniture covered with doiles. Rarely was Mamma presented in light of the nurturing qualities essential to the mother role.

Every Italian American interviewed about this series during my research was very clear in their negative evaluation of this program. One twenty-three year old, third generation woman's comment sums it up very well: "I was very offended by that show".

Italian American Women and the "Cultural" Image  
From Ancient Rome and the Renaissance

Much of the imagery we see on television and in films draws from a time that pre-dates the mass migration. Italian American women are heirs to a facinating and mixed tradition which, when reviewed, provides rudimentary information regarding some of the current stereotypes.

While Italy, as a country, has had vigorous, hard working, creative people throughout history, it has also been swept with periods of deprivation and loss. Italy has been sacked in every century of recorded time, and provides extreme examples of injustice, tyranny and poverty. During it's diverse history, Italy has produced many geniuses.

With respect to women, Italian history offers a wide range of images. There are the earth mothers, the nurturing mamas, the Roman goddesses, the field workers, the Renaissance women, the sexy women, the devout religious women and the fashion queens.

The Renaissance women were the wealthy medieval ladies who were immortalized in many paintings from that period wearing long gowns of fine brocades, velvets and lace.

The medieval artists depicted the lower classes working at their looms or working in the fields with their men. They were usually youthful looking because these poorer Renaissance women usually bred early and died young.

The image that dominates the medieval women, however, is the crafts. No other group surpassed the sewing and embroidery skills of the Italian women. These skills were a part of their life, and the fine hands of the first generation Italian American women were recognized by that group as a definite link to their ancestry while the second and third generation women identified more often with the medieval ladies and the women of ancient Rome.

The Italian Renaissance Image of Women in Literature. The fourteenth century literature presents women as either good and virtuous, or evil and seductive. Boccaccio's Griselda, a female character in the final story of Decameron, is a splendid example of one of the Renaissance stereotypes.

Griselda, a poor maiden, receives a proposal from a wealthy marquis only after she obediently strips in front of his men first. After they marry, she has their daughter which is taken away by order of the marquis because he wants a son first. Griselda is told that the child died during birth.

Griselda later gives birth to a son, which is also taken away by order of the marquis because a child born to a peasant would never be accepted. Once again Griselda is told that the child died.

Thirteen years later the marquis pretends to annul his marriage to Griselda and actually banishes her from his house. She is told this is being done because she is a peasant and because the marquis is preparing to marry a young girl which, unknown to Griselda, is actually her daughter.

After Griselda leaves, she is summoned back by the marquis to serve as a maid during the wedding preparations. As she did at the time of his proposal to her, once again Griselda obeys her husband's orders and returns to serve him. The marquis is now satisfied that his wife has proven herself worthy, and tells her of their children and the false annulment.

This mythical image of a woman replete with infinite patience, tolerance, obedience and respect for her husband, regardless of his unreasonableness and cruelty, is the foundation of a stereotype that is still perpetuated.

To some extent the Renaissance imagages preserve the predictability of life in the ethnic group, provide a parameter of their "Italianness" and help internalize it and socialize it among the younger members of their subculture. These myths function to encourage certain characteristics in future generations. What are stereotypes to outsiders can become self-fulfilling prophesies to those within the group.

Images, Stereotypes and Descriptions of Ethnicity:

Myth or Reality?

Some images, stereotypes and descriptions are oversimplifications, exaggerations or both. Some are created by observers outside the group as a way of explaining what they perceive, others are created from within the group to have outsiders see what they want them to see.

There are certain myths that Italian Americans purposively project to the outside world in order to insulate and protect the privacy of the clan. The characteristics that are inaccurately attributed to the Italian Americans by the outside world, however, are disturbing to the people I interviewed.

The role of the Italian American women, to many, is a composite of these externally ascribed stereotypes and internally projected images. Although there are variations from generation to generation, as well as differences within birth cohorts, Italian American women have a definite role within the family. Their role is a strong and powerful one with real control of the social networking of the members of the clan. One focus of my investigation was to assess how these women see themselves and how they define their roles.

Another focus of the study was to analyze the view changes across generations and within generational groups by comparing and contrasting three generations of Italian Americans. Specifically, the items investigated were: Where do these people make their status claims?; What are their perceptions of their community?; What traditions are passed down from generation to generation?; and Who follows the ethnic ways?

These assessments and analyses were undertaken based on the following hypotheses, each according to the women's perspective:

- 1) Ethnic identity is not unilineal,
- 2) Intergenerational similarities and differences exist among Italian Americans,
- 3) Intragenerational similarities and differences exist among Italian Americans, and
- 4) Value of family is the unifying thread intergenerationally and intragenerationally within the Italian American sub-culture.

Variables in Developing a Self Image: The self image of Italian American women is complex and varied because it is a function of their individual biographies which include their: birth cohort, social class, birth order, educational background, work experience, family traditions and community identity. Self image, as well as ethnicity, is integrated into this network of relationships. Although these relationships are as varied and complex as the women themselves, it is hypothesized that there will be consistency of response due to the importance placed upon family in each subject generation.

Status Claims and the Italian American Women. The status claims of the Italian American women give an indicator of who and what is important to them. The intergenerational descriptions from these people, as well as from their children and grandchildren, reveal the world as the Italian American women experienced it.

The women are the primary organizers of the Italian American social order and they are the primary socializers who translate the ethnic traditions to the new members of their group. The wife/mother role includes keeping the family traditions with spouse, in-laws, children and grandchildren. A woman has reason to feel pride, and even brag, if her children demonstrate that they have internalized the family's traditions.

A woman's status is partially determined by how well she has passed down the critical traditions of the family. She may brag about this to her sisters because it is a cause for envy.

One twenty-two year old, third generation respondent explained how her grandmother helped her to get out of an arranged engagement with her mother's best friend's son. The grandmother spent hours discussing the situation with her daughter and son-in-law. My respondent said that it took a week and a half of daily dialogue before the grandmother succeeded. My third generation respondent knew that the only possible way to avoid the unwanted marriage without being disrespectful was to get her grandmother to plea her cause for her to her mother. Manipulation of the powers within the Italian American clan is successful when the hierarchial order is understood and respected.

## Methodology

### Methodology: Objectivity and the Feminist Perspective

As early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there were general essays on women using historical material to make various points regarding the limitations and capabilities of "the sex". An example is Thomas Heywood's Nine Books of Various History Concerning Women originally published in London in 1624 and re-issued in 1657 as The General History of Women. However, the majority of books on the history of women focus on their intrinsic goodness or badness. This orientation to gender makes it difficult to conduct a balanced, scholarly treatment of the subject.

Recently, feminist writers<sup>13</sup>, historians<sup>14</sup>, and sociologists<sup>15</sup> began to undertake a systematic approach to the problems associated with the women's role in American life and history. My aim, although similar, is specifically targeted to analyze the Italian American women's experience, using a sociological orientation.

Methodology can be seen as a way of proceeding from theory to data. The aim of my method is to enhance understanding of the process, as well as the data resulting from my scientific inquiry. By focusing on the perspective of my respondents, an

understanding of the Italian American women, as they see themselves and their community across generations, can be developed.

There was a lot of history going on around the hearth, but many writers chose to narrowly define these events as mundane household chores having little or no residual significance to the community or nation at-large. Recorded history focuses on great men and great events.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the women in the home felt that getting the men out of the house was a necessity, allowing them the opportunity to get on with the really important tasks of life, such as preparing and giving food, clothing the family, raising the children and networking the family's social relationships. My research is designed to put women center stage, record their story and thereby provide new data around which less biased analyses and interpretations can be made regarding the true value of women's role in history.

Theoretical Overview. Weber<sup>17</sup>, Parsons<sup>18</sup> and Lundburg<sup>19</sup> each, representing different schools of sociology, wrote about and argued about the value-free element of the social sciences. The question of a value-free science has been debated for years because the histories, research analyses and recorded studies are reflections of, and consequently biased by, their authors.

A social philosopher, A. Kaplan, in his work entitled Conduct of Inquiry presents an interesting and relevant approach

to the logic of inquiry<sup>20</sup>. Kaplan presents the nature of science as a process and discusses the legitimacy of a value-free inquiry. It is desirable to eliminate bias and subjective relativism from science, however, it seems impossible to preclude values from scientific inquiry. Kaplan believes value judgments are not the issue in the controversy over a value-free science, but rather expands the definition of 'value'. His position re-enforces the ambiguity of the argument but is worth considering. Kaplan's work addresses fundamental points germane to a project focusing on women from the women's perspective.

A less philosophical methodology focuses on the role of interpretation and the notion that the past can only be viewed through the eyes of the present.<sup>21</sup> Various female and black sociologists claim there are valid perspectives in analyzing social phenomena which differ from the existing material in written history. This is particularly true of the Italian American women and the recorded history of their ethnic group's experience in the United States.

The available literature has some wonderfully detailed accounts of the immigration, settlement, evolution and special activity experiences of Italian American women, but only in broad, oftentimes stereotypical, terms. An example of this can be seen in the pages of Il Progresso, an Italian language newspaper published for the Italian American community.<sup>22</sup> A

content analysis of this paper, spanning the years 1960-1980, found that women are confined to cultural and art related areas, giving the impression that the only significant accomplishments of Italian American women were in the fields considered appropriate for the stereotyped female, i.e. music, art, education and other helping careers.<sup>23</sup>

The published stories focus on elements defined as 'female' by the Italian American male. and serves to reinforce, perpetuate and disseminate their traditional image. According to the women in my research population, the traditional image "is a myth".

The Women's Perspective in Social Scientific Methodology.  
Gerda Lerner's essays, "New Approaches to the Study of Women"<sup>24</sup> and "Placing Women in History"<sup>25</sup>, note the need to differentiate women in history into more specifically defined groups, and to distinguish among their economic, family, and political-legal status as well as their class position. Other areas to be distinguished include: the need to consider the gap between myth and reality with respect to the alleged "place" and actual position of women in any given time or location; the need to devise new scales of measurement appropriate to evaluate women's achievements; the need to examine whether women have wielded previously unrecognized forms of power; and the need to analyze the patterns and significance of changes in women's role over time.

For these reasons I focused on several issues mentioned by my initial population of immigrant women in their oral histories. These issues include: the legal status of the women in Italy prior to their emigration; the sojourners' experiences (which became an intricate part of the first generations' definition of gender-role); their definitions of work; their settlement house experiences (which were particularly significant to the women); and their experiences of success, guilt, respect, loyalty and tradition.

Although there was specificity of purpose built into my research design, I allowed my respondents to initiate certain general areas of concentration because I wish this work to reflect areas of concern that would otherwise be transparent to this observer.

Every social science - or better every well considered study - requires an historic scope of conception and a full use of history...<sup>26</sup>

Hilda Smith argues strongly for the feminist approach to women's studies in "Feminism and Methodology of Women's History".<sup>27</sup> Smith states the main basis for the separate study of women is the uniqueness of their past. She defines feminism as a:

...view of women as a distinct sociological group for which there are established patterns of behavior, special legal and legislative restrictions, and customarily defined roles.<sup>28</sup>

Her article suggests that there is a feminist approach which should influence methodology and interpretation of historical data, ranging from the search of sources and source material to the analyses of available theories. This rationale supports the selection process of my main research themes.

I began the depth interviews with questions focusing on family, community, religion, education, work and the social order. However, sections of the initial interview were unstructured to afford each respondent an opportunity to discuss whatever topics she felt were significant or important. By monitoring the unsolicited comments, I was able to take their most popular themes and incorporate them into the research.

As the interviews progressed, the questioning became more structured, extensive and detailed. The total research, nonetheless, is shaped by the topics which were clearly of concern to my respondents.

Juliet Mitchell's article, "Women: The Longest Revolution"<sup>29</sup> also confirms the approach that I use in the study of Italian American women. Mitchell, like Lerner, rejects the ideal of women as an undifferentiated whole and proposes that women be analyzed as a complex unity composed of a number of different elements appearing in varying combinations. The key elements, Mitchell argues, are: production; reproduction; sexuality; and socialization of children. When analyzing women, all four tasks must be taken into account.

My respondents confirm Mitchell's categories through their aggressive discussions concerning their: work; wife/mother roles; men; and their parents and children.

Sheila Ryan Johansson, in "Herstory as History: A New Field or Another Fad?"<sup>30</sup>, places considerable emphasis on the influences of attitudes, values and ideologies, as well as the customarily defined roles and status of women. Johansson, like Mitchell, includes production, reproduction, sexuality and socialization among the key conditions to be analyzed when assessing women. She emphasizes the need to recognize changing patterns over time and the modes through which women exercise power, influence and creativity. Collectively, women have a distinct impact of the direction of social change.

The nature of long-term social change and community evolution cannot be truly understood until the perspective of women becomes an intricate part of the interpretation process.<sup>31</sup> My method for including this perspective included analyzing three generations of women. Any attempt to unravel the mysteries of the past or to outline future possibilities would be futile, or at the very least incomplete, without the perspective of women,<sup>32</sup> particularly Italian American women.

### The Sample Population

Gaining Rapport: Participant Observation. I am a third

generation Italian American who has experienced the childhood socialization and adult participation in the networking typical of my ethnic group. Through these personal involvements I developed a subliminal insight and empathy that manifested itself to my respondents and minimized the non-response bias that might have handicapped an 'outsider'.

Additionally, my research was enhanced by a fortuitous event. I was pregnant during the initial interviews with the first generation group. Being a mother-to-be further solidified my access to these immigrant women. To them, the mother-to-be condition demanded a special reverence which overshadowed the negative features associated with the labels social scientist and stranger. These labels translate into distrust for the Italian American first generation women that would have put a filter between their thoughts and their responses. Instead, the combination of my heritage and my 'condition' created the ideal environment for my methodology that allowed me to collect data that would otherwise have been unretrievable.

After my child was born I took him to most of the interviews with this group and further solidified my relationship with these women who started thinking of me in terms of granddaughter. I believe my respondents became open and honest because I fit into their expectations of the Italian American female. They also felt that I was part of their "in-group".

The Sampling: Defined. A sample is a smaller representation of a larger whole. Sampling provides the opportunity to conduct scientific inquiry while maximizing two scarce resources, time and money. Sampling makes it possible to manage limited resources while conducting an investigation adequate to generate a sound data base.

My in-depth, three generation analysis on the feminine perspective of Italian Americans would not have been possible without sampling. In order to use sampling, however, five considerations had to be resolved:

- 1) sample type,
- 2) population profile,
- 3) sample size,
- 4) representativeness of sample population to whole population, and
- 5) scope and limitations.

Sample Types: Stratified Sample and Judgment Sample. If a population is made up of fairly uniform parts or strata, the precision of sample results can be improved by stratification. That is, the population is first broken down into strata, such that the elements within each stratum are more alike than the elements of the population as a whole. Then, an assigned part of the sample is drawn from each stratum either by random selection or strict adherence to a specific profile. In either case, stratification is the first step, always used in

conjunction with another procedure. The other procedure used in this study is Judgment Sampling.

As indicated, the strata should be defined so that the significant elements within a stratum are more uniform than they are for the population as a whole. For example, in a study of household incomes a city can be divided into high- and low-income areas so that income varies less within each area than it does in the city as a whole. Similarly, in a study of ethnicity a population can be divided by country of origin, emigration date, and settlement location so that traditions and customs vary less within each population than it does within the country as a whole.

Stratified Sampling is useful for reducing the sampling error. As an extreme example of how stratification reduces this kind of error, consider the following. A city has only two ethnic groups, each group having only one wage rate. If we were to take a simple random sample of people in the city and analyze wages, we would have an estimate and some sampling error associated with the estimate. However, if we were able to isolate the groups into two strata, we could then take a sample of only one person from each stratum, and we would have no sampling error. We would know exactly the wages of each ethnic group.

While the above example is artificial, it does illustrate the fact that by taking homogeneous groups and sampling

separately from each group, we can gain some accuracy in sampling. A second advantage of stratification is that it gives us separate estimates for parts of the population.

Stratification should therefore be applied to heterogeneous populations, such as humans, since people can be divided into fairly uniform strata, which for the purposes of this study were by sex, country of birth, emigration date, settlement location, personal availability and ethnic identification.

Stratified Sampling was most useful in identifying the respondents involved in the oral history phase of my research. These respondents provided a link to many second and third generation candidates for the follow-up interviews. Judgment Sampling was required to isolate the appropriate follow-up respondents.

Population Profile. The population profile is the composite of variables selected to identify the strata to be studied. Specific to this research, the profile included:

- a) female,
- b) southern Italian from Italy,
- c) emigrated to the United States between 1880 and 1925,
- d) continuous residence in the Belmont area of Bronx, N.Y.,
- e) available to personally participate in oral history interviews, and
- f) identifies self as Italian American.

Sample Size. Due to the nature of the research, the sample

size was not a predetermined variable, but rather a function of the population as it existed in 1979 when the study began.

An exhaustive search of the Belmont area was undertaken to ascertain the number of candidates that meet all the criteria enumerated in the Population Profile section. The search began by contacting major Belmont community organizations, such as churches and senior citizens' groups, merchant associations and social clubs, was followed-up with contacting individual members of these organizations and concluded after contact was made with other individual residents, store owners and government agency personnel in the area.

The immediate result of this effort was the identification and isolation of seventy-six usable candidates for the initial oral history interview phase.

The subsequent expansion of the sample population was determined by these seventy-six respondents. The total sample size of this study is a function of their lives and can be summarized as follows:

- a) 76 first-generation respondents covering
- b) 38 total families consisting of
- c) 75 second-generation respondents and
- d) 83 third-generation respondents, yielding a total population of
- e) 234 Italian American women (not including miscellaneous interviews with 21 fourth-generation females).

Representativeness: Sample vs Whole. Due to careful adherence to the predetermined population profile criteria, these immigrants, as a core group, provided data representative of southern Italian migrants and their descendents.

In addition to the respondents, the Belmont area itself is a representative Italian immigrant depository. There is a spatially maintained Italian American ethnic atmosphere in this area. The forum of Italian American educators, the Italian American Merchants' Association, the Italian American social clubs, the Catholic Church and special purpose coalitions are active in the community. Recently, the community opened the Fermi Library which is chartered to collect and preserve Italian American material for use by future generations.

Scope and Limitations. This study is seeking to expand the body of knowledge about the history of women in America. Specifically, the experiences of Italian American women are investigated by allowing the women themselves an opportunity to participate. As such, perceptions are a fundamental building block in the conceptual framework of this research. As a consequence of various experiences, traditions and customs, or by way of various inference processes, these women have learned or formed a number of beliefs concerning their collective influence and impact in America.

This study is limited in scope because it can only describe the belief systems and experiences of the respondents unique to

this inquiry. Another limiting factor is the number of women who meet the population profile criteria. These inherent limitations must be added to the limits imposed by sample bias (Belmont vs any other depository), interview unreliability and non-response. Any speculations or generalizations beyond this sample must be viewed simply as inference.

Demographic Factors from the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries. In order to fully understand what has been said above, it is important to outline the demographic history that directly relates to my respondents' immigration.

Four different periods of exodus can be identified when studying the migration patterns of Italians who came to the United States.

First, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, small numbers of Italians came to the United States. These populations were scarcely visible in the America and did not identify themselves with the masses of Southern Italians who came later.

The second period, beginning in the 1870's, was the beginning of a mass migration flow from southern Italy that lasted for approximately fifty years. In 1860 there were only 9,231 Italians in the United States; by 1904 there were 741,986. During the peak period, 1901-1914, the yearly average was 616,000. By 1910, the New York Italian-born population reached 340,770. In this second immigration period, the typical

Italian immigrant was a young, healthy male. Few elderly males and fewer women arrived during this period. The number of males during this period was three times greater than that of the female Italian immigrants. These Italians were from Abruzzi, Calabria, Basilicata, Naples and Sicily.

The unbalanced sex ratio and youthful majority characterized the second wave and are integral elements of the evolving Italian social order. The sojourners' impact, gender roles, work and family structure are related to these elements.

The third period, beginning in 1926, is characterized by strict immigration quotas imposed by the United States government. Consequently, the flow of Italian immigrants during this period decreased significantly.

The fourth period is marked by the 1965 Immigration Act which substituted national origin quotas with a new set of preferences. This allowed new immigrants the opportunity to join their close relatives already residing in the United States. The newer immigrants are different from the rural peasant who entered at the turn of the century. The recent immigrant is more likely to be better educated, possessing a specific skill, occupation or profession.

The focus of this research is on those Italians who arrived in the United States during the second wave of immigration. However, because these people were affected by those arriving during other periods, reference will be made to them when appropriate.

The Sampling Stages. The original sample includes seventy-six women who came to New York City at the turn of the century and who have maintained continuous residence within the Belmont community of the Bronx. I visited the senior clubs, church organizations and social associations for names of people who emigrated from Italy and who lived in the community for at least fifty years. This enabled me to identify, isolate and interview seventy-six women who arrived between 1880 and 1925.

These respondents provided information which was used to design the second and third generation sample groups. The husbands, children, grandchildren, other relatives, friends and associates of their extended families comprised the potential target audience for my research.

This first phase led me to thirty-eight family groups living in the New York metropolitan area, including: New York City, Westchester County, New Jersey, and Long Island. Subsequent to my initial sampling there have been several relocations, primarily to Florida. Interestingly, this movement within the United States provides additional insight into the Italian American clustering patterns, the management of the clan, and the real decision-making power of the women.

Within the second generation group, the clustering pattern is characterized by the close proximity of the female siblings. The DeM family provides a typical example. The four daughters of that family each moved from the Belmont area but bought homes

within a five mile radius of each other on Long Island. The three sons also moved from the Belmont area, but lived in areas closer to their wives' sisters. All the children, however, were less than an hour away from their mother who still resides in the Belmont community. Two of the granddaughters in this family who did not buy homes near their mother live near their uncle. This clustering pattern is also characteristic of the retiring second-generation Florida bound group.

I selected Stratified Sampling and Judgment Sampling techniques because they support the research designed to identify specific people within the total New York City population and then sub-stratify within that group's family network. The first generation, or core respondents, were predetermined by the Population Profile criteria. The second and third generation descendents of these people inherited their qualifications, but due to the size of the group and varied locations of individual members I had to use judgment in the selection process.

The third-generation group that I selected were the relatives and friends of my second-generation sample. This Judgment Sample group can only suggest or indicate conclusions, in general descriptive, qualitative terms. Consequently, I will not use the statistical testing procedures because sampling errors and biases cannot be computed. Instead, my report contains summaries of the data collected, using statistical

tables when available from census material or state and municipal statistics.

These sampling techniques enhanced understanding 'the making and unmaking of the myth of the Italian American women' because they provided a setting conducive to analyzing it through the experiences, expectations and perceptions of the subjects themselves. In order to fully focus through these women's perceptions, I had to include their significant others' perceptions of the Italian American reality. The use of Judgment Sampling allowed me to select the appropriate others throughout the three generations.

Since 1979, I participated in many ceremonies, family rituals, and traditional ethnic family events, e.g. family re-unions, christenings, communions, confirmations, weddings, birthdays, feasts, holiday celebrations, graduations, wedding anniversaries and funerals. These participant observations provided the opportunity to witness the 'real world', both as my respondents described it and as I viewed it. As I interviewed the different generations, I became aware that the strong community of spirit was replacing the disappearing spatial community (of Belmont). I am still enjoying friendships and relationships with most of the thirty-eight families featured in this research.

Specific Details of Sample. I began the Belmont community field work began in January of 1979 by interviewing the

first-generation women. I was assisted by a colleague, a second-generation female, who teaches Italian language and Italian American history at the college level. Eleven of the immigrant women, although living in Belmont since the 1920's, could not speak English. My colleague served as translator during these interviews.

My colleague was a asset in another way. This 'older women' was seen as confirmation that "...what I say will be understood by one who has lived longer" according to one eighty-seven year old first-generation respondent.

Data Collection. Each of the initial interviews lasted between three to four and one half hours. All were conducted face to face in the Belmont community.

Second and third-generation interviews lasted between one hour to five hours. Most interviews were conducted face to face, however, some were conducted by telephone.

A total of two hundred and fifty five people were contacted, of which two hundred and thirty four were either first, second or third generation Italian Americans.

Most people were interviewed only once, but many were contacted regularly between 1979 to 1985. There were many phone conversations and personal meetings at the aforementioned family gatherings. As participant observer at these latter functions, I added another methodology which greatly enhanced my finding. These gatherings are defined truly important by my respondents.

Footnotes for Chapter One: Images and Voices

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<sup>26</sup>C.W. Mills, The Sociological Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959) p. 45.

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## Chapter Two

### Historical Perspective:

#### The Law, the Sojourner, and the Settlement House

##### Overview

My family called Italy "the other side". The phrase was part of their Americanization. My grandparents came to New York a little after 1900. My mother's parents came from Sicily and my father's family was Neapolitan. It took many years before I would understand that difference, and the effect of American life on their values...and mine.  
(a 44 year old third-generation woman)

In order to fully understand how and why Italian Americans related to social order in the 'new world', it is beneficial to review relevant historical experiences through the perceptions of those who participated in them.

The historical data relevant to this research is:

- a) the pre-emigration position of women in Italy,
- b) the Italian feminist movement,
- c) prostitution, and

d) union activism.

The first-generation respondents spoke about these topics and felt they were relevant to their lives. The second- and third-generation were also affected vis a vis the childhood socialization process. Their roots helped shape their views.

This chapter reviews the history behind each of these experiences as well as their collective impact as manifested through the law, the sojourner and the settlement house.

(A) Social Class in Italy. In nineteenth century Italy, under the Civil Code of 1865, women were differentiated according to their age and relationship with men. Stratification was based on age and marital status thereby creating a situation where peasant women (in Sicily) and aristocratic matrons (in Milan) had the same legal rights, duties and disabilities. This legal situation remained unchanged for many years, but some change did occur. For example, in 1919 women gained property rights, including control over their own earnings, and access to some legal positions.

Turn of the Century Status in Southern Italy and Sicily. According to my respondents, ownership, particularly property ownership, and occupation were the primary determinants of social hierarchy in the southern Italian towns and Sicilian agrotowns. People who owned something, even if it was only a mule, were considered "padrone". "Padrone", a label denoting

a degree of status, was also ascribed to those who worked "as they pleased", e.g., independent artisans, professionals and entrepreneurs. This simple distinction produced a socio-economic hierarch elevating the landowners' status over the non-owner, the renter over the manual worker, and among workers, the independent artisan over those doing dirty and dependent work.

The Italian society was thus divided into : the landowning "rentier" class (also referred to as "signuri", "cavalieri", "galantuomi", or "cappedi"); the merchants (who were considered "clever people to be approached cautiously"); the artisans (who were respected as masters, "mastrus"); the land-owning peasants (sometimes called "burgisi")<sup>1</sup>; and the peasants (who owned no land and performed dependent work).

By contrast, the official designations according to the government, were more complex.<sup>2</sup> For example, merchants were carefully categorized by the products they sold, artisans was classified according to the products they made, and peasants according to their contractual relations to the land.

The categories were detailed and specific. Some of the breakdowns were: "gabelotti", "burgisi", "enfiteuti", "rentier", "giornalieri", "annoloti", "pastori", "fattori", "massarioti", "guardie campestre", "annoloti", and "civile". Each of these labels was a way to stratify workers according to their status as well as job. For example, "civile" meant that the person was

a landowner not to be confused with an "uncivilized" peasant.<sup>3</sup>

The civil records listed women's occupations as: weavers, servants, tailoresses, needleworkers, peasants, spinsters, midwives, and workers. In Sicily, despite the legal perspective, census-takers differentiated women using the sex-specific labels "casalinga" for the lower class females and "civile" for the wives and daughters of "rentier" men.<sup>4</sup>

Italian Women Gain the Right to Vote. In 1945, all adult women were finally allowed to vote, and in 1975 fundamental family law reforms, originally initiated in the 1860's, were finally enacted. These reforms were intended to transform the power relations of the sexes in marriage. Power was the domain of the men, and could only be gained by women through manipulation. It was necessary, according to many of my respondents, for girls to learn early how to manipulate men. Only through this manipulation of their fathers, husbands, sons, uncles, cousins, godfathers, grandfathers, grandsons or nephews could a woman get what she wanted.

Legislation was on the side of the men, and everywhere in nineteenth century Italy the principle of male domination 'officially' prevailed. The law did not reveal, however, the amount of family power unofficially held by the women as a result of skillfull manipulation. They did govern exceptional circumstances like seduction or marital separation, and in general, delineated the framework of coercion within which women

lived. As such, they prompted the first feminist protest in unified Italy which was made in the name of all women.<sup>5</sup>

The Civil Code of 1865: Italian Law and Women. The Civil Code of 1865 tried to make everyone equal under the law by ignoring class distinctions and declaring gender equality.<sup>6</sup> These 'equalities' were manifested through equal rights to inheritance by daughters as well as sons. Also, male and female minors were given the same legal position. Both were considered adults at twenty-one and were thereafter equally free to live wherever they chose, engage in commerce, own and manage property, make wills, and give and accept gifts.

Total equality did not result. Women were barred from political and administrative suffrage. They could not hold any public office, or any position representing the authority of the civil state. Women could not be arbitrators, notaries, or even witnesses to legal acts. They could not become lawyers, judges, or even family officials, e.g., guardians, except to blood relatives.<sup>7</sup>

Marital Authorization and the Law in Italy. Upon marriage, the restricted equality of women declined further. Women had to assume their husbands' name, take on their citizenship, and work in their house. Women not only remained inferior to men after marriage, they actually assumed new liabilities .

Although married women could own, inherit and bequeath property independently, acts behind the simple administration of

their own property required their husbands' consent under provisions called "the marital authorization". In effect, these articles made married women minors under their husbands' guardianship.

One of my respondents told me that a woman could not give her own property to her children without her husband's consent. This legal position meant that a woman could not act independently of her husband to provide a dowry for her daughter in a society where doweries were extremely important.

Legally, both parents had to consent to the marriage of a daughter under twenty-one or a son under twenty-five, but in the case of parental disagreement, the father's will prevailed. These marital restrictions added economic force to the power of men.

Regional Differences and the Civil Code. There was an important regional difference in the way Italian women experienced the Civil Code of 1865. Women in the northern provinces actually lost rights they had enjoyed under the previous Austrian domination. Lombard and Venetian women had been free from the marital authorization and, along with Tuscan women, had exercised administrative suffrage. These freedoms were curtailed by the codification in 1865. In the ensuing decades, the northern women struggled not only to advance all women's rights but also to recoup their losses.<sup>8</sup>

Familial Authority and the Civil Code. Married women

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gained a important symbolic victory in 1865 regarding authority over their children. The Code admitted mothers to the "patria potesta", which was sanctioned familial authority that included power to manage the children's property and determine who they would marry. This power, however, was only extended to a mother if the father deserted the family, went to rprison for more than one year, or emigrated.

Admission to this previously sacrosanct male preserve meant that a woman could act as legal head of the family. Since "patria potesta" was considered a public office, access to it became a major argument for more public rights for women.

Although women gained some legal authority under the circumstances leading to "patria potesta", it was only in situations that would not conflict with the husbands' authority. These circumstances did not amount to gender equality before the law nor did they amount to a shared goverenance of the family for women in any class in Italy.

My respondants discussed the position of their mothers within this context. In fact, some felt that these gender inequalities helped to ignite the women's nationalist fervor and gender consciousness in the Risorgimento into a feminist blaze.

Italian Unification and the Civil Code of 1865. All feminists of the 1860's and 1870's were described by my first-generation respondents as having been involved in the struggle for Italian unification. They believed that many had

suffered exile and economic deprivation for the Italian cause. The nineteenth century feminists were seen as women who expected the unified state to be more than just a political regime for the privileged. They were also seen as a group more interested in feminine consciousness than national revolutionary issues.

The unification struggle disrupted traditional order and encouraged a revolution of attitudes and roles. Those who turned their hopes to the new Civil Code were disappointed. As a result, the new Civil Code, which governed family relationships and touched on all women's experiences regardless of region or class, became a target of feminist reformers concerned with women of all classes in Italy.

(B) The Italian Feminist Movement. The first feminist assault on legal inequality in the unified state was made in Anna Maria Mozzoni's *Women and Her Social Relationships* (*La donna suoi rapporti sociali*), published in 1864, "on the occasion of the revision of the Italian Civil Code".<sup>9</sup>

Mozzoni, a pre-eminent and internationally known nineteenth century feminist, concentrated her early efforts on legal reform. Without class distinction, Mozzoni believed that women were "oppressed by institutions" of society, virtually equated with minors and incompetents. She believed that, "A legal husband was, for a woman, intellectual castration, perpetual minority, and the annihilation of her personality".<sup>10</sup>

Some of my respondents echoed this when explaining the condition of women in Italian society during their mothers' generation. With regard to children, a first-generation respondent continued, "...the legitimate mother did not exist...legal paternity was the first reason for women's slavery...man's domination was women's servitude".

Further, legal subjection in the family led to low status in Italian society, low wages and prostitution. The legally sanctioned male absolutism also buttressed tyranny in the Italian political structures. During this time, women's emancipation became a fundamental social issue involving the entire social and political structure in Italy.

Mozzoni's focus on family law revisions was echoed by the Neopolitan moderate, Aurelia Cimino Folliero de Luna who, in 1872, began publishing a journal dedicated to legal reform in Florence.<sup>11</sup> Legal reform was stressed as essential to improving other aspects of women's lives, such as education and economic status. Folliero was a constitutional monarchist, not a democrat, who claimed a sisterhood for all women in family life. Through their work and morality, women in all classes demonstrated their capacity for, and entitlement to, equality in the family.

The belief that all family authority belonged to the fathers made women "oppressed drudges" or "frivolous butterflies" according to one of my first-generation

respondents. By keeping women subservient to men and denying their human dignity, society would miss the contributions of responsible women.

Folliero proposed that women of all classes and regions form associations to : help women mistreated by their husbands; advise parliament on legislation affecting women; actively generate interest in their own gender. In summing up, Folliero tried to separate herself from the most radical feminists while still attacking the very basis of patriarchy, i.e., women's legal, economic, and political subjection in the family.

The More Radical Italian Feminists. By the end of the nineteenth century, more radical feminists joined the legal and social reform efforts. Their writings were published in the pages of La Donna, the leading Italian feminist periodical published regularly from 1868 to 1892 by Gulaberta Alaide Beccari. La Donna emphasized the sisterhood of women in all classes, a sisterhood often posited on women's material role in society. La Donna also supported efforts for family law reform in the 1870's. When it declared its all out campaign against government licensed prostitution in Italy in 1878, Beccari wrote, "...in the degradation of one of our sisters, do we not see signaled our own?".<sup>12</sup>

Some of my respondents recalled hearing their mothers talk about stories printed in La Donna, stories about women

victimized by unconvicted rapists, bullied by employers and deceived by fiances.

Divorce and Separation. The problem of divorce legislation was very important to women of all classes in Italy. Contrary to the reformers writing in the feminist publication La Missione della Donna who opposed divorce as a threat to the province of women, other feminists defended divorce as a women's right. One of my respondents, repeating a story originally told by her mother, agrees with the latter point of view:

...the Agnoletti case of 1872 involved a man who married a young woman for her money, squandered her patrimony, and then murdered her small son. Agnoletti was sentenced to life at hard labor. However, without divorce, his innocent wife remained his victim. As long as he lived, even though in prison, she was denied any hope of re-marrying and forming a new family.

(an 81 year old first-generation woman)

Cases like this dramatically illustrate the plight of the Italian women of that era. Between January 1, 1866 and December 31, 1879 there were 11,431 Italian couples involved in formal separation proceedings, a figure that increased by 817 couples per year for the next several years. More than half of the women (6,035) and nearly half of the men (5,438) were listed as "nullatenente" (propertyless), and about one-third of the women (4,062) were listed without a profession, trade or occupation.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, the women were much more likely than the men to seek legal separation.

The typical profile of these cases indicate that legal separations were often a women's only recourse against physically abusive husbands, and that considerations of personal safety for themselves and their children outweighed economic considerations.

Nearly ninety percent of the separation proceedings between 1866-1879 were initiated by the women, a figure that indicates the importance of this issue to women. The most frequently cited cause specified was "...excessive cruelties", accounting for an average of 199 cases per year. This was followed by "...threats and insults" which involved about 120 cases per year. An average of 218 cases were ascribed to "...unspecific causes".<sup>14</sup> Thus, the implication of physical abuse existed in the two largest categories. All of this seemed to matter very little to the men because they had so much power and licence in marriage during those year.

Adultry. The profound difference in the position of men and women under the law in late nineteenth century Italy was underscored in the definition of adultery. For married women, it meant any sexual encounter with a man other than her husband. For a man, it was more a matter of discretion than fidelity. A man was permitted a concubine as long the relationship was discrete and in so doing maintained his legal control over the children, family wealth, his wife's wages, her dowry property and any separate property she owned. But, if a woman could win

a legal separation as a result of her husband's indiscretions, she could escape the marital authorization and possibly gain control over her children.<sup>15</sup>

Legal Divorce and Separation. Legal divorce and separation were important women's issues at the end of the nineteenth century in Italy. Divorce was finally legalized in 1970 and then challenged in a national referendum in 1974.<sup>16</sup> A majority of Italian women voted to sustain the divorce law.

Debate centered on divorce after a period of extended separation. The divorce law took so long to pass because, as one respondent suggested, many of the "tough" women who may have been concerned about women's issues emigrated at the turn of the century. Her view alters the image that all immigrating women from Italy were under their husbands' control.. Indeed, several of my respondents came from homes filled with mothers, aunts and grandmothers committed to feminist issues.

Legal Gains for Italian Woman. During the period of mass migration to America, the women in Italy were legally subordinated to men's authority in the family and to men's interests in extramarital relations. Reform efforts that focused on such issues as seduction and paternity suits constantly failed.

In the 1890's, despite the rhetoric that denied women public office, legislators did admit some women to boards of directors of public charities and boards of arbitration in

factories. Yet, it took until the 1970's before allowing a seduced girl the right to sue for child support or a betrayed wife the right to break all ties with her adulterous husband.<sup>17</sup>

Such legal oppression intensified women's sense of gender identification. Many of the first-generation respondents were aware of their low status as women in Italy and taught their Italian American daughters to be concerned for women's issues and women's rights.

Changes in Italy. The feminist efforts launched in the 1860's to change the legal framework of patriarchy was the precipitating factor in heightened female consciousness. By the end of the 1870's many feminists had move to suffrage and socialism, but maintained a primary focus on family related issues. This stimulated a sense of sisterhood that transcended class differences.

Thus, as a result of women's activism combined with minor legal reforms, changing economic conditions and political upheavals, the social relations of the sexes changed gradually from the nineteenth to twentieth century. As one first-generation woman told me, she and her fellow migrants left a common legacy for both liberal and socialist feminists in Italy. It was now up to them to continue the fight that began so long ago and still had so far to go...farther than she expected to see in her lifetime.

(C) Prostitution. At the time of the mass migration, many women lived in a class system and had class specific concerns. This was particularly true of the Italian urban centers. Socioeconomic levels determined the opportunities available to women in these centers. These opportunities, limited, in general for women, were particularly limited for single women and the women in the lower classes

The populated areas, especially in the south, had emigration as a safety valve for families and single men, but not for women. As a result of this limited economic opportunity, in both the rural and urban areas, a conducive environment for prostitution was established.

The Single Italian Women. Single Italian women looked for work in Switzerland, Germany and France, but most migrated no farther than the nearest city in Italy.<sup>18</sup> In those cities, the slow pace of industrialization meant that factory jobs were scarce and mostly occupied by men.

The textile industries employed large numbers of women, but after 1900, with the decline in textile trade, women lost much of the ground they had conquered in this industrial sector. Consequently, the majority of women worked as domestics or did piecework, such as dressmaking, at home. Either jobless or unable to live on the wages paid for non-factory labor, many women turned to prostitution.

Pregnancy. Pregnancy was the natural occupational hazard

of prostitution, but also was result of other occupations as some single girls were seduced into favors for the employer of her 'much needed job'. Whatever the reason, an unmarried pregnancy meant being forced out of the job market and marked as an immoral. Even if allowed back into a legitimate job, such as domestic, these women could rarely earn enough to support two people. Therefore, any woman with dependents, whether children, siblings, or aging parents, had few alternatives in the Italian society at the turn of the century. As a result, some turned to prostitution in hopes of increasing their incomes.

Many people were alarmed by the growing number and the visibility of these so-called "...dangerous" classes of women which engulfed the Italian cities during the period of mass migration. Three first-generation Italian Americans from the northern part of Italy told me that they found these prostitutes to be a threat to morality, order and the public health. One seventy-eight year old woman from Toscana said that in terms of morality:

...public solicitation by streetwalkers offended [bourgeois] sensibilities and threatened to destroy family life through corruption of husbands, or worse, children. Criminologists such as Cesar Lombroso analyzed the born

prostitute as:

...not only physically degenerate, but lacking the moral sense and intellect necessary to control her passion.<sup>19</sup>

These opinions led to the demands by some urban Italians to remove the prostitutes from the public streets. Additionally, the Italian police defined illegal brothels and streetwalking as potential sources of crime and disorder. Although attempts were made, clandestine prostitution made it impossible for the police to achieve their aim of watching and controlling the prostitutes' movements and activities.

Prostitutes, Public Health and Italian Society at the Turn of the Century. In the late nineteenth century syphilis, which was associated with the prostitutes, posed a grave health problem for the Italian society.

This problem became a racial, class and gender issue because syphilis was considered to be the dreaded enemy capable of debilitating the population of an entire nation.

Urban Italian officials conducted vigorous campaigns against the diffusion of syphilis because they believed it was the only way to save their nation from physical and mental decadence. In fact, the effects of venereal disease on the military was the greatest fear. Nonetheless, most men in the administrative ranks of national government believed that prostitution could not, and should not, be eliminated from Italian society.

According to one popular argument, prostitution actually buttressed the family by providing a sexual safety valve for single men who might otherwise try to seduce the honest women of the higher classes.<sup>20</sup>

In order to satisfy male sexual demands, prevent venereal disease, and prevent public immorality and disorder, Prime Minister Camillo di Cavour along with other local officials, decided to legalize and regulate prostitution.

The brothel became an instrument of social control akin to a nineteenth century prison. There the prostitutes could be kept under close surveillance and separated from the rest of the community. They were required to register with the local police and to inform officials of any address change or any absence from the brothel for more than three days. Until 1888 they were also required to carry a special passport identifying their occupation.<sup>21</sup>

To limit the diffusion of venereal disease, prostitutes were examined twice each week and sent to a special hospital, by force if necessary, if infected. This system of surveillance was controlled by two departments within the Ministry of Interior: the Division of Public Security and the Division of Public Health.

Although the high rate of illiteracy precluded much written testimony, there is evidence that the non-cooperation with the law by the prostitutes was the result of their opposition to the regulation system. Police and government doctors estimated that only one-tenth of all practicing prostitutes were willing to participate in a system administered by the police.<sup>22</sup>

I was told stories by the respondents about how the police often abused their powers:

the police would follow women...they would even register a woman as a prostitute even if she wasn't one...usually only the poor women would be followed...and only the poor were registered.

This 83 year old first-generation respondent felt that the lower class women were unnecessarily harassed by the police in the Italian cities, oftentimes without even having proof of prostitution.

The registration of prostitutes was intended to benefit the community by minimizing disease through the twice weekly inspections. The guarantee of good health by the government, however, held little or no attraction for a class not yet acquainted with modern medicine and lacking public health consciousness. In fact, many women, especially in the south, trusted only witches or home remedies and avoided any encounters with trained medical people.

Female Activism. Unlike the prostitutes, the late nineteenth century feminists were most often from the middle and upper classes, characterized by wealth and leisure. With the influx of cheap domestic labor into the cities, the burden of heavy and time consuming household chores diminished for the "signora", the lady of the house, and having a 'wife of leisure' became a status symbol.

The available Italian records, and information from my respondents, indicate that only a minuscule number of upper class women worked in paying jobs such as clerk, typist, or

professional.<sup>23</sup> The only paying occupation open to women who wanted to maintain the status symbol image, according to the respondents, was teaching. Often making less than domestics or factory workers, however, the movement was frequently the other way with teachers escaping into marriage.

Within the family:

the wife was the "angelo del focolare" (angel of the hearth)...and she as the teacher of moral and religious values to her children.  
(an 81 year old first-generation woman from Naples)

This respondent was a teacher in her younger days in Italy, but stated that if a mother/wife spent any time outside the home it was usually doing charity work in the church organizations such as the Congregazioni della Carita or the Catholic Action Society.

Italian Feminist Organizations. In the 1890's, a small group of women, burdened with leisure time and interested in social issues, founded bourgeois feminist organizations. These dissident women modeled their clubs after those in Britain and the United States where women had been active for decades.

Major Italian feminist groups included: the Unione, founded in 1891; the Italian branch of the International Council of Women, affiliated in 1900; and the more radical Comitato Nazionale pro Suffragio Femminile, founded in 1906.<sup>24</sup>

Suffrage was not the primary demand of the Italian feminist as it was with her American counterpart. Since a large

proportion of men could not vote until 1913, Italian feminist has less ground than American or British feminists regarding the role of sexism and their disenfranchisement. More importantly, the conservative attitudes of most Italian feminists led them to focus on education, civil rights and welfare projects.

Typical of Italian feminists, Gabriella Spolleti spoke in 1908 at the International Conference of the International Council of Women, promising:

"...that women would not forget their greatest glory, motherhood and the education of men...rather than pursuing the grotesque idea of replacing men in their roles...women were ... to discuss matters which primarily were in the female sphere...<sup>25</sup>

This statement precluded prostitution as an issue for feminists because in Italy prostitution was defined as a moral and physical family issue -- and family was the men's domain.

Organizing Women's Issues in Italy. As early as 1875, prior to the establishment of the major bourgeois feminist organizations, Josephine Butler visited Italy to gather supporters for her British Continental and General Federation for the Abolition of Regulated prostitutes.<sup>26</sup>

Although the earliest members of the Italian branch were men, Butler began to arouse interest among the women who until then had been discouraged from thinking about, let alone debating, sex related issues. Basically, she attacked the regulating system on two fronts, one dealing with the treatment

of the prostitutes and the other with the treatment of their customers.

She attacked the method by which police surveillance and forced medical examinations denied the prostitutes certain basic civil rights. By forcing prostitutes to regularly check in with police and health authorities they became second-class citizens in a society supposedly dedicated to equality of all before the law.

Secondly, she defined the treatment of prostitutes in terms of sexual harrassment because of the absence of constraints on the actions of the men. In effect, the state blamed and punished only women for a practice in which men were equally involved.

The Organized Italian Feminists Against Prostitution.

During the era of mass migration there were few opportunities for women in Italy to earn a living, making prostitution a viable economic option for some. Consequently, when the Italian feminists finally began to organize, they made prostitution a prime target for their charity and reform efforts.

The larger organizations established special task forces to discuss this problem and determine the proper feminist response. For example, the Italian affiliate of the International Council of Women responded by labeling one of its eight sections "Morality and the White Slave Trade."<sup>27</sup>

In 1910, a group of Milanese women founded a committee to

fight the white slave trade, an effort that extended to other major Italian cities. In addition to lobbying for the repeal of the regulation law, this group sought to affirm "...the dignity of women and the integrity of their civil rights" by diminishing the ranks of the degrading profession.<sup>28</sup>

Like other women's groups, including Catholic Charities, they set up institutions to rehabilitate the already fallen women. They emphasized the prevention of prostitution through protective legislation for youth. Some of their other activities included efforts to improve orphanages, and to establish social dormitories and placement offices for young girls migrating to the Italian cities.

Police Bureaucracy and the Feminists in Italy. In the late nineteenth century the police solution to the problem of prostitution was limited to the surveillance of prostitutes and control of existing brothels.

The Italian feminists, like those in the United States, presented a more progressive solution focusing on the environment, not the prostitute. They rejected the argument that innate sinfulness caused deviance and crime and proposed that preventive measures be established to deal with eliminating the environments that fostered crime and vice.

Italian Feminist Perspective on Public Policy. The public policy regarding prostitution in late nineteenth century Italy was conspicuous by its silence. To counter this, the feminists

focused on child development and awareness. They promoted sex education as a method by which to enlighten the youth about the physical and moral dangers of prostitution.

Although the sex education was to stress moral uplifting, their proposal that schools break, what they had termed, the "conspiracy of silence" was extremely radical in Catholic Italy.<sup>29</sup> Believing that the moral progress of civilized society rested on the prevention of prostitution, feminists called on the government to adopt their programs and integrate their institutions of rehabilitation and prevention into the Ministry of Interior.

Poverty and the Italian Women. Poverty eclipsed morality in the struggle for survival in Italian cities at the turn of the century.

The feminists acknowledged that poverty was the primary cause of prostitution, yet failed to produce a radical criticism of the economic structure that caused the poverty. Although some of their ideas were economically motivated, their demands for equal wages and employment opportunities concentrated on professional jobs attractive to women in the middle and upper classes.

Politically conscious women in the lower socioeconomic levels, therefore, tended to join the Socialist Party<sup>30</sup>, which directed more energy fighting for fundamental economic change than against general legal inequalities.

(D) Union Activism. Existing histories of the Italian immigrant experience include obscure, if any, details regarding the women's involvement in the trade union movement in Italy at the time of the mass migration.

It would be an error, however, to combine this lack of data with the fact that the bulk of Italian immigrants came from the non-industrialized south and conclude that few, if any, women had been trade unionists before emigrating.<sup>31</sup>

Italian Women and Union Membership. Of all the regions supplying the bulk of Italian emigrants, Calabria and Abruzzi-Molise had the worst record of union membership. Sicily, Apulia and Campania, on the other hand, had sizeable numbers of union members, but hard documentation is lacking around which exact determinations can be made regarding female membership.

It is not unlikely that at least some of the "contadine" had joined a union before emigrating because five regions of emigration activity collectively contained over 100,000 union members in approximately 280 agricultural unions by 1910.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, the trade union records at the turn of the century indicate that Italian working women played an active role in labor organizations, and nearly ten percent of my respondents mentioned their union activity in Italy. The explanation of this progressiveness within labor organizations is tied to the hard economic, social and political realities of that time.

This aspect of the immigrants' experience casts a new light on the tenaciously held stereotype of the ultra-conservative Italian female exclusively engrossed in a little world bounded by an overbearing husband and pampered bambini.

Italian Women and Labor Market Conditions. The position of women in the labor market, and the attitudes of men and women concerning female participation in labor organizations, should not be treated separately. They must be analyzed as interwoven threads in the fabric of history.

By 1900, over 5,000,000 Italian wage earners were women, according to official government records. In relative terms, women accounted for over fifteen percent of the total population. Italian wage earning women were also visible union organizers because their primary occupations caused them to work in large concentrations in factories or in the fields.

There were heavier concentrations of Italian women in the textile trades, working in factories, than in the garment industry, performing piecemeal work in the isolation of their homes. Other isolated occupations included domestics and farm laborers.

Statistics show that more than one and a half times as many women worked in groups as opposed to isolation.<sup>33</sup> This massification of women enhanced unionization.

Italian Women and the Work Force. Italian women, as a percentage of Italy's total employee population, shrank

throughout the twentieth century. In 1901 thirty-two percent of the Italian labor force was female; by 1921, twenty-nine percent were women; in 1931, twenty-seven percent; and by 1951 only twenty-five percent of the labor force were women.<sup>34</sup>

This phenomena may be a function of the emigration of female workers to America. One respondent commented that:

at the turn of the century agricultural products and textiles were among Italy's chief exports, and the women were the backbone of the Italian economy...Italy depended on its women.

The Factory Act of 1902. Additional insight regarding the integration of Italian women into the Italy's labor market can be gained by analyzing societal attitudes affecting their organization, participation and network development.

Article six of the Factory Act of 1902 required government collected data to provide "...the technical bases for Maternity Leave Fund".<sup>35</sup> This social legislation reveals an acceptance of the fact that women could and did work after marriage.

This type of legislation, female progressiveness as workers and female activism in unions were all attributable to the urgent economic, social and ideological imperatives within the turn of the century Italian labor movement.

#### Italian American History: The Migration

The Exodus to America. Italian emigration to Europe and

the Americas developed sudden momentum in the 1880's, as did emigration from southeastern Europe in general. "Mass" migration, from Italy, refers specifically to the period from 1880 to 1925.

Emigration to the United States began in earnest in 1887, when for the first time, 35,000 Italian immigrants came to America. Growth for the next several years was gradual, then exploded 1901 culminating in 1906 when over 350,000 Italians came to the United States.<sup>36</sup>

Following 1906 the flow of arrivals fluctuated, reflecting international conditions. For example, during World War I more Italians returned to Italy than emigrated to the United States. Emigration then resumed after the war, and in 1920, once again, more than 350,000 Italians emigrated to America.

The emigration dropped sharply to 67,000 after 1924 as a result of the United States first adoption of selective and restrictive immigration laws.<sup>37</sup>

Immigration Restrictions. The Quota Act of 1924 put an end to the freedom of entry into the United States. It instituted a rigid system of annual national quotas based on the 1890 census data. Each nationality was limited to two percent of their existing U.S. based emigrant population.

In 1927 Mussolini restricted emigration from Italy, and the economic crisis of 1929 further reduced the number of emigrants.

Also in 1929, the base figure used to determine quotas in

the United States became a function of the 1920 census data. As a result of this shift, an annual ceiling of 153,000 immigrants was established, and Italy's annual quota was set at 5,802.<sup>38</sup>

Migration Patterns. Between 1876 and 1930 the United States took in 5,087,821 Italian emigrants, or roughly a third of the total of 17,664,525 who had left their country.<sup>39</sup>

The United States was the preferred destination since 1880. Other traditional destinations, such as northern Europe, Argentina and Brazil became less attractive at that time. In 1880 U.S. bound Italian emigrants made up only five percent of their total, whereas on the eve of World War I the United States was the planned destination for forty-three percent.

Between 1876 and 1900, 1,518,000 people left southern Italy.<sup>40</sup> Between 1901 and 1913, 3,738,000 emigrated from southern Italy, including a large number of Sicilians.<sup>41</sup>

The largest number in any year between 1880 and 1930 was 1906, while the highest annual averages were recorded between 1901 and 1910. Between 1910 and 1915, emigration from Italy totaled 8,769,680, more than half a million a year.

Nearly 5,000,000 of these emigrants crossed the Atlantic, the majority bound for America. Italy's entry into World War I temporarily stemmed the tide, but emigration increased again between 1919 and 1920, only to fall off again as a result of the economic crisis of 1921.

During the 1920's, the United States and several Latin

American countries enacted a series of laws severely limiting immigration. Other sources that prevented the immigrations totals from reaching previous peaks were: frequent economic and political crises; Mussolini's 1927 restriction on emigration; and the Great Depression of 1929.

Composition of Italian Immigrants. During the mass migration years, the majority of emigrants were farm workers or unskilled laborers from southern Italy and Sicily. A small percentage were tenant farmers from Calabria and Molise.

As a result of the mass exodus, small southern Italian towns were devastated. The farm laborers provided the economic base in these miniature communities that also included shopkeepers, barbers, shoemakers, smiths and other artisans. With the departure of the farm workers, these microcosmic societies were destroyed and the villages were abandoned.

Some of the emigrants were considered skilled workers in Italy, but joined the ranks of the unskilled when they reached America. Unskilled immigrants fit the American industrial profile at the time due to the need for people to man the machines that characterized this nation's move toward large scale, mass production.

Gender Differences in the Emigration. Overall, more men emigrated from Italy during the mass migration, however between 1891 and 1900 there was a significant increase (21%) in the numbers of women and children emigrants.<sup>43</sup> This was a period

when families were crossing the Atlantic to join their menfolk.

Prior to this time there was a pattern of adult male exodus and return, based on a desire to acquire money in the United States and land back home. In time, several males in a family would stay in America, accumulate money, then use it to bring over the rest of the family, usually consisting of older sons, brothers, wives, daughters, younger children and parents.

Italy's Socio-Economic Situation. Italy's socio-economic situation after unification was a cause of mass emigration. The Italian population was increasing, industrialization was backward, poverty was compounded by shortages of important raw materials, such as coal and iron, and farming, the primary occupation, was antiquated, un-mechanized and beset by low productivity.

The Poorest Italian Farms. Italy's poorest farms were in southern Italy and on the islands of Sicily and Sardinia. Although the soil was not suited for cereal cultivation, it was grown in the plains and on the plateaus. Animal husbandry was the main occupation in the mountainous areas, which made up almost half of the southern terrain.

Poverty had always plagued this area, and the added harassment and taxes resulting from the unification forced the southern Italians to start emigrating. The agricultural crisis of the 1880's converted the emigration to an exodus.

The Large Landowners and the Production of Cereals. At the

end of the nineteenth century the Italian politicians were calling for the abandonment of cereal cultivation in areas least suited to it. In its place, they recommended fruit or olive trees.

Despite these pressures, the southern landlords refused to switch because cereal cultivation did not require the costly capital investment associated with the substitutes. Cereals could be grown using the available and underpaid labor force.

The cereals grown in southern Italy supplied both the domestic market needs and also served as an export product. The landlords continued to reject substitutions even after the transport revolution helped to flood Italy and Europe with cut-rate cereals from outside markets.<sup>44</sup>

The Archaic Agriculture of Italy. The landowners made a profit and continued to grow cereals in spite of the call for change. As a result of this short-sightedness the profits from the southern farms were never used to modernize and prepare for future needs. Instead, the profits were used to buy more land, pay off mortgages, purchase government bonds through which the Italian treasury financed its administration, the army, navy and railways of the newly unified Italian state.

Italy was not converting its archaic agricultural procedures to modern, capital intensive farming as was being done in the United States and elsewhere in Europe. When Italy's industrial development finally occurred, it was conditioned and

limited by the nations backward agricultural set-up and low productivity.

Limited Industry in Italy. As mentioned earlier, poverty was a primary concern of the Italian farm workers. The farm workers' options were limited by Italy's resistance to modernize their farms and by the limited markets and production capabilities of the newly formed industries centered in Turin, Milan, and Genoa. These areas were not yet able to absorb the farm workers who were thrust upon the labor market as a result of the agricultural crisis that erupted in the 1880's.

The combination of these circumstances made emigration a logical option for these people.

The "Tariff War". Additional marketing limitations were created as a result of tariffs imposed by various European countries. The tariff of 1887 strained relations between Italy and the industrialized European countries.<sup>45</sup>

For example, the "tariff war" brought about a break in the commercial link with France, a traditional importer of Italian blending wines. Similarly, other opportunities were lost or postponed in the name of protectionism, each having its own effect on the wage earnings of Italian workers.

### The Italian Sojourner

Philosophy of the Sojourner. The Italian statistics

published by ISTAT (the National Statistics Institute of Italy) classify all transatlantic emigrations since 1876 are as permanent.<sup>46</sup> Although many were, these government records do not reflect the activities of an entrepreneurial, hard working group of men referred to by historians as sojourners.

Many crossed the ocean in the spring, when it was easy to find work in the construction industry or on the railways, and returned home in the winter. Therefore, it is misleading to think that every male emigrant said goodbye to his homeland forever.

Many Italians who had never seen Rome had traveled to New York several times for work (which probably remains to this day as one of the longest commutes on record). These "American" Italians served as living examples that the "American Dream" could come true when they returned to their native villages with enough savings to purchase land and a house.

The "American Dream" was the philosophy of the sojourner.

Historical Background and the Sojourner. Stories about the sojourner dominated the recollections of the first-generation respondents. Selection of the sojourner, according to them, was a joint decision made by members of the extended family. The male selected to go to the new country was supported, as much as possible, by those left in Italy and took with him an understanding that he was responsible for sending back whatever he could. In July 1908, the lead article of the Rivista di

Emigrazione described emigration as the:

greatest social phenomena of our epoch whether one is speaking of the demographic impact on the country, its economy, its moral condition, levels of criminality, state of public health, in fact, of any aspect of the people's lives.<sup>47</sup>

The country of emigration and the immigrant host country are both impacted demographically and economically in a variety of ways. This section of my research focuses on the emigration impact on the people, particularly the Italian American women who were originally left behind by their sojourner husbands, then emigrated themselves in order to be with their husbands full time in the new country.

The Italian sojourner was a man of his family and of his "paese" (agrotown or village). The decision to migrate was not usually made by the sojourner:

The actual decision to migrate is thrashed out in the nuclear family.<sup>48</sup>

...the decision to end a sojourn abroad is not the decision of the individual...it was a family decision.<sup>49</sup>

...the migrants were accounted-for units of the family and the towns which were left behind.<sup>50</sup>

The mayor of a small town in Basilicata informed a preliminary committee in 1907 that "the population [of his town] was 2,400 souls of which 600 were in America".<sup>51</sup> The Italian sojourners remained in his mind as the husbands, sons, fiances, brothers and fathers of the women in his town. Those migrating

individuals were sources of "cash money" for southern Italy.

The Italian sojourners' experiences impacted the family life, gender role, morals, values, attitudes, and the goals of women.

The obligation of the sojourner included:

- a) a willingness to live in cheap, crowded boardinghouses,
- b) a dependency on "padroni" (Italian coordinators of sojourners' activities),
- c) showing little interest in the host country, and
- d) risking no "cash money" on host country situations

Thus, there was a connection maintained with Italy that was secured through the sojourners. They brought the Italian culture of their home town to New York City in return for an opportunity to earn the "American Dream". Not all sojourners were successful:

It was difficult to remain committed to family obligations when you are so far away from them for so long...

(a first-generation woman speaking about her brother

The successful stories about the sojourners who came to America overshadowed the disruption and pain caused by the separation. Interestingly, what is now referred to as the "myth" of the American dream was a reality to these first-generation respondents.

Anti-emigration Sentiment. Anti-emigration literature concentrated on sojourning's impact on sexual morality. As migration increased, there apparently was an increase in

immorality.<sup>52</sup>

Several women recalled stories that circulated about the evil lives being led by the single men in the urban ghettos of America. There were graphic tales of drinking, prostitution and immorality. Consequently, many of the wives and girlfriends left in Europe were worried about their men. This situation was compounded by the illiteracy prevalent among this group, making direct communication impossible for many years.

Female clustering and bonding was fostered during this time as many women and children lived with sisters or mothers-in-law until sent for by the husbands, or until the husbands returned to Italy.

The Italian Sojourner: Marriage and Immigration. There was no tolerance for bachelorhood in the Italian culture:

In the old country there is no such thing as a person not married. Every man is born, grows, he marries, he is father, then a little while he dies. I never hear of a person not marry in the old country.

(a 93 year old first-generation woman)

Migration affected marital patterns more than the cultural predispositions, primarily because of the disproportionate ratio of males to females on both sides of the Atlantic.

The logical end of sojourning was to create a nuclear family or re-group and expand an existing one. Some men accomplished this by "going home", some by sending for a wife or betrothed, and some by marrying endogamously in America.

If immigration was a matter of intention and attitude rather than duration of sojourn, I would then suggest that true migration commenced when the questions of marriage and inheritance were settled. A migrant's search was ended when:

...he reached his target...he wanted to live normal...[that is] a married life, among his own kind...somewhere in with his "paesani" where he could make a living, support his family...

(a second-generation woman speaking about her father

This family maintained a close friendship for over fifty years with New York neighbors that emigrated from the same town in Italy. This commitment to the "paese" and then to its American emigrants may be the closest one can come to defining "ethnicity" in the daily lives of the first-generation.

Following are sections from letters that first-generation respondents saved, and shared with me during the interviews:

I wonder if I can get back in time for the next crop?

(man to wife in Italy living with his mother, 1907)

I hope I can get back in time for the "festa"  
(man's letter to his wife, 1911)

...(so and so) has married an American girl. The boy is very disobedient to the wishes of his family.

(man's letter to wife, 1921)

...(so and so) married a stranger\*. His family will be heartbroken...

(man's letter to sister, n.d.)

\*by stranger, this man was referring to a girl from another Italian town.

There was a pattern of contact between the specific paese

and those in America.

The sojourners were exposed to a variety of unique influences that influenced their feelings toward women and family. The anit-migrationists disseminated information describing women as slaves of primitive passions that would, when left alone, control them and cause them to be sexually immoral. The young, uneducated, rural men and jealous husbands who were thrown together in work gangs, camps and crowded boardinghouses were particularly susceptible to this stereotype of women. Coarse jokes, sexually oriented stories of lonely European women, inaccessible women in the host country and fragmented news from home all converged to create an environment quite unique for turn of the century Italian American men.

Their perceptions of the world, influenced by these stimuli, served as a basis for their definition of family when they later were joined by their wives, children and loved ones or as they formed social relations within the new Italian American subcommunity in the host country urban setting.

Their attitudes, values, goals and norms reflected a combination of traditional old world culture, newly perceived customs and brutal immigrant experiences. As a result, when the women arrived to join their men, they were kept in isolation and overprotected, according to my first-generation respondents.

The men were also the subject of anti-migration propaganda. The critics of emigration described the male

sojourner as a "dangerous and amoral beast" preying upon American women. The fear and jealousy of these 'strangers' combined with the prevailing prejudice against Italian bachelors of that time makes it difficult to get objective reports of the sojourners' life.<sup>53</sup>

Distrust: The Sojourner's Experience, Propaganda, and the Husband/Wife Relations. The primary purpose of the anti-migration propaganda was to dissuade Italians from coming to America and influence the sojourners to return to Italy. To some degree the propaganda accomplished both objectives, but its primary impact was unrelated to these planned objectives.

As a result of the propaganda campaigns directed against Italian migration, "distrust" permeated many husband/wife relationships. The Italian women were influenced to believe that their men had been preying on American women instead of working, and the men were influenced to believe that their women had become prostitutes in Italy after they left to work in America. Accordingly, the gender roles were re-defined in the minds of the males and females.

A number of women described their situation similarly to this first-generation respondent who came to New York in 1906:

I lived with my three children in my mother-in-law's house for seven years while my husband established a home for us in America. I worked by doing laundry and sewing at home. I never went out except to go to church. After I came to New York I had four more children. My husband wouldn't let

me go out much because he was suspicious of my actions during our separation...but I was always with his mother.

The world economy at the turn of the century forced many Italians to emigrate. Accordingly, social history writers in North America, a major Italian depository, focused their attention on issues of assimilation, uprootedness and persistence of "ethnicity". Part of my research focuses on the sojourner's commitment to cultural norms, values, attitudes and goals as described by my respondents. In contrast to the social history writers' profile of Italian males as displaced individuals in a strange land, this new perspective identifies the sojourner as a man of his family and his "paese".

The Sojourners' Families. Before the sojourn to America began, consideration was given to the effect of this separation on the sojourner and those he left behind. One result of this concern was that the sojourner usually retained his place in the social organization of his village, his inheritance rights within his family, and his proper place in all other family plans. Although physically leaving, the sojourner remained an integral part of his Italian community.

The available literature on the role of the nuclear and extended family in southern Italian life reflects this suppression of individualism and encouragement of working for the family. The interest of the family group was more important than individual advancement, and the family, not the individual,

as defined as the economic unit. Actually, one could label the family a synthetic person and is alluded to as such in most of my respondents' descriptions.

Family Responsibility and the Sojourner. The migrants, particularly the young men, were accounted-for units of the family in their home towns. Each family played an intricate role in the decision to begin and, in many cases, end the sojourn. Consequently, the sojourner left Italy filled with a sense of family responsibility.

Those left behind in the small towns and villages in Italy viewed the migrants in terms of husbands, sons, fiances, brothers and fathers who were away at work. The sojourners defined themselves similarly, understanding their role as wage-earner and source of cash money for the Italian south.

Missing Family Member: Impact on Italian Family Structure. During his absence, members of the sojourner's extended family provided protection and supervision for his immediate family. The migrant could return at any time and be assured of a physical home, a social niche and some immediate income.

Also, if a sojourner sent for female members of his clan, he knew that protection would be arranged for them throughout their trip to America.

Those who went abroad went in search of cash money for specific objectives. The families and dependents had

predetermined expectations regarding the results of the sojourn. They also had rough estimates, based on local folk wisdom, of how long it should take to achieve the desired results. The sojourns that went beyond the expected time frame caused anxiety for all involved.

My respondents spoke very descriptively about the pressure and anxiety during the waiting period, recalling stories of empty conjugal beds, daughters awaiting their dowry, suffering aging parents and lonely Mediterranean springs without a loved one.

The great distances and long periods of time associated with the sojourn had unexpected effects on family commitments and obligations. The evolving Italian American value system was influenced as much by the experiences of those who waited behind as by those who sojourned to America.

The literature from the turn of the century reflects the confused social conditions resulting from the 'bought mobility' made possible by the sojourner's cash money.<sup>54</sup> Ancient heritage and nobility seemed to vanish along with the traditional family structure, and the physical absence of the men ravaged the dream of a well-ordered future for many southern Italian families.

Many changes took place within these 'ruptured' families, including: people's feelings toward one another; the distribution of inheritances; and even the meaning of the

marriage alliance. The alteration of the family structure began even before the clan reunited in the United States.

Status Claims of the Migrants. It is a truism of migration studies that sojourners, regardless of their length of stay in the host country, continued to think of the problems and needs of their hometown as paramount and made their status claims in that community. The Italian sojourners retained their rural norms and customs, as well as the old attitudes, values and goals. These sojourners were very much a part of their families' traditions.

In most of the cases described by my respondents, the sojourn culminated in the bringing over of entire families, one by one, starting with the sons who were followed by brothers, male cousins, wives, daughters, sisters, parents and other female relatives.

By emigrating one by one, the family relocation process took many years, thereby preserving many of the Italian traditions and values as personified by each new arrival.

Sojourners' Families: Response to the Sacrifice. The immediate and extended family members brought over by the sojourners greatly appreciated the sacrifice that was made of their behalf. The manifestation of this gratitude is played an important role in the Italian American family. Consequently, we should not only study the individual immigrant in his urban setting, but also in the existential frame of reference.

The sojourners, as described by the first-generation respondents, were men who were sent to strange lands entrusted with responsibilities and expectations that were, for the most part, not possible to fulfill. There was an air of "adoration" in the way these men were described. They were seen as having made great personal sacrifice for the benefit of the family.

As a result, many first-generation women necessarily defined their role in terms of support, respect, tolerance and appreciation for the men in their lives.

I always made sure that my children show respect for their father. He wouldn't stay home from work...my husband always worked hard for the family and the children must show respect for their father.

(an 88 year old first-generation woman)

Historians have shied away from studying the turn of the century in terms of migration disruption because of poor sources of information. Only bits of oral histories survive, requiring risky inferences to be made from migration statistics to suggest the migrants' real frame of mind.

The Escaping Rural Migrants. The people categorized as escaping rural migrants were those freeing themselves from the controls of tradition, habit, family and religious anathemas enforced by the clergy. Other reasons, brought up by the respondents, were "getting free" from the ferocious surveillance of "gossipy villagers" and "escaping from" the physical exhaustion of their "rural labor".

Their escape was not as total as expected according to their stories. After emigrating to America they recall being brutalized by exploitation, isolation, prejudice and failure to fulfill expected goals. Cumulatively, this affected their personal dignity, language, manner, life style and family relations.

Italian American Women: Between Two Cultures. Several respondents referred to feelings of humiliation because of perceived ignorance, backwardness, low self-esteem and unfamiliarity with twentieth century urban living.

It must be kept in mind that rural norms and customs were retained among those who planned to return home and among those who still made their status claims in the community left in the old country.

This temporary nature of emigration also explains certain aspects of the behavior of Italian immigrants. Some of these characteristics include: preference for insulation within urban sub-communities; fear and distrust of strangers; disinclination to learn English; diligent saving of part of their income; reluctance to join labor and union groups; and a willingness to endure extreme hardship and poverty conditions unacceptable to native Americans and other immigrants. Over time, some of these characteristics changed for those who decided to remain in America.

The Italian Family in the New World. The family continued

to remain the point of Italian American loyalty. According to the respondents, three contributing reasons for the migration of entire families were: girls awaiting doweries; men without inheritance looking for land; and wives wanting to join their husbands to have more children in order to uphold the family status.

Familism. Americans were defined in terms of individualism by the turn of the century Italian immigrants. This was a sharp contrast to the familism that dominated the Italian culture.

The peasant Italian families were built on strong in-group solidarity and a high value for children. Each family had traditional celebrations which served as expressions of unity, solidarity and loyalty. The father was the wage-earner, the mother was the keeper of traditions and carrier of the culture and the children were described as living for their parents. Women were educated for marriage and motherhood, and were described as the heart and soul of the family.

"...women were to work, but not for wages", said a third-generation respondent.

"Going American" was something that the first-generation felt was a negative, especially for the Italian women. In order to maintain the culture, first-generation parents frequently arranged marriages for their children to make sure that the prospective mate was not only Italian but also from their town or village.

No first- or second-generation respondents admitted to using or having knowledge of others using birth control. There were no first hand stories of desertion.

As cohesive as the family was, no affection between husband and wife was to be demonstrated in public. In fact, many second-generation respondents felt that it was not even to be shown in front of the children. The women from both generations did, however, enjoy talking about sex with their peers, and joked quite often about it. Several first-generation women considered themselves sexually stronger than their men, and all agreed that a man could never withstand the trauma of pregnancy and the pain childbirth.

#### The Settlement Experience

The pre-emigration status of women in Italy, their legal position at that time, the results of the sojourners, and the actual migration were all a prelude to the final event that transformed Italians into Italian Americans -- the settlement experience.

Prior to settling here and experiencing the country, America was merely a combination of fragmented stories and optimistic fantasies. America to these women was "the land of opportunity" where "the streets were paved with gold". Although known, even then, that this was not literally true, one

respondents recollection indicates the limit of their knowledge at the time of arrival:

The first time I see a rose I wonder how a delicate flower can look so fresh after the long trip from Italy...I was living in New York for a long time and never see trees or dirt or farms  
(a 90 year old first-generation woman)

In addition to never seeing the American countryside, many of these woman rarely, if ever, got to see anyone that was born in America. As a consequence of the anti-migration propaganda, these woman were kept well insulated from the people and places outside of the Italian sub-community. Therefore, just as they developed misconceptions of America, America formulated misconceptions of them.

Stereotypical images of Italian American women pictured them as culture-bound to a life defined by the old rural attitudes, values, goals and norms. Their role choices were seen as limited to the old world social alternatives, most of which were not even understood by Americans. It was not understood, for example, that social alternatives were determined by birth cohorts, class, region of origin and individual family traditions.

Unquestionably, these women carried cultural baggage with them to the new society, however I have found that the American myths that circulated equally influenced their perceptions of America, their new role and, ultimately, their self-image.

Creating a New Subculture: An Italian American Community.

The actual migration was a long, arduous trip. Packed in steerage in the bottom of ships, many of the respondents now refer to the traveling conditions as "inhuman". Traveling, in most cases, with only the clothes on their backs, and the subsequent holding at Ellis Island, represented the final indignities before entrance into a better world for their families.

Eighty percent of the Italian immigrants were poor, illiterate peasant farmers from southern Italy and Sicily who were used to being subjected to the whims of landlords, local leaders and money lenders.

The impending isolation from society at-large would not be a new experience to these people who, because of their regional dialects, were isolated from each other in Italy.

Upon arrival into the United States, these immigrants turned for help to "bosses" and "bankers", people from their own towns who had come to America earlier and were now familiar with the country. In actuality, these 'helpers' became rich by exploiting the ignorance of the newcomers.

According to official sources, Italian countrymen pretending to help were a big problem. My respondents agree that this was a big problem during the mass migration:

...their worst enemies were the fellow  
Italians awaiting them...they trusted them  
and then were taken advantage of...  
(a second-generation woman)

The "bosses" looked after finding work and housing; the "bankers" served as travel agents, savings banks, post offices, money changers, money lenders and marriage brokers.

...they were crooks that took advantage of their own kind...they stole blood money.  
(an 87 year old first-generation woman)

In addition to temporary financial loss, there were other, long-lasting, consequences of exploitation:

...we were ignorant about America's ways and eager to work...we were sent to take over work for strikers...our men didn't know what they were doing.

(an 85 year old first-generation woman)

The Italians were defined as anti-union by the Americans and treated accordingly. The resulting pressure from the 'outside' intensified ghettoization of these immigrants.

The immigrants soon learned that trust should be limited to the family. "Trust only the family..." was an often quoted sentiment of the first-generation women. Thus, insulation and isolation became a powerful social fact for the Italian American families.

Trusting the family and being falsely labeled did not preclude attempts to operate within the mainstream. For example, in 1905, when the "Industrial Workers of the World" was founded, many Italian American started to play an active role in the struggle for better working conditions. In fact, Italian Americans activists helped organize some of the great strikes,

such as the famous wool-weavers' strike at Lawrence in 1912.

My respondents discussed the union organizations with positive, supportive descriptions:

The unions helped to get things better at work...they were good.

(a 79 year old first-generation garment worker)

Italian American Networking in the "Old Days" in New York

City. The newly arrived foreigners adjusted readily to the ways of life in the sub-communities. Although the change from rural living in Italy to city dwelling in New York tenements was environmentally different, the social aspects were similar.

Many small Italian towns had populations of ten to fifteen thousand people, and the men traditionally worked the land in an area distant from their homes.<sup>55</sup> This environment was a consequence of Italy's economic condition at the turn of the century and not indicative of the stereotypical peasants' reverence for land.

Although the men, as a condition of employment in the old country, worked in remote areas, the women were not isolated from large social networks comprised of immediate and extended family members. Each community had specific variations but all were dominated by familism. This social conditioning, not spacial conditioning, was critical to Italians thus making it easy to relocate the community to New York City .

The social lives of these people were shaped by the functional roles performed by the women while the men were away

at their wage-earning work. Work, by both men and women, was believed to be vital for any possible success in life. These people believed that hard work was the only way to get anything worth having:

I'm 91...I have nine children and twenty-five grandchildren and I ran the store with my husband for many years...work never killed anyone.

(a 91 year old first-generation woman)

Work for the men was defined as wage-earning activity;

work for the woman was defined as all the activity necessary to have the family function within itself and within the community.

Patterns of Italian American Subcommunities Outside of New York City. Not all Italian immigrants adjusted to life in New York City. Those who could not adjust migrated to other parts of America.

Some moved to the farming communities in upstate New York or New Jersey. Others moved nearer to relatives or "Paesani" already living in the midwestern and western states.

Many destinations were a function of employment with the railroads. Families of the men who worked on building the railroad system settled in Philadelphia, Chicago, Saint Louis, Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Deigo.

California, because of its grape growing and fishing opportunities, also attracted many southern Italians and Sicilians.

The big cities attracted the bricklayers, stone masons,

iron workers and construction workers. Others worked in the coal fields of Pennsylvania, the steelmills of Pittsburgh, the cotton fields of Georgia, the dairy farms of Wisconsin and the apple orchards of the Ozark Mountains.

Although geographically scattered, the pattern of Italian American settlements was development by clustering. It was the adherence to their social conditioning, not spacial conditioning, that governed the establishment of subcommunities. The day to day lives of these immigrants, however, varied according to their geographical location creating significant changes that were manifested through their children and grandchildren.

Consequently, Italian American community studies should be conducted regionally, not globally, in order to ascertain unique influences during the initial stages of community evolution. Specifically, the findings of my research, although valid and germane to the New York experience, can only serve as comparative data for other Italian American subcommunities.

Examples of Italian American Subcommunity Differences. The Italian American subcommunities were mixtures of Sicilian, Neapolitan, Roman, Peimontese, Toscanese, Pugliese and other regional groups. Unless grammatical Italian was spoken and understood, it was difficult for these immigrants to communicate with each other because of the distinct differences in their regional dialects. The result was a local Americanization of

many Italian expressions. These translations, therefore, were the result of at least four influences; two (or more) Italian dialects, English, and the regional location of the subcommunity.

As a consequence of this regional Americanization the pure Italian culture was diluted and modified. One residual impact of this was transmitted through the generations in the form of stereotypes and myths built on misconceptions.

Eating Habits: Regional Variations. Although eating habits were basically the same, there were some variations in both preference and preparation.

Tomatoe sause, for example, was used extensively in southern Italy while the northerens used white sause. The women from the southern regions discussed main meals consisting of lamb's head, brains, sweetbreads and tongue (all internal organs) and the northern women described dishes prepared with polentas, rice and fowl.

Within each Italian American subcommunity there were a variety of cultural complexities being integrated, adopted and modified according to the social environment. Food preparation and eating habits were also subjected to this re-shaping.

Insulation and Accomodation. The degree of insulation varied as did the definition of the family parameters. Since part of the first-generations' extended family were still in Italy, accomodations had to be made to fill 'family' positions.

For example, the selection of a godparent from among fellow immigrants from the same town in Italy was meaningful because it was as close as one could get without being a blood relative.

Internal Discrimination. I found that jealousy, discrimination and prejudice existed between people from different regions of Italy. An extreme example of this was demonstrated by two women who lived on the same block in the Belmont neighborhood for more than seventy years and still did not like each other because their hometowns were rivals at the time of their births. They were both very clear on this point and justified their position by concentrating on characteristics that confirmed the stereotypes they learned as children.

At the time of my research, the Belmont Italian subcommunity was divided into two distinct groupings: those who were American born and those who were born in Italy. This idiosyncrasy is further developed in the community section of this paper.

The Settlement House: Definition and Background. A conspicuous part of the turn-of-the-century immigrant experience, especially for the women, was the settlement house.

In the United States, settlement houses were established to facilitate the assimilation of the immigrants into America. They were institutions staffed by people who understood the old culture as well as the new culture and who tried to use that knowledge to ease the transition for the new comers. A

settlement can therefore be defined as a social institution dedicated to helping immigrants make the cultural adjustments necessary for integration into a new society.

The settlement movement is generally acknowledged to have begun in 1884 with the founding of Toynbee Hall in London<sup>56</sup>, even though the House of Industry, located at 716 Catern Street, in south Philadelphia, opened in 1857, preceeding it by thirty-seven years. Similarly, the Neighborhood Guild, established in New York City in 1886, is recognized as the starting of the movement in the United States<sup>57</sup>.

This chronological conflict may be a function of the atmosphere at the turn-of-the-century, a period marked by industrial growth, mass immigration, stratification of people by socio-economic factors, and, most importantly to the settlement house movement, stratification of people by national origin.

It was within this context that the settlement house movement was born in America and was introduced to the Italian immigrants.

The Settlement House and the Italian American Women. The settlement houses played a significant role in urban America, particularly in relation to the Italian American women, their families and their community.

Beginning in the 1890's the settlement houses undertook their first practical efforts to socially integrate the new immigrant nationalities with native Americans. Acting

independently of each other, these houses worked with neighborhoods on an individual basis but did little in the way of developing a nation of neighborhoods. Individuals people benefited from the efforts of the houses, but neighborhoods remained autonomously structured relative to the rest of the city, state and country. For example, although some settlement houses taught English and civic classes, others like Hull House and University Settlement put no special emphasis on either.

My respondents told me of programs for conserving and celebrating the holidays, customs, folksongs, art, festivals, pageants and language indigenous to their hometowns. Newcomers were encouraged to preserve the best of their traditions as a tangible contribution to the building of a new American culture. These approaches encouraged and sustained the immigrants' respect for their old cultural ways, especially for the women who were the primary socializing agents in the family.

Several of my respondents defined the settlement house as a "...friendly neighborhood place" where they could go to with their children. Generally, the settlements developed an approach that was sympathetic to the trials and tribulations of the recently arrived immigrants.

Settlement workers subscribed to the belief that ethnic self-hatred was psychologically debilitating and led to: family disorganization, alienation of children, break-down of family authority and juvenile delinquency.

By attempting to sustain the immigrants' self-respect and cultural pride, the social settlement provided the Italian immigrant with support while experiencing the Americanization process. Italian American women greatly benefited from these efforts because, according to them, cultural pride was closely connected to respect for the family and family traditions. The settlement approach reflected an effort to counteract the generation gap, parent/child alienation and the divided family.

Because they worked independently of each other, not all settlement houses subscribed to the same ideologies. Some, in fact, were described as bigoted and condescending by a few of my first-generation respondents. Over time, however, the houses within the same cities tended to provide similar services and programs.

Many respondents, elaborating on their settlement experiences, described the houses as "...the link to the better world". These were the women who were determined to retain pride in their Italian origin. They enjoyed incorporating their old world cultural experiences into the American neighborhood in the form of ethnic activities, such as: the Nativity pageants, the Italian folk dances, the Columbus Day celebration, fairs, feasts, religious holidays, music and drama.

These activities were instrumental in the development of the unique Italian American subculture. Their selection was greatly influenced by the perceptions of the settlement house and

neighborhood center operators. The women showed their interest by frequently attending settlement house or neighborhood center meetings. This action to support cultural traditions was, in itself, a break with tradition. I was told by one of first-generation respondents who was active in the settlement house activities, that:

...except for church related activities,  
women in Italy never went anywhere outside of  
family visiting.

(an 88 year old first-generation woman)

The respondents explained that the contents of the settlement house meetings changed to keep pace with the most immediate needs of the neighborhood at any given time. Some of the content descriptions included: the displeasure of workers in urban industry; religious topics; information about the local community; information about foreign lands; childcare; nutrition; and home management.

As the immigrants became more sophisticated, new learning programs were introduced. Initially, child-rearing and domestic themes dominated, then, especially during the depression years:

...we needed relief from the frustration of  
the daily life...entertainment dominated the  
content of the meetings of the settlement  
house.

(a 94 year old first-generation woman)

Then, during the war years:

...learning to cope with hostility and how to  
support the war effort occupied much time at  
our neighborhood settlement.

(an 88 year old first-generation woman)

During the early years, the Italian American women were passive listeners at the meetings, having no control and providing no input. By the 1940's the women were active participants in planning the agenda of the meetings. These houses provided a new way for the women to exercise their traditional role of network coordinator. During the oral histories, these women revealed that their perceptions of the new society came, in large part, from interacting with the settlement house workers and their staff.

The networking at this point was not identical to the Italian tradition of their parents because of the new meanings associated with neighbors. Although old hometown prejudices persisted, the new subcommunities were taking on a unique spiritual as well as territorial base. Blood relatives remained the core and primary network, but new bonds started to grow and were facilitated by the settlement house experience. There were discussions by my respondents concerning two types of social bonds that formed, one biologically based and one merely ritual.

The Second Generation's Settlement House Experience. The second generation respondents who recalled the settlement house experience were generally positive in their descriptions.

Most of the settlement house experiences were:

...interactions which were to satisfy certain obligations to the family network...I considered them merely ritual interactions.  
(a 66 year old second-generation woman)

The second-generation women were characterized by close social bonding and did not need the activities of the settlement as their mothers' did. Details of the second-generation are presented elsewhere in this paper.

Summary. The settlement house and neighborhood center experiences had significant impact on the Italian American women. Since these places were defined as:

...the main channels for us [the first-generation] to get information about our new country, our neighborhood and how to succeed in this new world..

(a 92 year old first-generation woman)  
they had a direct impact on the self-image, socialization, goals, attitudes and norms of those women.

The obvious attempts to Americanize the participants that were part and parcel of the settlement house purpose added another variation to the evolving culture complex. For example, the respondents explained that national holidays would be celebrated with banquets presenting American items to each of the people attending.

Religious groups, Italian fraternal societies and Italian language newspapers also assisted in the assimilation process. However, I found no early data in these areas to provide a study of specific influences. Actually, it wasn't until the 1940's that any mention was made of contact with these other groups.

The images these religious groups, fraternal organizations and Italian language newspapers projected, according to my

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respondents, were of the stereotypical female in the mother/wife role, music, arts or some nurturing role. The section on images discusses this aspect further.

According to the writings of the settlement workers, the Italian American woman was defined as having little organizational ability. Regarding her mother's activity during her [the respondent's] childhood;

This feeling hindered any skill development of these immigrants along these lines.  
(a 56 year old second-generation woman)

The Italian Mother's Club was described as a medium of education which provided assistance for the women from their late teens through their adult life. This was a particularly good group since it supported the child centered values of the Italian culture as well as the success aspect which was the driving force of the immigrant women.

The clubs described to me were grouped according to dialect and seemed to become a common denominator through which the women could "...gain a foothold in America". These clubs supplemented the activities provided by the settlement houses and neighborhood centers.

The first-generation worked hard and long to give their children more and better advantages than they themselves had had, either here or in Italy.

In spite of the Americanization and absorption into the Anglo-Saxon life style, there were still significant aspects

of the ethnic traditions that were cherished, maintained, passed-on and mumified. Details are presented elsewhere in this paper.

One second generation respondent described her mother and her mother's friend as:

...individuals of great courage who reached out and grasped the hand of the Italian clubs...and with the assistance of the clubs, they were able to see their way through problems which confronted them every day. They were able to help themselves and their families move toward an adjusted existence in their new lives in America.

(a 57 year old second-generation woman)

The settlement house and neighborhood center experiences, the mother's clubs, the religious groups and the mass media of the subcommunity were all critical aspects which impacted upon the Italian American women's self-image and that of her community.

Footnotes for Chapter 2

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<sup>3</sup>T. Cyriax, Among Italian Peasants (Glasgow, 1919) pp. 216-37.

<sup>4</sup>ibid. pp. 217-20

<sup>5</sup>Luigi Villari, Italian Life in Town and Country (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1902).

<sup>6</sup>Stefano Somogyi, Bilanci Demografici dei Comuni Siciliani dal 1861 al 1961. Palermo: Università di Palermo, Institute di Scienze Demografiche, 1971.

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<sup>8</sup>ibid., p. 51.

<sup>9</sup>Luciana Capezuoli and Grazia Cappabianca, Storia dell'emancipazione femminile (Rome, 1964).

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<sup>11</sup>ibid., pp. 39-40.

<sup>12</sup>G.A. Beccari, "Alle mie associate", La Donna (October 15, 1878).

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<sup>15</sup>J. S. MacDonald, "Agricultural Organization, Migration and Labour Militance in Rural Italy", The Economic History Review, 2nd Ser. 16 (1963): p. 61-75.

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<sup>22</sup>ibid., p. 360.

<sup>23</sup>ibid. p., 365.

<sup>24</sup>Capezuoli and Cappabianca, pp. 90-93.

<sup>25</sup>Fanny Zampini Salazaro, "Women's Condition in Italy," The International Council of Women in reprint of the Report of the International Council of Women (Washington, D.C.).

<sup>26</sup>Josephine Butler, Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade (London, 1896).

<sup>27</sup>Shorter, p. 78.

<sup>28</sup>Tommeo, p. 101.

<sup>29</sup>Giuseppe Tommasoli, Prostituzione et muladies veneriennes en Italie (Rome: 1880-1896).

<sup>30</sup>Cyriak, p. 217.

<sup>31</sup>Bandettini, p. 364.

<sup>32</sup>-----Statistica della Emigrazione Italiana (Rome: 1878-1879, 1881-1915).

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<sup>34</sup>Bandettini, p. 368.

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### Chapter 3

## Ethnicity and the Italian American Community

### Overview

An ethnic group consists of people who conceive of themselves as being of a kind. They are united by emotional bonds and concerned with the preservation of their type... For a person who identifies with an ethnic category, its history provides a backdrop before which to review his own conduct... Those who identify can conceive of themselves as a part of something larger than themselves, something of far greater importance.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter, divided into two parts, discusses the concept of ethnicity as operationalized in a New York City Italian American community known as Belmont. Ethnicity is presented first and is followed by an analysis of the Belmont area.

The Belmont area was selected because it fulfills certain, very specific requirements of my research. Specifically, Belmont represents:

- a) a primary depository for Italian immigrants at the

turn-of-the-century,

b) an area that houses first-generation Italian Americans who have continuously resided there since their arrival at the turn-of-the-century, and

c) a community that has clung to its ethnic heritage.

My ecological analysis of this community demonstrates that Belmont is a "Little Italy" of the Bronx. This ethnic community, therefore, provides a sampling base from which to select first-generation Italian Americans. This selection criteria was a critical component of the study because the first-generation respondents represented the core group that determined which second- and third-generation representatives would be included in the research effort.

Community, discussed later in the chapter, is operationalized in this study as that area in which most daily activities take place. The community relates to the individual's sense of belonging and identity.

In addition to the geographical parameters of community, community of spirit, a recent phenomena for many of the Italian American respondents, is also discussed.

Ethnicity, a key component of this analysis, is closely tied to community.

#### Introduction

There is no simple, clear definition of ethnicity that can be

cited and applied to this research. Ethnicity, therefore, is treated as a concept embodying the following elements: a concentration of his factors; aspects of origin; nationality; religion; language and communication characteristics; physical traits; and even name.

In the United States industrialized urban societies, the white ethnics who strove for social mobility tried to adopt a "American" identity that was essentially "WASP". Although this American "image" was idealized, it was evident that, in reality, Americanization would entail a unique blending of old world customs with new world experiences.

In order to sample ethnics across the generations, I had to isolate a group who identified themselves as Italian Americans. The target population for my initial oral histories became those people who never moved out of their original immigrant depository; a community that maintained its ethnic identity over the decades.

The 1980 census, because of its specific questions about family origins, was instrumental in identifying target areas.

Although this census indicated that the number of foreign born Americans declined from thirteen to six percent since 1900, it also indicated that many second- and third-generation Americans claim a single national origin for their families. Of these, the top four are: Germany, England, Ireland and Italy.

Among Italian Americans, thirteen percent were born in

Italy, forty-two percent are second-generation and forty-five percent are third-generation. Cumulatively, according to the census, there are twelve million Italian Americans. By factoring in the non-response bias, we can estimate that the actual figure is closer to fifteen million.

The second part of this chapter will focus on the Italian American community known as Belmont, a depository for the Italian American immigrants during the period of mass migration (1880-1925). Although this area in the south Bronx is still receiving Italian immigrants, I started my research by interviewing only women who emigrated from Italy at the turn-of-the-century and have maintained continuous in this area.

The Belmont areas has an aging population and the community is shrinking. However, the spirit is strong as is demonstrated by the recent establishing of the Fermi Library, Forum of Italian American Educators and other ethnic associations, all of which are discussed in the community section of this chapter.

### Ethnicity

Italian American Ethnic Expression. This study applies the Italian American ethnic label to the immigrant (first) generation, their children's (second) generation and their grandchildren (third-generation). However, an intricate part of the analysis is based on how the collective biographies of these

different birth cohorts relate to their identity as Italian Americans.

The opportunity structure is also considered in my attempt to understand the ethnic consciousness of the three generations within the Italian American community.

The Steven Steinberg thesis presented in The Ethnic Myth argues that the opportunity structure is very important in a group's ethnic image<sup>2</sup>. My research expands this thesis to include ethnic traditions which can be traced through the generations. Specific to the Italian ethnic group, the high value placed on family and blood lines is used to substantiate this expansion.

The common experiences of the ruptured group (first-generation), uniquely shaped the way they socialized their children (second-generation) in the areas of family, family networking, sibling bonding and child-rearing. Consequently, the current Italian American definition of family, as internalized by the third-generation, can only be understood by constructing overlays of the social changes experienced by each birth cohort.

This is important because a common denominator of each generation is their definition of family and friendship networks, along with the corresponding duties, obligations, rights and privileges attached to each. For example, the meaning of sibling bonding is a direct consequence of the

first-generations' exploitation. As discussed earlier, these experiences fostered insulation and the feeling that only the family can be trusted. Because 'family' was the purview of the women, this philosophy manifested itself in the socialization of their daughters; the future mothers of the family.

Consequently, close sibling bonding is characteristic among the second-generation women, so close in fact that many of the third-generation women felt they were raised by a consortium of mothers -- their biological mother and a cadre of "social mothers" (the biological mother's sisters). Bear in mind that it was not uncommon for first-generation families to have eight to twelve children, so the the opportunity for a third-generation women to have three to five social mothers was very distinct.

A common characteristic of the second-generation mentioned by the third-generation respondents was that most family decisions were made by committee, that is, by the mother and her sisters. Everything involving the third-generation girls involved the committee. Frequent examples cited by the third-generation women included such items as: whether or not to attend a party or affair, what to bring or give, what dress to wear, whether or not to host an event, who to invite, what to serve, and generally how to act.

All examples cited involved the second-generation women's perceptions of their daughters' role within the family and

friendship networks. Interestingly, according to the third-generation respondents, becoming an adult does not alter the committee's desire to counsel and control.

Ethnic Concept: Defined. Andrew Greeley states that ethnicity emerged in America:

when the peasant commune broke up, and was essentially an attempt to keep values, some of the informality, some of the support, some of the intimacy of the communal life in the midst of an impersonal, formalistic, urban, industrial society<sup>3</sup>.

The turn-of-the-century Italian peasants from southern Italy lived in pre-industrial towns, some with populations of ten to fifteen thousand people. The clan or extended family networks were primary social units in these towns according to the first-generation respondents. In their oral histories they described the towns as clusters of family networks that used the 'arranged marriage' as a means of broadening individual family influence.

The Catholic Church and the parish priest were most often described as the link to the outside world.

Contrary to the stereotypical pre-industrial village, these rural peasants did not work where they lived. This was due to the topography of the land which separated the best living areas in the northern mountain region from the best farming areas in the southern, malaria-infested, swampland region. As a result the workers lived in the high regions and had to travel

to the marshy lowlands to get to work.

The land they worked was owned by absentee landlords who lived in the urban areas. They were described as having little interest in either the working conditions or the condition of the land. Their only concern, according to the respondents, was the amount of annual cash crop yield produced.

Regarding the emergence of ethnicity, Greeley continues:

In the strangeness of the new environment, the individual or his battered and bedraggled family looked around for someone with whom he had something in common - hopefully a place in the big city where previous migrants from his village settled. Because such settlers were 'his kind of people', he could trust them; they knew their obligation to him and would help him in the new world in which he found himself<sup>4</sup>.

The communal life Greeley discusses must be modified in the case of the Italian Americans. The family networking must be given primary consideration. The Italian immigrants came over with family consent and were frequently part of a systematic migration of clan members. The sojourn experience strongly affected the Italian immigrant experience and their ethnicity. The sojourn experience made Italian ethnicity unique.

Ethnicity, Community and Stratification. I approached the analysis of ethnicity, community and stratification in light of six assumptions posited by Andrew Greeley regarding the nature of ethnicity in his work entitled That Most Distressed Nation<sup>5</sup>. These assumptions are:

- 1) acculturation can take place without assimilation,

- 2) ethnicity is more than a cultural phenomena,
- 3) ethnic groups are carriers of cultural traditions, 4) ethnic background is a determining force in self-identification,
- 5) role expectations are acquired from the family, and
- 6) ethnicity is a function of immigration.

Acculturation and Assimilation. Greeley concurs with Gordon Milton "...that acculturation can take place without assimilation"<sup>6</sup>. The ethnic group exists largely in a microcosm, albeit a selected one. The ethnic microcosm can interact with other groups and retain their own identity while adding on cultural characteristics of the larger society.

Greeley states:

...an ethnic group can acquire many of the behavioral traits of the larger society without losing either their sense of identity or desire to interact with other members of the group when such interaction is possible<sup>7</sup>.

This becomes particularly desirable in close social relationships as found in the Italian American community.

Ethnicity as a Cultural Phenomena. Greeley agrees with Glazer and Moynihan's point that ethnicity is more than a cultural phenomena. Greeley wrote:

...that ethnic groups are frequently

political, economic and social interest groups which continue to exist whether or not they pass on much of their cultural heritage<sup>8</sup>.

My sample of Italian Americans formed groups which could be described as having political, economic and social overtones that were based on self-interest. Implicit in the above definition is a broader view of the Italian American ethnic phenomena. The historically relevant experiences of each birth cohort, their perception of status within the larger society and their understanding of the opportunity structure culminated in group formations having the extended family as its core.

"Family" relationships are not defined exclusively in terms of blood, but also in terms of "godparenting", which is discussed elsewhere in this paper. Steven Steinberg's Ethnic Myth focuses on this vital dimension of ethnicity which includes the economic as well as cultural factors.

Ethnicity: Carrier of Cultural Traditions. Greeley's definition of ethnicity states that:

...an ethnic group serves as a carrier of cultural tradition, at least for some members of that group<sup>9</sup>.

As example, for the Irish the Catholic Church, alcohol

abuse and an affinity for a political career can be defined as cultural characteristic, but not as a condition of every Irish man and women.

The public myths attached to ethnic groups can be related to aspects of this definition of ethnicity. Although some characteristics may be rooted in reality, misconceptions and stereotypes may result. Variations of this theme were echoed in Daniel Patrick Moynihan's Report written during his tenure as assistant to President Johnson on domestic affairs. Moynihan believed the black family was in deep crisis because slavery shattered the black family as a cultural institution. He stated that the Negro family "...is the fundamental source of weakness of the Negro community as the present time"<sup>10</sup>.

Another statement on this assumption can be found in Oscar Lewis' The Culture of Poverty. Lewis assumed that once formed, the culture - more correctly the subculture of poverty - "...has a life of its own" which appears to formulate and perpetuate the familiar stereotypes for a broader category of people than ethnics<sup>11</sup>.

Kenneth Clark's thesis in Dark Ghetto defined the source of problems for poor blacks as the defective institutions of the subculture of poverty which perpetuate the stereotypes. Blaming the victim for not being upwardly mobile was the message Thomas Sowell, a black sociologist, discussed when focusing on stratification and crime within the black community in the

United States. In contrast, Irving Howe, when studying the Jewish American community, asserted that "...crime was a marginal phenomena... in the Jewish immigrant life".<sup>12</sup>

Ethnicity, Crime and the Italian Americans. Crime was not discussed as a symptom of class inequality but these authors see it as a condition of ghetto life and poverty. Steven Steinberg refers to crime in his chapter "The Ethnic Crisis in America" as a symptom of class inequality<sup>13</sup>. My respondents discussed crime in a unique way. They seemed to believe that "organized" crime was a way of fighting back against exploitation and didn't see crime as a real threat in their community. When interviewing the local police and reviewing the local crime statistics, it was clear that the Belmont area was an insulated region with very little reported crime.

A food store robbery occurred during the evening of one of my interview sessions. Before dawn those responsible for the robbery were caught and returned to their parents who made arrangements for retribution. This incident was never reported to the police. Also, when I first began my interviewing in the community I was told that I would not have to worry about walking the streets day or night as long as I stayed within certain parameters of the neighborhood.

Some first-generation respondents were proud about the connections made between Italian Americans and organized crime. However, most respondents in the second- and third-generations

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were offended with the association to organized crime and resented it being described as a cultural characteristic. One respondent seemed to state the sentiments of the majority of upper middle class, suburban, professional second- and third-generation Italian Americans when she said:

...music, art and literature are the core elements of the Italian American culture...this is what must be projected to the outside world, and not the association with the organized crime.

(a 53 year old second-generation woman)

Several of the respondents were very clear about how they felt toward the recent (past ten to fifteen years) activities of the Mafia in drug traffic and prostitution.

The organizers of the Mafia are greedy and now they are hurting the families, the children, which is wrong.

(a 61 year old second-generation woman)

Five of the third-generation respondents were active in organizing and executing an event in Westchester County in the Fall of 1983 which celebrated the cultural contributions of Italian Americans to America. The areas featured included: art, music, fashion, literature and dance. One of the organizers said:

...Italian Americans must loose the pizza, sausage, mafia image and relate to the rich art of our ethnic heritage.

(a 55 year old second-generation woman)

The day was a high success with close to five thousand people attending the event. The organizers of the affair are

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attempting to evolve into two permanent associations in Westchester called SIAMO (meaning 'we are') and the Salerno Club. Their intention is to conduct an annual celebration of the fine cultural dimension of the Italian Americans living in the area. The president of the SIAMO group, Mrs. Anna Crisci-Santana, is an organizer who has kept the primary focus of that group on the expression of "...Italian culture in music, art, dance and theater". There was, and is, financial support from many successful Italian American business people in Westchester County.

The vice-president of the Salerno Club, Mr. Mario DeGennaro, is planning to start an "Experimental Ethnic Theater" in order to present Italian operas, plays and musicals. They too are planning to locate in Westchester County.

Most people active in these projects were either second- or third-generation Italian Americans, although the first-generation was represented among the active group. One 90 year old woman hosted several planning meetings at her home because she could not get around very well. The attendee like these sessions because she had a wonderful spread of "home made" desserts for everyone. "This is my way of helping to make Italians proud of their background", she said.

These groups were only interested in identifying with the ethnic traditions and the upper class cultural traits associated with Italian Americans. One of the recurring themes at the

planning meetings was to play down the 'street feast' image of Italian Americans. The food and wine should be served in the "...style of the cultured, well bred individual", according to one women planners. Accordingly, only the finest crystal was used at the receptions following the various Italian cultural events.

Personal Identity and Ethnic Self-Identification. The fourth belief of Greeley states that:

...for some members of the ethnic groups a component of their personal identity is the ethnic self-definition, with or without any particular conscious interest in the cultural heritage.<sup>14</sup>

This is viewing the ethnic background of a person as a determining force - the individual is not a free or voluntary agent. Once born into a particular ethnic group, a dependency develops on specific traits.

When analyzing the personal identities of my respondents, I found that this was most often true of the working class Italian Americans. Also, it was more common among women than men, although many blue-collar males fit within Greeley's description.

The Socialization Process and Ethnicity. The fifth point made by Greeley deals with role expectations:

...certain ethnic traits...can be passed on through early childhood socialization whereby a child learns role expectations in relation to parents, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles and close friends<sup>15</sup>.

The Socialization Process and Ethnicity. A fifth point Greelely made on the nature of ethnicity dealt with "...certain ethnic traits which can be passed on through the early childhood socialization process, whereby a child learns role expectations in relation to parents, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles and close friends<sup>15</sup>.

Generational differences, according to my findings, are as relevant as exposure to the group. Using the socialization process itself as an example, I found that the first-generation's techniques differed from those used by their children. In many cases the first-generation disagreed with the methods used to socialize their grandchildren.

Secondly, the degree to which the socialized attitudes, values and goals were internalized varied according to social class, level of professionalism, and gender. The working class in some urban ethnic subcommunities appear to be more overtly ethnic than the upper middle class counterpart of the same birth cohort. Brothers and sisters, depending upon achieved class status, express their ethnicity radically differently.

Ethnicity and the Evolution of a Unique Italian American Subculture. The final major assumption of Greeley contended:

...that which certain ethnic groups as such came into existence in the United States, with the history and culture of the old country having a significant role - the nature of which was yet to be defined - in the values and structures of the American

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ethnic groups<sup>16</sup>

Greeley discussed the Irish Americans as being neither Irishmen nor mainstream Anglo-Saxon American, but Greeley stated that they were both.

My respondents discussed many traditions that helped to create a unique subculture. These were customs that were mummified and regularly resurrected during certain periods in each person's life, such as: the birth rituals, naming children, christenings, communions, confirmations, mate selection and weddings, selection of god-parents, funerals, wakes, death anniversaries, and religious feasts and holidays.

#### The Italian American Applications

I found Greeley's approach to be valuable because it reduces ethnic group characteristics to trends or tendencies, as opposed to universal characteristics. This approach is preferred because a vast amount of diversity exists among all ethnic groups. Regarding the Italian Americans, there are definite regional differences, as well as occupational, educational, political, economic and social differences.

On the other hand, there are also many similarities between Italian Americans and other groups. Patrick Joseph Gallo contended that there were differences within ethnic groups as well as between them. He contends that common characteristics

cut across divisions of ethnicity due to class:

With a person of the same social class but of a different ethnic group, one shares behavioral similarities but not a sense of peoplehood. With those of the same ethnic group but of different social class, one shares the sense of peoplehood but not behavioral similarities<sup>17</sup>.

Gallo refers to an "ethniclass" to describe a group that meets both criteria; similar ethnic background and similar social class. Gallo contends that this emerged when there was vertical stratification of ethnics and horizontal analysis of social class.

My research supports the view that class is not separate from one's ethnic identity, but that class is a factor within ethnicity.

Ethnicity: The Women and the Myths. During my interviews with the second- and third-generation Italian American women, several issues were made clear regarding stereotypes. These women supported the fact that strong family ties were critical, but rejected the "Mama Ronzoni" image as representative of their role within the family.

Regarding their role, these generations accepted the wife/mother role as being a valid description of them, but did not see them as depicted by the stereotypes. In fact, these women described how the first-generation mothers had very flexible roles within the realm of the extended family and Italian American subcommunities. The stereotypes frequently

depicted the Italian American women in one of two roles; making pasta or making babies. Not only did the first-generation women manage to do more in terms of family management, they were frequently described as being involved in operating the family business:

My mother would be up at 4:30 in the morning and be in the bakery with my father. She kept the books and ran the counter.

(a 61 year old second-generation woman)

Recognizing the many roles played by the first-generation women, Italian American females of the second- and third-generation expressed pride in identifying with them.

At one point in my life I didn't want to be associated with my mother because she was so obviously a foreigner. But now I couldn't be prouder of her and what she did in her hard working life. I'm always telling my children about the things their grandmother did for her family with nothing but incredible hard work.

(a 59 year old second-generation woman)

Understanding the many roles played by their mothers and grandmothers, the Italian American women were expressing feelings of being "at home" with their identity as Italian Americans.

A Sense of Belonging. Feeling pride in one's ethnic group is related to feeling good about oneself, especially when the identity is associated with the collectivity.

The respondents in my study were proud and confident about their role of wife/mother. The Italian American culture idealizes the feminine image, particularly in the role of

mother. The Madonna, as the symbol of motherhood; sexual purity; and inexhaustable caretaking and food giving were mentioned often. The idealization of motherhood forms a solid base for the Italian American family.

Ethnic Images and Italian Americans. In America, the idealized masculine image glorifies attributes of independence, assertiveness and career success. In the more traditional Italian American family, the idealized male attributes include: a strong mother-son bond, good provider and good father. Some of the women I interviewed mentioned that boys were socialized to have a special reverence for their mothers and their children, especially the daughters. As one respondent put it:

I'd love for my son to marry an Italian girl,  
but I don't know if I'd want my daughter to  
marry an Italian boy...they worship their  
mothers and pamper their daughters but not so  
much their wives.

(a 63 year old second-generation woman)

Group Belonging: The men, like the women, felt more "at home" with other Italian Americans. Some of the males from the second- and third-generations stated that their behavior should not be changed in an effort to be accepted by the American culture. This characteristic tends to increase the affiliations made with Italian American clubs and associations.

The men were also sensitive to negative stereotyping. This too enhanced the bond that the Italian Americans felt for each

other. Also, many of the respondents created further bonds by making conscious connections between their own behavior and their Italian heritage.

The second- and third-generation view their Italian American traits as different, not inferior. Several of my respondents made statement similar to this one:

When I was younger I was ashamed of being associated with the ethnic traditions, but now there is pride for those traditions.  
(a 55 year old second-generation man)

#### Community

Belmont is its official name...after August Belmont...but to us who walk the neighborhood, eat in its restaurants, go to its feasts and shop in its stores, it's called Arthur Avenue, the Little Italy of the Bronx.  
(a 45 year old third-generation man)

They can't be seen, but there are always eyes looking out on the neighborhood.  
(a 55 year old second-generation woman)

Belmont remains an Italian oasis. Unlike much of the Bronx, which has succumbed to change, Belmont is a community that has clung to its Italian heritage.  
(a 39 year old third-generation woman)

The center of my social life as a child was Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, built by Italian bakers, bricklayers, and other workers from about 1905 and finished in 1914. My parents were proud to have their Italian Catholic Church.  
(a 71 year old second-generation woman)

This community [Belmont] has about 25,000 persons and they make up one-third of the population of the 48th Precinct. However, Belmont accounts for only 9% of the crime in the precinct...the first Italians to arrive in the area were from Calabria, Sicily and Napoli (Naples). They were basically manual laborers who knew how to work and to make a buck to keep the family together.

(a 49 year old second-generation woman,  
former resident, who conducts tours  
of the area for the  
Bronx County Historical Society

Actor John Garfield attended school in Belmont and boxer Tami Mauriello, jockey Con Errico, entertainer June Valli, Don Cornel and Johnny Guarnieri all came from Belmont.  
(a 59 year old second-generation man)

Arthur avenue was named after President Chester A. Arthur. Catherine Lorillard Wolf named the street after him because she really admired him.

(a 56 year old second-generation woman)

All the respondents were very proud of the Italian character of Belmont. In addition to its history, they boasted of their colorful Italian restaurants, speciality bakeries, food stores and the Fermi Library.

People come here to buy things that you can't get anywhere else except maybe in Italy...you can come to Arthur Avenue and see how mozzarella [cheese] and bread is made.  
(an 82 year old first-generation woman)

I chose this Italian American community because of the ethnic identity which it maintained since the era of the mass migration (1880-1925). Around the turn-of-the-century the Irish moved to other parts of Fordham and were replaced by the Italian laborers and their families who helped build the railways,

reservoirs and streets of the Bronx.

The Urban Ethnic: Community. This research draws upon several areas of study. The significant areas relating to my research are: community, ethnic research and women's studies.

The image projected by Italian American women is not entirely unconscious. Although these women play significant roles within their families, they allow the 'passive, powerless, serving' stereotype to exist in the minds of outsiders. These women are key entities within the Italian American family, usually operating within an extended network of thirty to forty close relatives that collectively form a close-knit community insulated from the outsiders. To a great degree the destinies of the family are controlled by this network.

The community studies of Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman address this aspect of the image and reality of a community. Small Town and Mass Society presents an example of a collective myth being maintained by the members of an upstate New York community<sup>18</sup>.

My research delves more deeply into the image of the Italian American women by focusing on how their behavior, across three generations, created images of them in their community. I believe that the literature in the aforementioned areas will profit as a result of this research.

Community Studies: The Chicago Model. Particular dimensions within several existing works influenced my research

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format, however none of them captured the specific focus on gender that is the keynot of my research.

The Gold Coast and the Slum<sup>19</sup> by Harvey Zorbaugh, La Vita<sup>20</sup> and Five Families<sup>21</sup> by Oscar Lewis and Urban Families: Conjugal Roles and Social Networks<sup>22</sup> by Elizabeth Bott are examples of previous human community case studies.

Elizabeth Bott, an English social researcher, provided one of the earliest discussions of networking appearing in sociological literature. I used her technique of studying a single small group initially, then expanded the analysis to include the resulting broader social relationships.

My research focused on the intergenerational relationships of the ethnics as described by the original sample group of Italian American women living in a urban ethnic subcommunity. I then traced their sense of belonging to community and ethnic identity through the different birth cohorts identified as part of their network.

Lewis' and Zorbaugh's works give insight into community study as did Herbert Gans'<sup>23</sup> and Gerald Suttles'<sup>24</sup> studies. My analysis adds the intergenerational dimension as well as the women's perspective, both missing in these classic research projects.

Suttles' ecological analysis of Chicago's West Side multi-ethnic community was influenced the way in which I organized my study. This is a valuable study because it

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emphasizes the research tradition of Robert in a more contemporary study.

I also found The Social Order of the Slum<sup>25</sup> by Gerald Suttles useful in ordering my work. I particularly appreciated the two approaches in the research which adds to the interpretation of my information: the wholistic view of the slum; and the view of the slum resulting from the knowledge of the people.

In this work, Suttles looks through the eyes of the people being studied and addresses problems as they perceive them in order to solve them in their daily lives. My project partially parallels this work by placing emphasis on people's shared understanding as the basis of emergent social order. The parallel is only partial because this study focuses on the women of the territorial community and traces their sense of belonging across generations to their children's and grandchildren's cohorts, whether or not they live in the original spacial community. I believe this view of the Italian American women's community experience provides a new dimension and more depth than do previous studies on this ethnic subcommunity.

Although Suttles makes no reference to H. Blumer or H. Gans, I can see their influence in his approach to social analysis.

Overall, Suttles' technique is most appropriate for my research because of the extensive analysis of fieldnotes. This

format is generally considered a characteristic of the students of Robert Park.

Italian American Studies: Community, Culture and Identity.

A problem associated with community and identity is narrowing the relevant variables in order to make the project workable for scientific analysis. The range of cultural traits, complexes, universals, alternatives and specialities are vast and sometimes difficult to compare because of their subtle differences.

Nonetheless, because the women of the Italian American community have never had their perspective presented, this research will enlighten not only the outsiders to the community but also some of the Italian American men. Many of the women I interviewed were excited to know that their attitudes, values, goals, stresses, guilts, loyalties and support systems were common dimensions for many Italian American women of their respective generations.

Where one is located relative to the ruptured group (the first-generation) is an important contributor to one's ethnic experience, perceptions of life chances and ethnic identification. The first-generation's views of education, duties, privileges, and rights represent the core of this community research.

The stratification of this group includes the usual socioeconomic aspects as well as the cultural symbols, status claims and ethnic identities as perceived by the respondents.

Leonard Cavello's The Social Background of the Italo-American School Child<sup>26</sup> was completed in 1944 as a doctoral dissertation. He undertook this research while working as a principal in a New York City high school, and it reflects his lifetime of service as an educational administrator of a large city school in an Italian American subcommunity. This research updates some of the elements discussed in Cavello's work.

Another similar research effort is Herbert Gans' The Urban Villagers<sup>27</sup>, published in 1962, which discusses the experiences of the first American born generation (identified as second-generation in this study). This study is aimed at expanding Gans's work by focusing on the women's perspective.

There were many other informative social histories, but all were missing the feminine perspective and, in some cases, even the sociological dimension applied to this analysis. Interconnections to larger society and to the broader social concepts were also missing in most of these studies which treated their study groups as microcosms, i.e., worlds within themselves.

One book used as a data resource, Fordham was a Town: During the Twenties and Thirties<sup>28</sup> by Rocky D'Erasmus, presents a nostalgic look at Fordham's "Little Italy". This is the community from which I selected my first-generation core population. The book's descriptions include accounts of

everyday life of neighborhood people in their: schools, shops, movies, parks, beach outings<sup>7</sup> and dates, as well as their nicknames, violin lessons, evil eye superstitions, communions, confirmations, christenings, music, festivals, saints' days, family reunions, odd jobs and more.

Another helpful resource is Sal Gumina's The Immigrant Speak: Italian Americans Tell their Story<sup>29</sup> which contains several first person histories of immigrant miners, shoemakers, poets, artists, theater people, a social worker, a soldier, a lawyer and an entrepreneur. There is no attempt by this author to generalize any of the collected information.

Other general works on Italian Americans that contributed to the historical perspective of this research are: Iorizzo and Mondello's The Italian Americans<sup>30</sup>, Patrick Gallo's The Urban Experience of Italian Americans<sup>31</sup> and Old Bread New Wine: A Portrait of the Italian Americans<sup>32</sup>, Lo Gatto's The Italians in America 1492-1972<sup>33</sup>, Italian American Radicalism: Old World Origins and New World Developments<sup>34</sup> by Rudolph Vecoli, and Silvano Tomasi's The Religious Experience of Italian Americans<sup>35</sup>. Other relevant case studies include the works of Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, Richard Gambino and Jerre Magione.

Research conducted in the Buffalo Italian American community by Yans-McLaughlin offers a descriptive analysis of selective social change on one group of families over the fifty year period from 1880 to 1930. I like the approach used in this

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study entitled Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo<sup>36</sup> because it not only complements some of the experiences described by my respondents but also gives insight into the variety of their migration and adjustment experiences.

Richard Gambino's Blood of My Blood<sup>37</sup> and Jerre Mangione's Mont Allegro: A Memoir of Italian American Life<sup>38</sup> are critical historical narratives which examine and communicate a deep, sensitive view of Italian Americans, their family networks and the connections with older southern Italian cultural systems. These works are partially autobiographical, which, I believe, adds to developing a complete understanding.

Richard Gambino is a second-generation Italian American who grew up in what he describes as a Brooklyn ethnic community. Both men provide us with research that is very detailed and descriptive on an individual level while skillfully integrating the historical dimensions.

Jerre Mangione gives an account of the immigrant Sicilian life in Rochester, New York. Herbert Gans read the Mangione work in 1957 when he started his work in Boston, and the connection between them is discussed in the preface of the 1981 edition of Mont Allegro. Gans admits that this work influenced the way he dealt with structuring the ancestral analysis.

#### Community Theory

We must read the writings of the past, not to blindly pass

on traditions, but to break with the singular perspective.

Historical overviews frequently record factual accountings drawn from personal observation and interpretation. This analysis, however, draws primarily from the perspective of the female respondents and their clans. The core material evolves from the definitions and selected attentions of the respondents, supplemented with supporting demographic data and available records to add depth when the information was partial or sketchy. To this framework, constructed primarily by my initial seventy-six respondents, I have included my initial theoretical orientation in order to convert the raw material into significant sociological information.

A long view of the sociology of urban communities reveals the need to work from a theoretical frame because of the difficulty in generalizing from individual community studies. A multiplicity of paradigms and good tools have been developed from community studies focusing on such relevant topics as: ecology, social system, power, collective comparative studies, and symbolic interaction. Also, community and urban sociology material reflect more recent trends and directions, such as: network studies and neo-Marxist theory. Additionally, anthropologists, geographers and psychologists have been involved with studies of the urban world.

As a sociologist, I feel it is important to understand the urban community in terms of a new emerging social form and not

merely as a composite of developed paradigms. The culture of cities is a continuous process: roles and institutions are emerging, developing, aging and dissolving while new cultural solutions are evolving. The basic problems of making a living, raising a family, establishing companionship, and creating an acceptable perception of the environment produce restless city dwellers. In an industrial capitalistic society, moral, occupational, social and geographic dislocations are continuously trying to be resolved by people, both individually and collectively. The people that experience the bureaucratic-technocratic urban society as life enhancing, liberating and full of opportunity, have a favorable urban profile: skills, experience, associational networks and family composition, as well as favorable ascribed traits: race, ethnicity, age and gender.

The economic and technical changes hit segments of the urban population in varying degree with different effect. Upward or downward mobility, of individuals or groups, is a response to the pace and force of changes in the complex urban society.

The Italian Americans in the urban subcommunity of Belmont can best be analyzed by focusing on the opportunity structures and ethnic identifications as perceived through the generations. It is critical to consider the different directions of urban society in the West as it relates to American culture in order to establish a workable analysis of

the process of urbanization, industrialization and bureaucratization under through communities developed and must be understood.

The working of these fundamental social processes shows the emergence of urban communities as a consequence of broad American social changes. This level of abstraction combined with the varying distances of the research to the community being studied have yielded a variety of significant variables. This method of analysis establishes a framework for further macroscopic study while identifying the relevant micro-elements of the Italian American women specific to the Belmont subcommunity.

The Urban Ecological Approach. The urban ecological approach presented a systematic way of viewing the Belmont community as a territorially based system. I borrowed the basic categories used in my analysis from the organic model of society used by Park and Burgess<sup>39</sup>.

It is important to focus on the "natural areas", replete with their differing demographics, changes in size and location, concentration of ethnic/racial groups, invasion and succession patterns, degree of cultural and institutional assimilation or elaboration, changes in transportation systems, and unique economic conditions.

My analysis of these variable within the Belmont community was instrumental in establishing a scientific basis for the

qualitative core material of this research. The extreme ecological approach of the urban social scientists sometimes exaggerates the role of the local inhabitants and excludes the interconnecting broader cultural factors which are important determinants of human conduct in society. Nevertheless, I feel their works contributed to my analysis because of their ability to organize complex urban social structures, including growth, movement, invasion and succession patterns and the role of these phenomena on behavior.

Examples of such studies include the previously cited: The Gold Coast and the Slum, The Culture of Poverty, and Urban Families: Conjugal Roles and Social Networks. Additionally, John Rex's study of housing conflict in Sparkbrook, England was also helpful<sup>40</sup>.

John Rex's theory of housing conflict provided material, omitted by the Chicago School, by elaborating on the ideas of competition and natural areas and explaining how they actually play themselves out.

The Belmont Community. John Rex's work contributed to my understanding of the settlement patterns of Belmont and helped me to organize the information on intergroup relations of the ethnics living in this area since the turn-of-the-century.

By analyzing the local housing market I was able to determine why certain described conflicts existed. In fact, it possibly provides a way to predict where future class conflicts

may occur. For the Italian Americans, especially the first-generation, there was a definite concentration and insulation of the subcommunity.

Rex reflects the Weberian point that class has an economic base and that one's class position is a relationship to the market for domestic property. In fact, Rex felt that class struggle over housing was the central process of the city.

Many of the shop owners in the Belmont community no longer lived in the area, yet they had no intention of relocating their businesses and remained very active in the Merchants Association. They remained loyal to the economic well being of the neighborhood. One such individual said:

...it is economically reasonable to support and market the Italian American image of the Belmont area.

(a 48 year old second-generation man)

Some of the data collected in this ethnographic dimension of my research was not particularly valuable because it did not maintain my focus on the women's perspective. Data collected that was indigenous to the Italian American lifestyle according to the women did include information on businesses within the community, as well as on their churches, sports clubs, social organizations and associations and collections of assorted periodicals, certificates and memorabilia.

As suggested earlier in this paper, the women's perspective is conspicuous by its absence in the literature on ethnicity and

community. Consequently, an objective of this research effort is to illustrate why the images of the Italian American women are misunderstood. This is the core of my research because understanding class character from the perspective of my respondents, in the context of their Italian American community, is essential to understanding Italian American ethnicity and community. This has not been done before and each generation of women in my study were happy to finally have a forum for their perspective.

Because the theories of melting pot, cultural pluralism and ethnic purity are integral parts of discussing ethnic groups, the aforementioned case studies in general community become more usable when integrated with the information collected from my respondents.

The History and Geography of Belmont. The history of Belmont began on August 3, 1639 when:

...a large tract of land called Keskeskeck was given to the Dutch West India Co. by three Indian sachems, Tequeement, Rechqawac and Pachimiens "in consideration for some merchandise".

In 1663, the first settlement was formed in the area when two Englishmen, Edward Jessup and John Richardson, bought the land on the west bank of the Bronx River, which they divided into several farms and resold and called West Farms.

By 1671, land speculation in the Bronx had become a booming business and one Jan Archer, called "koopall", (buy all) by fellow landowners, procured a manor grant from Gov. Lovelace and formed Fordham Manor, from "ford", a wading place and "ham", a house.

The manor included 1,250 acres and was preserved intact until 1755.

In the spring of 1846 a group of Jesuit priests arrived in the village of Fordham to take over the direction of St. John's College. They have remained ever since.

At about this time, many prominent families, the Bayards, Lorillards and Lydigs to name just a few, opened big estates in the area. South of Fordham University was the farm of Rev. William Powell, rector of St. Peter's Church of Westchester from 1830 to 1849. He obtained the property by marriage to the widow of one of the Bayard family. The Village of Belmont was situated just south of the Powell farm on land that formally belonged to Jacob Lorillard.

From 181st to 184th St. between Quarry Road and Third Ave. the Home for the Incurables was established in 1866 by the Protestant Episcopal Church.

In the 1880's, the Irish moved into frame houses in Belmont to work on the big estates and some Germans opened the first of a series of truck farms during the 1880's and 1890's according to Bronx historian John Namara.<sup>41</sup>

The Boundaries of Belmont. The entire Belmont area, by census tracts, is that area of the Bronx bordered by Fordham Road, Tremont Avenue, Third Avenue and Southern Boulevard. For the purposes of this project, the Belmont Area has been further sub-divided into three areas on the basis of the racial and ethnic affiliations of its residents:

- a) core area - residents are almost exclusively Italian Americans,
- b) fringe area - residents are predominantly Italian American, with some Black and Puerto Rican residents, and
- c) transitional area - residents are predominantly Black and

Puerto Rican as well as other non-Italians and non-Italian Americans.

The core area within Belmont is bordered by Fordham Road, 183rd Street, Third Avenue and Southern Boulevard.

The fringe area is bordered by 180th Street, Third Avenue, Quarry Road and Belmont Avenue.

Two transition areas exist within Belmont, the Italian American transitional area bordered by Arthur Avenue, Belmont Avenue, 180th Street and 182nd Street; and the Jewish transitional area bordered by Third Avenue, 180th Street, Crotona Avenue, 180th Street and Tremont Avenue.

The map, located in the Appendix, presents the boundaries of the core, fringe and transitional areas in graphic detail.

Migration Patterns. According to the available statistics, migration pattern of the Black and Puerto Ricans into the Belmont area have generally moved in a northwest direction, and have been conditioned by a number of factor. Good housing is the reason why sections of the Jewish community held ground in their transitional area. Another reason is that non-Italian Americans found it difficult to cross the natural boundaries provided by the electrical power station at 180th Street and the city hospital between Quarry Road and Third Avenue.

Additionally, the Dennis Lane Apartments used to provide an economic and geographic block that has not only resisted invasion for a long time, but also delayed the conversion of the

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area from linking up with the Italian transitional area to the west. My respondents who lived in this transitional area frequently referred to the neighboring region.

The Black and Puerto Rican migration moved steadily northward from the south Bronx since the end of World War II when they first began to cross Tremont Avenue. Concurrently, the Jews, Germans, Irish and Italians living in the eastern part of the area began to leave. The areas they vacated were quickly replaced by the Blacks and Puerto Ricans.

Previously, the Italian Americans had been spreading out to the south from the core area, but the sudden influx of Blacks and Puerto Ricans brought this movement to a halt. However, the Italian Americans who already lived in the area were not as quick to leave as the other ethnic groups.

There were several reasons for remaining in Belmont, not the least of which was a greater concern for leaving the insulated subcommunity than having 'stranger' move into it. Several of the first-generation respondents discussed this point as did most of the second generation respondents that still lived in Belmont at the time of the interviews:

I like this neighborhood...I feel safe...all  
my friends are here.  
(a 42 year old second-generation woman)

Other sentiments expressed different reasons for remaining in the area:

...they [the Jewish] left the area because they're more prejudiced than the we [Italians] are.  
(a 54 year old second-generation man)

...the Jewish community was more scared than prejudiced and merely ran away from their neighborhoods.  
(a 61 year old second-generation woman)

The emigration of the Jewish population from this area resulted in a breakdown of the Jewish community, as such, which at one time had been a dominant force in parts of Belmont.

Many fond references were made by the respondents about the "good relationships" they had with the Jewish population throughout their life experience in the community. There were several descriptions of business interactions, friendships and intermarriages, especially between second-generation Italian American women and Jewish men.

I trusted the Jewish businessman, he was fair.  
(a 57 year old second-generation woman)

However, the Italian American community of Belmont, to some extent, blame the Jews for the massive invasion problem that resulted because of their pack-up and run reaction.

The core of the community, according to the respondents, is the Roman Catholic National Parish, Mount Carmel Church. The church works very hard at retaining the "traditional Italian" image of the community, and it is not surprising to learn that the southern boundary of the parish coincides with that of the core area.

Mount Carmel Church: The Core of the Core. The Italian National Church constantly fortified its community by replenishing the core area with first-generation Italian immigrants. The bishops were instrumental in recruiting Italian families every few years to come to America, thereby keeping the local occupancy rate very high. Consequently, this provided little opportunity for non-Italians to find vacant apartments in the core area. Landlords were able to discriminate since they knew Italian tenants would always be available.

Up until a few years ago, landlords rarely advertised, preferring instead to solicit through the parish social worker, part of whose job was to find homes for Italian Americans within this subcommunity.

Mount Carmel Church primarily services the core area, which has approximately eight thousand families of which seven thousand are affiliated with the church in some manner. However, the total number of families registered with the church is nearly thirty thousand, evidence that second- and third-generation families that have physically moved from the community remained linked in spirit. According to the respondents, the primary objective of the bishops was to preserve the traditional Italian attitudes and values through the church.

Other Churches in Belmont. Saint Martin of Tours Catholic Church is located on 182nd Street and Cambreling Avenue in the center of the fringe area. Once a predominantly Irish parish, it

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now serves a variety of ethnic groups. Although originally distressed by the Spanish influence at Saint Martin's, many of the respondents now feel that the goal of this parish is to link Italian Americans with other ethnic Catholics within Belmont.

Saint John's Baptist Church, located on 187th Street near the center of the core area, was an Italian peaking church until 1955. The congregation was described as quite small, and evenly distributed among Italian Americans, Blacks and Puerto Ricans. This church was described as having a white, Angol-Saxon, Protestant pastor who displays respect for the Italian subcommunity through his concern for civic civic affairs and the community life.

The Italian Christian Church, a Pentecostal church, is located at 188th Street and Belmont Avenue, in the core area. Services are conducted in Italian and most of the parishioners are elderly, first-generation Italian Americans who, for some reason, became disenchanted with Catholicism. Their beliefs are fundamentalist in nature, coming directly from the Bible. This church is not recognized by the Protestant Council of Churches and does not co-operate with the rest of the community. The respondents described these people as isolates who are generally "ridiculed" because of the "emotional" nature of Americans who also have a propensity for labeling, usually in a derogatory way with new groups.

The first-generation respondents, as well as the second- and

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third-generation respondents were familiar with derogatory labels, having received many, such as: Wop, Guinea, Dago, Greaseball, Spaghetti bender and Hyphenated-American.

Belmont's History: According to the Respondents: Most of the respondents were familiar with details of their community's history.

This area was opened to development with the 1840 extention of the New York Central Railroad, but East Tremont remained part of the rural community of West Farms until the mid-1860's. Urbanization followed the waves of immigrants who moved to the area in that decade, and in 1874 West Farms was annexed to the City of New York.

Completion of the Third Avenue El [elevated train] in the 1880's touched off a construction boom which produced many frame houses and four-story tenements.

In 1904 the IRT Subway was opened to this community and the following year extended service to East 180th Street expanded the building boom.

After the turn-of-the-century East Tremont was transformed into a modest residential area by real estate speculators who constructed detached single dwelling units and row houses for the small investor market. Working independently of each other, the speculators created a crazy-quilt like development throughout most of the district. Officially labeled "planning district #6", this area now contains about 120,000 residents and is suffering from

deteriorating housing, overcrowded schools, poor sanitation services and insufficient recreational facilities.

Many of the physical changes that have taken place are similar to those of nearby Morrisania and the south Bronx. Belmont is an aging community and most of the younger families have moved to the suburban areas of Westchester County and Long Island. Although still a strong community of spirit, the remaining residents are not able to take control of the ravages of the aging physical structures.

Some of the aging is more nostalgic than tragic. In some residential sections, traces of the old street system are visible, as on Quarry Road, and remind everyone of how the entire area once looked.

East Tremont's first residents were Irish, and the district's many Irish Catholic Churches give evidence to their settlement patterns. Italians followed soon after, settling in the area north of 180th Street and Park Avenue, and a Jewish community settled south of 180th Street. Many of the first-generation respondents vividly remember the days of the Irish and Jewish communities.

In the 1950's the Cross Bronx Expressway cut across the heart of the Jewish community causing an exodus of all those who could afford to move. Also, the Third Avenue El and the Park Avenue Rail were described as catalysts for migration out of the neighborhoods. Subsequently, this area between the two railroads

became a mixture of residences and industry. The respondents refer negatively about this region.

Population Record of Belmont. The population figures underscore the ethnic changes of the last several decades. In 1950 the population was 144,000: 98.4% white, 0.9% black and 0.8% Puerto Rican. By 1960 the population shrunk to 109,000: 85.9% white, 6.2% black and 5% Puerto Rican. Currently, the population is estimated to be 125,000: 41.6% white, 28.1% black, and 30.3% Puerto Rican. The population shifts are partly a result of the exodus of the young, white, middle-income residents.

Belmont's Italian American population is shrinking despite the influx of young Italian immigrants because the children of older residents are moving to the suburbs and to the newer middle-income neighborhoods within New York City.

Belmont's housing is similar to the rest of the district, consisting of small four and five story tenements and many single family attached houses. The structures themselves are in generally better condition than the rest of the district reflecting the good maintenance characteristics of Italian American communities.

Newer housing facilities mentioned by the respondents included the Fordham Towers, built in 1967 with City Mitchell Lama funds, between Washington and Bathgate Avenues on 187th and 188th Streets; and the Twin East renewal area that is west of Southern Boulevard between Fordham Road and East 183rd Street.

Fordham Road is described as a major artery and shopping area when "out of the neighborhood" shopping is done. However, the basic shopping is done within the community, in the bakeries, butcher shops, fish stores, open air markets, live poultry markets, pasta shops, cheese stores and restaurants which line East 187th Street and Arthur Avenue.

This core area manifests the local ethnic color of the Italian American culture and serves as a regional center for the Italian Americans living in Westchester, upstate New York, Long Island, New Jersey and other surrounding areas.

Health-Care Centers. According to the respondents, the health care centers serving this community are: the Tremont-Fordham-Riverdale Center at 1826 Arthur Avenue; the Infirmary at Tremont and Webster Avenues; and Saint Barnabas Hospital at Third Avenue and 183rd Street, which specializes in the treatment of rare heart and brain illnesses making it more of a regional institution than a community resource. Other facilities servicing, but not actually part of the district include: North Central Bronx, which was built after Fordham Hospital was torn down, and Jacobi Hospital.

Topography. When analyzing the topography of this subcommunity the primary topic is the description of the two regional parks. The Bronx Park, with its famous Bronx Zoo and Botanical Gardens stretches along most of the district's northern and eastern borders. The other, Crotona Park is a 147 acre expanse

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that lies south of the Cross Bronx Expressway, with its northern extension jutting up into the district.

The residents feel that the public transportation is generally good, and although the once famous Third Avenue El has long since been torn down, the New York City subway system still services the area. Surface transportation is also good because of the multitude of routes along Fordham Road. And public highways, most notably the Cross Bronx Expressway and Bronx River Parkway, are easily accessible, making it convenient (if you can stand the rush hour traffic) to travel to and from the area.

Local Community Groups. The final aspect of this spacial community worth mentioning are the local groups that keep the area organized, cohesive, unified and alive. Many of them, too numerous to list, are associated with the area churches and schools. These groups are catalysts for social behavior within Belmont, especially for the Italian American women. Essentially these organizations operate as friendship associations which function to recruit people into supportive activities activities for the subcommunity while simultaneously giving individuals a sense of belonging.

The Mothers' clubs, Solidities, Youth organizations and even the sports' clubs all operate in this way. Many of the respondents describe the outstanding work of the Italian American Alliance which helps anyone in search of employment, regardless of ethnic background.

Another frequently mentioned community group was the Council of Belmont Organizations, Incorporated which provides counseling to anyone in the community in such as social security, medicare, legal aid, veteran's benefits, and other practical issues that relate to the larger societal bureaucratic structures. General information on the type of material provided is included in the Appendix,

The new Fermi Library, which seems to personify the pride the community has in its own character, is located on Hughes Avenue. The people that supported the building of this library are not only helping the youths in the district but also are confirming the identity of the Italian American character of the area over the years.

Almost without exception, the people I interviewed were enthusiastic about their memory of the Italian American life in Belmont.

Footnotes for Chapter 3

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<sup>4</sup>ibid., p. 45.

<sup>5</sup>Andrew Greeley, That Most Distressed Nation (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968).

<sup>6</sup>M. Gordon, Acculturation in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) p. 7.

<sup>7</sup>Greeley, Why Can't They Be Like Us? p. 47.

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<sup>9</sup>Greeley, That Most Distressed Nation, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup>Daniel Patrick Moynihan, The Moynihan Report and Politics of Controversy (New York) p. 50.

<sup>11</sup>Oscar Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty," Urban Sociology

<sup>12</sup>Kenneth Clark, Dark Ghetto (New York, 1964).

<sup>13</sup>Steinberg, "The Ethnic Crisis in America" pp. 44-75.

<sup>14</sup>Greeley, That Most Distressed Nation, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup>Greeley, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup>Greeley, p. 25.

<sup>17</sup>Patrick Gallo, Political Alienation Among the Italians of New York Metropolitan Region (New York: N.Y.U. Dissertation, 1971) p. 12.

<sup>18</sup>Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power and Religion in a Rural Community (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968, rev. 1971) (1958 original).

<sup>19</sup>Harvey Zorbaugh, The Gold Coast and the Slum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929).

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<sup>24</sup>Gerald Suttles, The Social Order of the Slum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

<sup>25</sup>ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Leonard Cavello, The Social Background of the Italo-American School Child (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1967) ed. and intro. Francesco Cordasco.

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<sup>28</sup>Rocky D'Erasmus, Fordham was a Town: A Nostalgic Look into Fordham's Little Italy during the Twenties and Thirties (New York, 1978).

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<sup>30</sup>Luciano Iorizzo and Salvatore Mondello, The Italian Americans (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1971).

<sup>31</sup>Patrick J. Gallo, The Urban Experience of Italian-Americans (Staten Island, New York: American Italian Historical Association, 1975).

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CHAPTER FOUR:

The Italian American Women and Their Community:  
Compared and Contrasted Across the Generations

Overview

Italy has often been defined, with only slight exaggeration, as nothing more than a mosaic of millions of families.<sup>1</sup>

Thus far, this report has presented the Italian American myth as developed through the media, the images of Italian American women as stereotyped, the appropriate methodological approach for studying women, the position of women in Italy prior to and during the mass migration, the immigrants' experiences relating to the sojourners and to the settlement houses, the ecological analysis of the Belmont community, and a discussion of ethnicity across generations and intragenerationally.

This final section will compare and contrast the three generations of Italian Americans by focusing on: the family relations, gender roles, the meal, the aging family, the communication style, the women achievers, the family celebrations and traditions, death and dying rituals, religion, education, social class, and work. This describes

the world which my respondents live in.

This chapter is the unmaking of the myth which was explained in the beginning of this report. This chapter compares and contrasts those elements of the Italian American subculture across the generations from the perspective of its women.

This material is primarily from the interviews and participant observations completed over the last several years. I began in 1979 with the 76 oral histories of women living in Belmont. Their children's and grandchildren's generations were followed up. The result was interviews with family and friends in 38 Italian American families. While the American culture has tended to regard Italians as a homogenous group, Italians themselves have never had a strong sense of unified group belonging. Their allegiance is to the smaller family unit, and its modified variations. The reasons are rooted in Italian history.

Historically, for the Southern Italian peasant in Italy, life was a struggle to survive amidst economic deprivation and constant political upheaval. In addition, not only had the changing government, ruling classes and the Church proven oppressive, but the instability that surrounded them make it foolhardy to look outside the family for guidance and support. My first-generation respondents

described their families as the core of life, the supportive network and the measure of all things. These people turned inward to the clan. "My family is the only ones I would depend upon..." said an 89-year-old, immigrant woman.

The beginning of this section will generally describe family relations. However, keep in mind that the women were not only the focal point, but were put center stage in this report. The character, strength and depth of the women is one of the best kept secrets of the Italian American ethnic group.

#### Introduction

Generally, the stereotypes and media images of the Italian American women are unmistakably different from the WASP ideal of women. A common image depicts most Italian American women as fertile, overweight and preoccupied with pasta.

Typically, she would be near a kitchen or dining room in the act of bringing food to a tableful of waiting family members or perhaps calling her children to supper. Her dress is covered by an apron, she wears no make-up, and her hair is black. The actresses or models of these Italian American women have dark eyes, heavy features and ample figures.

Another view is of the seriously religious person in church. This stereotyped person is with a group of other

women, all dressed in black, and saying the rosary. In a younger version, as was pointed out, the Italian American woman is a fiery, emotional seductress. These are what I have referred to as the Mamma Ronzoni, Mother Caprini and Sofia Loren myths of the Italian American women.

These immigrant women devalue the ideal American women as "...shallow and nonsense." One 83-year-old, woman said:

I can't understand why any Italian girl would want to become American. There is no real respect for her in an American house. In the Italian home a woman is the heart and soul.

In fact, it is quite obvious from my oral histories that this was a very common sentiment echoed with different words but similar meaning.

#### The Italian American Women and Family Relationships

Keeping in mind the historical elements relating to the Italian Americans familial experience, there are views of family traits which emerge. The WASP ideal of power is through separation and individualism which implies personal expression or achievement that sets one apart from the family unit. The Italian American values individuality which involves personal expression or achievement that occurs within the framework of the family.

Also, the gender roles were articulated by my respondents. The father is considered the head of the

family. Within the family unit, the mother dominates and is the decision maker. The Italian American family is matriarchal.

The benefit of the mother's food giving, nurturing role is bestowed upon family members: sons, husband, daughters, parents, in-laws, sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews, godchildren, and cousins, usually in that order.

The three generations of respondents discussed the warmth and support of their Italian American families. But there was also a discussion of the sense of entrapment, guilt, jealousy and conflict within the family structure. Among other things, part of the reason for this entrapment involves the demand that Italian American family members remain children within the family unit.

The family takes care of the children by giving them warm, loving, comfortable homes with always enough to eat; but it is when the child grows up that they don't know how to handle us.

(a 56-year-old, second-generation woman)

My children become upset when I'm with my mother because I am treated like a child... and I guess I act like a child when I'm around my mother.

(a 49-year-old, second-generation woman)

My daughter is very angry with my mother because she [the daughter] can't see how her grandmother could treat me like I wasn't capable of doing anything right. I always related with my mother that way... I really don't mind.

(a 53-year-old, second-generation woman)

The maternal strength is important in the Italian American family. Many of my second-generation respondents described feelings of impossible standards, criticisms and competition when discussing their relationships with their mothers. In several interviews with second- and third-generation women who had brothers, they each perceived that there was more approval and an oppressive overprotectiveness experienced by the boys. The women felt less nurtured than their brothers.

I could never do anything right for my mother. She always found something to criticize me for.  
(a 66-year-old, second-generation woman)

I always felt less important than my brother in my mother's eyes.  
(a 39-year-old, third-generation woman)

The sun rises and sets because of my brother, according to my mother.  
(a 34-year-old, third-generation woman)

When I visited one home there was a very large portrait of the third-generation son hanging in the living room. The sister commented that his picture has "...the place of honor" because their mother just worships her "precious son."

Mother-Son Relationships in the Italian American Families. The mother-son relationship is one of nurturance and support. An Italian American mother raises her boys to be sons all their lives.

The mother is the soul, the heart and the anchor of the

family. The mother is all powerful in the house and is totally responsible for the well-being and nurturance of her children. This maternal strength continues throughout the lives of her sons. The males feel this supportive nurturance and describe their mothers as "providers." The age and marital status of the man does not make much difference.

Two second-generation brothers, 67 and 71 years old, carried on at the funeral of their 94-year-old mother because they felt the loss of this supportive provider. Both men were extremely successful in business and both earned a six-figure income during the previous year.

You can have ten wives but you will only have one mother.  
(a 67-year-old, second-generation woman)

This comment was also frequently made by the men when they talked of their mothers or to their sons.

My mother had the power in our house... She would cope with all the demands of the family... She did everything from the cooking to cleaning to budgeting...  
(a 31-year-old, third-generation man)

I still get a call from my mother every night even though I talk to her or visit her in the daytime...  
(a 68-year-old, second-generation man)

My husband's mother still thinks of him as her son and sometimes as the father of her grandchildren... but he is not seen as my husband!  
(a 59-year-old, second-generation woman)

The mother-son relationships last to the grave. An Italian American mother raises her boys to be sons and fathers.

Father-Son Relationships in the Italian American Families. The father-son relationship is based on respect. The second-generation Italian American male, however, does not hold up his father as a role model for business and career. The Italian American male lacks a clear role model regarding professional aspirations, especially the second-generation group. The economic well-being of the family is the value stressed by the males of all three generations. The women stated that family support and economic security were vital functions for their sons to successfully fulfill.

My father taught me all he knew about his brick laying skill, but he told me he'd break my hands if I chose that job for my life's work.  
(third-generation Italian American businessman)

Mother-Daughter Relationships in the Italian American Families. The maternal strength impacts the daughters differently. Many of the second- and third-generation women articulated that their mothers set impossible standards for them. These women felt competition and criticism rather than the overprotection experienced by their brothers.

. The daughters craved the approval from their mothers and felt that their status would parallel that of their mothers after marriage and the birth of their children. The wife/mother role would raise the daughter's status. Though the female feels less important than her father and brothers in her mother's eyes, the daughter is aware of the ascent to power in marriage. This was a reason that many of my respondents gave for their desire to marry early.

The daughters identify with their mothers when they establish their own families. This leads to a close relationship with the females' parents. The sons are assumed to be married and to become absorbed in their wife's family. The daughter is expected to continue with the caretaking role of her aging parents.

The tragic thing about not having a daughter is that there is no one to take care of you when you get old.  
(a 69-year-old, second generation woman)

My brother had his mother-in-law living in with him for years. When papa died and mama could no longer live alone, I naturally was going to take her with me. It is the only thing to do... there is no choice.  
(a 57-year-old, second generation woman)

Father-Daughter Relationships in the Italian American Families. The traditional Italian-American family is in many ways a matriarchial culture where feminine strength is accepted. The internal system of the Italian-American

family demonstrates that a non-sexist supportive attitude exists towards the females except in relation to sexual matters. The fathers are very protective of the daughters when it comes to their sexuality. The Italian American fathers of girls believe that their

daughters could do anything and achieve anything that they set their minds to do. I have no doubt that my girls can have what they want in life...

(a 58-year-old, second-generation man)

My mother and sisters were hard working, strong women that organized and ran our lives.

(a 55-year-old, man)

These men were very physical with their young daughters, but became physically distant and protective as their daughters matured. Italian fathers coddled and protected their little daughters. They felt very comfortable being as warm and nurturing as their wives in dealing with young children. However, the playful and affectionate physical contact would stop, especially when a daughter reached puberty.

I think that the reason I rebelled as a teenager was because I felt my father withdrew his love.

(a 29-year-old, third-generation woman)

My adolescent years were hard because I felt distant from my father ... who had been so terrific when I was young. I felt lonely and angry, so I would go out with boys I knew he'd hate ...and I'd put on make-up.

(a 37-year-old, second-generation woman)

The sibling relations and those of the extended family network will be discussed at a later section of this chapter.

Italian Americans and the Female-Male Relationships.

The oversimplified, shallow stereotypes served to make the younger Italian Americans of the opposite sex less attractive.

The third-generation women gave several reasons for their lack of romantic interest in Italian American men. There was the jealousy that they felt towards their brothers who were pampered by their mothers and who had greater freedom. This was compounded by the torn feelings they had about their relationships with their fathers which became more distant as they became women. These granddaughters of the immigrants also saw the negative situations developing as their aging fathers reached retirement (which I will describe in more detail in a later part of this chapter).

The third-generation Italian American males were involved with the strong mother-son relationship. "Women as mothers" was a repeated phrase when discussing the opposite sex with these young Italian Americans. These male respondents resented this

all-pervasive nurturance which was very supportive but much too much control...  
(a 38-year-old, third-generation male)

. Italian American women have  
treacherously, sly control...  
(a 33-year-old, third-generation male)

I resent being characterized as  
childlike and I feel the Italian  
American women do this to their men in  
the home...  
(a 39-year-old, third-generation male)

The traditional pattern of sex-role segregation and the  
stereotyped depictions of the Italians-Americans has had its  
impact on the female-male relationships.

#### Italian American Celebrations and Traditional Family Events

There is a definite extended family pattern dominated by  
matrilineal descent and maternal authority in the Italian  
American family. This family type is also perceptible in  
the second generation, and a bit diluted in the third  
generation according to my observations.

In this general overview of my material, it must be  
kept in mind that social class, mobility and professional  
identity are critical elements in what I would consider a  
valid analysis. It could be said that "...universally in  
public, men are obeyed by their wives," according to my  
respondents, "...however, in the privacy of the Italian  
American households the believed father-right is not as  
deeply rooted as it would appear."

The Myth and the Outside World. The myth projected out  
is sometimes convenient to hide behind in order to secure

the tradition and insulation of the family. It also serves to reduce the stresses with which contemporary women are faced in the role of achievers. The fear of success can be easily avoided by internalizing the stereotypical images.

The Internal Reality and the Italian Americans. The family role of wife/mother is very powerful in an Italian American network and has a universal meaning that the in-group shares, understands and respects, to which others don't have access. This role was described to me as functioning to control those dimensions of life that keep the family operating on a daily basis in the short-term as well as the long-term.

The women occupying this status influence not only those of their generation, but also the other birth cohorts of their family network or family community. Some examples of the range and techniques of influence vary within different clans, as does the degree of subtlety.

Meals, family celebrations, holiday gatherings, ritual expression of special events as: births, Christenings, Communion, Confirmations, weddings, anniversaries, birthdays, deaths and related events of the members of the extended family community are controlling elements under the direction and coordination of the women of the family. The Italian American family community demands lifelong loyalty and interdependence among its members. The social life

This quote was strikingly similar to many others by the third-generation women I talked to, with few differences in the core of their descriptions. Most descriptions of these events were happy ones of warm, close, loving, loyal and accepting relations.

There were also elements in the descriptions which indicated jealousy and envy. The jealousy was reflected in all generations with variations from cohort to cohort. These aspects seem to function to control and motivate the women. The status claims were made in the family network and a mother would boast that she has all her adult children conforming to the family's traditional event.

There are variations which reflect the extent to a woman's power. For example, one second-generation respondent, who has two married sons, takes great pride in (and is envied by her sisters) the fact that "...my daughters-in-law can host family get-togethers just as often and as well as my nieces."

Another added boost to the status claim occurs if the daughter-in-law isn't from an Italian family, because this mother feels she has not only succeeded in socializing her son in the proper respect for the family traditions but also her new "non-Italian" child. Therefore, in her older years, she reaffirms her function as socializer and transmitter of the family culture.

The Italian American Families and Their Women Achievers

At this point, I'd like to address the image of women from the perspective of the Italian American family-achievers. Most of those that I would categorize in this group are in a profession such as law, medicine, business ownership, academic professorship or social work.

I found these respondents had very positive memories of their childhoods. I found that the achievers had images of their mothers as strong women who were the centers of the household. Both the second- and third-generation achievers had a sense of power in their feminine identity. When the mother was an inadequate role model, my high-achieving respondents identified with another female figure in their family network. Some described grandmothers, aunts, godmothers and even older sisters. The women who were role models were powerful and decision makers.

My mother was a strong lady... she was a survivor... real simple but she had great pride and confidence in her place in the world... I got a lot from watching her.  
(a 49-year-old, third-generation woman)

Unanimously, the women in this group defined the Italian American women in their lives as "strong," "adaptable," "dependable," "not weak," "not infantile," and "capable." The women described themselves as able to structure their life experiences as well as those around

them. There was a sense of awareness of social control and power that they (the women) possessed.

To reinforce this point I'd like to quote a second-generation college professor, mother of two, who is married to a second-generation Italian:

My mother was a strong guiding force in my life... There was no limit as to what I could and should achieve in my life. My father was quiet and hard working but not a go-getter, my mother was. What ambition I have is from my mother.

This last quote was significant to me in a very personal way because it applies to my own biography. My mother is a strong, powerful person who is actively ambitious, while my father is quiet and hard working. I found in the families that I studied with achievers, the women were used as role models for the younger members.

Brothers of achievers were described in stressed relationships with regard to the association with the mother. The achievers complained that the brothers were favored by their mothers when they were growing up. However, at a later stage in their lives, these women felt that they could gain significant power by "...acceding to the food-giving role after marriage, which strengthened the women's identification with their mothers." A discussion of this aspect of the Italian American culture is important since it directly relates to the family as a community.

The Aging Italian American Families

Women's Status in American Society. The Italian American women must be considered within the context of the position of women in American society. Women's status in our society has particularly undergone a major change which directly contributes to the transformation in every aspect of life: home, school, the workplace and the larger culture.

The Aging Italian American Families: Demographic Analysis. In 1900, demographically, a person was old at forty and dead at fifty, but today, a couple should expect to survive jointly the marriage of their last child and spend at least one third of their married life alone as seniors. These facts have significant effects on my respondents' lives, particularly the lives of the third-generation respondents. These cohorts are faced with retired fathers, aging mothers and a sense of American feminism growing out of their adolescent experiences of the women's movement.

The Italian American Subculture and the Aging Families. The Italian American subculture creates problems for the woman in the second generation and her children because of the male's role expectations when he retires. The man expects his wife to maintain the same family role except that

she should concentrate her efforts on him:

All day, every evening and weekends should be devoted to serving him [the husband], cooking for him, cleaning and shopping.  
(a 68-year-old, second-generation woman)

Retirement and the Italian American Families. It seems that when a man retires his aging wife must begin to double her workload and cut down her social network, except for those things that include husbands. In fact, five second-generation respondents, between sixty-three and seventy-two years old with retired Italian American husbands, very emotionally said that they "envied their widowed friends..." because they were "free of the domestic demands of their husbands...."

In each of these cases the women had always assumed the traditional wife/mother role exclusively and their spouses had worked outside the home six days a week (five-and-a-half to five days a week later in their work-careers). These women love their husbands, but the endless serving and increased demands complicate the domestic lives when total retirement becomes a reality.

Division of Labor According to Gender in Aging Italian American Families. Those respondents who described a more equal setup with regards to the gender roles were members of families whose men were in the professions. The woman in these households was the decision maker for domestic

situations; she was the power in the home with significant influence on the social life of the family.

When second-generation professional men married non-Italian American wives, the ethnic dimension in their everyday lives was almost nonexistent, but in most cases, the special holidays and ethnic celebrations were followed. One Westchester doctor explained that his non-Italian American wife wouldn't understand the importance of his calling his mother daily, so he waits to go to the office before communicating with her. This man had no intention of not calling and he wished to avoid criticism from his wife.

Sibling Bonding and the Aging Italian American Families.

The second generation has very close sibling bonds, especially the sisters. A husband usually considers not only his wife, but her sisters too. Close proximity is vital to this group and if one sister moves, the others will probably follow.

Three of the family groups in my study were in the process of making a move to Florida as the men reached retirement age. One sibling would buy in an area, then would begin to search for homes for the rest of the sisters and brothers.

I bought my house and then all my sisters and brother came down to stay with me, one family at a time. During the visit, we would look at real estate and houses for sale.  
(a 72-year-old, second-generation woman)

Sometimes nieces, nephews, cousins, in-laws and even godparents would follow to the same area.

Birth Order, Siblings and the Aging Italian Families.

As the second generation ages, the birth order of their generation and that of the third generation seems to gain added significance.

The oldest sibling, whether a male or female, has a specific status in the family. Being unmarried is the only thing which detracts from the power of this position. If the oldest sibling is not married, then the power passes to the next oldest married, or in some family, the next oldest male. This second-generation person assumes the head of the extended family when the parents become too old to function, or, when death takes the first generation.

The third generation becomes more conscious of their status within their extended family as the aging process goes on:

Whenever there was a death, wedding, christening, or other family affair... my mother always told us what the obligations were on our part. But when mama died, I [the oldest married daughter] was first informed of the events within the family... It became my job to notify my sisters and brothers of their obligations.  
(a 57-year-old, second-generation woman)

The third generation had similar patterns as the second

generation in those cases where the second-generation parents were dead. The only thing that added to the status of the new family head from the ranks of the siblings was the success of work. Only when there was considerable success in the third generation was there even a slight alteration in the status levels of the siblings. In these cases, the successful individuals may be approached for advice, or their opinion may have slightly more importance on a final family decision, than all the others of the sibling group. For example, in a family deciding whether to take mama or papa to a specific doctor, the vote of the oldest is very important, but the successful member will also have added weight to his opinion.

Ethnicity and the Aging Italian American Families.

The third generation tends to become more actively involved in the family traditions as the parents age. The aging parents depend upon their children to host the family get-together with the traditional foods, to visit at designated times, to meet obligation payment. This will be further discussed in the ritual section.

Community and the Italian Americans:

Compared and Contrasted Across the Generations.

Introduction. Several studies have examined residential segregation among Italian Americans as

discussed in Chapter Three of this report. From the very beginning of their immigrations, Italians settled in what have been called "Little Italies," and these ethnic communities tended to be concentrated along the Eastern Seaboard, particularly in New York and in the cities of Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Jersey.<sup>2</sup> Americans of Italian descent make up more than one sixth of the population of New York City.<sup>3</sup> To a large extent, these broad patterns of residential settlement have been maintained.<sup>4</sup> The census figures show us that almost two-thirds of the Italian Americans live in the northeastern portion of the United States.

Walter Firey's 1947 study of the Italian North End of Boston found that second-generation Italian Americans were moving to the suburbs.<sup>5</sup> Later Glazer and Moynihan noted:

While the Jewish map of New York City in 1920 bears almost no relation to that in 1961, the Italian districts, though weakened in some cases and strengthened in others, are still in large measure where they were...<sup>6</sup>

They also noted two trends among second- and third-generation Italian Americans. One was a tendency to redo old neighborhoods and the other was to move to the suburbs in clusters of relatives. Often the moves were a two generational process, that is, the parents and children

moved to the same suburban neighborhoods. My respondents show a somewhat similar pattern in Westchester, Long Islands, New Jersey and Florida.

Kantrowitz does a detailed analysis of residential segregation based on census data and concludes, "that ethnic segregation ...has changed little over a generation."

Italian Americans and the Community. The second generation women described the community where most of their daily activities take place as a non-spatially based network. This group has a community of spirit, where territorial distance isn't quite as critical as it was for their parents.

I will discuss the spatial patterns of Italian Americans in the next section, but first I'd like to discuss those respondents who feel they are "...living too far from the family" (a second-generation woman). Those of that second-generation group who moved to Long Island, New Jersey, and Westchester and who couldn't visit as often because of age "are suffering because of longing to see family..." (a 74-year-old, second-generation woman). A woman who lives close to her children but between a half hour to forty-five minute ride from her sisters said:

My husband can no longer drive the distance and I must depend upon my children to take me.

The third-generation is being brought back into many of

only those traditions that pleased me. I didn't have to answer to my parents, or those of their generation ... so I was freer to change the way, my family's ways. My family's traditions fit my liking.

Spatial Mobility and the Italian Americans. Moving out of a neighborhood, or even to a suburb was viewed as desirable as long as "the distance wasn't too far and the phone bills weren't going to be too prohibitive..." (a 61-year-old, second-generation woman). Another claims:

My phone bills average between fifty-five and sixty dollars a month now ...I just call my sisters after eleven at night for the lower rates...

This woman moved up to Rockland County and the rest of her social network remained in Westchester and in the Bronx. The frequency of contact is quite regular, three to five calls a week to each of her four sisters, with weekly visits.

These patterns are similar to those reported by Gallo, who found that while the first-generation Italians tended to live in closer proximity to kin than the second- or third-generations, the younger Italian Americans visited relatives and were in turn visited more frequently. Gallo concluded that

the second-generation respondents became increasingly active outside the family as they acculturate to urban values, but at the same time retain family

contacts. The extended family plays a greater role for the second- and third-generation respondents than for the first.<sup>9</sup>

There are studies focusing on social class and Italian-American ethnicity. Lopreato researched Italian Americans in New Haven and found that the working class group visited family twice as much as the general population.<sup>7</sup> Kobrin and Goldschneider<sup>10</sup> compared Catholic ethnic groups with Jews and Protestants in regard to the issue of residential concentration. Like Lopreato, they found that working-class Italian Americans were more likely to reside in ethnically cohesive neighborhoods.

The relationship between social class and ethnicity is complex, and I don't think a final answer can be provided with the data available. It seems unlikely that the upward social mobility of the third- and fourth-generation Italians Americans will lead to complete assimilation. Rather, the evidence from my respondents indicate that there will continue to be a distinct ethnic identity. Others report similar findings. Goering's study noted that third-generation Italian Americans in Providence, R. I., were more likely to think of themselves ethnically than first- or second-generation Italian Americans.<sup>11</sup> This reaffirms my observation that ethnic awareness is increasing.

Death, Dying and the Italian Americans

Death and dying are vital aspects of the Italian Americans experience which are surrounded by rituals and traditions. There are many intricate, detailed complexes that were described to me by my respondents. This data confirms the parameters of the family's network, the intensity of the social relations, and the statuses of those involved. I feel that the best way to understand this aspect is to describe several scenarios which I found to be most typical. These rituals are basically derived from the mumified practice of the immigrant generation who described the wakes in the home. Dying was a part of life and everyone was part of the rituals.

A second-generation woman in her early seventies had a seriously ill husband who had to have his leg removed due to diabetes. Her description of his condition included an emotional description of fights over his diet. She had told me on several occasions that she "envied the widows" whom she knew. She admitted that the characteristics which she found so unbearable to live with were nurtured by her over the years in her family role. Her sons and daughters were also part of the socialization.

I created the Frankenstein I had to spend my last years with. He became impossible after his retirement. In his view, my sole function in life was to

the older traditions of the holidays and special celebrations of the family because of their parents' dependence.

My mother can lay a guilt trip on me if I don't take her to a funeral, wedding or special anniversary party in the family. My life would be unbearable for months if she would miss an event in the family that she defined as important.

This third-generation respondent had not been active in the family network in her late teens and early twenties, but since her father's health began to fail, the daughter was depended upon for transportation.

Italian Americans and Child Care. The fourth generation are usually tagging along and growing up with many of the traditional rituals. In addition, the third-generation women who work are depending upon their mothers, mothers-in-law and aunts to babysit, which is further re-enforcing the ethnic traditions in the fourth generation. The child-care options for the first generation were quite different since most of those women left their mothers in Italy. These immigrants who had to work depended upon neighbors. The neighborhood became the basis of the community where the women would socialize on the stoops and would "keep an eye out for the children playing in the streets."

Also, this first generation felt more autonomous because as one respondent put it:

Since my mother and other members of my family remained in Italy, I could follow

serve his needs as he viewed them.

This was an unattainable task since the male's perceived needs were not within anyone's realm or capacity to satisfy.

After the surgery, the husband had to be placed in a nursing home until he learned to accommodate the loss of the limb. The guilt and trauma that rippled through the family were enormous. The second-generation siblings and their spouses, the children, the nieces and nephews, the grandchildren, and even the older of the great grandchildren are still debating the issue. For this clan, the general census was in favor of the decision since it was only to be "for a short time."

However, those with negative feelings had their point confirmed when the man died in the nursing home because of very deep depression and resentment. My respondent visited him daily for six to ten hours for five-and-a-half months until his death. She is experiencing the stages of acceptance which the "death and dying" literature describes, but with a heavy dose of guilt.

The oldest daughter of my respondent has assumed responsibility for her mother's welfare even though my respondent still maintains her own apartment, manages her own finances, buys her own food, cooks, cleans, and travels. The first family function after her husband's death was her

granddaughter's wedding four months later. On this occasion there was criticism because my respondent wasn't in black or some other dark colored clothes. Also, it was felt that she shouldn't have danced at the reception. Most of the critical comments were made by sisters-in-law.

Another second-generation respondent described her mother's wake and period of mourning:

I can see the casket in the living room with flowers all around... All my aunts were in black, even their stockings, slips and other underwear. The dinner was a very large feast...

Ritual and Family Traditions: Death. The basic traditional family rituals at a time of death seemed to be used by every clan I studied.

At the time of death, there seemed to be a basic formula of notification: the immediate family is collected and then one member of each branch is called, usually the oldest sibling. This person has the duty to contact those within the family, notifying them of the place of the wake, the time of the funeral, the expected gift, extent of visit to the wake and/or funeral, and those who should be obligated to attend from her family.

Not to be told of a death in the family within a reasonable amount of time is insulting and indicates that those close to the deceased do not consider these people as significant members of the family network. When there can

be blood ties traced, then the gesture indicates a lack of respect for the person's status in the family. Who shows up at the wake, how much they give, what kind of flowers, how many nights they attend, whether they attend the funeral services at church and/or at the cemetery, whether they come to the dinner after the burial, all indicate the position the persons perceive they have relative to the core-grieving group.

Funerals. Funerals offer an opportunity for family members to confirm their status in the family network, to reinforce certain ties, to legitimize sentimental attachments, or to sever relations. This is a sensitive and vital part of the family's tradition which becomes a significant dimension of the family's history, and it won't usually be forgotten or forgiven, as the case may be. Time does not heal these wounds in a family's experience.

A second-generation 73-year-old, woman married to a second-generation male was terminally ill with cancer. She was very clear about her condition to the extended family. She was satisfied with the visitation frequency of her immediate family about which she used to brag. However, her cousins and one of her sisters-in-law did not fulfill her expectations. Therefore, she gave strict orders that these people were not to be notified of her death and that they were not to attend the wake or

funeral. This message was announced over and over to everyone who came to visit. She settled her affairs before her death: she gave her furs, jewelry, crystals, etc., to the family in a value equal to what she perceived as the closeness of the relationship.

Family Bonds and the Death Rituals. "Closeness" is defined by my respondent as "blood relations and the amount of respect that is shown in that relationship." Also, the economic worth of that item along with its sentimental value is taken into account. This is an important way to demonstrate the range of the families' network.

Women, Death and Strength. A 93-year old, first-generation woman died in the Fall. She had lived alone for over twenty years after her husband died in the late Fifties. However, the past year and a half was spent in the home of her youngest daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughters. At her death, the family found that she had prepared the dress she was to be waked in, the funeral home, the church, the priest, the cemetery plot and the flowers. In fact, she had envelopes with amounts of money that her children, grandchildren, greatgrandchildren, nieces and nephews, sisters, and brothers should spend on the floral arrangements for the funeral. Her entire estate was clearly divided up among her children and grandchildren.

This woman even made arrangements for the dinner which is traditional after the ceremony at the cemetery. She told me that she didn't want to be a bother to anyone, and that she didn't want her funeral to be a time when the family members would compete with flower displays that were beyond their means. She wanted that time to be a warm occasion for the family to get together and reaffirm their solidarity. She definitely saw herself as a symbol of the family solidarity and I feel she was valid in her judgment. Her funeral came off exactly as she had planned.

The conversation reaffirmed the important of the clan and of close relationships through all stages of life. The funeral was used as an occasion to socialize the younger members of the family and to encourage the internalization of the need for family loyalty.

Follow-up Rituals. Many of the families I interviewed had elaborate follow-up rituals which added to the solidification of the family community. The anniversary of the death was generally celebrated with a mass, a cemetery visit and breakfast/lunch for many. This was sometimes also done on Palm Sunday, All Souls' Day and other significant saints' days. Men were not expected to take off from work on those days, but usually family representatives are expected to attend.

Work, that is wage labor, was valued highly, and only

close relatives would be expected to miss a day's salary and this would be for the funeral only. Many of my second-generation respondents would make status claims by referring to how many times their children with their spouses have taken the role of the family representative at funerals, wakes, anniversary gatherings, and other such functions.

These women convey the feeling that they raised their children to respect the family and to understand the duties and obligations which are vital for the clan to continue to survive. When daughters-in-law and sons-in-law can be controlled as well, then the power of the core family heads is clearly affirmed to every member.

Also observed is the wearing of black until death, that is, every piece of clothing: dress, shoes, hose, slip and underwear. Some families have small shrines and light votive candles each evening.

Socializing the Family Traditions and Rituals.

Obedient daughters-in-law were particularly envied. My third-generation respondents describe their participation as vital for their sanity and psychological well-being:

My life would be unbearable if I didn't attend the family function because my mother has already begun to call me three times a day about who is expected to attend.  
(a 30 year old third-generation mother of two)

Details of date, time, dress, gifts, others attending, others invited, and general significance of the hosting group, along with the proposed menu, are part of the information circulated in the extended family's communication network. This communication chain is very sophisticated, extremely efficient and quick.

The women of the second generation have a close sibling bond which facilitates communication. As I discussed in several other sections of this research, the sisters of this second generation have a very tight connection with one another and are also very socially and psychologically interdependent. The husbands, brothers, children, nieces and nephews are conscious of this relationship; and if they want to function peacefully in the family network, accept it by respecting it.

In many cases, a third-generation respondent will discuss mothers, that is, the biological mother and her sisters (the social mothers). Men of the second generation are used to dealing with and considering not only his wife but her sisters as well. In fact, a woman of this second generation is usually pitied if she doesn't have sisters or daughters. Having friends is acceptable, but this second-generation woman will always feel that a sister should and will be considered first, in every situation.

Therefore, the death and dying dimension of the Italian

American culture is another significant complex which solidifies the subcommunity's boundaries and confirms the power positions within the clan. The networks of relationship are re-established at this stage of a family's experience. Funerals are times of family reunions and a time to reconfirm loyalties and demonstrate respect, commitment, and a sense of belong. (Weddings also serve this "getting together" function.) The flowers, the money given and the visits are norms understood by everyone in the family network. Reciprocity is a core element as this comment from a second-generation respondent indicated:

I have noted who came to my Joe's wake, how many times, what they gave and how many times they visited... these things I shall never forget.

The Italian American Seniors and Their Ethnic Revival.

One pattern which began to emerge in the past few years was an ethnic revival for several second-generation respondents.

Italian American widows were becoming very active in ethnic associations and clubs. Several of my second-generation Westchesterites told me that since the death of their husbands, they have free times. These women were proud of their "roots" and "craved to learn" about Italians and Italian Americans. They are enrolled in "Italian Language" courses and courses in "Italian Culture." They also belong to the National Organization of Italian

American women (NOIAW), SIAMO (see appendix), the Sons of Italy (the female group), the Salerno Club and many others.

My daughter has got me involved in the Italian groups around here. I'm glad... I enjoy being with my own kind.  
(a 61 year old second-generation woman)

Since I'm a widow, I have time to do what I want... I enjoy being part of an Italian group.  
(73 year old second-generation woman)

The Jewish friends I have are the same as me when it comes to family... I like being with those women because we understand each other... They [Jewish women] have taught me to be a joiner and to be proud of my ethnic group.  
(a 63 year old second generation woman)

### Religion, Morality and the Italian American Women

Introduction: Religion and the Church. The Southern Italian peasant family-structure blended with the American experience in a variety of ways and emerged as a complex of attitudes, values, goals and norms which fostered strength and power in the females, while at the same time imposed severe restrictions on them. This was in part due to the religious symbols, the mythology of the culture and the intergenerational role expectations. The Church was the center for the rites of passage, such as Communion, Confirmation and marriage. These were all occasions for celebrations and festivity.

The Italian American women consider themselves

religious. The first generation describes their deep religious commitment in the old country. However, these immigrant women did not feel strong ties to the Church authority. The Church was not a unifying force for these Italians and did not provide a unifying structure for the Italians Americans. The Italian Americans in all three generations personalized their relationship with religion.

Many of my respondents would pray frequently and were devoted to the saints and the Blessed Virgin.

I pray anywhere and with anyone. It is important to pray.  
(a 66-year-old, second-generation woman)

In Italy the only time the women would get together was for the religious feasts...  
(an 89-year-old, first-generation woman)

The saints my mother and grandmother taught us about were very practical saints. There were those saints who: helped find things, Saint Anthony; helped in hopeless cases, Saint Jude; protected the traveler, Saint Christopher; watched over pregnant women, Saint Anna; and Saint Francis was kind, loving and caring, especially to animals.  
(a 49-year-old, third generation woman)

There was a child saint, Dominic Savio... and as a child, I remember being impressed that someone didn't have to be an adult to become a saint... I remember belong to a Saint Dominic Savio Club where the kids of my neighborhood would get together and play... Each meeting there was some inspirational talk geared for us kids... It was really nice...  
(a 39 year old third-generation male)

The religion was the way of further expressing the Italian American ethnic traditions through celebrations of the religious holidays. Many of my third-generation respondents felt that they are more conscious of the traditional family celebrations for religious feasts because their mothers are getting "...too old to prepare the food for the enlarged family." Also, this third-generation woman continued:

My daughters are getting older and I want them to know how to celebrate the holidays the way my mother and grandmother did.

Some working women also said that since other groups stress the importance of their religious observances, then they also demand equal time off.

The Family and Religion: Unifying Force. The religion did not serve as a unifying force in the lives of the Italian Americans, the family did.

The Italian mother raises her family to strengthen family loyalties while the American mother expects her children to move out into society.  
(a 41-year-old, third-generation professional woman)

The Italian American family acts as a centripetal force which receives some of its energy from religion.

The Madonna and the Italian Americans. One of the most

important symbols or ideals in the Italian-American family, according to my respondents, is the Madonna. Unlike the "masculine super-ego" postulated by Freud, the Madonna can be described as the feminine super-ego of the Italian American family. Symbolically, for my respondents and their community, the Madonna, the mother of Christ, has occupied a special place and has been the recipient of especially fervent devotion. The relationship of the supplicant to the Madonna is one of child to mother. God the Father is seen as a more distant figure who may be approached through the intermediary of the Madonna. She is considered to be the ideal maternal figure, one which all young girls are expected to emulate.

Characteristics of the Madonna and the Impact on Italian American Women. The Madonna possesses great strength and power by virtue of Her uniqueness in being the vehicle through which Christ was born into the world. "...Her qualities are admired by men and women... There is no limitations to her love and tenderness which is always available." One respondent told me that since "...She is conceived without sin, She became a mother as Her primary roles which is asexual."

Young Italian American girls, socialized according to the traditional norms and values, were encouraged to possess the ideal qualities such as "...patience, kindness and

limitless love." The Madonna ideal has had varying but profound impact on Italian American women.

Contradictory Messages Directed Towards the Italian American Women. There are many contradictory messages going to the women of the different generations. The first generation knew and taught their daughters that

The husband must be satisfied by his wife, it is her duty. A man has certain needs that a wife must fulfill.

Many of the first-generation respondents were reluctant to discuss sexual issues. One woman claimed that she counseled her granddaughter on the eve of her wedding that

Sex was unpleasant, but if a husband is expected not to wander, his need must be filled by his wife... It is a wife's duty.

There is a notion of morality and of nature. The Catholic Church discourages human sexuality, but the Italians are very sensual people.

Italian Americans and Catholicism. The Italians who arrived in the new world found an Irish Catholic Church in the urban ghettos. This Church was not receptive to the Italians immigrants and their ways. My respondents described incidents where they were refused seats in the main part of the church:

We [the Italians] could only sit in the balcony...  
(an 88 year old first-generation woman)

We would not give into the collection basket until the end of mass and we would give only if we liked the sermon, which would get the Irish mad.  
(an 86 year old first-generation woman)

The Italians used their Italian American Church for many ethnic expressions which became the annual feasts still celebrated today. The specific discussion of the evolution of the churches in the Belmont area is described in detail in Chapter Three of this study.<sup>12</sup>

The men were much more visible in their activities and support of the Church in America, according to the testimony of many of my respondents. In Italy, most people knew each other in their town or villages, but not so in the American city. So the Church was a useful vehicle to prove one's morality and trustworthiness, which was particularly important to those who had businesses in the community.

I always was part of the Church processions and I always supported the Church... My neighbors knew I was an honest man to do business with.

Italian American Sexuality and Morality. There were some respondents who joked about sex when they were with women friends and relatives of their birth cohort. These women were serious and humorous in their conversations about sex, but there was a general consensus that females were in more control and far more powerful.

There were several folk songs sung to me concerning sexual themes. Most were referring to husband-wife sexuality. However, there were a few that focused on the parish priest "...getting a young girl pregnant" (see the appendix for some examples of the songs).

This opinion was meant to include the physical dimension as well as the social. An 88-year-old woman, who was a mother of nine, stated about sexuality:

Men think a cut on the face or a bruise from a fight is so horrible and painful, but I'd like to hear their moans if their bodies swelled up for nine months, then opened up like a bloody cavern to expell a child. That is the real meaning of life... pain, motherhood.

The limitless love for children and the importance of protection by the mother was defined as top priority. With large families there had to be sibling support, the family had to be the first priority in every member's mind.

Italian American Sex Roles. Historically, women's lives were centered around child-rearing and household responsibilities. Men were supposed to be the decision-makers, the heads of the households, although the women had considerable power in family decisions, especially concerning the children.

The husband-wife relationships were socially and legally segregated (see Chapter Two of this report) and likely to be emotionally distant. The first-generation respondents

reflected some elements of this rural way of life in their descriptions of their marriages. The novels seem to give a vivid sense of the feelings these immigrant women were trying to articulate. One respondent told me she felt that Umbertina was a true description of her own life experience before, during and after emigration. However, in contrast, the college-educated, third-generation respondents had very close, emotional, sexual relationships with their spouses.

The traditional Italian American sex-role expectations for females consisted of the stereotyped image of the "nice girl". This nice person was to exhibit the traditional feminine virtues of being affectionate, nurturant, unassertive, attractive but sexually reserved and primarily concerned with children and the maintenance of the home.

The Italian American men do not expect to dominate women in decision-making, but they learn to show a protective attitude toward female family members, that is, daughters, sisters, mothers, aunts, nieces and female cousins. In return for this the Italian American women will always courteously yield to the men's opinions or wishes "in public."

Italian American Women and Public Deference. This publicly-displayed courteous respect is an often-mentioned element in my respondents' descriptions of the "most important thing that Italian American women must do in

their roles in their families. The public deference enables men to avoid malicious gossip about their being controlled by women. However, in private, women are assertive and exert their powerful influence upon the family.

The public myth and the private reality operate in the balance maintained between the sex-role expectations of the male and female Italian Americans. The men, from all three generations of respondents, commonly describe how "unmanly public expression of affection" is. These same people with the unemotional public demeanor admit that in private they are quite emotionally expressive.

Why do you think Italians are considered great lovers? It is because in private they know how to express affection...  
(a 32-year-old, third-generation male)

Italian men can show a woman what it really means to be loved by another truly emotional individual...  
(a 43-year-old, third-generation male)

Italians are the best lovers... because they can really appreciate a woman... and they know how to express that to her...  
(a 49-year-old, second-generation male)

I found a wide range of emotional expressiveness described by the three generations of women respondents, when they discussed the men they knew. Their descriptions complimented the testimony of the men. Those who would get descriptive were very positive in their statements.

My husband is a warm, emotional lover...  
He's great.  
(a 29-year-old, third-generation woman)

I enjoy my marriage... My husband  
really is all that I could ever want in  
a man... in every way.  
(a 40-year-old, third-generation woman)

Magic, the Church, the Sicilians and the Southern  
Italians. At this point I'd like to return to the  
discussion of religion, the church and magic in the cultural  
lives of the Italian Americans I interviewed. Even the  
second- and third-generation respondents believe in many  
elements which were rooted in an amalgam of pagan customs,  
magical beliefs, Mohammedan practices, Christian doctrines,  
and peasant pragmatism.

The Southern Italians and Sicilians were looked down  
upon by the Northern Italians, as already discussed. This  
definition of inferiority intellectually accounts for the  
Church's tolerance of the superstitions and magic which  
were integrated into the Southern and Sicilian practices.

The Italian Americans developed a distinct form of  
religious expression because of their experiences when they  
arrived in the United States. The American church was the  
Irish-American Catholic Church which my respondents of the  
first generation described as religiously somber. Actually,  
American Catholicism, or Catholicism in Rome, was different  
from the Southern Italians' understanding of religion and

its expression.

Many first-generation respondents described the isolating conditions of Southern Italy which helped to preserve old customs intact through the period of mass migration to the United States, as well as through the period of social and political changes in Italy. In fact, some of the beliefs are still held in certain parts of the Mezzogiorno even today. The peasants valued life and believed that evil abounded. The unanswered dimensions of nature, its benefits and calamities were attributed to various saints, witches, and demons, to the Christian God, to Satan, and to combinations of these spiritual entities.

An occult agent or group of agents or their powers was known as "il mal Occhio," the evil eye. Some refer to it as "occhio cattiva," the bad eye, or to "occhio morto," the eye of death, or "occhio tristo," the wicked eye. The term "evil eye" has its roots in ancient Greece, whose people introduced it to Southern Italy with their colonies.

In ancient times, people did not make strict distinctions between animate and inanimate things, or between symbols and their referents. The ancestors of the Sicilian and Southern Italian peasants tried to make sense of a senseless and dangerous world. They held that events were caused by forces and powers which were in turn controlled by agents. At first, these agents were pagan

gods, but, with the coming of Christianity, many of the pagan customs were joined to those of the new religion. This process continued for centuries, eventually incorporating many ideas from various Christian and Moslem sects that periodically dominated the region.

The religion of the people emerged with magical and demonic strains. The saints of Christianity replaced the old pagan polytheism. Each saint, as was true with the ancient gods, was seen as having power in a specific area of life and often was in competition or in rivalry with demons, witches, and even occasionally other saints.

Many of my respondents detailed the elaborate worship and appeasement of saints. Some examples, mentioned by my respondents, were: Saint Lucia protects eyesight, Saint Anna guards pregnant women and the babies they carry, Saint Barbara shields against lightening. Saint Jude is the patron of the impossible. Saint Anthony is very important to the peasants because he is the patron saint of the animals. Each saint has his/her own special name day and some families would celebrate that calendar date and worship the saint. Also, many children were named after saints, if they weren't named after relatives.

Religion and the Muslim Influence. The influence of Muslim beliefs on first-generation immigrants can be seen in their practice of burying the dead without shoes and

sometimes placing food in the coffin. The Muslims had a custom of shedding one's shoes when entering into the presence of Allah and a belief that bodily pleasures, such as eating, awaited the faithful in the after-life.

I've seen some statues of saints and of the Blessed Mother with black skin in my respondents' homes, reflecting the Arab influence. The Church in Rome was tolerant of the variations in Southern Italy. Some of the dialects from the Mezzogiorno show the Arabic as well as the Greek influences.

The Historically Significant Events Relevant to the Religious Experience of the Sicilians and Southern Italians.

At the time of the Italian unification in the 1860s, there was evidence that the indigenous population of the South was considered inferior intellectually, socially, and even genetically, as mentioned above in my initial introduction to "Religion."

Therefore, the Roman Church leaders felt that peasants of the Mezzogiorno were not capable of understanding the truths of the Church in a straight forward manner. The peasants' folklore of magic and witchcraft was integrated into the Southern religious expression and transplanted to the American subcommunities.

The Italian Americans and Their Religious Expressions.

From my data, it is obvious that the powers of the occult were not limited to the saints and dieties, but certain

humans had immediate and potent access. This belief was not confined to my first-generation respondents, but the second- and even third-generation Italian Americans believed as well.

As a specific example of how this is still part of the current beliefs of the Italian Americans, a second-generation woman, 66 years old, with three children and nine grandchildren, stated her strong belief in the power of the "mal occhio," "the evil eye." However, she announced that she was one of the "select few who knows the ritual which works as a counterforce." This "very secret rite" was learned from her mother, and was never to become "common knowledge." When there was an illness that couldn't be diagnosed or an unexplained mishap, the cause was believed to be a curse, sometimes intentional and sometimes unintentional. "...An envious person may not be aware that they are putting the evil eye on someone," this woman told me. The ritual to remove the evil eye was complex:

A piece of the cursed person's clothes must be brought to me... The home where the cursed person lives must be blessed by a priest, every room including the closets and bathrooms... A statue of the Blessed Mother with a blue cape must be placed in the person's bedroom... Then the rite can proceed with water, oil, a key and certain prayers recited in a specific sequence...

This ritual is believed to work, sometimes it will take

three or so days.

Many of the first- and second-generation respondents strongly believed in the power of the evil eye. Stories ranged from slight illness, mishaps and accidents to death caused by the "evil eye." Envy was usually mentioned as the triggering factor. These Italian Americans believed that good fortune shouldn't be flaunted.

Actually, I found there was a significant number of third-generation individuals, both men and women, who would admit that they don't really disbelieve these things. This dimension of the culture contributes to the collective, non-individual aspects of the group. They could expect to have something evil happen to them if they were too overt with their luck, fortune, accomplishment, and such.

Education, Social Class and Italian American Women Working  
Introduction. As the first formal interaction of the family, school plays an important role in the Italian American subcommunity. Most of my respondents attended the parochial school, taught by nuns and priests who were Irish or influenced by the Irish Catholic Church. There was a genuine feeling of being, as one of my second-generation respondents put it, "...less favored in school than the non-Italian kids." This further insulated the Italian Americans within their families.

Actually, the insulation of the Italian Americans in their family networks or subcommunities, as I have it in this research, can make sense out of the statistical records. For example, the second generation are one of the lowest of all ethnic groups as far as number of years completed in school.

The family valued work for the good of everyone, "...the wages were contributed to the family for the family's welfare." So leaving school early was not stigmatized; to the contrary it was praised if the reason for leaving was work.

School, to this day, gets a negative reaction from some of my second-generation respondents because it weakens the family's influence and control over its young people which is the primary role of family.

I was the first to go to college in my extended family. My mother said it was good because I disliked sewing, typing and nursing. I was allowed to specialize in early childhood education because it would help me when I became a mother. My mother felt this kind a work was good because I could work and still be off with my children.

(a 38-year-old, second-generation woman)

My parents didn't know how to guide me, but they did demand good grades in school and wanted me in high education.

(a 43-year-old, third-generation man)

I was the youngest son who went to college and graduate school because my older brothers and sisters contributed their salaries for my education. I got

good grades because I owed that much to my family... They sacrificed so much in order to give me a good education. (a 63-year-old, second-generation doctor)

Other groups sent their children to school in order to raise the family's standard. Unlike them, an Italian American second-generation woman explained, "...sent my children to college after we made it financially." It seems that education is something that comes after the level of affluence is reached for the family. This strategy seemed to have worked if the national standard of income is an indicator.

Until recently the Italian Americans were not above the national average in family income. However, today they are significantly higher than not only the national average, but also the white national average. This could be easily explained by the family network in operation with the bartering of goods and services. The subcommunities remain relatively insulated economically, because "... there's always a cousin, uncle, nephew or paesan to buy from or to call if something has to be repaired."

The Value of Ownership and the Italian Americans. In the data, the investment in small real estate ventures, mostly the purchasing of homes, is evident.

Familism and the Italian Americans. Familism is a part of the Italian heritage which significantly affected the

self-image and the emergence of the Italian American subcommunity. The generations growing up in the Italian American subcommunity realize very early that "...the family counts first, last and in between." The morality for the Italian Americans is simple "...if it's good for the family, then it's good; and if it's not good for the family, then it's bad," said a second-generation respondent.

Gifts and the Family Network. The family is protection against shame, embarrassment and powerlessness when relating to the outside world, providing social dignity, security, loyalty, love, affection and support throughout one's life. Insulation of the family from the world of strangers was a role the Italian American women of the first and second generation took very seriously. When blood relations weren't available, the godparent networking took greater meaning and significance in the interpersonal relations.

...When funds are low, I'm sure to get appropriate gifts for godchildren first, so they always remember the importance of our relationship.  
(a second-generation woman)

Gifts are important indicators of the closeness of the relationships within the clans.

Generalizing: Italian American Role Descriptions. A composite of the three generations of women would be described as: the first-generation immigrant who defines

herself as wife/mother, daughter, daughter-in-law, sister, grandmother, great-grandmother; the second-generation woman who defines herself as sister, mother, daughter, wife, grandmother, niece, cousin; the third-generation woman who defines herself as daughter, wife, mother, sister, niece, cousin, and friend. These women operate a complex social network which they have been doing for generations.

Socialization of Italian American Children: School, the Family and Work. Robert Redfield in his Little Community describes people being born into the communal social group and then growing into the larger, associational community. The beginning of school is the first formal interaction outside the family. School plays an important role in the lives of all Americans. Whether it is a positive or negative role, it is still of vital importance.

My second-generation respondents spent their childhood in an Italian American, urban, ethnic neighborhood. The school was the first place that my respondents became aware of discrimination, prejudice, a feeling of being different. The parochial schools were dominated by Irish Catholicism which made the Italian Americans feel less favored than their peers. School counselors would describe their students with Italian surnames as not scoring well on their reading and verbal standardized tests.

The first-generation parents emphasized education

and stressed high marks but there was little emphasis on education for its own sake. When I questioned my respondents about their education, career planning, reading habits as children, and socialization, they said:

We didn't have magazines or very many books around our house... The newspaper was the primary reading material.  
(a 39-year-old, third-generation woman)

My mother thought that I should learn to sew, be a nurse, or a teacher... Going to school for any other reason didn't make sense.  
(a 59-year-old, second-generation woman)

I was the first in my extended family to go to college... and my uncle wanted to know why... He would say, "Do you want to be the smartest woman in the cemetery?"  
(a 38-year-old, third-generation woman)

My mother didn't understand why I should go to college if I was going to be supported by a man and spend my life raising children... She felt I should learn a skill, like typing or even hair dressing.  
(a 33-year-old, third-generation woman)

My parents didn't know how to guide me... They were encouraging, but they didn't know how to support that drive toward higher education.  
(a 61-year-old, second generation male)

My parents, along with my older brothers and sister put me through college and medical school... The thing my mother asked was that I open an office in the community and practice there for at least part of my work week... She was proud of her, the doctor.  
(a 60-year-old, second-generation man)

In the old world, practical skills were far more essential and highly prized than intellectual information. The survival outlook of the peasant was part of the first generation's philosophy of education. They didn't make very much sense out of those courses of study which led to dubious economic gain or promised long-delayed gratification.

When talking to those who were the first in their families to go to college, they said:

I struggled with the gap between me [an Italian American] and those whose families took higher education for granted...

(a 58-year-old, second-generation male)

I realized early in graduate school that if I was going to survive, I could not follow those characteristics that my father had... My father was a patient and silent man. He showed his strength by being quiet... that didn't work in the outside institutions.

(a 30-year-old, third-generation male)

The negative stereotypical images which stem from the press are to some extent internalized by the Italian Americans. The women in particular have a low self-esteem. When I asked my second- and third-generation respondents to list their past achievements, skills and talents, they found this very difficult to do. When I finally received a list, it contained such things as:

- a marriage of 37 years.
- three children and eight

grandchildren.

-two sons in business and a daughter married to a doctor.

-three of my grandsons in college.

-I'm a good cook.

-I can nurse people back to health quickly.

There are many third-generation husbands who objected to their wives being too educated. It was all right for her to work and bring home a paycheck, but she should not be committed to a career. The women were not to be fulfilled by their work:

They were to keep the family as their first priority at all times.

(a 43-year-old, third-generation male)

I am 38 years old and when I was in my second year of college, my husband threw all my notebooks and texts into the fireplace just before my final exams.

(a third-generation woman)

I worked all my married life part time as a nurse... When I went to college, my husband objected and refused to pay my tuition... Even though we could well afford it with my salary... The only way I could get money was to trick my father-in-law (who was very well off) to give me the money. My father-in-law also object to my being in school. So I claimed to have spent \$850 on a foolish shopping spree... and I was afraid to let his son know... My father-in-law gave me the money and never told anyone of the incident.

(a 44-year-old, third-generation woman)

Italian American women still have far to go when it comes to their own education. However, their children are

socialized to value education and are encouraged to go to college. Depending on the economic level of the family, first the sons are sent to college, then the daughters. The boys may be sent away to the better school, while the girls are kept at local schools.

Italian American Communication: Women, Their Community,  
Their Work and Their Social Position

Reading facial expressions is an important art in Italy, to be learned in childhood, perhaps more important for survival than the art of reading print. Spoken words may be sometimes at variance with the grimaces that accompany them. The words should then be overlooked. Only the face counts. Italians are often disconcerted, unhappy, and lonely in the North of Europe, and seldom know what is going on, surrounded as they are by the blank faces on which little can be read and that little is seldom exciting. They wrongly conclude that, as the people show no feelings, they have no feelings worth showing. The proverbial impassivity of the English is believed to be a definite proof of coldness and insensibility.<sup>12</sup>  
(Barzini, 1965)

Speaking of the Southern Italian way of life, Barzini, in his book, The Italians, notes "the importance of spectacle" where "everything [is] displayed everywhere in dramatic and artistic disorder." He states that most Italians are victims of "confusing reality with

representation of reality." The family has actively "formented chaos" in order to survive. There is striking similarity between Barzini's comments and my respondents' descriptions. However, I found that both Barzini and my respondents are describing an art form which is a common characteristic of all generations of Italian Americans. There usually is much use of non-verbal language, that is, metaphorical language.

Italian Americans are somewhat inexpressive and direct in their communication with strangers. However, the dramatic, expressive acting, which is the common style of communications in families and between close friends, is showmanship. Marie Rotunno and Monica Mcgoldrick in their study, "Italian Families,"<sup>13</sup> reports that words are often not meant to be taken literally, as genuine intentions for action. This is especially the case when intensely felt emotions are being expressed, such as affection, anger, enthusiasm, sadness, grief, and hatred. The non-verbal communication is often more important than the word used.

Dr. Jeffrey S. Victor<sup>14</sup> in an unpublished paper, "Ethnic Variation in Communication Styles," agrees with these findings and adds accompanied facial expression, elaborate gesturing and widely modulated tone of voice from soft to loud. My respondents' testimony corroborated these descriptions. It should be noted that the "body language,"

the non-verbal gestures, is stylized expression used in this cultural communication mode and not mere erratic emotionality.

The daily conversation in our house includes bits of acting out in order to demonstrate a point and to elaborate a story.  
(a 49-year-old, third generation female)

At large family get-togethers, it is amazing how I can carry on five conversations at the same time... and not miss a thing that anyone is saying.  
(a 39-year-old, third generation woman)

Other respondents described everyday conversations in their families which included impersonations of other people, short bits of acting to demonstrate an account, and the telling of elaborate stories of people and events. There seems to be less concern for precise, accurate details, than to capture the listener's interest and convey the emotional meaning of one's experience. It is important to engage the listener in the story and to entertain the listener as well. The family dinner table conversation was described as:

Animated and always full of exchanges which are interesting but usually avoiding areas of disagreement... Heated issues are not for the dinner table conversation.  
(a 37-year-old, second-generation male)

The Italian American families that my respondents described from the three generations used a non-direct mode

of communication. In this mode of communication, what is not being said is just as important as that which is verbalized.

The older generations held many beliefs as self-evident and to be expressed indirectly:

What worked with my parents, aunts and uncles was the reading of emotionality rather than the listening to their works.

(a 63-year-old, second-generation woman)

My father felt he had an extremely close relationship with my older brother, but they never talked to each other.

(a 67-year-old, second-generation woman)

I tell my daughter that it is better that she keeps her opinions to herself.

(a 83-year-old, first-generation woman)

Communication style refers to how people use words and non-verbal gestures. An awareness of cultural differences in communication styles is increasingly important for the Italian Americans because of mobility out of their community and because of increased intermarriage. Italian Americans are living with and working with non-Italians more than ever.

Many of the women from the three generations described the difficulty in asking for anything directly or in verbalizing one's needs. The family members were expected to know the numerous unspoken obligations, rules and regulations. One skill that an adult Italian American

should have is the sensitivity to read non-verbal, expressive communication:

There are lessons that must be mastered early within the Italian American family: along with any favor comes obligations; needs are to be anticipated; only the family can be fully trusted; and respect is necessary with those who hold power. My mother would get very angry if we (my brothers, sisters and father) didn't infer her needs and fulfill them to the best of our ability... She felt that she shouldn't have to tell us what she expected to be done... My mother would say: "if children love and respect their parents the way we did with my mother and father, then they know [and are responsive to] what has to be done without having to be told."  
(a 35-year-old, third-generation woman)

#### The Italian American Women and Their Work

Introduction. This section of my study will focus on the Italian American women and their work experience. A lot is not yet known and may never be able to be known about women's work and their contribution to their communities. Women's work histories are notoriously difficult to document systematically, since city record keepers were often blind to the kinds of work women did.

My descriptions of women's work patterns are based primarily on information from the oral histories of the generations of Italian American women from the New York metropolitan area. This method of sampling yields only the bare outlines of mother/daughter/granddaughter preceptions.

This part of my study pieces together that data which could be the foundation for areas of further study.

The Italian American Women and Their Meaning of Work. It is important to understand the value of work and the meaning the first generation women had for labor. First of all, I found that my first-generation respondents did not fit the stereotypical image of the peasant who valued land and its associated labor. The Southern Italian had an experience of distinctive chaotic patterns of land tenure. Most of the land in Italy during the time of mass migration and before was divided into small parcels which were cultivated independently. Ownership, rental, sharecropping and wage labor were all common, and often coexisted in the same family at the same time. The circumstances of an immigrant's family in Sicily were explained:

Angelina, her siblings and her mother and father all lived with her grandmother in a small farmhouse which passed down to them as family land. Although they did own the house and land around it, their annual income was just enough to sustain them and rarely was there any extra profit. The family lived from their own land and their job was to raise enough crops and produce to live for a year. In days when there was little to do on the farm, Maria (the mother) would send the children to neighboring farms to help pick vegetables and fruits for an average of three cents a day while she herself would do extra weaving to sell.

The small scale of the plots of land in Southern Italy

limited the size of the agricultural work group to an individual family, usually parents and unmarried children.

These households regularly included aging parents who could no longer work. Even when families owned land, the plots were too small and unproductive to sustain them fully, and most families combined agricultural work with non-agricultural pursuits. Many of my respondents had fathers, brothers, uncles and cousins who were tradesmen, carpenters, barbers, masons, and other craftsmen.

These Italians do not fit the general image of the land-committed rural peasant. Cash was usually scarce and "the survival of the family was dependent upon the labor of all its members. This meant mothers as well as fathers, sons, and daughters." In a society of such scarce resources, the women were critical to the family's economy, both as mothers and as daughters.

A vital element in the socialization of the girls was to be sure that they were taught how to work productively for the family. From the age of seven on, daughters learned to cook, clean, sew and care for younger children. They learned to gather an adequate wood and water supply and how to bargain persuasively at the market. Daughters worked alongside their mothers in the fields, or at home, sewing, embroidering, spinning, and weaving for extra income. From the age of ten years on, daughters assumed adult

responsibility for these tasks. As daughters grew older and their physical strength increased, so did the amount of work they were expected to do.

From the oral histories, it was evident that daughters' daily lives in rural Southern Italy were usually spent in the vicinity of the home, and almost always in the company of other women. Sometimes, as described above, daughters were hired out, under the chaperonage of their brothers, to work as day laborers. Wives and daughters worked as part of a family economic unit and not independently. This was symbolized in the frequent payment of wages to the head of the household for the labor of all employed family members.

While mothers expected their sons to care for them in their old age, they brought up their daughters to leave them in taking on the responsibilities for their husbands, their children and their husbands' families. Nearly all daughters in Southern Italy married and it was rare for sons-in-law to move in with parents. The expected path for daughters led from their father's houses to those of their husbands. In fact, according to one respondent:

Those homes of your own relatives  
were considered to be those of outsiders  
once a girl married.

However, there was some evidence of continued connection between parents and married daughters. In some areas of Southern Italy, daughters looked to their mothers for

protection from abuse by their husbands. For example, a first-generation respondent told me:

In my old country, in a village near Foggia, Apulia, there was an ancient custom which afforded us much entertainment. When a young husband would beat his wife and curse her family, everybody knew what would happen. The young wife would run to her parents, complaining about the husband. In a short while, a crowd would gather around the girl's parents' home. Shortly after, the brothers, cousins, and other male relatives of the beaten girl would go, led by the old mother, toward the home of the girl and they pounced upon the husband and beat him up. In a kind of procession, the mother and her kin returned home. The old father all that time remained at home. He neither laughed nor was angry. He acted as if he had no right to butt in.

Daughters sometimes found it difficult to make the transition from their own families to those of their husbands. Often there were descriptions of these women feeling torn between devotion to their husbands and obligation to their parents. Parents also found it difficult to separate from their daughters and continued to expect help from them.

An older Italian I interviewed reminisced over the old customs of the father's blessing to his daughter at her wedding, mentioning the "practical advice" that was part of the blessing: "...obey your husband, but do not forget that you owe a debt to your own parents." So when a woman

had depended on to supplement family budgets.

Commercialization in other parts of Italy undermined traditional artisan crafts. Emigration was a strategy which evolved from the structure of peasant households and which in turn built on that structure. Sons and daughters took advantage of long-distance job opportunities to produce needed family income.

Migration patterns were established by family groups and the migrants depended on their brothers, sisters and neighbors who had gone before them to secure housing and jobs. In a way this was a beginning of the new parameters of "family" networking which would evolve as the Italian American community grew.

Work, Women and the Italian Emigration. Emigration was intended in this context as an extension of a familiar strategy, attempting to preserve a way of life threatened by external economic and social forces.

Still, emigrants experienced enormous changes in a matter of weeks, moving from a country in one stage of development to a country characterized by completely different structures of economic organization. Although immigrants had considerable commercial and artisan skills from their work experience in Southern Italy, the modern industrial development in America had its impact on them. The respondents from this group had a difficult time

married, her work obligation doubled.

Family Support and Early Death of a Parent. When an early death occurred, it was the mother's family who took the children if the daughter died, or would help support the family if the husband died. A respondent explained:

I cannot tell why it was so, but when a mother died, the family usually fell apart. The small children were taken over to the mother's relatives, and the older ones felt that they could not live at home anymore. So they moved - one to an uncle, one to an aunt, where they would help in any kind of work in order to earn their keep. When the father died and the mother remained alive, the family always remained together like chickens around a hen.

There were several cases of Italian American families which followed this pattern, with little variation. This suggests that in crisis women should look to their own family of origin. The husband's family was generally unwilling to assume the responsibility if the woman's family was capable. In the United States, there were adaptations which meant that godparents and others were defined by the girl as part of her family.

Women, Work and the Italian Pre-Emigration Experience. Prior to the period of mass migration and during that time, the economic and social conditions increased the Italian families' need for extra income, while diminishing the local availability of the non-agricultural work sons and daughters

adjusting to the city because:

There was only concrete... no place for a vegetable garden or for fruit trees... There weren't any trees at all.

(a 90-year-old, first generation woman)

I was in New York for quite a while when I went to the fields as was done in Italy.

Many of the opportunities for work which wives had in Italy grew out of their situation as part of an agricultural economy. For example:

Money could be made by working as a day laborer in a neighboring field, or raising and peddling chickens and eggs.

Many of my first-generation respondents described the hand-loom weaving that the women did in Italy but which was made obsolete by the United States mills.

Work as the Italian American Women Experienced It.

From my interviews, I found that the Italian American women had confidence in their abilities and skills as well as their resourcefulness in exploiting new opportunities for work. One first-generation respondent, who had lived on a farm and also in a small Italian city, knew how to market produce, to sew, to weave and embroider, especially detailed and fine bridal linen. She explained:

I never have a lot of money, but I have my hands. That's all the way they used to look in the old country... The money you have, that no mean nothing,

only I know. I know how to do, I know everything. That's the way they look, the people in the old country.

These skills were taught to daughters and valued in the family network. Work was respected. Wives were able to find work which they could combine with their home responsibilities.

In America, the need of newer Italian migrants for room and board before their families were assembled meant that women could be economically productive through extending the services they were already providing for their families. Cooking, marketing and cleaning for boarders and lodgers was an important way for married women and their daughters to generate income in their own homes. One woman recalled that on her block:

In 1915 to the Twenties, more than half the young married women I knew took in boarders or had wage earning relatives living with them.

Brothers, brothers-in-law, uncles, cousins and other kin were commonly part of this network.

Wives of artisans, craftsmen, and merchants whose shops were in the front or below the family's living quarters worked alongside their husbands in a variety of business-related functions. There were descriptions of many of my respondents keeping the books of the store, covering the counter, baking in bakery shops, sewing in the tailors,

stocking and bagging in groceries, selling handmade items along with coffee in a specialty shop, and much more.

I found it interesting that the first- and second-generation respondents who described the family business always referred to it as the man's business. The women never defined it as theirs, but the work was very much a part of their definition. Both the first generation and their children acknowledged the contribution of the hard-working women. It was described to me as "natural" that a female should never be idle. In fact, several of my third-generation respondents would not feel comfortable if their mothers, aunts or grandmothers dropped in on them and found them resting in the middle of the day.

The First Generation Italian American Women and The American Industries. Various American industries divided and subdivided the processes of manufacturing, resulting in the proliferation of small tasks which could be done outside the shops. Women could work at home carding snaps, stamping out military buttons on a footpress, stringing rosary beads, linking chains, stemming artificial flowers, or pulling threads on lace, all of which were available on a seasonal basis, according to my respondents. When children were young, these were opportunities to supplement the father's income.

Clustering at Work and the Italian American

Second-Generation Women. Sisters got jobs for each other at the same jewelry shops, downtown department stores, factories or other such places. Kin connections were very prominent as part of the way that the second-generation women described their work:

It was almost a family affair there, all our cousins and relatives working there, everybody.  
(a 59-year-old, second-generation woman)

She was a doffer; the job was pulling yarn from the frames. It was a nice factory to work in, she remembers; it was big. She worked there with her brothers and sisters.  
(a 36-year-old, third-generation respondent about her mother)

However, the aspect of the mother-daughter relationship that was based on the teaching and learning of workskill was lost. The workplace of the second-generation daughters was quite different from any situation their mothers might have envisioned for them.

Although men and women originally worked on different tasks in different sections in factories and department stores, there was still ample opportunity for contact without the usual chaperonage for these second-generation people. When immigrant mothers had worked at doing home work, caring for boarders, or had labored in nearby shops with their husbands, the children helped them and the income produced was clearly generated by family effort. There was

a collective consciousness which dominated the perceptions of these first-generation people.

However, the second-generation women became unmistakably different from their mothers by working for their own wages. This introduced an element of individuality which differed from anything in the Italian tradition. This was especially unusual for the females to attempt to become separate from the family group in any way.

Daughters still passed their paychecks over to their families, and all the families with children had more than one wage earner in this community until well into the 1940s. The second-generation women had a strong sense of their own needs, and they were more conscious of peer pressure towards certain kinds of consumption. These daughters felt that they were:

Entitled to their earnings, at least in part for personal needs.  
(a 67-year-old, second-generation woman)

Some of the second-generation girls even arranged for a larger share of their wages, indirectly:

Lena, my sister, and I resented turning over every cent we worked for and having a small allowance handed out to us to buy needed clothing, personal items, and for leisure activities. We became adept at sewing, knitting, crocheting and making do; and borrowing from mother.  
(a 55-year-old, second-generation woman)

Descriptions from other second-generation respondents told of the tactic of simply withholding a part of their paychecks. An older second-generation sister told of dipping into her wages only to treat herself to a carfare home on payday. Her younger sister responded differently:

I'll never forget the first time I got pay. You know, I'm different from the way she [her older sister] is altogether... I went downtown first, and I spent a lot, more than half of my money... I just went hog wild, I guess. and, I came home, and we used to have to hand our pay in. So I gave my father what I had left and he threw it at me. So I just picked it up and took the rest of it. The next week he didn't throw it at me.  
(a 71-year-old, second-generation woman)

The supply of boarders ended with immigration restrictions, and the national labor codes (NRA Codes) in the mid-Thirties outlawed home work, so at least it became less available.

The second-generation women worked outside the home for a good many years before their marriages which made it easier to work outside the home after marriage. The primary problem these second-generation, wage-earning wives had was child care which they dealt with in a variety of ways. Mothers, sisters, sisters-in-law, aunts, cousins,

mothers-in-law and godmothers helped. The first-generation women hadn't had the same options since they left most of their extended family in Italy when they emigrated.

The most frequent complaint my mother had was that she didn't have her mother in New York when she was raising her children.

(a 65-year-old, second-generation woman)

The Depression and the war experience also had a significant impact on the work experiences and development of the second-generation group. The men left for:

A great anthropological adventure that children of immigrants could never have expected to have. They saw Europe and came back with an opportunity for a college education paid for by the United States government.

(a 39-year-old, third-generation professional male)

The women during this period were encouraged to take the men's work roles with pride. The experience affected the self-image of the women significantly. The economic growth of the 1950s together with the automobile revolution in the post World War II period made dating a more intimate and private affair with the couple in control.

Work, Autonomy, Individuality and the Italian American Women. Autonomy and individuality were aspects which became integrated in the characters of the women in differing degrees.

The second generation found themselves in a socioeconomic level higher than they had thought possible due to the broader societal opportunities. Simultaneously, the immigrant parents were aging and unable to keep pace with their waning strength, so parents were becoming more dependent on the help of their children. The first consideration of institutional provisions for older people, and institutional arrangements for child care, both negatively viewed and inadequately provided, changed the relationship between the three generations.

The older people felt abandoned; the second generation felt guilty; and the third generation realized that the institutions had a functional place in the care of family members, especially those that were in day care as children. Thus, the ethnicity of the Italian family significantly changes with the different birth cohorts. However, for the time being, it seemed from the responses of the third-generation women that the Italian grandmothers, Italian-American mothers, and daughters changed and reconstituted their relationships to each other in the American setting.

Standards of womanliness brought by the Italian immigrants at the turn of the century encompassed many more areas of life than were typically considered appropriate for the American woman. Specifically, the Italian immigrant

woman saw her role as the focal point of the most significant institution of her social world. Her ability to function according to the prescribed patterns of her role were the basis of the success or failure of her family, as well as herself. Italian women were given a sense of their power through the practice of involving them in the most important sphere of influence in society, the family. As expressed by this respondent, these first-generation immigrant women feel that:

American women lose because of how unimportant they are in the American family... She has little or no respect... The American family isn't even respected... so how could the woman feel important?  
(an 86-year-old, first-generation woman)

The political, economic and social successes of a person depend on the power and status of their family.

The traits which were repeatedly mentioned as important elements in their development as young Italian women evolved into patterns. The first related to the emphasis on creating and maintaining life as a female's primary work. This responsibility is taken seriously in the three generations of women interviewed. Womanliness can be taken as synonymous with seriousness. The second related to a view common in all three birth cohorts, i. e., that a woman's role is an active one. Being passive is not

acceptable for females:

A woman should never, never be caught doing nothing.... A woman is the last to go to bed because her work is never done.

(a 56-year-old, second-generation woman)

### CONCLUSION

The making and unmaking of a myth is a critical first stage in understanding the Italian American women and their community. Richard Gambino said:

The dilemma of the young Italian American is a lonely, quiet crisis, so it has escaped public attention. But it is a major ethnic group crisis... If they are to realize this sooner rather than later, these young people must learn whence they came and why they are as they are... Sadly, many Italian American(s)... are in the shame-born-of-confusion condition.<sup>19</sup>

This quote was validated by the testimony of my respondents in all the generations, but it was especially true of the second and third generations.

When it came to ethnic identity and self-esteem, the Italian Americans are particularly vulnerable to lower image. The continual exposure to stereotypes in media makes it more difficult to feel proud of one's Italian American background. For example, Lichter and Lichter's study on television portrayals revealed that a negative view pervades the media, with a margin of nearly two negative images for

every positive one:

- Italian Americans are usually engaged in criminal activities.

- The number of role models in professional crime outnumber those of educated professionals in business or politics.

- Most Italian American characters held low status jobs; only one in seven working as an executive, manager or other professional.

- The majority of Italian American characters used abnormal language and frequently were the butt of jokes<sup>16</sup>

The stereotyped women are confused further because part of their role is to project and sustain a myth for the outside society of non-Italians and of non-family Italian Americans. As was shown in this report, there are many variables which affect the Italian American women and their position in the community:

- social class differences and mobility,

- specific generational groups and their cohort experiences,

- biographical experiences in the Italian American community and in the Italian community with a focus on the history,

- the perceived opportunity structure along with their understanding of the WASP cultural ideal.

The identification seems centered on feelings which focused on:

- the "not intellectual" traits,

- the manual complexes being more appropriate,
- the inarticulate and "uncultured" traits,
- the crude and "unattractive" characteristics,
- the women's "stay at home" role,
- the women's "always cooking, serving, mothering" role,

and most importantly,

- the hospitable, emotional, family-oriented, good providing, nurturing, hard working, sacrificing family.

Descriptions of the Italian American qualities relating to family values were positive descriptions that pervaded through the women's interviews. On the whole, the three generations of respondents felt that they had to work hard to prove themselves worthy.

This study provided an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the comparisons and contrasts which are shared by the immigrant generation of Italian Americans, their children's generation and their grandchildren's generation. Each cohort in some way is a microcosm of their experiences, and also a continuation of the families' traditions.

Italian Americans and their family system are a major component of the American ethnic mosaic. The migration of Italians, mostly from Southern Italy during the mass

migration, was one of the largest in terms of numbers of people; and they brought with them a close-knit family system with the women as the core.

Change and Adaptation. The Italian American family unit is the nuclear family, but with ties to the extended family relationships. When residential dispersion precludes daily visiting, kinship ties are maintained by the women through regular gatherings at holidays or feasts, scrupulous attendance at wakes, funerals, weddings, showers, Christenings, Communions, Confirmations, and weddings. The remembrance of the birthdays and anniversaries of at least the oldest members of the family, the occasional visits to certain family members, and the certainty of assistance if help is sought are devices which are used by Italian Americans to maintain the solidarity of the clan.

The family always comes first. No matter how involved in career or life on the outside, no matter what kind of hostility that takes place in the family... at the end, after the initial explosion is over, the family is always there.

(a 39-year-old, third-generation professional woman)

The Italian Americans have a uniqueness which they have maintained across the generations. Though they have been economically and spatially mobile, they have a high degree of residential concentration. Several of the households have become three-generation households as aging parent(s) move

in with their married children and grandchildren.

The second generation who were the sons and daughters of the immigrants tend to have close sibling bonding; and have not had a history of taking a strong position characteristic of either the Italian American or non-Italian American cultures. They were the ones who may be considered apathetic in the sense that they hadn't immersed themselves in some of the traditional ethnic ways and accepted the gains in the non-Italian American world. Some of these second-generation respondents who moved to non-Italian American neighborhoods Anglicized their names and shielded their true heritage. Two of my second-generation respondents didn't deny their Italianness, but did deny from Belmont and being the children of Southern Italian immigrants

I am criticized by former Belmont neighbors as being a traitor to the community... I consider myself a Renaissance man who is the product of medieval culture of that time.  
(a 49-year-old, second-generation professor of Italian)

This man has re-identified with his Belmont roots and is proud of his Southern Italian heritage. His wife and daughters follow the family traditions and maintain the social networks. They are immersed in the old ways at specific times of the year. The mumified customs are unwrapped periodically. There is for this family an

accepting of the best of both worlds.

In the third generation and beyond, the Italian Americans exhibit similar value orientation preferences. This is predictable on the basis of the Hensen theory of generations,<sup>17</sup> which derives from the Jewish proverb, "What the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember."<sup>18</sup> My sample of respondents who were born in the United States and with parents who also were born here, expressed and identified with Italianness with more security. But keep in mind, the immigrant grandparents had a peasant culture with its value system and related traits from the pre-industrial society of Italy.

The specific content of the Italian American ethnicity has been altered in each generation but elements of continuity remain, and ethnic identification is still a major source of social differentiation. The modern Italian Americans are developing an interest in both the classical as well as the more immediate aspects of the Italian and Italian American heritage.

Perhaps all Americans can profit from the translated familism which the Italian Americans provide, along with the "gemeinschaft" relationships that were lost by others in the urban, modernized, industrialized society. The Italian American women are the ones which manage and maintain the Italian American family, and pass on the Italian American

culture traits and complexes.

The emphasis on the importance of family is the cultural universal that is prominent in every generation of Italian Americans. The wife/mother is the core of the Italian American family and in reality is the organizing source and power:

The woman is the heart and the soul of  
the family. She is the life.  
(a 71-year-old, second-generation woman)

While many of my respondents were upwardly mobile, achieving and spatially separate, there are common elements with each cohort. The first generation, the ruptured group of elderly immigrants, socialized their children to trust, respect and be loyal to the family. This first-generation respondents still held many of the old peasant values and attitudes.

The sons and daughters of the immigrants, the second-generation group, grew up during the Depression, experienced World War II, and the economic growth of the industrialized America of the Fifties. This group of respondents lived in the Italian American world and in the American world. They were characterized by a strong sibling bonding. This group raised their children in the Post War society and were part of the upward socioeconomic mobility.

The grandchildren of the immigrant generation grew up

watching television's Ozzi and Harriet, "Leave It to Beaver," and "Father Knows Best." The silent watchfulness of this generation gave them mass images which made them decreasingly tolerant of some Italian American styles. Many of my third generation respondents were self-conscious about:

The loud, boisterous conversations and laughter at the Sunday dinners at my grandmother's.  
(a 41-year-old, third-generation male)

The references to "loudness" and "boisterousness" was not uncommon in the third-generation interviews. This group has a different sense of their Italianness. They, along with some of the second-generation group, emphasize the cultural aspects of the Italian culture. This third generation are also products of being raised by parents who were closely bound to their siblings.

The self-esteem of Italian Americans is becoming higher. The identification with the WASP ethnics is not an ideal for those I interviewed. The family value is recognized as clearly an important asset.

The fourth-generation Italian Americans are rediscovering Italian ethnicity, drawing partly from those mumified traditions their great grandparents passed down, partly from the family traditions their aging grandparents passed down, and partly from the classical traits their

post-War War II Baby Boom parents display. There is a renewed interest in learning the Italian language by the younger generation, not the dialect of their Southern Italian ancestors.

The United States is unique because it began as a nation of strangers. The integration in diversity characterizes the contemporary American society and the expression of ethnic identity is a feature of America in the 1980s. The Italian American women are coming out from behind the myth.

To sum up, this research shows that:

- 1.) Ethnic identification is not unilineal.
- 2.) There are similarities and differences intergenerationally among the Italian Americans I studied.
- 3.) There are intragenerational similarities and differences among the Italian Americans I studied.
- 4.) There is a sustained high value for the family, which is the unifying thread in all Italian American subcultural experiences, and a part of the three generations I studied.
- 5.) There are myths of the Italian American women which are not representative of the reality. Italian American women are complex people with a strong family identify.

6.) The Italian American women uphold the myth of their "powerlessness" to the outside world.

Italians are industrious, good natured, very affectionate towards children, courteous and polite... generous and self-sacrificing... and dense ignorance ... sentences (them) to ... the drudgery of unskilled labor. ...The second generation goes to school. ...Out of this class emerges a third generation... The Italians of the third generation crowd into the professions and we have Italian teachers, doctors, architects, lawyers and judges.  
(an American writer, Willard Price, in a 1919 report about Italians who were emigrating to the United States.)

In 1917, an American writer named Willard Price left Genoa in the steerage class of a White Star liner with 500 Italians who were emigrating to the United States.

Nearly sixty years later, it is apparent that the flaw in Mr. Price's vision was his insufficient daring, particularly in the place Italian American women would have. Besides lawyers and judges, an Italian American woman is the first of her sex to run for Vice President on a major party ticket. It was not until 1974 that Ella T. Grasso, an Italian American of Connecticut, became the first woman to be elected Governor in her own right--or as she put it, the first female governor who "was not previously a governor's lady."

Italian Americans have distinguished themselves as

business people, politicians, university presidents, inventors, artists, writers, athletes, and scholars. They taught America to appreciate Italian cooking, art, literature, fashion, movies, and zest for life. The Italian American women in their family context were the core of this ethnic group.

Mr. Price closed his report on his voyage with a sentence appropriate for the close of this study:

It would be well if every phase of the life of America were as full of hope and promise as is the spirit of the steerage.

Footnotes for Chapter Four

- <sup>1</sup>Barzini, Poetry (1981) p. 190.
- <sup>2</sup>Liebertson, Ethnic Patterns in an American City (New York: Free Press 1963) p. 79; also see Lopreato, Italian Americans (New York: Random House 1970) p. 41.
- <sup>3</sup>Pat Gallo, Ethnic Alienation (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press 1974) p. 25.
- <sup>4</sup>Abramson, Ethnic Diversity in Catholic America (New York: Wiley 1973) p. 29; also see Lopreato, Italian Americans (New York: Random House 1970) p. 53.
- <sup>5</sup>Walter Firey, Land Use in Central Boston (Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press 1947) pp. 200-09.
- <sup>6</sup>Glazer and Moynihan, Beyond The Melting Pot (Mass.: M.I.T. Press 1963) p. 187.
- Kantrowitz, Ethnic and Racial Segregation in the New York Metropolis (New York: Praeger 1973) p. 7.
- <sup>8</sup>Pat Gallo, Ethnic Alienation: Italian Americans (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press 1974) p. 39.
- <sup>9</sup>Lopreato, Italian Americans (New York: Random House 1970) p. 51.
- <sup>10</sup>Kobrin and Goldschneider, The Ethnic Factors in Family Structure and Mobility (Mass: Ballinger Publishing Co. 1979) p. 85.
- <sup>11</sup>Goering, "The Emergence of Ethnic Interests: A Case of Serendipity," Social Forces 50 (Mar. 1971) pp. 379-84.
- <sup>12</sup>Barzini, Poetry (1965) p. 163.
- <sup>13</sup>Rotunno and Mcgoldrick, ed., Ethnicity and Family Therapy (New York: Guilford Press 1982) pp. 340-363.
- <sup>14</sup>Jeffrey S. Victor, "Ethnic Variations in Communication Styles."
- <sup>15</sup>Richard Gambino, Blood of My Blood (New York: Doubleday & Co. 1975) pp. 40, 363.

<sup>16</sup>Lichter and Lichter, Italian American Characters in Television Entertainment (The Commission for Social Justice 1982) pp. 26-27.

<sup>17</sup>J. Spiegel, Transactions: The Interplay Between Family and Society (New York: Science House 1972) p. 76.

<sup>18</sup>F. Kluckhohn and F. Strodtbeck, Variations in Value Orientations (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson and Co. 1961) p. 61.

**APPENDIXES**

**QUESTIONNAIRES**

ITALIAN AMERICAN WOMEN: LEAD QUESTIONS  
FOR DEPTH INTERVIEW

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Present Address: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Marital Status:  married  widowed  separated  divorced  
 single, never married/other, explain \_\_\_\_\_
4. Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. Husband's occupation \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Father's occupation \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. (1) Brother(s) occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - (2) Sister(s) occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - D. (1) Son(s) occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - (2) Daughter(s) occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Education: Last year of school completed \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. Husband's education \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Father's education \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. (1) Brother(s) education (a) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - (2) Sister(s) education (a) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - D. (1) Son(s) education \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - (2) Daughter(s) education \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

A. Describe Place of Birth (or earliest community respondent can remember as being important in Italy): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. Rural or Urban or Suburban, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Major industry: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D. Major institutions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(1) Role of Church: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(2) Role of School: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(3) Role of Social Associations (list names and descriptions with memberships, functions, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(4) Other Clubs, Assoc., etc. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(2a) What did the older women (36 years or over) spend most of their time doing during a normal day: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2b) What did the older men (36 and over) spend most of their time doing:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(3a) What did the very young girls (under 18 years) spend most of their time doing: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(3b) What did the very young boys (under 18 years) spend most of their time doing: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(4a1) What did the girls hope to do when they grew up: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(4a2) What did the mothers encourage their daughter(s) to learn (describe skills these people felt important for girls): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(4b1) What did the boys hope to do when they grew up: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(4b2) What did the mothers encourage their son(s) to learn (describe skills these people felt important for boys): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Describe the first community respondent can remember after entering the U.S.A.

A. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. Rural or Urban or Suburban: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. Major industry: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. Major institutions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(1) Role of Church: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2) Role of School: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(3) Role of Social Associations (list names and descriptions with memberships, functions, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(4) Other Clubs, Assoc., etc. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E. Community Organization:

(1) Chaotic or planned, explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2a) Friendly, explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2b) Unfriendly, explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(3) Other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

F. Overall evaluation of the community: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

General class of people (mostly related to in daily encounters) describe:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

G. Sex Roles:

(1a) What did the women (about 18-35 years) spend most of their time doing during a normal day: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(1b) What did the men (about 18-35) spend most of their time doing during a normal day: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2a) What did the older women (36 years or over) spend most of their time doing during a normal day: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(2b) What did the older men (36 and over) spend most of their time doing:

\_\_\_\_\_

(3a) What did the very young girls (under 18 years) spend most of their time doing: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(3b) What did the very young boys (under 18 years) spend most of their time doing: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(4a1) What did the girls hope to do when they grew up: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(4a2) What did the mothers encourage their daughter(s) to learn (describe skills these people felt important for girls): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(4b1) What did the boys hope to do when they grew up: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(4b2) What did the mothers encourage their son(s) to learn (describe skills these people felt important for boys): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Describe the present community the respondent is living in:

A. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. Rural or Urban or Suburban: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. Major industry: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. Major institutions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(1) Role of Church: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2) Role of School: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(3) Role of Social Organizations, Associations (list names and descriptions with membership, functions, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(4) Other Clubs, Assoc., Groups, etc. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E. Community Organization:

(1) Chaotic or planned, explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2a) Friendly, explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2b) Unfriendly, explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(3) Other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

F. Overall evaluation of community: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

General class of people (mostly related to in daily encounters) describe:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

G. Sex Roles:

(1a) What did the women (about 13-35 years) spend most of their time doing during a normal day: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(1b) What did the men (about 13-35) spend most of their time doing during a normal day: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2a) What did the older women (36 years or over) spend most of their time doing during a normal day: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(2b) What did the older men (36 and over) spend most of their time doing:

\_\_\_\_\_

(3a) What did the very young girls (under 18 years) spend most of their time doing: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(3b) What did the very young boys (under 18 years) spend most of their time doing: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(4a1) What did the girls hope to do when they grew up: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(4a2) What did the mothers encourage their daughter(s) to learn (describe skills these people felt important for girls): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(4b1) What did the boys hope to do when they grew up: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(4b2) What did the mothers encourage their son(s) to learn (describe skills these people felt important for boys): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Socialization History:

A.1 What did your mother stress as "important" for a woman (to teach to a daughter): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(1) Skills, describe in detail: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2) Virtues, describe in detail: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(3) Other, describe in detail: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

A.2 Are there any differences for boys: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B.1 What do you feel are "important" for a woman (to teach to her daughter): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(1) Skills, describe in detail: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2) Virtues, describe in detail: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(3) Other, describe in detail: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B.2 Are there any differences for boys: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C.1 What does your daughter (daughter-in-law) feel is "important" for a woman  
(to teach to her daughter): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(1) Skills, describe in detail: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(2) Virtues, describe in detail: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(3) Other, describe in detail: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Women's role in the family:

A. What is the most important thing that a woman does for her family:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(1) In your age group: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(2) In your daughter's age group: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(3) In your granddaughter's age group: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. What is the most important thing that a man does for his family? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(1) In your age group: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(2) In your son's age group: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(3) In your grandson's age group: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12. Macroscopic Perspective: \_\_\_\_\_

A. What do you think of the "professional" woman: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. What do you think about career/family situation for a woman: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C.1 Should most women marry? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C.2 What is the ideal age? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D.1 What do you think the "Ideal American Woman" is like: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D.2 What do you think the "Ideal Italian American Woman" is like: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D.3 Explain the difference and why: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

13. Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14. Income level: \_\_\_\_\_ \$40,000 or over

\_\_\_\_\_ \$25,000-\$39,999

\_\_\_\_\_ \$20,000-\$24,999

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15,000-\$19,999

\_\_\_\_\_ \$10,000-\$14,999

\_\_\_\_\_ under \$10,000

Daughter(s) income level: \_\_\_\_\_ \$40,000 or over  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$25,000-\$39,999  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$20,000-\$24,999  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$15,000-\$19,999  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$10,000-\$14,999  
 \_\_\_\_\_ under \$10,000

Graddaughter(s) income level:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$40,000 or over  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$25,000-\$39,999  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$20,000-\$24,999  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$15,000-\$19,999  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$10,000-\$14,999  
 \_\_\_\_\_ under \$10,000

15. Immigrant History

A. When enter U.S. \_\_\_\_\_

B.1 Where first settled \_\_\_\_\_

B.2 List other residences and amount of time spent in each community: \_\_\_\_\_

Name	Amount of Time	Describe
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

C.1 Have you visited Italy: \_\_\_\_\_

C.2 If yes, how many times? \_\_\_\_\_

About when	How long visit
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

C.3 Do you write or send packages to Italy? \_\_\_\_\_

(1) How often: \_\_\_\_\_

(2) To whom: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D.1 Do your children visit Italy? \_\_\_\_\_

D.2 How often and for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D.3 Do your children correspond with anyone in Italy? \_\_\_\_\_

(1) With whom: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(2) How often: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E.1 Do your grandchildren visit Italy? \_\_\_\_\_

E.2 How often and for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E.3 Do your children correspond with anyone in Italy? \_\_\_\_\_

(1) With whom: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(2) How often: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

QUESTIONNAIRE # 100

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Sex: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who Am I? Try to answer this question with sentences which describe you or say something about yourself.

A) \_\_\_\_\_

B) \_\_\_\_\_

C) \_\_\_\_\_

D) \_\_\_\_\_

E) \_\_\_\_\_

F) \_\_\_\_\_

G) \_\_\_\_\_

(If more space is needed please use the other side of this sheet)

4. My Future Biography:

- a. On the line below place a dot where you think you are now between "Birth" and "Death":

Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Death

b. List below in order, opposite each number, the events and roles you imagine will be part of your future life:

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 9. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(If more space is needed please use the other side of this sheet)

5. Complete in a spontaneous and personal manner the following sentences:

- 1. When I am with my family I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. School for me \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. For me, religion is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Those who use drugs \_\_\_\_\_

5. I would like to be able \_\_\_\_\_

6. Above all, mass communication media serve \_\_\_\_\_

7. The really important things in my life are \_\_\_\_\_

8. One becomes criminal \_\_\_\_\_

9. Among my friends \_\_\_\_\_

10. To be politically involved \_\_\_\_\_

11. Violence is \_\_\_\_\_

12. My greatest desire is \_\_\_\_\_

13. The social reality we live with \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. The worse thing that could happen \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. For me, work means primarily \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. People who have authority \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

19. I think that the government \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

19. In order to change society truly \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

20. I often imagine that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Education: What is the last year of school completed.

---

9. Family:

Number of Children \_\_\_\_\_ Males \_\_\_\_\_ Females

Number of siblings \_\_\_\_\_ Brothers \_\_\_\_\_ Sisters

Lead Questions for Depth Interview of Leaders, Directors, etc.  
of Community Institutions and Associations

I. A. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ I C. Position in Assoc. \_\_\_\_\_

I. B. Address: \_\_\_\_\_ I D. Time in Assoc. \_\_\_\_\_

II. A. Association's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

II. B. Association's Address: \_\_\_\_\_

III. History of Association:

A. Date founded: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Original Charter: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. Original Membership: number: \_\_\_\_\_

type of members (describe): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D. Other relevant information about the history and development in the community:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

IV. A. Present function of Assoc. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

IV. B. Present membership: number: \_\_\_\_\_

type of members: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

V. A. What was the Community's contribution to the Association? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

V. B. What was the Association's contribution to the Community? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

VI. Is Polish Culture encouraged? (Be specific and explain how)

A. language: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

B. history: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

C. music: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

D. dance: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

E. other: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

VII. Describe the Association's relationship to: (Describe in detail with agency, assoc., etc. names)

A. the City Government \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. the State Government \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. the Federal Government \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D. the Private Sector (outside the community) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

VIII, Describe the Associations relationship with community clubs, institutions, associations, etc.: (describe in detail)

A. Church: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. Social clubs (list names and nature of relationship) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

IX, Describe Association relationship to non-members of the association but members of the community

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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X. Comment on "N.Y.C. Polonia (Greenpoint) as a declining Urban Sub-Community"

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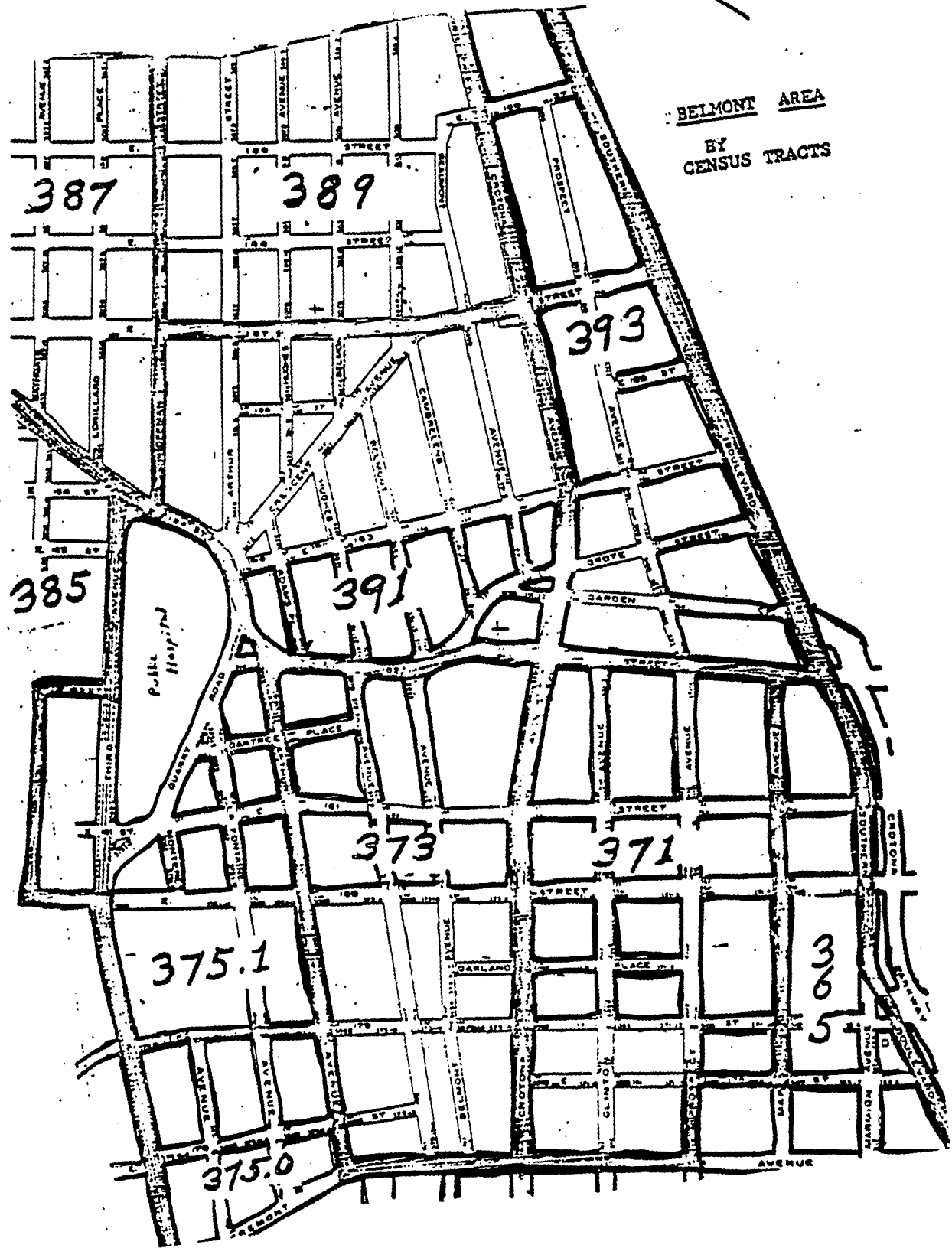
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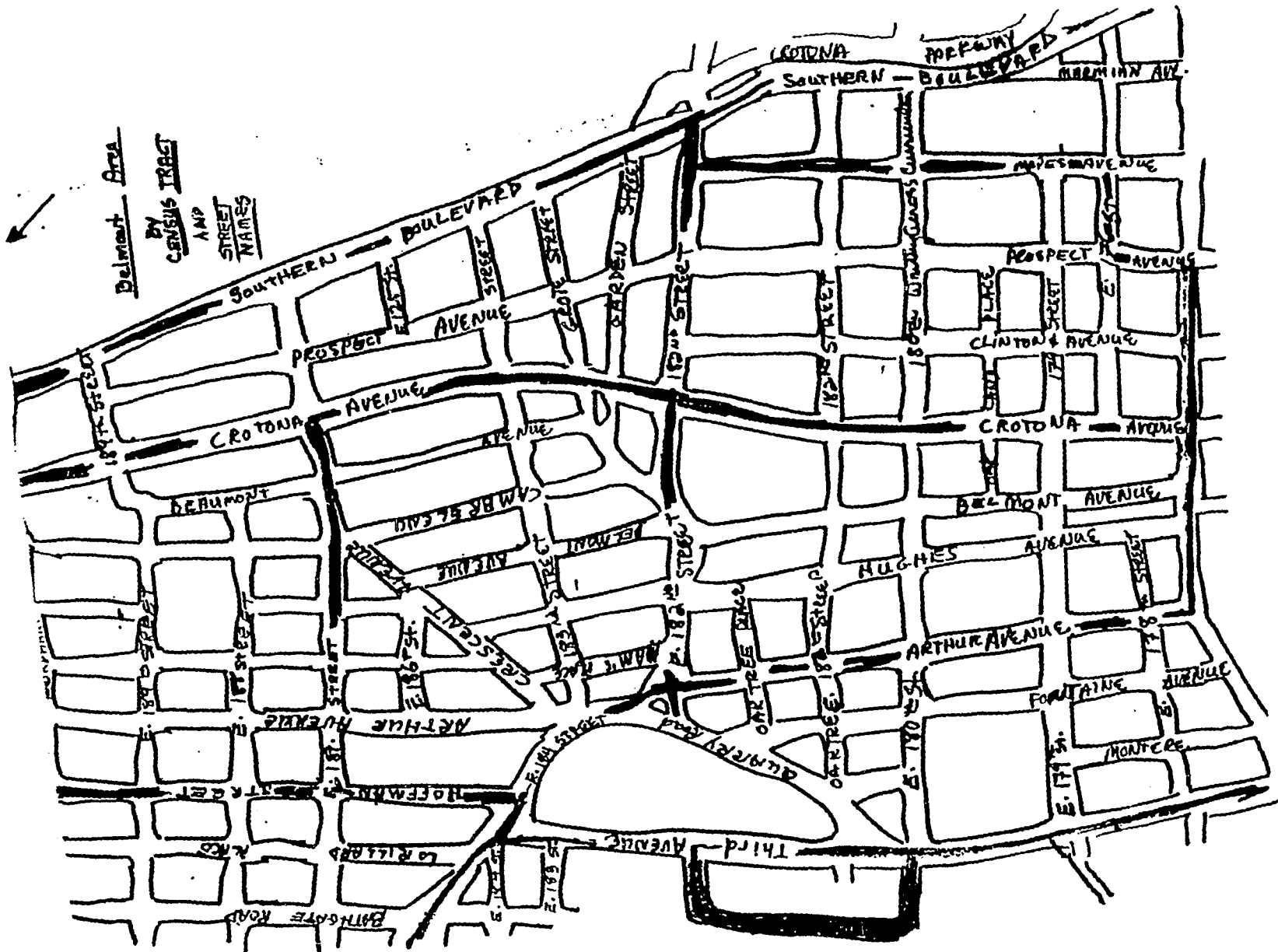
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**THE BELMONT AREA:  
CENSUS TRACT MAPS**



BELMONT AREA  
BY  
CENSUS TRACTS





**MUSICAL EXAMPLES**

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These consist of pages:

P. 290-310

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ASSOCIATION DATA



ntemente alla Fordham University una conferenza sul ruolo della donna italoamericana, impegnata tra famiglia e car-  
 o le partecipanti, insieme con il rettore dell'ateneo, rev. Joseph O'Hare, e il dr. Anthony Lentini, presidente del  
 n of Italian American Educators. Da sinistra: Theodora Podestà Farrell, Bronx Regional Office for Special Education,  
 arfi, specialista di lettura, Board of Education, N.Y.C.; presidente-elect Manhattan College Reading Council, Fiamé;  
 i, senior Lehman College Cuny, Fieri; Maria di Meo, senior fordham University, Fieri; Lind Carlozzi, senior, Fordham  
 i; Sheila Mignone, casalinga, madre, ex docente della Fordham University; il rev. O'Hare, S.J.; la prof. Florinda M.  
 rice del Programma di Studi Italiani della Fordham; Rosemarie Gallina, assistente speciale del governatore Mario  
 ssa Dorothy Balancio, docente di sociologia della Long Island University; la dott.ssa Ann Merlino, preside degli "Ex-  
 del College di Staten Island, Cuny; la prof. Pauline Fusaro, docente del Mercy College; la dott.ssa Aileen Riatto Si-  
 ista, presidente della "Noiaw", National Organization of Italian American Women; il dott. Anthony Lentini. (Foto

Il Progresso

March 9, 1985  
 FIAME of Belmont, N.Y.

"SIAMO, a multi-faceted organization, dedicated  
 to promoting an increased awareness of Italian  
 American achievements and contributions to the  
 fabric of American life" . . .

## A Statement of Purpose

- S** - serve Italian Americans by providing the necessary resources and activities responsive to their needs and aspirations.
- I** - insure, promote and preserve the unique Italian American heritage by increasing knowledge and pride in our historical contributions to America and the world.
- A** - advise, educate and influence public opinion, in promoting a positive image of Italian Americans in society.
- M** - maintain and encourage open communication and a spirit of cooperation among all Italian American organizations.
- O** - organize a networking system to promote greater interaction and commitment among Italian Americans, enabling us to know, share and enjoy who we are  
... **SIAMO.**

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Wrigley, E. Anthony. "Reflections on The History of The Family." Daedalus (Spring 1977): 71-86.

Zito, George. Methodology and Meaning. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

Dorothy M. Cali Balancio  
11-68 Jackson Avenue  
Scarsdale, New York 10583  
(914) 961-2426

*D: 7/8/46  
married - 12 years  
2 sons:  
6 years  
12 years*

*mother's family - from Naples  
father's family - from Sicily*

EDUCATION :

- 1985 CUNY, The Graduate Center, New York, Sociology, M.of Phil., Ph.D.
- 1971-79 The New School for Social Research, New York, A.B.D.
- 1973 Iona College, New Rochelle, New York, Studied Fortran in the M.B.A. Program
- 1972 The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., M.A.
- 1968 Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, New York, B.A.
- 1968 New York State Permanent Certification for EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (grades N, K, 1 - 6)
- 1967 NYU, New York, Extension Program in Social Work - field experience as assistant caseworker

EXPERIENCE : TEACHING

- 1982-present LIU, New York, Associate Professor in the Graduate Division
- 1983-present Queens College, Flushing, New York, Department of Sociology and the Ethnic Studies Program
- 1982 The International University, Pesce, Italy, Faculty Coordinator, Assistant Professor
- 1973-74 Sing Sing Prison, Ossining, New York, Instructor and Assistant Professor
- 1971-present Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, New York, Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology, Sociology and Behavioral Sciences
- 1971-72 Elizabeth Seton College, Yonkers, New York, Instructor
- 1970-72 Yonkers Public Schools, Yonkers, New York, Elementary Teacher
- 1969-70 Saint Casimir's Elementary School, Yonkers, New York, Teacher of fourth and sixth grades
- 1968-72 The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., Teaching Assistant
- 1964-67 Child Center for the Mentally Retarded, Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, New York, Teaching Assistant

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE :

Director - Social Research Center, 161 Centucks Station, Yonkers, New York, 1974 - present

Chairperson - College Committee for Life Achievement, Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, New York, 1984

Board Member - the Mercy College Alumni, 1984

Co-chairperson - College Homecoming Committee, 1984

Organizer of the Faculty Computer Fair, Mercy College, Spring, 1984

SBHS Reunion Chairperson, 1974 and 1984

Vice President - New York State Sociological Association, one year term, elected in 1981 and in 1984

Session Organizer and Chair of Undergraduate Teaching of Sociology - the 31st Conference of the NYSSA, SUNY, Oswego, New York

Local Organizing and Planning Committee - The 32nd Conference of the NYSSA, Baruch College, New York, New York

Coordinator of Publicity and Planning - The Italian American Tricentennial Committee, Westchester County, New York, 1983

Planning and Organizing Committee for the Dean's Lecture Series , 1983-84

Faculty Coordinator and Instructor - International University, Pesce, Italy, 1983-4

Assistant Chairperson Department of Sociology, Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, New York, 1977-81

Acting Chairperson, of the Department of Sociology, Mercy College, 1981

Research Consultant and Field Work Supervisor for the Polish Slavic Center, Greenpoint, Brooklyn, New York

Secretary of the Curriculum Committee - Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, New York, 1975-76

Department Secretary of the Sociology Department - Mercy College, 1973-78

Assistant Director and Field Research Supervisor - Census Bureau Research Project, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 1968-69

HONORS :

NOMINATED FOR THE 1985 CORANARO AWARD conferred by the Order of the Son of Italy in America

International Register Profile , 1977 edition, biography listed

Who's Who in the East , 1976 edition, biography listed

Who's Who in the East , 1977 edition, biography listed

Outstanding Achievement Award Nominee , June, 1975, Westchester County's I.W.Y. Committee

Outstanding Young Women of America, 1974 , biography listed

Graduate Assistantship, Catholic University of America, 1968-69

Sociology Departmental Honors, Mercy College, 1968

College Scholarship, Teamsters Union, Local 210, New York, 1964-68

Dean's List, Mercy College, 1966-68

RESEARCH and PROFESSIONAL PAPERS, PUBLICATION :

1969 "Population Analysis: Count of a Virginia Suburban Area,"  
cosponsored by the C.U. Research Center and the Department on Commerce

1969 "The United States Census Bureau's Training Program - focus being  
on Foreign Dignitaries from the Third World," sponsored by the Department  
of Commerce

1971 "Spatially Descriptive Analysis of Washington, D.C. from  
1940-1960," C.U., Washington, D.C.

1972 "Man in the Street Attitude Survey: Bus Service," sponsored by  
the Westchester County Legislators

1973 "Class of '64: Description and Development in the Past Ten  
Years," Saint Barnabas High School, Bronx, New York

1974 "The Polish American Community in New York City: Origins,  
Contributions and Development," Queens College, Flushing Queens, New York,  
Conference sponsored by the Bicentennial Committee for Community Services

1974 "The Position of Women in Contemporary American Society," New York  
State Sociological Association

1974 "A Demographic History of Man," sponsored by the  
Hastings-DobbsFerry-Ardsley Rotary Club

1974 "Urban Research and Community Development," panelist, sponsored by  
the Westchester County Association

1974 "Dial-a-ride Survey," a transportation research project presented  
to the Westchester County Legislator

1975 "Position of Women in Post Secondary Education in New York State  
and Nationally," presented at Westchester County's I.W.Y. Conference, June  
4th

1976 "Ecological Analysis of Washington, D.C. from 1940-1970," C.U.

1976 "Polish Community in New York City," New Horizons , Fall Issue

1976 "Political Poll: Westchester Voters' Intensions on Local and  
National Levels," sponsored by local candidates

1977 "Italian American Women in Contemporary Society," presented at the  
Italian Immigrant Woman in North America Conference, Toronto, Canada.  
Sponsored by the Canadian and American Historical Associations

1977 "Polish Intellectuals: Analysis and History," New Horizons , 108  
West 39th Street, New York City, Fall Publication

- 1977 "Montessori Education: Westchester Awareness Analysis," sponsored by the Alcott School, Irvington, New York
- 1977 "Market Research Survey: Shoppers Profile," sponsored by Cross County Center, Yonkers, New York
- 1980 "Italian American Clan: Women, Socialization and the Community," Chicago, Ill., the 13th Annual American Italian Historical Association Conference
- 1981 "Italian American Clan: Women, Socialization and the Community," presented at the 29th Annual Conference of the NYSSA
- 1981 "The Role of Women in Today's World," Winter meeting of the American Association of University Women, New York
- 1981 "Training Methodology, Education and the Corporation," presented at the S.H.E.T.A. (Safety, Health, Education and Training Association) Boston, Mass.
- 1982 "The Status of Italian American Women in Society," presented as part of the Dean's Lecture Series on the Invisible Women
- 1982 "Italian Identity: Socialization, Stereotypes and Society," presented at Iona College's Ethnic Identity Day
- 1982 "Italian Americans and Education," Saint John's University, New York, The 14th Annual American Italian Historical Association Conference
- 1982 "Training Programs in Industry: the Adult Learner," presented at the American Association of Trainers and Developers' Conference, San Antonio, Texas
- 1983 "The Italian American Women and Their Contribution to Society," presented at the Scarsdale Women's Club
- 1983 "The Image of the Italian American Women," the New York State Sociological Association's logic
- 1983 "Ethnic Women: the Case of the Italian American Women," the National Women's Studies Association, University Of Ohio, Ohio
- 1983 "Italian Women: an Intergeneration Analysis," presented at the Italian American Tricentennial Celebration of Westchester County, September EXHIBIT: "The Fine Hand of the Italian American Women"
- 1983 Session Chairperson and organizer: "Undergraduate Teaching of Sociology," the New York State Sociological Association Conference
- 1984 "The Italian American Families and Education," presented at the Mamaronek public Schools' Seminar Day for Faculty, Counselors and staff. The theme: Focus on Family
- 1984 "The Making and Unmaking of a Myth: the Italian American Women and Their Community," presented at the 32nd annual New York State

Sociological Association Conference, Baruch College, New York

1984 "Images of Italian American Women," presented at the Boccaccio Colloquium, Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, New York

1985 National Organization of Italian American Women (NOIAW), Steering Committee for the development of a regional chapter for Westchester, Putnam, Fairfield Counties.

1985 Writing Workshop for faculty, writing skill development through "experience learning," Mercy College and the Institute of Writing

1985 Text Book Review, Text Development Inc., New York, Social Change in Contemporary Society by William Kornblum

1985 Panelist> Session XII, "Identity and Community," paper presented: The Making and Unmaking of a Myth: The Italian American Women and Their Community," Kansas City, Missouri, February 27 - March 2

1985 .Keynote Speaker at the annual Conference of the Forum of Italian American Educators (FIAME), Fordham University and the Fermi Library, Belmont, New York City

1985 WNYC (83AM/94FM), "Senior Edition", THE ITALIAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND THE JEWISH AMERICAN WOMEN COMPARED AND CONTRASTED , RADIO Program, February 7

1985 T.V. (STATION: Westchester ch. 34 and N.Y.C. ch. 8. Taped on April 9th to be aired April 29th/8:30pm ch.34 and four times in May. "The Italian and Jewish American Women Compared and Contrasted"... a talk show

1985 June 9th, the New York State Historical Association, Annual Conference, Hofstra University, New York. I am a discussant of the "Oral History Session"

\*NEW COURSES: Created and Taught on the college level:

- \*Language and Behavior
- \*The Interconnections of Sociology and Antrropology
- \*A Cultural Perspective of American Society for Foreign Students
- \*Bureacracy, Society and Public Safety
- \*Italian American Women: Myth and Reality
- \*Ethnic Women: the Case of the Italain American Women
- \*The Italian American Family
- \*Political Sociology: Human Nature, Class and Ethnicity
- \*The Italian American Women and the Jewish American Women: Compared and Contrasted