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The twilight of ethnicity among Americans of European ancestry: the case of Italians*

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The course of ethnicity in advanced industrial societies continues to be debated without satisfactory resolution. Earlier social theorists, inspired by a vision of the erosion of traditional structures under the impact of a tide of modernization, tended to see ethnicity as receding. More recently, sociologists and others have proclaimed the resilience of ethnicity; for some, this is because ethnicity is an affiliation apart, primordial and only superficially modified by currents of modernization, while for others, it is due to ethnicity's moorings in durable structures of inequality.

Proponents of the view that ethnicity is resilient are the dominant voice in contemporary discussions, but their dominance is by no means assured, since the conceptual groundwork for interpreting ethnicity remains unsettled. There is in fact no consensus on the proper vantage point from which to view ethnicity, 'assimilation' having been dethroned as the crowning concept of the field over the last two decades (Blauner, 1972; Greeley, 1977).

This paper examines some of the interpretative difficulties surrounding ethnicity through the experiences of one group, Italian Americans. In particular, Italians are taken to constitute a strategic test case for some reigning assumptions in the study of ethnicity of European-ancestry groups in the United States. I will argue that the Italian experience demonstrates the importance of boundary-shifting processes, as opposed to assimilation at the individual level only, and that these shifts require for their explanation the invocation of historical contingencies, rooted in structural changes external to the group.

Assimilation and ethnic boundaries

For a long time, assimilation appeared as one of the most successful and important concepts for the study of ethnicity; this status is reflected in its classic treatment at the hands of Milton Gordon (1964). But much recent writing on ethnicity rejects or avoids assimilation as a focus of major concern. At least part of the reason appears to lie in an implicit model of assimilation, which is ahistorical, individualistic and incrementalist – which, in other words, does not connect assimilatory processes to macrostructural dynamics,

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but instead conceives of them as individual decisions played out against a static background. Such a conception naturally places the emphasis on social psychological constructs, including the acceptability of a group's members to the majority or core and, perhaps more importantly, their motivation to merge with the majority. At the same time, it is implicitly one-directional: assimilating individuals are affiliating with a new group, thereby dropping the cultural and other garb of their original one.

This individualistic conception makes it easier to understand why assimilation has slipped out of the inner circle of concern. Since it assumes that assimilation hinges on the willingness of individuals to surrender to the majority, then the importance of assimilation would appear to decrease as this willingness does. And this is precisely what seemed to happen during the 1960s, in what appeared to many as a revival of ethnicity among American groups, both the racial minorities and, somewhat surprisingly, those of European ancestry. The revival meant, to use a characterization that, with minor variations, rings throughout the literature on ethnicity in America, that the ethnics were refusing to assimilate (e.g., Novak, 1972).

One difficulty with this diminishing of the importance of assimilation as a concept is that statistical indicators, such as intermarriage rates (Alba and Chamlin, 1983), suggest the cresting of assimilatory processes in recent decades. The apparent contradiction with the presumed ethnic revival indicates the limitations inherent in the individualistic conception of assimilation and the need to reconceptualize it in a way that allows it to be linked to structural processes of group formation and dissolution. One way to achieve this is to explicitly include the notion of group boundaries within the focus of assimilation. Group boundaries in this context refer to the recognition of ethnic distinctions in interaction, and thus are premised upon 'criteria for determining membership and ways of signalling membership and exclusion' (Barth, 1969: 15). Ethnic distinctions are socially maintained by such boundary markers as language, speech mannerisms, food, culture more broadly, and physical appearance, all of which can serve to identify group members to each other and to outsiders.

Reexamining the concept of assimilation with the notion of group boundaries in mind forces the recognition of two ideal types of assimilation. One is the type envisioned by the individualistic conception described above: namely, an individual moves across an ethnic boundary, transferring allegiance to another group, but without any change to the boundary itself. Assimilation of this kind can be viewed as a sort of population trade between different ethnic blocs (e.g., Newman, 1973; Greeley, 1971). Research advancing such an interpretation has emphasized such consequences of intermarriage as the conversion of one spouse to the religion of the other (Newman, 1973: 162–4). The consequences of this kind of assimilation for ethnic change are problematic; it can be plausibly argued that it does not weaken ethnicity.

The second kind is a group form: it is assimilation accomplished through a change in ethnic boundaries, either through a weakening to reduce their salience or through a shift that removes a previously recognized distinction.

By definition, such boundary changes mean changes to ethnicity as well. That they may occur is made plausible by the much noted observation that the coincidence of ethnic and other boundaries, such as those of occupation and residence, tends to enhance ethnic solidarity (Glazer and Moynihan, 1970; Hechter, 1978; Yancey *et al.*, 1976); consequently, a dilution through mobility of ethnic considerations in particular occupational strata or neighborhoods might be expected to weaken ethnic boundaries.

Empirically, of course, there is not necessarily a sharp distinction between the two types. Nonetheless, a separate recognition for the second type is valuable because it forces attention to the structural factors that may enhance or detract from ethnic solidarity, such as those stemming from the cultural division of labor (Hechter, 1978), group size (Blau, 1977), and the institutional completeness of ethnic communities (Breton, 1964).

The type of assimilation at the group level also underlines the cardinal importance of studying interethnic relations, since they provide a means of detecting ethnic boundaries and the changes that occur to them. The same does not hold true for the 'content' of boundaries, i.e., the cultural and other signs of group membership, which may change without change to the boundaries themselves (Barth, 1969); for this reason, the study of culture by itself is not decisive for resolving questions of ethnicity. The occurrence, even the frequent occurrence, of interethnic relations also need not contradict the existence of an ethnic boundary, but the maintenance of such a boundary requires that interethnic contacts be asymmetric in some fundamental way, as would be true of relations between members of groups of unequal status (Barth, 1969). Interactions structured by ethnicity help to maintain ethnic distinctions. This is generally not the case for symmetric, nonsegmental relations, such as those of friendship and marriage. A change in the pattern of such relations is a signal of a change in ethnic boundaries.[1]

A case in point: the Italian Americans

Italian Americans provide an intriguing example of the significance of boundary-shift processes as well as a litmus test for the most frequently advanced interpretations of ethnicity. Thus, those who argue for the persistence or revival of ethnicity generally point to white ethnic groups such as the Italians to support their arguments. In this view, Italians remain entrenched in ethnicity partly because of their recency of arrival and partly because their core values – in particular, the values embodied in the family – have enabled them to maintain solidary ethnic communities, manifest for example in vital urban neighborhoods.

These contemporary arguments find an echo in older ones. Few argued on behalf of the assimilability of the Italians at the time of their arrival, for they entered as one of the most despised of European immigrant groups (Higham, 1970). The bulk of the Italian immigration before the close of mass immigration in the 1920s came from the rural villages of the south, or Mezzogiorno,

although because of the imprecision of both American and Italian statistics, it is not possible to estimate precisely the proportion from southern provinces (Sori, 1979).[2] The available statistics, however, do clearly support the well-known overall picture of an immigration swollen with a dislocated peasantry. For example, tabulations published by the Immigration Commission of 1911 reveal that in the crucial period 1899–1910, when 2.22 million Italian immigrants arrived on American shores (44 percent of the total from 1820 to 1970), 32 percent of those with European work experience described themselves as farm laborers and an additional 43 percent as laborers (Kessner, 1977: 33–4). The general category of 'laborer,' or *bracciante* in Italian, included many who had only recently been forced out of agricultural work (Sori, 1979).

The experiences of southern Italians hardly constituted preparation for integration into an urban, industrial society. The Mezzogiorno presents a classical picture of an underdeveloped society where the penetration of capitalist markets of land and labor created severe dislocations, uprooting peasants from the land and transforming them into a rural proletariat. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, many rural dwellers were forced to work the land of others, frequently under share-cropping or other tenancy arrangements that gave them little return for their efforts. Patterns of land holding and land use, combined with unfavorable climate and topography, produced an agriculture of scarcity, characterized by chronic shortages of work and food (Covello, 1972; Schneider and Schneider, 1976; Sori, 1979). And the nature of the work bore little relation either to farm or industrial work in the United States. The tools were primitive, so that, according to the immigrant writer, Constantine Panunzio, 'When they come to America, the work which comes nearest to that which they did in Italy is not farming or even farm labor, but excavation work' (Panunzio, 1928: 78; quoted by Kessner, 1977: 39).

The cultural values engendered by the social and material contours of the Mezzogiorno also did not mesh well with the exigencies in the United States. In such a landscape of scarcity, a supreme value was placed on the family. It has been observed many times that the family, not the individual, was the basic social atom of Mezzogiorno society; in the well-known words of Robert Foerster,

> Life in the South exalts the family. It has been said of Sicily that the family sentiment is perhaps the only deeply rooted moral sentiment that prevails. (Foerster, 1924: 95)

This was not, however, the 'amoral familism' of Banfield (1958), which portrays Mezzogiorno life as a Hobbesian war pitting each nuclear family against all others. Southern Italian social structure was constituted in good part from filaments of family-like relations extending beyond the nuclear family, such as extended kinship, fictive kinship created through the institution of godparentship (*compareggio*), and friendship (*amicizia*) (Chapman, 1971; Schneider and Schneider, 1976).

An aspect of the southern Italian ethos with repercussions for Italians in America lay in the presumption that family interests should take precedence over individual ones. A well-known instance of this occurred in relation to marriage. Since the position of a family was affected by the marriages of its members, families attempted to exert considerable control over the choice of a spouse, to the point that many marriages were arranged. Family control was enhanced by the sexual provisions of the Mezzogiorno's code of honor, which drastically restricted contact between eligible men and women (Chapman, 1971). A second instance lay in the economic value attached to children. In peasant families, children were generally expected to make an economic contribution as soon as they were able to work, beginning usually during adolescence. The early initiation to work brought an abrupt transition to adulthood. It also generally spelled the end of formal schooling. This was in any event in accordance with the family-centered culture, in which education was regarded with suspicion, as a potential danger to family solidarity (Covello, 1972: 257; Gambino, 1974).

This occupational and cultural background powerfully shaped the niche the immigrants were able to establish for themselves. The majority of Italian immigrants sought work in urban labor markets, in part because they frequently intended to repatriate after earning enough money to improve their position and this limited them to places where employment was readily available. But immigrants fresh from the peasantry discovered upon their arrival that only 'peek and shuvil' work, as Panunzio described it (quoted by Kessner, 1977: 58), was open to them. In 1905 in New York City, i.e., at the height of immigration in the city with the largest concentration of Italians in the United States, nearly 60 percent of Italian household heads did unskilled or semiskilled manual labor, working on construction gangs or as rag pickers and longshoremen (Kessner, 1977: 52–9). The reasons were not limited to a shortage of skills that could be applied in the industrial sector. Culturally engendered expectations about the nature of work, carried from the Mezzogiorno, also constrained occupational possibilities. That many immigrant men took jobs in construction or on the docks was partly a result of a preference for outdoor work, an attempt to reproduce familiar work cycles and conditions. This preference tended to consign Italians to seasonal work outside the regular channels of blue-collar mobility, which were found in factories (Yans-McLaughlin, 1977: 35–44).

Culture also limited the work horizons of women. One of Mezzogiorno's strongest prohibitions was directed against contact between women and male strangers, and this powerful norm went far toward defining what was an acceptable work situation for women. Work in the home was strongly preferred. Some took in boarders (generally relatives or paesani in order not to compromise the family honor), and others homework such as laundering or the manufacture of artificial flowers. One instance where Italian women did work outside the home occurred in the New York City garment industry, where women could work among other women (Yans-McLaughlin, 1977: 50–4).

Immigrant adjustment was complicated by the intention to repatriate. The number who ultimately returned to the Mezzogiorno is uncertain, but clearly it was large; one estimate is that 1.5 million Italians returned from the United States in the years between 1900 and 1914 (Caroli, 1973: 41). The sojourner's orientation toward the homeland, felt undoubtedly also by many who stayed, delayed such important adaptations as the acquisition of citizenship and the learning of English.[3] Lieberson's study of ten cities, for example, shows that in 1930, at a point when new immigration had all but ceased, Italians had the highest percentage of foreign-born who did not speak English in nine of the cities (they ranked second highest in the other); and they had the first or second highest percentages of immigrants who were not citizens in eight (Lieberson, 1963: 206–18). Obviously, this retarded adaptation had a large impact on the group, disadvantaging it relative to other immigrant groups who arrived around the same time (particularly in relation to Jews, who did not wish to return to the European societies from which they fled (Kessner, 1977: 167)).

The prospects for Italians seemed bleak also on the basis of American reactions to them. The Italian group arrived in a period when racial ideologies were widespread in the United States; and its arrival served to stimulate their further development, as Italians became a focus for explicitly racist thinking and stereotypes. The Italians were perceived as prone to crime, both organized and that spurred by passion and vengeance, the latter symbolized for Americans by the stiletto (Higham, 1970: 66–7). The Italian distinctiveness was perceived in physical terms as well: the immigrants were 'swarthy' and seemed to bear other signs of physical degradation, such as low foreheads. In the racially conscious climate, at a time when race theoreticians were attempting to draw biological distinctions among European peoples to the disfavor of those from the south and east, the question of color may have been unavoidable. It would go much too far to say that Italians were viewed as non-whites, but their color position was problematic. This is evident in the common epithet for them, 'guinea,' which was derived from a term referring originally to slaves from the western coast of Africa (Mencken, 1963: 373; Craigie and Hulbert, 1940: 1192–3).

The situation in the 1930s

The assimilability of the Italians continued to seem unlikely in the 1930s, after the close of the period of mass immigration. This is not to deny that significant cultural changes had taken place by then; these were especially evident in the transition to the second generation. Important aspects of the family-centered culture of the Mezzogiorno were so attuned to southern Italian situations that they could not be reestablished successfully in the United States. For example, strict control over unmarried daughters was only workable in southern Italian villages, where parents were in a position to evaluate the suitability of all potential suitors. Parental superiority broke down in American ghettos, since more acculturated children were better able

to make appropriate matches for themselves. The extent of change in family norms is suggested by Ware's study of Greenwich Village in the early 1930s (Ware, 1935: 180–202). In a survey of its Italian residents, she found clear-cut differences between older and younger respondents, a division that no doubt corresponded well with generational status (i.e., foreign versus native-born). Older Italians were less likely than younger ones to reject such Mezzogiorno family norms as 'girls should not associate with men unless engaged' and parental arrangement of marriages.

But in other ways, the same survey indicates second-generation fidelity to the southern Italian cultural heritage. Only half the younger group rejected the proposition that 'a child should sacrifice his personal ambition to the welfare of the family group'; and only 15 percent denied that 'children owe absolute obedience to parents' (Ware, 1935: 193).

One area in which the remaining power of the family ethos was undeniably manifest was that of education. The conflict between the school system and the family that had existed in the Mezzogiorno was renewed in America. Immigrant families perceived many points of friction in the contact between these culturally alien worlds. These occurred even in seemingly innocuous matters such as school recreation, which immigrant parents saw as creating moral and physical risk for teen-agers, who in their eyes were already adults (Covello, 1972: 325–6). Undoubtedly, the most important conflict centered on the economic contribution expected of children, which was jeopardized by compulsory attendance laws, greatly resented by Italian parents.

As a result of the clash between school and family, Italian children had high rates of truancy and frequently left school as early as the law allowed (Covello, 1972). In fact, during the height of mass immigration, it is estimated that as many as 10 percent of the immigrant children in New York City managed to avoid school altogether (Kessner, 1977: 96). But even as late as 1930, only 11 percent of Italian Americans who entered New York City high schools graduated from them, at a time when over 40 percent of all the city's high school students stayed through to receive their diplomas (Covello, 1972: 285). The obvious consequence was low ultimate educational attainment for second-generation Italians and a channeling of them towards jobs where educational credentials were not important, mostly in the blue-collar ranks.

The ultimate assimilation of the Italians was also put in question by attitudes of the Italians themselves. Two studies of Italian-American ghettos, in Boston and New Haven, offer relevant testimony. Whyte's (1955) classic study indicates a split among Italians in their attitudes towards assimilation. He portrays the division in terms of 'college boys,' oriented toward mobility into the larger society, and 'corner boys,' loyal to their peer groups and held on ghetto corners by that loyalty. Whyte did not provide direct evidence on the relative popularity of these two orientations, but Child's (1943) New Haven study did. Child depicted the attitudes of Italians as defined against a background of virulent prejudice directed at their group, which hedged in the possible choices with the risk of potential losses. Identification with the Italian group meant risking complete exclusion by other Americans and

the loss of any prospects for mobility. On the other hand, identification with Americans, and hence a positive valuation of assimilation, risked a double rejection: by non-Italians as a result of prejudice and by other Italians on the grounds of disloyalty to the group. According to Child, the most common response to this double-bind situation was one he labeled 'apathetic': a denial of the meaningfulness of nationality distinctions and of the existence of prejudice against Italians. Individuals displaying the apathetic response remained through inertia within the orbit of Italian-American social and cultural life, for it required deliberate action to break this social gravity and move into non-Italian spheres. Because of the risks involved, few maintained such intentions.

The 1940s and 50s: the watershed

By the end of the 1930s, an analysis based solely on the group's experiences and its cultural and occupational background would seem to have doomed Italian Americans to a perpetual position of inferiority and separateness in American society. But such an analysis would have been misleading because other developments were taking place in the larger society that affected the context within which Italian-American preferences would be played out. These factors came to a head during and shortly after World War II.

Some had been in the background all along, but the war sharpened their effects. One such was the transformation of the occupational structure and the attendant structural mobility. Between 1930 and 1970, for example, the white-collar proportion of the national labor force expanded rapidly from 29.4 to 44.8 percent (all figures are from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975: 139); about half this change, moreover, was concentrated in the upper part of the white-collar spectrum, the category of professional and technical workers, whose share of the labor force increased in this period from 6.8 to 13.7 percent. Although the proportion in the combined blue-collar and service occupations hardly changed, within them a significant realignment was taking shape. In particular, unskilled laborers, a category which included many Italian Americans in the earlier part of the century, declined sharply from 11.0 to 4.4 percent. The structural mobility engendered by such shifts in the occupational distribution holds a special significance for disadvantaged ethnic groups because it does not have a 'zero sum' character. Thus, the upward mobility of an individual or group can occur without the complementary downward mobility of another; and as a result, it is not likely to produce a heightened salience of group boundaries among more advantaged groups, intended to keep the disadvantaged in their place.

The effects wrought by structural mobility were most sharply felt in those places where Italian Americans were concentrated: the metropolitan areas of the north. This is made clearest by examining the kinds of jobs that were opening up and closing out in different places in the post-war interval, since it is the changes at the margins that chiefly dictate the occupational options for young people entering the labor force and thus shape intergenerational

occupational mobility. Over the period 1940–60, metropolitan areas in general were the places of greatest job growth (Stanback and Knight, 1970). In the older metropolises of the Northeast and Midwest, growth was primarily concentrated in white-collar rather than blue-collar jobs (Berry and Kasarda, 1977: ch. 12).

A corollary of structural occupational shifts during the 1940s and 1950s was another kind of structural mobility: the rapid expansion of higher education and its transformation from a selective system to a mass one. In 1940, only 15 percent of the college-age group actually attended college, but by 1954 the rate of college attendance had climbed to 30 percent; by 1960, it was almost 38 percent (Trow, 1961). This expansion played an important role in reducing status differences because, in addition to propelling occupational mobility, higher education extends a sense of equality among its students through an experience that is viewed as a sharp alteration in status and is sanctified by the selectivity of colleges and universities.

World War II acted as a catalyst for both kinds of mobility. The War helped to drag the United States out of the Depression and open up an era of prosperity and economic growth, signaled by a steady growth in real income beginning in the early 1950s (Miller, 1971); and it specifically fueled the expansion of higher education through the G.I. Bill. But the impact of the war was much wider than the socioeconomic changes it helped to stimulate, for the war had a powerful effect on American perceptions of nationality and national origins.

The crux of the wartime situations during this century is that they have turned ethnic identity into a matter of national loyalty, thereby giving ethnicity a subversive appearance and ultimately hastening a deemphasis on nationality differences. The diversity of the origins of Americans and the substantial proportion of those of recent origins, particularly from combatant nations, have made Americans sensitive to the potential frailty of national solidarity. During World War I, the presence of millions of recently arrived European immigrants provoked intense anxieties about the immediate loyalties of aliens and the potential for subversion from within, leading to overt xenophobia and demands for the 'pressure-cooker assimilation' and '100 percent Americanization' of the immigrants (Higham, 1970). By the 1940s, the flood tide of immigration had receded; the groups with the potential for loyalty to enemy nations were increasingly composed of the native-born, and the responses of Americans were accordingly different.

This is not to say that the war did not stimulate anxieties over national loyalty. The internment of Japanese Americans demonstrates indisputably that it did. In the case of European ethnics, clouds of suspicion gathered early during the war over Germans and Italians, but then largely gave way to a cultivated national unity that was also a response to the wartime strains. The melding of Americans of different nationalities was almost ritualistically promoted by festivals to celebrate the contributions of immigrant groups to America (Polenberg, 1980: 54). More significant, wartime reporting and films about the war made for domestic consumption self-consciously highlighted

the spirit of unity among American fighting men from different backgrounds, portraying the armed forces as a melting pot in miniature (Blum, 1976: 63).

The war no doubt served to drive home the perils of too strong an ethnic identification for many ethnics. One of Child's New Haven respondents sharply formulated a general problem:

> Then a lot of times in the show you see Mussolini on the screen and they all start to razz him. Then I feel, 'How the hell do I stand?' (Child, 1943: 88)

A frequent response on the part of the ethnics was a push toward further assimilation. Ethnics had high rates of enlistment in the military, and there was massive adoption of American citizenship by the foreign-born – more than 1,750,000 became citizens in the period 1940–45 (Polenberg, 1980: 57). Movement toward acculturation is evident in the waning of the foreign language press that occurred during the war. The number of radio stations broadcasting in immigrant languages dropped by 40 percent between 1942 and 1948 (Polenberg, 1980: 55).

An ultimate impact of the war was to render the perceptions of the ethnics more fluid and thus open to the possibility of change. One realm in which this influence is visible is in the novels about the war, published during it and afterwards. Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, James Jones's *From Here to Eternity*, Harry Brown's *A Walk in the Sun*, and John Hersey's *A Bell for Adano*, which were all popular novels made into successful films, presented a very different version of American society from that which prevailed before the war. Like many wartime films, these novels depicted military groups that contained American ethnic diversity, or more precisely the part of European ancestry, in microcosm, and showed ethnics as the moral equals of those of 'old stock' origins (Blum, 1976). The novels, which served to interpret the war experience for many Americans, signaled a shift in attitudes towards ethnics.

Thus, World War II stands as a watershed for European ethnics, partly because it lies at a fortuitous conjunction of forces – structural transformation of the labor force, demographic transition from the immigrant to the second generation among the ethnics of recent European origins, and a cultural relaxation of the attitudes towards ethnics – that served to fluidify the boundaries separating ethnics from old stock groups. It remains still to confirm that these massive forces actually had an effect on the life chances of ethnics. Relevant evidence is supplied by Lieberson's recent study (1980), which reveals a prodigious socioeconomic leap for the 1925–35 cohort of second-generation South-Central-Eastern European ethnics, which came to maturity during and shortly after the war (Lieberson, 1980: 200–6, 328–32).

The boundary fluidity associated with the large-scale mobility in the aftermath of the war was further advanced by the enormous residential movements of the 1950s and 1960s. In the single decade from 1950 to 1960, the population in the suburbs increased by nearly 50 percent, from 41 to 60

million (Polenberg, 1980: 128). For ethnics and others, the suburban exodus was often directly connected with occupational chances – and not merely the result of increasing affluence – since the bulk of newly created jobs were to be found in the suburban fringes, not central-city areas (Berry and Kasarda, 1977: ch. 12). But the exodus was full of portent for ethnic groups because it disrupted urban ethnic communities and brought many mobile families into an ethnically heterogeneous milieu, a shift with obvious ramifications for the next generation. The residential changes of Italians are exemplified by the group's distribution in the metropolitan region centered around New York City and Newark, which contained nearly a third of the Italian Americans the Census counted in 1970. By then, the second generation had significantly dispersed to the suburbs. According to Census figures, 47 percent were living in the area's smaller places, those with fewer than 100,000 residents; and 41 percent were living in places with fewer than 50,000. These figures are only slightly lower than those for whites generally (50 percent and 45 percent, respectively). However, first-generation Italians remained distinctly more concentrated in the region's larger cities. Only 35 percent were in places smaller than 100,000 in population, and 29 percent in places smaller than 50,000.[4]

Obviously, the changes of the post-war period did not mean a complete dissolution of ethnic communities and subcultures. Gans's (1962) study of Boston's West End in the late 1950s establishes that many, particularly in the urban working class, remained firmly in the grip of ethnic worlds. But a process had been initiated, one that spelled a gradual lowering of ethnic boundaries among European ancestry groups and an upward shift in the life chances of their younger members.

The contemporary situation of Italian Americans

This process of boundary shift has had a profound impact on Italian Americans, and recent evidence points to a convergence with other European ancestry groups, including those of older stock. As one demonstration, consider the educational trajectory across different cohorts of second- and later-generation Italians, compiled in Table 1 from the November, 1979, Current Population Survey.[5] To provide a rigorous yardstick against which to measure change, comparable figures are also provided for third- and later-generation Americans of exclusively British ancestry (defined as those who report ancestry only from England, Scotland, and Wales). Such a comparison group avoids the confusion that might be introduced by including other recent ethnics in the reference group and also compares the Italians to an ethnic category that is indisputably part of the American core, thus underlining the sharpness of the changes. For similar reasons, the focus in the table is exclusively on rates of college attendance and graduation.

What stands out in the table is a pattern of convergence across cohorts. Although the pattern is complicated somewhat by an unsustained peak in college education among British Americans in the 1946–50 cohort (which

Table 1. *Rates of college education among Italian Americans, by sex, generation, and cohort and compared to those of third-generation British Amercians.*[a]

Cohort	Second generation % attended college	Second generation % finished 4 or more yrs.	Third generation % attended college	Third generation % finished 4 or more yrs.	Third-generation British Americans % attended college	Third-generation British Americans % finished 4 or more yrs.
Men						
1951–	56.6	28.9	54.4	25.8	53.2	27.1
1946–50	42.1	32.8	55.9	29.1	66.4	38.1
1941–45	45.4	26.2	51.8	35.7	55.7	38.5
1936–40	42.9	30.3	42.3	22.1	51.5	35.1
1931–35	33.0	18.7	39.0	18.4	50.3	31.3
1926–30	24.9	11.7	31.5	15.2	42.1	27.8
1921–25	22.1	16.0	20.1	7.7	43.9	23.8
1916–20	17.5	3.9	13.4	11.3	35.7	20.1
–15	16.3	7.9	15.2	6.2	30.1	17.4
Women						
1951–	50.4	20.2	46.6	26.3	48.8	24.0
1946–50	35.0	17.1	40.5	20.0	53.5	31.8
1941–45	27.3	13.1	32.1	13.5	44.7	22.5
1936–40	28.3	13.2	18.2	3.9	39.0	21.7
1931–35	9.1	4.4	17.9	10.5	33.2	16.1
1926–30	14.6	5.7	27.6	9.2	41.8	23.0
1921–25	8.2	4.5	22.6	5.1	29.7	14.5
1916–20	7.0	4.2	30.1	20.2	37.6	17.8
–15	5.1	1.8	2.7	0.0	26.5	12.3

Source: My tabluations from November, 1979, Current Population Survey

[a] Table restricted to individuals older than 22. The 'third generation' contains all native-born group members with native-born parents and thus encompasses the third and later generations.

may be part of a Vietnam era phenomenon revealed by a recent Census report) and by some wandering of the numbers from a simple trajectory of linear change, its basic nature is clear: a gradual narrowing of Italian differences from British Americans and the achievement of parity in the youngest cohort (who were in their mid-twenties in 1979). This convergence holds for both men and women, and indeed what the table also reveals is the relatively greater disadvantage of Italian-American women in the past, especially in the second generation. For this last group, the rise in college attendance (from 9.1 percent to 50.4 percent) across a twenty-year time span, from the 1930–35 cohort to that of 1951–56, is very strong. The convergence also holds for both generations, and underlining the historical nature of the convergence is the fact that the generations do not seem much different, although the third generation shows some tendency to take the lead in rising rates of college attendance.

Evidence of cultural convergence is provided by survey items that tap attitudes and values connected with the stereotypical family-centered ethos presumed to color Italian-American life (e.g., Greeley and McCready, 1975).[6] One widely cited expression of this is greater loyalty to kin groups, purportedly evident for instance in a reluctance to move away from the family (Gambino, 1974; Vecoli, 1978). Another is conservatism on family-related matters, ranging from hostility toward changes in sexual mores and the position of women to a low frequency of divorce (Greeley, 1974; Femminella and Quadagno, 1976).

The thinness of any residual cultural patina among individuals of Italian heritage is evident from Table 2, which reports the analysis of items from the General Social Surveys for the years 1975 through 1980 (the table is a selection from a larger set discussed in Alba, 1985).[7] The comparison is again to those of British ancestry (more precisely: since the General Social Surveys ask for the religion in which a respondent was raised, the comparison group contains those with Protestant ancestry from the British Isles). The table presents the comparison without any controls and also with controls for: current region and size of place as well as those where the respondent was raised; education and occupation of respondent and parents; and sex and age.[8]

On items relating to traditional family roles, Italians are generally quite similar to WASPs. They do not significantly differ from WASPs in terms of acceptance of abortion, for example, although they appear slightly more conservative after controls are applied because of their greater concentration in areas where liberal attitudes prevail.[9] Italians do not differ from WASPs in their acceptance of women outside the home.[10] Similarity between the groups is also found, albeit with an important exception, in attitudes toward the raising of children. Italians have been depicted as emphasizing traditional values, rather than those of self-direction (Rosen, 1959; Schooler, 1976). But in terms of their rating of the desirability of various traits in children, they are not meaningfully different from British Protestants.[11] Worthy of mention for its echo of the Mezzogiorno is one trait on the list, 'that he

Table 2. *Cultural comparison between WASPs and Italian Americans.*

	WASP mean	Italian mean	difference	diff. after adjustment[a]
Anti-abortion scale	1.33	1.42	.09	.20*
Anti-feminism scale	1.26	1.25	−.01	.08
Premarital sex is 'always wrong'	34.5%	22.6%	−11.9*	1.3
Adultery is 'always wrong'	69.8%	58.6%	−11.2*	−3.5
Homosexual sex is 'always wrong'	69.3%	60.4%	−8.9*	−4.7
Ever divorced or legally separated	25.7%	21.9%	−3.8	−4.4
Divorce should be 'more difficult'	50.1%	41.3%	−8.8*	−3.1
Scale of value put on self-direction for children	1.24	1.17	−.07	−.12
Young people 'should be taught by their elders'	37.9%	53.0%	15.1*	19.8*
Reside in same place where grew up	39.5%	53.2%	13.6*	6.6*
Socialize with relatives weekly	33.8%	46.8%	13.0*	10.4*

*Indicates statistical significance.

Source: Tabulations from the NORC General Social Surveys, 1975–80.

[a]Variables for which adjustment has been made include: current region and size of place and those where respondent grew up, education and occupation of respondent and parents, age and sex.

[the child] obeys his parents well.' Just a quarter of the Italian-American respondents prize obedience as one of the most desirable traits in children, a figure not statistically different from that for WASPs (28 percent). The exception to this general similarity concerns whether young people should be taught 'by their elders to do what is right' or 'to think for themselves even though they may do something their elders disapprove of.' About half of Italians agree with the position consistent with the family-centered ethos – namely, that young people should be taught by their elders – compared to 38 percent of WASPs. Nonetheless, the Italian percentage is not far from the one for all Americans, 45 percent of whom favor the traditional option.

Despite their conservative image, Italians are more liberal than WASPs in certain respects, apparently because of their location in the metropolitan northeast, where cosmopolitan outlooks are frequent. They are less likely to condemn adultery, premarital sex, and homosexuality as 'always wrong.' They are also less likely to feel that divorce laws should be tightened to make divorce more difficult to obtain. (The proportion who have ever been divorced or separated is also, incidentally, not statistically different from that found among British Americans.) But in all these cases, the differences disappear after statistical controls are introduced, and an inspection of the regressions indicates that the reduction is chiefly brought about by the controls for place.

Broadly speaking, then, there is little support for the image of a distinctive Italian conservatism on family matters. Where there does appear to be greater evidence for an Italian-American ethos is in terms of loyalty to the family group, but at best its remaining strength seems no more than moderate. This loyalty can be examined through two items in Table 2.

One tests the idea that Italians remain rooted in one place because of their reluctance to move away from family. Indeed, an impressive 53 percent reside in the same place where they grew up; however, the percentage of WASPs who do so also is high, 40 percent. Moreoever, the Italian percentage could be expected to be higher on the grounds that Italians have more frequently grown up in the cosmopolitan magnets that attract others from their hometowns (New York City is the prototype) and also have lower overall educational and occupational attainment, factors associated with less residential mobility. When controls are applied, the difference between the two groups is only modest, 7 percentage points.[12]

Finally, the Italian pattern of socializing with relatives, emphasized by Gans (1962) in his depiction of the 'peer group society,' still persists to some degree. Nearly half of Italians socialize with family members weekly or more frequently, compared to only a third of WASPs. This difference is not explained very much by the background variables, as the tendency to socialize within the family is not much affected by socioeconomic variables, and this is counterbalanced for WASPs by the fact that it is somewhat higher among those who live in smaller places. After controls, Italians are still 10 percent more likely to socialize on a weekly basis with relatives.

Thus, what remains of the family-centered ethos is a slightly greater tendency to remain in the same place, greatly diluted from ancestral peasant rootedness, and a moderately greater willingness to keep company with relatives. The evidence of cultural convergence seems substantial,[13] but there is still more imposing evidence of convergence and assimilation: in intermarriage rates. Intermarriage stands as the cardinal indicator of boundary shift for several reasons (cf. Merton, 1941). To begin with the obvious, because marriage is an enduring and intimate relation, intermarriage provides a stringent test of group perceptions, of the social distance between Italians and others. Moreover, an intermarriage is not simply an isolated crossing of ethnic boundaries but carries far wider ramifications, including most importantly those for the next generation, which will be raised in an ethnically heterogeneous milieu. Finally, the occurrence of intermarriage implies the occurrence of other relations that penetrate ethnic boundaries.

The intermarriage rates of Italians, calculated from the 1979 Current Population Survey, are presented in Table 3. In the case of marriage, it makes little sense to combine individuals of part Italian ancestry with those of wholly Italian parentage, because the social contexts in which the two types are raised are so different that their intermarriage rates are likely to be as well; and consequently, they are shown separately in the table. The marriage rates are also decomposed by generations and birth cohort, and presented separately for men and women.

The table indicates a rapid rise in the intermarriage rate, which has reached the point that, of Italians marrying recently, generally two-thirds to three-quarters, depending on the category of the group, have intermarried. Revealing of the changes is the trend by birth cohort for persons with unmixed Italian ancestry, especially in the second generation. Among those born before 1920, i.e., during the era of mass immigration, about 60 percent of this second generation chose spouses of wholly Italian percentage. But this strict endogamy falls off with each new cohort. Among men, a sharp drop occurs with the cohort born during the 1930s; for women, such a drop occurs with the cohort born in the next decade. This rapid change has, among men, closed the gap between the second and third generations. For both, only about 20 percent of men born since 1950 have chosen wives with all Italian parentage, while another 10 to 15 percent have chosen wives with part Italian ancestry. The gap between the generations is not quite closed among women; second-generation women have the highest rate of endogamy in the youngest cohort, although this may be a statistical aberration, since a small number of cases is involved. In any event, the great majority of Italian Americans in this

Table 3. *Marriage patterns of Italian Americans, by sex, generation, and cohort.*

	Men			
	Second generation		Third generation	
Cohort	Ancestry of spouse is . . .		Ancestry of spouse is . . .	
Ancestry type	wholly Italian %	wholly non-Italian %	wholly Italian %	wholly non-Italian %
1950–				
wholly Ital.	20.3	64.1	20.0	70.5
partly Ital.	–a	–a	5.4	78.9
1940–49				
wholly Ital.	30.0	60.0	24.4	69.2
partly Ital.	0.0	82.7	10.7	76.8
1930–39				
wholly Ital.	29.8	62.9	24.1	63.3
partly Ital.	17.8	81.5	6.9	80.1
1920–29				
wholly Ital.	44.6	51.7	38.8	60.9
partly Ital.	15.7	83.7	4.8	90.0
Before 1920				
wholly Ital.	56.7	41.7	42.7	57.3
partly Ital.	–a	–a	15.8	78.6

Table 3. *Continued*

Cohort / Ancestry type	Women: Second generation, Ancestry of spouse is . . . wholly Italian %	Women: Second generation, Ancestry of spouse is . . . wholly non-Italian %	Women: Third generation, Ancestry of spouse is . . . wholly Italian %	Women: Third generation, Ancestry of spouse is . . . wholly non-Italian %
1950–				
wholly Ital.	38.7	53.2	23.8	72.7
partly Ital.	–a	–a	10.3	79.1
1940–49				
wholly Ital.	25.7	71.3	31.7	58.4
partly Ital.	20.7	72.1	11.7	77.8
1930–39				
wholly Ital.	38.8	61.0	49.4	46.6
partly Ital.	17.0	83.0	17.2	75.6
1920–29				
wholly Ital.	54.9	44.6	34.6	61.7
partly Ital.	10.3	89.7	18.6	69.3
Before 1920				
wholly Ital.	59.5	37.6	40.8	60.2
partly Ital.	–a	–a	11.5	78.5

Source: My tabulations from November, 1979, Current Population Survey.
[a]Percent not reported because it is based on 10 or fewer cases (weighted).

cohort belong to the third or later generations, where high intermarriage rates prevail.

Individuals of wholly Italian ancestry provide a conservative estimate of intermarriage rates. Individuals of mixed background have higher intermarriage rates and, moreover, the overall Italian rates will increasingly resemble theirs, since the group is more and more composed of them (this will be made clear shortly). For example, if the two ancestry groups are combined among men, then nearly three-quarters of third-generation men born since 1950 have chosen wives with no Italian ancestry. The comparable third-generation figure among women is nearly identical to that for the men.

It might be argued that these high intermarriage rates do not establish by themselves a relaxing of boundaries between Italians and other groups because they do not show whom Italians marry when they marry outside. Thus, it remains possible that other boundaries, enclosing clusters of culturally and socially similar groups, constrain their choices. It is true that, like other European ancestry groups, Italians are very unlikely to marry Hispanics and

non-whites (Alba and Golden, 1984). But this important exception aside, two pieces of evidence damage the thesis of selective intermarriage. One is Alba and Kessler's (1979) analysis of marriage patterns among Catholics, demonstrating that very little selectivity is visible among those who marry across nationality lines. The second emerges from data that reveal fairly high rates of marriage across religious lines. For example, Alba (1985) shows from General Social Survey data that about half of Italian Catholics born since World War II have married Protestants. So, in other words, it appears that the elective affinities of intermarrying Italians are not narrowly channeled to a few groups, but range widely across the spectrum of European ancestries.

The rising rate of intermarriage is bringing about a profound transformation of the Italian ancestry group. The character of this transformation is quite evident when the proportion of individuals with mixed Italian ancestry is displayed by birth cohort, as is done in Table 4.[14] The figures reveal a striking relationship of mixed parentage to cohort, with a percentage change between the oldest and youngest cohorts of over 75 percent. These dramatic figures indicate that a tremendous swing in the nature of the Italian ancestry group is destined to take place by the end of this century, as members of older cohorts, for the most part of unmixed ancestry, die and are replaced by younger persons of mixed parentage. Thus, in the Current Population Survey, persons with only Italian ancestry make up two-thirds of the adult ancestry group, a comfortable majority. But counting individuals of all ages, including children, they were a scant majority; 52 percent. Taking into account the expected mortality in the older group, these figures suggest that individuals with one non-Italian parent will compose a majority of the ancestry group by the end of the next decade.

Table 4. *Type of Italian ancestry by age (1979).*

	% with mixed Italian ancestry
all ages	48.0
65 and over	5.9
55 to 64	11.4
45 to 54	18.5
35 to 44	36.1
25 to 34	48.1
18 to 24	60.5
14 to 17	71.3
5 to 13	77.8
under 5	81.5

Source: November, 1979, Current Population Survey, report in U.S. Bureau of the Census (1982): Table 2.

It is doubtful that even the mild distinctiveness of Italians on matters of family solidarity can withstand such higher intermarriage rates. Intermarriage not only tests the extent of existing cultural differences among groups, but it ultimately alters the cultural boundary. Johnson's (1982) study of kinship contact among Italians in Syracuse, New York, illustrates the general process. She compared in-married and out-married Italians to each other and to Protestants of non-Italian background in terms of the frequency of their contact with parents, siblings, and other relatives. Although contact with the relatives on the Italian side appeared dominant among the intermarried Italians, in the sense that both spouses saw more of them than of the non-Italian relatives, the frequency of contact was diminished; the intermarried group stood intermediate between the in-married Italians, the majority of whom had daily contact with parents and with siblings, and the Protestants, the majority of whom had comparatively infrequent contact with their relatives. Johnson's research implies that high rates of intermarriage are associated with further erosion of what Herbert Gans labeled as the 'peer group society' in the 1950s.

Conclusion

Italian Americans are on the verge of the twilight of their ethnicity. 'Twilight' appears an accurate metaphor for a stage when ethnic differences will remain visible, but only faintly so. The metaphor acknowledges the claims of many (e.g., Glazer and Moynihan, 1970; Greeley, 1977) that indeed ethnicity has not speedily disappeared and, therefore, the optimism of the melting-pot portrayal of American society seems to have been ill-founded. At the same time, it also captures the reality that ethnicity, at least among whites, seems to be steadily receding.

The approach of this twilight may seem deceiving, for when Italians and some other white ethnic groups are observed in the aggregate, their ethnic features still appear prominent. But in the case of the Italians, this happens because earlier generations and older cohorts are quite different from old-stock Americans on such factors as educational and occupational attainment. Hence, it is only when the group is analytically decomposed by generation or birth cohort that the leading edge of change can be discerned.

Properly analyzed, the evidence on behalf of the looming ethnic twilight among Italians appears overwhelming. Despite the widely accepted image of an intense, family-centered Italian-American culture, the group's cultural distinctiveness has paled to a feeble version of its former self. Paralleling this change, the social boundary between Italians and other Americans has become easily permeable; intermarriage, an irrevocable indicator of boundary shifts, takes place quite freely between Italians and those of other European ancestries. Acculturation and social assimilation have been fed by a surge in the educational attainment of Italians, which has brought cohorts born since World War II to the brink of parity with British Americans, the quintessential American group. Moreover, this profound transformation of the Italian

group has taken place at a time when the fourth generation, the first generation without direct contact with the immigrant experience, is small (Steinberg, 1982; Alba, 1985). But this generation will grow substantially in size during the rest of this century, and simultaneously, the first and second generations, which presently constitute the majority of the group, will shrink.

In a number of respects, events among the Italians seem to parallel those among other groups descended from European immigrants, although because of differences in their times of arrivals, the specific situations that greeted them, and their occupational and cultural heritages, no two groups are following exactly the same pathways to the twilight stage. Yet among virtually all white ethnic groups, one can observe a progressive, if gradual, dampening of cultural distinctiveness. Core values have been overwhelmed by a common American culture so that even though cultural uniformity has not been the end result, the remaining differences among groups are so mild as to constitute neither a basis for group solidarity nor a barrier to intergroup contact. Additionally, among almost all groups, one can see a spreading pattern of intermarriage, testimony to the minor nature of remaining group differences and guarantee of additional assimilation (e.g., Alba, 1976). The strength of this pattern is confirmed by events among Jewish Americans, who provide the acid test of pervasive intermarriage. Historically, the rate of Jewish-Gentile intermarriage rate has been quite low, but recent studies have confirmed a sharp rise in this rate, starting in the 1960s (Cohen, 1983).

Such pervasive intermarriage suggests the emergence of a new ethnic group, one defined by ancestry from anywhere on the European continent. This need not mean that ethnic differences within this group will disappear altogether, but rather that their character is being fundamentally altered. This appears to be increasingly the case with ethnic identity. As Herbert Gans (1979) has observed, many mobile ethnics attempt to maintain some psychological connection with their origins, but in such a way that this attachment does not prevent them from mixing freely with others of diverse backgrounds. This contemporary form of ethnicity is private and voluntary, intermittent and undemanding; it focuses on symbols of ethnic cultures, rather than the cultures themselves, and tends to be confined to leisure-time activities. There is a wide latitude available for this 'symbolic ethnicity' – for Italians, it can range from a liking for pasta to a repudiation of criminal stereotypes – but the crucial point is that it is the individual who decides on the appropriate form. Such an ethnic identity is, in other words, a personal style, and not the manifestation of membership in an ethnic group.

The impending twilight of ethnicity among those of European ancestry is not matched by equal changes among most of America's non-European minorities. Black Americans stand as the extreme case. Though their socio-economic progress in recent years has been debated, no informed observer claims that they are even close to parity with whites (Farley, 1985). It hardly needs saying, then, that racial boundaries remain salient. Residentially, blacks are still extremely segregated from whites, and the incidence of black-white intermarriage is very small (Heer, 1980).

The position of some other minorities is more ambiguous. Some older non-European groups that were voluntary immigrants to the United States evidence developments like those among the white ethnics, though these are not as far along. For example, Japanese Americans, despite the bitter legacy of World War II internment, have been quite successful in socioeconomic terms, with high rates of college attendance and occupational mobility. In tandem with this upward movement have come increases in intermarriage, frequently with whites (Montero, 1981; Woodrum, 1981). Although in the future it may become appropriate to speak of an ethnic twilight among Japanese Americans, the picture for non-European groups is complicated by the large-scale immigration from Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America since immigration laws were revised in 1965. Immigrants from Colombia, Cuba, Haiti, Korea, Mexico, the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, and still other places are adding new parts to the American ethnic tapestry. Thus, although twilight may be descending on those ethnic groups whose forebears came from Europe, ethnicity itself is not subsiding as an issue for American society. In the future, the salient ethnic outlines may stem from non-European origins, just as those of European origins have been prominent in the recent past.

Notes

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1. This, of course, coincides with the importance that Gordon (1964) attributes to 'structural assimilation,' that is, large-scale primary relations across ethnic boundaries.

2. Although American immigration authorities began to keep statistics on 'southern' and 'northern' Italians in 1899, the racial intent of the distinction distorted the definition of a 'southern' Italian to include anyone from the 'peninsula proper' (as well as the islands of Sicily and Sardinia). According to the Bureau of Immigration's definition, 'even Genoa is South Italian' (U.S. Senate, 1911: 81)! While American statistics were weakened in this way, Italian statistics depend largely on applications for the *nulla osta*, or exit permit, which required a destination to be stated. But many applicants either did not subsequently leave or went somewhere other than where they stated (Caroli, 1973: 30; Sori, 1979).

Nonetheless, both sources, though imprecise, are broadly consistent.

3. Jerre Mangione's (1981) memoir of Italian-American life in Rochester paints a very clear portrait of the sojourner's mentality among his Sicilian relatives.

4. These figures are for the New York, N.Y. Northeastern New Jersey Standard Consolidated Area, which in 1970 contained 1.4 million foreign-stock Italian Americans. The figures are my calculations from Tables 17, 23, and 81 of the *Characteristics of the Population*, Parts 32 and 34 (Bureau of the Census, 1973).

5. This survey included the same ethnic ancestry question that appeared in the long form of the 1980 Census. This question, 'What is . . .'s ancestry?' is superior to questions asked in previous Current Population Surveys and decennial Censuses, because it does not constrain answers by a predefined list of responses and hence does not eliminate the many individuals with mixed ancestry. However, by the same token, it offers a too inclusive definition of the Italian-American group, since it forces the inclusion of individuals with any reported degree of Italian ancestry, regardless of its magnitude and

of the extent of their identification with the Italian group (for a more detailed discussion, see Alba, 1985).

A virtue of this survey for the study of socioeconomic change is that its large sample size allows for refined breakdowns.

6. The focus here must be on this ethos, rather than the outward forms of culture, since these tend to wither away within the first two generations. This is true, for example, of the everyday-use of Italian. According to the Current Population Survey, over 4 million claim Italian as a mother tongue, a language spoken in their childhood home, but only 1.4 million (about 12 percent of the group) claim to speak it in their current home (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982: 14). Since the total size of the ancestry group is around 12 million and that of the first generation, whose members are very likely to continue to speak their native tongue at home, is 800 thousand, it is clear that only a small part of the second and third generations continues to use the language on an everyday basis. For further analysis of external culture, see Crispino (1980).

7. The General Social Surveys offer a narrower definition of the Italian-American group than does the November, 1979, Current Population Survey. The GSS ask individuals with mixed ethnic ancestry to identify, if they can, the group to which they feel closer. This is then reported as their ethnic category.

8. The adjusted difference between the groups reported in the table is the coefficient for the Italian dummy variable taken from a regression analysis. To achieve stable estimates of the effects of the control variables, the regression analysis includes all whites; the comparison to WASPs is effected by making them the omitted category.

9. The value of the anti-abortion scale is the number of times the respondent would deny a legal abortion in three situations where a presumably healthy pregnancy has resulted from voluntary sexual activity (Davis *et al.*, 1980: 143–4). Such situations are the litmus test for abortion attitudes, as most Americans would allow an abortion for such circumstances as a life-endangering pregnancy, or one resulting from rape.

10. The anti-feminism scale is a summative scale composed of responses to four questions such as 'Do you approve or disapprove of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her?' For the wordings of the other three, see Davis *et al.* (1980: 142).

11. These items are derived from the well-known ones developed by Melvin Kohn and his colleagues. But there is no pretense here of replicating Kohn's work, since he has explicitly confined the validity of his scale to parents with children in a certain age range (Kohn, 1976). Such a limitation is not feasible here.

The scale I report is calculated by counting a +1 for each time a respondent rated as desirable a trait associated with self-direction and also each time he or she rated as undesirable a trait associated with conformity, and counting a −1 when the reverses occurred. Positive numbers on the scale thus indicate a valence toward self-direction.

12. Since simultaneous controls for both current and original location amount to controls for mobility itself, one has to be removed from the list of independent variables for this analysis; current location (both region and size of place) has been deleted.

13. This does not imply that Italians and WASPs are similar in all ways. For one, they differ in their political party allegiances, with Italians notably more tied to the Democratic Party. But the crucial point is that they are similar on many traits bearing on the family-centered ethos. (For more details and discussion, see Alba, 1985).

14. The 1980 Census yields a somewhat lower estimate of the percentage of Italians with mixed ancestry, 43.5 (versus 48.0), and presumably will show lower rates of mixed ancestry in younger cohorts when tables of ancestry by age become available. Nevertheless, there appears to be good reason to give greater credence to the CPS rather than the decennial census in this case. The markedly lower estimates of mixed ancestry in general in the census suggest that ancestry responses were more cursory to the census's mail survey than to the face-to-face interviewing of the CPS (for further discussion of the differences between the two, see Bureau of the Census, 1983: 4–5).

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