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# Italian-American ethnic identity and school achievement : an exploration of the persistence of conflict between the home and school cultures of Italian-American high school students.

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ITALIAN-AMERICAN ETHNIC IDENTITY AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT:  
AN EXPLORATION OF THE PERSISTENCE OF CONFLICT BETWEEN  
THE HOME AND SCHOOL CULTURES OF ITALIAN-AMERICAN  
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS


A Dissertation Presented

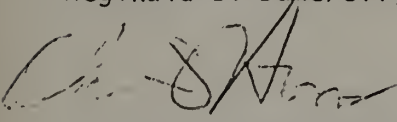
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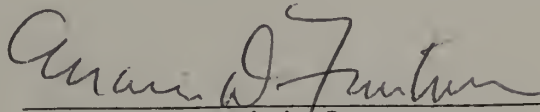
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A Dissertation Presented

By

Thomas D. Sharkey

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

February

1982

Education

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whose unbelievable patience and personal sacrifices have truly enabled this study to become a reality, I give my lasting gratitude.

ABSTRACT

Italian-American Ethnic Identity and School Achievement:  
An Exploration of the Persistence of Conflict Between the  
Home and School Cultures of Italian-American  
High School Students

February 1982

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The purpose of this study was to explore the continuing effect of Italian-American ethnic identity upon high school students' school achievements and mobility orientations. A preliminary review of Italian-American ethnographic studies had suggested that traditional Italian familistic orientations had discouraged generations of students in America from pursuing educational and career opportunities that maximized individual potential but also undermined family solidarity. The research questions derived from this review explored the relationship between Italian-American ethnic identity and student's (1) school achievement, (2) educational expectations, (3) independence opportunities, and (4) mobility aspirations.

A questionnaire was administered to 207 urban and suburban students in two schools. Interviews of 28 high-achieving students were also conducted.



The data indicated that within many of the Italian-American families a process of accommodation to schools and to education has taken place. However, within their homes and in the primary relationships among family members, many traditional familistic values and attitudes persist which may continue to adversely affect young people's opportunities for socio-economic mobility.

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# C H A P T E R I

## INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

### Background of the Study

This study had its origins in the Italian-American neighborhoods of East Boston. There, from 1974 through 1977, the writer served as the principal of a newly formed K-8 school designed to replace four financially troubled parochial schools and to introduce to this blue collar community, a privately financed, parent-controlled alternative school.

As a participant-observer in East Boston, the writer noted many of the characteristics that had been documented by Gans in his study of another Italian-American neighborhood of Boston (1963). His analysis of the extended family patterns, of the insularity of neighborhoods, of the attitudes toward schooling, and of the occupational aspirations of second and third generation Italian-Americans provided meaning to my observations of East Boston life.

However, subsequent experiences as a school administrator with middle and upper middle class urban and suburban Italian-American families challenged the class analysis that Gans had employed to explain the behavioral and values differences that he observed. Many of the behaviors and attitudes, particularly with regard to educational and occupational aspirations, that he ascribed to working class

status, also were evident among more affluent Italian-American families. This study was derived from an effort to go beyond an exclusive social class perspective and to examine the extent to which cultural factors associated with the Italian-American ethnic group affected high school students' orientations toward education, achievement, and careers.

### Statement of the Problem

For one hundred and fifty years, the school has been an essential force for the achievement of the major cultural values of American society. Challenged by the arrival of millions of immigrants from diverse cultures, the host society has utilized the school as its primary vehicle for establishing social cohesion and economic progress. In addition to the teaching of language, history, and government, the school introduces certain value orientations that the dominant society considers as essential for socio-economic mobility (Dreebens, 1968, p. 64). Historically, when the immigrant groups' traditions and value orientations have matched the dominant American values, needs and expectations, as taught by the school, assimilation defined as achievement and upward mobility, has occurred. Where the matchings have been less sure, so has been progress (Greer, 1972, p. 100).

This study asserts that the Italian-American ethnic group was one of the immigrant groups whose values and beliefs differed significantly from those of the dominant society and its school system.

Consequently, Italian-Americans have been slow to assimilate, and, as a group, have ranked among the lowest ethnic groups in levels of educational attainment and occupational prestige. The problem that this study addresses is whether this culturally-based conflict of value systems persists within contemporary Italian-American families.

Kluckhohn's model of value orientations within a society (Kluckhohn, 1958) provides a useful conceptual framework for an understanding of this study's problem. In every society, she asserts, there is a range of orientations or preferences that various groups utilize to address four problems crucial to all human groups:

1. The relationship of man to nature (man-nature orientation);
2. The temporal focus of human life (time orientation);
3. The nature of human activity (activity orientation);
4. The nature of man's relationship to other men (relational orientation) (p. 67).

Kluckhohn's cross-cultural analysis of American and Italian preferences, revealed that for each orientation, the two cultures differed sharply. Figure 1 illustrates the contrasts.

In every instance, the first-order preference of the dominant American culture was the third-order preference of the Italian immigrant's culture. With regard to the Man-Nature orientation, the American culture views nature as something that man is expected to overcome with the assistance of technology and science. The Italian immigrant brought with him from Italy an orientation that stressed man's subjugation to the overpowering forces of nature.



	<u>Preferences</u>	
<u>Orientation</u>	<u>Dominant American Culture</u>	<u>Italian Immigrant Culture</u>
Man-Nature	Mastery Subjugation Harmony	Subjugation Harmony Mastery
Time	Future Present Past	Present Past Future
Activity	Doing Being Being in Becoming	Being Being in Becoming Doing
Relational	Individualistic Collateral Lineal	Collateral Lineal Individualistic

Figure 1. Order of preferences of the dominant American culture and the immigrant Italian culture in addressing life's orientations. (Kluckhohn, 1958, p. 69)

In terms of an orientation toward time, Americans emphasize the future while the Italian immigrant viewed time as an endless succession of present moments that cyclically came and went.

The activity orientation of the dominant American culture emphasizes Doing. Parents train children to compete for success and to attain achievements measurable by standards that are external to the individual. The Italian culture stressed Being. Success and achievements were not as important as the spontaneous expression of one's moods, feelings, and desires.

Finally, with regard to man's relationship with others, the American society prefers an individualistic orientation. Parents tend to train their children to stand on their own and to make their own decisions. Families live most often in small groups, and relationships with the extended family are not usually strong. Individuals are not bound to any place and will choose to move to another part of the country leaving relatives behind if that is necessary for social mobility. In contrast, the Italian immigrant and his family preferred a collateral orientation. Individual goals gave way to the goals or welfare of the group. Children were trained to be dependent upon their elders and upon each other, and if anyone made an independent decision, that person was looked upon as disloyal or uncaring. They preferred to live in close proximity to relatives and if anyone had to go away, it was a tragedy for everyone.

Of all the value orientations noted by Kluckhohn, the Italian emphasis upon collateral relationships (more frequently identified as "familism") has been described as the most powerful and most

enduring cultural value orientation of the Italian-American ethnic group (Campisi, 1957; Tomasi, 1972; Gambino, 1974; Valletta, 1974). Its departure from the American society's individualistic orientation has been regarded as an important factor that explains the low levels of Italian-American occupational achievement. And since the school supports and teaches the American value system, it has also been recognized as being at the core of the Italian distrust of schools and education (Gans, 1963, p. 132; Ware, 1935, p. 336), of poor school achievement (Covello, 1967, p. 285), and of low levels of educational attainment (Lopreato, 1970, p. 160).

Yet fifty years have passed since the end of the mass immigration from Southern Italy. The second and third generations' contacts with the school and with other American institutions, their employment outside the home, and their families' movements out of the urban ethnic enclaves into the suburbs have inevitably altered Italian-American value orientations (Palisi, 1966, pp. 167-178). This study, in its investigation of student achievement and career aspirations, seeks to examine the interplay between the Italian familistic and the American individualistic value orientations that is occurring within today's generation of Italian-American students.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study is two-fold:

1. To examine the effect of strong ethnic attachments upon

urban and suburban Italian-American high school students' school achievements and educational aspirations;

2. To explore among high-achieving students who possess strong ethnic attachments, the interplay between the individualistic value orientation of the American culture and school, and the familistic value orientations of the Italian home.

Through its examination of the value orientation of students who are successful in school, the study seeks to establish a perspective on the state of Italian-American assimilation in both the city and the suburbs.

#### Organization of the Study

This study consists of two parts: a review of the literature; and the design and use of a questionnaire and an unstructured interview. The review of the literature presents various theoretical constructs that have emerged from studies of the assimilation patterns of American immigrants, particularly the Italian-American immigrant. The review also focuses upon the studies that have examined the educational experiences and attitudes of Italian-American families, and the career patterns that Italian-American workers have assumed.

The primary section of this study is the design and use of a questionnaire and an unstructured interview which probe Italian-American high school students' experiences of home and school and their educational and career aspirations. The questionnaire is administered to students of Italian-American parentage in one urban

and one suburban school. Items are utilized to attempt to distinguish among students in terms of:

1. The strength of their ties to family practices and belief structures that are characteristic of the Italian familistic value orientation;
2. The level of their achievements in high school;
3. Their educational aspirations;
4. Their career aspirations.

In addition to the questionnaire, data is collected through unstructured interviews of selected students who, from the questionnaire data, reveal themselves to be both high-achieving students and also closely affiliated with the Italian familistic value orientation. The interviews seek to explore the question of whether, as high-achieving students, they experience strains emanating from the conflict between the American and school individualistic and Italian familistic value orientations.

The data derived from the questionnaire and the interviews is combined and analyzed in order to examine the issue of the persistence of Italian familistic values that have traditionally prevented Italian-American students from assimilating into the American educational system.

## Research Questions

The following research questions are advanced for investigation in this study:

### Achievement

- R<sub>1</sub>. Does high Italian-American ethnic salience, defined in terms of the possession of Italian familistic value orientations, continue to correlate negatively with school achievement?

### Mobility values

- R<sub>2</sub>. Do students who possess high measures of Italian familistic value orientations limit their formal education to high school?
- R<sub>3</sub>. Do students who possess high measures of Italian familistic value orientations lack autonomy and self-reliance in decision-making situations?
- R<sub>4</sub>. Do students who possess high measures of Italian familistic value orientations reject mobility as a means of obtaining successful career opportunities?

### Strains

- R<sub>5</sub>. Do students who possess high measures of Italian familistic value orientations but who also maintain a high achievement level in school experience strains that arise from the dissonance between the culture of the home and the culture of the school?

These questions were addressed through the use of a written questionnaire and an unstructured interview. A further explanation of the research methodology is provided in Chapters III and V.

### Limitations of the Study

This study examines the ethnic attachments of Italian-American students enrolled in one urban and one suburban high school. It makes use of quantitative data derived from a questionnaire administered to 207 students, and of qualitative data secured from unstructured interviews of 28 high-achieving students who also demonstrate high Italian-American ethnic salience. The combined data is utilized to examine the relationship between the Italian-American ethnic identity and educational and occupational achievement.

Limited scope. The study makes no claim to represent a definitive description of the level of Italian-American acculturation. Novak (1971, p. xviii) asserts that the same shared ethnic identity does not produce homogeneity of thought, feeling, behavior, or group loyalty. People may choose ethnicity, and consequently there is considerable diversity within an ethnic group. Therefore, the findings in this study can only suggest what might be generalizable to other Italian-American student groups in other cities and towns.

Sample. The study examined two groups of Italian-American high school students who were enrolled in one suburban public and in one urban parochial school. Although as Italian-Americans, the students of both schools were of the same religious faith, the fact that the

urban school is private and parochial in nature may affect the type of Italian-American who is enrolled there. The tuition that is charged and the active parental involvement in the student's decision to attend this school that is an alternative to the urban public school may make the study's urban sample not fully representative of the urban Italian-American high school population. A detailed description of the study's sample is contained in Chapter III.

Methodology. The questionnaire, although field-tested before it was administered to students must be regarded as limited in its comprehensiveness. No claim is made that the items contained in the instrument completely measure Italian-American ethnic salience, school achievement, or success value orientation.

Second, the writer is not anonymous in the schools being studied. As a former and present administrator within both schools, the accessibility to both student groups may be offset by the possibility that some of the students might have been concerned about their responses to the writer. They may have believed that certain responses would be more "right" than others or be more compatible with the writer's own beliefs regarding achievement or educational and career aspirations. The authority image of the high school administrator may have reinforced this type of response so that the student could avoid "looking bad" in the eyes of the writer.

Specific efforts were made in this study to minimize the limitations created by the writer's lack of anonymity in the schools. Students were not requested to identify themselves on the questionnaires. The interviews were developed to introduce at the middle



and end of the format the more personal questions that students might be reluctant to answer candidly. With both instruments, students were advised that their participation was voluntary and could be terminated at any time.

Although one cannot be certain that the study's results are free of distortion, it may be said that the writer's familiarity with the students may have advanced rather than obstructed the inquiry. A rapport with both groups of students had been established in the years before this study was conducted that appeared to produce relatively high comfort levels during the administration of the questionnaire and interview. Sensitive to signs of uneasiness, the writer noted that the students generally appeared to be free of tension and to be quite candid in their responses.

Finally, the absence of a control group of non-Italian students against which the two samples of students might be measured, does not provide the writer with the tools to examine the possibility that intervening variables, unrelated to Italian-American ethnic identity, might affect the findings of the study. Therefore, the writer, in keeping with studies of an exploratory nature, can only make considered judgments on the data bearing upon students' experiences of home and school and their educational and career aspirations.

#### Significance of the Study

This study seeks to contribute to the literature on Italian-American assimilation in the following ways:

1. The study provides a detailed analysis of the interplay between Italian familistic and American individualistic value orientations within the context of school achievement and mobility aspirations. Previous studies of Italian-American educational and occupational achievement have provided useful statistics and generalizations. This study takes an in-depth view of the issue.
2. The study differentiates the sample according to socioeconomic status. Most studies of Italian-Americans have tended to study the working class that is more easily discernible in the urban ethnic enclaves. This study considers the educational and occupational achievement of both working and middle class Italian-Americans.
3. The study examines the impact of the suburbs upon the retention of Italian familistic value orientations. Very few studies have treated the suburbanization of the Italian-American. This study isolates a suburban sample in order to provide a contrast between their value orientations and those of Italian-Americans in the city.
4. The study also contributes toward the remediation of weaknesses in the measurement of ethnicity. In survey research, a person's ethnicity has been determined by one of three methods: (a) what the survey interviewer observes; (b) what the individual states when asked what is his/her ethnicity; or (c) what can be derived from a review of the individual's genealogy. All of these approaches involve

potential measurement defects that may cast doubt upon the findings of a survey (Wright, 1978, p. 3).

This study introduces a technique for differentiating the members of the same ethnic group according to measures that are related to the strength of their ethnic attachments. Through this method, survey research may gain greater accuracy in describing ethnic group experiences.

### Definitions

This study attempts to analyze the impact of Italian-American ethnic group identity upon high school students' educational values, attitudes and performance. The study is predicated upon an understanding of the concepts of:

1. Ethnicity
2. Ethnic group
3. Italian familistic value orientations
4. Ethnic salience
5. American individualistic value orientations

Ethnicity. Most contemporary definitions of ethnicity begin with Edward Shils' ideas on "primordial ties." In an article in the 1957 British Journal of Sociology, Shils comments on man's much greater interest in what is near at hand, in what is present and concrete. Man is much more attached to his mates, to his home, to his pub, to his family, and to his job than to remote or abstract ideologies.

Clifford Geertz (1963) develops the concept further with his analysis of "primordial attachments."

By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the "givens" -- or more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the "assumed givens" -- of social existence, immediate contiguity, and kin connection mainly, but beyond them, the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, and following particular social patterns. These congruities of blood, speech, custom and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. (p. 109)

Geertz observes further that in virtually every person, some of his attachments to kinsmen, neighbors, or fellow believers, flow more from a sense of natural affinity than from personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation (p. 110).

Following Geertz, Isaacs (1967) articulates the concept of "basic group identity." Within each person, he states, a tolerable existence requires a sufficient measure of self-esteem and self-acceptance. While for some individuals this sufficient measure may be derived exclusively from their own individual personalities, most people need to also depend upon group associations. The basic group identity of a person consists of the "ready-made endowments and identifications which every individual shares with others from the moment of birth by the chance of the family into which he is born at that given time in that given place." Bodily characteristics, the family name, the history of his group, the group's language, religion, and value system all make up the givens of his group, and as long as the individual wishes to remain a part of his basic group, he cannot be denied his identity with that group.

The identity with his primary group provides the fundamental association needed for self-esteem and self-acceptance. Isaacs argues further that while secondary group identities -- class, social, educational, occupational, professional, recreational -- may satisfy the human need for self-esteem derived from the sense of belongingness, they do so only when not in conflict with basic group identities (pp. 32-36).

The definition of ethnicity that is used in this study is derived from the concepts of "primordial attachments" and "basic group identity." It is, in Abramson's words, "a shared conscious or subconscious feeling of peoplehood that is based upon common referents of racial, religious, nationality, and/or regional identification" (Abramson, 1973, p. 6).

Ethnic Group. Formerly, when one considered the meaning of an "ethnic group," one thought in terms of minority groups, or subgroups within the society that experienced less power, lower status, and alienation from the cultural norms of the larger society. Even today, when "ethnic studies" or "multi-cultural education" is discussed as proposed school curricula, the subject referred to is most frequently content related to oppressed subgroups in American society.

However, the definition of ethnicity as the overt manifestation of primordial attachments and basic group identity gives rise to a broader understanding of ethnic groups. In this context, ethnic groups are all groups of a society that are characterized by a distinct sense of difference owing to culture, tradition, and descent. Even the majority group is an ethnic group.

Numerous writers develop this definition further. Parsons (1975) defines the ethnic group as a "diffusely defined group which for its members characterizes what an individual is rather than what he does" (p. 57). Weber (1961) understands it as a group that forms out of individuals' consciousness of differences from others and is based upon the belief of common ancestry, real or imaginary (p. 305). In these contexts, the ethnic group is the collectivity that is part of the self-definition of a person -- is the subgroup that is initially generated by a fundamental sense of peoplehood, and once established, continues to sustain a feeling of distinctiveness through its function as the bearer of cultural traits.

American ethnic groups are American phenomena. Greely (1974) argues that the immigrants were citizens of towns, not nations, in the old country. They became ethnics in the United States partly because the larger society defined them as ethnic, and because it was in their own interest to derive the social support provided by the ethnic collectivity (p. 27).

Formed in such a fashion, American ethnic groups are capable of maintaining their identity without necessarily being restricted to a particular physical location (Etzioni, 1959, p. 258; Gordon, 1964, p. 163). Their members seek a sense of belongingness and identity, seek out preferred associates, and seek to maintain cultural traditions within a group that transcends physical boundaries. One may be ethnically conscious in the suburbs as well as in the city (Gabriel & Savage, 1973).

The Italian-American ethnic group, then, is a collection of families from various towns in Italy, who, once in America, came into being as the result of their contact with the American Anglo-Saxon culture. In their perception of differences, a "basic group identity" emerged which rested upon their common recollection of and desire to retain the traditions and customs of the Old World, upon common experiences in the strange and often hostile "American" environment, and upon life together in the neighborhoods and self-help groups created as necessary means of cultural accommodation.

Italian familistic value orientations. Kluckhohn (1951) defines a value orientation as "a generalized and organized conception, influencing behavior, of nature, of man's place in it, of man's relation to man and of the desirable and non-desirable as they relate to man-environment and interhuman relations. . . . Like values they vary on a continuum from the explicit to the implicit" (pp. 409, 411).

As noted in the Introduction, Italian familistic value orientations refer specifically to the area of one's relations with others. They represent a preferential mode of thinking and behavior that places the goals or welfare of the family above individual goals.

Ethnic salience. In this study, ethnic salience is defined as a measure of students' attachments to Italian familistic value orientations. Students possessing high ethnic salience are those who experience frequent contact and close relationships with members of their immediate and extended families. The Italian language is frequently spoken at home and at family gatherings. They are also

those students who express a reluctance to leave their family in order to obtain forms of employment.

American individualistic value orientations. For the purposes of this study, American individualistic value orientations refer to the conceptions of what is most desirable in the area of human relationships that are held by Anglo-American middle class society. Within this value system, individual goals have primacy over the goals of the family. Implied here is not a pursuit of selfish interests or a disregard of family members. It is rather that each individual's responsibility to the total society is conceptualized in terms of goals and roles that are independent of the family.

Within this study, students reflecting individualistic value orientations are those who possess a sense of autonomy and self-reliance in making decisions, are willing to be geographically mobile in their pursuits of successful careers, and maintain a perspective toward personal and career development that regards individual fulfillment as most important.

The differentiation between individualistic and familistic value orientations established in this study runs the risk of creating a set of false dichotomies that fail to adequately describe the complexity of students' family relationships. The distinctions also tend to produce a pro-con situation in which one or the other orientation is labeled as more desirable or more correct. In its use of these definitions as tools for the analysis of student responses, this dissertation will be sensitive to the dangers they create.



## C H A P T E R   I I

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Italian immigrants brought to America all of the "cultural baggage" of southern Italy. In their efforts to accommodate to the New World, people from the same families and towns settled together, celebrated with each other the "festa" of their town's patron saint, and attempted to establish within their ethnic enclaves, cultural milieus which replicated that of the Old World. As in Italy, the family continued to be the central institution around which all community life was constructed, but the cultural support provided by the "paisani" living on the block elevated the neighborhood to a position of greater importance.

However, most studies of the Italian-American acculturation process concur that, in comparison with other ethnic groups, there was hardly an aspect of the Old World Italian tradition that was not in conflict with the existing American patterns (Tomasi, 1972; Vecoli, 1974; Gambino, 1974; Valletta, 1974). The task of the second and succeeding generations was to confront the schools, the military, and the economic and cultural environment lying outside the family and neighborhood and to attain appropriate forms of acculturation.

The focus of this dissertation -- the continued effect of Italian familistic value orientations upon high school students'

school achievement and career aspirations -- addresses one of the conflicts experienced by the Italian immigrants and their families. The study's research questions ask whether contemporary Italian-American high school students continue to experience a conflict between the Italian familistic and the American individualistic value orientations.

The studies cited in this chapter will be presented in order to illuminate the issues this dissertation is exploring and to provide the perspectives from which the analysis of student responses can be drawn. First, a brief ethnographic survey of Southern Italian familism will be provided; then various theories of assimilation; and finally, a review of studies of Italian-American achievement.

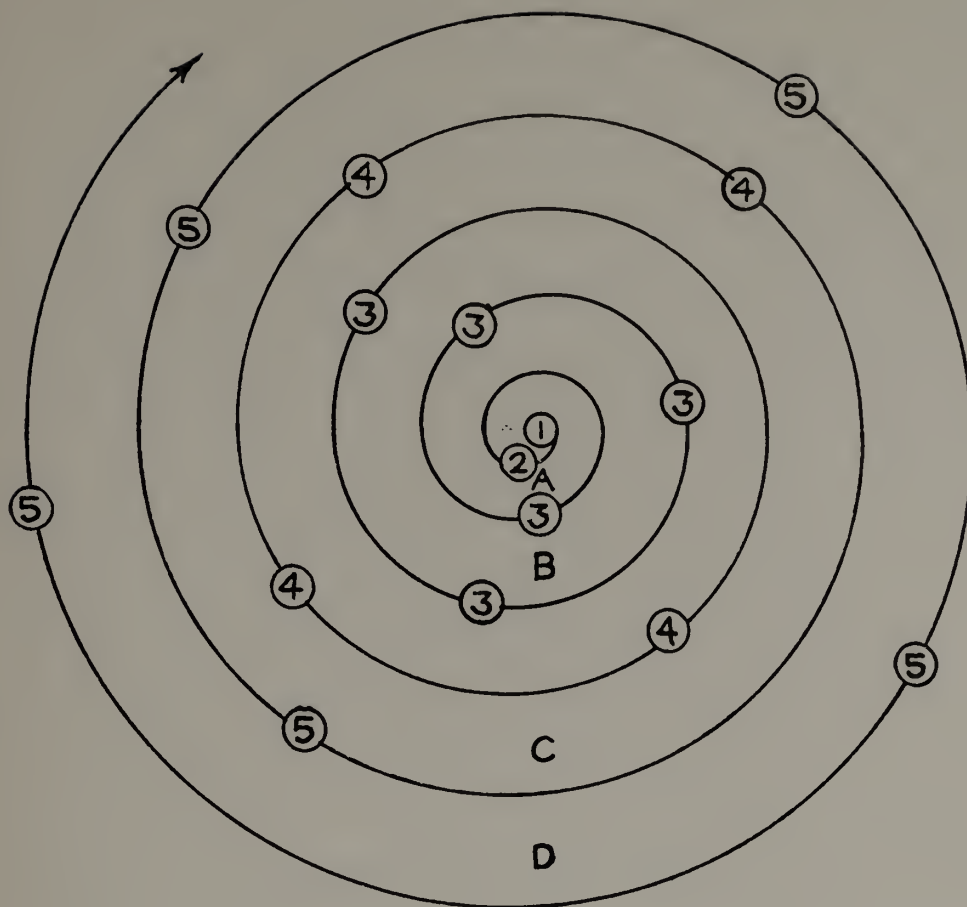
### Familism in Southern Italy

All studies of the southern Italian immigrant experience begin with some variation of Foerster's observation that "life in the South exalted the family" (1919, p. 95). For within southern Italian society, the family represented the fundamental institution that controlled the political, economic, and social life of the people. Barzini (1964) in his study of Italy speaks of the family in the following terms:

Scholars have always recognized the Italian family as the only fundamental institution in the country, a spontaneous creation of the national genius, adapted through the centuries to changing conditions, the real foundation of whichever social order prevails. In fact, the law, the State and society function only if they do not directly interfere with the family's supreme interests. (p. 198)

Most of the southern Italian immigrants to the United States had experienced the family as a source of strength and comfort in a land afflicted with economic hardship. The oppression of landlords, taxation, and the breakdown of an economy largely dependent upon grape and citrus fruit production, had established the family as the center of social and economic life. A dominant ethos had emerged within the society which Banfield (1958) has labeled "amoral familism." Each family maintained the following rules: (1) maximize the material short-run advantage of the nuclear family; (2) assume that all others will do likewise; (3) one owes nothing to anyone outside of one's family and effort should only advance the family (p. 83). Covello (1967), in his analysis of the cultural background of the Italo-American school child, gives an example of this philosophy with his account of the old woman who saw a village boy stealing fruit from a tree and ignored him on the first occasion. However, the second time she observed the boy she severely reprimanded him -- not because it was the second time, but because the first time it had been from the tree of someone outside the family and the second time it was from the family tree. Covello summarizes this view of life with the observation, "It is impossible to imagine the contadino (peasant) in South Italy contributing to the Red Cross" (p. 175).

The society's emphasis upon the family created tight-knit family units around which the individual was organized. In Figure 2, Tomasi (1972, p. 19) presents the family structure of the southern Italian peasant. At the center of the family was the father, and as the individual's sphere of social contact extended outward, varying



READ:

A = Area of Obedience & Dedication  
 B = Area of Solidarity  
 C = Area of Fidelity & Generosity  
 D = Area of Respect

1. Father
2. Mother
3. Brothers, Sisters, Grandparents, other members of the family
4. Friends
5. The "others" - "forestieri" or strangers - not hostile to the family (equal or holding religious scholastic, political authority)

Figure 2. The Southern Italian Psycho-Moral Familistic System (Tomasi, 1972, p. 17).

degrees of allegiance or respect was demanded. Those outside the family circle were considered as strangers to be treated with indifference but with respect if they were not hostile to the family.

In southern Italy, the individual found himself absorbed within the kinship system. His status, his role and his values were determined by the family, while his personality was shaped by his essentially familistic orientation (Banfield, 1958, p. 103). He, along with all of the members of his family were disciplined to the idea that the decisions of the individual lives should be made in accordance with the aims and the good of the group as a whole that was most often defined by the oldest active member in the family (Campisi, 1957, p. 311).

Children were particularly restricted within the family. They were taught not to think of "I" or "me" but of "we" and "us" and were expected, at least until they were ready for marriage, to subordinate their wishes to the family's interest. In the impoverished agrarian southern Italian society, they were essential economic assets and were needed and expected to work in the fields or at home in order to contribute to the family's minimal well-being (Campisi, 1957, pp. 310-311; Banfield, 1958, p. 111).

One final aspect of the southern Italian familistic system that is of interest in this study was the status of the unmarried women of the family. Although boys were expected to contribute their share to the family, their activities were not so strictly supervised as were the girls'. The daughters' individual choices were particularly

limited by the family's preoccupation with ensuring that they reached their wedding night "chaste as the Virgin" (Lopreato, 1970, p. 61).

Obviously, upon encountering the industrialized urban American world in which institutions emphasized the individual's role outside the family, the southern Italian immigrant experienced a cultural crisis that threatened the familistic orientation. The degree to which he/she abandoned this value system and absorbed the host culture's individualistic orientation will be discussed in the sections that follow.

### Italian-American Assimilation

In order to examine the degree to which Italian-American students have absorbed the host culture's individualistic value orientations, this study requires some treatment of the various theories that have governed social scientists' views on the assimilation of immigrants into American society.

Three theories of assimilation are particularly relevant to this dissertation and, considered together, shed light upon the critical issues of the study: (1) the assimilationist perspective; (2) the cultural pluralism perspective; and (3) the acculturation but not assimilation perspective. This portion of the review will describe each perspective and at the same time establish a number of questions which the dissertation will address in the later chapters.

The Assimilationist Perspective. This perspective has historically been represented by two theories: the Anglo-conformity theory and

the melting pot theory. These theories postulate that, generally speaking, ethnic group identities are eliminated (Anglo-conformity) or are fused into a common mixture (melting pot) after three or four generations in America.

In his study of assimilation, Gordon (1964) describes the Anglo-conformity theory as a view that demands complete renunciation of the immigrant's ancestral culture in favor of the behavior and values of the Anglo-Saxon core group (p. 88-114). Within the context of this study, this perspective asserts that upon his arrival in the United States, the southern Italian immigrant experienced a separate cultural system. However, through time, from generation to generation, the effects of American institutions, particularly the school and the mass media, have influenced Italian-American families to give up their familistic value orientations and to take on all of the host Anglo-American individualistic value orientations. Figure 3 represents an illustration of this perspective.

The melting pot theory represents a more idealistic view of the assimilation process. The United States is considered as a nation of immigrants in which all can be absorbed and all can contribute to an emerging national character. As each wave of immigrant cultures arrives in America, there takes place a biological merger of the Anglo-Saxon peoples with these immigrant groups and a blending of their respective cultures into a new indigenous American type (Ibid., pp. 115-131).

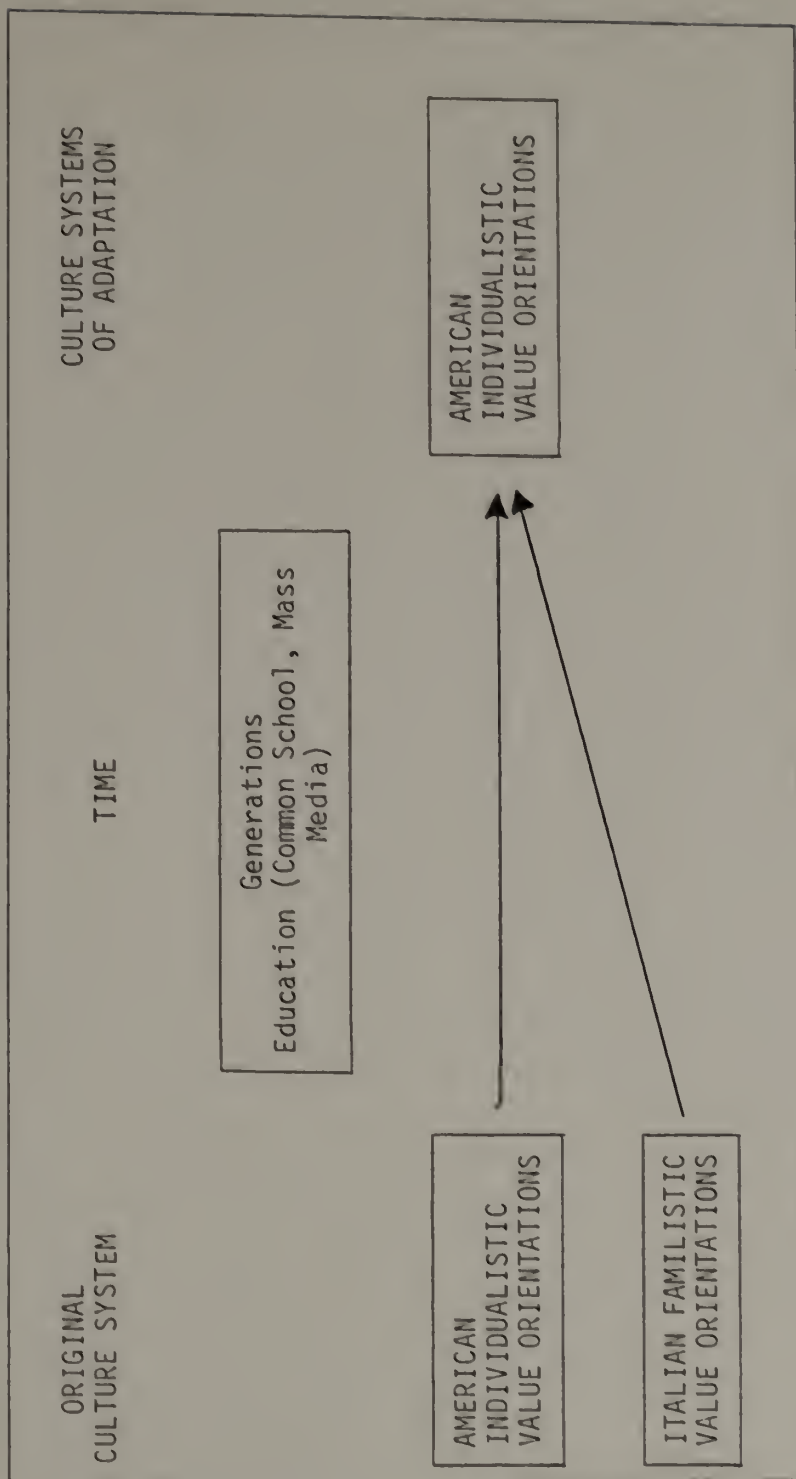


Figure 3. The Anglo-conformity perspective. Adapted from Greeley (1974, p. 304).



Figure 4 depicts the melting pot theory as it relates to this study. The host society accepted many of the values associated with the southern Italian culture just as the immigrants changed many of their ways to conform with host customs and values. A new cultural system has thereby evolved that is exclusively neither host nor immigrant, but a mixture of both. The merging of the Italian and American cultural groups into one common culture has been accomplished through social mixing in primary as well as secondary groups, and through intermarriage. However, the outcome in terms of a resolution to the conflict between the individualistic and familistic value systems is not clearly defined. All that can be maintained is that, in the end, there is no conflict.

The Italian-American whose life patterns correspond to the assimilationist view is referred to by Child, in his study of second generation New Haven Italian-Americans, as the "rebel personality." This individual rejects the Italian familistic value orientations and eagerly absorbs the American individualistic value orientations. (S)He tends to be in conflict with parents; expresses an aversion toward Italian ethnic customs and traits, and attempts to become completely accepted as an American (Child, 1943, Chap. 4).

Campisi (1957), in another study of first and second generation Italian-American families, describes the family who abandons the Old World way of life in favor of thorough assimilation into American society. The family changes its name, leaves the Italian neighborhood for more respectable localities (frequently the suburbs) in order to better raise their children, and seldom associates with

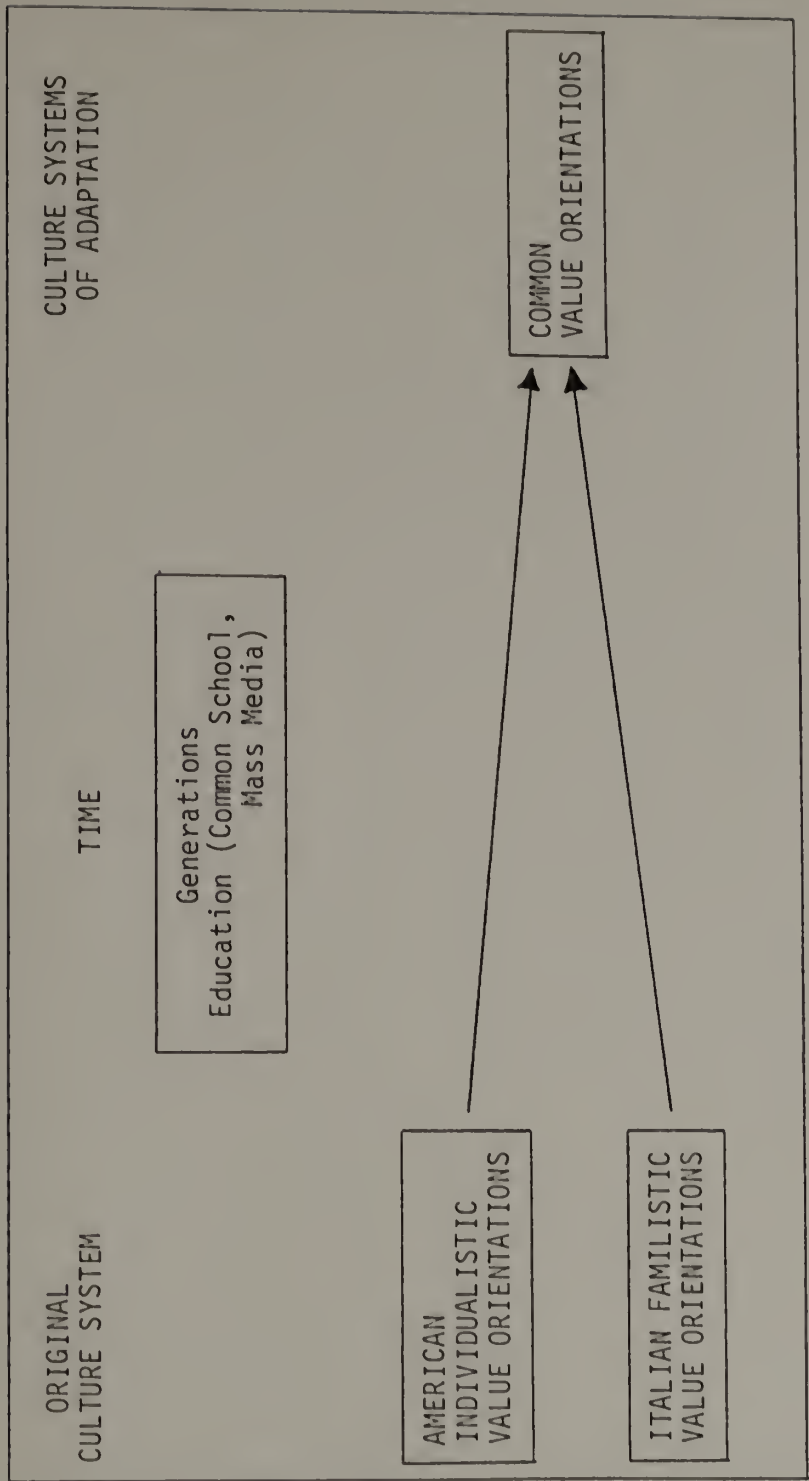


Figure 4. The melting pot perspective. Adapted from Greeley (1974, p. 305).

foreign-born parents and relatives. Most frequently the parents in these families are characterized as mobile and ambitious, attaching great importance to a college education. The children in these families expect to attend college and show little or no reluctance to leave the parents' home in pursuit of their careers (p. 315).

Many writers concur that the assimilationist perspective is an inadequate description of at least the first two generations of the Italian-American experience in the United States. One proof of its inadequacy is the resiliency of the Italian-American neighborhoods, both in their longevity, and in their resistance to Americanizing forces (Child, 1943, p. 44). In a study of New York City Italian-Americans, Glazer and Moynihan note that the Italian neighborhoods of 1920 remained essentially intact in 1960. Furthermore, these neighborhoods were not inhabited exclusively by the older people. Many of the married sons and daughters renovated tenements, raised them to a higher standard of living, and stayed close to their parents (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963, p. 187).

Additional studies have also demonstrated the tenacity of Italian-American familistic value orientations. Greeley, for example, in a study of college students' attitudes toward parents (1972), found that family allegiances remained a most important force in Italian-American students' lives. He noted that, among all of the ethnic groups surveyed, these students had the highest percentage of agreement with the statements that "parents should never look bad" (65%) and "children should not doubt their parents' ideas" (48%) (p. 210).

The Italian-American students in this study live in one industrialized city and three small suburban towns. Many of the urban participants inhabit neighborhoods that have a distinct Italian ethos. The stores and shops near their homes are largely owned and operated by Italian-Americans, and an Italian national parish serves most of the area. From the studies just cited, it may be hypothesized that these urban students will continue to possess Italian familistic orientations and remain largely unassimilated. Conversely, we might expect that the suburban students will demonstrate greater levels of assimilation into the American individualistic value orientations than their urban counterparts.

The impact of the suburbs upon the retention of Italian ethnic value orientations is an issue of considerable debate. Some studies have noted that as families move away from urban ethnic enclaves, they identify less with their ethnic group (Liberson, 1961, pp. 52-57; Winch & Greer, 1968, pp. 40-45; Palisi, 1966, p. 49-50). Gabriel and Savage (1973), in testing a number of variables that might reduce ethnic identification, observed that geography, i.e., the suburbs, significantly affected the level of an individual's self-conscious identification with a particular ethnic group. They concluded that whereas in the city, ethnic identification might serve as an instrument for securing political ends, in the suburbs it was more frequently only a source of pride to the individual.

Other studies challenge the assimilationist powers of the suburbs and assert that homogenization is not truly a characteristic of

the suburbs and that movement from the city into suburbia does not have an integrative effect upon individuals or families (Berger, 1960; Dobriner, 1963). The myth of suburbia as a "second melting pot" is untenable. Ethnic neighborhoods frequently exist within the suburbs, and even in a heterogeneous neighborhood, the individual can lead most of his life, aside from work, in a subsocietal network of schools, family, church, and recreation (Greer, 1961, p. 624).

The suburbanization of Italian-Americans occurred after World War II. Frequently it was a movement of families of two generations rather than simply the young (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963, p. 187), and for some, the departure from the urban ethnic enclave represented almost as great a break with the past psychologically as the crossing over from Italy was for the immigrant (Amfitheatrof, 1973, p. 248).

The reasons for the exodus from the familiar sounds, smells, and sights of the ethnic neighborhood are, for some writers, traceable to the growing class differentiation that was occurring within the Italian-American ethnic group. Vecoli (1974) notes that many of the families who moved to the suburbs represented the emerging professional and business elements who sought an environment that they believed was commensurate with their increased social class status (p. 34).

Within the context of this study, the studies cited in this section indicate that one of the issues to be considered in this dissertation should be the differential effect of socio-economic status upon suburban students' retention of Italian familistic value orientations.

Warner (1962), for example, asserts that most ethnics belong to the lower social class. However, he maintains that in time the pull of the American class system will loosen the ties of the individual to his ethnic group so that as he reaches the upper middle class, he will be drawn into the general American community of similar class background in which all share the same individualistic value orientation (pp. 170-171).

Studies of Italian-American communities have supported the social class perspective in maintaining that increases in income, education, and occupational prestige tend to dilute the southern Italian value orientations. In a study of New Haven Italians, Lopreato (1970) found that working class Italian-Americans visited with extended family members twice as often as working class persons in general. However, middle class Italian-Americans visited others in the family only slightly more frequently than other middle class people in the general population. Another pronounced difference between the middle class and the working class was the fact that working class Italian-Americans were twice as reluctant as the other working class Americans to move away from the larger family. In contrast, middle class Italian-Americans were almost identical to the New Haven middle class in their expressed willingness to leave the extended family behind (p. 5)).

Lopreato's assertion that social class standing tends to maintain or dilute Italian-American familistic value orientations is supported by Gans (1963), who asserts that the working class status

of the Italian-American neighborhood explained most of the familistic values and behaviors that he observed in Boston's West End (p. 229-262).

The social class perspective has been challenged as a view that does not recognize the diversity of values and beliefs that exist beneath the surface of people's secondary group associations. Although accepting of the fact that social class standing significantly affects an individual's norms and behaviors, writers such as Greeley (1974), Novak (1971), and Abramson (1973) have suggested that ethnicity also continues to exert a considerable influence upon one's primary relationships and most personal values.

Greeley, for example, in his analysis of a 1967 National Opinion Research Center (NORC) study of urban neighborhoods, questions Lopreato's findings regarding family visits. Stratifying his sample according to occupational prestige, he noted that the percentage of Italian-Americans who visited with members of the extended family was slightly lower for those individuals rated as high in occupational prestige than for those in lower and working class occupations. However, the percentage for both groups was significantly higher for Italian-Americans than for British Protestants or Jewish workers in each respective group (1977, p. 192).

One final study that illustrates the complexity of the relationships among ethnic value orientations, social class status, and suburban environments is Sennett and Cobb's analysis of suburban working class Italian-American families in the Boston metropolitan area (1972). Deriving their data from interviews, they state that movement

into the suburbs is often synonymous with upward mobility. Frequently this move is the result of a feeling created by the American individualistic value orientation associated with middle and upper class status that the interdependent relationships with the extended family is a source of personal humiliation rather than of collective strength. In contrast, the nuclear family in the suburbs is viewed as a beacon of strength. But ambivalence and anxiety accompany the move which arises from the compulsion to move without a real desire for the culture outside the old enclave. Consequently, the outcome of the move is an isolated feeling of detachment and alienation (pp. 107-109).

Greeley and Sennett and Cobb cast doubt upon the expectation, stated earlier, that suburban students, because of their area of residence and social class status, will demonstrate higher levels of assimilation into the American individualistic value orientation. The two other theories of assimilation that are reviewed in the following sections will shed further light upon these issues.

The Cultural Pluralism Perspective. The response to the Anglo-conformity and melting pot theories of assimilation takes the view that the richness of the American society was derived not from the homogenization of cultures, but from a composite of groups which have preserved their own individual cultural identities.

Horace Kallen (1924) presented the classic statement outlining the theory of cultural pluralism. He argues that the United States is a democracy of nationalities who cooperate together for the best interests of the nation, but have for their emotional and involuntary



life, their own dialect, individuality, esthetic, and intellectual forms. The existence of various ethnic cultures and their interaction within the framework of democracy enriches the quality of American life (p. 116).

The cultural pluralism perspective is represented by Figure 5 (Greeley, 1974). The Italian immigrant and his family, in accepting American citizenship, learning English, participating in the political processes, and in enjoying mass media become more like the host American society. Therefore, the line jogs upward. However, the Italian-American ethnic family remains, in its formulation of primary relationships, and in its familistic value orientations, fundamentally separate from the individualistic American culture.

The Italian-American individual or family who is most supportive of this approach toward assimilation has been described by Child as an "in-grouper." This person or family strives primarily for acceptance by the Italian group. They prefer to remain in the Italian neighborhood, close to the parental home and their interests tend to be tied up with those of the Italian community. Married daughters will often maintain close ties with their mothers by settling near them, and although intergenerational conflict arises, all of these people believe that the parents can provide welcome advice about life and the world (Child, 1943, Chap. 5; Campisi, 1957, p. 315).

The importance of the cultural pluralism perspective for this dissertation rests upon its usefulness as a tool for describing the urban student and family. Juxtaposed to the assimilationist theories,

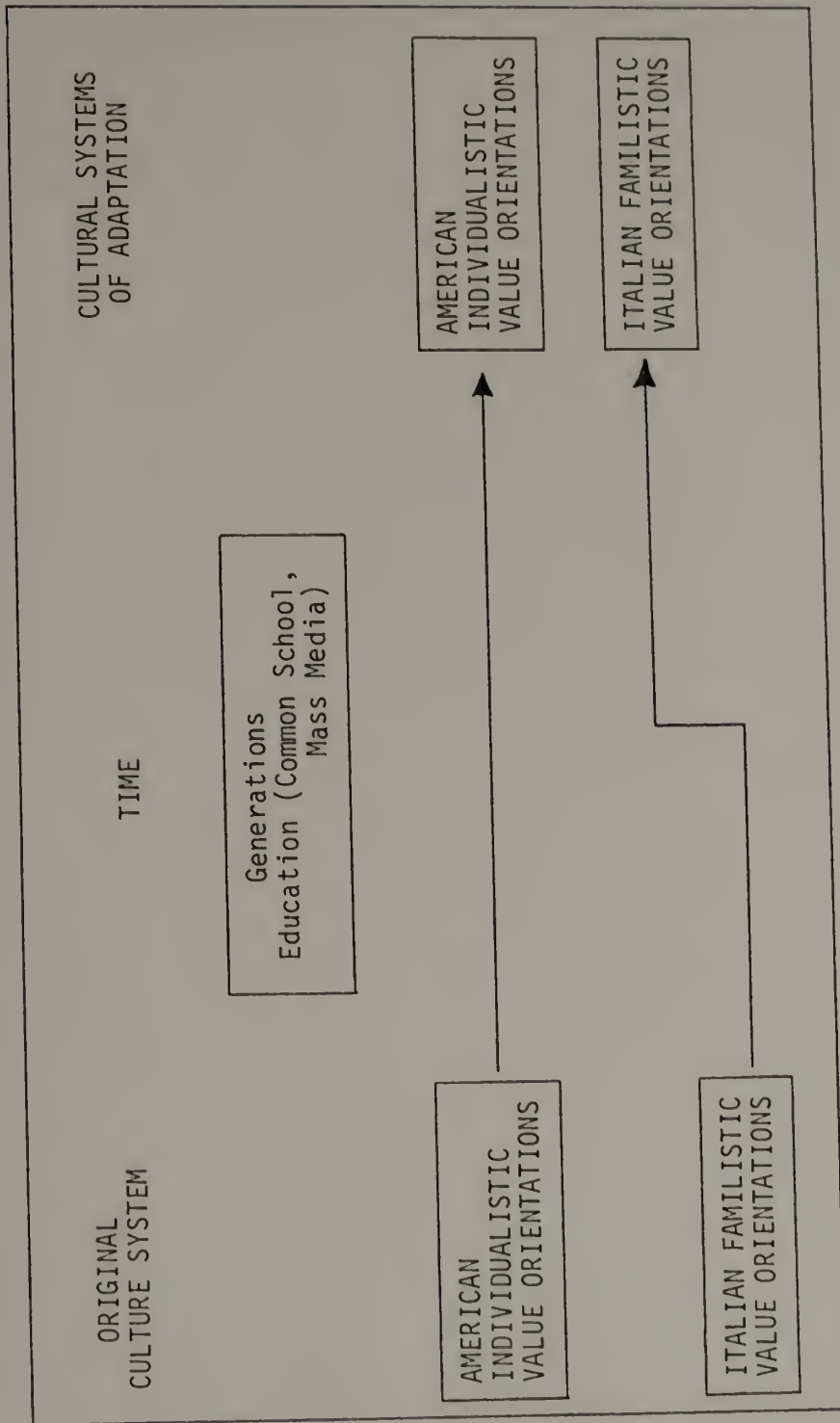


Figure 5. Cultural pluralism perspective. Adapted from Greeley (1974, p. 306).

it describes the other end of the assimilation continuum that is a point of reference within the study.

Acculturation but not Assimilation. Represented by Gordon's model (1964), this theory postulates a degree of homogenization and a degree of separation. It suggests that ethnic groups, from generation to generation have accepted "acculturation" into secondary groups and into institutional life. In particular, the sons and daughters of the immigrants — the second generation — have given allegiance to those dominant American values that are visible to them in their particular portion of the socio-economic structure and that appeal to their social class interests. Yet the second and third generations, despite their movement into the host society's institutions, and frequently into a heterogeneous suburban environment, have not acquiesced to "structural assimilation." Their choices of friendships, of marriage partners, and of fundamentally personal values remain heavily under the influence of their identification with the ethnic group (pp. 70-71).

Greeley (1974) diagrams Gordon's Acculturation but not Assimilation perspective in Figure 6.

Child and Campisi suggest a personality and family type that corresponds to this theory. Referred to by Child as the "apathetic" personality, this individual takes time to Americanize him/herself. Individuals and families in this study who correspond to this type tend to reject aspects of the parents' or grandparents' culture, but do not condemn them. Some families may have moved from the parent neighborhood but have not broken the emotional bond. Intimate

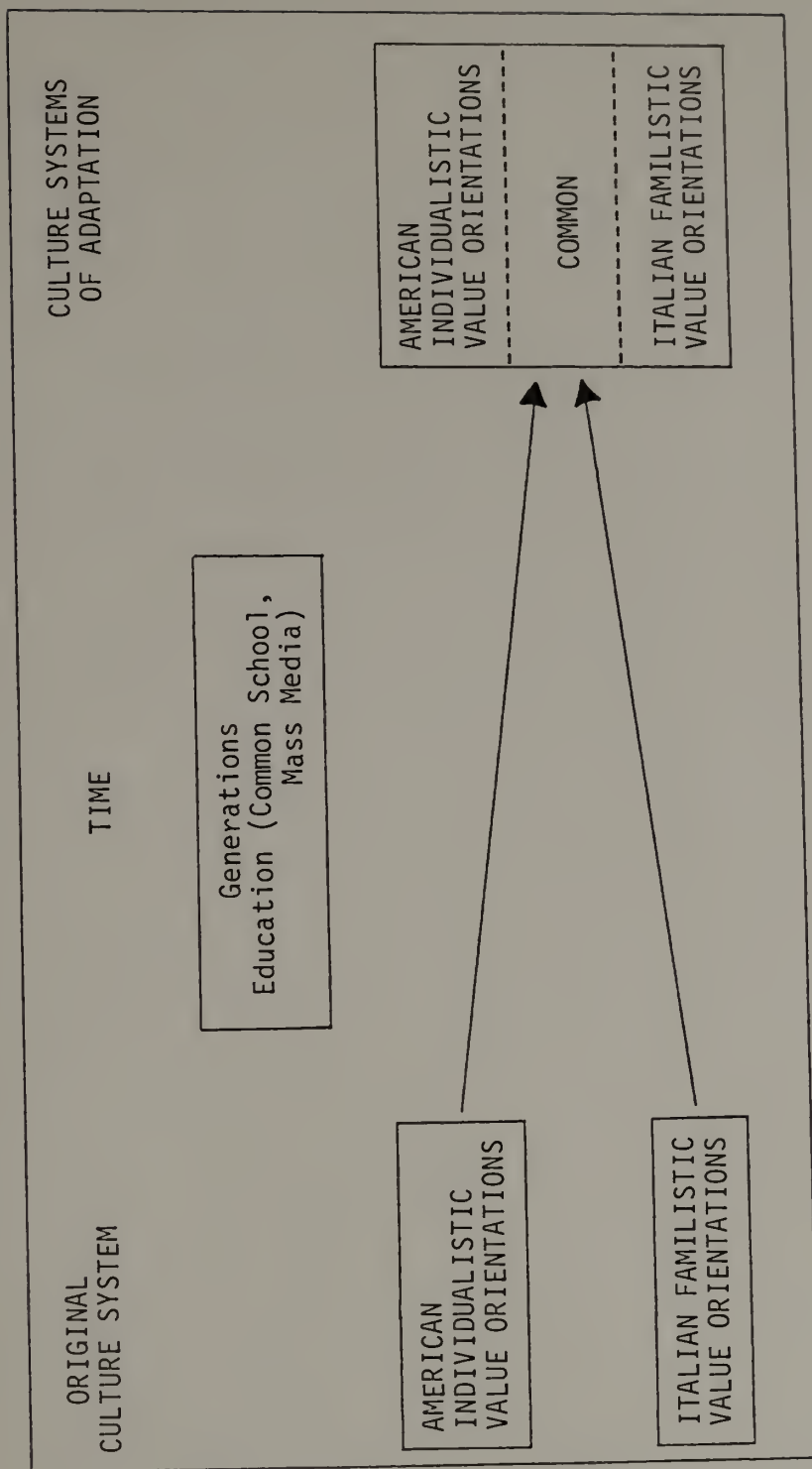


Figure 6. Acculturation but not assimilation perspective.  
Adapted from Greeley (1974, p. 306).

interaction with extended family members might be maintained by living within commuting distance, and participation in primary groups is likely to occur among fellow Italian-Americans of the same social class. Within the families of this type, the mother and father will tend toward a democratic family pattern, and the father will frequently share household duties, including the raising of children (Child, 1943, Chap. 6: Campisi, 1957, p. 310-314).

This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study in its contention that second and third generation Italian-Americans are likely to be assimilated into American institutional life. Schools are among the society's dominant institutions, and the assimilation into education of the second and third generation students in this study might imply an acceptance of the school's individualistic value orientation that stresses making one's own way in life and pursuing personal goals.

However, this theory also postulates that in primary relationships, notably one's contact with family, ethnic identification remains undiluted. What occurs, then, when the familistic value orientations of the students' family conflict with the individualistic value orientations of the school? How do students resolve this tension? This study attempts to address that question.

The acculturation but not assimilation model represents a synthesis of the assimilationist and cultural pluralism theories. A corollary of this model -- the idea of "ethclass" (Gordon, 1964) -- also addresses the tension created by social class advocates'

claims that increases in socio-economic status dilute ethnic ties and that social class rather than ethnicity is a better predictor of individuals' behaviors and value orientations.

Essentially, this idea suggests that people develop and maintain behaviors and norms that are similar to others of their own social class. However, they also experience a sense of comfort derived from a sense of peoplehood with people of their own ethnic group. Consequently, the ideal relationship will be with a person of one's own ethclass; that is, of his own ethnic group and social class (p. 77).

Within the context of this study, the "ethclass" raises the issue of differential educational achievement and mobility orientations, i.e., varying levels of assimilation into the American individualistic value orientation among students of different social classes in both the city and in the suburbs. If ethclasses are discernible in either community, the question will be the extent to which each group has retained Italian familistic value orientations that inhibit achievement and mobility aspirations.

### Summary

The perspectives on assimilation and their concomitant personality and family types that have been described in this section of the Review provide a framework that is useful for the analysis of student responses to this study's questionnaire, and of students' views and descriptions of their family lives and value orientations

derived from the study's interviews. Figure 7 presents a summary of the personality and family types that may emerge in this study.

### Italian-American Educational and Occupational Achievement

As with other agrarian peasant immigrant groups, the southern Italian immigrants arrived in the United States possessing very low levels of education. The economic conditions that required children at an early age to labor in the fields or at home in order to contribute to the family's well-being combined with the neglect of education in southern Italy by the Italian government (Foerster, 1919, p. 515) had produced an illiteracy rate that, in 1900, was over 70% of the southern Italian population (Covello, 1967, p. 246).

However, what differentiates Italian-Americans from other immigrant groups, and provides the impetus to this study is their comparatively slow rate of assimilation into American society considered in terms of educational attainment and occupational mobility.

Statistics on educational attainment, for example, reveal that in 1969, the percentage of Italian-Americans, 25 years of age or older, who had failed to complete high school was 54.3% -- the highest figure of all of the ethnic groups considered except for Mexican-Americans and Puerto Rican-Americans. In contrast to the national percentage of people who had attended some years of college (32.3%), the Italian-American percentage of 20.7% was the lowest figure next to

Issues	Assimilationist Perspective (the "rebel" personality)	Cultural Pluralism Perspective (the "in-group" personality)	Acculturation but not Assimilation Perspective - "Ethnic class" (the "apathetic" personality)
Response to Italian Familistic Value Orientations	Rejects.	Maintains strong allegiance.	Maintains in primary groups. Strains with resolution uncertain
Response to American Individualistic Value Orientations	Eagerly absorbs.	Rejects.	Maintains in secondary groups.
Relationship with Family Members	Distant; seldom visits family and relatives.	Lives very close to family members and sees them frequently.	Maintains ties even while living at a distance.
Attitude Toward Education	College education is most important. Children expect to attend college.	May tend to maintain distrust to higher education and desire to stop with high school diploma.	Uncertain.
Attitude toward the pursuit of a career	Physically mobile; has no hesitation to leave home in pursuit of individual career.	Family allegiances, reinforcing a desire to remain at home, limits job opportunities.	Uncertain

Figure 7. Varying responses that may emerge on particular issues considered in the dissertation.



Mexican-Americans and Puerto Rican-Americans (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1971).

In terms of occupational prestige, Glazer and Moynihan note that in 1950, 72% of the Italian immigrants were craftsmen, operatives, service workers or laborers. In that same year 65% of all second generation immigrants were in those same occupational clusters (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963, p. 206). Analysis of the 1970 Census statistics revealed that a generation later, 56% of the Italian-American male working population continued to dominate the lower end of the occupational continuum (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1971).

Efforts to explain the low levels of Italian-American educational attainment and occupational prestige have frequently included the conflict between Italian familistic and American individualist value orientations as one of the sources of the slow rate of Italian-American assimilation. This portion of the review seeks to present the literature that has explored the conflict from both an ethnographic and an empirical perspective.

Glazer and Moynihan (1963) note that for the Italian-American, the one common channel to success -- education -- was narrowed by the outlook of the family (p. 197). For of all the institutions that the immigrant faced, the school, as the repository of American individualistic value orientations, posed the greatest threat to the stability and welfare of the traditional family code of living.

Within southern Italian village life, the school had been considered as an "outside" institution. Education beyond the fifth year was seen as a privilege and necessity only for the better classes.

This attitude was reinforced by the fact that in many towns, schools had been operated largely for the children of the higher classes and the children of the peasants and laborers had been neither expected nor encouraged to attend (Covello, 1967, p. 287).

For the southern Italian family also, to be "buon educato" -- well-educated -- was to be well-mannered and well-brought up. The code of proper behavior had been learned for centuries in daily contact with relatives and neighbors. To be "buono istruito" -- well-instructed in book learning -- was viewed not only as irrelevant to the child's future role in the agrarian peasant society, but also as potentially subversive of parental authority and parental influence. "Do not make your child better than you are" runs a south Italian proverb (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963, p. 199).

Handlin (1951, p. 244) observes that in America, the school introduced a rival sense of authority into the lives of the immigrant's children. As a middle class institution, it encouraged the student to pursue individual goals rather than those of his family. Furthermore, in challenging paternal authority and undermining the Italian cultural value orientations, it sought to persuade students to reject all that did not reflect the American middle class value system (Tomasi, 1972, p. 6; Ware, 1935, p. 337; Davis, 1959, pp. 446-449).

For the majority of Italian-American families who did not reflect the "rebel" response of full-fledged support for the American individualistic value orientations, the school came to be viewed as an alien institution that subverted family values. Gambino notes

that the sons and daughters of the immigrants who accepted the old heritage of devotion to family attended school but maintained minimal levels of interest in its purpose. He further states that the ambiguity contained within this compromise resulted in their attainment of working class occupations that required little education beyond high school (Gambino, 1974, p. 34).

For their children, the second generation Italian-American tended to accept education, but at the same time, they demanded obedience. Allegiance to the family ruled out any consideration of self-advancement if it required physical or psychological detachment from the family (Tomasi, 1972, p. 31).

Empirical studies analyzing the effects of Italian familistic value orientations upon achievement have documented further the continued clash of Italian and American value orientations. In a New Haven study of occupational mobility, Strodtbeck asserted that Italian-Americans were far less mobile than Jewish-Americans because of their inability to accept the American mastery over nature and individualistic value orientations (1958, pp. 184-191).

In another study in which social class variables were controlled, Rosen (1959) suggested that one explanation for the lower Italian-American rates of upward mobility was the fact that Italian-American parents differed significantly from other ethnic groups in their childrearing approaches. Specifically, he found that Italian-American parents were among the least supportive of the two socialization practices which develop high levels of achievement motivation in children:

- a. achievement training, in which the parents, by imposing standards of excellence upon tasks, by setting high goals for the child, and by indicating a high evaluation of the child's competence to do a task well, communicate to him that they expect evidences of high achievement; and
- b. independence training, in which the parents indicate to the child that they expect him to be self-reliant and at the same time grant him relative autonomy in decision-making situations where he is given both freedom of action and responsibility for success or failure (p. 50).

A final study of achievement motivation, conducted by Danesino and Layman (1969) notes the significant effort that must be exerted by high achieving Italian-American students to overcome their traditional ethnic values and attitudes toward education. Irish and Italian college students were divided into two groups of high and low achievers and were compared in terms of achievement motivation levels. Danesino and Layman found that high achieving Italian students possessed greater achievement motivation than high achieving Irish students. However, the converse was not in evidence. Rather, low achieving Italian-Americans scored lower in achievement motivation than low achieving Irish-Americans. The researchers concluded that the greater disadvantage to the Italian high achieving student created by his ethnic group affiliation leads him to strive harder to break free of the ethnic values and habits in his tradition that inhibited upward mobility. At the same time, the low achieving Italian student continues to possess the attitudes and values

characteristic of the immigrant group, and, although pursuing a college education for social or economic gain, maintains a low estimate of the value of individual achievement.

The significance of these studies for this dissertation's inquiry rests upon their suggestions that the conflict of value systems has indeed persisted beyond the first generation of Italian immigrants. They indicate that the Italian concern with the family welfare over the individual's has slowed the process of the second, third, and fourth generations' assimilation into American education and their pursuit of upward mobility career patterns.

But what of contemporary Italian-Americans? Recent studies note that increasing numbers of Italian-American young people are attending colleges. Greeley, for example, reports that perhaps because of the G.I. Bill and post World War II prosperity, the percentage of Italian-Americans in colleges in 1970 had reached parity with the national percentage (Greeley, 1976, p. 70). On the other hand, in another study of occupational mobility (the occupational prestige of the respondent given his/her parents' occupational and educational achievement) Greeley cites the Italian-American as the second lowest of all of the ethnic groups considered (1977, p. 61). Why are Italian-Americans not capitalizing upon their education? Does the family continue to affect the choice of occupations?

One derives the sense from these studies that significant shifts are occurring within Italian-American families that are in some fashion bringing Italian-Americans into the dominant American society. Whether it is simply a giving up of Italian familistic value

orientations in favor of the American individualistic values or something more subtle is an issue that requires investigation. And if it is full-scale assimilation into American society, what dynamics are occurring within the homes of Italian-Americans that help or hinder students' efforts to absorb American individualistic values. These questions will be addressed in the study's interviews and form the heart of its inquiry.

## C H A P T E R   I I I

### QUESTIONNAIRE PROCEDURE AND RESULTS

#### Method

#### Sample

The sample selected for this study consisted of Italian-American students in attendance at one parochial urban and one public suburban high school located in the New York metropolitan area. The urban high school, situated on the outskirts of a large industrial city, serves almost 750 residents from all neighborhoods within that city. The suburban school is a regional school enrolling approximately 1300 students from three individual communities.

The ethnic-religious composition of the urban school consists of Black, Hispanic, and White Ethnic students who are all primarily of Catholic and Protestant traditions. Each of these three groups represents approximately one-third of the student enrollment. Among the White Ethnic students, approximately half are of Italian surname.

Within the suburban school, the population is comprised of Jewish and White Ethnic students of both Catholic and Protestant traditions. Jewish students account for approximately 15% of the student body with the White Ethnic students representing almost all of the remaining 85%. Less than 2% of the enrollment are Black or

Hispanic. Among the White Ethnic students, approximately 16% are of Italian surname.

The socio-economic make-up of the urban school is primarily skilled and semi-skilled blue-collar families. Although a tuition exists, many of the students receive tuition assistance from the school.

A more diverse socio-economic population exists within the suburban school. In contrast to the urban school, fewer skilled blue-collar families exist and more middle and upper-middle income families with the primary wage earner employed in white-collar positions are in evidence.

Together, both schools offered populations from which there could be drawn samples of students that provided the degrees of Italian-American generational and socio-economic diversity appropriate to the study.

To identify the study participants, the enrollment lists of the two participating schools were examined, and those students with Italian surnames were isolated and invited to participate in the study. To be further considered eligible for inclusion in the study's sample, students were required to have at least two grandparents whose ancestries were traceable to Italy. This aspect of their eligibility was determined from their responses to a questionnaire item that required students to specify their maternal and paternal family backgrounds.

Of those invited, 237 students appeared at the designated time. Twenty-six students who did not have at least two grandparents whose



ancestries were traceable to Italy were eliminated from the study. An additional four students who failed to complete the questionnaire were excluded. The remaining 207 students constituted the sample whose responses are analyzed below.

### Procedure

A total of 171 students in the suburban high school and 103 students in the urban high school were identified as eligible for the study. Individual letters were sent to these students in their homerooms that briefly explained to them the nature of the study and invited them to come to a specific location within the school building and at a specific time when they were not scheduled for classes. Those students who were either absent from school or who did not respond to the invitation were sent another letter of invitation. Those who continued to be absent and those who failed to respond to this notice were not included in the study.

A small conference room was secured in both schools for the administration of the questionnaire. Groups were limited in sizes ranging from 8 to 15 in one sitting. A brief explanation of the purpose of the study was again provided in which the writer emphasized the study's purpose of securing students' perceptions of goals and expectations in the context of their family heritage.

Each group was advised of the confidentiality of their responses and that they were not expected to put their names on the instrument unless they so desired. The writer also emphasized that

the instrument was not a test, that there were no right or wrong answers. Finally, each group was informed that they should feel comfortable leaving items unanswered and turning the questionnaire back incomplete at the end of the meeting. Few students exercised this option.

In administering the questionnaire, the writer maintained an awareness of his position as an administrator in both schools that might affect students' willingness to participate in the study and might create fears of specific ramifications associated with their responses. Within the urban school this factor was of less concern inasmuch as he no longer held a position of authority in that school. Nevertheless, the essentially voluntary aspect of participation created by the letters of invitation and the researcher's introductory comments that established the study as his own personal study, required by the University with no connection to their schools, was thought to have minimized this potential intimidation effect.

Each questionnaire was coded with sequential numbers on the first page. As students received the instrument, the number on the questionnaire was recorded by the writer next to their names on a master list of invited students. This recording was performed as unobtrusively as was possible in order to eliminate the intimidation effect. This code was utilized by the writer only for the purpose of designating the students who would later be interviewed.

## Questionnaire Items

The final questionnaire was the product of a number of reviews and revisions. A first draft was submitted to two experts in Italian-American Studies for review of the ethnic salience items and to three sociologists for review of the demographic and achievement items. A second draft, reflecting the changes recommended by these individuals, was then submitted to a group of high school teachers for a consideration of form and vocabulary. Minor modifications of wording and form were made. Finally, a group of high school students were administered the questionnaire and were questioned regarding the clarity of each item and their personal responses to the instrument. Of particular interest to the writer was the issue of whether any one item was construed as an invasion of the respondent's private life that was offensive. Although a few students questioned the relevancy of an item requesting food preference, none expressed the view that any question was offensive.

The questionnaire used in this study (See Appendix A) was composed of 21 items that were designed as measures of the following variables:

Demographic characteristics (10 items). Study participants were asked to indicate their sex, grade level, ancestry, family's generations in the United States, parents' occupations, and parents' school attainment.

Ethnic salience. Study participants' total scores on seven items were used as an index of their ethnic salience (familistic

orientations). The formulation of these items was based upon a review of studies of the Italian-American ethnic group. As noted in Chapter II, these studies clearly indicate that the family strongly influenced the lives of Italian-Americans. Five of the seven items that were devised required study participants to indicate (1) whether the Italian language was used in their homes; (2) their favorite foods; (3) how close they lived to their grandparents and relatives; (4) how frequent were family gatherings; and (5) the nationalities of their three best friends. The two remaining items required the study respondents to indicate on Likert-type scales (1) how important it is that they marry an Italian-American, and (2) their willingness to move away from their families because of a job promotion or opportunity. The internal consistency of these items was found to be moderate ( $\alpha = .48$ ). A factor analysis involving the seven items indicated two underlying primary factors that explained 44.5% of the variation in subjects' responses to the items.

Achievement: Achievement was appraised using a six point scale that ranged from a failing average (1) to a "straight A" average (6). Students were asked to rate their achievement performance on the basis of grades they generally received in their courses.

Occupational and educational expectations. Three items in this section of the questionnaire sought to establish the study participants' expectations regarding their future occupations and education. The two items seeking occupational information differentiated between the students' aspired-to and expected careers. The item measuring educational expectations requested the students' assessments of the

minimal level of education that they would accept. An ordinal scale (range 1.0-3.0) was constructed to measure educational expectations. Students intending to attain a minimum of four years of college were assigned a 1.0 rating; students expecting to attend a community college were assigned a 2.0; and students expecting to complete their formal education before or when they finished high school were assigned a 3.0.

## Results

### Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Table 1 describes the samples of both schools as reported by the participants, according to sex, grade, and generation in the United States.

In both the urban and suburban groups, female respondents outnumbered male respondents. The total sample consisted of 89 males (43%) and 118 females (57%). In terms of grade level, the urban group was more heavily represented by grade 11 and 12 students. However, the suburban sample was more equally spread among all grade levels.

Of particular interest in this study was the number of third and fourth generation Italian students sampled. More than 75% of the respondents were at least the grandchildren of Italian immigrants. A second note of interest was the larger number of first and second generation Italian-Americans within the urban group. These two

Table 1  
 Number of Students According to Specific  
 Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Urban % <sup>a</sup>	Suburban %	Total %
Sex			
Male	40 (34)	45 (55)	43 (89)
Female	60 (50)	55 (68)	57 (118)
Grade			
9	11 (9)	21 (26)	17 (35)
10	19 (16)	25 (31)	23 (47)
11	42 (35)	24 (30)	31 (65)
12	28 (24)	29 (36)	29 (60)
Generation			
1st	11 (9)	1 (1)	5 (10)
2nd	30 (25)	11 (13)	18 (38)
3rd	48 (41)	60 (74)	56 (115)
4th or more	11 (9)	28 (35)	21 (44)

<sup>a</sup>Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of students in each cluster.

generations represented 41% of the urban sample but only 12% of the suburban group.

Another characteristic assessed by the questionnaire was the occupation of the respondents' fathers. Table 2 outlines these occupations as they were described by the student respondents. Almost 75% of all of the parent occupations fell into the middle and lower end of the occupational spectrum. Skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers represented 49% of the total sample and 66% of the urban group.

Within the upper occupational clusters, no doctors, lawyers, or corporate executives were represented. Within the second and third clusters, urban-suburban differences were pronounced. Of the ten respondents who reported their parents as either managers or proprietors of medium concerns or minor professionals, nine lived in the suburbs. Among administrative personnel of large concerns, owners of small individual businesses and semi-professionals, suburbanities possessed a twenty-six to eight advantage. The questionnaires revealed further that most of the eight urban workers were city employees while many of the twenty-six suburban workers owned their own businesses.

The educational attainment levels of the students' parents are presented in Table 3.

Sixty-eight percent of the respondents' parents cited as the family's primary wage earners were reported as not having attended college. Fifty-seven percent of the suburban sample and 85% of the

Table 2  
Occupational Clusters of Student  
Respondents' Parents

	Urban		Suburban		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Executives and proprietors of large concerns and major professionals	0	0	0	0	0	0
Managers and proprietors of medium concerns and minor professionals	1	1	9	7	10	5
Administrative personnel of large concerns, owners of small individual businesses and semi-professionals	8	10	26	21	34	16
Owners of small businesses, clerical and sales workers, and technicians	12	14	37	30	49	24
Skilled workers	22	26	18	15	40	19
Semi-skilled workers	27	32	13	11	40	19
Unskilled workers	7	8	15	12	22	11
Other (retired or don't know)	7	8	6	5	13	6



Table 3  
 Educational Attainment of Student  
 Respondents' Parents

	Urban		Suburban		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Graduate Program Completion	0	0	9	7	9	4
Standard College Diploma	2	2	21	7	23	11
Partial College	11	13	22	18	33	16
High School Graduate	31	37	42	34	73	35
Partial High School	16	19	20	16	36	17
Junior High School	8	10	6	5	14	7
Less than Junior High School	16	19	3	2	19	9

urban sample stopped at high school. A total of 15%, almost entirely suburbanites, had obtained a bachelor's degree.

Combining occupation and educational attainment, and utilizing Hollingshead's Two Factor Index of Social Position (1953) to obtain social class status, the following differentiation occurred:

	Urban		Suburban		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Social Class I	0	0	0	0	0	0
II	1	1	13	11	14	7
III	15	18	39	32	54	26
IV	45	54	62	50	107	52
V	23	27	9	7	32	15

Sixty-seven percent of all respondents' families fell into the lowest social classes. Although urban and suburban samples had similar representation in Social Class IV, differences between the two groups existed at the upper and lower levels. Suburban families dominated in Social Classes II and III and urban families were more numerous in Social Class V.

#### Relationship Between Ethnic Saliency and Demographic Variables

The relationship between ethnic saliency and sex, socioeconomic status, grade, and generation in America were examined using an analysis of variance. The urban and suburban groups were analyzed separately

since preliminary analyses indicated that the relations between these variables appeared to be different in the two groups (Appendix B). The means and standard deviations for the two groups are presented in Table 4.

For the urban sample, with a mean ethnic salience score of 5.286, the generation of the student significantly affected individuals' ethnic salience scores,  $F = 5.93$ ,  $p < .002$ ; whereas socio-economic status only marginally affected the level of ethnic salience,  $F = 2.481$ ,  $p < .08$ . Neither sex nor grade level significantly affected scores, and there were no significant two or three-way interactions between any of these demographic variables.

With respect to the ethnic salience scores of the suburban sample ( $M = 3.585$ ), no significant main effects or interactions of the demographic variables were obtained.

#### Relationship Between Achievement and Demographic Variables

Table 5 presents the achievement means and standard deviations of the urban and suburban groups according to sex, generation and socio-economic status.

Utilizing an analysis of variance, it was noted that for the urban sample, the sex of the student significantly affected individuals' achievement levels,  $F = 9.569$ ,  $p < .004$ . Female respondents tended to achieve at higher levels than male respondents. The generation of the student only marginally affected achievement,  $F = 2.176$ ,  $p < .10$ , with the third and fourth generations tending toward

Table 4  
 Mean Ethnic Salience Scores and Standard  
 Deviations for Urban Students

Characteristic	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Sex			
Male	4.914	1.068	35
Female	5.551	1.276	49
SES			
2	6.006	0	1
3	5.469	.743	15
4	5.044	1.167	45
5	5.609	1.530	23
Generation			
1st	5.778	1.093	9
2nd	5.880	1.013	25
3rd	4.976	1.129	41
4th or more	4.556	1.590	9
Grade			
9	5.444	1.130	9
10	5.313	1.138	16
11	5.114	1.323	35
12	5.458	1.215	24

Note: Overall mean ethnic salience for urban students = 5.296;  
 Standard Deviation = 1.228; N = 84.

Table 4 (continued)  
 Mean Ethnic Salience Scores and Standard  
 Deviations for Suburban Students

Characteristic	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Sex			
Male	3.462	1.368	54
Female	3.681	1.576	69
SES			
2	3.539	1.450	13
3	3.386	1.632	39
4	3.581	1.444	62
5	4.556	.882	9
Generation			
1st	4.000	0	1
2nd	3.846	1.573	13
3rd	3.635	1.486	74
4th or more	3.371	1.497	35
Grade			
9	3.414	1.570	29
10	3.821	1.701	28
11	3.700	1.489	30
12	3.444	1.252	36

Note: Overall mean ethnic salience for suburban students = 3.585;  
 Standard Deviation = 1.487; N = 123.

Table 5  
 Mean Achievement Scores and Standard  
 Deviations for Urban Students

Characteristic	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Sex			
Male	3.257	1.401	35
Female	4.388	1.455	49
SES			
2	6.000	0	1
3	5.067	1.033	15
4	3.667	1.477	45
5	3.565	1.562	23
Generation			
1st	2.889	1.364	9
2nd	3.840	1.491	25
3rd	4.098	1.562	41
4th or more	4.333	1.414	9

Note: Overall mean achievement score for urban students = 3.917;  
 Standard Deviation = 1.531; N = 84.

Table 5 (continued)  
 Mean Achievement Scores and Standard  
 Deviations for Suburban Students

Characteristic	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Sex			
Male	3.704	1.327	54
Female	3.783	1.434	69
SES			
2	4.077	1.553	13
3	4.051	1.432	39
4	3.500	1.238	62
5	3.667	1.732	9
Generation			
1st	3.000	0	1
2nd	4.231	1.481	13
3rd	3.514	1.436	74
4th or more	4.086	1.147	35

Note: Overall mean achievement score for suburban students = 3.748;  
 Standard Deviation = 1.383; N = 123.

higher achievement scores. Socio-economic status did not significantly affect achievement scores and no significant outcomes were derived by two or three-way interactions.

Within the suburban sample the generation of the student was the only demographic variable that significantly affected achievement scores. The relationship was marginally significant,  $F = 2.241$ ,  $p < .09$ .

#### Relationship Between Ethnic Saliency and Achievement

Means and standard deviations for achievement levels according to measures of ethnic saliency are stated in Table 6. With the achievement scale's midpoint range (3.0-4.0) defined as average achievement, the urban students who had high measures of ethnic saliency unexpectedly maintained above average levels of achievement ( $M = 4.11$ ), while students with moderate ethnic saliency maintained achievement levels that were in the low-average range ( $M = 3.25$ ). An analysis of variance indicated a main effect of ethnic saliency on achievement that was marginally significant,  $F = 3.837$ ,  $p < .055$ .

The suburban students at all levels of ethnic saliency were similar in mean achievement levels ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $3.84$ , and  $3.55$  respectively), and levels of ethnic saliency were not found to significantly affect suburban students' achievement levels.

The moderate internal consistency of the items that made up the ethnic saliency scale prompted a further examination of the correlation between each of these items and achievement scores.



Table 6  
 Mean Achievement Scores and Standard Deviations  
 for Urban and Suburban Students According  
 to Levels of Ethnic Salience

Urban			
Characteristic	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Low ethnic salience	4.500	2.121	2
Moderate ethnic salience	3.250	1.446	20
High ethnic salience	4.113	1.505	62

Note: Overall mean achievement scores = 3.917; Standard Deviation = 1.531; N = 84.

Suburban			
Characteristic	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Low ethnic salience	3.786	1.524	28
Moderate ethnic salience	3.848	1.311	59
High ethnic salience	3.556	1.403	36

Note: Overall mean achievement score = 3.748; Standard Deviation = 1.3825; N = 123.

Pearson product correlations were computed for each variable and are presented in Table 7.

Within the urban sample, positive significant correlations were obtained between high achievement and proximity to relatives ( $p = .02$ ), family gatherings ( $p = .009$ ), and the possession of Italian best friends ( $p = .007$ ). A marginally significant positive correlation was also found between high achievement and a reluctance to leave home because of a job promotion or opportunity ( $p = .094$ ), while a marginally significant negative correlation was noted between high achievement and the Italian language spoken in the home ( $p = .064$ ).

Within the suburban sample all of the scale items except food preference were negatively correlated with high achievement, but no correlations were determined to be significant.

#### Relationship Between Educational Expectations and Demographic Variables

Another area of inquiry in this study was the level of education that students expected to attain. Table 8 provides the mean educational expectation scores and standard deviations of the urban and suburban student groups according to sex, generation, and socio-economic status. In both the urban and suburban groups, female mean scores were slightly lower than male mean scores but an analysis of variance found no significant effect of sex on educational expectations. Socio-economic status within the suburban sample was the only variable that significantly affected educational expectation scores,  $F = 4.25$ ,  $p < .008$ .

Table 7

Pearson Coefficients of Correlation Between High Achievement and Ethnic Salience Items for Urban and Suburban Students

	Urban (N=84)	Suburban (N=123)
Italian language is spoken at home	-.167 (p=.064)	-.009 (p=.460)
Student lives in proximity to relatives	.224 (p=.020)	-.025 (p=.391)
Student prefers an Italian spouse	-.017 (p=.438)	-.106 (p=.121)
Family gatherings are frequent	.258 (p=.009)	-.031 (p=.367)
Student's best friend(s) are Italian	.267 (p=.007)	-.056 (p=.269)
Student is reluctant to leave home	.145 (p=.094)	-.080 (p=.190)
Student prefers Italian food	.128 (p=.123)	.050 (p=.292)

Table 8  
 Mean Educational Expectation Scores \* and  
 Standard Deviations for Urban Students

Characteristic	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Sex			
Male	1.943	.873	35
Female	1.898	.896	49
SES			
2	1.000	0	1
3	2.000	1.000	15
4	1.867	.920	45
5	2.000	.739	23
Generation			
1st	2.111	.782	9
2nd	2.000	.866	25
3rd	1.805	.901	41
4th or more	2.000	1.000	9

Note: Overall mean educational expectation score for urban students = 1.917; Standard Deviation = .881; N = 84.

\*1.0 = college; 2.0 = community college or technical school;  
 3.0 = high school diploma or less.

Table 8 (continued)

Mean Educational Expectation Scores\* and  
Standard Deviations for Suburban Students

Characteristic	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Sex			
Male	1.852	.856	54
Female	1.768	.789	69
SES			
2	1.308	.480	13
3	1.590	.751	39
4	2.016	.839	62
5	2.000	.866	9
Generation			
1st	3.000	0	1
2nd	1.769	.832	13
3rd	1.824	.817	74
4th or more	1.743	.817	35

Note: Overall mean educational expectation score for suburban students = 1.805; Standard Deviation = .816; N = 123.

\*1.0 = college; 2.0 = community college or technical school;  
3.0 = high school diploma or less.

Students in the upper social classes tended to more often expect to attain a college education.

#### Relationship Between Educational Expectations and Ethnic Salience

To address the question whether ethnic salience affected educational expectations, means and standard deviations were derived for the urban and suburban samples that were differentiated according to low, moderate and high ethnic salience scores. Table 9 presents this data.

Within the urban sample, students possessing high measures of ethnic salience obtained similar mean educational expectation scores to students with moderate ethnic salience scores ( $M = 1.9$  and  $M = 2.0$ , respectively). The very small number of respondents in this sample who possessed low measures of ethnic salience did not permit comparative analysis. An analysis of the variance indicated no significant relationship between ethnic salience and levels of educational expectations.

For the suburban sample, the mean educational expectation scores were similar for all students. No significant relationship between ethnic salience and educational expectations was obtained.

As with achievement scores, an examination was conducted of the correlations between each of the ethnic salience scale items and the educational expectation scores of the students. This inquiry sought to establish whether any one item was significantly correlated with

Table 9  
 Mean Educational Expectation Scores\* and Standard  
 Deviations for Urban and Suburban Students  
 According to Levels of Ethnic Salience

Urban			
Characteristic	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Low ethnic salience	1.50	.707	2
Moderate ethnic salience	2.00	.918	20
High ethnic salience	1.90	.882	62

Total mean = 1.917; Standard Deviation = .881; N = 84.

Suburban			
Characteristic	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Low ethnic salience	1.86	.891	28
Moderate ethnic salience	1.78	.789	59
High ethnic salience	1.81	.822	36

Total mean = 1.805; Standard Deviation = .816; N = 123.

\*1.0 = college; 2.0 = community college or technical school;  
 3.0 = high school diploma or less.

high educational expectation scores. Table 10 presents these correlations.

No significant correlations between ethnic salience items and high educational expectation scores were obtained for either the urban or suburban groups. Only three relationships within the suburban sample -- a positive correlation of frequent family gatherings ( $p = .091$ ), negative correlations of having Italian friends ( $p = .086$ ) and preferring Italian food ( $p = .086$ ) -- were of marginal significance. Of particular interest in this study was the fact that students' reluctance to leave home, although negatively correlated with high educational expectation scores, did not bear a significant relationship.

#### Student Occupational Expectations

A final set of data derived from the questionnaire was the occupational expectations of the urban and suburban students. This data was obtained in order to assess the occupational mobility occurring within the families of this study. Table 11 provides students' occupational expectations.

For both the urban and suburban samples, the contrast between students' occupational expectations and their parents' present occupations was striking. Whereas 49% of the parents were in skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled jobs, only 17% of the students expected to possess similar occupations. Within the urban sample, the contrast was more in evidence as only 11% of the students expected to assume the occupations that 66% of their parents presently maintained.



Table 10

Pearson Coefficients of Correlation Between High Educational Expectations and Ethnic Salience Items for Urban and Suburban Students

	Urban (N=84)	Suburban (N=123)
Italian language is spoken at home	-.009	.080
Student lives in proximity to relatives	.078	-.070
Student prefers an Italian spouse	-.060	-.082
Family gatherings are frequent	.116	.122
Student's best friend(s) are Italian	-.119	-.125
Student is reluctant to leave home	-.097	-.146
Student prefers Italian food	-.054	.124

Table 11  
Occupational Clusters of Student Respondents

	Urban		Suburban		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Executives and proprietors of large concerns and major professionals	7	8	8	7	15	7
Managers and proprietors of medium concerns and minor professionals	20	24	19	15	39	19
Administrative personnel of large concerns, owners of small individual businesses and semi- professionals	20	24	30	24	50	24
Owners of small busi- nesses, clerical and sales workers and technicians	22	26	25	20	47	23
Skilled workers	5	6	16	13	21	10
Semi-skilled workers	3	4	7	6	10	5
Unskilled workers	1	1	3	2	4	2
Other (Don't know)	6	7	15	12	21	10

In terms of the upper end of the occupational spectrum, 50% of the students expressed expectations of holding jobs in the top three occupational clusters. Only 21% of their parents possessed such occupations. The areas of law, medicine, the sciences, education, accounting, and business administration, were cited by many students.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

In the opening pages of this study, it was suggested that the conflict between Italian familistic and American individualistic value orientations was a primary factor that explained the relatively low levels of Italian-American educational attainment and occupational prestige. Many of the studies cited in Chapter II further established that the placement of the family's needs and priorities over those of the individual had influenced the Italian-American high school student to remain removed from higher education and from careers that required geographic mobility. The extent to which these patterns persist among contemporary high school students was the primary issue addressed by the questionnaire.

The findings presented in Chapter III indicate that important changes are taking place within the Italian-American families of this study. The educational attainment and occupational expectations of both urban and suburban students significantly surpass the education and career patterns of their parents. At the same time, the low levels of suburban attachment to Italian familistic value orientations as measured by ethnic salience scores suggest that the suburban students' assimilation into the American individualistic values that are concomitant with college education and upwardly mobile occupations

may be less difficult than for the urban students who as a group remain largely unassimilated. Both of these issues will be discussed in this Chapter.

The first issue of importance in this discussion of the questionnaire data is the nature of the study's Italian-American families. In terms of their occupational prestige and levels of educational attainment, it is significant that so many of the students' parents typified the Italian-American norms cited in Chapter II. The fact that no family in either the city or the suburbs was headed by a doctor, lawyer, or corporate executive; that so many suburban parents owned stores or small family businesses; and that so many in both locations were working class people; all give credence to the thesis that within the parent generation, Italian familistic value orientations have limited an individual's upward mobility. Moreover, the small percentages of parents in both the city (15%) and the suburbs (42%) who had pursued any education beyond high school suggests some retention of traditional Italian-American attitudes of distrust toward higher education.

In examining the socio-economic status of the urban sample, one wonders why families of such limited means have chosen to pay the sizeable yearly tuition charged by the urban school. Part of the answer lies in the changing status of the Italian-American ethnic group within the city.

Typical of many other eastern cities, the city from which the sample was taken is experiencing significant population shifts. Through the 1960's and 1970's, various Black and Hispanic ethnic

groups entered the city and settled into formerly southern and eastern European neighborhoods. The Italian-American ethnic group, at one time the majority in the city, now finds itself vying to hold onto its political power.

The growth of the Black and Hispanic public school population has been accompanied by a simultaneous increase in the number of public elementary school students who wish to enroll in the parochial high school. Although many of these students are Black and Hispanic, a significant number also come from Italian-American families who, now that their children are leaving the predominantly Italian-American neighborhood school, opt for a high school environment that they regard as ethnically more comfortable and educationally of higher quality. Rather than leave the city, or perhaps unable to leave because of the nature of their occupations, the size of their incomes, or their desire to remain close to family, Italian-American parents have decided to pay the significant cost of tuition for the parochial high school education.

In approaching the suburbs, one expects to find Italian-Americans who, as Vecoli (1974, p. 34) suggested in Chapter II, are college-educated, have left the city and have gone to work for corporations with jobs that demand geographic mobility. However, the data suggests that in the suburban towns of this study, the Italian-American families do not fit the mold of the "organization man" but are instead geographically stable and headed by second and third generation parents whose occupations require neither advanced degrees nor geographic mobility.

A closer analysis of the three towns served by the study's public high school reveals that two of the three are established rural communities that expanded and achieved their growth limits during the 1960's. In contrast to the third community that continues to grow and is dotted with expensive development homes, these two towns consist of less expensive homes and summer cottages that were converted into year-round dwellings. It is within these older communities that most of the Italian suburban families in this study reside.

The intensity of ethnic consciousness in the city, the geographic stability of the suburban families, and the demographic data regarding the occupations and levels of educational attainment for both groups suggest that the ethnic salience scores of all of the study's sample would reflect a continued attraction to Italian familistic value orientations. The fact that the suburban mean score demonstrated little attraction and differed significantly from the urban mean score is a critical finding in this study.

The substantial discrepancy between the groups' mean ethnic salience scores was reflected on every item and the ethnic salience scale except food preference (Appendix C). Whereas 74% of the urban sample obtained high ethnic salience scores, only 29% of the suburban sample obtained similar scores.

Three items on the scale drew responses that provide insight into the state of the Italian-American ethnic salience in the suburbs. The first item was the students' reluctance to leave home for a job opportunity or a promotion. Of all the questions in the scale, this item

was the most direct assessment of the extent to which students retained familistic value orientations. It presented the dichotomy of family needs and integrity against individual desires and ambitions. On this item, only 34% of the suburban students indicated that they would turn down a job offer or promotion in order to remain close to the extended family.

The other two items were directed toward the students' primary group relationships. One item asked for the three best friends of the students. The other asked whether Italian-American nationality would be a consideration in their choice of a marriage partner. In contrast to the low number of students who would remain close to home, 63% indicated a preference for Italian-Americans as their best friends and 59% stated that the ethnic background of their future spouses would be a consideration in their marriage decisions.

The view of the study's suburban sample that emerges from the analysis of these three items is much akin to Gordon's acculturation but not assimilation model. As illustrated in Chapter II, Gordon (1964) stated that immigrant groups adopt many of the values and patterns of behavior of the secondary groups in which they work or interact daily, yet maintain ethnic preferences in their most personal relationships. As a group, the suburban students in this study have demonstrated similar patterns. They display the tendency to pursue upward mobility even at the cost of leaving home but they also appear to be most comfortable with others of their own ethnic group.

The fact that no demographic variable, including socio-economic status, significantly affected ethnic salience scores provides another



dimension to this analysis of suburban ethnicity. It suggests that suburban residency is of itself a primary variable that draws people out of ethnically derived value orientations.

Within the suburban high school, Italian-Americans comprise 16% of the total school population. Unlike the urban school, ethnic identity is not accentuated. Moreover, the Italian-Americans live in ethnically heterogeneous communities where, except for one lake resort community that is noticeably Jewish in population, no ethnic sections are discernible.

It would seem, then, that suburbanization has influenced ethnic value orientations. However, the data suggests that many of the suburban families in this study are of the type of family that Campisi (1959) referred to as "marginal" -- as having one foot in two separate worlds. Their occupations and educational attainments are not reflective of the upwardly mobile American individualistic values orientation. The students in these families seek out ethnically compatible people for their closest acquaintances. Yet they also have left the ethnic enclaves of the city and many have settled in communities alone and apart from other family members. Moreover, their children express individualistic value orientations when given a choice between family and career.

To sum up, then, the suburban sample appears to represent clusters of families who are at various stages of assimilation in terms of giving up the Italian familistic value orientations that have influenced at least the parents' socio-economic standing. The heterogeneous suburban environment appears in and of itself to affect ethnic salience scores

negatively and to encourage the adoption of the American individualistic value orientations. The particular impact of the suburbs upon achievement, educational attainment and occupational expectations will be discussed later in this Chapter.

The significantly high mean ethnic salience score for the urban population reflected the persistence of Italian familistic value orientations within the city neighborhoods of this study. On every item that comprised the scale, except language, at least 72% of the students responded in the direction of ethnicity. Of particular interest, especially in terms of its contrast to the suburban data, was the fact that 74% of the city students articulated a reluctance to leave home in order to obtain a position or promotion.

The significant effect of generation and the marginal effect of socio-economic status upon urban ethnic salience suggested that attachment to familistic value orientations was most intense for the first and second generations and for the lowest social classes. Yet these variations are relevant only when viewed in the context of the overall urban mean score. Within every generation and social class stratum, ethnic salience scores were high.

The very high urban mean ethnic salience score raises the issue of the representativeness of the private school sample. Although its religious affiliation with the Catholic Church might render it particularly ethnic in character, that proposition is questionable for two reasons. First, except for the Italian national parishes that were established to address the unique needs of the Italian immigrant families, the Catholic Church in America has traditionally maintained

an uneasy relationship with Italian-Americans. The Irish-dominated clergy have most often staffed the churches and schools and the cultural differences between the Irish Catholic and Italian Catholic have frequently alienated the Italian-American family (Tomasi, 1974). It is therefore doubtful that the religious aspect of the school would have attracted families that were intensely ethnic.

The second objection is the contention that the high ethnic salience scores are primarily based upon the urban environment and not the environment of the school. As indicated earlier, the consciousness of ethnicity in the city is intense. Ethnic concentrations co-exist side by side and frequently are engaged in struggles for political leverage. The awareness of cultural differences and the coming together as a group to secure the maximum urban services accentuates the individual ethnic identity. Consequently, with this view, the parochial school enrollment may be typical of the total Italian-American population in the city.

Whether representative or not, the fact remains that the particular urban sample chosen for this study possesses stronger Italian familistic value orientations than the suburban sample. The primary issue for this study is the extent to which these familistic value orientations affect school achievement, educational attainment, and career expectations. A comparative analysis of these relationships for both samples is considered in the following sections.

Although the questionnaire data revealed a significant difference between the urban and suburban mean ethnic salience scores, such was not the case with achievement. The mean achievement scores of the

urban and suburban groups were similar to each other, and on a scale of one to six, fell into the mid-upper levels of the moderate achievement range.

School achievement, that is, high grades, is the product of a student's intelligence (IQ) and his/her motivation to demonstrate within the structure of a school, mastery of the dominant skills and concepts of the culture. The studies of the Italian-American experiences of schooling that were cited in Chapter II, noted that the conflict of familistic and individualistic value orientations often limited students' involvement with the school, affected their motivation levels, and consequently lowered their grades. One of the objectives, then, in the analysis of the questionnaire data, was to ascertain the nature and the extent of the influence of Italian-American ethnic salience upon school achievement.

The data indicated that, for the urban sample, ethnic salience affected grades in a marginally significant manner. For the suburban sample, it bore no significant relationship. The striking aspect of these findings was the fact that for the city students, high ethnic salience scores were correlated with high achievement; in other words, students possessing familistic value orientations tended to achieve high grades.

A correlational analysis between each item on the ethnic salience scale and urban high achievement revealed an interesting dichotomy among the items. Those that reflected an orientation to the family -- distance from extended family, frequency of family gatherings, and a

reluctance to leave home -- were positively correlated with high achievement. Those that indicated an absence of acculturation -- the retention of Italian as the spoken language and a desire to avoid intermarriage -- possessed negative correlations with academic performance, although the correlations were not significant.

With respect to the suburban sample, none of the correlations between ethnic salience items and high achievement were significant, yet all were negative. The differences between the two samples requires some investigation.

One explanation for the differences between the two groups is the possibility that the two schools in the study might have employed different grading systems. The urban school may have maintained a formal or informal grading policy that would result in the awarding of grades to the urban students that were higher than suburban grades, but in fact represented recognition of similar academic performance. The issue is common whenever two school systems' grade distributions are compared. In one school, teachers may reward effort as well as ability while in another school, the grading system will correspond strictly to student performance.

Another more cogent explanation suggests that the nature of the urban sample has had a distorting effect upon the questionnaire data. As indicated earlier in this Chapter the private school offered an ethnic and educational alternative to Italian families in the city. Parents who were particularly concerned with the quality of education provided by the high school could choose to pay a tuition rather than be served by the public school. The urban sample, composed of

students whose parents had made an investment in education, may come from homes in which a particular concern for education is evident. It is likely that the influence of the home environment has therefore encouraged students to maintain academic performance that tends to be of higher quality than that of other students from a different background.

If correct, this hypothesis would explain the positive correlations between urban students' familistic orientations and high achievement that were reflected in the questionnaire data. In contrast to the findings of other studies of Italian-American achievement, this study suggests that an alliance with education has been established by many of the urban families. Students are encouraged by their families to do well in school with the result that there is no tension between familistic value orientations and achievement. Consequently, as in the case of many of the urban students in this study, one may be closely tied to family and still perform at high levels of academic achievement.

The implications of this hypothesis, if it is correct, suggest that the tendency toward negative correlations between ethnic salience items and school performance that were reflected in the suburban sample may be a more accurate description of this relationship -- that if an urban public school sample had been chosen, the traditional negative correlation between Italian-American ethnic salience and achievement would have persisted. Unfortunately, this study did not contain such a sample. Nevertheless, a review of the questionnaire data regarding

educational attainment and occupational expectations may provide more insight on this issue.

As with achievement scores, the mean educational attainment scores of the urban and suburban students were similar. Both groups demonstrated an expectation for post-secondary education with 43% of the urban and 45% of the suburban students indicating that four years of college would be the minimum that was acceptable to them. When compared with the parents' educational attainment, these percentages reflected a growing interest in or acceptance of higher education within Italian-American families.

Linked closely with education are the career expectations of the students. The data revealed a significant upward shift in occupational prestige within the generations of this study's families. Whereas in the past, Italian-American children tended to assume the same occupational patterns of their parents, this generation of young people appeared to clearly reject working class occupations for themselves.

None of the demographic variables significantly affected the urban students' educational expectations, but socio-economic status did have a significant effect within the suburban group. Why SES was an important factor only within the suburbs is perhaps again a reflection of the urban students' parents' particular interest in education. It would appear that, within the city, parental expectations and aspirations for their children transcend class distinctions. As Kahl (1953) noted, parental pressure to do well in school and to aspire toward a college education, is probably the pre-eminent force behind working class students' decisions to attend college (p. 201).

That socio-economic status did affect suburban students' educational attainment scores is compatible with numerous studies that have demonstrated a high correlation between the two variables. The home environment of the middle class that reinforces the intellectual skills needed to do well in school, the predominantly middle and upper-middle class school setting in which many students expect to attend college, and the middle class perceptions of desirable occupations that by their nature require a college education and force the student, though he/she may not enjoy school, to remain for a long time, have all been cited as factors that make socio-economic status a significant influence upon educational attainment (Jencks, 1972, p. 140).

Another potential influence on educational attainment is the impact of the peer group. In addition to parents, studies have indicated that students' friends exert the most powerful outside influence on post-high school plans (Grant, 1980, p. 69). A review of the graduating classes of both schools obtained from their principals revealed that 60% of the class had chosen to go on to college immediately. Within school environments that contained numerous students thinking of and planning for college, it is reasonable to expect that the Italian-American students in this study's sample would be influenced in some way toward higher education.

The most significant result of the questionnaire's probe of educational attainment was the absence of any significant relationship between ethnic salience scores or scale items and higher education in both the city and the suburbs.



The low suburban ethnic salience scores provide an explanation for this result in that sample, but in the city, it is a different situation. Although atypical of other Italian-American families within the city, nevertheless the group's high ethnic salience score indicated strong tendencies toward Italian-American familistic value orientations which traditionally have conflicted with the individualistic value orientations of the school. Some change, some form of acculturation has occurred within these families that have rendered familistic orientations compatible with the idea of pursuing higher education. The other alternative is that the students who share familistic values and who also desire to go on to college experience difficulties within themselves and within their families as they attempt to resolve the strains created by value orientations that have not disappeared. The questionnaire data is inconclusive on this issue and any attempts to examine it are left for the interviews of students possessing high ethnic salience scores and high achievement grades.

## C H A P T E R V

### INTERVIEW PROCEDURE AND RESULTS

#### Sample

The students interviewed in this study were selected from the population of students whose responses to the questionnaire demonstrated strong Italian-American ethnic attachments and high levels of achievement. Specifically, students with scores of five or above on the ethnic salience scale and with general averages at the fifth or sixth level of achievement were sought out for interviews.

#### Format

The essentially exploratory nature of the study precluded any pre-ordained detailed outline of the interview format. Certain broad objectives, already stated in terms of the research questions posed by the study, guided the process of the development of questions. Consequently, the interview was standardized only in the sense that it included fixed questions which were asked in constant form to everyone. Various supplementary questions were addressed to each informant in an effort to obtain more complete information and a better understanding of particular responses. These questions included requests for clarification or for details about an incident

mentioned by the respondent, and comments uttered to encourage the student to continue speaking.

Many of the questions in the interview schedule were of the open-ended type and subject to supplementary probes. The advantages that such a technique had for the purpose of in-depth analysis over the varieties of "closed question" (yes, no, don't know) or "alternative answer" (multiple choice of prefabricated responses) were as follows: first, the student was encouraged to talk at will, to go off on tangents, and sometimes, with supplementary probes, to reveal more than he/she intended to. Second, by means of the opportunity to follow up on questions, the interviewer was provided with the context in which the student understood and answered the question. Third, the free response question was especially useful since the researcher had limited knowledge as to the kinds of answers that a particular question was likely to elicit.

The ordering of questions was largely arbitrary but was determined partially by the following considerations:

1. Questions that fit together -- for example, regarding the respondent's family -- were placed in sequential order.
2. Questions which, it was believed, few respondents would resent, were placed at the beginning of the interview.
3. Questions likely to evoke anxiety were introduced later in the format.

As with most forms of interviewing, the writer was to a great degree at the mercy of the student's candor, memory, and verbal fluency. With regard to each respondents' veracity, it may be stated

that for the most part, there was made a sincere effort to give accurate accounts of family histories and parent and student opinions and feelings. Rapport appeared to be excellent with all of the students interviewed and no experience of hostility or resentment toward the writer emerged.

The position of the writer as a past and present administrator in the schools also represented a potential obstacle to candor and to the fluency of responses. As best as can be noted, most of the respondents were at ease and were comfortable in expressing themselves. In addition to making statements designed to reduce tension, the writer emphasized his position as a student, avoided comments of condemnation or surprise, attempted to make known in unobtrusive ways the favorableness of his attitudes toward Italian-Americans, listened with interest to digressions, and utilized accounts of his own experiences to set the individual at ease.

### Setting

Most of the interviews were conducted within the school setting but outside the regular school day. This setting not only facilitated the arrangement of interviews; it also brought the student away from his home and his family, thereby frequently freeing him/her from the censorship afforded by nearby family members.

In all, thirty interviews were conducted. Each interview ranged in length from one to two hours depending upon the loquacity of the student. The average time was approximately 70 minutes in length.

With the exception of the first two, all interviews were recorded on tape. In the cases of these two, extensive notes were taken during the sessions and, by filling in notes immediately after each session while it was still fresh, there was obtained what are believed to be satisfactory accounts.

After the writer identified himself as a student at the University, he informed the students that they would be asked some questions, nothing too personal, about their family, background, and their plans and hopes for the future in order to know a little more about the effect of their home and school environments upon their achievement in school.

#### Interview Data

In Appendix F on pages 195 to 286 of this dissertation, composites of the interviews are presented. Derived from transcripts of the taped conversations with each of the urban and suburban students in this study, they contain numerous insights and descriptions of experiences that this study has only partially examined. The reader is encouraged to turn to these composites in order to obtain not only a more intimate view of each student, but also additional interpretations of the data that may go beyond the scope of this inquiry or that may indeed differ from those of the writer.

The issues that are examined in this study were generated from the view that the questionnaire data analyzed in Chapter IV had left unanswered the issue of how students who obtained high ethnic salience

scores reconciled their Italian familistic value orientations with their intentions to go on to college after high school. The questionnaire was also seen as inadequate in its capacity to examine more closely the dynamics taking place within students' families that permitted, interfered with or encouraged students' educational and career expectations.

Through their probing of high achieving and high ethnic students' descriptions and feelings regarding their family lives and experiences, the interviews in this study attempted to provide additional insight into these unanswered and unaddressed issues. Each interview attempted to elicit from the students their relationships to certain values attendant to social mobility in American society. Specifically, they probed four interrelated themes:

- I. The students' experiences and views of their families in relation to the family-oriented characteristics of the Italian-American ethnic group.
- II. The students' own views and their perceptions of their parents' views regarding the meaning of higher education.
- III. The students' opportunities for independent activities.
- IV. The students' views toward geographic mobility in the pursuit of a college education or a career opportunity.

What follows is a presentation of the data pertaining to each theme. The analysis of the interview data will be found in Chapter VI.

## I. Family Lives

In this section, the interview data bearing upon the nature of the students' relationships with their nuclear and extended families is presented. Part A offers a brief description of the living arrangements of the students' families. Part B describes their perceptions of their individual family lives.

### A. Physical Distance

A large number of students (18), especially those living within the city (14), indicated that they lived within one or two miles of their grandparents or nearest relatives. Some (8) of the urban students lived with their grandparents in two or three family houses. Of the families whose relatives lived at a distance (10), three had all of their relatives in Italy, and seven had left grandparents and relatives in a move out of urban ethnic neighborhoods into the "country."

### B. Perceptions of Family Life

Most students reported that they experienced close-knit nuclear and/or extended family lives. For some, family activities constituted a major portion of their lives outside of school. The following description of Deborah B., a third generation urban student, was typical of these students' accounts:

We get together ever chance we have — the whole entire family. Both sides together. On the holidays it's a mass of people at my house. On everybody's birthday, both sides come. Sometimes, even on a Saturday night, if nobody is doing anything, we just all get together. I eat by my grandparents' house three nights a week — Sunday, Tuesday and

Friday. Still we go down, my aunt and her family come downstairs, and we all eat together. Because they live in Pittsdon and we're a couple of miles away and we don't see them during the week.

For other students, experiences with the extended family were limited to two or three times a month. Birthdays, holidays, and specific celebrations served as the occasions for family gatherings. Suburban students who lived apart from their grandparents and relatives tended to regard the coming together of family as a "reunion." Urban students who lived within close distance of grandparents and relatives and who communicated with them almost daily took a more matter-of-fact attitude toward such get-togethers. Bob G., a third generation suburban student, offered his observation:

We get together pretty often. Every holiday we go down there (to grandparents' house). She's a fantastic cook — ahh, the best foods you ever tasted in your life so no one ever misses a reunion. No excuses because no one wants to miss it. And we go down to visit them at other times and my father sees his father every day at work. We'll see them at least twice a month.

A minority of students reported that the extended family ties had diminished within recent years. Although they felt that their nuclear family relationships remained close, specific events, notably a move to the suburbs or the death of a grandparent, had weakened the family network. In speaking of her grandmother who died recently, Kathy I., a third generation suburban student, commented:

The big family get-togethers are not as much because she's not around. That was always the big thing — going to Grandma's, but now it's hard because you can't say you are going to your aunt's because they're busy with their own families — you have to check, you have to do this. My grandmother was different. You could go down there whenever you wanted and surprise her. She was always there and she loved it. . .



Everybody has their own little family now and they have things to do. They're going on trips, they're going here, they're going there. Everybody's working so it's hard. It has to be some kind of big vacation like Christmas was. They always get together on Christmas.

But I think you can still have a family life within the family if you make it that way. And everybody has friends -- I guess it can be that way.

One suburban student, Angela B., reported that the combination of her grandfather's death, her grandmother's move to South Jersey, and her father's business that requires him to be on the road all of the time, had severely weakened both her extended and nuclear family ties. This year, for the first time in her life, she and her family celebrated Christmas at home:

I see people in my family growing more and more apart. My aunt, when she lived with us, I saw her all of the time. I mean, she was like my sister -- she's exactly ten years older than I, so I always went out places with her. She always took me places. And then when she first moved away, I saw her a lot. Now, I don't see her very often. Now, I'm not even sure where she lives. Because it was like having an older sister, that bothers me a lot. . .

When you own your own business, it's all work and never relaxation. It's hard. I'm never home when my father is home. Like I get home at 12:30 [from school] and leave for work at 4:00. I'm home when nobody else is and they say to me, "you're never home. We never see you. We never talk." It's running in and out the door.

Although parental and family attitudes toward child-rearing and education produced disagreements between the parents and their children, the students viewed their close-knit families as satisfying and supportive. In addition to enjoying the company of family members, some students stated that they also experienced a sense

of security which helped them outside the family. Kathy I. described the positive effect of her family life upon her school work:

A close family life is good. Everybody wants to know what you are doing. Everybody wants to talk to you about what you are planning. Everybody says, "That's good." It's encouragement to have people there and to know -- I mean, if your family is always fighting, how is that going to make you feel. You're going to go to school but you're not going to want to go to school and not care about anything because that's all you think about -- that fight or whatever. But if you have a very helpful family life, I think it does a lot for your life. It makes you, un -- I don't know, like life.

Some students observed certain differences between their views of family life and those of people around them. Michele F., a second generation urban student, compared her feelings with those of her sister-in-law:

I see my sister-in-law. She doesn't really care that much about the family, about these little get-togethers. She doesn't mind it if she could just stay with my brother and that's it. But me -- when we are together, I feel happy. I like that. That's one thing with my parents I agree -- and my grandparents. They're all together. That's the reason I went to Italy -- to just be with my family.

Frank C., a third generation suburban student, considered himself as more fortunate than other non-Italian students with whom he went to school.

When I look at a lot of my friends with parents getting divorced and things like that -- as I look at some of my friends, I say to myself that I feel sorry for them that they don't have the things that some people have, and that their parents haven't really made the decision to do certain things with them.

One student, Angela B., who earlier expressed her unhappiness with the fact that she is never home when her father is there because of his business, described her sense of distance from her family. She noted that she found more comfort and relaxation in her boyfriend's home where everyone in his family was regularly home.

## II. The Meaning and Importance of Higher Education

This section reports the students' and parents' views toward higher education. Part A will describe parental perspectives on the idea of their sons/daughters attending college. Part B presents both the students' and the parents' explanations of the purpose(s) of a college education.

### A. Parental Viewpoints

Almost all of the students interviewed (27) indicated their intentions to attend a college after high school. For many of their families, they represented the first generation interested or able to obtain higher education.

Most of the students stated that their parents were generally pleased with their performances in school and encouraged their college aspirations. However, many of this same group commented that their parents would not object if they, the students, decided not to attend college after high school. Maria P., a third generation urban student, gave an example of these parents' views:

My parents wouldn't be totally disappointed if I didn't go to college, but they'll back me up in whatever I choose. If I said I didn't want to go,

they'd probably ask me to give good reasons and to say what I was going to do -- what kind of job I was going to get. But they would probably accept it if I was sure of it.

In some families, the son's education appeared to take precedence over the daughter's. Whereas great sacrifices were made to finance their brother's college education, a few young women reported that their parents would not object to a decision to end their formal education with the high school diploma.

Only one student spoke of a parent's aversion to higher education. In speaking of her parents' differing viewpoints regarding her brother's decision to go to work after high school, Michele F. described her father's attitude.

In the morning when my brother Sal is there and he gets into the truck to go to work and my brother Paul goes to college, my mother says, "Why does that have to be?" Why does he have to suffer and work like crazy and my brother Paul, all dressed up, goes to school? She's angry that Sal is going to work. Why didn't he go to school first? And there is not my father backing her up saying, "All right. You're right." My father has a different hand and says, "Oh, no. It's good the way he is doing it. He should come to work and get better money. . . ."

Frequently, the strongest parental statements supporting higher education were reported by the sons and daughters of working class people who did not experience many years of education themselves. They tended to encourage their children to do well and to go to college in order to achieve a better life than they, the parents, had obtained. Mark E., the son of a suburban carpenter provided an example:

They think it's a necessity, which I feel it is, for jobs. It's tough enough now to get a job with a degree. Without a degree it's almost impossible to get a good job. They haven't had the education and so they want us to have the education.

Adrienne G., the daughter of an urban factory worker, offered a similar observation:

At one point I said I just didn't want to go to college. But my father said, "You should go." He always wanted me to be better off so he says, "We never got the chance. You've got the chance. I want you to become something." He has in mind me becoming a nurse or a teacher and my brother a doctor. He figures he's worked really hard -- he's gone through so much. He wants it to be easier for us. He figures -- he had seven brothers and not all could go to high school and college. But he figures now we have the chance and he wants us to become something. He doesn't want us to have to struggle like he had to.

In one case the eyes of the entire family of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, fell upon the student and his college plans. Jimmy D., an urban student, described the advice offered by his extended family:

They'd tell you that they didn't have an education and look where they wound up -- working for a living. For them, education more or less gets you out of the rat race. My father always says: "If you have an education, you can always go somewhere."

If I said tonight, "I don't want to go to college," they'd be very upset -- very upset. They'd say, "You're just going to waste yourself -- become like me." Everybody says that in my family -- my uncles, my grandparents. "You don't want to become like your uncle who works in the dyehouse" or whatever -- things like that. He'd show me his hands -- all cut up from working and he'd say, "Don't be like me." I look at his hands and they're all cut up with oil and stuff like that.

Any type of education will satisfy them. They just feel that any type of education would be good for you. You'll always get somewhere with that education. They mean getting out of the working class. They mean, "Don't be a blue collar worker," or something like that.

A final view of higher education reported by the students was the assumption of some parents that their sons/daughters would of course go on to college. Where this assumption existed, the students' parents or siblings had already experienced college educations, so that the student was merely moving along a college-directed path that was already well-traveled. Cindy D., a third generation suburban student illustrated this situation.

I have six cousins my age and they're all graduating this year or next, so we're all in the same set age where we're just entering college and planning our future. We'll sit there and say, "Oh, yeah, we've got a lawyer, a doctor, a business woman, an engineer." Everyone in my family is well-educated. My brother is an engineer and I have cousins at MIT. Seven or eight Villanova alumni are in my family. That's where I am going. It has a good reputation and everyone loved it.

#### B. The Purpose of Higher Education

Through most of the interviews, the economic motive appeared to dominate student interpretations of the importance of a college education. Although some students mentioned intellectual growth, jobs, income and security tended to emerge as the primary sources motivating young people to attend college. Frank C.'s comments are an example:

The two reasons for going to college are to economically survive in the world and enjoy life, and [to acquire] the knowledge to do something with one's own life and not always just be bored.

Education is the most important thing in the family at this point. There's always a common philosophy that my father brings up and that is a quote from Martin Luther King: "To earn, baby, learn," and that's the type of thing he's pumped into my mind.

For many of these students, to remove the economic incentive significantly diminished the importance of attendance at a college. The response of Joanna R., the daughter of a second generation urban sewing machine operator to a question that asked what her parents' responses would be to a decision to not attend college was shared by a number of students.

Well, I'll tell you. If I were to get a good job with a good company -- if I can get into the telephone company or anything like that, I think that they wouldn't mind because, let's face it, if you go to college and go in for business, you want to get into that company anyway. So maybe in the four years there [at college] I could work my way up to the point where I would have entered with a college degree.

For most of the students, then, a college education represented a "ticket" to higher wages and better jobs. Even the sons and daughters of parents with college experience tended to regard higher education as career training. Bob G. in speaking of the necessity of taking courses in his chosen field, provided an example:

Well, now you need it, really, if you're going to be what I want to be. If I was going to be, maybe, a mechanic, I might not need it. It's so you can learn more and understand. If you don't, you'll be way behind everyone else. There are so many people who went to college and you'd never be able to get a job like them without a college diploma. Not just that. You wouldn't know, you wouldn't understand. It's like my walking into a calculus class -- you don't know what they're talking about. Your life would be like that. You wouldn't understand. You'd feel stupid.

Angela B. provided the only rationale for a college education that addressed directly the idea of personal enrichment and human growth.

It's not the salary aspect. I think they want me to be able to be independent and to take care of myself. It's maybe that it makes you a better individual. Because even if you don't get a better-paying job, you might be better at whatever you're doing. You're better able to take care of yourself.

### III. Opportunities for Independence

This section will present the interview data that bear upon the students' opportunities for independence and autonomous behavior. Part A will report the students' perceptions of their relationships with their parents. Parts B and C will describe the students' views of their interaction with their parents on two issues: (1) social activities and (2) going away to college. Part D will summarize the students' feelings regarding their opportunities for independence.

#### A. Parent-Child Relationships

In response to interview questions that probed the nature of their relationships with parents, most of the students tended to agree that their parents were interested in what they were doing and thinking. Only two students noted that they did not communicate very often with their parents. Both of these students lived in the suburbs and had experienced a great amount of family movement -- one shuttling back and forth to Italy, and the other, moving around the country.

Students described parental interest in terms that might be classified as either dominant or democratic. Some sets of parents tended to maintain a powerful influence upon students' daily lives and decisions. In contrast, other groups of parents encouraged a



dialogue with the students and permitted them independent decision-making opportunities in specific areas of concern. In terms of the interview sample, more students reported their parents as dominant than as democratic.

Students from parent-dominated families tended to regard their parents as infallible sources of authority. When asked to characterize his parents, Jimmy D. half seriously presented them as larger-than-human.

Demi-gods [laughs]. They're god-like. I look to them as more or less -- as gods, really. I try to look at them as the know-it-alls. That's the way I think they should be. I think that respect for your parents is above almost anything else. The family comes first.

Lisa C., a second generation daughter of an urban factory worker, echoed Jimmy in her view of the role played in her life by her parents.

I wouldn't argue with them because I know that they might hold things that seem wrong to me, but most of the time I know that my parents wouldn't guide me in the wrong direction. That's what they're there for -- to put me on the right road to where I'm going. They wouldn't steer me wrong.

A minority of students who experienced a democratic relationship with their parents described a form of partnership and dialogue which was characterized by parental interest and involvement in their affairs, but did not carry authoritarian overtones. Deborah B., whose family activities were a major portion of her life, commented upon her parents:

The main thing about them that I love is that they are on my level. Like my father -- he's not old-fashioned. He sees things as I see them. If he doesn't, he tries, or if I don't see something the way he sees something, he'll explain before he goes

into a rage. Like if I want to go somewhere, and he's really not too thrilled about the idea, he will say, "Why? Tell me, why?" and I will explain to him, and then he will say, "Well, don't you think it's this type of thing?" and I'll tell him and we'll reason it out. He doesn't always agree with me. Sometimes I agree and give in. It's more like a partnership thing on a friendly basis.

My mother is the same way. She's like a friend to me -- a best friend. We share things and I tell her things and she tells me things.

Anthony S., the son of a baker whose hours prevented him from sharing much time with his children, offered a similar view of his mother as he described his projection of what might take place if he chose not to continue in high school:

My mother would probably sit down with me and talk to me and ask me why, but if I really wanted to go through with it and I had no doubt in my mind, she would let me go through with it because she feels that what's right for me is right for me. She would disagree but since it is my opinion. . . . I respect her and she respects me.

#### B. Issues: Social Life

The issue of "going out" emerged from the interviews as a significant area of interaction between the students and their parents. Of all the respondents, a very small number expressed a feeling of relative autonomy in planning and following through on social activities outside the home. These students reported that their parents seldom challenged their activities largely because they had acted responsibly in the past. Mark E.'s observations exemplified these students' reports.

My parents don't push us in any direction. They let us decide on our own. They aren't really

strict. They're firm, but not real strict. Like I can come at 2:30 and they'll ask what hour I came in, but they won't jump at me at the door. I think that with my brother, sister, and me, we've shown responsibility and they know we'll not get into trouble.

On the other hand, for most of the students interviewed in this study, parental desires and directives determined their social activities, their friends and their nightly curfews. These students indicated that, unlike other students whom they knew, their social lives seemed more tightly monitored. Jimmy D., who described his parents as "demi-gods," provided an example of these feelings:

They more or less let me do anything, but there's always the "But. . .," or the "If. . .," or "Don't . . . ." That's what keeps it toward the authoritative. I was going to a party and I told them I was going to be late, and they said "How late?" and I said, "I don't know! About 12:30. That late!" They gave me a dirty look, so I came home early and that made them happy (laughs). I think we're a closer family than most families because of that. We always know each other's moves and moods. That's what I find about our family.

Another account, offered by Claire S., a second generation suburban student, exemplified a very strict limit that was placed upon a few students' activities outside the home:

One night I told him that I was going to my girl-friend's house. He said, "Okay. Fine, but I want you home around nine o'clock." And I said, "But, Dad, it's too early." I just wanted to be like everyone else and be out 'til 11:30 or 12:00. And I said, "I'll be there." Now, I'm not the kind of person who would lie to my parents. And I said, "I'll be there. Here's the number where I'll be. If you want anything, call me." So then about 8:30 or 8:45, my friend and I decided that we'd go for a little walk. So before you know it, it was about 9:30 and we still were not back to the house. And I said, "Oh, my god! It's 9:30!" and so we ran over to the house and I asked my

friend's mother if my father had called and she said "Yes," and I started crying because I knew the trouble I was going to get.

So around 11 o'clock, I went home and my father was standing there and before I knew it, he started yelling and he hit me -- he hit me with a strap. He didn't hit me hard, but he hit me hard enough to hurt, and I started crying. He said, "Where were you! You told me you'd be there! You lied to me!" And he was yelling and I was crying. The next day I woke up and I was grounded for the next two weeks. Ever since that day, I will never do that again. To this day, I tell him exactly where I'm going to be. If I'm going some place different, I call. I've learned my lesson. That was it. That was the worst experience of my life.

One explanation which some of the students most often offered for their parents' rigid controls over their activities was parental concern for their well-being. They agreed that fears for the safety of their children motivated their parents to assume active roles in discouraging or encouraging certain courses of action. Claire, after describing her traumatic experience, gave this explanation for her father's behavior:

It's very difficult for me to go out because my father sees how the environment is today, and he sees what the kids are doing. He feels that we may get the urge to do what they're doing. We've explained to him that, "Don't worry; we can handle ourselves." But sometimes he just doesn't want to believe us. He is still afraid and he's just holding on to us like tight ropes.

Kathy I. offered another explanation of her father's enforcement of rigid regulations on curfew and social activities:

With my father, I think he wants me to have a social life, but I think he's afraid to let me go too far. Maybe he wants me to work more because I'm at a place and I'm working -- not out doing something. Because I have a boyfriend so I go out with him a lot. I think he's more afraid of just losing me.

Protective impulses of parents toward their children were reported as especially strong with the daughters in the family. Even those parents who were characterized as democratic in other decision areas were noted as taking a more forceful stance with their daughters on the issue of going out.

Some of the young women indicated that their parents appeared to draw distinctions between acceptable behavior for boys and girls. Maria P., whose mother is an elementary school teacher, gave an explanation of her parents' restrictions on her social life that was similar to that of many of the young women in the study:

. . . We're Italian, I'm the only girl, and I'm the youngest. My brothers had more freedom where choice is concerned. They're boys. There's a lot of concern because I'm a girl -- that has a lot to do with it. It's never late -- around 10:30 or 11:00. Even when my brothers were my age, they had more freedom, like in staying out late. Maybe not so much as with decisions -- they sort of got on their backs too. But there was more freedom to go where they pleased.

Joanna R. also spoke of the double standard she felt at home and gave an example of her experiences:

The boys can move. My brother has freedom to a certain extent. It's like this -- he's the boy. I can never sleep over at anyone's house. But my brother sleeps over at his friend's house. He goes away for the weekends, whatever. I don't know what he does. But he's a boy; he can do that. You're a girl; you can't. Even when I turned eighteen. . . I have told her a number of times, "Mom, I'm eighteen. I can go out. That's it. I'm not going to come in at. . ." "No, no, no. As long as you are living in my house, no way." That's how she is.

To summarize, on the issue of "going out" a few students stated that their parents provided them with significant degrees of freedom to determine "where to go," "what to do," "who to do it with" and "when to come home." These parents were characterized as "democratic" or in a very few situations, as "uninvolved." However, the majority of parents, including many of those termed "democratic" in other areas of decision-making, were reported as directly involved in their children's social activities. Daughters found themselves particularly restricted.

### C. The College Decision

In Section II, it was noted that twenty-seven of the twenty-eight high-achieving students voiced a desire to attend a college. Together with decisions regarding social life, the decision as to which college they would chose required considerable interaction between themselves and their parents.

A sizeable minority of students indicated that they intended to go away to college. Many of these students lived in Rockford. For a few, the college decision was based upon where the best program existed. Angela B. reported that the University of Rochester's psychology program was rated twenty-sixth in the country. Mark E. stated that his choice, the University of Illinois, was rated just behind MIT in aeronautical engineering.

A more frequently stated reason for going away to college was the prospect that it offered of seeing different places, different

people, and of being on one's own. The comments of Cindy D., a third generation suburban student, are an example:

I can't wait! I can't wait to see different faces, different views. I can't wait to go away. I guess Rockford is such a small town that you want to break away. . . I'm just looking forward to not being so dependent upon anyone -- walk my way and get what I want by myself.

The final explanation offered by a few students who had decided to go away to college was their desires to be free of the distractions at home. Maria P. spoke of how living away, she could put more time to her studies and exercise greater responsibility:

I think it would be better for me to live away from home because, first of all, I think I'd be able to concentrate better on the work and I think I need the responsibility of living away. I feel that everything has been handed down to me so much. I feel I have to take on something myself even if it's going to be real hard. I'd feel I'd get more out of it than staying at home.

My brother, Steve, is at home and he doesn't have that hard a time, but I'd get distracted easily -- the things to do around the house constantly, the little things like that. Not that it's not good. It's like. . . I just don't have enough responsibilities for myself. I'm relying so much on everything there.

For all but a few students, the parents of the students who wished to live out of town on a college campus supported or condoned their sons'/daughters' decisions. The parents who supported the choices all came from Rockford, while the parents who reconciled themselves to the choices were split -- one from Pittsdon and one from Rockford. Where older siblings had already "made the break," or where the students' parents themselves had attended at least some

years of college, the students reported both active parental support and few personal reservations regarding a move on to a college campus.

Gina T., a third generation suburban student whose father and older sister had attended college, reported that her parents had actively encouraged her to go away to school. Her observations exemplified those of the other students:

My parents feel that we should go away to school. They thought I should see what it was like. And I wanted to because if I stayed home and went to school here, it'd be like going to high school, and I wouldn't get half as much done as I would by myself. I'd end up getting a job and put that before work. . .I take it for granted that they want me to go. I know they do. Why? To get the most of it and to be on your own.

The parents who reconciled themselves to their children's choices of colleges away from home were reported as leaving the decision to the students. One student stated that her parents would let her go because they wanted the best for her. Another student, Bob G., indicated that his father didn't push him one way or the other.

Three additional students who stated their intentions to go away to college did not get full parental approval. These students indicated that the distance from the college to their homes was the fundamental problem. Maria P. reported that her parents, although they might feel it'd be good for her, were not very supportive of the idea. Frank C. noted that his father preferred that he, Frank, go to the same local engineering school as the father had attended but also added:

Yet he does see that he's kept me very tight. He wants me to see what the world is really like. If I get accepted I think he will let me go. I think



he will have realized that he's trying to ask a little bit too much of me. It's not that I'm having trouble at home but it's just the sense of being free. I guess I want to find out what the world is really like and I think it would be about time that I did because this way I wouldn't have to get out of college and possibly be blasted with responsibility.

The other student, Jimmy D., found no objective from his father, but had encountered mild resistance from his mother.

I'm going to go away to college -- either Boston College or Rutgers. . . I just said, "Dad and Mom, I want to go away from home." My father said, "Yeah, that's all right with me." My mother said, "What are you going to do away from home?" But she agreed.

What did she mean by that?

"What are you going to do without me? Who's going to wash your clothes?" And stuff like that. "How are you going to eat?"

The majority of students interviewed expressed their intentions to remain living at home and to commute to college. Some stated that their decisions were not necessarily based upon their own preferences, but upon their desires to conform to parental wishes or directives. They reported that their parents had taken firm positions opposing attendance at colleges away from home. Joanna R.'s description of her parents' point of view was echoed by a few of these students:

My parents don't want me to go away. I mentioned it to them because I did want to go away. I wanted to go to Glassboro State and she didn't like it. She said, "No. Don't go. No, don't leave." I said "Just to see how it is, to be out on my own -- to be away -- because one day -- let's face it, I'm not going to be here forever." I tell her all of the time. I say, "I'm not a little kid anymore. All right, I'm not grown up yet but I'm on my way. You have to let go. I'm not going to be your baby forever." She says, "Well, I don't care. I don't

care how old you are. You're still my daughter!"  
 . . .the whole thing (laughs).

Then I thought about it. And I thought, "Well, yeah, it would be good, it would be a good experience. But then it would leave me with all these things if I went away: "Oh, what is she (mother) doing?" I couldn't do it. Maybe I will with four years of college -- maybe I could transfer if I really wanted to. But I don't think it's that major.

Paula B., a third generation urban student, provided another parental viewpoint in explaining how her parents' position was a continuation of family values and attitudes:

My parents won't let me (go away to college). If we move out of the house we don't come back. Their parents always had them in their houses until they grew up and got married and that's what they believe in.

One final parental perspective that affected the students' decisions to attend college while living at home was the attitude that many parents possessed toward their daughters. As with independence training, the opportunities for young women were more restricted than for young men in these Italian-American homes. Lisa C. stated:

My parents don't like the idea of a girl going away to school -- no matter what. And I really wouldn't want to. It sounds nice but I wouldn't want to because I like to have my family around me and not just talk to them once in a while."

Jimmy D., although he himself intended to go away to school, stated his opposition to his sister's doing the same thing.

I don't think they'd let my sister go away. They're very -- I guess its the European influence. The daughter -- she just doesn't do things like that. She just stays home. They want her to go to school -- keep her in education -- but I don't think they would let her go away. I wouldn't allow it. . .It's just -- maybe I'm a

chauvinist or maybe I've been caught in the influence too, but I just don't feel. . . the girl, if she wants to continue her education, should continue it around here. That's the way I think. There's a little fear in her going away and there's also, you know, she's -- just to point out something crude -- she washes the dishes, you know? The woman's supposed to stay near the house and things like that. That's what they expect of her.

Another group of students stated that, unlike the first group who agreed to comply with their parents' directives, they shared their parents' views on the issue. The primary point of agreement was a desire to keep the family together.

Michele F.'s statement typified many students' feelings:

Guidance says it's better to move away. They say you grow up; you experience more things. But I couldn't. I just couldn't see myself going -- maybe because I have so much at home. I don't think I'd want to leave it. I just tell them, "I don't want to." Maybe they think I'm like a baby or something. "Oh, you want to stay with your mother all your life." It's not that. It's just that I wouldn't want to leave what I had at home. It would be hard for me.

Deborah B. tended to echo the same theme in describing how the traumatic experience of her father, a president of a successful small company, had influenced her decision to remain at home.

My father went to Georgetown, Notre Dame, and ended up at Fairleigh Dickinson University. He made the switches because he just missed home. He didn't like it away. He said that every Sunday night, when he had come home, he would get a stomach ache or find an excuse not to go. He missed everyone so he decided to finish back here.

Well, I don't think I'd ever go away myself because I'd miss -- just like him, I'd miss it all here. I think he did the right thing. If he wasn't going to be happy there he was right coming back here and getting the good education that he got.

My grandmother mainly did everything for him at that time. He didn't even have to pick up anything. He wasn't independent. He was dependent on her for everything. So when he found what it was really like out there on his own, he said, "Hey! I don't think I can take it. I miss my mother and father too much." So he decided to come back.

He can handle himself really. But I guess it was because their family was so close and I guess during the holidays it was so far away from everybody that he needed to be with his family.

Finally, Lisa C.'s account of her mother's difficult time in adjusting to Lisa's brother's going away to school was a third statement of parental concern over college away from home.

My brother had applied to go to Rutgers but was on the waiting list. But Marquette had accepted him. And so, if not Rutgers, Marquette was the closest. My mother didn't want him to go. Not that she wanted to deny him the education, but she didn't want him far away. She had never had him farther than here and we had never been separated, and it was like, "I don't want you to go, but if that's what you want. . ." And so she just sent him and it was like forever. He was going to be back for Thanksgiving and she was going crazy. She felt like it was forever that he was gone. She was always worried about him. If he called about ten minutes later than he was supposed to -- because he would give us the day and the time -- if he called five minutes later, she would be on the edge of her seat. She would be, "Go call him. Pick up the phone!" She wouldn't know what to do. She would drive herself and everyone else crazy. And up until this day -- it's been four years -- she does the same thing.

A final group of students reported that their parents had maintained an open mind about their choices of colleges, but that they, the students, had decided to remain at home. A desire to remain close because they liked being with their families was characteristic of

both male and female students. A few students also stated their preferences to remain in familiar surroundings. For example, Paul V., a third generation suburban student, commented:

There's something to do. I figure you have a place to live, stuff to eat, all your friends are up here. Why bother starting over? I will stay around here. There's a lot going on -- we're close to the City (New York); close to a lot of stuff.

In summary, the interviews suggested that a majority of students planned on commuting to college after high school. This decision was in some cases the result of parental directives to which the students complied; in other cases the result of parent/student agreement; and in still others the result of the students' decisions which they had been allowed by their parents to make on their own. For this entire group, the effort to maintain family contact tended to influence the decision. Of the sizeable minority of students who chose to go away to college many were from the suburbs. The data also suggested that for almost all of the students, their parents approved the decision. The reasons stated by most of these students for going away to college tended to cluster around the desire for independence and for broadening experiences. A few students also expressed a desire to attend the schools that were most highly rated in their field of interest.

#### D. Student Responses to Independence Opportunities

The interview data indicated that the parents of the high-achieving students interviewed in this study exercised varying levels of control over the students' decision-making opportunities. This

section examines the students' reactions to their parents' child-rearing practices and to the opportunities they had for autonomous decision-making.

The minority of students who experienced a democratic relationship with their parents stated their satisfaction and pleasure with the independence they possessed. Bob G., in speaking of other ethnic groups within his school, notably Jewish students, exemplified this contentment with his comparison:

My background with my family has encouraged me to do well. My brothers and I have been allowed the independence to choose our direction. . . the Jewish kids, I think, at an earlier age were brought up faster. Like more maturely. Not more independence -- I'd say I'm more independent but they were at an earlier age. They were taught things before I was about everything in life, but now, I'd say I'd be a little more independent than they -- they're shakier. By "independent" [I mean] you can be responsible for yourself and you don't always need your mother and father around. You can do things on your own and you can live by yourself.

For the majority of students who reported dominant relationships with their parents and strict parental monitoring of their decisions and activities, a variety of responses was heard. Some students indicated their feelings of constriction as personal plans or desires gave way to family needs. Adrienne G. offered an example:

Sometimes I want to do something and they'll say, "Will you babysit for me?" and I'll say, "No." I like babysitting but it's just that I wanted to do something else for myself. My relatives will say, "If you don't want to, it's okay." And then if she -- one of my aunts -- wants to go to work and I say that I can't babysit, then she'll say, "All right; then I won't go. I'll stay home." Then I feel guilty -- not guilty -- but if she really wants to do something, I can always do it another time. There will be some

days when she says, "Are you doing anything today?" and I'll say, "Yes," and she'll say, "Oh, all right." -- she will ask me first. [But] sometimes she thinks I'm not doing anything and she says, "Can you babysit?" and I say "(sigh) O.K." She says, "I'll try to be home early." And then at night -- if I've been babysitting in the day, they will try to do something for me. They'll bring me out to dinner.

A few students spoke of the conflict they experienced between their desires to be on their own and their sense of obedience to parent wishes. Lisa C. provided an example of this conflict as she reflected upon the idea of going away to college.

. . . It sounds nice, but I wouldn't want to, because I -- it's like I like to have my family around me -- not just to talk to them once in a while. [It's nice because] I can be more responsible for myself instead of depending upon my parents for everything. I can depend upon myself more. And I like to be independent. If I can sit down and do things myself, I'd prefer it. They [parents] feel I should have them for like my moral support behind me or if I need a helping hand that I shouldn't have to go crazy on my own -- that I should go to them. But if I can think things out for myself -- it's not that I want to keep things away from my parents, but if I can do things for myself, it makes me feel good -- that I can work things out on my own and not have to say, "I really need help!"

Yet, although the students indicated that parental controls, the pre-eminence of the family, and the absence of personal independence created conflicts at home, they tended to voice not rebellion or rejection, but rather support of their parents' child-rearing methods. Cindy D.'s reactions were an example:

I find things still to be very, very tight. I used to think that, "Oh, when I am 18!" and they would say, "As long as you're living under this roof, it doesn't matter how old you are. You follow by the rules." Once in a while, when you get in an argument with your parents they say, "When you have children, you'll know what it's like." But then I think back and everything that they did was for my own good.

Some students reflected upon the differences between their families and non-Italian families of students in their schools and expressed a feeling of being in a more fortunate position than other families. Lisa C., who had described the conflict between her desires to be independent and her parents' inclinations to over-protect, spoke of the differences she saw between her life and the lives of Black students with whom she went to school:

. . .Most American families have more freedom. The Americans -- the colored families -- have more freedom to do as they please. There are a few that I know whose parents are stricter, but there are others who can do whatever they please. I'm not saying that's wrong, but I don't think it's absolutely right that someone my age is free to come and go whenever they please from their house. That's like saying, "You're on your own." There's a certain limit to what a teenager my age should be allowed to do. . .

Michele F.'s statement represented another example of some students' perspectives on their parents' close supervision. In comparing herself to other students, she viewed her parents as more caring:

The friends that I hang with have all been brought up like me. Their parents are Italian and they've gone through what I have. But as I look at the kids here in school, they're more American and there are a lot of differences that I see. Like the parents still say, "I don't care. Do what you want." There's this one girl whose mother said, "Do what you want," and now she's living with her boyfriend. I'm lucky where I am right now in my own home because I see kids whose parents don't care. . . There are some times when I disagree with them, but I'm lucky.

Finally, a few students like Claire S. who had reported very strict parental monitoring of their social activities expressed neither support for nor rebellion against their parents' practices,



but a resignation to their situations. Claire's reflections exemplified this reaction:

It has been difficult. Like my father is very strict. He has learned to carry out whatever his father did to him. He is going to do to me and to the kids what his father did, and we have learned to cope with the kind of person my father is. . .

I've experienced that my father cannot give me independence. I want him to trust me. He is checking up on me and I don't like that. But that is never going to change. He is always going to be that way. He still doubts me -- "Are you sure?" I say, "Trust me, Dad. Please, trust me."

In summary, the students in the interview sample gave support to their parents' childrearing practices. The minority of students, who reported themselves as having a measure of autonomy, reflected no discontent with their parents' methods. The majority of students, who indicated that parental attitudes and desires or family concerns often imposed limits upon their opportunities for independence, nevertheless also expressed satisfaction. Although conflicts frequently occurred, they evaluated their family lives against those of their classmates and tended to believe that they were in a more fortunate position. Finally, the students who experienced very strict limits on their activities, voiced not rebellion, but a resignation to their parents' views.

#### IV. Mobility Aspirations

This section reports the students' views toward the idea of leaving home and family in pursuit of a career. Part A briefly examines

the career aspirations of the students who were interviewed. Part B describes the views held by parents and students regarding the issue of women and careers. Part C will present the students' responses to the question of their willingness to become mobile in order to obtain or hold a particular job.

#### A. Career Aspirations

The high-achieving students interviewed in this study voiced a variety of career interests. The occupations and the number of students who mentioned them are listed as follows:

Doctor	1
Pharmacist	1
Science/Engineering	4
Psychologist	3
Nurse	1
Teacher	2
Accountant	3
Business Administration	4
Computer Programmer	1
Fashion Designer	1
Secretary	5
Don't Know	2

In expressing their career interests, most of the students stated that they were pursuing careers unlike those of their parents. The exceptions were two students whose parents were engineers, one student whose parent was an accountant, and one student whose mother was a secretary.

## B. Women and Careers

In Section III, it was noted that some of the female students observed differences between what the boys in the families were permitted to do and what freedoms they were afforded. Frequently, they noted that many more limitations were placed upon their social activities or their ability to go away to college than on their brothers.

With regard to their pursuit of careers, some young women reported that their parents maintained levels of expectations for them that were lower than those of their brothers. They observed that their parents tended to regard them as future homemakers, not as career women. Michele F.'s statements regarding her parents' views of her future in contrast to her brother's, and their negative attitudes toward their son's wife, provided examples of this perspective.

As long as I'm happy and as long as I go to a school, they don't really say, "You have to do this." For my brothers, it was different. My mother wanted so much out of my brothers: "Be a doctor. Be a lawyer. Do this. Do that." And I guess that's why it hurt my mother especially since my brother left school and got married. She was really upset because she wanted so much out of her sons. But I guess it's all the time like this -- with the girls it's like they're more, "Get married, have kids, and just stay home." But I want my career first.

and:

My sister-in-law, Stephanie -- she goes to jazz class. She does all these different things and my brother comes over and my mother is like "Where's Stephanie? Why did she go?" They didn't have that. They were like the wife had to stay with her husband and that's it. The wife cannot go out alone. And now they're just going to have to put up with it. They're going to have to change because that's the

way it's going to be because Stephanie is going to jazz class. She's not doing anything wrong -- that's the way I see it -- but they see it like she's doing something against my brother -- that it's wrong to not be at home and to have another interest and to go out while he's home. "Why does she have to leave him alone?"

A contrasting view toward women and careers was presented by a few young women who stated that their parents actively supported their pursuit of higher education and of successful careers. These students tended to be the daughter of parents who had achieved successful careers in industry. Deborah B., the daughter of a small company president, gave an example of the support these students received at home. In speaking of her grandfather's desire that all his grandchildren attend college, she observed:

He's like guiding all of his grandchildren toward college. He'd love to see them all into college, especially the women because he says that anyone could just be a secretary. He wants to see us make a go of it.

The young women in this study all spoke of careers after graduation from college. However, most indicated that once they were married and were ready to have children, they, like their mothers before them, would suspend their careers until the children reached school age. Lisa C.'s comments typified many of the students' feelings:

They (parents) feel that if I get married, I should not abandon my homelife to have a career. Because I want a family. If I have to stop my career for my family, I will. I've always been like that -- if I have to stop doing something for my family -- my parents -- I will. It means more to me to have my family than to have something material.

C. Willingness to Become Mobile  
in the Pursuit of Careers

On the theme of mobility, the interviews generated three viewpoints. The first view, shared by about a fourth of the sample, tended to assume that geographic mobility was a fact of life in this world if one were to attain one's specific career goals. A second view, also represented by a quarter of the sample, expressed a reluctance to leave home, but articulated a willingness to pursue careers at a distance from family and relatives if the circumstances warranted such a move. The third view, held by the remaining half of the sample, stated that they could foresee no situations in which they would choose to live apart from their nuclear or extended families.

The first group was composed of three students from Pittsdon and five students from Rockford. All of these students stated that the benefits derived from a job opportunity would lead them to leave home. Mark E.'s brief comment exemplified this group:

It's where the opportunity is. I'll go wherever  
the job takes me.

A few of the students reported that their parents expected that they, the students, would be required to move away in the pursuit of careers. Others indicated that their parents might be disturbed at their departures from home but would consent. Within this cluster, two students stated that their parents, although they might be hurt, would let them leave since they were old enough to be on their own. Another student suggested that she would try to have her mother move with her. Kathy I. spoke of the idea that she had to start her own

life, but that her parents could come to visit her; and Cindy D., in hoping that her leaving home would not be painful, believed that "everyone will realize that it's for the better."

The second group consisted of four urban and four suburban students who expressed a reluctance to leave home but a willingness to do so if necessary. Paul V.'s statement was an example of this group's perspective on their individual careers:

If there was a great, great difference in money, then I'd probably -- you would have to take it. If I were to go to college for let's say, accounting or computers and if I were to get a job up here and then I were to get a very good raise or something that made it really worth it -- that I always wanted to do or that I'd been working for -- as much as I wouldn't want to leave, you'd have to take it because it's what you're working for. You've got to take the opportunity while you can get it. It would be a waste working for something and when you get the shot at it, you're not going to take it. But it would have to be a great difference. It would have to be something I really wanted to do -- overly persuading me to go that way. Other than that, I'd stay right here.

Some of the students in this group articulated feelings of personal discomfort derived from the prospect of leaving their families. Frank C.'s reflections exemplified some of these students' anxieties:

It's kind of scary for me -- upsetting the family; having to be the person who did it all -- break the bonds. But if my job brings me across the country, I'm kind of devoted to my career and I think I'd go to work there, but I'd certainly try to find something that was close by.

It always comes down to the fact that your family is the most important thing. But sometimes my father breaks from that philosophy and says, "Frank, you have to worry about yourself -- you have to worry about what's going to happen to you and stop worrying about what other people are going to be doing."

The third group was composed of nine urban and three suburban students who stated that they intended to remain close to home in their pursuits of careers. A few of these students, including two from Rockford, indicated that after college, they would assume positions in their fathers' businesses.

Parental perspectives opposed to careers away from home influenced many of the students in this group. They reported that, for their parents, a child's leaving home was a poor reflection on the family. Joanna R.'s observations exemplified this viewpoint:

My brother wanted to move out of the house and he wanted to get his own apartment and. . .forget it! She said, "If you leave" -- that's how they are. They have a lot of traditions, Italian traditions, that I think she carries down -- they both do. A lot of what their parents say and what they think. "What are people going to think?" That's what she's always concerned about -- what are people going to think. She says, "If you leave this house, you're not coming back and I don't want to know you and that's it!" [She thinks people are thinking] "Why are they moving out?"; "Is he moving in with his girlfriend?" The same thing for me -- "Why is she moving out? A girl doesn't do that. Her parents are here. She has a house. Why does she have to move out?"

Paula B. developed this view further with her comments:

If my parents hear that someone's kid lives in another state, they don't consider it a close family. They consider it like the family is not speaking. It would be just another typical family with kids all over the world and it's not even a family. For a family, you must live together.

So when someone tells them that their kid lives out of state, the first thing that comes to their minds is they must have had problems or the kid is not a good kid if he wants to get out of being home.

A few students stated that their leaving home would be taken as a personal hurt by their parents. Michele F. provided an example:

If I had the job and the money, I could get an apartment on my own, but not with my parents' blessing. They would say, "Why? When you have everything." They would think of it as if there was something I didn't like about them. My father would say, "What did I do to you? You have everything here. Why do you have to leave?" They'd disagree.

Finally, many of the students in this group expressed personal convictions that they, acting on their own, did not wish to leave their families and relatives for a job opportunity. A few expressed their desires to remain within the neighborhoods they knew. Jimmy D's statement of his plans after he returned home from college was an example:

I like Pittsdon. I'd feel strange going anywhere else. Just, you know, the things like hanging out on the corner. I don't know if I could do that anywhere else but in Pittsdon. It's like a norm -- where I live anyway. Yeah. I could see me doing that when I'm 25. Yeah, I'll come back. There's no doubt about that.

Joanna R., after describing her parents' views, stated her own beliefs regarding her taking a position away from home:

I really don't think so. I think that -- well, maybe a career is important to me but I think family life is more important. I don't think work is your life. . .

I'm thinking of "The Jazz Singer." It reminds me of that -- this whole thing. It's about this person -- he's Jewish and he's got cancer and he's living with his father and his wife and he wants to be a singer. He has the chance to be [a singer] and he has to leave his home and he has a choice between his work and his family and he picked his work. I cried. I said, "How could he leave his father like that?" You know, his father was crying



and everything. I think I would have stayed because you have everything there; but to him, that was so important -- that was his whole way of life -- his songs and his performing -- everything. It really meant a lot to him and so it meant more to him than his wife did; than his father did; than his whole New York setting did.

In summary, the interviews surfaced three groups of students. One group reported that they expected to leave their families in order to acquire jobs or to obtain promotions. These students indicated that either their parents had no problems with mobility, or their parents did have concerns but would permit them to leave. The second group voiced a preference to remain close to their families but would reluctantly leave if the right opportunity appeared. The third group reported that they did not intend to leave their families and neighborhoods for jobs and careers. They cited opportunities for jobs in family businesses, compliance with parental views, or personal convictions that family life was more important than work as the reasons for their decisions.

## CHAPTER VI

### ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA

The interviews conducted in this study represented an effort to probe more deeply into the state of Italian-American educational assimilation. The questionnaire data, in indicating that Italian familistic value orientations did not significantly interfere with either urban or suburban students' school performance, plans for college, or career aspirations, raised the important question of how the accommodation had occurred. How had the conflict been resolved between the familistic values that placed the needs of the family above those of the individual, and the individualistic values that emphasized individual fulfillment and making one's own way in the world?

The students selected for the interviews had revealed, through their questionnaire responses, that they were performing in school at the highest levels of achievement. Their performances gave every indication that they would go on to college and become successful, upwardly mobile individuals. However, their responses had also indicated that they retained many of the traditional Italian familistic value orientations.

The interview, then, addressed itself to the interplay of the two value systems within the lives of these students. Four issues, organized in terms of the research questions posed in Chapter I,

were explored: (1) the students' views of higher education ( $R_2$ ); (2) the students' experiences of autonomy and self-reliance in decision making ( $R_3$ ); (3) the students' mobility orientations ( $R_4$ ); and (4) the students' experiences of strains that might be derived from the conflicting values of the home and school cultures ( $R_5$ ).

The analysis in this Chapter must be considered as separate from the analysis of the questionnaire data. It represents a closer look at only a small segment of the study's sample who appear to be straddling two cultures. However, its value rests upon not only what it reveals about these twenty-eight students, but what it suggests about the process of many Italian-Americans' assimilation into American education.

Research Question 2. Do students who possess high measures of Italian-American ethnic salience limit their formal education to High School?

The data revealed that twenty-seven of the twenty-eight high achieving students expected to enroll in college after high school. Almost two out of three students reported that they or their older brothers and sisters represented the first family members to experience college.

The students reported that their parents were generally pleased with their school achievements. They also indicated that their parents would be most disturbed if they decided to withdraw from high school. However, many urban and suburban students agreed that their parents would not be upset if they decided against going to

college. Unlike other areas of decision-making, they were permitted to make the choice on their own between attending college or getting a job.

The laissez-faire stance toward the college decision tended to be reflected in those families in which the parents had no personal experience of college. Although the parents, particularly those with working class occupations, encouraged their children to make a better life for themselves by attending college, they did not exhibit on this issue of college attendance the dominant influence that they frequently displayed in other areas of students' decision making.

For the young women in this study, the detachment of parents from the college decision may have been the result of an attitude that considered the education of women to be less important than that of men. Many girls noted that particular attention and encouragement were given to their brothers' career preparations while for them, their parents' attitudes reflected the view that "whatever makes you happy is all right with us."

Another factor that may have contributed to the parents' non-participation in the college decision was their lack of experience with higher education. Many of them had not completed high school. The idea, then, of college -- what it meant and how to get there -- may have been a wholly new concept for them. Consequently, their lack of assertiveness might not have reflected disinterest, but rather their inability to give their children advice on the issue.

In a majority of the interviews, the students stated their intentions to remain at home and to commute to college. Most of these students lived in the city. Although they tended to come from less affluent families than those of the suburban students choosing to go away to school, the data suggested that parental and family concerns, not finances, dominated their decisions. Commuting students most often expressed their parents' strong opposition to their leaving home or their own reluctance to leave their families as the reasons for their decisions to remain at home. Paula C., for example, spoke of her parents' belief that all unmarried children should live in their homes, and of their admonitions that if she left home, she should not come back.

For many of these families, a student's living away from home on a college campus reflected poorly upon the family. It was a sign that there were problems -- severe problems within the household. Otherwise, it was felt, there would be no reason for the person to leave.

In contrast, the minority of students who intended to leave home for college reported that their parents generally approved of their plans. The data suggested that where parents or older siblings had themselves attended college, students received more support and encouragement to go away to college.

Both urban and suburban students tended to view higher education in vocational terms. They agreed, almost unanimously, that college attendance represented the means of obtaining the job or income that was required for a comfortable and secure future. Throughout the interviews, they defined the college diploma as one of the minimum

requirements for future success in today's world. With the exception of only one student, the idea of college as an experience of intellectual growth and personal development did not surface in their statements regarding the meaning of higher education.

This attitude toward higher education is of particular interest to this study's probe of the relationship between Italian familistic value orientations and the individualistic value orientations of American education. It suggests that Italian-Americans would continue to reject higher education as an institution that is subversive of the family's welfare and stability if it were not now the means for achieving economic gains. However, just as in 1944, Covello's interviews of Italian-American parents and students indicated that they believed that high school education should yield concrete results (p. 320), the vocational perspective on college education shared by the students in this study merely represents an upward shift of the minimum number of years of schooling required for a comfortable life. What was necessary forty years ago -- a high school education -- has now expanded to two or four years of college. The study's data suggests that in response to the changing society, the Italian-American family has accepted college education as necessary but does not appear to have altered its utilitarian view of its purpose.

The decisions of many students to remain with their families and to commute to college represents another indicator that Italian-American families continue to maintain ethnically derived attitudes opposed to higher education that is subversive of the family. The data revealed that where family life was close-knit, students and

parents were inclined to choose colleges close to home. In other words, family life continued to supersede other concerns and to influence students' decision-making. In accommodating to the increased need for college education, the Italian-American parent and student accept college but on terms that do not upset the stability of the family's life.

In summary, this study's findings would corroborate the assertion that greater numbers of Italian-American students are enrolling in colleges. However, the data does not support an interpretation that they have necessarily assimilated the value system concomitant with higher education that challenges familistic values. The data suggests, instead, that many of the ethnic group may be accommodating to what they see as the needs of contemporary society but are not giving up their traditional familistic orientation.

Research Question 3. Do students who possess high measures of ethnic salience lack autonomy and self reliance in decision-making situations?

The interview questions probed students' experiences of independence and autonomy within their families. They were designed to obtain information on their parents' approach to childrearing, their relationship with the parents, and the decision-making processes in the two specific areas of social activities and college choices.

The data indicated that all but two students experienced what they perceived as close relationships with their parents. They

described their parents as continuously and directly involved in their daily activities and concerned about their well-being.

Students also appeared to recognize and accept the dominant role of their parents. More than 60% of the students represented their parents as most influential in decision-making situations. Although they spoke of disagreements, deference to parental desires and viewpoints characterized most of the students' responses to their parents' interventions.

Noticeable differences were observed between urban and suburban students in the degree of parental dominance. Urban students more frequently defined their parents as dominant while suburban students spoke more often of their parents as democratic or laissez-faire in their involvement with the students' daily decisions.

The data suggests that extended family ties, parental experiences of higher education and a suburban heterogeneous environment all exercise some influence upon the parents' childrearing patterns. The approximately 40% of the parents who were described by their children as "democratic" in decision-making situations lived in the suburbs, had attended college, or had experienced diminished extended family relationships.

In both the city and the suburbs, women indicated that their parents tightly restricted and monitored their activities. Many stated that they witnessed a double standard that their parents maintained between what they and their brothers were permitted to do. Brothers were reported as able to stay out later, to sleep over at friends' houses, and to go away for weekends -- activities that were



not permitted to them as the daughters in their families. These young women reported that their parents, in imposing stricter limits upon their social activities, articulated a concern for their well-being and a desire to protect them from harmful influences.

As noted earlier, the data revealed that parents exercised a lesser role in students' college decisions. Once the decision was made to stay at home or to go away to school, students appeared to be left to decide which college they would choose.

In short, the interviews suggest that the important personal decisions of Italian-American students remain very much a family affair. With the exception of college choices, students' decisions tend to continue to be dominated by parental wishes or family concerns.

The information derived from the interviews also gives insight into Rosen's (1959) study of achievement motivation that found that Italian-American families provided few independence opportunities for children. The data noted that the pre-eminence of family integrity and well-being, combined with parents' tight monitoring of students' activities and decisions, prevented most of the students in this study from acting on their own and exercising autonomy in decision-making.

Surrounded by peers who experienced more independence, the data is striking in its suggestion that the students accepted and supported their parents' dominant roles within the family. Students articulated differences between their experiences and other non-Italian-American students, but appeared convinced that they possessed the better situation. What to other adolescents might seem oppressive, they viewed as signs of parental love and concern.

In terms of Italian-American acculturation or assimilation patterns, the data suggests that where a weakening of the extended family connections is occurring, parents tend to be more democratic in their relationships with their children, and children experience more opportunities for independent decision-making. Students whose parents had left the city for the suburbs or who lived in the city but did not frequently see relatives, described their parents as more willing to communicate with them regarding their activities. In other words, as families became more nuclear in form, the adult-centered orientation that arises from the extended family's frequent interactions with each other gives way to a more child-centered perspective.

Finally, the study's findings would appear to indicate that there persists within many Italian-American families many of the traditional views of the subservience of women. Although almost two out of three mothers were reported as out of the home engaged in part-time or full-time employment, the restrictions placed upon the young women's activities revealed a continued interest in maintaining the woman's role in the home.

In summary, the interviews found that Italian-American students from families where extended ties remained strong, experienced home lives that tended to deny them the opportunities to make independent choices and to be self-reliant. Although more acute for the young women in the study, the restrictions of a closely-knit family system affected both sexes. These findings support other studies of the Italian-American family and suggest that in the area of childrearing

practices, Italian-American ethnic values continue to minimize the amount of independence opportunities parents provide their children.

Research Question 4. Do students who possess high measures of Italian-American ethnic salience reject mobility as a means of obtaining successful careers?

To approach this question, the interview items probed students' plans for the future and their feelings about leaving home to take advantage of career opportunities. Questions focused upon: (1) their tendencies to move out of their homes; (2) their views toward leaving family to pursue career opportunities; and (3) their decisions if they were confronted with a promising job opportunity that required them to move away from home.

For all of the students in the study, the idea of a career away from home constituted a direct challenge to the Italian-American ethnic family solidarity. Unlike the college decision that they were to make as adolescents, and representing only four years of activity, the career decision was an adult choice that had a sense of permanency to it. Moreover, for most of the students, this decision would be the first that their families would face since the decision to leave southern Italy had been made. For, with the exception of some of the suburban parents who, in leaving the city, had broken with their families, the students' parents had remained within close distance of grandparents and families and had maintained the family ties.

Understandably, then, the familistic orientation of the Italian-American ethnic group exerted strong influences upon both the urban and the suburban students' responses to questions of mobility.

First, urban and suburban students expressed little interest in taking up an apartment of their own as single people. To do so was viewed as an affront to their parents and a sign that problems existed within the family. For a family to exist, they believed, with their parents, that all members were required to live under one roof at least until they were married.

Second, almost three out of four students stated either preferences or convictions regarding their remaining close to home and pursuing post-college careers that situated them within close proximity of their families. The students who were convinced that no job would lure them away from their families tended to be urbanities who had either accepted without question their parents' views on maintaining close family ties or had assimilated the familistic orientations into their own thinking. Although two of the suburbanites who articulated similar convictions stated their intentions to work with their fathers as accountants, none of the urban students considered following in his/her father's or mother's career footsteps. However, the careers they did project for themselves represented the types of occupations (e.g., teacher, doctor, pharmacist, secretary) that would permit them to remain in one location for as long as they desired.

Third, the students who expressed a preference to remain close to home could not unequivocally state that they would do so. If a job opportunity represented all that they were working toward, in

terms of salary and the work itself, these students indicated that they would reluctantly leave their families. Split evenly between the city and the suburbs, this group indicated that they would experience anxiety in arriving at the decision -- anxiety stemming from their parents' desires that they not leave, and from their own fears and concerns about leaving the comfort and security of their families.

Fourth, the 25% of the students who saw no problems with leaving home were derived primarily from the suburbs. They also tended to be many of the same students who intended to go away to college and whose parents were reported as "democratic" in their childrearing practices. These students reported that, generally, their parents recognized and supported the pre-eminence of individual career pursuits over family considerations.

Finally, most of the young women, in responding to questions on mobility, tended to think in terms that assumed marriage and children in their future. Consequently, they viewed the mobility issue primarily as a pre-marriage concern. Once they were married, their husbands' career patterns would predominate while they would stop work, bear children, and remain at home until the children reached school age.

Of all the issues raised in this study, the mobility orientations of the students represent the clearest picture of the state of Italian-American ethnic identity. For it is on this issue that the American value of individualism and of making one's own way in the world clashes with the Italian-American idea of family solidarity,

of obedience and respect for elders, and of placing the needs of the family above the dictates of the individual.

The students interviewed in this study all demonstrated close attachments to their families. But as high achievers in schools that advocated an orientation toward individualistic goals in life, they also experienced a taste of a lifestyle that frequently placed upward mobility aspirations above home and family.

The interview data suggests that students fall into one of two groups as the outcome of this clash between home and school values. The first group is composed of those students who have chosen to carry on their parents' choices of lifestyles. The second group consists of those students who are choosing on their own a new method of accommodating to the conflicting demands of both forces.

Within this study's sample, the first group is dominated by students who remain "unassimilated." Representing what Child labeled the "in-group personality" (Child, 1943), these students have accepted as more satisfying the familistic orientations of their parents. Career decisions for this group are subservient to the needs and demands of their family.

The minority of students in the first group are those who have continued the assimilationist patterns initiated by their parents. For the suburban students, their parents' decisions of 15 or 20 years ago to leave family and move to the suburbs were the critical points in their family's ethnic history. For the urban students in this group, their parents' decisions to attend college represented similar turning points. The exposure to other value systems weakened

the tight hold of Italian-American ethnic familism upon family members. Get-togethers may have continued but the family became, in Campisi's words (1957, p. 312), "marginal" in its rejection of some ethnic patterns and its holding onto others. In deciding to pursue careers away from home with their full or reluctant approval of their parents, the students are moving one step further away from the Italian-American ethnic familism that their parents broke away from in years past.

The second group within the study's sample are those students who are on the verge of breaking with their families as they decide to pursue career opportunities away from home. It is within this group especially that one sees the persistently powerful influence of Italian-American familism at work. For the students within this group are the first members of their family to accept the dominant society's requirement for success -- a willingness to leave home in order to pursue individual careers -- and their decisions are touched with fear and anxiety over the consequences of their choices.

The interview data also suggests that many of the traditional Italian-American attitudes toward the role of women in the family are held by the women themselves. Most of the young women interviewed in this study spoke of career aspirations that tended to be commensurate with their status as high achieving students. Yet none of them contemplated the prospect of any other life but that of marriage, suspension of their careers, children, and resumption of their careers when the children were of school age.

In terms of Italian-American assimilation patterns, this dimension of the study's inquiry documents the very strong hold that Italian-American familism retains on the upward mobility orientations of young people. The students who were interviewed in this study were those who "had everything going for them." They were achieving success in school and were successfully competing with other students who will be the corporate executives and government leaders of the future. Yet the question raised by this study is for how many of these students will their ethnic attachments to family prevent them from accepting mobility as an inevitable feature of a successful career, thereby limiting the opportunities they possess for upward mobility?

Research Question 5. Do students who possess high measures of Italian-American ethnic salience, but who also maintain a high achievement level in school, experience strains that arise from the dissonance between the culture of the home and the culture of the school?

Cultural Strains. Within each area of inquiry touched upon by the interviews, questions were formed to ascertain students' reactions to the conditions, to the parental viewpoints, or to the experiences that they described. Where students registered disagreement or upset, additional questions were posed to assess the degree of anxiety that they experienced.



Interview data revealed that students were inclined to experience strains derived from the clashes of their home and school cultures on the following issues: (1) their experiences of limited autonomy and independence opportunities; and (2) their decision-making experiences that sought to reconcile their career interests and aspirations with family demands and attachments.

As noted previously, many students described their parents as "dominant" in their childrearing practices. In contrast to other students whom they knew, they noted that their parents' desires, viewpoints and directives influenced their decisions significantly, and frequently prevented them from doing things they thought they wanted to do. Social activities, college choices, and career aspirations all fell under not only parental scrutiny, but review by the extended family of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Young women were particularly affected by the restrictive impulses of their parents. They frequently reported that their parents had doubled standards of behavior for their brothers and themselves, and that they fell victim to strong protective impulses of their parents.

However, the interview data suggested that the students voiced no more than murmurs of discontent with their parents' tight restrictions. They grumbled over how difficult it was, but it is noteworthy that no student voiced rebellion or rejection of their parents' views. Even Jimmy D., who enjoyed socializing on the street corner with his friends complained of the "But," "If," or "Don't" that frequently came from his parents and restricted his movements. Yet

he also then described his parents as "demi-gods" who knew all things and whose advice he followed because "respect for your parents is above almost anything else." A common progression of thought that students followed during the interviews was a statement about the situation, a mild complaint, and then a statement that with their children, they would do exactly the same thing as their parents were doing.

Some students compared themselves to their non-Italian peers and came away believing that they were the more fortunate. They cited their parents who cared about them, who would not allow them to come and go at will, and their families that were intact, as assets that belonged to them, but often not to others whom they knew.

The strains of significance for students that were revealed by the interview data are the internal strains associated with conflict between certain career aspirations and continued intimate contact with the family. The data suggested that the students who experienced extended family lives found the prospect of leaving the family to pursue a career a very difficult choice.

The absence of significant strains arising from Italian-American students' experiences of limited autonomy and independence is among the most interesting conclusions of the study. Situated as they are in heterogeneous environments, listening to the accounts of their peers' free movements, and frequently to tales of adolescent rebellion, the students in this study appear to remain powerfully connected to the influences of their parents' views and desires. The example of Claire S., the suburban student whose father severely

punished her for not being at her friend's house the precise moment he called, comes immediately to mind. Despite the rigid rules and regulations that she must live by, Claire prefers to attend college close to home so that she can be with her family.

Further, as high achievers the students also display a resilience in managing effectively the conflicting demands of their individualistic-oriented schools and their familistic homes. Paula B., for example, deeply disappointed at her inability to attend the college of her choice because her father would disown her if she left home before she was married, still maintains with her guidance counselor a discussion on what other colleges might be available to her.

However, the data suggests that students are approaching the time when they must make career decisions that place them squarely between the demands of the two cultures. This fact is a source of tension and strain. Generations of Italian-Americans have confronted similar situations and have tended to choose family over career. Boys frequently decided to follow in their fathers' occupations or to work in the business immediately after high school. Girls were inclined to marry early and remain at home as housewives and mothers. But with the acceptance of a college education, this generation of high achieving students take themselves out of the skilled and unskilled labor market that permits easy accommodation with the family's interests, and put themselves into the middle class white collar professional world -- a world where mobility is often a

prerequisite for success and where an unavoidable "showdown" between the conflicting familistic and mobility-oriented values takes place.

At this time in their lives, the interview data is inconclusive in assessing which direction the students will move. For some, their parents have already initiated the action with their decisions to move to the suburbs and to remove themselves from the extended family. However, for most of the students, the decision to be made is theirs and the strain of assimilation will be upon them.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

The contemporary revival of scholarly interest in ethnicity has focused increasingly upon the role that ethnic identity plays in the personal and career decisions of the American people. Whereas attachments to one's ethnic group were formerly regarded as ephemeral — as vestiges of the Old World immigrant culture that inevitably would give way to the assimilative forces of the upward mobility value orientations of American society — these attachments are now viewed by many educators and social scientists as significant persistent influences upon the behavior and feelings of second and third generation immigrant families.

This dissertation has inquired into the persistence and the effect of Italian-American ethnic identity upon individual students' school achievements, educational aspirations, and career plans. With an urban and suburban sample, it has also attempted to discern whether the culture of the school, with its emphasis upon individualistic value orientations that stress making one's own way in life and pursuing personal goals, remains distant from the students' cultural experiences of their homes.

In Chapter II, it was noted that, in relation to other ethnic groups, Italian-Americans have been slower in accepting higher education as the means of achieving social mobility. Handlin (1951),

Glazer and Moynihan (1963), and others observed that the school, with its emphasis upon the pursuit of personal goals rather than those of the family, constituted a threat to Italian-American parental authority and to the basic Italian familistic value of devotion to the family (see pages 44-45). Gambino (1974) also indicated that the tension generated by the conflict between the home and school cultures frequently resulted in minimal Italian-American interest in social advancement obtained through educational achievement and excellence. However, the findings of Greeley (1976), in stating that Italian-American college attendance figures equalled the national average, raised the issue of whether this aversion toward higher education continued. (See Chapter II, pages 44-48.)

This study has found that, generally speaking, the traditional patterns of hostility toward higher education, derived from the feeling that a college degree introduced value orientations that were subversive of family values, do not persist within contemporary Italian-American families. The group data obtained from the questionnaire revealed that students' levels of attachments to their ethnic group did not significantly affect their school performance. The data also indicated that college attendance was an option that many students intended to exercise, and a review of the students' parents' educational attainments suggested that a significant shift in attitude has indeed occurred with regard to the acceptance of higher education.

The significance of these findings is an important issue in this dissertation, for the data also indicates that with most of the students, the attainment of high levels of school performance and the acceptance of higher education do not necessarily represent signs of diminished Italian-American familistic values and attitudes. On the contrary, an in-depth analysis of the family lives of high achieving students suggested that parents continue to maintain not only an influential presence, but also a significant degree of filial respect and obedience in their relationships with their children.

In addition to the maintenance of traditional Italian parent-child relationships, the interviews revealed that many of the childrearing practices that had characterized the immigrant Italian family continued within second and third generation families. The absence of independence opportunities for both boys and girls, the double standards of behavior for girls, and, most important, the tendency of the students to accept this situation and to approve of it as a manifestation of their parents' concern for them, were all indicators of a significant retention of ethnic familistic attitudes and practices.

The apparent accommodation of Italian-American families to higher education achieved without a breakdown of familistic value orientations, represents a major finding of this study. It suggests that in some way, the Italian-American distrust of a college education has diminished, but the emphasis upon devotion to the family that traditionally created the distrust remains.

One interpretation of this ambiguity, supported by some of the studies cited in Chapter II, is that this study has merely captured Italian-American families at one moment of a period of assimilation. Lopreato (1970), Gans (1963), and Warner (1962) asserted that increases in income loosened an individual's ties to ethnic value orientations. Therefore, the acceptance of college education by both urban and suburban families does in fact represent the weakening of Italian familistic values. The retention of traditional family relationships and childrearing practices is only the result of a cultural lag and will be short-lived. When students have absorbed the orientation directed toward making one's own way in life that a college education promotes, these vestiges of Italian-American ethnicity will diminish significantly.

The data obtained in this study suggests a second interpretation that is based upon an analysis of the students' perspectives toward the college education. This view asserts that in reality, the traditional Italian-American attitudes toward higher education have not changed as significantly as it appears. Instead, certain fundamental changes have taken place within society and within higher education that have permitted a college education to become more compatible with Italian-American families.

First, the increased emphasis upon specialized vocational programs in colleges that serve to prepare students for particular jobs in business and industry, has diminished the pre-eminence of the "liberal arts" education, which, in promoting a well-rounded education, exposed students to "dangerous" ideas that undermined



either Italian-American parental authority or family solidarity. This trend toward the vocationalization of education is particularly compatible with traditional Italian-American pragmatic attitudes toward schooling.

Covello noted in Chapter II that within the agrarian southern Italian society, education beyond the fifth grade was essentially useless for the economic well-being of individual families. U.S. Bureau of the Census figures (1971) indicated that a similar pattern emerged in the United States, but with a high school education considered as the minimal level of education required for a comfortable and secure life (see Chapter II, pages 42-45).

In this study, parents and students tended to view and accept a college education also in terms of its vocational training value. Students reported that the primary concern of their parents was that they, the students, obtain a better life than the parents had attained. The idea of college as an experience of intellectual growth and personal development — that aspect which traditionally had been perceived by Italian-American parents as subversive of family values — was conspicuously absent from the students' perspectives. Instead, the recognition that a college education was a minimum necessity for economic well-being dominated their views.

The merger of Italian pragmatic views toward education with a similar American attitude may account for much of the receptivity toward college education evidenced in this study. But the increased localism of higher education in contemporary society may be a second

factor that explains a portion of the breakdown of Italian-American distrust of the college experience. Twenty years ago, when the parents of this study's students were of college age, the idea of going to college frequently meant the leaving of home and family. For most Italian-American families, to do such a thing constituted a traumatic blow to family solidarity. Today, the growth of community colleges, the prohibitive expense of attending a school away from home, and the general tendency of society to view higher education as career training afford students the opportunity to easily contemplate attendance at college while living at home. Unlike their parents, the students in this study are easily able to maintain the integrity of their families and to remain under their parents' roofs while attending college.

In summary, this dissertation's data suggests that higher education has become more compatible with Italian familistic values. Italian-Americans contemplate attending college not so much because they have assimilated the individualistic value orientations promoted by the college experience, but because higher education, with its emphasis upon localized vocational programs corresponds more closely to the ethnic group's pragmatic view of education, and most important, has made it possible for Italian-American families to send children to college without experiencing a breakup of the family unit.

Although college education has become more acceptable to Italian-American families, the students' opportunities to choose local colleges may have merely deferred to a later date in their lives an

inevitable clash between Italian-American familism and mobility values. The data demonstrated that most of the parents in this study possessed blue collar jobs or owned their own businesses — occupations that were commensurate with their educational attainment. Possessing a college diploma, their children will be eligible for and be exposed to corporate and professional occupations that may require geographic mobility. The second issue of importance in reviewing the results of this dissertation is the question of whether further Italian-American social mobility will be restricted by the group's devotion to family.

Unlike other ethnic groups, Italian-Americans have consistently encouraged within their families the subordination of individual desires to family needs and goals. In a comparative analysis of immigrant social mobility, Kessler-Harris and Yans-McLaughlin (1978) note that the conflict of interest experienced by Italian-Americans between individual achievement in the outside world and family solidarity was a significant factor that accounted for the ethnic group's slow rate of social mobility. In contrast to Jewish-Americans whose emphasis upon career success permitted geographic mobility, Italian-Americans regarded the individual's movement away from home for the sake of a career as a betrayal of the family (p. 126).

Although most of the students in this study expected to assume occupations of higher prestige than those of their parents, three out of four expressed, during the interviews, that they too would be reluctant to move away from home in order to pursue a career opportunity. Of all the issues discussed, this conflict between

career mobility aspirations and familism appeared to generate for students the most significant strains.

As high achievers, the decision to attend a college close to home did not require compromises of either their own ambitions or their sense of devotion to their families. However, they recognized that the career decision carried the possibility of permanent separation from the family and might require a clearcut choice between two conflicting value orientations.

This study suggests that the response to the question of whether Italian familism will continue to restrict an individual's social mobility is largely dependent upon the orientations of the parents in each family. Throughout the interviews, the writer consistently noted that the students' reflections upon issues were heavily influenced by the values learned at home. Although peer-group values were also evidenced, parental views dominated.

A study by Strauss (1964) of socialization practices within the family is particularly useful in understanding the nature of the powerful parental influences observed within the families of this study. He indicates that two factors dominate most intra-family interactions. The first factor is power — actions that control, initiate change, or modify the behavior of another in the family. The second factor is support — actions that establish, maintain, or restore as an end in itself a positive effective relationship with another family member. He asserts that the most effective transmission of parental values occurs when both power and support

are the strongest (pp. 318-326). In their descriptions of family life and family relationships, the students characterized their parents as both dominant and caring.

It appears, then, that the intensity of the familistic values held by the parents significantly influences the students' responses to the question of leaving home in pursuit of a career. Some, whose parents encourage a desire to achieve upward mobility that supersedes devotion to the family, stated that they intended to, as one student expressed it, "go where the opportunity is." Others, particularly many of the young women, whose parents emphasized the responsibility of each family member to maintain family solidarity, expected to remain close to home in the most satisfying job that they would be able to obtain.

The impact of familism upon social mobility, therefore, is clearly present in the career plans and aspirations of many Italian-American students. However, for some families in this study, the issue is not dichotomous. Sowell (1981) observes that upwardly mobile Italian-Americans have achieved incomes above the national average without jobs that required geographical mobility (pp. 126-127). Likewise, a significant number of students in this study expressed a conviction that they could pursue careers that challenged them and provided job satisfaction, and at the same time permitted them to remain close to their families. Whether these students can indeed successfully straddle two worlds as their parents managed to do, is, from this study's perspective, open to question.

A third theme emerging from this dissertation's inquiry is concerned with the meaning of Italian-American ethnicity in the suburbs. Since few studies of Italian-Americans have taken an in-depth look at the extent to which familistic value orientations persist in the suburbs, the data obtained in this study on this issue was of particular interest.

As noted earlier in Chapters III and V, significant differences in the retention of familistic value orientations emerged between urban and suburban students. On every item of the ethnic salience scale, particularly the item measuring students' reluctance to leave home to pursue a career opportunity, the suburban students demonstrated a greater tendency to go their own way in life and to geographically separate themselves from their nuclear and extended families. With regard to child-rearing practices, suburban parents also reflected more of an inclination to assume a democratic relationship with their children or to provide opportunities for them to exercise autonomous behavior.

In Chapter II, Gabriel and Savage (1973) were cited for their assertion that the suburban environment, with its emphasis upon a common individualistic value orientation, significantly reduces the level of an individual's self-conscious identity with a particular ethnic group. They suggest that a drift away from Italian familistic values that occurs within the suburbs, may create the condition in which ethnic identity no longer affects behavior and attitudes but serves only as a source of pride to the suburbanite (see page 31).

This study's data does not support such a view of suburban ethnicity for, despite their generally weaker hold upon Italian familistic values when compared to Italian-Americans in the city, many of the suburbanites displayed behaviors and attitudes that clearly demonstrated the persistent influence of these values. Numerous students, for example, noted that contact with members of their extended families, particularly grandparents, was faithfully maintained. Get-togethers of the entire family occurred frequently, and in some families telephone calls were exchanged daily.

The families in this suburban sample were also particularly stable. Most of the students had lived in one house for all of their lives, and only one of the 123 families in this study had experienced the divorce or separation of parents. When compared with the rates for the communities in which these families reside, this statistic is striking.

A third example of the persistence of Italian ethnic identity in the suburbs were the students' statements regarding preferences of friends and marriage partners. In an environment in which they represented approximately 16 percent of the school population, 63 percent indicated that their best friends were Italian-American, and 59 percent expressed the hope of marrying an Italian-American.

Although these findings demonstrate that suburban Italian-Americans retain significant attitudes and behaviors associated with Italian familistic value orientations, the clear differences

that exist between urban and suburban Italian-Americans in the strength of these values requires some further analysis.

Much of the literature on suburban Italian-Americans takes the position that differences in social class prompted the move to the suburbs and account for the weaker familistic values observed there. Vecoli (1974), for example, states that many of the Italian-Americans who move to the suburbs are professionals and businessmen who seek an environment that corresponds to their social class standing (p. 34).

However, the demographic characteristics of the suburban Italian-American sample obtained in this study do not match the image that Vecoli presents. Although they had greater representation than the urban families in the upper social classes, the majority of the suburban families — 57 percent — were from the two lowest social classes. Moreover, the analysis of variance utilized to examine the questionnaire data demonstrated that socio-economic status did not figure as a significant variable influencing suburban ethnic identity. The image of the assimilated upwardly mobile family who lose or renounce their ethnic ties in moving up in social status and out into the suburbs is not supported by the data.

An analysis of the suburban families in which the parents displayed an inclination toward individualistic value orientations — that is, more democratic childrearing practices and support for their children's leaving home to attend school or to attain a career — revealed that their most significant common characteristic was not



their social class standing, but their weakened family ties. In some families, these ties had been shattered by a grandparent's death, and students stated that with their grandparents gone, the family's unifying force had been lost. They indicated that a fragmentation of the extended family then proceeded rapidly as their aunts and uncles became more involved in their own nuclear families.

In addition to weakened extended family ties, the environment of the suburbs appears to further undermine Italian familistic value orientations. The isolation from one another of families living in single-family houses encourages families who do not have extended family nearby to turn more and more into themselves and to adopt an increasingly individualistic lifestyle.

Perhaps more than any other factor, then, the presence or absence of extended family ties accounts for the differences not only between the urban and suburban families but also among the suburban families themselves. Those families living in the suburbs that did maintain frequent communication with the grandparents and relatives were more likely to retain many of the Italian familistic value orientations in their attitudes toward education and careers and in their childrearing practices.

In summary, this study's analysis of suburban ethnicity suggests that Italian familistic values will remain as important influences upon a suburban family's behavior and attitudes as long as there remains tangible and frequent contact with extended family members. At the present time many of the suburban families in this study

maintain such contact. However, once these ties are broken, through the death of grandparents or simply a lack of interest on the part of family members in preserving them, Italian-American ethnic identity may become only an external trapping for the suburbanite bereft of any significant influence upon his/her behavior and attitudes.

The signs of diminished familistic orientations, particularly in the suburbs of this study, raise for discussion one final issue — that of ethnicity's future impact upon Italian-Americans' behaviors and attitudes.

For the task of organizing this study's findings regarding the persistence of familistic value orientations among contemporary urban and suburban students, Gordon's "Acculturation but not Assimilation" model has proved to be the most appropriate of the theories of assimilation cited in the Review of the Literature. This model's view that individuals and families may involve themselves in American institutions such as higher education, but still maintain for their primary relationships preferences for others of their own ethnic group corresponds very closely to the description of the behaviors of the Italian-American families in this study. Urban students clearly remained influenced by familistic values on every issue connected to social mobility, and in some cases, evidenced attitudes that reflected a significant persistence of Old World Italian family values. Within the heterogeneous environment of the suburbs, although students demonstrated greater tendencies toward many of the individualistic values associated with upward

mobility, they at the same time considered other Italian-Americans as their best friends and as their preferred marriage partners.

As useful as it is for describing the present state of Italian-Americans' retentions of familistic value orientations, Gordon's model projects a future of complete Italian-American assimilation into American society's individualistic value orientations — a premise that this study asserts as requiring further investigation.

In his review of American ethnic groups, Sowell (1981) observes that the behaviors and attitudes toward social mobility that have characterized Italian-Americans were the result of their adaptation to the circumstances and conditions that they encountered upon entering the United States. In contrast to the Jewish immigrants, for example, who came to America expecting to stay, many Italians came with the idea of returning to Italy within a few years. The result of these different goals for immigrating was that the Jewish-Americans invested in American businesses and encouraged their children toward education while the Italian-American, thinking only in terms of the immediate future, emphasized occupations that produced incomes quickly and encouraged their children to go to work at an early age in order to help the family raise the money to be used back in Italy (pp. 276-283).

The relevance of Sowell's observations lies in the emphasis that he places upon the evolution of an ethnic group's value orientations as responses to circumstances they face in the United States. Greeley (1974) describes this process as "ethnogenesis" — the ethnic group continuously evolving and emphasizing certain aspects of the

immigrant heritage in response to their life in America, until a point in time when they have a cultural system that reflects a combination of traits that are shared with other groups and traits that are distinctive to their own group (pp. 308-309).

These conceptualizations suggest that many of this study's findings — the differences between the urban and suburban Italian-American families, the evolution toward support of higher education, and the weakening value of geographical proximity to family in the pursuit of career opportunities, are reflections of the adaptations and adjustments that Italian-Americans are making in response to the pressures and conditions they experience in American society. The future of Italian-American ethnic identity will depend to a significant extent upon the ability of Italian-Americans to continue to reach an accommodation with the forces of upward mobility that presently challenge familistic values.

#### Suggestions for Further Research

This study has examined two samples of Italian-American high school students over a two year period of time. Many of the students who completed the questionnaire or who were interviewed have moved on to colleges or have assumed various careers. Although the scope of this particular study did not involve ongoing reviews of students' experiences and attitudes, nevertheless a longitudinal study of Italian-American students' development would significantly contribute to an understanding of the effect of familism upon their college

and career plans and experiences. This study captured students at one moment in time and attempted to examine their life experiences up to that point. An ongoing follow-up study would provide for continuous review and analysis of students' experiences of ethnic attachments and would significantly improve the quality of studies that focus upon the assimilation patterns of various ethnic groups.

This study also represented the student's point of view.

A study that included high school students and their parents might provide a richer perspective of the interplay between parents and their children in the Italian-American home. With interviews of both students and parents conducted together or separate from each other, one might have a more complete image of the dynamics that is occurring within the family.

A review of the study's limitations that have surfaced in the analyses of the data provides additional suggestions for follow-up research projects. First, the scale for measuring the levels of Italian-American ethnic salience requires review and possible revision. Designed to measure an element of the affective domain, this study's scale clustered about two factors that explained approximately 45 percent of the variations in responses. Additional items on the same aspect of ethnic identity or entirely new ethnic dimensions might increase the validity of the scale and further refine this study's innovative effort to differentiate members of an ethnic group according to levels of ethnic salience.

A second limitation of the study was the absence of an outside criterion group for measuring the significance of Italian-American

students' school achievements and educational aspirations. This study proved capable of assessing the relationship of ethnic identity to each of these variables. However, no method existed for determining the absolute levels of achievement. A comparative study of the emergence and development of different ethnic collectivities' responses to higher education and mobility demands would introduce an outside criterion group into the study and produce an increase in the study's validity.

A similar project might also be developed to compare Italians in America with Italians who have settled in other parts of the hemisphere. Italian immigrants settled in numerous countries besides the United States and encountered significantly different environments. Such a study might provide the opportunity to test Greeley's theory that defines the ethnic group as a collectivity that came into being in America and to examine what differences exist between the Italians in each country. This type of study would also afford researchers the opportunity to refine their hypotheses regarding the extent to which Old World attitudes arrive in the New World intact.

Two final suggestions are derived directly from the data. The relationship between the parents and children in this study tended to be authoritarian in form. Yet the high school students, in the full bloom of adolescent rebellion years, articulated some unrest but seldom rebelled against their parents. An in-depth study of the parent-child relationships within Italian-American families would offer a more complete perspective upon the dynamics of the

family interactions that generate such harmony between the traditional Italian-American dominant parent and the adolescent.

Finally, the data suggested that with the weakening of extended family ties, there is a dilution of many of the Italian-American attitudes, values and practices. A study that addresses the Italian-American nuclear and extended family systems might provide further insight into the assimilation patterns of the ethnic group.

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APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Mark one:

Male  Female

Freshman  Sophomore  Junior  Senior

2. Do you live most of the time with your natural mother and father?

Yes  No

If no, who do you live with? (Check all that apply)

Father       Stepfather       Other adult relative - male  
 Mother       Stepmother       Other adult relative - female  
 Someone else

In the rest of the questionnaire, when asked about your mother and father, please answer in terms of the persons you actually live with most of the time.

3. Were you born in this country?  Yes  No

If no, in what country were you born? (For example, Africa, China, Ireland, Italy, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Were both your parents born in this country?  Yes  No

If no, from which country did they come?

Father \_\_\_\_\_

Mother \_\_\_\_\_

5. Were all of your grandparents born in this country?  Yes  No

If no, from which country did they come?

Father's father \_\_\_\_\_

Father's mother \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's father \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's mother \_\_\_\_\_

6. If all of your grandparents were born in this country, from what country did your ancestors come?

Father's family \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's family \_\_\_\_\_

7. What kind of work does your father do? What is his job called?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. What does he actually do in that job? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. What kind of work does your mother do? What is her job called?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Please show the highest grade in school that your parents completed.

	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>
a. Grade school or less (1st - 7th grades).....	_____	_____
b. Completed grade school (8th grade).....	_____	_____
c. Some high school (9th - 11th).....	_____	_____
d. Completed high school (12th).....	_____	_____
e. Technical or vocational school beyond high school.....	_____	_____
f. Some college.....	_____	_____
g. Completed college.....	_____	_____
h. Some graduate work.....	_____	_____
i. Graduate or professional degree.....	_____	_____
j. Don't know.....	_____	_____

11. What language is spoken in your home? \_\_\_\_\_

When family members come together, what language is spoken?

\_\_\_\_\_

12. What are your favorite foods? \_\_\_\_\_

13. How close do you live to your grandparents (distance)?

\_\_\_\_\_

to the relatives you see most often?

\_\_\_\_\_

14. As you think ahead to the ideal person whom you will marry, what place does his/her nationality (Italian-American, Irish-American, Polish-American, etc.) have in the ideal?

\_\_\_ is not even a consideration  
 \_\_\_ is a consideration, but is not very important  
 \_\_\_ is an important consideration, but not a most important  
 \_\_\_ is a most important consideration

15. How often do you spend time with your relatives — grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins and so on? Please answer in terms of the relatives not living in your immediate family whom you see most often.

\_\_\_ more than once a week  
 \_\_\_ about once a week  
 \_\_\_ a few times a month  
 \_\_\_ about once a month  
 \_\_\_ on holidays or a few times a year  
 \_\_\_ about once a year  
 \_\_\_ practically never  
 \_\_\_ I do not have any relatives

16. What are the nationalities of your three best friends?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

17. We are interested in finding out something about people's outlook on life in general.

After each statement in the following list, please circle one number to indicate whether you Strongly Agree with the statement, Agree with it, Disagree or Strongly Disagree.

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
A. What happens to me is my own doing.	1	2	3	4
B. If I were offered a promotion that required moving to a distant town, I would accept it even though it would separate me from my family and friends.	1	2	3	4

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>		
C. It is not always wise to plan too far ahead, because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow.	1	2	3	4		
D. Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.	1	2	3	4		
E. Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.	1	2	3	4		
F. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.	1	2	3	4		
G. If I were offered a promotion that required moving to a distant town I would turn it down because family responsibilities come before my job.	1	2	3	4		
H. In my case, getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.	1	2	3	4		
18. As a student, what is your general average?						
	<u>    </u> 90's	<u>    </u> 85-90	<u>    </u> 80-84	<u>    </u> 75-79	<u>    </u> 70-74	<u>    </u> 65-69
19. If you could acquire the qualifications needed to work at any job you wanted, what type of job would you choose?	_____					
20. What type of job do you think you will <u>actually</u> be working at after you have finished your education?	_____					

21. What is the lowest level of education you are willing to accept for yourself?

- One to three years of high school
- Graduate from high school
- Graduate from technical or vocational school
- Graduate from 2-year Junior college
- Graduate from 4-year college or univeristy
- Graduate from graduate school with a Master's degree
- Graduate from graduate school with an advanced degree such as a medical degree, a law degree, or a Ph.D.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION. WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE TIME AND EFFORT YOU HAVE GIVEN TO COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. YOUR CONTRIBUTION WILL BE IMPORTANT TO THE SUCCESS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT.

## APPENDIX B

KENDALL COEFFICIENTS OF CORRELATION AMONG PREDICTORS  
OF ACHIEVEMENT AND EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS

Kendall Coefficients of Correlated Among Predictors  
of Achievement and Educational Expectations

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Urban Group (N=84)				
	Sex	Generation	Socio- Economic Status	Ethnic Salience
Sex	1.00	-.16	-.07	-.24
Generation		1.00	-.60	20.00
Socio-economic Status			1.00	.12
Ethnic Salience				1.00

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Suburban Group (N=123)				
	Sex	Generation	Socio- Economic Status	Ethnic Salience
Sex	1.00	.003	-.02	-.08
Generation		1.00	-.15	.09
Socio-economic Status			1.00	-.12
Ethnic Salience				1.00



## APPENDIX C

PERCENTAGES OF URBAN AND SUBURBAN STUDENTS RESPONDING  
POSITIVELY TO ETHNIC SALIENCE ITEMS

Percentages of Urban and Suburban Students Responding  
Positively to Ethnic Salience Items

Item	Urban	Suburban	Total
Italian language is spoken at home	48	27	35
Distance from nearest relative is less than 10 miles	86	48	63
Relatives get together at least twice a month	79	50	61
A future marriage partner's ethnic affiliation is a consideration	72	59	64
Student is reluctant to leave home	74	34	50
Italian food is preferred	80	79	79
Italian friends are preferred	92	63	74

## APPENDIX D

FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF STUDENTS INDICATING  
EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS ACCORDING TO SPECIFIC  
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Frequencies and Percentages of Students Indicating  
Educational Expectations According to Specific  
Demographic Characteristics

	High School		Technical School		Two Year College		Four Year College	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total	60	29	17	8	39	19	91	44
Male	28	31	9	10	14	16	38	43
Female	32	27	8	7	25	21	53	45
First Generation	4	40	1	10	3	80	2	20
Second Generation	12	32	2	5	9	24	15	39
Third Generation	32	28	12	10	18	16	53	46
Fourth Generation	12	27	2	5	9	20	21	48
Social Class 2	0	0	1	7	3	14	10	71
Social Class 3	13	24	3	5	9	16	29	54
Social Class 4	38	36	9	8	17	16	43	40
Social Class 5	9	28	4	13	10	31	9	28
Urban	29	35	7	8	12	14	36	43
Suburban	31	25	10	8	27	22	55	45

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM IN COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL  
AND UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES FOR STUDIES THAT  
INVOLVE HUMAN SUBJECTS

October 10, 1980

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your son/daughter has been selected to participate in a study of high achieving students' goals and hopes for the future. The purpose of this study is to explore with each student his/her perceptions of how his/her home and school experiences have contributed to the academic success he/she has obtained.

To accomplish the objectives of this study, an interview of approximately 45 minutes will be arranged during your son/daughter's study hall period. He/She will be free to end his/her participation at any time and all of his/her responses will be confidential.

This study is being undertaken as a portion of my dissertation research that will lead to an advanced degree in Education. The study has received the approval of Sister Germaine.

Your permission to speak with your son/daughter will be most appreciated. I am also most willing to answer any questions you might have regarding the interview's format.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Thomas D. Sharkey  
(Former Vice Principal at Paterson Catholic)  
Telephone — 627-3500

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Permission is hereby granted for my son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_  
to participate in the study of high achieving students' goals and  
hopes for the future.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

October 24, 1980

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your son/daughter has been selected to participate in a study of high achieving students' goals and hopes for the future. The purpose of this study is to explore with each student his/her perceptions of how his/her home and school experiences have contributed to the academic success (s)he has obtained.

To accomplish the objectives of this study, an interview of approximately 45 minutes will be arranged at your son's/daughter's convenience. (S)He will be free to end his/her participation at any time and all of his/her responses will be confidential.

This study is being undertaken as a portion of my dissertation research that will lead to an advanced degree in Education. The study has received the approval of the Superintendent of Schools.

Your permission to speak with your son/daughter will be most appreciated. I am also most willing to answer any questions you might have regarding the interview's format.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Thomas D. Sharkey  
Administrative Assistant  
Morris Hills High School  
Telephone: 627-3500 - Ext. 23

School of Education  
University of Massachusetts  
Amherst, Massachusetts 01003

-----  
Permission is hereby granted for my son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_  
to participate in the study of high achieving students' goals and  
hopes for the future.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX F  
INTERVIEW PROFILES



The interviews conducted in this study ranged from one to two hours in duration. The primary variable determining the time of each interview was the loquacity of the student. Where answers were given in monosyllables without supportive examples of meaning or clarification, the time span of the interview was minimal.

The profiles that follow represent composites of each of the interviews conducted in the study. All of the students' statements were taken verbatim from the transcripts. Left out of these profiles were only the interviewer's probing questions and various conversations that digressed from the major themes of the study.

To maintain the anonymity of the students, the names ascribed to each profile and to the quotations cited in Chapter V are fictitious. The cities and towns mentioned throughout the interviews have also been changed.

Urban Student Profiles

Michele F. (Grade 11)

Michele's parents came to Pittsdon from Sicily just before her oldest brother was born. After a few years of struggling to make ends meet, they purchased a house in the city. Each parent was then followed to the United States by one brother or sister but most of the family remained in Italy. At the present time, Mr. F. owns a house in Italy, a house in Pittsdon and a third house bought for his son, in a neighboring town.

Michele's mother comes from a relatively affluent family. Her brother in Sicily is director of a bank and her sisters are teachers. She does not work any more. Michele's father established a roofing and siding business with his brother and works primarily in New York state on private homes.

Michele has two older brothers and a younger sister. One brother attends aeronautical school and the other left college after a year to work with her father.

In the morning, when my brother Sal is here and he gets into the truck to work and my brother Paul goes to college, my mother says, "Why does that have to be?" Why does he have to suffer and work like crazy and my brother Paul, all dressed up, goes to school. She's angry that Sal is going to work. Why didn't he go to school first? And there is not my father backing her up saying, "All right. You're right." My father has a different hand and says, "Oh, no. It's good the way he is doing it. He should come to work and get better money." My father didn't want him to leave college. But what can you do? A person can do so much. He can't say, "Listen, you have to do this." He was olde enough to decide.

Michele's brother married a third generation Italian-American woman. The fact that she was not direct from Italy is a concern to Michele's parents.

My parents say, "Take an Italian. It's better off for you and better off for the family." That is because she doesn't speak it. My sister-in-law and I are different because of the way I was brought up and the way she was brought up. [My parents] think "If the families get together, what are we going to talk about — we don't understand each other." You see, they think about the families. They don't think about the two people who are getting married and that's not right.

You see, I'm close to my parents. I'm the one who can talk to them. Of all my brothers and sister, I'm the one who's close to them and I want to make them happy — especially my father. But when it comes to that, you can't help who you fall in love with. I'm going to try to stick with Italians. I'm going to try it, but you're not going to say to whomever you fall in love with, "I don't like you because you're not Italian." It's stupid. They're the ones who are going to have to live with each other for the rest of their lives. They're not going to think about the families. You always come back to the same thing — your father and mother know what's best for you. They know what's right for you but when it comes to this, I still think it's wrong.

Families being able to talk with each other — that is important to them. When we have get-togethers — I mean, I've seen it happen already. It was my brother's birthday and we got together. It was like they were cold to each other. I talked with everybody, but it's like my mother and my sister-in-law's mother — they just sat there and they might say a few words to each other once in a while, but it's not that close — the relationships between families — it's not the way it should be, the way I see my mother and her brother-in-law where everybody's close and everybody's from one town.

My sister-in-law doesn't really care that much about the family — about these little get-togethers. She doesn't mind staying just with my brother and that's it. But me — when we're together, I feel happy. I like that. That's one thing with my parents that I agree. And my grandparents, they're all together. That's the reason I went to Italy — to just be with my family. I guess for each family it's like that. I don't really know. Well, I see this generation now. They're like, "I don't care." My sister-in-law will have a party and she'll just invite the friends and not the family. I guess there's some times when you have a party with just your friends and sometimes — you understand what I'm trying to say? I would feel like I would have to invite my family first and be closest with even my in-laws. She's just...I don't know. It's not that I have anything against her, but I guess she's just

different. That's the way she was brought up and I can't do anything about it. I'm going to have to accept her just the way she is, that's all.

Michele continued to draw comparisons between herself and her sister-in-law, especially in terms of the role of women in family, marriage, and careers.

My parents want me to go to college. They want me to do something. They just don't want me to stop after high school. But as long as I'm happy and as long as I go into a school, they don't really say, "You have to do this!" For my brothers, it was different. My mother wanted so much out of my brothers. "Be a doctor; be a lawyer. Do this. Do that." And I guess that's why it hurt my mother; especially since my brother left school and got married. She was really upset because she wanted so much out of her sons. But I guess, maybe, that it's all the time like this. With the girls, it's like they're more "Get married. Have kids. And just stay home." But I want my career first... My parents — when I come home and say "Ma, I want to be a doctor," she says "Good! Go to school and be a doctor. Better for you!" They never said, "No, don't go to school." They always try to help me out. If they saw that I was happy, they'd be happy. My mother always says to me, "If you're happy, I'm happy."

When I get married, I wouldn't stop working. I'd have to find the right guy who would understand me and understand that "Hey, this is my job. I went to school for it and I can't leave it for him." We'd have to work something out. If I married an Italian, forget it! I guess with the way things are now, if I married someone whose parents were Italian, then it would be different. But if I went to Italy or if I married a guy who just came from Italy, oh, forget it! I have this friend — she's Italian — who is a teacher and teaches history in New York. She went around the whole world. She has all these meetings. She married a Jewish person because this guy is so...considerate. Like "Oh, all right, Honey, you have a meeting tonight. Don't worry about it. I'll watch the kids." But the Italians are like "No. You're staying home and you watch the kids." Like I can see in my own house — my mother won't go out and leave my father home alone. I tell her, "C'mon. Go out. Come out with me. I'll take you shopping." "Oh, no, I'm not leaving Daddy here alone." I guess it's both my mother's and father's faults to think that way. But I want to marry an Italian but someone not strict in thinking about what I'm going to do.

My sister-in-law, Stephanie — she goes to Jazz class. She does all these different things and my brother comes over and my mother is like "Where's Stephanie? Why did she go?" They didn't have that. They were like the wife had to stay with her husband and that's it. The wife cannot go out alone. And now they're just going to have to put up with it. They're going to have to change because that's the way it's going to be because Stephanie is going to Jazz class. She's not doing anything wrong — that's the way I see it — but they see it like she's doing something against my brother — that it's wrong to not be at home and to have another interest and to go out while he's home. "Why does she have to leave him alone?" That's wrong. That's what I think.

My parents are very much closer to us. They want to see us settled in a home. They want to make sure we have everything — as much as they can give us. I guess her [Stephanie's] family was more like the type "You're on your own." They still lived in the house and everything, but I could see the difference. The mother really didn't — the mother loves her and everything — but it's more like the thing the Americans say, "Once you're eighteen, you're on your own. Do what you want to do." She was able to go on weekends with my brother. Like, I would never never — my mother would kill me — go out with my boyfriend for a weekend. The mother says "You can take care of yourself. That's it! Go!" But my mother, I don't know, I think my mother is right in that, because sometimes with too much freedom, you can end up getting in trouble. I agree with that.

There's a big difference between the boys and the girls in my house. I can go out but if I go out somewhere where I have to come home late, I have to go out with my brother or else she won't let me go out. Like going to Italian dances. She says, "I don't want you to be seen alone." That's another thing they really [are concerned over]. What the people say. She says, "What are the people going to say?" I don't care what people say. I care about what I say and what I feel. That's another thing we always disagree on.

The friends that I hang with have all been brought up like me. Their parents are Italian and they've gone through what I have. But as I look at the kids here in school, they're more American and there are a lot of differences that I see. Like the parents still say, "I don't care. Do what you want." There's this one girl whose mother said, "Do what you want," and now she's living with her boyfriend. I'm lucky where I am right now in my own home because I see kids whose parents don't care.

Michele's family gets together frequently. She expresses a reluctance to go away to college and uncertainty regarding a career away from home.

Even on weekdays, we'll go over to my aunt's house, or on Sundays, my house is, like, everybody's house. Everybody always gets together in my house because my father is the oldest of the brothers. My house is always full. My cousins eat over almost every night or somebody sleeps over.

Guidance says it's better to move away to college. They say that you grow up and you experience more things. But I couldn't. I just couldn't see myself — maybe because I have so much at home. I don't think I'd want to leave it. I just tell them, "I don't want to." Maybe they think I'm like a baby or something! "Oh, you want to stay with your mother all your life?" It's not that. It's just that I wouldn't want to leave what I had home. It'd be hard for me.

If I had the job and the money, I could get an apartment on my own, but not with my parents' blessing. They would say, "Why — when you have everything?" They would think of it as if there was something I didn't like about them. My father would say, "What did I do to you? You have everything here. Why do you have to leave?" They'd disagree.

In a way, it'd be good because I'd really get to know the way the world is. Right now, even though I go out and know what the world is, I come home and I have food on the table and I have money whenever I want, and I have the school. I don't know what it's like to struggle, to even make a penny and take care of myself because I have my mother taking care of me. It would be good experience, I'd say, just to get away, to start with different people, and not always be mixed in with Italians, to meet different people and to know how they feel. It would be a good experience.

Deborah B. (Grade 11)

Deborah B. is a third generation immigrant from Calabria on her father's side and fourth generation on her mother's side. Both sets of grandparents came to Pittsdon and worked in printing (father's father) and textile (mother's parents) factories. Approximately seven years ago, Deborah's family moved a few miles away from their neighborhood to a suburb of Pittsdon. At the present time, her mother's parents live with her family while her father's parents live with her aunt in Pittsdon.

We all lived in Pittsdon at one time and then branched out mainly because of the neighborhood's going downhill. We were all in Blessed Sacrament Parish (an Italian national parish) and we still are because its our parish, it's always been our parish, it's something that never can be taken away from us. That's our family there. Everyone is still there — the same faces, the same old people — people who have moved out and some who still live around. They have a parish night on Saturday night. They have different church activities and groups. There's a good-timers group and there's a youth group. And they meet and go places. You see the same people.

Deborah's mother is a high school graduate who has worked in the office of the small laminating company of which her father is president. Mr. B. completed college and worked his way up within the company.

My grandfather is a great believer in education. He says that education is the thing you can't take away from anybody. Because he never had the chance to go on, he more or less guided my father to college... And now that's all he talks about. He's like guiding all of his grandchildren toward college. He'd love to see them all into college, especially the women because he says that anyone could just be a secretary. He wants to see us make a go of it.

My father went to Georgetown, Notre Dame, and ended up at Fairleigh Dickinson University. He made the switches because he just missed home. He didn't like it anyway. He said that every Sunday night when he had come home, he



would get a stomach ache or find an excuse not to go. He missed everyone, so he decided to finish back here.

Well, I don't think I'd ever go away myself because just like him I'd miss it all here. I think he did the right thing. If he wasn't going to be happy there, he was right coming back here and getting the good education that he got.

My grandmother did everything for him at that time. He didn't even have to pick up anything. He wasn't independent. He was dependent on her for everything. So when he found what it was really like out there on his own, he said, "Hey! I don't think I can take it. I miss my mother and father too much." So he decided to come back.

He can handle himself really, but I guess it was because their family was so close and I guess during the holidays, it was so far from everybody that he needed to be with his family.

We get together every chance we have — the whole entire family — both sides together. On the holidays, it's a mass of people at my house. On everybody's birthday, both sides come. On holidays, sometimes even on a Saturday night if nobody is doing anything, we just all get together. I eat by my grandparents house three nights a week. Still we go down to Pittsdon, my aunt and her family come downstairs and we all eat together.

Deborah is interested in business school at a college within commuting distance of home. She's thinking of working in some field like buying and accounting.

I don't think I could be on my own. I'd always need somebody there. I'm not the type that's forward enough to be left alone. I'd get lost in the crowd, I think. Maybe I'd do well in school, but my social life would be poor. I'd find trouble meeting people, getting to know people. Most of my friends are not going away.

Away from my parents? No! I don't think I could be away from my parents that far. I would think I'd probably take a job here even if it was less, just to be with them.

My father's against it. He doesn't want me away. He says he has trust in me but it's the other people. Like he knows how I am and he knows that people would step on me and he's afraid of that. Like if I don't voice "Hey! I'm here,"

they just walk over me. That's how it is out there. He knows what the world is like, the outside world. He's worried that I might not be able to cope with things and that I might break down. He's afraid of that. My family is there to help me — to give me the courage, the perseverance, and support, but out there, I'd be on my own.

The main thing about them [parents] that I love is that they're on my level. My father, he's not old-fashioned. He sees things as I see them. If he doesn't he tries, or if I don't see something the way he sees something, he'll explain before he goes into a rage.

Like if I want to go somewhere and he's really not too thrilled about the idea, he'll say "Why? Why? Tell me why." And I will explain to him, and then he'll say "Well, don't you think it's this type of thing?" And I'll tell him and we'll reason it out.

He doesn't always agree with me. Sometimes I agree and give in. But it's more like a partnership thing — a friendly basis. My mother is the same way. She's like a friend to me — a best friend. We share things and I tell her things and she tells me things.

Lisa C. (Grade 10)

Lisa C.'s parents immigrated from Sicily in 1965, a few months after Lisa was born. A shoemaker, Mr. C. could not find adequate work in Brooklyn and therefore came to Pittsdon upon the suggestion of townspeople he had known in Sicily.

Both of Lisa's parents completed five grades of schooling in Sicily. Mr. C. works in a dyehouse in Pittsdon and Mrs. C. is a machine operator making coats in a coat factory — a job she has performed since Lisa was five years old.

Besides the friends they have from the same town in Sicily, Lisa's mother has a sister living in a town ten to fifteen miles from Pittsdon and a cousin living in Pittsdon who gets together with Lisa's family three times a week. Mr. C. has a cousin in a neighboring town but all of his family live in Rome or in Sicily.

Lisa's brother is a senior at Marquette University. He had applied to Rutgers and had been placed on the waiting list so he enrolled in the next closest school that had accepted him.

My mother didn't want him to go. Not that she wanted to deny him the education, but she didn't want him far away. She had never had him farther than here and we had never been separated and it was like, "I don't want you to go but if that's what you want..." And so she just sent him and it was like forever. He was going to be back for Thanksgiving and she was going crazy. She felt like it was forever that he was gone. She was always worried about him. If he called about two minutes later than he was supposed to because he would give us the day and the time — if he calls five minutes later she'll be on the edge of her seat. She'll be, "Go call him. Pick up the phone." She won't know what to do. She'll drive herself and everyone else crazy. And up until this day — it's been four years — and she does the same thing.

How did your father feel about the move?

Well, kind of the way my mother did, but he didn't show it as much because he knew that he had never had the opportunity or the honor to be able to go somewhere and to do something with his life other than just move back and forth knocking himself out working. He saw that my brother had the opportunity and he didn't want to take it away from him, so he let him go.

Were there any discussions of moving back and of going to a school closer to home?

Well, my brother did. He did more discussing about coming closer than my parents did, because they did not want to seem like they were discouraging him. Although they would prefer that he were nearer to us. But after he was there, he was doing well, they didn't want to take it away from him, especially because they knew he liked it. He liked being on his own and having his own responsibility and we found that when he came home, he did have a lot more responsibility than when he left. We found he was neater because he had to clean up for himself.

Does he intend to return home when he graduates?

Well, when he graduates, he plans to go to a law school in Pennsylvania. But there's one in California that may accept him, so he's like, "I want to go." But to make my mother happy, if he can stay closer to us, he will. Because he doesn't want to cause any movement of the ground around because she will just say, "You were far enough. Now you want to go to California? Forget it. You're staying!"

Lisa would like to attend a business school upon her graduation if finances can be handled. She is interested in business administration but enjoys clerical and secretarial work.

Would you think about a good business school away from home?

No. My parents don't like the idea of a girl going away to school, no matter what. And I really wouldn't want to. It sounds nice, but I wouldn't want to, because I...it's like I like to have my family around me — not just to talk to them once in awhile.

When you say that it would be nice to go away, what are the nice things you think of?

I can be more responsible for myself instead of depending upon my parents for everything. I can depend upon myself more. And I like to be independent. If I can sit down and do things myself, I'd prefer it.

Do you think differently from your parents on this issue?

Well, they feel I should have them for like my moral support behind me; or if I need a helping hand, that I shouldn't have to go crazy on my own — that I should go to them. But if I can think things out for myself...it's not that I want to keep things away from my parents, but if I can do things for myself, it makes me feel good — that I can work things out on my own and not have to say "I really need help."

If you were to say to your parents, "I want to stop school," what would they say?

As far as my parents are concerned, the more I further my education, the more pleased they will be because they know I can reach where I want to be. But if it was my decision to stop school, they would insist that I at least finish high school.

Would that be the final word?

Yes, because I wouldn't argue with them because although they might hold things that seem wrong to me, most of the time I know that my parents wouldn't guide me in the wrong direction. That's what they're there for — to put me on the right road to where I'm going. They wouldn't steer me wrong. If they could pay for all my tuition, I could go to school for the next twenty years. He puts it, "If I have the money, I'll do it," because he feels that he was educated only until the fifth grade and he wound up in a factory. He said if it's more schooling that is necessary to get you to a place where you don't have to sweat it out, then I want you to be somewhere where you will be sitting behind a desk with air conditioning. Even if you are going to have a hard job, at least you won't be uncomfortable at it like me where you don't have all the luxuries of an office and you have to stand there and work and work and work.

Do you intend to pursue a career?

Well, as far as that's concerned, they feel that if I get married, I should not abandon my homelife to have a career. Because I want a family. If I have to stop my career for my family, I will. I've always been like that — if I have to stop doing something for my family — parents — I will. It means more to me to have my family than to have something material.

Would you accept a very good job that required you to move away from home?

Well, of course if I were twenty, I'm on my own — I make my own decisions. I would like to but it would have to be — I would not want to hurt my parents in the act of it. If they didn't want me to, I don't think I could. I really couldn't. I couldn't do that to them. I'd prefer waiting, maybe putting it off. But by the time I'm probably married, my parents won't be in the U.S. They have their own property [in Sicily] and my father would build there after he retires.

Do you see differences between your family and other families?

My parents give me a certain amount of freedom that I don't take advantage of because I don't want to lose it. They'll let me go wherever I want — in a limited fashion — as long as I don't get into any trouble, or there's no trouble caused, or there are no troublemakers who could lead me in the wrong direction. My parents trust me. They trust me a lot. Sometimes I think that I wouldn't trust myself as much as they trust me. But they know of all the responsibility that was placed on me when my brother left because they don't speak English. I found myself balancing checkbooks — I had never done that before. When my brother left for college, I was only in the sixth grade and I found myself doing things that had never crossed my mind. Most American families have more freedom. The Americans — the colored families — they have more freedom to do as they please. There are a few that I know whose parents are stricter, but there are others who can do whatever they please. I'm not saying that's wrong, but I don't think it's absolutely right that someone my age is free to come and go whenever they please from their house: that's like saying "You're on your own." There's a certain limit to what a teenager my age should be allowed to do. Like my parents, if I go to a friend's party — especially if they know the person — they will let me stay out later like 12:30 or 1:00. But knowing where I am, knowing for sure that if they call me, I will be there.

Do they call to check up on you?

No, they trust me. But they do ask me to call when I get there. Sometimes I check on them. I feel like "Let me call home just to let them know." I'm used to that. I don't feel there's anything wrong with that. Why shouldn't they? They're my parents; they're worrying about me and my well-being.

Do you see differences between your family and third and fourth generation Italian-American families?

Definitely. Sort of the same thing. I'm sure that if my parents were living in the U.S. before I was born, they would be a little less strict and worried about what's going on. They're worried. In Sicily, they'll leave their keys in the door or they just leave their doors wide open and when they come home they'll find everything intact — nothing is touched. In Pittsdon, they get really worried hearing about people being raped and I'm only 15 and they say, "Look out. Don't take anything." I say, "Mom, I'm not two anymore, I'm not five, I'm not six, I'm not starting school like somebody can catch my attention by saying, "Here, have a lollipop," or "Want a ride?" I feel like I know what I'm doing and I won't probably feel responsible but I don't think they are because they've done everything in their power to make me turn out right. If I make a mistake, it will be my mistake and they would not be to blame at all. Those families are more lenient because they've been around longer.

I don't think that my parents are absolutely right in being so strict. If I have children, they'll grow up differently than I have due to the changing times. There will be many more delusions. They'll want to go in the wrong direction. There are a lot of things that make you think, "Maybe I should," but I won't be like my parents because I've been through it. I'll be strict because I won't want my kids to get hurt, but I won't be totally the way my parents have been. If I have a son or a daughter and if they want to go away to college, in a way they'll have to work up to it because I'll have to trust them. I think that every parent has to trust their kid one time or another. I wouldn't want to put my son or daughter, if they're not responsible and don't know what they're doing, some place where I can't see what's going on. If they do something wrong, oh sure, they can call me, but I can't be there as quick as if they're right here. So if I feel I can trust, I'll give them everything they want and anything I can give them like my parents in a way; but I'll be more lenient instead of strict. A lot of third and fourth generation Italian families — some are lenient enough — some are too lenient.

Paula B. (Grade 12)

Paula B. and her parents have lived in the city all of their lives. In 1910 her grandparents immigrated to the United States and, within a few years, purchased the house in which Paula and her family are presently living. The interview began with a discussion of Paula's educational and career goals.

What are your plans for next year?

I hope to get a job, more or less in special education. Either emotionally disturbed children or the physically handicapped. I had planned to work in some kind of handicapped camp this summer, but the only ones I could find were too far away and my parents wouldn't let me go.

It required living away from home?

No, it was only ten miles away but they just said they didn't want me driving that far right after I got my license.

Do you plan to go away to college?

No! My parents won't let me. If we move out of the house, we don't come back. We more or less have no choice (laughs). If we leave, we just don't come back.

Why do they feel that way?

Well, their parents always had them in their house until they grew up and got married and that's what they believe in.

Paula's older sister and brother continue to remain at home.

Her sister, a psychology graduate student, commutes daily into New York City and has struggled for two years to get her parents' approval to move into her own apartment closer to the City. Her brother, a candidate for State Trooper, travels up to two hours every day from home to the training site.



Is this situation difficult for you?

The only problem I've run into is that other schools have better programs for what I want to go into. I'd rather go away just for the education I'd be getting there.

Your father completed high school. Does he regret not going on to college?

I think that that is part of the reason why he wanted us all, but especially my brother, to go on to college. He wishes that he made more of himself because to him, to say he works in a factory doesn't sound so hot. He doesn't like the job and he knows that he could have had something better; that he could tell somebody "office" rather than "factory."

If you said to your father tonight, "I'm dropping out of school," what would he say?

He'd tell me that I'm crazy and he'd tell me I didn't have any choice. That I was in school and under his roof and I'm to do as he says. He knows you can't get anywhere. The kid on the street comes to his mind — the typical kid who gets himself into trouble. Even though he knows me, he thinks the worst all of the time.

When your father says, "If you go away, don't come back" what does he mean?

I think he means that when I come back I'm not staying there. Actually, I'd have to do it to find out.

What if you as a single person had a job opportunity in Pennsylvania?

They wouldn't let me move there.

Does that produce tension?

Well, kind of, because of the way I was brought up. I don't know if I'd be able to move away. You know, I'd really be lost, but I guess if it were a good job I probably would be ambitious to try it — I'd want to try it just to see what's going on and test it out.

But then again, I've seen what's going on with my sister. That's just New York and it's been going on for a long time. I wouldn't want to go through it myself.

I'd have to turn down any out-of-state opportunity. They could not keep tabs on me and plus it's old-fashioned — it's a tradition. You know what your kids are doing. You can keep an eye on them and tell everyone you've got good kids and you know what they're doing all the time.

If my parents hear that someone's kid lives in another state, they don't consider it a close family. They consider it like the family is not speaking. It would be just another typical family with kids all over the world and it's not even a family. For a family you must live together.

So, when someone tells them their kid lives out of state, the first thing that comes to their minds is they must have had problems or the kid is not a good kid if he wants to get out of being home.

Does the advice regarding careers that you receive in school conflict with home?

A little — they tell me that the best thing to do is to go to colleges that have the best thing to offer me. They will point it out and say it's the best, it's over here. But usually I don't pay any attention. I usually don't say anything when they tell me this is the best. Sure, I'll think about it. I know I'm not allowed. I got a lot of letters in the mail from colleges and once in a while, I'll read something that has a good special education program and I'll think about it, and after a few days just lie it down because I know I have no choice.

I know that if I moved away, I'd lose part of my family. It's not that we are really close, but it's the little bit that's there that I might lose — and I don't want to. If we were really close, I might feel a little better about going away, and I'd know I'd come back. Things would be a little bit different... I just wouldn't feel a part of my family any more. If right after college I came back to visit, I wouldn't feel I could move right back in and have things the way they were — they just wouldn't be that way. That's why I am kind of glad that they are not letting my sister move out. Because any time one moves out, there's going to be a break.

Donna E.

All of my grandparents were born in Italy. My mother's parents came to Pittsdon when they were about twenty-four. They were married when they came from Salerno and Napoli. My father's parents were both from Sicily and they both came at an early age — around four or five — and they settled in Lodi. My grandfather [father's father] worked in a factory and my mother's father was a mason. My mother's mother was a seamstress in Pittsdon. She lives with us.

My father is a professional artist. He does portraits of people in the winter. He turned a portion of the attic into a studio. In the summer, he works on location doing houses and other things. He went to an art academy in New York. He's sold close to fifteen hundred pictures. He has done murals for banks.

My mother went to Drake's Business School and is now working for my uncle who is a pharmacist at Palumbo Drugs in Pittsdon.

My father met my mother at a dance in Lodi and they moved to where my mother's parents were. Usually the guy goes to live with the girl and her family or close by.

How are you doing in school?

Last marking period I got all A's, and this marking period I got A's and three B's. My parents were disappointed because they expect all A's. You know, the courses are getting harder, but they don't understand that and they tell me to study more. I do but I can't get A's all the time.

They told me that I shouldn't talk on the phone that much because I really don't have that much time for homework. When I come home from school at 3:30, I cook supper during that hour and go straight to work [at the drugstore] about 4:30. I have dinner ready and I usually eat by myself. By the time I get home, it's usually 9:30. I wash my hair and take a shower and talk on the phone. But I don't really mind [parents' pressure] because it's good that someone really cares about which direction I am going towards.

I have a sister who is twenty-three who is going to graduate from Boston University Medical School. She got into a six year accelerated program and I guess she's going to stay there for her internship because she wants to specialize in internal medicine. And my brother is in that same six year program at the University of Michigan to become a doctor. I think he wants to go into surgery. I want to be a pharmacist. My

uncle [the druggist] went to Rutgers, but he doesn't think it's the best around.

They both wanted to go away because there was nothing around here that they considered worthwhile. My parents approved of it. The first year for each of them — they called home a lot. But now it's more like with their friends, they have their own little family now.

I'd like to stay with my family... I could never go that far. Maybe, I think I'm going to commute to college because I like being with them. They [brother and sister] focus in on where the best education is and then think about how far it is. I think about how far it is first and then about what kind of an education I can get.

What are your parents' views?

I think they want me to stay home because I'm the last. But that's not why I'm staying home. That's what I want to do. If my brother and sister really didn't care where they wanted to go, they probably would have said "Stay close." It's a little bit of both my being the youngest and my brother and sister having gone away.

Suppose you had a promising opportunity as a pharmacist away from home. Would you move?

I'm not sure. I don't know what I'd do.

Do you expect to pursue this career after you are married?

Oh, yes. Because if I spent all that time getting an education and then get married and never use it, then it's ridiculous.

Does your family get together frequently?

We have a meeting because my father and all of his brothers own property in all different places, so every month they go to one person's house and have a meeting and they discuss their property and things in general. On my mother's side, we see my uncle every day.

I consider my family to be American totally. My grandmother still has her old ways, but not us. She always had to help her parents, like bring the water from the well. No matter how old she was, her mother always told her what to do. But it's not like that really [with us]. Sometimes when I go out to a movie or something, she always tells me, "Stay home and help your mother with the cooking or sewing or whatever,"

just because they never did anything like that. They never had television or anything and so they concentrated on their sewing or whatever they had to do in their house.

My parents will make some decisions for me. But others about my life or my career, I'll make, but they will be behind me. With college, we'll probably talk it over as to where I'll go. It won't be that I'll go up to them and tell them where I am going and they'll say, "yeah, yeah. Go there," or they won't tell me you have to go there.



Jimmy D. (Grade 12)

Jimmy's father was born in Italy near Naples and at age 18 came to the United States. His father died when he was six years old and after finishing elementary school, secured a job in a leather factory to support his mother and brother. Then, according to Jimmy:

Once his brother started working and he saw that his mother was all right, he decided to leave. From what I can get out of him, he was tired and just wanted to go out on his own and he saw that America was the land of opportunity — that's what he told me — so he came here. He ended up in Pittsdon, got a job, and got married. He has very bad memories of Italy, he tells me. It was only when his mother was dying that he went back. I guess he fell in love with America. He made something out of himself over here — that's what he tells me. He says he doesn't think he could have made anything over there. His first job was a french frier. Then he gradually got into the carpentry business. At the time there was a small company in Farhaven just starting and that's where he got his job skills. After that he found a lot of jobs and made a lot of money.

Jimmy's mother was born in Germany during World War II. Her family fled to Venezuela where they stayed for 12 years and then came to the United States in the late 1950's. Her parents live upstairs. When her youngest child (7 years old) began school she took a part-time job as an office shipping clerk.

Even though in our family we're mixed, the predominant is Italian. My mother speaks Italian very well. Strange as it may seem, I think that's the way it started off when my parents first got married and that's the way it's been — predominantly Italian. Like Christmas Eve Dinner. On Christmas Eve the whole family gets together at our house. My father makes the big dinner with fish on Christmas Eve. That's a tradition — and the pasta on Sunday, every Sunday.

What role do your parents play in decision making?

I've made a few decisions for myself when they have told me to do it this way and I've gone against them, and they've all come out very disastrous so I just made a commitment that I was going to try to listen to them most of the time until I was on my own. That's the way it is. I think of all the bad experiences I've had when I've made the decisions and I've said, "Yeah, well, if this doesn't work out I can always point the finger at them." I feel pretty big and mature to make these decisions, but I feel better when they back me up. I'm still a little insecure about things like that, so I just listen. It hurts, I know it hurts everybody — not hurt but sometimes upset about something when you think they are wrong, but it lasts just a couple of hours and that's about it.

Can you think of examples?

They more or less let me do anything. But there's always the "But. . .," or the "If. . .," or "Don't. . . ." That's what keeps it toward the authoritative. They're arguing all the time about when I come home. I was at a party and I told them I was going to be late and they said, "How late?" I said, "I don't know — about 12:30. That late." They gave me a dirty look so I came home early and that made them happy. I think we're a closer family than most families because of that. We always know each other's moves and moods. That's what I find about our family.

If you were to characterize your parents, how would you?

Demi-gods (laughs). They're god-like. I look to them as more or less — not — yeah, as gods really. I try to look at them as the know-it-alls. That's the way I think it should be. I think that respect for your parents is above almost anything else. The family comes first.

A lot of other families are much more lenient than mine. They let a lot more go. I guess that comes along with, maybe, the whole American system — more freedom, more lenient. But my parents haven't become really Americanized yet in things like that, so that's the difference right there.

When you say "more Americanized" or "more lenient" what comes to your mind?



The type of family who's not so close. They have their conflicting careers and jobs and things like that, and it's very hard for them to sit down and have a dinner. The kids aren't home or are at someone else's house at dinnertime. That would never be tolerated at my house. I don't know. I guess it's just the way they have their lifestyle. I don't really condemn it. I think "To each his own." I think that's good too, more or less. But that's the way I've been brought up and that's the way it is and I'll probably be that way with my children.

What are your plans for next year?

I'm going to go to college — either Boston College or Rutgers. I want to get away from home and they told me, "Yeah, all right. Don't worry about it. You go away from home." So that's it.

Did that take a lot of discussion?

No. I just said, "Dad and Mom, I want to go away from home." My father said, "Yeah, that's all right with me." My mother said, "What are you going to do away from home?" But she agreed.

What did she mean by that?

What are you going to do without me? Who's going to wash your clothes? And stuff like that. "How are you going to eat?" Well, I'll manage. I've been in Pittsdon all my life except for a few trips overseas to Italy and then a week down the shore during the summer or whatever. But I'd like to get away. I want to see America. That's really what I want to do. I want to experience. . . . And if it doesn't work out, I'll just come back. I can always come back.

I've made my mind up pretty much. Like I said, the family is first at all times. But then again, I said that some day I will start to make my own decisions and this is one of them and I have their blessing, so that's why I'm doing it.

I don't think they'd let my sister go away. They're very — I guess it's the European influence. The daughter — she just doesn't do things like that. She just stays home. They want her to go to school — keep her education — but I don't think they would let her go away. I wouldn't allow it.

Why?

It's just — maybe I'm a chauvinist or maybe I've been caught in the influence too, but I just don't feel. . . . The girl, if she wants to continue her education, should continue it around here. That's the way I think. There's a little fear in her going away and there's also, you know, she's — just to point out something crude — she washes the dishes, you know? The woman's supposed to stay near the house and things like that. That's what they expect of her.

If I were to visit your house and talk about B.C. or Rutgers and talk about the purpose of it all, what would they (parents) say?

They'd tell you they didn't have an education and look where they wound up — working for a living — and for them education more or less gets you out of the rat race. My father always says if you have an education you can always go somewhere. I think he's satisfied considering he grew up in bad times — poverty, the War, no father — so he's pretty satisfied with what he's made out for himself considering that after grammar school he had to go to work. But if I said "no college" they'd be very upset — very upset. They'd say, "You're just going to waste yourself — become like me." Everybody says that in my family — my uncles, my grandparents: "You don't want to become like your uncle who works in the dyehouse," or whatever — things like that. I can see why. If they had the opportunity I have, I can see why they think that way.

Would they say that about themselves?

Yeah. "Don't be like me." He'd show me his hands, all cut up from working and he'd say, "Don't be like me." I look at his hands and they are all cut up with oil and stuff like that.

I think they all feel that they made the most, but still they regret a little bit that they could not go on and further their education.

Any type of education will satisfy them. They just feel that any type of education would be good for you. You'll always get somewhere with that education. They mean getting out of the working class. They mean, "Don't be a blue collar worker," or something like that.

Do you envision yourself returning to Pittsdon after college?

I like Pittsdon. I'd feel strange going anywhere else. Just, you know, the things like hanging out on the corner. I don't

know if I could do that anywhere else but in Pittsdon. It's like a norm — where I live, anyway. Yeah, I could see me doing that when I'm twenty-five. Yeah, I'll come back. There's no doubt about that.

With your son, will you permit him to go away?

I guess it depends on what experience I have when I go away. If my experience is good, then yeah, he'll have my blessing. If my experience is bad, then maybe I'll have second thoughts about it. But then again, it's one of the first major decisions he'll make — college — so. . .

I think that the worst thing that could happen to me would be having a problem and not being able to say it to anybody — that's what I fear the most. Not having somebody there — that's what I probably fear the most. Loneliness or whatever. I don't think I'll really encounter that — maybe in the beginning.

Do you feel comfortable talking to your parents at home and are there any issues not raised at home?

Yes. Sex is not raised at home. It's raised indirectly. Like, you know, if I were to go out with a girl, my father's favorite word would be to say "Watch yourself," and right there I know what he means, so it's raised indirectly. But we never sit down and talk about it. My mother says things more than my father because I guess, over there — there again, the European influence — you don't talk about these sorts of things until you're old enough.

Uniquely enough, religion is the easiest thing we can talk about. We can argue about that for hours. Right now in my life, religion is not that important. I'll be honest with you. I see conflicting things in my Roman Catholic religion and I can sit down and talk with them about it and we'll have an argument about it. We just have conflicting values about it. My mother goes to church and my father only misses a week here, a week there. But about two years ago, I told them, "I don't want to go to church anymore and the only time I'm going is Christmas and Easter." They weren't very upset about it because they thought that I was old enough to make my own decision.

Caroline L.

Caroline L.'s mother and father, together with her aunts and uncles, came to Pittsdon from Naples twelve years ago. All of the adults secured jobs in factories and settled close to each other. Caroline's mother's mother lives with the family, but all of her other grandparents have died. Her father does not live with the family.

Caroline spoke of her home life.

I consider myself to be Italian-American because America means a lot to me and so does Italy because that is where my parents are from. Italian means going by the Italian rules from Italy. Most Italians are more strict and all. They speak Italian well. I speak Italian at home with my mother and grandmother because my mother likes to speak Italian. I help her to learn to cook American food. I help her at home. I want to. It's not that I have to. I want to.

My mother is not as strict as her mother. She lets me go out, but she won't let me date yet. I have to wait until I'm seventeen or eighteen. I don't find the restrictions difficult because I've been brought up that way, so I'm used to it. For me, what my mother decides I stick along with although sometimes I think it's too strict. I know that when I have kids, I'll be even more strict because sometimes I see her point of view. You know, when you have kids you want the best for them and you have to be strict for them to be that. They will probably feel as I do now, but after all, they fall under my decisions so they have to listen to me.

Caroline's parents attended school to grade seven. Caroline herself would like to acquire a degree in psychology or law.

She [mother] feels that education is important in everyone's life. The more education you get the more advanced in life you are — you can get a better job. She says, "Nowadays I am sending you to school because I didn't have the opportunity to have the great stuff you have now." She would like me to go to a good college but she would rather have me go to one that's nearby. I wanted to go to Yale but I will probably go to FDU [Fairleigh Dickinson University]. I'll stick to

my mother's decision not because I want to, but to make her approve my decision and not upset her. After all, she's paying for my education.

In pursuing a career requiring mobility, Caroline suggests that she might convince her mother to move with her.

If an opportunity presented itself, I'd force my mother to move or move myself. She would like to see a new place. But maybe if it was too far she would disagree. She would like to stay close to her relatives just in case she needs them so she can discuss problems. For her, that's important. But even if I had to move alone, I'd take the job. My mother would probably be angry but she would have to come to accept it.

When I get married, I'll stay in my career because after all you went through to get that career. If I do have children, I'll abstain (from work) for awhile and then I'm going to let my husband take care of them and still pursue my career.

Your environment does affect your work, the way you communicate with people. I wouldn't want to live in Pittsdon all my life. I'd like to explore other parts of the state and other states.

Ervin D. (Grade 11)

Ervin is a fourth generation Italian-American whose ancestors settled in Pittsdon upon their arrival at the turn of the century. Both of his parents have lived in Pittsdon all of their lives, and the family lives on the second floor of the house owned by Mr. D.'s mother. One of Erv's aunts lives with the grandmother while two uncles and their respective families live within a ten block radius.

Ervin's mother attended Montclair State College for two years, but left school when she married to work in an office as a clerical aide. She has not worked since Erv was born. The death of his father cut short Mr. D.'s education. After high school graduation he secured a job in a factory where he is now foreman of an assembly line crew of workers. Erv states that his parents would object to his taking a job similar to his father's.

It's not a high-paying job and there is not much room for advancement. There's not much mental work to it at all.

A college education is important to his parents, Erv says. "They say to get a good job, you get a good education and a good degree."

However, a decision not to go on to college would not necessarily upset his parents. "It would depend upon what I was going to do."

Nevertheless, his parents have voiced a clear preference that he attend school in New Jersey and commute. Erv suggests that his parents might have a real problem if he decided to go away since his mother is very attached to him and very protective.

But an opportunity of a job away from home would remain an option after college:

I could foresee going. From an emotional point of view, they would object, but if it was a good paying job, they'd think it was good.

Joanna R. (Grade 12)

Joanna R's grandparents all came to the United States from little towns surrounding Naples. Her father's parents were the son and daughter of a tailor and a silk mill owner respectively, who had settled in Pittsdon. Their marriage was arranged by Joanna's great-grandparents.

It was really like a set-up marriage. That was the first guy that my grandmother ever went out with. My great-grandfather liked him and so that's how they — the Italians — do it.

Joanna's mother's parents came to Jersey City as adults. Her grandfather was an unskilled worker in the Colgate-Palmolive plant. Her grandmother, who never worked, continues to live in the same house in Jersey City.

Joanna's father attended New York University for a year but then entered the Army as a medic. The Army experience, according to Joanna, contributed to her father's suffering a nervous breakdown which has affected his work.

He's a sewing machine operator — making coats. He works for my cousin. He had so many jobs. He's been everywhere — he's very unstable. That's one thing — my cousin could always put up with him so he has no problem because they can't fire him; you know, it's his cousin. . .

Mr. R. regrets not having finished college and Joanna's mother is very self-conscious in her new position as a teacher's aide in a Pittsdon public school.

Sometimes when he gets these guilt trips, he's like, "Look where I am. I sew coats." I feel sorry for him. He's like "Why? I could have been somebody and you kids have had to live here." It's true. He really regrets it. At times he really does. He looks at other people and sees how happy they are, the jobs they have and they don't do anything. And then he wonders, "Why didn't I?"



My mother was working for the telephone company before she got married. But now she has a job as a teacher's aide in School Number 2 with the deaf. Now it's her first year. My mother is very embarrassed because she feels she's uneducated compared to the other teachers there because she just went to high school. So, as she goes into work, she talks to her teacher. But before school everyone is in the teacher's room and they're gabbing away and she comes in about a quarter to nine so she doesn't have to do that. She feels inferior to them. I say to her, "Ma! Don't think like that. You're just as good as they are. So what that they went to college — big deal!" [She responds] "But I feel funny, I don't know why. . . I know why — education is important."

When people talk in big words, she always asks me, "What does that mean? What are they saying?" Like if somebody is talking with her and using these big words, she will be like, "What are you talking about?" I don't think she wants to get in that situation. I don't think it ever happened to her, but I think she just doesn't want to be in it.

Joanna's plans are to attend college.

I want to go to college but I don't know where. A lot of people say that Lambert Pittsdon is no good — that it's a glorified high school. I don't know. I wanted to go there because it's closer to home. It's convenient and I think that wherever a person goes, he'll learn. If you want to learn, you are going to learn no matter what kind of a school it is or how it's rated. . . I think I am going to wind up at Lambert Pittsdon because I want to go into elementary education because I like working with people. Everyone is telling me, "No, no, no. It's a crowded field. Don't do it. You have to put up with those little kids — they're such brats." But if that is what I want to do, I'm going to do it. If you want to do something and if you put your head to it, you can do whatever you want to do.

Have you considered going away to school?

Yes, but I can't do it. I don't think my mother and father would appreciate it too much and I don't want to leave her either. Because if I leave — my brother is almost gone already. He has been going out with a girl for a while now and I think pretty soon he is going to get married. I know she (mother) has my father, but you know.

My parents don't want me to go away. I mentioned it to them because I did want to go away. I wanted to go to Glassboro [State College] and she didn't like it. She said, "No, don't go. No, don't leave." I said, "Just to see how it is to be out on my own — to be away." Because one day — let's face it — I'm not going to be here forever. I tell her all the time — I say, "I'm not a little kid anymore. All right. I'm not grown up yet, but I'm on my way. You have to let go. I'm not going to be your baby forever." She says, "Well, I don't care. I don't care how old you are. You're still my daughter" . . . the whole thing (laughs). Then I thought about it. And I thought, "Well, yeah, it'd be good. It'd be a good experience, but then it would leave me with all these things if I went away: 'Oh, what is she doing?'" I couldn't do it. Maybe I will, and with four years of college maybe I could transfer over if I really wanted to, but I don't think it's that major.

My brother wanted to move out of the house and he wanted to get his own apartment and . . . forget it. She said, "If you leave" — that's how they are. They have a lot of traditions, Italian traditions, that I think she carries down. They both do — a lot of what their parents say and what they think: "What are people going to think?" That's what she's always concerned about — what people are going to think. She says, "If you leave this house, you're not coming back and I don't want to know you," and that's it.

When she says that, what does she believe people might think?

Why are they moving out? Is he moving in with his girlfriend? The same thing for me — Why is she moving out? A girl doesn't do that. Her parents are here. She has a house. Why does she have to move out?

Why do they think that way?

I think they don't want to let go. They don't want to accept it. They're so used to having us there depending on them. They feel secure just by knowing that we're there. Just by saying, "They're home. They're safe." If we were on our own — I know that when I go out — take the car out — my mother, she worries constantly. She's like waiting up for me — even in the daytime. If I have the car, she goes crazy! When she hears a siren she thinks something is going to happen. That's how they are. Just to know that I'm safe. If I were on my own, she wouldn't know what's going on. She'd probably be calling every minute.

It's not just my parents who think that way. My grandparents think that way. Well, for instance, my aunt — she feels the

the same way. She's 33 and she was never married and my uncle the same thing. He's 40. And they won't leave my grandmother. I mean you figure, "Hey! 40 years old. 33 (years old). C'mon!" And they won't leave her.

My parents are old-fashioned but yet they're free with me. They'll let me go out. But a lot of Italian families — forget it. The sons can go wherever they want. The daughters — forget it. And I think for anyone to leave home. . . I think it may be in families, but in Italian families mostly.

The boys can move. My brother has freedom to a certain extent. It's like this — he's the boy. I can never sleep over at anyone's house. But my brother sleeps over at his friend's house. He goes away for the weekends, whatever. I don't know what he does. But he's a boy; he can do that. You're a girl; you can't. Even when I turn 18, if I'm still living in her house, like I've told her a lot of times, "Mom, I'm 18. I can go out. That's it. I'm not going to come in at. . ." "No, no, no, no. As long as you are living in my house — no way." But that's how she is. Even this summer, I wanted to go down to the shore for a week with my girlfriends — just a whole bunch of girls going down there — she doesn't like the idea. "No," because she doesn't know what we're going to do. She's not there. She can't see. Do you know what I'm saying? She has to be there. She has to see.

One time, I went to the Meadowlands to see a soccer game. And she called up the Meadowlands to see what time the game was over. It was the last game of the season. It was that game that Pele came back, and at one o'clock in the morning we were still in the parking lot trying to buck the traffic to get home. When I got home, she was furious. "Where were you? I called the Meadowlands," and on and on; and it was like. . . "Oh, God."

A lot of times she does that to me. She'll let me go out but I have to tell her where I'm going and I have to be home at a certain time. And if I'm not — if I don't call her up at a certain time, she'll come looking for me. One time Deborah and I went out — we went to a dance. There's this place in Newark — I don't know if you're familiar with Newark or not — it's La Casa Italiana. She told me to call her at 11 o'clock and I didn't call her until 11:30. And first of all, she didn't know where this place was and at 11:30 when I called up, nobody was home. So I called downstairs to my grandmother and asked "Where are they? Nobody's home. What is this?" And she said, "Your mother and father have just left." About a half an hour later the phone rings in

the office there and they go — well, there was a band, an Italian band and Deborah was going to sing, so I was to go with her. The only reason I went was because in order for her to go, I had to go. So the office said, "It's a phone call for somebody with the band." So this girl, Carmen, got on the phone and she said, "Joanna, it's your mother!" "Mother?" And she's yelling; and she's on the Parkway, "Where are you?! Why didn't you call me?" and this and that! And the operator cut her off. So she called back wanting the directions on how to get there so I gave the phone to the manager. And around 12:30 she came in — she doesn't care — she came in with her housedress and her slippers and I was so embarrassed. And Deborah was dancing and she goes to Deborah and she says, "Deborah, get in the car! Joanna!" And I was just walking, "I don't know her." And I just quietly walked out and I was so embarrassed. Never again. I learned my lesson.

Everyone knows how my mother is. She always wants to know everything. She's always down-to-earth and my friends come over to her and they talk to her. She loves that. She loves to relate to my friends. It makes her feel good. But she's all right.

What are your career plans?

It's either elementary education or business — working with a large company like IBM and going in for office administration or business management or something like that. I want to be somebody. But I was also thinking that I would be a teacher and then I'd go back for my masters and go into administration.

Would you accept a position that required you to move away from home?

I don't know. It depends on how old I was. It depends on a lot of things. . . I don't know. I really don't think so. I think that — well, maybe a career is important to me, but I think family life is more important. I don't think work is your life.

What would your parents say?

I think they would be happy. They would be proud, but I don't know how they would like it too much moving away. That's the big factor in everything — moving away. I think if I were old enough, maybe they would have to accept it. If they would tell me, "Joanna, go ahead and take it," I think I would, but I'm not sure that they would.

Why are you smiling?

I'm thinking of "The Jazz Singer." It reminds me of that — this whole thing. It's about this person — he's Jewish and he's got cancer and he's living with his father and his wife and he wants to be a singer. He has the chance to be [a singer] and he has to leave his home. He has a choice between his work and his family and he picked his work. I cried. I said, "How could he leave his father like that?" You know, his father was crying and everything. I think I would have stayed because you have everything there, but to him that was so important — that was his whole way of life — his songs and his performing and everything. It really meant a lot to him and so it meant more to him than his wife did. Than his father did. Than his whole New York setting did.

How would you feel being married to a man who has a job that requires you to move around frequently?

I think it would be exciting, but I think that it's a whole different setup altogether when you meet a guy. When you meet a guy and you're married to him and you love him, then they will understand that — my parents will understand. "She's married. Therefore, that's her husband. Now it's time for him — he has to take care of her." That's their philosophy. In other words, if I were on my own, they don't like that [moving away] because they think that it's their responsibility to look out for me, to watch me, to make sure things are okay. They still think that way when I'm married, but it's his job. But I think they would resent him if we had to move around.

Adrienne G. (Grade 10)

Adrienne is a second-generation Italian-American. Her parents knew each other in Salerno, but were married after they arrived individually in Pittsdon twenty-two years ago. Adrienne's mother came with her parents and eight brothers and sisters. Her father left his parents and seven brothers in Italy and came alone.

Both parents did not complete high school in Italy. Her mother attended two years and is a sewing machine operator. Her father did not attend any high school and after working in a bakery for many years, now works in a dyehouse.

My grandparents live in Pittsdon. As each of my mother's brothers and sisters got married, they moved out of the house, but they all still live in Pittsdon. My father left his brothers in Italy but he wouldn't like leaving my mother's family. He likes staying close to the family.

In Italy our family lives in the mountains. My father owns land and wants to build a house there. My mother said she wouldn't mind going back. But my brother said "No!" For schooling, he would rather stay here. I'd like to go back there — I really like it there. They're so friendly. In the area where we live, all my relatives are there. I made so many friends there. I like the mountains and it's nice and clean. It's such a sweet place.

I want to go to college. I want to do something in sports. I like outside activity and I'd like to teach physical education in a high school. I don't think I'll need four years of college but I'll want to have four years of education for another job in case I want to do something more. I'll just get all the education I can.

My parents want me to go to college. At one point, I said I just didn't want to go to college, but my father said, "You should go!" He always wanted me to be better off so he says, "We never got the chance. You've got the chance. I want you to become something." He figures he's worked really hard, he's gone through so much, he wants it to be easier for us. He figures he had seven brothers and not all could go to high school and college but now we have the chance and he wants us to become something — he doesn't

want us to have to struggle like he had to. He doesn't like working in the factory so he says he doesn't want us ending up working in a factory but having good paying jobs and being well-off financially. He figures that with college, you'll have a good education and be happy.

My father has in mind me becoming a nurse or a teacher and my brother a doctor. He says teachers are well-paid and its a good job. He thinks teachers and nurses are good jobs, but I want to be a sports instructor. He says that's not really for women, but then I say, "What about gym teachers?" and he says, "Well, if that's what you want to be."

If I said "no college" he wouldn't mind. He's asked me, "Do you want to go to college and get the education for a very important job?" and I said, "For a sports instructor I'm not going to need too much of an education." He said, "Well, if you don't want to go, I won't force you. It's whatever you want to be." But he told me if I wanted to be something different, I'd probably need four years of college. He says that the education you get will be helpful in the future.

With my brother, they figure that Lambert Pittsdon [College] is a very good college and why do you want to go to California. He thinks that that would be a better education. And they say, "But Lambert Pittsdon is close and you can get a good education," and he said, "Yeah," and then he thinks about it and says, "I really don't think I want to go to California," and he's read about Lambert Pittsdon and thought about it and he says, "Yeah," — he'd like to go there.

I always talk about my career at home. I want to do something for myself, help other people. I want to become something more — not just working in an office — everyone does that. I want to do something special. Like last year, I wanted to start a group to help clean up Pittsdon. I always wanted to help make Pittsdon look better. But I can't organize. I don't know how to start it off — to get everyone together and start a campaign or something. But they've always seen that I want to do something.

I'd always try to find the same thing here that's the same thing as far away. If I had the same opportunity here, then why move away? But if there wasn't anything I enjoyed or was interested in here, I would go there. I'd always come back. It's not like I'd never see them. I'd probably go there and then after awhile probably quit there, not stay there. I'd probably come back and see if there's anything I like here. I figure that if I got to missing my relatives, which I probably would since they're all here, I'd probably say, "I don't like it here because it's lonely. I'll go get something in Pittsdon." I'd try to get something as close to it [the previous job] because, you know, Pittsdon does have

opportunities. So I'd try to find the thing that would interest me the most and see where that leads me.

I wouldn't say, "I'm old enough to do it. You can't stop me." But I'd tell them, I'm going there because I have to get this job and I'll be back. I'll visit as often as possible. They wouldn't really mind. They want me to do something I really want to do. They wouldn't stop me. It's just the idea of going away. They'd probably think, "How are we going to come to see you?" I'd say, "You know. . ." [laughs]. They'd probably let me go. They wouldn't come out and say "Don't take it." They'd say, "Are you sure you want to take it?" and if it were something I really wanted to do, they'd say "All right." But they'd want me to come to see the family.

We're together every day. We see each other all the time. Sometimes I want to do something and they'll say "Will you babysit for me?" and I'll say, "No." I like babysitting but it's just that I wanted to do something else for myself. My relatives will say, "If you don't want to, it's okay." And then if she — one of my aunts — wants to go to work and I say I can't babysit, then she'll say, "All right, then I won't go. I'll stay here." Then I feel guilty — not guilty, but if she really wants to go do something, I can always do it another time. There will be some days when she says, "Are you doing anything today?", and I'll say, "Yes," and she'll say, "Oh, all right." — And she says, "Can you babysit?" and I say, "(sigh), O.K." She says, "I'll try to be home early." And then at night — if I've been babysitting in the day, they will try to do something for me. They'll bring me out to dinner.



Darlina M. (Grade 11)

Darlina M. is a third-generation Italian-American. Her grandparents came to Pittsdon from Italy as married adults. All except her mother's mother, who lives upstairs, have died. Darlina's father went two years to a college or vocational school — she is not sure where because she never asked him. He has worked in a factory making diamond wheels on a machine but recently received a promotion into the office where he's on the phone selling the company's products. "Now he goes to work in nice clothes rather than a uniform." Darlina's mother completed high school and a few years ago went to work as a clerk typist for a supermarket chain.

With her twin sister, Darlina is the youngest in a family of five children. Her sister Dianne graduated from a local state college and is now a teacher in a parochial elementary school in Pittsdon. Beth also graduated from this same college and is now a manager at McDonald's. Carl attended two years of college but left school to work full-time in an A&P. Everyone is unmarried and lives at home.

Are you thinking of college?

I'm kind of in-between. I was thinking of business because I'm taking steno and typing and things like that. But I took all of my college credits here in case I decide to go to college later. My father thinks college is if you want to be a teacher, but if I am going to be a secretary, I really don't need college. My father separates what kind of career I want and then says whether college is important or not.

Does he encourage you in any direction?

No. He just thinks that we should make up our own minds if we want to go.

If you were to go to college, where would you go?

Probably Montclair State. I just can't see myself going away to a new city and stuff. I'd rather stay home.

What led Carl to leave school?

He got an offer for full-time. He didn't like all the work for college — all the homework. He had to stay home and study so when he got this offer he thought about it a lot. He talked to my parents and decided that he wanted to go full-time. They wanted him to finish college, especially since he had only the rest of this year and next to go. They wanted him to finish and get his degree in case he didn't work in the A&P all his life.

Where would you place your parents on the range from very restrictive to very lenient?

Closer to that end (points to restrictive end). Because my mother worries about what we do, where we are all the time. She knows where we are all the time and who our friends are, who we're going out with, what time we'll be home. If we're going by a friend's house, she'll want the number where she can reach us — things like that.

Are there any areas where your parents leave it all up to you?

I don't know. Well, I guess when I wanted to get a job. I told them when I wanted to and they just let me pick where I wanted to work. They didn't tell me I had to work here. I've met people at work and I go out with them. She doesn't say that I can't go out with them. She only wants to know where we are. My mother plays more of a role in this. She does all of the talking. He does too, but he lets her do it.

My brother just bought a motorcycle. My mother and father don't like it all all. Right now, they're discussing it. They didn't want him to buy it, but he told them he was going to buy it.

If you were your brother, what would you have done?

I don't think I would've gotten it. I guess if I really wanted it enough, I'd do it even if they didn't want it. Maybe — I'm not really sure.

Carl, Beth, and Dianne are living at home. Is there any discussion of their getting their own apartment?

Sometimes, I think that they're only fooling around and they'll say they're going to move out. But I don't think they would move out until they got married. They can do what they want. They're not pressured. They have it pretty good. My parents wouldn't say they can't move out of the house because they're old enough to take care of themselves. I guess they'd be a little hurt thinking that they didn't want to live with them, but they would let them talk about the idea that they wanted to be independent and things like that.

If you were to get a job away from home, would you take it?

I'd have to think about it a lot because I'd be leaving my friends and my family both for somewhere that I've never been before. But if it was a good job — exciting — I might try it. My parents would want me to do what's best for me — if I'm going to move up. I think they'd side with going away and having a good job.

Would you consider your family to be Italian, Italian-American, or American?

We're more American, but our ancestors are Italian. We eat macaroni on Sundays and things like that. But we don't talk Italian. My parents talk Italian to my grandmother. She understands a little bit American.

What differences are there between your grandmother's thinking and your parents' thinking?

I can remember when we were down at the shore last summer and my older sister and brother were home alone. My grandmother came down a lot to check on them [to see] if they're okay. She'd want them home early and things like that. But my parents let them do things for themselves. They want them to be home early but they don't have a curfew.

When you look at other Italian-American families do you see differences?

No. Well, my friend Lois — her family is really Italian. They talk American at home, but the whole family knows

Italian because they talk Italian to her grandmother. They're more Italian than my family. They make their own wine and they crush the tomatoes to make gravy. We used to do that. My father told me that my grandmother used to do that, but we don't do that anymore.

Why has that happened?

After my grandfather died, they just don't do that anymore.

Vickie N. (Grade 10)

Vickie N.'s parents immigrated from Sicily to Pittsdon twenty years ago. At that time, Vickie's mother was a widow with four children. "She was alone and wanted to come over to start over again — to make a living for her kids." With the help of Italian friends and some friends of her husband, who provided child care services and other forms of help, she found a job as a sewing machine operator. Vickie's father had left ten brothers and sisters in Sicily and was living alone in Pittsdon working as a machine operator. He is now retired.

There aren't many friends from before. Either they went back to Italy or now, because they're old, they don't have any friends. My father still wishes he could go back [to Sicily]. But he has life better here moneywise. My mother never liked the idea of going back because I could get a better education here and my grades are pretty good. When I finish high school, they will wait until I settle down and then they'll spend six months here and six months there.

In Italy, when you have gone to school, it's not like here where you can get jobs. In Italy, it's very hard to find a job. You go to grammar school and high school, but after that, the women usually get married. People get married at 17 or 16 over there and they just don't do nothing with their lives. But over here, I'd like to get into a career and then settle down later on. If I go to Italy, I do know Italian, but not good enough to get a good position or a good job over there, so I'm better off staying here.

They don't teach you very much over there. They are pretty strict and everything at school, but with an Italian education, you can't get a job anywhere. My mother went only to the first grade. Her mother died and she lived with an aunt and uncle who didn't have enough money to send her to school. She worked instead making blankets or shoes. She's always telling me, "Keep your mind on your books. Don't get distracted. As long as you do good in high school and college, once you get a good job and good career, you'll be nice and settled down. Instead

of. . .look at me, your mother. I didn't get to do any schooling and look where I am — in a factory. And you have to put up with the bosses yelling at you all the time and telling you what to do and you have to do what they say, and everything.

My older sister didn't want to go to school any more because she saw that my mother hadn't gone to school. She knew what it was like in Italy because she was born there, but once she came here, she didn't want to go to school. My mother says, "All right!" and she brought her to work with her and she made her work, and my sister goes "No way! I'd rather go to school." And she did.

I'm not exactly sure yet if I'm going to college. I want to be a secretary or a teacher. I took tests in freshman year and they tell me I was good for secretarial work, but I have more knowledge to do something better. I do want to go to college, but what's the use of going to college if I'm going to be a secretary, so I'm not sure what I want to do.

My father tells me he wants me to get a good job. He doesn't want me to go into teaching because the field is getting over-crowded, and they go on strike sometimes, and they have to do work after school, and all this. But I really like it. I enjoy teaching. In grammar school, since I was pretty good, I got to teach younger classes when the teacher was absent and I liked it a lot. But then, people over here tell me about teaching and everything, so I also like secretarial work. Both my mother and father want me to go into computers because they tell them that computering is good and you get a lot of money and all this. But I'm not interested in computer.

They tell me I should do something I like because that will be what I'm doing for the rest of my life and I might as well like it. Since my father is retired, the government will pay for my schooling although they don't pay everything. They'll sacrifice for me. . .as long as I make something out of my life.

I never thought about living away from my parents. I always thought about finishing school still living with my parents. I'd probably stay with my parents and go to work until I started getting serious with another and then I'd move when I got married. I don't like the idea of living alone in an apartment.

If I moved for a job, my parents would probably decide to move with me. I mean, it would be something big, but they

don't really like Pittsdon either. They always talk of moving. My mother would ask my whole family to go with us — not that they would go, but she would try.

I don't think I'd like the idea of my husband working for a company where we would have to move around from place to place, because I've worked this far for a career, and I want to stay in one place with work.

Susan O. (Grade 11)

My parents were both born here. But my grandparents on my father's side were both born in Italy. My grandfather came over from Sicily as an older teenager with his mother. His father had died. But he still has brothers and sisters in Italy. They were here but they went back again. My grandmother came from Naples. They both settled in Pittsdon. They live upstairs from us and we see them all the time. My grandfather is a tailor. He's been a tailor for all of his life. I 'm not too sure why he came over. I guess for the same reasons — for opportunities that they didn't have over there. On my mother's side most of them were born here. I think their history is Germany. She has five sisters and a brother, but they're all in Pennsylvania. We see them two or three times a year.

My parents met at the Shore — at Atlantic City. When they got married they came to Pittsdon. My father's a mailman. He finished high school but didn't go on to college. He worked in the dyehouse back then, but when he got married, he got the post office job. He doesn't mind not going to college. I guess if he had a bad job, if his life was insecure, he probably would. But we're pretty secure and he likes his job. My mother is a secretary in a grammar school. She was a medical secretary but when my sister (6 years old) was born, she stopped. She just started again.

I see myself as Italian-American because my life — I'm living in America and I have all of that in me, but I also have my family. I always have a bit of Italian customs in me and I see that — not as much as my American customs, but I see enough to say I'm Italian-American.

We always eat spaghetti on Thursday nights with my grandparents, and we have dinner on Sundays with my grandparents, and like, some of the meals are very Italian-based; and then when we get together with family — Italian food, the wine — there's always wine — and things like that. This is just with my father's family. We've never gotten together like that with the entire family.

My mother goes along with it. She doesn't mind it. She doesn't like pizza, but that's Italian and we eat pizza so she'll stick it out. But she doesn't mind at all. She considers herself as Italian too.

My grandfather and father are similar, but I don't think of myself as the same way that they are. In my life, the things I've done now, my father didn't do when he was younger and my grandfather didn't do when he was younger. There's more



responsibility put on us than when they were young — that I'm able to do this, my father was never able to do that. The times changed, I guess. I don't think my father had the possibility of getting all the schooling I did. I'm allowed out. I have to be home by a certain time, but I don't think my father was able to be out so late. I'm not sure about that, but I think that's so.

I think with the Italian families right from Italy it's a lot stricter. I'm not sure. For some reason I think it's stricter. Their parents are more "This is the way it goes!" in what they're able to do — their activities, their grades.

My parents are closer to the independence side but not all the way. They want me to be independent because I'm going to need independence out there where I'll be making my own decisions. They don't want to direct my whole life because when I go out, when I'm older, I won't know what to do. Like when I tried out for cheerleading. The year before I had trouble keeping my grades up. My mother would say, "Well, it's up to you. Do you think you should not try out and keep good grades, or try out and do both?"

But when I got out with my friends or my boyfriend, it's "We want you in before this time or at this time," or "We don't want you in this place." That's pretty much where they want to make sure I follow what they want.

I got a C in Chemistry last year and they didn't like that too much. My father especially — they didn't like the idea at all. I had to bring it up. The next marking period it had to be up or there would be trouble in the house — weekends I couldn't go out — I'd have to study more — study at home.

I want to be a nurse, a pediatric nurse. And after that I want to get married and to have children. I like working with children. I coach the cheerleaders at St. George (School). I like children.

I'm not sure whether I want to go to college for nursing or to a nursing school. My mother thinks nursing school and my father thinks college. My father thinks you need the schooling and my mother thinks you need on-the-job training. Because the nursing school would give you right away on-the-job training.

I was thinking of going away to college. I think I want to go away. My parents are not too sure about that yet. We've been talking about that. The con would be that I would miss my family. Well, see, now they're giving me a lot of

independence. It's giving me decision-making so I would know what to do out there. I'd get a different change of life. I'd be able to see the difference without my parents — being on my own, making my own judgments and things. But far away — I wouldn't be used to that.

I think they (parents) would let me go. Especially if I wanted to go. I think they would let me go because they want the best for me. Not too far, but away from home. They'd let me go.

A career away from home? It would depend on. . . say, I'm twenty-three or twenty-four and now I have marriage in mind. Now if I had a boyfriend that I planned to marry and he was here, I don't think I'd go away. I don't know. It would depend. If I were planning on getting married, I wouldn't go. If I didn't have a steady boyfriend or if I wasn't planning on getting married, I probably would go.

I think my parents would agree. It would depend on me. The career part — I think they'd want me to stay home if I was planning on getting married. I think my father especially wants me to get married and have a husband and have children. That's the way he feels. If I lost that opportunity by losing a fiance and moving away, he'd think I lost an opportunity. If my fiance agreed to come with me, if he didn't mind, sure, I'd go.

Maria P. (Grade 11)

Maria P. is a fourth generation Italian-American. All of her grandparents except her father's father were born in the United States.

On Maria's father's side, the great-grandparents came from Italy to New York City. However, in 1940, after working for a New York City pipe organ business, her grandfather brought his family to Pittsdon and opened a business of his own that built and repaired church pipe organs.

Maria's great-grandparents on her mother's side immigrated from Italy directly to Pittsdon, and the family has lived in a six block area for more than seventy years. Just recently, Maria's grandfather died.

Maria's father jointed the family business immediately after high school. At the present time he works together with the grandfather, but is preparing to take over full responsibility for the business. Maria's mother is a college graduate who has taught first grade in the Pittsdon Public Schools for eighteen years. Her career was interrupted for eleven or twelve years while she had her four children. She resumed work when Maria started school.

Maria has three brothers who work with her father and grandfather. Joseph, 23, is married and lives a few houses down the street. He attended a college for three years, then left to work with his father. Richard, 21, attended Montclair State College for a year, dropped out, and works with his father. Steve, 20, is

majoring in classical guitar at Lambert Pittsdon College and works part-time in the business.

I've changed my mind a lot during the four years in high school. But recently, I've been thinking about plants and agriculture. I was also interested in psychology, but I want to look into that more. I probably will go to college, but I will major in one particular area. I would rather be sure to go to college to concentrate on just one thing.

My parents wouldn't be totally disappointed if I didn't go to college, but they'll back me up in whatever I choose. If I said I didn't want to go, they'd probably ask me to give good reasons and to say what I was going to do — what kind of job I was going to get. But they would probably accept it if I was sure of it.

With my brother, Richard, they had no concern. He was more interested in the business. He was more that type. But they did want him to go on, but it was better for him not to. They wanted him to try longer, not just give up, because it was the first year. My brother couldn't get himself interested in the work or the atmosphere. It just wasn't his style. I think that was mainly the problem. It's not like he doesn't have the brains. It's like he feels that he won't use it. What he's doing now is mostly woodworking and draftsmanship in the organ business.

I am considering going away to college. I have heard that Cook College is good for agriculture, but I'm really uncertain about it. I think it would be better for me to live away from home because I think I'd be able to concentrate better on the work and I think I need to get the responsibilities of living away. I feel that everything has been handed down to me so much. I feel I have to take on something myself — even if it's going to be real hard.

My brother, Steve, is at home and he doesn't have that hard a time, but I'd get distracted easily. The things to do around the house constantly, the little things like that. I do a lot of housework. My brothers will help out but it's like me and my mother taking over everything. Not that it's not good — it's like I just don't have enough responsibilities for myself. I'm relying so much on everything else.

My parents — I guess they feel it'd be good for me, but I don't think they feel as strong as I do. My brothers think I should. They think it will be better for me. They think I need it. My parents would probably think it was good for me, but they'd probably also think that it would be just as good if I stayed home.

I cannot see having a career away — not just yet. Honestly, no. Family reasons, the people I know, the area I'm in. I guess I'm just so used to it, it would be hard to be away from that. I'm secure where I am — not that I wouldn't like to go to other states, but right now, I just can't see myself doing that. Maybe once I start college and get used to that I might start thinking of that.

My father's parents are right next door to us and the company is right next to that. Right after my father got married, he bought the land and built our house, so there are three right in a row. If my aunts and uncles come over, my grandparents come with them, like on holidays and birthdays. But not too often — my grandparents are pretty much on their own, except for my mother's mother who now with my grandfather having died, will come eat supper more often. She lives a couple of blocks away.

We don't really have any Italian traditions — maybe cooking, food. A lot depends upon the family. That's probably the most important thing; the main thing that you could tell we're Italian, because everything is family, everything has to do with family — even your decisions. That's why college is sort of hard. It's more like you're all together. It's not like you're on your own. You usually have to consider your family, their opinions. That's about it where we're Italian. Our grandparents usually don't come over a lot. In most Italian houses, they will every Sunday. We don't really do that ritual every Sunday. Only certain times. It varies. It's never every Sunday we do this or that — it's not like that.

My parents are just below the middle toward authoritarian. Going places, getting involved in certain things — they don't force them but they strongly suggest. Like to take certain courses. They won't force it on me, but they'll try to convince me to go ahead with it when I'd rather make my own choice about it. But I'd say going out -- that's the big one.

It doesn't bother me too much. I'd rather they care about it than not to care at all, but at times, I feel I can make my own decisions on some things. Being the only girl has a lot to do with it. Definitely. We're Italian, I'm the only girl, and I'm the youngest. My brothers had more of a freedom where choice is concerned. They're boys. There's a lot of concern because I'm a girl. It's never late [when I must be home] — around 10:30 or 11:00 — but even when my brothers were my age they had more freedom in staying out late. Maybe not so much as decisions — they [parents] sort of got on their backs too. But there was more freedom to go where they pleased.

Disagreements come mostly about going out — making my own decision — and lately, a lot about religion — some of the ways Catholics are believing in some things. They'll listen to me though. My mother is stronger than my father. My father can agree with the changes but my mother has a hard time seeing what I'm saying.

Anthony S. (Grade 12)

Anthony S. is a third generation Italian-American whose mother's relatives settled in New Brunswick (about 60 miles from Pittsdon) and father's relatives came to Pittsdon. Mrs. S. finished high school and works as a cafeteria worker in a nearby parochial school. Mr. S. completed two years of high school and is a baker.

My father is very Italian in his thinking because he grew up in an Italian culture and the way he thinks is mostly Italian — you know, you work for a living — he doesn't really enjoy life. He sees life as a struggle. He doesn't really go out and if he goes out, he doesn't really enjoy it that much. He works six days a week and that's it.

My father would rate school about "8!" He puts great importance on school because he had very little school. He treats teachers almost like a doctor — almost how you would personally trust a doctor. Whenever we get low grades, he says, "Try to work harder." He says, "If you want a good job, if you want to make something of yourself in life, get a good school." It's sort of a strict thinking but he doesn't play a strong role in our family. I hardly hear from him. If I get a punishment, it's from my mother because she is the person who usually is home. My father doesn't get home until two in the morning.

What are your plans for after high school?

Lambert Pittsdon [College]. I want to stay home because I couldn't afford to move away from home. If money was not a concern I would probably stay home but I wouldn't go to that school. Maybe Seton Hall. I wouldn't go [away], probably to keep the closeness of the family and friends and all. It's not that I'm really scared to go into an environment and to try to make new friends — I think I'm pretty good at that. But because my parents broke up and now they are back together, I feel it's very important that we try to stay close.

Where do you plan to work?

I feel I should stay close now. I know that when I get married, I am moving out of the city — out of Pittsdon. I really don't like the environment of Pittsdon but I do want to go to a place that's racially mixed. I wouldn't want to move out of the state because I like New Jersey.

If you were offered a good position out of state, do you think you would take it?

It would be according to whether I was single or married. If my wife had a job somewhere and was happy at it, maybe I wouldn't. If I moved West, my mother would be upset and would probably talk to me about not taking the job.

Suppose you decided to withdraw from school. What would your parents say?

My mother would probably sit down with me and talk to me and ask me why. But if I really wanted to go through with it and I had no doubt in my mind, she would let me go through with it. She feels that what's right for me is right for me. She would disagree but since it's my opinion — I respect her and she respects me. When I was younger I sort of had a close tie with my mother, so most of my thinking is the same as hers.

Does your family get together frequently?

We used to get together once a week on Sundays, but now it's just on holidays. I'm not really sure why except that it was done so frequently. Maybe [it was] loss of interest.



Michael W. (Grade 9)

Michael W. is a third generation Italian-American whose grandparents on his father's side came from Sicily to Pittsdon. His grandfather worked in the dyehouse and he does not believe his grandmother ever worked. Mrs. W.'s family came from Germany and England. In speaking of his identity, Michael describes himself as "American."

American — that's just the way I feel. The food is Italian. My mom cooks Italian. My father says she had to learn to cook before they got married so my grandmother taught her. I don't think they are too much Italian because they don't talk Italian around the house. My father cannot speak Italian, but my grandparents could. Around my house, it's an Italian neighborhood. When you leave my house and walk into their houses, it's like you are walking into a different country. It's just completely different. You hear them talking Italian and you can't understand what they're saying. They act more like they are still in Italy. Like when someone dies, they wear black for a year. They dress like they do in Italy and they dress their kids that way too. They wear these old-fashioned dresses and funny shoes.

Michael's father has two brothers who are mechanics living in nearby towns and a sister who is a school secretary in a Pittsdon public school and lives in Pittsdon. His mother has a brother who works for the fire department in a neighboring town, and a sister who lives in Pittsdon but does not work.

Our family is pretty close. We get together a lot on holidays. But we see each other a lot at any old time. We all live pretty close together.

Michael's parents both finished high school. His mother is a secretary in a Pittsdon parochial elementary school. His father is a contractor with a major portion of his work contracted services with the Pittsdon Board of Education.

My father fits where he is. He's not the guy who would look good sitting in an office. He's more like the guy who does outdoor work and stuff like that.

My parents make the important decisions. Like if I want to go out somewhere, I can go as long as I don't come home too late. They decide how late I come home. If I don't want to go someplace that they are going, and if they are not going to be gone too long, I don't have to go.

They'd like me to go to college. They have told me that, but that's only if I want to go. They feel it's good to have as good an education as you can get. You can get a job if you have a good education. I don't have any cousins who went to college. I have three cousins who were old enough to go to college. Two went into business with their fathers as auto mechanics and the other got married. The one who got married is moving to Texas. They don't talk about it much but I don't think they're happy with the idea. They [aunt and uncle] are upset about it because they don't really have to move out there.

I'd consider going away to college. It would be according to what the school had to offer. If there was a school close to home that had what I wanted, I'd go there. If it was far away, I'd go there too, but I'd prefer to stay close. My parents would like me to stay close but they know that if I chose a school that was far away, I would go.

If I chose not to go, they would understand. If I decided what I was going to do with my life did not require a high degree of education, I wouldn't go on to college. But I would never think of going to work with my father. When I think of it, it's kind of boring. My father knows that I don't like it so he leaves me alone about it. Last summer, I worked with my father for a while and I didn't like it and I stopped. He said, "If that's the way you feel, it's all right."

Suburban Student Profiles

Angela B. (Grade 12)

Angela B.'s family moved from Jersey City to Rockford fourteen years ago when Angela was three years old. Her father and mother left the city for a home of their own and for what they believed was a safer environment for children. For years after the move, her family returned to Jersey City on almost every Sunday for dinner with grandparents, aunts and uncles, and close family friends. However, with her grandfather's death, and her grandmother's move into her uncle's house in South Jersey, the family get-togethers have almost completely ceased. This year, for the first time in her life, Angela and her family celebrated Christmas at home.

I see people in my family growing more and more apart. My aunt, when she lived with us, I saw her all of the time. I mean she was like my sister — she's exactly ten years older than I, so I always went out places with here. She always took me places. And then when she first moved away, I saw her a lot. Now, I don't see her often. Now I'm not even sure where she lives. Because it was like having an older sister, that bothers me a lot.

I see myself as just American. My father would think of himself as Italian because he was brought up with it. All of his relatives grew up speaking Italian. They all lived within two blocks of each other. It was more intense for him than for me. They never forced me to learn the language. If I wanted to know something, fine. But I was never brought up with it. My cousins understand and speak Italian well. I can understand it, but can't speak it.

My father is very traditional. We have a lot of arguments because some of the things my relatives do I think are stupid. Like what? They have built a \$40,000 mausoleum for when they die and I think that's a stupid waste of money. And they have so many fights over that. . .and things like that. They think things should be done a particular way or they have crazy ideas. Like when my grandfather died they said things to my grandmother that were so stupid. I don't remember what it

was but they made her all upset for nothing. My father said this is the way it has to be and I said, "No, it doesn't," and we had a good fight over that.

Like when they fight. My father won't talk to people that my grandfather might have fought with for God knows how long, and I don't think they even know why they don't talk to whomever they're not talking to. I think it's stupid. My father says, "We can't do this, they did this, they hurt Grandpa." He's more traditional than what he likes to be. I try not to say anything. My mother — she knows what I'm saying is right. She says, "Shh. Leave him alone because he's going to do it anyway."

Mr. B. is owner of his own optics business and is on the road all of the time. Dinner-time seldom finds the family together.

When you own your own business, it's all work and never relaxation. It's hard. I'm never home when my father is home. Like I get home at 12:30 and leave for work at 4:00. I'm home when nobody else is and they say to me, "You're never home. We never see you. We never talk. It's running in and out the door.

With a goal of a Ph.D. in psychology, Angela intends to attend a four-year college. Her parents support her goals.

My mother always says she wants me to get a good education. But she never forces me. Like she won't say I have to go to college or I have to do this. It is my choice. But she says that she wants things to be better for me than they were for her and that if I get an education I'll be better off. I think that they want me to be able to be independent and self-sufficient. It (a college education) is not the salary aspect. It's maybe that it makes you a better individual, because even if you don't get a better paying job, you might be better at whatever you're doing.

My father disagrees that the woman should stay at home. He is traditional but he wouldn't want that for me because he knows me. He still expects to come home and find dinner on the table but my mother plays an equal role in the business. But he's still a male chauvinist. He comes home and throws his clothes down and expects someone else to pick them up, and he's got to have his dinner, got to have his coffee. And God forbid if his paper isn't where it is. . . But he wouldn't want that for me.

And the choice of colleges:

They said it was up to me; that I could go wherever I wanted to go. But my mother said if it came down to a college like Purdue or the University of Illinois, my father wouldn't want me to go. My father says it's what I want to do but no matter where I choose, he's going to go and check the place out first. He'll never let me decide — he's got to be in on it.

Nick C. (Grade 12)

The grandson of immigrants from Naples and Sicily, Nick C. has lived with his family in Rockford for 15 years. The move out of a more urbanized environment and away from his grandparents and cousins was made, according to Nick, for the children's sake. Rockford was "nice and quiet at the time," safer for children, and provided more living space for the family. Nick's father commutes daily to his pallet company in North Arlington, often staying overnight at his grandmother's house. Now, with all of the children in their teenage years, he speaks of moving back to the city.

Although he states that his parents don't appear to care about things Italian, Nick thinks of himself as uniquely Italian.

Even though I don't speak Italian and I probably could not name more than six cities in Italy, I like things "Italian," about Italy, about the way Italians are supposed to be, and what they are. I like every Italian dish that's ever put in front of me.

I don't think my parents take it the way I take it. I always made a big thing about the big get-togethers that we used to have up until I was about sixteen. Now, we've cut down lately — everyone's getting a little older. But, you know, Delores, my girlfriend, asked "What are you doing this weekend?" And I'd say, "Well, I'm going to one of our Italian festivals." I used to label it because it was a big thing to me. I always thought that was nice — you know, being with the family, everyone eating and Italian this or Italian that. I'm Italian and that's the way I like it. I'd like to learn Italian. I could see myself talking Italian. A lot of times I make up words. Like we will be at work and I'll say ". . .whatever" and they (fellow workers) would say "What does that mean?" and I'll say "I don't know."

When I was growing up, on even the little holidays like my grandmother's birthday, the whole family would be up there (at his grandmother's) and we'd all eat together and sing and dance and do things like that. My grandmother would cook up a big dinner of turkey and stuff and it was just

like a Walton's type thing where everyone used to get together.

Families can be close but I think that they can get too close. Now I can see myself and a lot of other kids saying "Well, I'm going to get out and be a little independent and run my own life." You would think that when you're 20 or 25 years old that your mother is going to lay off. But still, you are going to reach a point where you're going to want to just move away and run your own show and then come back, even every week at first. But you're still six days living on your own.

The ambivalence regarding family affects Nick's decisions about college and career.

We were talking about that the other night. A lot of the kids that go to college go away. No matter how far it is, they are going away. A lot of kids go away because they have to break away from their parents and some want to think they just should do it. You know, going away is also fun. Now I feel that I don't have trouble with my parents as far as that goes — a lot of times my mother gets on me a little bit where I almost say, "Gee, I wish I were going away to school." But I am going to Seton Hall and just commuting. I felt that, the first year, because Seton Hall is a good business school, if I don't have to, I wouldn't take the challenge of living on my own. But next year, chances are I'll be living at Seton Hall or going to another school. I won't stay home — not because I don't like my parents or anything like that. It's just that I think it's a move that should be made. I doubt if I'll go to California. When I was looking at all sorts of colleges and when I got far away, like to Colorado or California, they (parents) sort of said, "No, don't do that." They sort of objected and I said "No, too, too far."

As for taking over the family business, Nick states:

Well, I've thought about taking over the business. I haven't thought that I would, but if it came up after four years of college, if I did get my degree in accounting, I might take it. But I don't know if it will be offered to me. But then again, it would seem that I'd follow in my father's footsteps, because neither of my cousins are too bright in school and neither likes the office-type work. They would rather be out there fooling around with the forklift or with a machine just like their fathers, so it is almost like everyone's following in their father's footsteps.



Nick's goals are practical. He sees his girlfriend who will major in liberal arts as not being sure of what she wants and throwing away six or seven thousand dollars to figure out what she's going to do with her life. He sees his father as never regretting that he did not attend a college because it served no practical purpose. He expresses ambivalence about the value of a college education in citing his father as an example: "He didn't need college and managed to do what he had to do. And with the family business, I might not need it either."

Judy D. Grade 10)

Judy D. is a fourth generation Italian-American, although her mother's ancestry is English/Scottish. When asked with what group she identified she responded, "I am one-half Italian, one-quarter English, and one-quarter French."

Ten years ago, the family moved out of New York City to Rockford. They had been living with Mr. D.'s parents. "We were finding a place that was close to New York, that was nice and was a change. We knew that we'd be a distance. We moved out here before my grandfather and grandmother moved out to Long Island, but it worked. We still see her two times a month." Judy's grandmother on her mother's side has died and her grandfather lives in Florida.

Judy's mother completed nursing school and worked as a nurse until she had children. "She had to go back to nursing when my Dad lost his job. But right now, she says it's the last thing she would do. Right now she works in a ceramic studio and teaches two classes." Judy's father completed City College in chemical engineering and is a project manager for Borden International.

## Regarding school:

My parents are proud that I'm doing well. If I do poorly, I'm not going to get punished for it. They'll just say, "I know you can do better," or "You know you can do better." I don't have a lot of pressure at home. If I do well, I do well.

## Regarding the importance of grades:

I want to get ahead. I want to go to college. I want to become a chemical engineer. I don't have pressures from my parents like "I'm a doctor. I want you to be a doctor," but my dad is a chemical engineer. He sits down and tells

me about it. I'll get everything I can out of high school so that if I don't go into chemical engineering, I'll be prepared for whatever career I choose.

Regarding a career:

My number one goal is to be very successful. My dream is to be a dancer with the American Ballet Theater. Being successful is having a good salary, securing a good husband — to be very lucky.

Regarding a move away from home:

I don't know. It would be a hard move, but I'd keep in touch.

Frank C. (Grade 11)

In 1902, my grandfather immigrated with his parents from North Naples to Brooklyn; they live there to this day. My parents met each other in Brooklyn, and after getting married moved to Rockford eighteen years ago. They were very reluctant to come out into the country because of family ties — the closeness of the Italian family is very powerful.

When I went to Brooklyn this summer, I kind of got that nostalgia about going back to the old times. My grandmother always talks about how you just walk down the street and you talk to your cousins and the family is all around the block. Now it's not like that. Everything is scattered out. As a matter of fact, my family is the only part of my grandfather's side who have ever moved out of the City. My grandmother always talks about that — you know, moving out and how it could be if we were together again.

And how do your parents respond to that?

My father always says that it is my mother's fault that we came out. My father's attitude — sometimes it is positive. Sometimes he thinks it's good that we came out, that it's better for me, that maybe I didn't have to go through the mess he went through. Maybe he was trying to get away from that — hide himself, hide myself away.

He said that if we had stayed in New York, we could have built a construction type of thing that would have been very profiting. I just think that's one of the things he always thinks of — he never likes to put it into words but you can understand what he's trying to say. But my mother, I don't even think she would ever want to go back. I think she likes it out in the country.

It was hard for my father because he was not very well educated in his prime life. He went to automotive school and he was going to work with automobiles. But after that, he decided that he wanted to do much more with his life so he went to aeronautical school and then he went to engineering school in Newark and at nights. You know, he has always told me that education is the most important thing. Because when he went to school it was much harder for him. He had to go to night school and this is while he was bringing me up as a tiny tot; and it was hard on my mother.

My father always talks about how he is so disappointed that he did not learn at a young age because in Brooklyn, in New York City, you're very street smart. There were gangs at that time — my father was never part of any gang, but he was always involved with street activities. You know, girls and cars and things like that which in the fifties were very important. I'm sure that his attitude toward school in general was negative. He didn't realize that school was important until, maybe, in his late 20's or early 30's when he started going to college and said, "I have to raise a family now. Why didn't I do this from the beginning?" And so my father sometimes gets very depressed — not depressed in the way you can see it, but he gets upset with himself and upset with everything around him that he did not do the things he wanted to do when he was younger.

My father kind of looks down at the people in Brooklyn. Even when he talks to people he tries to talk at a high level. When his brother is around he tries to say "I made it and you haven't tried to make it." I think he does that, he tries to look down on people because he went through a lot of hell and it was pretty tough for him.

When he thinks of the things he wanted to do when he was younger, he looks at me and we sort of compete together. I don't know why. When I try to talk to my parents it's not very easy because my father tries to bring it to a high level — very high technically. And my father never likes to discuss things with me because its pretty hostile. Here's a good example: I saw a show on "Nova" on Channel 13 and I brought up this discussion that if you drop a pencil, it will never hit the ground — it's a paradox in physics. And my father is yelling at me; he says, "That's impossible!" But I said "Dad, if I take it and drop half and drop half it's infinite and you can't do anything with it." And he gets all upset at me because he thinks that I am trying to learn just the surface details without getting the basis of what everything is; that's something he doesn't understand. I do understand what's on the bottom and I'm just trying to build up to the top, but he always thinks I'm on the top like he was.

Personally, I think that the thing he does with me is a mental block that he has inside of his head. I don't know; I kind of think that my father and I are competing against each other. He says, "Well, I did good on my test today," and then I come home and say, "Well, I got a 99 on my test," and he says, "Oh. That's good." But I think it's a mental block he puts in front of his mind when he talks to me. He thinks, "Frank can't be right. He's talking nonsense."

My parents don't particularly like my going away to college. When I was in the seventh grade, I picked up a Time-Life book of the universe and fell in love with astronomy and ever since then have wanted to go to the California Institute of Technology with the Jet Propulsion Laboratories. But considering the distance, it'd be too far from the family.

My father wants me to go to NJIT. The reason is because they have always kept me very close to the family. We discuss colleges many times at home and distance has always been a problem. You know, keeping away from the family, not being close enough, having an empty seat for four years.

Yet he does see that he's kept me very tight. He wants me to see what the world is really like. If I get accepted I think he will let me go. I think he will have realized that he's trying to ask a little bit too much of me. It's not that I'm having trouble at home but it's just the sense of being free. I guess I want to find out what the world is really like and I think it would be about time that I did because this way I wouldn't have to get out of college and possibly be blasted with responsibility.

As far as a career goes after college, I see me going after a job that may take me away from home. That's kind of scary for me — upsetting the family; having to be the person who did it all — break the bonds. But if my job brings me across the country, I'm kind of devoted to my career and I think I'd go to work there, but I'd certainly try to find something that was close by.

It always comes down to the fact that your family is the most important thing. But sometimes my father breaks from that philosophy and says, "Frank, you have to worry about yourself — you have to worry about what's going to happen to you and stop worrying about what other people are going to be doing.

Do you think it is easier for people who don't have a close-knit family?

I think it's bad. It's detrimental to the person because if you're not that close, you don't know where you are and you cannot find yourself. If you haven't seen your first cousin, that's pretty bad.

When I look at a lot of my friends with parents getting divorced and things like this — as I look at some of my friends, I say to myself that I feel sorry for them that they don't have the things that some people have and that their parents haven't really made the decision to do certain things with them.

Valerie D. (Grade 10)

Valerie D. is a second generation Italian-American whose parents immigrated to Pennsylvania in the 1950's. They knew each other in Italy but married in Pennsylvania. Later, they moved to a small suburban town in New Jersey.

Five years ago, the family returned to Italy to spend one year there with Mr. D.'s entire family on a farm. However, after one year of seeking work, Mr. and Mrs. D. and their three children returned to Rockford.

The distance from father's relatives in Italy and mother's in Pennsylvania make it most difficult for Valerie's family to get together with relatives. Still, Valerie describes her family as "pretty close." However, in New Jersey, "we don't have many friends in the neighborhood."

Mr. D. graduated from high school and is self-employed as a general contractor. He takes care of a church in a nearby town. Mrs. D. attended college but does not work.

I was thinking about going to Italy to college. My sister went to John Cabot College there and I'm thinking of the same thing. The distance doesn't bother me. I've gotten used to going back and forth to Italy. I have cousins and aunts and uncles in Italy that I would see. My parents would be happy if I went to school in Italy. They're planning on going back.

Going to college will pay off getting a job. The graduate from high school can't really have a profession. In college you take courses for your profession.

I'm not sure, but I don't think they'd be upset if I did not go to college. I haven't really talked to them about it. But it was basically their decision for my sister to go to college. She majored in English, but she's not certain where she wants to work. My parents don't say much.



If I do well, I do well. Sometimes they tell me I study too hard. But they always will mention when we have company how well I'm doing. They're happy but they don't go crazy.

Cindy D. (Grade 12)

Cindy D.'s parents are life-long residents of Rockford. Her paternal grandparents settled there and established a sawmill and lumber yard which her father and uncles now operate. Her father attended two years of college — "enough background to keep my grandfather's business" — and her mother completed two years of a business school.

I guess everyone has a goal in life. My goal is to be a news commentator. You get the facts right from the horse's mouth where you're working. I know a lot about current events and it's always interested me, and I've written for the newspaper. But when you're right on top of everything there's a lot of knowledge to learn. It will be a hard goal to reach. I guess I have more of a step ahead because they're hiring more women for news commentators now but I've written to different news commentators to ask them what college experience and work experience they had before they made it to the top and it's been a lot.

Once in a while my parents tell me about the consequences I'm going to have to pay — what might happen. They want to get me thinking. I'll sit there and I'll say, "Oh, yeah, that would be great. . . go to Iran and cover this story, cover that story. Go to Washington." My mother would say, "Yeah, all right. And you miss Christmas, miss the family gatherings." And it gets you thinking. You give up.

Family gatherings are very important. I couldn't have lived a better childhood and adulthood now. We have a very close family because my father's side — he had a large family of ten kids — and my mother's side — six kids. It's really close.

I have six cousins my age and they're all graduating this year or next year, so we're all in the same set age where we're just entering college and planning our future. We'll all sit there and say, "Oh, yeah, we've got a lawyer, a doctor, a business woman, an engineer." Everyone in my family is well-educated. My brother is an engineer and I have cousins at MIT. Seven or eight Villanova alumni are in my family. That's where I am going. It has a good reputation and everyone loved it.

Was your father disappointed that your brothers did not go into business with him?

He got over it. He knows how hard he works and the long days and the packing of wood, the deliveries, the sending of wood there, getting shipments and headaches in owning a business.

Are you concerned about leaving home?

No! I can't wait! I can't wait to see different faces, different views. I can't wait to go away. I guess Rockford is such a small town that you want to break away.

You see yourself being able to break away?

Oh, yeah, I guess so. I hope so. I hope that it won't be like a tragic leave and painful. But I doubt it because everyone will realize that it's for the better. My brother went to school in Pennsylvania, got a job in Philadelphia and didn't want to come home. He'll make it home every holiday but my parents realize that he's there and that's what he's going to do.

I'm not going to go like some kids and go wild and crazy in college and live it up. I know what I'm there for. I know I'm paying for an education there and I'm not going to abuse it. I'm just looking forward to not being so dependent upon anyone — walk my way and get what I want by myself.

Would you raise your children differently from your parents?

No, not at all. I would feel more comfortable not with someone with a Jewish background but with someone who was brought up as I was in a strict Italian home, Catholic. . . whatever. It doesn't have to be that set, but I think it would be the most well-put relationship. I find things still to be very, very tight. I used to think that, "Oh, when I am 18" and they would say, "As long as you're living under this roof, it doesn't matter how old you are. You follow by the rules." Once in a while, when you get in an argument with your parents they say, "When you have children, you'll know what it's like." But then I think back and everything that they did was for my own good.

Mark E. (Grade 11)

Mark is a third generation Italian-American whose roots are in Rockford, New Jersey. In 1905 his great-grandfather came from San Petito, a small town near Naples, to Rockford with his wife and five year old son and established a construction company that remained in operation until seven years ago when his grandfather retired and the business dissolved. Mark comments: "I guess everyone wanted to go in their own directions — go their separate ways." Although all of his relatives live in Rockford and he sees them in the stores and on the street, Mark and his immediate family do not get together with them very often.

I asked Mark if he considered himself to be Italian, Italian-American, or American.

"American" because I don't really feel that Italian has. . . I mean, it's my heritage but we don't live like Italians with spaghetti every night and anything like that. . . My father would probably answer that question "Italian-American." And then my grandfather would say "Italian." I think that's how it is, you know. The second generation would be Italian-American and the third generation would be American.

My parents don't push us in any direction. They let us decide on our own. They aren't really strict. They're firm but not real strict. Like I can come home at 2:30 and they'll ask what hour I came in but they won't jump at me at the door. I think that with my brother, sister and me, we've shown responsibility and they know we'll not get into trouble.

Mark's brother attended Glassboro State College and then transferred to Indiana University where he received a business degree. His sister is now majoring in child development at Glassboro and Mark himself is looking forward to a masters degree in engineering.

Your parents never went to college. Do you know why?

I don't think a lot of people had the money. Those were hard times. And I guess he graduated around 1945 or 1946, right after the war. But I think he just went into the family business that was already started. I guess he never felt the need.

How do your parents see a college education today?

I think more necessary and like I said, they're not real Italian like "Prince Spaghetti Day." I don't think that they really push us in any direction. They let us decide on our own. It's what we pick. They think it's a necessity. . .for jobs. It's tough enough now to get a job with a degree. Without a degree it's almost impossible and they haven't had the education and so they want us to have the education.

Do you plan on going away to college?

It is sort of interesting. I've always lived here — I've lived in the same house all my life. I think that's one of the reasons why I've done better too. I don't think moving around is very good. Now, if I get the ROTC scholarship, after that you get commissioned and I'll probably have to be employed for five years there; but after that, I think I'd settle down, but I'm not sure whether it would be here. . . My parents are moving — it'll be a change for my father — he knows everyone in town.

In going away to college I think that you've pretty much severed your family ties. The day you come back, it's pretty different. As for a job, my father wants me to go to where (there are) more jobs and more money than to where there are less jobs and more competition. It's where the opportunity is. I'll go wherever the job takes me.

Bob G. (Grade 12)

On my father's side, my grandfather and grandmother came from Italy. They both moved here when they were nine or ten. They met here. On my mother's side, they've been here longer. They were in Canada and then they moved down. They're French and Italian. My mother's parents lived in Corston and then Rockford. My father's parents did live in Altville and now they live in Williams Falls. My grandfather started off until ten years ago selling cars. Now he and my father buy and sell real estate and stocks.

My father does a lot of things. He owns some property, and he has some people who are his partners in owning an apartment building and some property. They rent it out or they'll sell it and people will build on it. He owns little pieces in Saltonbury and Altville and he'll buy and sell them. He's always watching stocks. And there are a couple of people he advises. These two guys have a lot of money, but they don't know how to invest it and my father is real good at investing money so they come to him for advice and they pay him for that.

My mother used to work before the kids were born. She was a fantastic secretary. She used to be, in her day, the fastest typist. But when she had children, she stayed home and I don't think she wants to work.

My father went to Villanova for one year but he never went back because he came to work in the car dealership with my grandfather. It didn't matter if he finished college or not, really, because it wasn't like now where you have to finish college and have good grades and everything to get a good job. He had the job because of his father and he was going to run it anyway and his father needed him right then to help him. They were into racing cars for awhile. My father was chief of the pit crew. He tuned it up and made it run. He knows everything about them.

I'm going to go to college like my brothers. I have two brothers — one graduated from Notre Dame last year and one will graduate this year from West Point. I've always wanted to go (to college) and my father wants me to go. If I was going to be maybe a mechanic, I might not need it, but I want to be a finance major. For a while, I wanted to be a lawyer but then I saw how much school it takes and I didn't want to stay in school that long. I'd like to get out there on my own a little bit. I think I'll come back here and work with my father, or first get a job with a bank and then after five years, take over my father's business. He'll be ready to retire.

I want to go to college so I can learn more and understand. If you don't, you'll be way behind everyone else. So many people are there who went to college and you'd never be able to get a job like them without a college diploma. Not just that — you wouldn't know, you wouldn't understand. It's like my walking into a calculus class — you don't know what they're talking about. Your whole life would be like that. You wouldn't understand; you'd feel stupid.

My parents encourage me a lot. They, like if I do bad, they're not like some parents: "Oh, you didn't get an A+. You can't watch TV. You can't leave the house." They're not like that. They get mad if I could be doing. . . . If I do my best and still get a C, that's fine — if I can't do any better myself. But if I get a B and I could get an A, then they'd be very mad. They want me to do my very best because they want to teach me to try my best and not be one who tries a little bit. They're trying to teach me to give my best all of the time.

My background with my family has encouraged me to do well. My brothers and I have been allowed the independence to choose our direction. Whatever suits us is fine. Really it's not that much independence, but college choices are ours. I should be higher, but I don't work at it hard enough. I think too much about sports, but I don't feel like being a bookworm and going home and studying all the time. I enjoy sports a lot — soccer, basketball, and tennis — I love it. Books come first for my parents but they say "You have to have some fun too. You're not a computer." They encouraged me to go out for sports and were most supportive and would never make me quit. If I failed, they might, but I'm not near failing.

My brother is working in a bank in Detroit. He promised my parents that he'd move back to New Jersey when he has kids. But he says it might be five or ten years because they're not going to have kids for a while because they're both working. She got a real good job for 3M. She's earning more than he is. She's really smart — she's a chemical engineer. But that's where the wedding was and that's where her family is. But he will (move back). He wants them to be near Mom and Dad. And they would like him to be near. They miss him and, like, they still talk to him every week. They'll call him. I don't know about his wife's parents. Family means more to Mike than to Cathy.

Our family gets together pretty often. Every holiday we go down there (to grandmother's). She's a fantastic cook — ah, the best foods you ever tasted in your life, so no one ever missed a holiday reunion — no excuses because no one wants to miss it. And we go down to visit and see them at other times and my father sees his father every day at work. We'll see them at least twice a month.

My mother is almost as good an Italian cook as my grandmother now. Because my father — my mother couldn't cook anything Italian when she got married — told my mother to go over to my grandmother's house and she gave her recipes and stood over and watched her make it. Now, she's a really good cook. I wouldn't say we eat mostly Italian food. It's my favorite but it's not really their favorite.

My brother didn't marry an Italian girl — I wonder what her name is — Dilworth — they're not Italian. That had nothing to do with it — not even joking. They'll ask "What is she?" Just curiosity really — to find out if she can cook Italian because my brothers all like Italian food. But I think religion has a lot to do with it — we being Catholic. You see, my mother wasn't Catholic, but she turned Catholic and now she's really devout. Not that they would say "Never" but they'd question him about it and it would definitely be an issue.

It's not Italian but Catholic. There's a big difference between what Catholics think and Jewish. I don't think it's anything to do with Italian. It's like, just the whole attitude of a person — the way they bring their kids up. It seems — now, I don't want to say anything against Jewish people. It's just that Jewish people are brought up a little snottier. Like my parents brought me up and taught me to be nice to everybody, friendly. And also the Jewish kids, I think, at an earlier age were brought up faster. Like more maturely. Not more independence — I'd say I'm more independent, but they were at an earlier age. Like they were taught things before I was about everything in life. But now, I'd say I'd be a little more independent than they — they're shakier. By "independent" [I mean] you can be responsible for yourself and you don't always need your mother and father around. You can do things on your own and you can live by yourself.



Kathy I. (Grade 12)

Kathy's grandparents came from Italy around 1930. Her parents met in high school, and after a few years of marriage moved to Rockford. Kathy, with her two brothers, ages 28 and 9, and her sister, 24, were born and raised in one house. "I've been in Rockford all of my life and I plan on staying here."

My father works for the Town Recreation Department. In the summer, they work on the fields and in the winter, they work in the schools and on the roads. He used to be a construction worker but about five or six years ago, they laid everyone off.

My mother doesn't like people to know she works. She works at night as a nurse's aide at St. Stephen's [Hospital]. She does that for the money. She works the 11 to 7 shift because my brother is 9 and she always likes to be home when he gets home from school or goes off to school. My father goes to work at 7 and my brother doesn't get off to school until 8. My mother is trying to get some office work. She really doesn't want to work but she has to.

I plan on going to college for marketing and getting into a job with a company, not like Bamberger's but a company that does research; then after two years getting married and stay with the job a while until I decide to have a family. Then I'll stop unless later on, when the kids got older, I'd go back to work.

I think that if I were not going to college, my father would totally disagree. He would say I'm not going to get anywhere — that I need some sort of degree. He says he thinks you need it to get on in life the way things are these days with money. They'll look at the four year degree more than the two year degree or the high school graduate. They wouldn't really yell but we'd sit down and talk about it. They'd talk it out and let me think about it — all the consequences, the good points and the bad points and then they'd let me do what I want. They wouldn't force me. They like that I know where I am going. I'm pretty set in my ways. I sort of have something to look to. I don't have an attitude like I don't care.

My father could not go on to school. His father died in the War and he supported his nine brothers and sisters and then it was the Service. My mother had no money to go to college.

Would you consider leaving home to pursue a career?

If it were just my family, I might, because, I don't know, it's not like I have to live anything else there. I've done what I had to do there. As a woman, I think I have to go and get married and start my own life. With my family, I'm starting to end it if I am going to start my own career anyway. They could at least come out to where I am and visit. It would be a hard decision, but if it were that good a job and it really had a lot of pros for it, I'd probably go.

I don't think my parents would like it. They always like it when my brother and sister come over and they only live in Corston and Lake Tonnesoni. They wouldn't say "don't go." They wouldn't discourage it if it was good for my way of life. But they would always think that I could get a better job here.

My parents are in the middle because some parents are too lenient and some are too strict. I've had a brother and a sister who have broken through the barriers like time and going out. But they always want to know where I am and what I'm doing. With my father, I think he wants me to have a social life, but I think he's afraid to let me go too far. I think he's more afraid of just losing me.

I'm getting older and it's the strictness — the strictness has to be stopped at a point. I've learned the lesson, I know what's right and what's wrong and now it's up to me to go through with it.

But for my father, it's always family — family everything because they are a big family. They're all Italian and they're always together; you know, the big Sundays, and they knew everybody in the neighborhood. That's the kind of family they were. So it was like the big family things all the time. That's why I think my father is so more or less loving and stuff — the family. It's always the family. "Do for the family" is his big thing. "Don't worry about anybody else."

That's the way it was whenever I went to my grandmother's. There would be people there that you wouldn't even know — tons of people in this house and like, they'd all be my father's sisters and brothers, my aunts and uncles, and all the kids — they'd be running around. But there would be my grandmother's friends — she lived in the middle of the town and there were stores and she knew everybody and she would always bring everyone into the house. There were always so many people in the house but she always had one pot on the stove

and it fed everybody — it fed everybody! (laughs) And there was always leftovers! You could never figure it out. It was really funny.

I think my father misses it because he talked about it lately. The other day we got into a conversation. He doesn't talk much so this must have been something he really felt because I just woke up one morning and we were talking. We get into conversations about his mother because I remember a lot and I used to go down there a lot with him. I think he misses it because, well, he misses his mother a lot. The big family get-togethers are not as much because she's not around. That was always the big thing — going to Grandma's, but now it's hard because you can't say you are going to your aunt's because they're busy with their own families — you have to check, you have to do this. My grandmother was different. You could go down there whenever you wanted and surprise her. She was always there and she loved it. The big thing now is when my uncles from California come home — that's when everybody really gets together. They end up at one person's house and then everybody goes to that person's house. Because you never see them. When they come back, it's a big thing.

Family life is good. Everybody wants to know what you are doing. Everybody wants to talk to you about what you are planning. Everybody says "That's good." It's encouragement to have people there and to know — I mean if your family is fighting, how is that going to make you feel? You're going to go to school but you'll not want to go to school and not care about anything because that's all you think about — that fight or whatever. But, if you have a very helpful family life, I think it does a lot for your life. It makes you, uh, I don't know, like life.

I don't think it's like that anymore. Everybody has their own little family now and they have things to do. They're going on trips, they're going here, they're going there. Everybody's working so it's hard. It has to be some kind of big vacation like Christmas was. They always get together on Christmas.

But I think you can still have a family life within the family if you make it that way. And everybody has friends — I guess it can be that way.

I think my parents will always be here. They're more or less settled. My sister — I don't know — she will never get married. She's always talking about money but I think she'll stay here. And my brother too — he's a big worrier. He

wants to have a life of one direction so he can keep track of what's going on. I don't think they can leave.

I want to stay here because I was brought up here and there's not really all that wrong with Rockford. It's a cute little town. So I may go — move just because of a job, but I think I'd like to stay here.

I don't think it will ever be what my grandmother's house would be. Hers was just something that, like, was. It wouldn't be like that. There are only three or four of us. I think it'd be different. We would have get-togethers, but it will be different. It just will.

Claire S. (Grade 12)

Claire S.'s parents came to the United States from Sicily twenty-five years ago. They came with Mr. S.'s parents and family of three brothers and a sister. However, within a short time, his parents and a brother returned to Palermo. All of Claire's mother's family remained in Sicily.

Claire's parents established a delicatessen in Lodi, New Jersey. But after seventeen years, they sold the store and moved to Rockford. A self-educated man with no formal schooling, Mr. S. secured a few different positions before acquiring his present job as a supervisor of maintenance for an insurance company. Mrs. S. went back to work behind the counter of a delicatessen once the last of her four children went to school.

My mother, she stopped at the ninth grade. She sees us now and she tells us, "Go to college if you would like to, but if I were you, I would go." Right now my mother is kind of depressed that she did not go on learning more and she says that we should be very thankful that we are going to schools and have colleges to improve our education. She feels that she hasn't learned enough and she feels kind of stupid. That's how she feels. Like when I tell her that after high school, I plan to go on to college, she says "That's the best thing for you. Don't be like me. Get an education. Do as much as you want. Your ability will be much better." But with my father, he regrets it. Back when we lived in Lodi he used to go to night school, but he felt that he couldn't learn as well as he did when he was a child in school so he stopped. My mother wanted to go to night school but her problem was speaking. She couldn't speak very good English and she was having a rough time. She tried to go to night school but it just wouldn't work and she stopped it. Now she wants us to get all the education we can get from school.

My sister and brother go to County College. You see, my father thinks that going to college is very, very important because he feels that we still know what we finish in high school. He feels that I may forget what I learned, and I

feel that maybe he is right. My mind won't be as fresh as it would be if I waited a year because I'll be working and I won't be learning that much. He feels that to continue is a lot of good because you can find yourself a nice job in whatever field you're taking, and that when you have a degree, you're liable to get the job first before the other person behind you who did not go to college.

Going away to college scares me a little bit because I'm just so close to my parents. They've done so much for me and I depend on their love. I feel that if I do go away on my own, it would be a big experience for me. It would be different — instead of turning around and just looking at my mother and father sitting there waiting for me to do a certain thing that I should do. If I were away, I think it would be a nice experience. I would want to be my own person and just do as I please. But now to go away — I feel like County [College] is good for me and I just want to take it slow.

I want to be a fashion designer. I have a lot of knowledge. I want to use it. I don't want to work for McDonald's or at the Mall. My father has said that if I find a job that has to locate me to other places and I think it's right, I should do it. "But," he says, "think of the family." I say, "The family is most important to me. I do think of the family. But if that's my job, how would you feel?" He says, "It's your own life. If that's what you want to do, to go to different parts of the country and you want to do a lot of things, then go ahead. You have my permission as long as you are happy doing what you're doing." But he says that for me to move away — in a way, he gets disappointed. He thinks that he will lose the family and never see me as I'm moving from one place to another. He thinks that I won't be thinking of the family that much — that I would just forget.

But it's not true. I told him, "You made me and you made me the person I am today and I am very grateful for what you have done for me. I won't forget the family that easily. I will call from wherever I am. I'll keep in touch and on certain holidays, I'll come back and visit." But he says, "If you feel that it's right, then you have my permission to do it."

Right now, he won't pressure me, but when the time is there, I think he will pressure me. Right now, I think he is being very open with me about how he feels. Then, he'll look at it a different way. That time will come. When the time comes, we'll talk about it.

My brother is highly rated as successful. He is in computers. My father expects a lot more from my brother than from the girls. All he expects of us is to clean the house.

If my father came home and saw me cutting the grass, he'd get mad. He'd say, "What are you doing that for? That's a man's job!" and that would bother me because I'm saying a girl can do this kind of job too. I'm capable of cutting the grass. I did it once before and he was furious. He said, "That's a man's job." And I said, "I'm sorry. I can do it just as well as he can do it." I said, "Just because he has muscles and I don't — that doesn't mean anything." And he just said to me, "Well, I don't think it's right." But I feel it's right and we see it in a different way. He sees it through his eyes and I see it through my eyes.

It has been difficult. My father is very strict. He has learned to carry out whatever his father did to him and to this day he is doing what his father did, and we have learned to cope with the kind of person my father is.

It's very difficult for me to go out because my father sees how the environment is today, and he sees what the kids are doing. He feels that we may get the urge to do what they're doing. We've explained to him that, "Don't worry; we can handle ourselves," but sometimes he just doesn't want to believe us. He is still afraid and he's just holding on to us like tight ropes.

Like he's afraid when we go outside at night. When we go out on Friday nights, we have to tell him where we are. We have to be specific where we are. He'll call up there and we will have to be there. If we're not there, then he'll panic. He's still very scared.

One night I told him that I was going to my girlfriend's house. He said, "Okay. Fine, but I want you home around nine o'clock." And I said, "But Dad, it's too early." I just wanted to be like everyone else and be out 'til 11:30 or 12:00. And I said, "I'll be there." Now, I'm not the kind of person who would lie to my parents. And I said, "I'll be there. Here's the number where I'll be. If you want anything, call me." So then about 8:30 or 8:45, my friend and I decided that we'd go for a little walk. So before you know it, it was about 9:30 and we still were not back to the house. And I said, "Oh, my God! It's 9:30!" and we ran over to the house and I asked my friend's mother if my father had called and she said "Yes," and I started crying because I knew the trouble I was going to get.

So around 11 o'clock, I went home and my father was standing there and before I knew it, he started yelling and he hit me — he hit me with a strap. He didn't hit me hard, but he hit me hard enough to hurt, and I started crying. He said, "Where were you? You told me you'd be there. You lied to me!" And he was yelling and I was crying. The next day I woke up and I was grounded for the next two weeks. Ever since that day, I will never do that again. To this day, I tell him exactly where I'm going to be. If I'm going some place different, I call. I've learned my lesson. That was it. That was the worst experience of my life.

I've experienced that my father cannot give me independence. I want him to trust me. He's checking up on me and I don't like that. But that's never going to change — he's always going to be that way. He still doubts me — "Are you sure?" I say "Trust me, Dad. Please trust me."



Gina T. (Grade 12)

In 1930 my grandparents came to Brooklyn from somewhere in the south of Italy. My grandfather was a tailor and he worked in Brooklyn until two years ago when he returned to Italy with my grandmother and they both died there. My dad was very happy that they got to go back home.

Most of my relatives live on Long Island. My father met my mother in Brooklyn and they moved to Rockford 12 years ago. He owns a liquor store but for the last three years he's thought of selling the store. Before that he worked for a company that moved a lot. In two years we lived in Georgia, Tennessee, and Wayne (N.J.).

We don't know any of our neighbors. We know them by name and face only. There are many Italians in the neighborhood but no native Italians — only Rockford Boro Italians. What's a true Italian? Claire S.'s family. We're not like my grandmother who was 100% Italian all the way — the food and the traditions.

My father went to Villanova on a track scholarship and graduated in 1948. I'm going to York College. It was the only place I got accepted. I had four choices, all in Pennsylvania. I liked Pennsylvania — my sister lives in Susquehanna, but York was my last choice. I still don't want to go there. I didn't like it. It's too far.

My family always compares me with my sister. She was always in honors and I would always just miss honors by one course. I don't think they really realized how bad I do until I applied to schools. Although my grades and rank are pretty good, we all were surprised that I didn't get into more schools.

My parents feel that we should go away to school. They thought that I should see what it was like. And I wanted to because if I stayed home and went to school here, it'd be like going to high school and I wouldn't get half as much done as I would by myself. I'd end up getting a job and put that before work. I want to go away but it's just that York was my last choice. We'll see.

I probably would not have thought about leaving if my sister didn't go to NYU. She didn't want to go at all because she had a boyfriend she knew for a long time, but my parents wanted her to go. They kind of gave her no choice. Like they didn't force it — she didn't get all upset. It's like me. I take it for granted that they want me to go. I know they do. Why? To get the most of it and to be on your own.

I plan to major in marketing. My parents think that you really don't get anywhere without your college education — with out a degree — because my mom works, and if she just had a college diploma, she'd get a lot more money for doing the same job. I had wanted to go into Fashion Merchandising but my parents don't want me to go into the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. First of all, it's in the middle of the City, and I wasn't sure it was exactly what I wanted — just fashion. I wasn't too crazy about it. I wanted a small school anyway. I guess I could have if I really, really wanted to.

I want money in my job. I think that when you work all day it ought to be something that you want. I worked at Bamberger's and I loved it. I was working in the Juniors Department which is my size and working with people my age. I got to know the manager real well and got to do a lot of things she does. I'd do secretarial work part-time, maybe, but it seems boring sitting behind a desk.

My mother wants me to have a career and be happy with my job before getting married. But my father — he thinks the woman should be in the household cooking dinner and washing clothes. He doesn't like the idea of my mother working. But I really don't know exactly how they feel — I don't talk to my parents that much.

Paul V. (Grade 12)

Paul is a fourth generation Italian-American whose ancestors settled in Rockford. His parents met each other in high school and have lived in the same house since they married. Paul's father is an assembler in a local factory and his mother does not work. Both parents completed high school.

Paul credits his grandmother as the "glue" of the family. It is her traditions and values that keep everyone together.

If you were describing who you are, would you consider yourself to be Italian, Italian-American, or American?

"Italian-American." Italian is the background — everyone has to have a background — what they are. American is what I am now. It's a good mix of today and my grandmother's traditions.

Differences between my family and others are not an issue for me. It depends upon where you live. Like in the cities, there's an Italian section and a Jewish section and I guess if you're all together and you're the same type of people, then maybe your traits are more distinctive. But up here it's mixed.

I think it depends upon who you're gathered with. Like I notice when we get together with my mother's family where there are a lot of traditions, you sort of go along with them more than if you were to get together with friends who are totally different. My parents lead two lives. Family is one thing and friends and neighbors is another. A lot of it is together. Most of my parents' best friends are Italian. But there's a Polish and an Irish too. . .

There's not a whole lot of difference between me and my friends. The only difference I find is that I seem to look at things more realistically — what's coming up. I look at things logically. A couple of my friends dropped out recently. We've been together since we were very young. It's not different interests — it's that I look at things logically — realistically — at what can be done and can't be done. It's great if you can do what you want to do all of the time and plan things out, but things just don't work

out that way, and you have to accept things like that. I think I've been taught that way mainly by my dad. My mother is more "spur of the moment." My father thinks things out — the way things have got to be.

Paul intends to go to a four-year college and stay at home.

There's something to do. I figure you have a place to live, stuff to eat, all your friends are up here. Why bother starting over. I will stay around here. There's a lot going on — we're close to the City (New York), close to a lot of stuff.

If you were offered a job opportunity in another part of the country, would you take it?

That would have to depend upon what it was. If there was a great, great difference in money, then I'd probably. . . you would have to take it. If I were to go to college for let's say, accounting or computers and if I were to get a job up here, and then I were to get a very good raise or something that made it really worth it — that I always wanted to do or that I'd been working for — as much as I wouldn't want to leave, you'd have to take it because it's what you're working for. You've got to take the opportunity while you can get it. It would be a waste working for something and when you get the shot at it, you're not going to take it. But it would have to be a great difference. It would have to be something I really wanted to do — overly persuading me to go that way. Other than that, I'd stay right here.

Would your parents be upset if you moved?

I don't know. We never talk much about that.

