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THE ITALIANS OF BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS: TRADITION, CHANGE AND INTRAETHNIC DIFFERENCES

by *Valentine J. Belfiglio*

*“San Antonio ... the Venice of the Texas
plains.”*

Mason Sutherland¹

This paper will explore tradition, change and intraethnic differences among Italian-American families whose ancestors settled in Bexar County, Texas, before 1920. After a historical overview, it will contrast immigrant and contemporary attitudes towards fertility, child-rearing patterns, sexual behavior, friendships and memberships in clubs, and attitudes towards verbal arts, music, and sculpture. Finally, it will contrast the beliefs, technology, norms, values, and language (including nonverbal communication) of Italian immigrants and contemporary Italian-Americans. It is hoped that this study will lead to a better understanding of the Italian subculture in Bexar County, and the ways in which that subculture has been affected by the dominant, Southern Anglo-American culture.

A Historical Overview

On June 13, 1691, a Spanish expedition commanded by Captain Domingo Teran, stopped at the Indian village known as Yanaguana. They renamed the place San Antonio, in honor of St. Anthony of Padua. A later expedition in 1709 gave the same name to a nearby river. Bexar County, including San Antonio, became part of the United States when the U.S. Congress admitted Texas to the Union on December 29, 1845. Prior to the American Civil War, trade by team trains between San Antonio, Mexico, and New Orleans, was the main source of revenue for Bexar County.²

After the war, freighting and the cattle industry added to the growing prosperity of the area. On February 19, 1877, the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railroad arrived and capital, building, and tourism increased. By 1883 it was possible for immigrants to reach San Antonio from New Orleans via the Texas and New Orleans Railroad.³ Capitalistic opportunities attracted Americans and Europeans bent upon improving their standards of living, and the population of the country more than doubled between 1880 and 1900.⁴

It is difficult to determine exactly when Italians first settled in Bexar County. Spanish authorities listed an Italian living in San Antonio in a survey of Spanish Towns taken between 1777 and 1793.⁵ Vicente Micheli, a native of Brescia (Lombardy), in northern Italy, moved to San Antonio around 1806. He bought the Rancho de San Francisco and a general mercantile store and became quite prosperous.⁶ Another northern Italian,

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Giuseppe Cassini, of San Remo (Liguria), settled in San Antonio in the 1820s after a sojourn in New Orleans. He established a general mercantile store, and bought and sold real estate.⁷ Several other northern Italians sailed to the United States from Genoa, and then moved to San Antonio before the American Civil War. However, the descendants of these people have become assimilated as members of the dominant, Southern Anglo-American culture of Bexar County.⁸

The United States Census for 1880 lists no Italians living in Bexar County. However, the directory of the city of San Antonio for 1877-78 mentions twenty-five persons with Italian surnames. Four examples include Antonio Bruni, Peter Callegari, Louis Colombo, and Michael Russi.⁹ Peter Callegari was "teacher of languages."¹⁰ The evidence for an early Italian presence in Bexar County is strengthened by tombstone inscriptions. Several Italians buried in *Cementerio de San Fernando* (St. Fernando's Cemetery I), which is located on Vera Cruz Avenue near South Colorado Street, include Giuseppe Bertetti, who was born in Rocco Canavese (Turin), Piedmont, in 1843 and who died on February 16, 1929; Salvatrice Carnesi, who was born in Piana dei Greci (Palermo), Sicily, in 1844 and who died on October 12, 1908; and Zavepo Barloco, who was born in Milan (Lombardy), in 1847 and who died in 1914. Some of the tombstone inscriptions are in the Italian language. The one for A. Giovanni Giorda, who was born in Cumiana (Turin), Piedmont, in 1848 and who died May 3, 1908, reads: "*padre ed avolo affezionato amico sincero il figlio Giovanni pose* (father and ancestor devoted loyal friend laid to rest by his son John)."

Certificates of baptism and marriage recorded by priests of San Fernando Cathedral offer additional evidence of Italian settlers in Bexar County. For example, Luciano Bravo was baptized there in 1852, as was Franco Marino in 1856.¹¹ Records on file with the county clerk of Bexar County document the fact that some Italians were purchasing land in the territory before statehood. Vicente Micheli purchased one tract from Mariano Basqnes on March 9, 1804, and another tract from Jose Amador on January 16, 1815.¹²

As Table I demonstrates, the number of foreign-born Italians living in Bexar County nearly tripled between 1890 and 1920. A majority of the new arrivals were born in villages within the provinces of Cosenza (western Calabria), Reggio di Calabria (southwestern Calabria), or Palermo (western Sicily). Examples of these villages include: Spezzano della Sila (Spezzano Grande), Celico, Oppido, San Pietro in Guarano, Piana dei Greci, and Corleone. The immigrants were *pastori* (shepherds) or *contadini* (peasant farmers). Before coming to America they lived in wretched cottages and toiled long hours on farms or tended sheep and goats. Food was scarce, infant mortality was high, and upward social mobility was difficult.¹³

Calabrians sailed to America from the port of Naples. The earliest

migrants journeyed overland to Naples, with mules or donkeys laden with baskets and bundles. Shortly after 1900, Calabrians traveled by railroad from Cosenza to Naples, or from Reggio di Calabria to Naples or Palermo. Ferry-boats crossed the Strait of Messina with through trains on board. Sicilians sailed to America from Palermo, after a stopover at Naples, and commonly, stopovers at Gibraltar or Ponta Delgada (Azores), in a voyage that lasted up to sixteen days in 1908.¹⁴

**TABLE I. FOREIGN-BORN ITALIANS LIVING
IN BEXAR COUNTY
(1870-1920)**

Year	Total Population	Number of Italians
1870	16,043	none listed*
1880	30,470	none listed
1890	49,266	263
1900	69,422	316
1910	119,676	470
1920	202,096	711

*Bexar County was created in 1836, and organized in 1837, from a Spanish municipality named for the Duke de Bexar. The U.S. Census for 1840-1860 also makes no mention of Italians living in the County.

Sources: United States Census Office, Ninth Census of the United States (1870), Population, Volume I, Washington, DC, 1872, p. 372.

United States Census Office, Tenth Census of the United States (1880), Population, Volume I, Washington, DC, 1883, p. 528.

United States Census Office, Eleventh Census of the United States (1890), Population, Volume 1, Part I, Washington, DC, 1895, p. 660.

United States Census Office, Twelfth Census of the United States (1900), Population, Part I, Washington, DC, 1901, p. 784.

United States Census Office, Thirteenth Census of the United States (1910), Population, Volume III, Washington, DC, 1913, p. 814.

United States Census Office, Fourteenth Census of the United States (1920), Population, Volume III, Washington, DC, 1920, p. 1022.

Calabrian and Sicilian Life-Styles

Calabrian and Sicilian settlers in San Antonio had distinct ideas about fertility, child-rearing patterns, sexual behavior, friendships, and memberships in clubs. They belonged to the lower class, and the average family had six children. Today, their descendants belong to the lower middle class, or upper middle class, and average three or 2.4 children respectively. Several factors account for the decrease in fertility. The higher the social

class, the greater the tendency for women to be career-oriented and thus to want to control family size. Furthermore, modern Italian-Americans marry later than their progenitors. They tend to plan their lives in accord with the dominant value patterns of the day, and having a modest number of children is such a prevailing value pattern.¹⁵

Italian immigrants strove to maintain order and obedience within their families. Children obeyed their parents, or, they often were punished physically by their fathers. Their descendants tend to discipline children in an equalitarian manner. Parents pressure their offspring to internalize acceptable standards and to make them their own. They punish disobedient children by reprimands and disapproval. Immigrant and modern mothers also have used reasoning and emotionally supportive instruction.¹⁶

The villagers of Calabria and Sicily believed in sharply defined roles for men and women. Parents arranged marriages for their sons and daughters with persons of the same class. Church marriages were important to these people. Family units were strong, and divorces or desertions were forbidden. So was premarital sex, adultery, birth control (except abstinence and the rhythm method), and abortions. Marital discords and sexual problems were seldom discussed beyond the immediate family, and husbands and wives generally tolerated no interference with their personal relationships.¹⁷

Italian San Antonians today no longer believe in rigid sex roles, although wives assume a greater responsibility for children and household chores. Husbands are the main providers of the material needs of their families. Parents no longer select spouses for their children, and marriages between Italian-Americans and non-Italian-Americans have become more common. Church marriages are still important to a majority of Italian San Antonians, although the number of marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics is increasing. Family units remain strong, but divorces have become more acceptable. There is a more permissive attitude toward birth control and premarital sex among modern Italian San Antonians; however, they generally do not tolerate abortions or desertions. An increasing number of young couples are willing to consult counselors or therapists for marital or sexual problems.¹⁸

Calabrians and Sicilians who moved to San Antonio preferred to choose their spouses and friends from among people of their *paesi* (villages) or *comuni* (municipalities). They also befriended other Italians born in the *mezzogiorno* (the regions of southern Italy). Benevolent-fraternal organizations facilitated ethnic affiliations. Local Italians founded the *Societa Italiana de Mutuo Soccorso* on April 4, 1884. Its original directors included: Antonio Bruni, Augustine Rubino, Francesco Rubiolo, Jose Cassiano, Luigi Moglia, and Paolo Colombo. The charter of the organization states that "This corporation is formed for the purpose of mutual relief among its members, social intercourse and union of Italian people and their descendants."¹⁹

Cav. Carlo Alberto Solaro and fifteen other Italians founded the Christopher Columbus Italian Society in 1890. This was a benevolent society and fraternal organization. It loaned money to needy Italian families, offered advice and counsel in business matters, taught English to new arrivals, and sponsored festive and social events. Italian was the official language of the society until 1946, when its members authorized a change to English.²⁰

Research by Leonard Moss (1983), demonstrates that there were no equivalent organizations of this kind in most Italian villages at the turn of the century.²¹ Moss' findings indicate that "most Italian immigrants to America came without the experience of 'joining'."²² Benevolent-fraternal organizations such as the *Societa Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso* were founded to facilitate affiliations and social contacts among people of common cultural ties. Members felt a "consciousness of kind" which allowed them to confront the stress associated with moving to a new environment more easily. In Calabria and Sicily, the family was the major unit of social interaction. The *Societa* was an extension and adaptation of an important custom known as *comparaggio*, through which carefully selected outsiders became part of a kind of extended family. Italians had learned the original version of this custom in their native villages.²³

Modern Italian San Antonians choose friends from among their own or adjacent social classes, especially if they are in the most prestigious occupations. They join health spas, professional organizations, and charitable groups, but many also belong to Italian clubs, such as the Christopher Columbus Italian Society, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1990. This club continues to promote and propagate Italian culture and traditions, while serving the San Antonio community through several programs.²⁴ UNICO National is another Italian-American organization in San Antonio. This is a service and charitable group.²⁵

Calabrian and Sicilian Art

Art is the creative use of human imagination to interpret, understand, and enjoy life. It is a reflection of the cultural values and concerns of people. Oral traditions denote the unwritten stories, beliefs, and customs of a culture. Tales are fictional, entertaining, non-historical narratives that sometimes teach children moral or practical lessons. Their distribution provides evidence for cultural contacts or isolation.²⁶

Parents and grandparents often told stories by firelight at night in Calabria and Sicily. Calabrian storytelling, influenced by early Greek settlers, exhibits a rich, colorful, complex imagination; but, the logic of the plot is sometimes lost, leaving only the unraveling of the enchantment.²⁷ Some folktales stress the importance of an unswerving faith in God, while others imply that evil behavior ultimately leads to self-destruction. God is depicted as stern, just, and merciful. Many tales feature representatives of the Holy Family, and most teach the eventual triumph of good over evil, often

through miracles. Calabrian immigrants believed in magic, so the folktales of these people abound with dragons, wizards, witches, and spells.²⁸

Typical Sicilian tales also contain magic, fairies, witches, and spells, and they are filled with color and natural objects.²⁹ These stories frequently are based on realism and common sense. Some feature the Holy Family; others find leading characters visiting holy places. Calabrian stories depict a people explicit about boundaries. That is, they characterize a strong sense of identification, loyalty, and the exclusion of non-Calabrians. In contrast, Sicilian folktales, especially those of Palermo, often contain kings, nobles, or knights from other lands such as Naples, Portugal, Greece, Brazil, or Spain. Heroes also visit other places; including Turkey and the Jordan River. In one tale, "Catherine the Wise," the entire royal family of England visited Palermo for a wedding.³⁰

Italian immigrants in San Antonio told their children the same tales they learned in their native villages. Storytelling often took place in the kitchen, and women were the principal narrators.³¹ With the passing of the original immigrants, the process of acculturation, and the advent of radio and television, storytelling virtually has disappeared as a traditional art form among Italian San Antonians.³²

Music is a form of social behavior through which there is a communication of sharing of feelings and life experiences. Like tales, songs may express the concerns of the group, but with greater formalism because of restrictions imposed by closed systems of tonality, rhythm, and musical form.³³ Religious hymns and *tarantelle* (vivacious folk dances in 6/8 time), were popular among villagers in Calabria and Sicily. Hymns are songs of praise, usually sung during religious worship. Italians sang them in their village churches. The Feast of St. Joseph, held every year on March 19 in the homes of Sicilian Texans, began with prayers and a Rosary chanted in Italian. All present sang a hymn, "Evviva la Croce" (Hail to the Cross). Italian-Texans today sing hymns as part of the Catholic Mass on Sundays, and a few Sicilian San Antonians still celebrate the Feast of St. Joseph.³⁴

Ethnic dancing is a cultural expression of the traditions, identities, and values of a community. The patterns, gestures, costumes, and styles of the *tarantelle* in the various regions of southern Italy reflect local attitudes towards sex, love, courtship, and the acceptance or non-acceptance of outsiders. During the height of the Calabrian and Sicilian emigration to San Antonio (1880-1920), differing versions of *tarantelle* evolved in Cosenza and Palermo which were reflective of the differing cultural and geographic realities of villages located within these provinces. The *tarantella* of Cosenza does not have a definite pattern because it is the actions and movements of the body that give it character. The motions of the dance are elastic and robust, in keeping with the people of mountainous Calabria. The *tarantella* of Palermo is full of movement and abandon, expressing the joy of being alive, but the gestures of the dancers are never immodest.³⁵

The *tarantella* of Cosenza contains many closed circular patterns. This is another indication that Calabrians are a people explicit about boundaries to exclude outsiders. The Sicilian *tarantella* contains numerous suggestive gestures. The dancers depict play and joy through broad smiles, sincerity, and openness through open hands, and readiness by placing their hands on their hips. Other gestures and facial expressions, as well as stares and touches, imply acceptance, cooperation, courtship, and flirtatiousness.³⁶ The *tarantelle* danced by members of the Christopher Columbus Italian Society today were taught to them recently by the dance troupe of the Italian Club of Dallas. These dances are common to all parts of Italy.³⁷

Sculpted objects, such as statues, ceremonial knives, or public buildings, represent an imaginative organization of materials in space. Sculpture may be representational — limiting the forms of nature, or abstract — representing only basic patterns of natural forms.³⁸ Sculptured treasures are meager in Calabria. Earthquakes have harassed the region for centuries, and few of its architectural masterpieces have survived.³⁹ However, Calabria hosts Gothic cathedrals and churches, Norman castles, and some fine examples of Byzantine architecture.⁴⁰ Many architectural landmarks attract tourists to Sicily. Carthaginian ruins, Greek temples and theaters, Roman bridges and aqueducts, Byzantine cloisters, Norman churches, and Saracen mosques dot the landscape. The architecture of Palermo reflects each of these periods.⁴¹ However, the hardworking *pastori* and *contadini* living in villages within the provinces of Cosenza and Palermo generally had little time to create or enjoy sculptural or architectural works of art.⁴²

The descendants of Calabrians and Sicilians living in San Antonio today show a marked preference for representational architecture and sculpture. The church of San Francesco de Paola, constructed by the Italian community of San Antonio in 1927, is early Renaissance in style. The entrance to the church is in the form of a Roman triumphal arch, with a Gothic tower of red brick. The Christopher Columbus Society presented a bronze statue of Christopher Columbus to the city of San Antonio in 1957. The monumental sculpture-in-the-round rests upon a large rectangular base. It was cast in Italy, and shipped to Columbus Park where it now stands.⁴³

The artist cast Columbus dressed in a doublet which is waisted and very short with close-fitting sleeves. A houppelande covers his shoulders and upper body, and he is wearing square-toed boots. Columbus' erect stance and determined look give an impression of readiness. He appears to be deep in thought with an intensity of concentration that is common among men of genius. What a face! It seems proud and alert, willful and intelligent.⁴⁴

Calabrian and Sicilian Culture

Culture consists of all human-made products associated with a society. Its components consist of beliefs, technology, values, norms, and language.⁴⁵ Beliefs are statements that people accept as true. The Calabrians and Sicilians who settled in Bexar County were very religious people. Most of them strongly believed in Catholicism, with its emphases on hierarchy, the seven sacraments, and elaborate rituals.⁴⁶

The earliest Italian settlers of San Antonio attended the San Fernando Catholic Church. The church was strongly under the influence of Hispanic traditions and was predominately Hispanic in leadership and membership. The Christopher Columbus Italian Society donated land for an Italian community church and its members financed its construction next to the lodge of the society. San Francesco (St. Francis) was a likely choice for the name of this ethnic church. The saint was born at Paola (Cosenza), Calabria. He and his order erected churches and monasteries in Calabria and Sicily, and he was Sicily's patron saint of fishing.⁴⁷

Many Calabrians and Sicilians believed in magic. To ward off the effects of a person suspected of having the *mal'occhio* (evil eye), some wore amulets, including *cornicelli* (little horns). The worship of objects, such as statues and sacred relics, and the attributing of specific powers and qualities to individual saints, reflected the beliefs of earlier pagan religions. The Italians held other beliefs. They distrusted outsiders and governmental authority, and they regarded the political activities of their region and country as irrelevant.⁴⁸ Before leaving their native lands, they believed that most Americans were wealthy, and that poverty, malnutrition, and hunger did not exist in the United States.⁴⁹

Italian San Antonians today have been affected by the growing secularization of society, but many still believe in the Catholic Church, and they participate in its sacraments. A majority no longer give credence to magic, although some occasionally consult palmists, astrologers, tarot-card readers, and the like. Feelings concerning *campanilismo* (localism), the distrust of outsiders, a negative attitude towards governmental authority, and political apathy largely have disappeared. Italian-Americans generally have realistic attitudes about American society and its class structure.⁵⁰

Technology consists of repeated operations that people use to manipulate the environment in order to achieve practical goals. Most Calabrians and Sicilians who migrated to San Antonio were shepherds or farmers who barely managed to make a living because of poor land and outdated techniques. To make matters worse, most of the land they worked was owned by gentry. Many Italians who entered the United States at the port of New Orleans moved on to Texas after a sojourn in Louisiana where they worked in the sugar cane fields. Then their lifestyles changed, as farming gave way to urban labor.⁵¹

Italians who lived in the eastern part of the United States before coming to Texas found work in mines, railroad construction, the garment industry, and in positions requiring few special skills. Others came to Texas after sailing to Vera Cruz, Mexico, where they worked as farmers or railroaders. Before 1883, Italians arrived at San Antonio aboard stagecoaches and team trains. After that date, most came by railroad. Italians migrated to San Antonio in search of economic opportunity. Many entered urban occupations, especially in small business — grocery, saloon, plumbing, fruits and confectionary, and boot and shoe making.⁵²

The development of commercial technology supported the rise of a middle class in Bexar County, and this provided people with opportunities to obtain economic self-sufficiency. As technology advanced, the Italian community became more affluent. This in turn led Italians to experience a greater satisfaction with a variety of other social and economic issues. Some Italian San Antonians have become successful entrepreneurs, and they have entered the professions in substantial numbers.⁵³

Norms are standards of desirable behavior. They are the rules people are expected to follow in their relations with one another. An important component of Calabrian and Sicilian culture was the belief in the importance of the family. The family was the fundamental and all-important unit of village society in the *mezzogiorno*. It determined social standards, types of labor, and restricted other activities. To be without family was truly non-being. The family included spouses, children, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and *compari* (godparents). All placed the welfare of the family above their personal ambitions.⁵⁴ The Italians of San Antonio were especially dependent upon their extended families to provide for their needs because there was no concentrated ethnic community in the city upon which they could rely for support.⁵⁵

A complex set of rules (*l'ordine della famiglia*) governed the relationships of family members. The father was the head of the family, and no one in his household would make a major decision without his permission. The mother was the center of the family. Her authority was also greatly respected. She often took charge of her husband's earnings and those of her unmarried children. Daughters-in-law generally were obedient and submissive to their mother-in-law. In addition, the mother made most of the decisions in the everyday affairs of the family. Family loyalty was a cardinal virtue for the villagers of the *mezzogiorno*. Most Sicilians adhered to *omerta* (code of silence), which forbade telling outsiders about matters concerning the family.⁵⁶

Values are general convictions about what is good or bad, right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate. Chastity, seriousness, and nurturance were feminine values among the villagers. Patience, strength, and honor were masculine values. The image of the woman as a chaste person finds its expression in the great status accorded to the primary female figure in Italian Catholicism — The Virgin Mary. The cult of the *Madonna* was

especially powerful in Italy. Seriousness included the ability and desire to bear children and household skills. It also included the competence to be the cohesive force which bound a family together and thus made all life possible. Mothers were the principal caretakers of infants and small children. Women commonly tended to domestic duties and other arduous tasks, such as collecting firewood or carrying loads. In addition, they cooked and served meals. The social context in which food was prepared, served, and eaten, was important to the family.⁵⁷

For men, the code of reserve, of patience, of waiting for the right moment, of planning for events, and then of decisive, impassioned action, served life. They provided for the material needs of their families, and were the primary hunters, fishermen, and laborers outside the home. They were also responsible for the physical safety of their clan. Honor meant protecting one's family and advancing its security and influence. Males were expected to be clever, honest, wise, and worldly. Boys began to move away from the dominant influence of their mothers at the age of seven, and they engaged in male work and social life at puberty. Males were taught self-reliance, self-control, and self-denial. When anything or anyone threatened to undermine *l'ordine della famiglia*, they responded forcefully.⁵⁸

Pietro Mascagni's opera, *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Rustic Chivalry), written in 1890, depicts the lengths to which Italian males of the *mezzogiorno* would go to preserve the honor of the family. The plot takes place in a Sicilian village. A villager named Turiddu goes away to war. While he is away, his sweetheart, Lola, marries Alfio, the village carter. When Turiddu returns, the fickle Lola soon wins back his love (an affront to *l'ordine della famiglia* and the teachings of the Catholic Church). Alfio becomes aware of the affair and kills Turiddu in a duel with knives.⁵⁹

Language is a system of symbolic communication that uses words, which are sound patterns that have standardized meanings. Italian immigrants spoke the dialects of their native villages, and language appears to have influenced their perceptions and thoughts. The Italian language is characterized by a distinction between masculine and feminine nouns, and by the use of familiar pronouns with familiar persons. This implies that the general behavioral standards that differentiate males and females were important to them, and that there was a clear distinction between intimates and out-groups.⁶⁰

Italian immigrants continued to communicate with one another in the Italian language, but they gradually became bilingual. J. Fernandi published the bilingual newspaper, *La Voce della Patria* (The Voice of the Fatherland), at 1135 North Laredo Street, between 1927 and 1930.⁶¹ The paper contained local, statewide, national, and international news of interest to Italians and Italo-Americans. Local news items stressed church activities, festivals, information about Italian San Antonians, meetings of benevolent-fraternal organizations, and business advertise-

ments. *La Voce della Patria* was an urban creation designed to transcend some of the limitations on spoken communication among Italians living throughout Bexar County. As time passed, the immigrants spoke Italian at home, among *compatri*, and at meetings of the Christopher Columbus Society, but they used English in most other situations. A majority of Italian San Antonians today do not have a working knowledge of the Italian language; however, they are more familiar than is the general population with Italian terms and phrases.⁶²

Nonverbal communication can also be revealing. Italians have a smaller conception of intimate space than do most Americans, and they also touch one another more often than do most Americans. Italians generally stand at a distance that would be comfortable to the average American only if the other person were an intimate friend or family member. Gestures convey a wide range of feelings. A few gestures common among the villagers of the *mezzogiorno* are:

1. The Hand Purse — insistent query.
2. The Teeth Flick — nothing/anger.
3. The Chin Flick — disinterested/negative.
4. The Eyelid Pull — be alert.
5. The Forearm Jerk — sexual insult.
6. The Ear Touch — affirmative/warning.
7. The Horizontal Horn — sign-cuckold.
8. The Nose Thumb — mockery.
9. The Fingertips Kiss — praise and salutation.⁶³

Some Italian San Antonians today continue to use gestures such as these to communicate with one another.⁶⁴

Conclusion

The number of Italians living in Bexar County between 1880 and 1920 was relatively small, but their significance belies their numbers. Their experiences help to shed light on the process by which a group reacts to a new social environment by adopting the culture prevalent in that environment. The purpose of the oral interviews amassed in this study was to obtain information about the process of transition from the Italian cultural formation to the modern mores found in Bexar County. The main factors in the enculturation process of Sicilians and Calabrians were the family, the Catholic Church, and village mores. Because of these factors, Italians valued cooperation more than competition, family success more than personal ambition, and the careful management of nature more than its conquest and exploitation. People were seen as an integral part of their village, not separate from it. Italian immigrants brought with them to Texas distinctive patterns of behavior and organization which helped them adapt to the broader culture and society.⁶⁵

The values cherished by Italian immigrants came into conflict with

those of the dominant, Southern, Anglo-American culture. The main factors in the enculturation process of Anglo-Americans were the family, Fundamentalist churches, rural schools, and county mores. Their culture stressed individualism, political domination, economic development, and exploitation of the natural environment. Protestant fundamentalism clashed with Italian Catholicism, and this sometimes led to prejudice and discrimination.⁶⁶

Most Italian San Antonians today were born in Texas, and so they talk, dress, and act much like others born there. A major aspect of their assimilation is intermarriage. Studies by the author indicate that by the third generation, sixty percent of San Antonians of Italian ancestry married non-Italians. Yet, an Italian subculture still exists in San Antonio despite substantial assimilation. Italians have become Americans, but they have become Italian-Americans. The transition from Calabrians and Sicilians to Italians, and then to Italian-Americans, is an artifact of immigration to the New World.⁶⁷

Italian San Antonians have become more individualistic, politically oriented, and interested in economic development. They are also more willing to exploit the natural environment. Most Italians have not changed their religion, but this cultural difference does not now generate much conflict. Agreement has been reached within the society of Bexar County that this difference is not important in comparison with the many cultural bonds linking all county residents. Underlying this accommodation is economic equality. Italian San Antonians have managed to achieve economic success and relatively equal status. They have also abandoned several aspects of their cultural traditions as the price of escaping minority status and participating fully in the life of the society of Bexar County.⁶⁸

What has been the impact of the Italian heritage upon the society of San Antonio? Italian-Americans have contributed significantly to the growth and vitality of two Catholic churches, including the San Fernando Catholic Church and the San Francesco de Paola Church. Italians have also contributed to the fine arts in Bexar County. Pompeo Coppini conceived and executed the sculptural part of the Alamo Cenotaph, located in front of the Alamo, in 1939. John C. Filippone was one of the founders, and for a number of years a member of the Board of Directors of the Artists' Guild of San Antonio. His dry-point etchings won him popularity and acclaim.⁶⁹

Other Italians became successful entrepreneurs, and streets, avenues, and lanes in San Antonio were named in their honor. For example, Bruni, Cassiano, and Bertetti streets were named after Antonio Bruni, Jose Cassiano, and Giuseppe Bertetti.⁷⁰ Perhaps the greatest impact of Italians upon the society of Bexar County was the introduction of popular Italian foods and wines. Immigrants brought their food customs with them. Italian families still serve Italian dinners several times a year to the general public through the Christopher Columbus Italian Society. Italian restaurants

abound in San Antonio, imported Italian foods appear on the shelves of major supermarkets, and Italian wines and liquors are on sale at many liquor stores and restaurants.⁷¹ Still, Italian Americans have adopted most of the cultural patterns of the dominant groups. Therefore, they have experienced extensive changes in their internal values and world views.

NOTES

¹Mason Sutherland, "Carnival in San Antonio," *The National Geographic Magazine*, XCII (December 1947), p. 813.

²Pearson Newcomb, *The Alamo City* (San Antonio, 1926), pp. 1-84; Frederick C. Chabot, *San Antonio and its Beginnings* (San Antonio, 1931), pp. 5-111.

³An entire network of roads became part of the Southern Pacific system in 1905.

⁴Boyce House, *City of Flaming Adventure: The Chronicle of San Antonio* (San Antonio, 1949), pp. 6-39; T.R. Fehrenbach, *The San Antonio Story* (Tulsa, OK, 1978), pp. 13-19.

⁵Alicia V. Tjarks, "Comparative Demographic Analysis of Texas, 1777-1793," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXXVII (July 1973-1974), p. 325.

⁶The University of Texas at San Antonio, Institute of Texas Cultures, *The Italian Texans*. San Antonio, Texas, 1973, p. 5.

⁷Frederick C. Chabot, *With The Makers of San Antonio* (San Antonio, Artes Graficas, 1937), pp. 223-235; *A Twentieth Century History of Southwest Texas* (Chicago, 1907), pp. 58-61.

⁸Valentine J. Belfiglio, *The Italian Experience in Texas* (Austin, 1983), pp. 25-50.

⁹Directory of the City of San Antonio for 1877-78, compiled by Mooney and Morrison (Galveston: Galveston News, 1877), pp. 77, 79, 85, 168.

¹⁰Directory of the City of San Antonio, p. 79.

¹¹San Fernando Cathedral, Index of Baptisms, I, p. 13; II, p. 144 (1800-1877). These records are stored in the Catholic Archives at San Antonio, Chancery Office, 2718 West Woodlawn, San Antonio, Texas.

¹²Texas, Bexar County, Office of the County Clerk, Direct Index to Deeds, General Index A-C, 1837-1884, pp. 27, 85.

¹³The author obtained this information by interviewing, in a systematic and comprehensive way, scores of San Antonians whose ancestors were born in Calabria and Sicily. The interviews were conducted in 1982 and 1988; Emigration Conditions in Europe: Italy. *Reports of the Immigration Commission*. Vol. 12 (Senate Document No. 748, 61st Cong., 3rd sess., 1911), pp. 50-164.

¹⁴Government of Italy, Department of Foreign Affairs, *Circular in Re-Emigration to the United States*. Circular No. 17 (Commissioner of Emigration, Rome, March 15, 1908), pp. 1-2; Courtesy of the Steamship Historical Society, 1420 Maryland Avenue, Baltimore, MD.

¹⁵Christopher B. Doob, *Sociology: An Introduction* (New York, 1985), pp. 218-219; Michele Rizzo, Sam Lucchese (et al.), private interviews held at Christopher Columbus Hall, 201 Morales Street, San Antonio, TX, June 1, 1980.

¹⁶Christopher Columbus Italian Society, private interviews held with several members, 201 Morales Street, San Antonio, Texas, June 1, 1980.

¹⁷Albert L. Panza, Gale S. Granato (et al.), private interviews held at the San Antonio Marriott Inn North, 437 McCarty Road, San Antonio, TX, October 16, 1982.

¹⁸Sammy Scrivano, Joseph A. Monteverdi (et al.), private interviews held at the San Antonio Marriott Inn North, 437 McCarty Road, San Antonio, TX, October 15, 1982.

¹⁹Texas, Office of the Secretary of State, Charter of the Societa Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso di San Antonio, Texas. Charter No. 2354. Austin, TX, April 21, 1884.

²⁰Phillip Rizzo, Michael Venincasa (et al.), private interviews held at the San Antonio Marriott Inn North, 437 McCarty Road, San Antonio, TX, October 16, 1982.

²¹Leonard Moss, "Family and Community: Voluntary Association in South Italy and Detroit," in Richards N. Juliani (ed.), *The Family and Community Life of Italian Americans* (New York, 1983), pp. 11-22.

²²Leonard Moss, "Family and Community," p. 12.

²³For a discussion of the custom known as *comparaggio* or *comparatico*, as it was practiced in Sicily during the nineteenth century, consult Richard Gambino, *Blood of My Blood* (New York, 1975), pp. 3-41.

²⁴Robert Brischetto, Ph.D., private interview held at 7826 Hawk Trail, San Antonio, TX, October 17, 1982.

²⁵For a list and description of the Italian organizations in Texas, consult Frank D. Stella (et al.), *Directory of Italian American Organizations* (Washington, DC, 1988), pp. 367-376.

²⁶William A. Haviland, *Anthropology* (New York, 1985), pp. 585-602.

²⁷Italo Calvino, *Italian Folktales* (New York, 1980), p. xxvii.

²⁸Italo Calvino, *Italian Folktales*, pp. 482-521.

²⁹Italo Calvino, *Italian Folktales*, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

³⁰Italo Calvino, *Italian Folktales*, pp. 521-606; Thomas F. Crane, *Italian Popular Tales* (New York, 1885).

³¹Elizabeth Mathias and Richard Raspa, *Italian Folktales in America* (Detroit, 1985), pp. 53-55.

³²Louis Ruffo, Gilda and Marilyn Mazzurana, private interviews held at 122 Sunnycrest Drive, San Antonio, TX, October 17, 1982.

³³Haviland, *Anthropology, op. cit.*, pp. 604, 610.

³⁴Joyce Elaine Germano and Carla Pisarro Sherman, private interviews held at 1122 Birch Hill, San Antonio, TX, October 17, 1982.

³⁵Elba F. Gurzau, *Folk Dances, Costumes and Customs of Italy* (Newark, NJ, 1964), pp. 73-74.

³⁶Allen T. Dittmann (et al.), "Facial and Bodily Expression: A Study of Receptivity of Emotional Cues," *Psychiatry*, XXVIII (August 1965), pp. 239-244; Erich Fromm, *The Forgotten Language* (New York, 1951), pp. 23-54.

³⁷Pete Magaro, J.D., private interview held at 2300 W. Commerce, Suite 203, San Antonio, TX, October 3, 1988.

³⁸Haviland, *Anthropology, op. cit.*, p. 610.

³⁹The author toured Calabria, including Cosenza, during a visit to Italy in May-June, 1985.

⁴⁰The author toured Calabria.

⁴¹The author toured Palermo during a visit to Italy in May-June, 1985.

⁴²Antoinette Carnesi (et al.), private interviews held at the San Antonio Marriott Inn North, 437 McCarty Road, San Antonio, TX, October 15, 1982.

⁴³Henry Guerra (et al.), private interviews held at 1119 St. Mary St., San Antonio, TX, December 27, 1988.

⁴⁴These observations were made by the author during visits to San Antonio in 1982 and 1988.

⁴⁵Doob, *Sociology: An Introduction, op. cit.*, p. 52.

⁴⁶For a complete discussion of the role of the Catholic Church in the lives of southern Italians, consult Silvano Tomasi, *The Religious Experience of Italian Americans* (New York, 1973).

⁴⁷Herbert Thurston and Donald Attwater, *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, II (New York, 1956), pp. 10-13.

⁴⁴Gambino, *Blood of My Blood*, *op. cit.*, pp. 313-351.

Joe Monaco and Joseph Di Muccio, private interviews held at 2802 Marlborough, San Antonio, TX, October 17, 1982.

⁴⁵Peter Parenti and Nick J. Pantuso, private interviews held at the San Antonio Marriott Inn North, 437 McCarty Road, San Antonio, TX, October 15, 1982.

⁴⁶The author obtained this information by interviewing several San Antonians whose ancestors were born in Calabria and Sicily. Private interviews held at the Christopher Columbus Hall, 201 Piazza Italia, San Antonio, TX, November 6, 1988.

⁴⁷Directory of the City of San Antonio for 1920, San Antonio Public Library, 203 S. St. Mary's Street, San Antonio, Texas.

⁴⁸The author obtained this information by interviewing several San Antonians whose ancestors were born in Calabria and Sicily. Private interviews held at the Christopher Columbus Hall, 201 Piazza Italia, San Antonio, TX, November 6, 1988.

⁴⁹For an excellent discussion of family life in Sicilian villages at the turn of the century, consult Giuseppe Pitre, *Biblioteca delle Tradizioni Popolari Siciliane*, XV (Palermo, 1913), pp. 30-88.

⁵⁰The author obtained this information by interviewing several San Antonians whose ancestors were born in Calabria and Sicily. Private interviews held at the Christopher Columbus Hall, 201 Piazza Italia, San Antonio, TX, November 6, 1988.

⁵¹Pitre, *Biblioteca delle Tradizioni Popolari Siciliane*, XV, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-88.

⁵²Gambino, *Blood of My Blood*, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-182.

⁵³Gambino, *Blood of My Blood*, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-159.

⁵⁴Mary Emma S. Macy, *Librettos of the Italian Operas* (New York, 1939), pp. 339-361.

⁵⁵For an excellent analytical study of the Italian language consult Anna Laura and Giulio Lepschy, *The Italian Language Today* (London, 1977).

⁵⁶The San Antonio-based newspaper, *La Voce della Patria* (1930), is available at the Rosenberg Library, 2310 Sealy, Galveston, TX.

⁵⁷Italian language classes offered by the Christopher Columbus Italian Society, reinforces this distinction.

⁵⁸Joseph Giordano, *The Italian-American Catalog* (Garden City, NY, 1986), p. 13.

⁵⁹The author obtained this information by observing and interviewing scores of San Antonians whose ancestors were born in Calabria and Sicily, during several visits to San Antonio in 1982 and 1988.

⁶⁰The author obtained this information by observing and interviewing.

⁶¹The author obtained this information by observing and interviewing.

⁶²The author obtained this information by observing and interviewing.

⁶³The author obtained this information by observing and interviewing.

⁶⁴Harold Schoen (et al.) *Monuments Erected By the State of Texas To Commemorate The Centenary of Texas Independence* (Austin, 1938), pp. 61, 84; Esse Forrester-O'Brien, *Art and Artists of Texas* (Dallas, 1935), p. 307.

⁶⁵The author obtained this information by observing and interviewing scores of San Antonians whose ancestors were born in Calabria and Sicily, during several visits to San Antonio in 1982 and 1988.

⁶⁶The author obtained this information by observing and interviewing.