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*From Sicily  
to Elizabeth Street*

*Housing and Social Change Among  
Italian Immigrants, 1880-1930*

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tinuity with their comings and goings. Between 1880 and 1920, immigrants, too, would help make the *cortile* a socially more dynamic place. But that, too, was a new departure from the older agrotown norm.

### Summary

As they chose their houses, agrotown residents created a unique social environment, one that in part reflected environmental opportunities and restraints. While residential patterns themselves had no necessary or inevitable social consequences, one can find in agrotown patterns a number of likely implications for Sicilian social behavior. Residential patterns could open or close possibilities for social interaction, depending on how people in their everyday work and leisure activities shared space. That is the subject of the next chapter.

The dense settlement called the *paese* could not but influence work and leisure activities for the peasant majority in negative ways, since, contrary to Sicilian ideals, peasant workplaces lay far from peasant houses. As the next chapter shows, this restraint influenced the division of labor within the peasant family and made fulfillment of some nuclear family roles very difficult for agricultural workers of all kinds. At the same time, peasants' small ground-floor houses confronted families with the practically impossible task of simultaneously maintaining privacy while seeking to build social ties to other families.

More positively, the absence of social segregation in agrotowns offered agrotown occupants the opportunity to mingle easily with *casa*, some *parenti* and nonkin, and with persons of a variety of social and occupational backgrounds. Furthermore, low rates of residential mobility should have allowed intermingling among a relatively stable group over significant lengths of time, at least among the homeownership majority. These patterns seemed to offer relatively good opportunities for social flexibility in building a useful and large social network of kin, friends, neighbors and *padrone*. For some agrotown residents—artisan men and peasant women—this was the case. But for peasant men it was not, and the consequences of this discrepancy for agrotown social life were enormous.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Everyday Life and Sicilian Society

By restraining everyday work and leisure activities, housing is believed to influence human social behavior. Sociologists describe housing's effect on residents' "lifestyles," while German folklorists refer to its effect on *Wohnweisen*.<sup>1</sup> (English speakers have not made "houselife"—Lewis Morgan's translation of the German term—part of their vocabulary.<sup>2</sup>) Since "lifestyle" need not refer specifically to ecological patterns, I will instead call the ways people use their physical surroundings for work and leisure "everyday life." "Everyday life" has the advantage of familiarity, but there is no widely accepted definition of the term.<sup>3</sup> This chapter describes how agrotown housing restrained everyday life, influencing social interaction and attainment of Sicilian social ideals in the nineteenth century.

By "everyday life" I mean the daily, seasonal and yearly cycles of work and leisure activities and their ecology. Describing everyday life is usually the first task of ethnographic description.<sup>4</sup> It is the basis for social analysis because everyday life provides people with opportunity for social interaction and, thus, for the creation and maintenance of social ties to others.

Ethnographic description of past everyday life is a challenge for the historian, who, unlike the anthropologist, must depend on the observational skills of others. No matter how high the hopes, the historian does not always uncover the equivalent of the deposition that LeRoy Ladurie used as his main source in writing *Montaillou*.<sup>5</sup> This chapter depends not on one excellent but rather on many limited sources to describe everyday life and its social consequences. A sizeable number of middle-class Sicilians left fictional accounts of their observations of nineteenth-century agrotown life. Of these "insiders," Emmanuele Navarro della Miraglia surpassed even the much-cited Verga. No small detail escaped his careful attention; when he wrote of eating, for example, he distinguished nutritional ideals from real meals, peasant from *civile* diet,

everyday repast from feast, and summer from winter staples.<sup>6</sup> Accounts by three kinds of "outsiders" also proved helpful: British and German visitors tended to focus on the curious and quaint, while writers of Italian government surveys and folklorists or anthropologists working in the early twentieth century provided more systematic observations. Casual talks with present-day residents of Sambuca revealed some interesting details. So did physical artifacts—mainly tools and household goods—and old photos.<sup>7</sup> By using a variety of sources, I was able to cross-check which people performed particular activities in varying places through time. With that information I interpreted the social relationships typical of agrotowns in the years immediately preceding the mass migrations to the United States.

As a nonparticipant, the historian faces particularly great difficulties in offering an insider's interpretation of the social behavior described. Normally we historians cannot gradually learn the meaning and significance of everyday social behavior by living among the people we study—a process at the very heart of the anthropologist's or ethnographer's method of participant-observation.<sup>8</sup> I accepted that limitation, and I turned when I could to the interpretations of Sicilians living in the nineteenth century, especially to Giuseppe Pitrè. Nevertheless, I also did what I could to participate as well as observe. I spent three months—two in summer and one during late winter—living in several ("type two") agrotown houses. However, let me not exaggerate, my life in Sambuca in no way resembled that of an ordinary peasant in the nineteenth century. If nothing else, though, I learned about noise and quiet, and about how wind and rain or a brilliant sun affected where and when one works and plays in an agrotown, and I heard for myself how very close by were the voices of my neighbors. In the summer I learned to keep one ear turned to those noises from the outside, so that one evening when I heard the unmistakable sounds of a Brooklyn accent, I too could race to my balcony to learn that an American relative had arrived for his annual summer visit. At the end of my stays in Sambuca, I was always surprised by how terribly far away the end of our quite short street seemed to me. I think I did learn something about how Sicilians perceived the environment around them. Each of my experiences subtly colored my interpretations of social life in nineteenth-century agrotowns, and made me aware of just how much the lives of ordinary Sicilians changed during the past century.

### A Typical Day

It is difficult to identify a single pattern of work or leisure for agrotowns so sharply divided—as they were—by class and gender distinctions. A comparison of two ordinary families and their activities demonstrates easily the considerable variation in Sicilian experience in the nineteenth century. The agricultural Mangiaracina and the artisan Mulè families (see Table 3-1) are fictionalized versions of real families living in Sambuca at the turn of the century.

Table 3-1. Two Agrotown Families 1900

MANGIARACINA,	Giuseppe	Head	35	Day laborer
	Cristina	Wife	24	housework
	Maria	Daughter	3	-
	Calogera	Daughter	1	-
MULÈ,	Calogero	Head	40	Shoemaker
	Caterina	Wife	Dead	-
	Audenzio	Son	15	Shoemaker
	Teresa	Daughter	11	Student
	Antonina	2nd. Wife	25	seamstress
	Maria Stella	Daughter	3	-
	Anna	Daughter	1	-

In the Sicilian nuclear family, the father's role was to guide family economic efforts to improve its position in the agrotown hierarchy of classes. For a lower-status agricultural worker like Giuseppe Mangiaracina, this meant rising before dawn on a September morning to begin a fifteen-kilometer walk to a distant large estate.<sup>9</sup> There for a week or more at a time Giuseppe M. would live as did the men described by Navarro della Miraglia in "Una Masseria." To feed himself during that time, he carried with him, in a sack, half of a large loaf of bread made by his wife; as part of his wages he would also receive at the *masseria* (headquarters building of a large wheat-growing estate) an evening bowl of warm soup.<sup>10</sup> In September, day laborers like Giuseppe M. found work as plowmen, preparing fields for fallow under the direction of a *gabelloto*.<sup>11</sup> (Sharecroppers worked nearby preparing their individual plots for planting.) And, if Giuseppe M. was like many other common laborers in western Sicily, he might pass by the headquarters of another large estate on his way back to his agrotown home the following weekend—with luck he might find employment for another week in that way.<sup>12</sup>

With responsibility for caring for children and for the house, the activities of a woman like Cristina Mangiaracina seem far more varied than those of her husband. Household work began before dawn: Wives rose even before their husbands to get water for their families.<sup>13</sup> In towns like Sambuca, water-gathering meant only a short trip to a nearby public fountain fed with piped water. There, in the morning and again in the late afternoon, women from several adjoining streets or *cortili* clustered, awaiting their turn to fill their earthenware jugs.<sup>14</sup> In more isolated or smaller mountain towns, the only sources of water remained outside of town in nearby valleys.<sup>15</sup> Wealthier families purchased water from male water vendors, but poorer women saved money by transporting water individually over the paths between water supplies and hilltop homes.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout the day, women like Cristina Mangiaracina mixed housework and childcare. In the early morning hours they dressed and nursed smaller children, set out coops of chickens, rabbits, or other small animals, made the bed and swept straw and feces from one corner of the house into the street.<sup>17</sup> In some towns, to which present-day residents of Sambuca referred with great amusement, women carried "night pots" to a preferred dumping spot outside of town.<sup>18</sup> Women lucky enough to have brick or tiled floors often washed them daily, throwing the water into the street when they finished.<sup>19</sup> Others sat outside their doorways, making brooms or other small articles, knitting or spinning.<sup>20</sup> Younger children played close by; mothers did not allow them to wander very far.<sup>21</sup> On almost any day, one woman in the *cortile* had laundry to do. Since not all women owned a *pila* (washtub), borrowing occurred.<sup>22</sup> A woman like Cristina M. not uncommonly went into the home of a well-off neighbor in order to help with the heavier household chores.<sup>23</sup> She received money or food for her efforts, or she might receive nothing more than permission to use the oven of the better-off woman on Saturday, allowing her to bake her family's bread.<sup>24</sup> Women also took eggs from their cooped hens to sell to more prosperous neighbors.<sup>25</sup>

By late afternoon most heavy household chores were completed. At this time of day male vendors wandered through the streets, seeking to sell or barter their food products to the women sitting outside their doorways.<sup>26</sup> Later still began preparation of the evening meal, requiring yet another trip to the fountain.<sup>27</sup> During the day, a poor woman and her children ate little or nothing except bits of bread from the large loaf.<sup>28</sup> And, as Navarro della Miraglia indicated, some poorer families made this bread their evening meal as well. When a woman instead prepared a cooked meal, she often coarsely ground a small amount of grain, which she cooked with beans, greens or herbs into a thick porridgelike soup.<sup>29</sup>

She made only a small straw fire in a portable stove. Cooking in the doorway (houses rarely had chimneys), she watched workers from the nearby fields returning to their families.<sup>30</sup> As the sun went down, women closed their doors to eat with their families and eventually to sleep.<sup>31</sup>

Artisans' lives, like those of peasants, also centered around productive work. A shoemaker like Calogero Mulè began his day later than did day laborer Mangiaracina, for his workplace *bottega* was downstairs from his private living quarters. Day began with the arrival of a jug of water for the family's use, transported to Antonina M. by a poor widowed neighbor woman.<sup>32</sup> (Such a woman might be allowed to live in one of the Mulè family's small ground-floor rooms in exchange for labors like this.<sup>33</sup>) If the family was a prosperous one, the wife cooked coffee before family members hurried to their other tasks.<sup>34</sup> The shoemaker went with his son Audenzio to the *bottega*, while his wife attended to a variety of household chores. She nursed her younger child, cleaned the rooms in which the family lived, washed their tiled floors, and selected ingredients for the family noontime meal.<sup>35</sup>

Although the oldest son of the Mulè family was too old to still attend school, his younger sister Teresa probably attended one of Sambuca's two schools.<sup>36</sup> Taking a break from work with his father, Audenzio accompanied Teresa to the school and on his way back from this errand, he had ample time to wander about the town, looking at girls his own age as they worked in neighboring *cortili* with their mothers.<sup>37</sup> He could also stop at the central piazza, talk there with the men gathered about, carry a message from an artisan or *civile* man to his father, or watch for the arrival of the post coach, with its newspapers from Palermo.<sup>38</sup>

An artisan family like the Mulès usually met in their upstairs rooms to eat an early afternoon meal together. On a September day, they might dine on eggs and bread and vegetables (stored, following the harvest on their small plot of land, in a cool ground-floor room behind the *bottega*).<sup>39</sup> After this meal, the shoemaker and his son returned to their work, while Antonina Mulè continued her chores with the help of her stepdaughter. They washed dishes from the meal and began to sew together, either on dowry items for Teresa or on a simple dress that the seamstress was preparing for a peasant neighbor's wedding.<sup>40</sup>

Occasionally the Mulè family again came together to make a brief visit to a friend or kinsman in the early evening. The birth of a baby might be the motivation for such a visit, perhaps to the home of the peasant that sharecropped the Mulè family's small plot of land.<sup>41</sup> Visitors brought the mother small gifts for her child.<sup>42</sup> The peasant host offered his guests wine and sweets while they admired the baby and its white garments.<sup>43</sup>

Guests exchanged compliments and gossip during the short visit. Afterwards the Mulè family walked together with another artisan family back towards their houses. The men paused near the piazza and remained there, but sent their sons back to the workshops to finish some simple chores left undone. In the piazza, shoemaker Mulè and friend discussed a local election with other artisans; later they listened to a *civile* man read aloud from a newspaper that had arrived with the post coach.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile Antonina M. and her younger children returned to their house, where the older women continued sewing. The family again came together for a light evening meal, just after sundown. Because she was behind in her sewing, Antonina M. lit an oil lamp and continued to work long after the rest of her family went to bed.

### Activity, Time and Location

The comparison of the Mulè and Mangiaracina families shows that any assessment of the match of social ideals and agrotown physical environment must take into account class and gender differences. While the incomes of the Mulè and Mangiaracina families might not have differed much—both agrotown peasants and artisans seemed terribly poor to visitors from northern Europe and America—their lives could scarcely have differed more.<sup>45</sup> Work responsibilities made variation especially clear in the lives of Calogero Mulè and Giuseppe Mangiaracina, but even housework—the shared responsibility of their two wives—varied with class. The wife of an artisan or peasant landowner had a more varied supply of food and fuel, and her family ate together far more frequently. The artisan's wife had a larger house, more furniture, clothes, linens, pots and dishes. At the same time, she enjoyed more household help. For poorer women trying to maintain similar standards of cleanliness (as Pitirè, a trifle defensively, insisted they did), the absence of possessions created other housework burdens.<sup>46</sup> Cristina M. had to clean up animal and human messes and try to maintain order in the storage of food, straw, fuel, furnishings, and family possessions in the single small room that served as the family shelter.

Even the division between male and female tasks within the family varied by class. It was especially strong and clear in the artisan family. While artisans like Calogero Mulè could always depend on female family members to cook and clean for them, agricultural workers left home to work. They sometimes performed chores normally described as women's responsibilities while in the countryside. Men working in the fields could

and did cook for themselves, although they might never do this in the presence of their wives.<sup>47</sup> (See Figure 3-1.)

Seasonal changes affected agricultural families far more than artisans' families. Several hundred proverbs in Pitirè's collection detailed the importance of the repetitive agricultural cycle; Sicilians linked this agricultural cycle to the church's equally cyclical system of religious celebrations.<sup>48</sup> The first important harvest of the year was beans, in June. Peasants harvested grain from June to September, depending on altitude. The wheat harvest demanded many laborers during a relatively short period; wages rose to their yearly peak at that time. Whole families travelled to these harvests, where men harvested and women and children gleaned.<sup>49</sup> Grapes, cactus fruits, fruits, and nuts ripened during September and October, thus overlapping with plowing for the next wheat crop. Olive harvesting and wheat sowing overlapped in November.<sup>50</sup>

By late November the rainy season began, and with it a period of diminished agricultural activity. This was the time for weddings and rest,



Figure 3-1. Men Cooking in the Countryside (*Presepe*. Museo Pitirè)

extending through Christmas. It was also the time when a newly watered countryside produced a variety of wild vegetables, greens and snails. Water holes and streams filled. From Christmas until June, fully six months, little agricultural work was required: pruning of vineyards, planting beans and vegetables, cultivating wheat all took far fewer hours than the harvests.<sup>51</sup> Landowning peasants and sharecroppers slowed the pace of their work during the winter. Most day laborers and sharecroppers, finding only irregular employment, suffered severely, and could scarcely be said to enjoy their "leisure." Such men gathered daily in a piazza labor market, sometimes staying the entire day, ever hopeful of finding someone needing their labor. When truly pressed for food, they and their families scavenged wild foods in the countryside.<sup>52</sup> Winter was also the time for weaving, a chore done exclusively by women in towns where the domestic production of cloth still maintained some importance.<sup>53</sup>

Although the artisan's business increased during the months preceding Christmas weddings, most artisans controlled the pace of their work. And they chose to work throughout the year. Stone masons might stop work during the heaviest rains of winter, but they also regarded winter as the best time for constructing a sturdy wall.<sup>54</sup> The seasons had a far smaller significance for artisans than for peasants.

When the ancestors of Calogero Mulè and Giuseppe Mangiaracina centuries before built the dense settlements called agrotowns, they made it difficult for their descendants to make homes anywhere else. The countryside, uninhabited, remained uninhabitable, with no roads, no water supplies, no churches. As a consequence, agricultural workers had no choice but to leave their homes and families for long periods of time. Another consequence was that women's participation in wheat cultivation remained limited.

The lowest-status agricultural workers—day laborers, shepherds and agricultural guards—spent proportionately more time working in the distant *campagna* and proportionately less time in and around their urban homes.<sup>55</sup> Sharecroppers and landowning peasants also wasted hours travelling to their work places, but two factors lessened their burden. First, these peasants alone owned animals—they could ride to the fields. Secondly, they were more likely to cultivate at least one or two plots of land in the *corona* just outside town. From there, they could return nightly to their homes.

There was one exception to this general rule, however. The *gabelloto*, the man who leased large wheat estates from absentee landlords and managed them for a profit, spent much time in the countryside. Most

owned land, also; all were aspiring *civili*. (And, in fact, many *civili* of the late nineteenth century had a *gabelloto* father or grandfather.) The time spent at the headquarters of the wheat estate proved a social hindrance to the ambitious *gabelloto*, for it made him "rough," the very opposite of "civile."<sup>56</sup>

By contrast, the artisans and petty merchants of a town like Sambuca—shoemakers, butchers, tile-makers, carpenters, stone masons, iron workers, barbers, grocers and operators of taverns or cafes—chose to work close to their homes. Most worked in shops directly below their living quarters. Winter rains might force them into their shops, and in better weather they rarely worked further away than the street outside their shop doors. Only carters and millers had occupational motives for travelling into the distant *campagna*, and they, like the *gabelloti*, gained a reputation as tough and uncivilized men as a result. Artisans and merchants worked and relaxed as they saw fit. In their leisure, they might meet with others in their own shops or visit a large central piazza where other men gathered. In the 1890's Sambuca had at least six sellers of wines and spirits; their taverns also served as leisure-time gathering places, especially in winter.

Similarly, an agrotown's rentiers, taking little active interest in the land they owned, rarely ventured into the countryside. Whether their "work" consisted of speculation, useful profession or conspicuous idleness, they chose (and thereby defined) a central gathering place in the agrotown as the best place for their "work".<sup>57</sup> Navarro della Miraglia poked fun at the *civili* sitting on the stone wall that surrounded a square in the simple country town of "Gibelmoro." Elsewhere, rentier men met in pharmacy or cafe. In Sambuca by the end of the century, they owned relatively luxurious club rooms on the main street.<sup>58</sup>

Women could combine childrearing, household and agricultural work only with some difficulty in Sicily. That is why they travelled to the distant wheat-raising *campagna* only once in the year. However, the harvesting of the intensively cultivated crops raised in the nearby *corona* fell to women, while plowing and planting of wheat (which coincided with these harvests) became men's work. Women could harvest and process nuts, fruits, or vegetables and still return nightly to their homes. They could also bring young children with them to the nearby fields where these crops were raised.<sup>59</sup> The agrotown settlement pattern certainly encouraged agricultural families to divide labor in this way, guaranteeing employment of as many family members as possible while harvests raised demand for labor to yearly peaks.

During most of the year, women remained within the agrotown.<sup>60</sup> But

staying there did not mean working within one's own four walls, at least not for peasant wives and daughters. It was absolutely impossible for a poorer woman to accomplish many of her household chores while remaining in her home. She had to haul water, either from fountain or distant spring. Since it was easier to transport dry clothes than to carry water, women usually preferred open streams for laundering during the rainy winter season. (A favored washing spot outside of Sambuca served the entire female population of the town; it was about a mile away from the southern edge of housing.) A peasant woman's efforts to earn money could also require her to leave her home, either to exchange eggs or to do housework in other women's houses. Even for smaller tasks, small one-room houses made poor work places—they had no chimneys, no windows and little room. In winter women might weave there by oil light, but all evidence shows that women worked outside their houses in the street or *cortile* whenever weather allowed.<sup>61</sup> This is why Navarro della Miraglia called the *cortile* "a kind of shared living room."<sup>62</sup>

Artisans' wives, living in lighter and larger houses, had more choice over where they worked. Nothing in the structure of their homes prevented them from going into the *cortile* or street to work, so they must have preferred to work where they did—inside. Artisans' wives often chose the "best room," the one most likely to have windows, as their work place. The women who helped their husbands run small shops also easily combined housework, sewing and selling. A tailoress or seamstress left her home to fit the clothes, of course; but only the skilled midwife always worked outside her own house.<sup>63</sup>

For most of the year, then, higher-status men, women, girls, and young children permanently occupied the Sicilian agrotown. Higher-status men gathered in scattered ground-floor *botteghe* and shops or in centrally located squares, shops and clubs. Higher-status women worked upstairs in their own houses; lower-status women toiled below in *cortile* or street, at the fountain or water hole, or in the house of a higher-status woman. Their husbands, sons, and brothers were far away, during the day in the best of cases, for weeks at a time in the worst. Harvest altered this pattern temporarily; lower-status women travelled briefly to the *latifondo* and more often to nearby harvests, while men worked for long periods on distant estates. Even a *civile* family spent several weeks during the harvest, living in a *corona*-area "country house."<sup>64</sup> Wintertime drew almost all Sicilians into town. While higher-status men retreated into protected work and leisure places and lower-status women spent more time in their damp small houses, unemployed men sought work about

town, wherever the better-off gathered, in piazza, artisans' shops or tavern.

As the last chapter predicted, the agrotown imposed severe restraints on agricultural families in their everyday lives. The settlement pattern required men to travel large distances to work and limited mothers' participation in wheat raising. Furthermore, the house itself practically forced women and children in agricultural families to find work and play places outside their homes. Unlike men—who created male gathering places in central locations—peasant wives chose to do much of their work just outside their doors, in street or *cortile*. Thus the majority of Sicilians had very limited choice over where or when or with whom they performed their everyday work and leisure activities.

### Agrotown Social Patterns

Obviously, some agrotown dwellers had far better opportunities than others to interact with members of their own families and to form social ties to others. But physical proximity and the opportunity to interact do not alone ensure that real social relationships will result. Two people can pass on the street without talking. And, even if they do talk, people alone decide what type of relationship they will begin. The social ideals described in chapter 1 guided Sicilians in forming, structuring and maintaining their social ties to others. Environmental restraints could only limit everyday opportunities to achieve those goals by making certain kinds of interaction difficult if not impossible.

Peasant families in agrotowns faced the nearly impossible task of defending the privacy of family life—an important symbol of their solidarity in competition with others—in a one-room house. A passerby, the women in the *cortile*, or a caller could easily check the condition of the bed linen, the amount of grain stored in the corner, the absence of household goods, or the dirt floor.<sup>65</sup> Little wonder that Sicilians preferred homes on the second floor, where they could better control access to their private dwelling rooms. Proverbs expressed considerable anxiety about threats to this private family space, especially through doors and windows.<sup>66</sup> "Every house has its door [its weakness]" (III, 92); "When happiness is in the house, disgrace is just behind the door" (II, 92); "The back door is often the ruination of the house" (I, 221); "All the world's ills come in through the door" (II, 153); "When you eat, shut the door, and when you talk, look behind you" (III, 295); "The door is open to him who contributes—otherwise, you stay outside" (IV, 229); "The

neighborhood is a snake, if it doesn't see you it hears you" (I, 219). The need to defend nuclear family privacy, originating in competition, made cooperation difficult for the majority of agrotown residents. Peasants could not easily receive visitors or offer hospitality in their houses without exposing their private space.

Peasant men in particular found their ideals in conflict. With fields far away, they could not simultaneously direct the family's economic tasks, control the sexuality of the women in the family, and form the social ties necessary both to survive economically and to accumulate respect. Yet all these were part of their ideal role as fathers. An artisan man clearly directed the family economic endeavors: He trained his sons in his occupation, and together they formed a family enterprise, even while the son attended school.<sup>67</sup> The sons of landowning peasants, some sharecroppers and independent shepherds also worked under their fathers' guidance. But sons in many poor families sought work outside the family unit. As herders they wandered the countryside with other young boys; as domestic servants they followed the directions of a *civile* or his wife. And, as they grew older, most sought work as day laborers. They might even compete for work with their own fathers. Few peasant fathers, then, actually directed their family's collective economic endeavors.

Away from home for much of the year, the peasant man slept irregularly with his wife; he could not control her sexuality. This, I believe, was the material basis for much of the anxiety expressed in the proverbs about faithless wives. (Pitrè himself noted that the proverbs he collected painted an unrealistically negative picture of women's behavior, I, ccxiii-iv.) Illegitimacy, while not unknown, was lower than in other parts of Italy where settlement patterns demanded no family separations. Government surveys reported that even the supercilious *civili* judged peasant morality favorably.<sup>68</sup> All the same, the possibility of female adultery fascinated and appalled Sicilians of all classes. Several of Navarro della Miraglia's short-story plots involve the peasant wife's infidelity. Seduction of the peasant daughter was another popular theme, as in *La Nana* and several of Verga's short works.

By contrast, most women in either peasant or artisan families could devote themselves to their housework, children and household, as ideal demanded. They could remain with their children in and around their agrotown homes. The symbolic association of the physical house and mother's love was, in fact, a strong one: "My *casa*, my mother!" (I, 217). Unlike their husbands, peasant wives also continued to supervise their older daughters, training them for their later lives as housewives and

mothers, working together with them until the daughters married. In this way, too, women could usually live up to idealized notions of motherly responsibilities.

Peasant women went to some lengths to prove their faithfulness and submission to their often-absent husbands. They waited on them at table, addressed them with the respectful form of address and—sometimes—were beaten.<sup>69</sup> What they did not do was seclude themselves in their houses as final proof of their fidelity. Given their household responsibilities, it would have been difficult for them to do so. Still, they even refused to signal a fictional seclusion (as Sicilian women in smaller towns do today) by symbolically turning their backs to the street or *cortile* from the doorway where they sat. (See Figure 3-2.) Only unmarried daughters remained relatively secluded.<sup>70</sup>

This was so because a peasant family literally could not afford either the real or fictional seclusion of the mother as proof of the father's control over her sexuality. The family, too, desperately needed to form instrumental ties to others. A story by Navarro della Miraglia suggests that most families chose to reap whatever cooperative benefits they could from the wife's active social efforts outside the household: The author pokes fun at the foolishness of an overly jealous man who locked up his

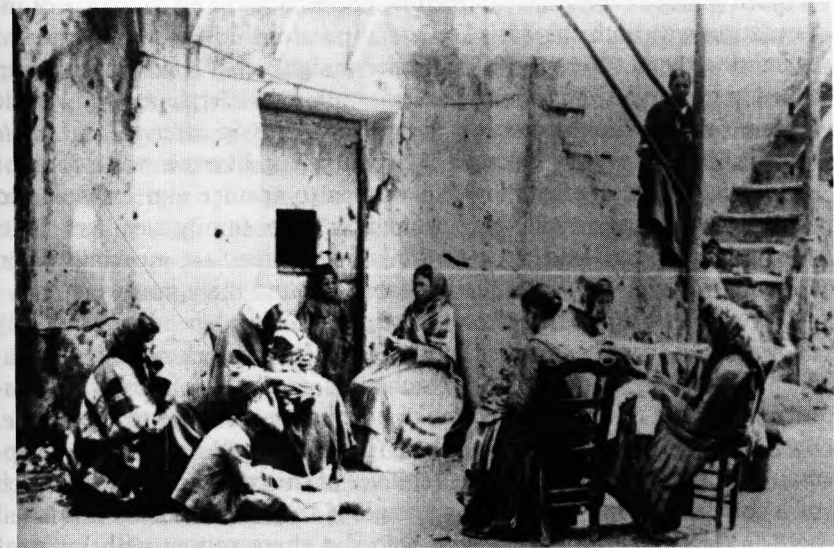


Figure 3-2. "The Street is Their Drawing Room" (William Seymour Monroe, *Sicily, The Garden of the Mediterranean* (Boston: L.C. Page, 1909)).



wife while he was away. In accepting the nonsecluded wife, most families tacitly recognized the father's limitations as organizer of family cooperative efforts. A man's work companions were an ever-changing group of competitors with few resources beyond their own labor (which they sought to sell). A man's visits to male gathering places were few and seasonal.<sup>71</sup> Both factors made it difficult for peasant men to form reciprocal instrumental relations to others.

Women faced fewer difficulties socially. Pitrè wrote that "the women . . . cannot stand being unable to see each other, to talk, to work together."<sup>72</sup> And a proverb encouraged women to "Capitalize on your neighborhood" (I, 220). A woman's *cortile* neighbors and, to a lesser extent, those she met daily at the fountain, were a stable group, changing only slowly with residential mobility. In addition women shared household responsibilities; these labors were less commonly sold for wages. Instead, they could be exchanged, at little cost to resourceless families. Over long periods of time even the poorest woman could occasionally offer a neighbor her help in heavy housework, in childrearing or at a time of family crisis—a death, for example.<sup>73</sup> If she did this for an artisan's wife, she gained a *padrona*, and she could expect a returned favor—use of a loom or sewing machine.<sup>74</sup> She could also expect others to recognize the existence of this social tie and respect her family because of its existence. Women gossiped constantly in their neighborhoods. This exchange of information was both the basis for social relationships and the means of evaluating them. "Vermicelli for dinner tonight, eh?" a gossiping group asked a pompous and outraged priest in one Verga story,<sup>75</sup> while Navarro della Miraglia traced the spread of gossip after a local *civile* returned from a visit in Palermo.<sup>76</sup> Trivial gossip like this was a form of social evaluation. It also allowed a woman to arrange marriages and to help find work for herself, her husband, or other family members. Four eyes, as the proverb said, were certainly better than two, especially when a man's two eyes only infrequently looked round the agrotown.

Nevertheless, the peasant family also suffered for depending so heavily on women to form its social network. Since this network arose from simple household and childrearing exchanges, a family's network of instrumental ties rarely extended much beyond the entrance to the *cortile*. Both men and women found all their friends there. According to Chapman even the highly-valued close relatives of the *casa* rarely played much of a role in the family's social exchanges if they lived outside this small area.<sup>77</sup> And even the patron who helped a sharecropper with loans of grain during the lean preharvest months was likely to be the artisan or *civile* whose house overlooked the *cortile* below.

A woman's efforts to build a social network around her family also provided yet another justification for virulent Sicilian misogyny. The higher-status men who wrote stories and novels about agrotown life admitted that their peers, artisans and *civile* men, used their prestige to prey upon the peasant woman, offering help in exchange for sexual favors. A common theme in the proverbs was the absent peasant man, assumed to be a cuckold (II, 75). Most lower-status women, however, seemed to have successfully avoided the higher-status men who resided continuously in the agrotown with them.<sup>78</sup>

The wife's social ties to others served as yet another reminder that the peasant father failed properly to fulfill his family role. Anthropologist Susan Carol Rogers traced the emergence of a powerful "myth of male domination" to male peasants' resentment of women's social powers.<sup>79</sup> Certainly Sicilians of both sexes had reason to use such a compensatory myth. No matter how respectful the peasant wife, no matter how carefully she served her husband at table, she could not resolve the conflicts among idealized family roles and the social ideal of a useful network of instrumental ties to others. As long as environmental obstacles remained high, "The husband is like the government at Rome, all pomp; the wife is like the Mafia, all power."<sup>80</sup> Idealization of male domination helped compensate for its absence.

Peasants, we saw in chapter 1, were not culturally familist. Neither were they familist in practice, although their small and female-dominated social networks rarely met Sicilians' ideals. One or two close *casa* kin, a single more-distant kinsman, three or four unrelated families, and a nearby patron formed a family's *cortile* social world. To the extent that local controversy touched this world, neighborhood women might act collectively. Verga, for example, described women engaging husbands in their quarrel with a local gentleman when the men returned from work at the end of the day.<sup>81</sup> Women did not, however, form voluntary associations like friendly societies, political clubs or labor unions. Neither did peasant men, at least before the 1880's. It seems likely, then, that peasant localism rather than peasant familism limited peasant experimentation with voluntary association until the late nineteenth century.<sup>82</sup>

Artisan and *civile* families faced none of the obstacles that frustrated peasant families in their pursuit of Sicilian social ideals. Both groups easily maintained family privacy in the dwelling rooms that they separated from a space to entertain guests and offer hospitality. Their large-doored and many-windowed houses symbolized not a threat to family privacy but the achievement of housing ideals.<sup>83</sup> Artisans regularly

slept with their wives and trained their own children, fulfilling the role of the ideal father and thereby acquiring respect. They met with other men regularly and played a much larger role in forming family social networks than did their housebound wives. These social networks were not geographically limited, as was the peasant's neighborhood group, and were not the source of anxiety about the social power or infidelity of women. Jane and Peter Schneider argue that *civile* families placed less emphasis on female submission as a consequence.<sup>84</sup> Navarro della Miraglia supported that contention: He described *civile* women participating, conversing and even flirting during the constant round of visits in which these families engaged.<sup>85</sup> Chapman also observed that artisan families in the early twentieth century shared the social practices of the rentier families.<sup>86</sup> More patriarchal in their social relations, such families had less reason to idealize patriarchy.

Artisan, *civile* and aspiring *civile* men usually succeeded in building the large and complex social networks idealized in the late nineteenth century, but they achieved this ideal in a variety of ways. Artisans enjoyed a long history of occupational cooperation in their guilds. Abolished in the 1830's, the guilds reappeared in new forms—as the fraternity that honored a patron saint with a yearly *fiesta* and, especially in the 1880's, as the mutual benefit society limited in membership to “honest workers.”<sup>87</sup> By contrast, *civile* men competed desperately in changing and loosely organized factions for control of both local wheat trade and local government. In Sambuca they formed two quite stable competing political cliques that warred bitterly over spoils in the late nineteenth century. (Residents cynically called these two groups the “ups” and the “downs.”) Together, *civile* men also organized their club; its main function was to maintain, in its limited way, *civile* class solidarity, usually by excluding the rough but eager and increasingly prosperous *gabelloti*.<sup>88</sup> *Gabelloti*, controlling employment on the large estates, in turn formed extensive networks of peasant and shepherd clients (*servi*). Centered in the forbidding *campagna*, the *gabelloto*'s social network often assumed the form and function of a mafia band.<sup>89</sup>

Thus, the agrotown remained socially fragmented. Rarely a single community, at best it can be characterized as a series of overlapping networks. Peasants' many small networks were geographically based and small, while artisans' and *civile*'s were larger and class based. In addition, each agrotown had a few large cross-class networks with powerful *gabelloti* at their centers. For two brief but important decades, *civile* and some artisan men experimented with the consolidation of large cross-class political factions that could have considerably simplified the com-

plex social structure of Sicilian agrotowns. Literate artisans attained suffrage in 1883; during the years that followed, Sambuca's artisans formed two mutual benefit societies (the *Unione Elettorale* and the *Società Franklin*). No documentation survives to tell us about the functions of these organizations. But elsewhere in Sicily such mutual benefit societies did function as vote-gathering mechanisms for existing *civile* political factions. In Sambuca, *civile* efforts to unite politically with artisans ultimately failed; perhaps independent artisans did not relish abandoning their group identity to become *servi* of the town's rentiers. Besides, artisans had other social options. In Sambuca a group of shoemakers, cabinet-makers, and tailors began during the 1880's to build a very different cross-class network, one that forged alliances to the peasant majority. By the end of the century, Sambuca's artisans, in cooperation with a small number of peasants, formed a workers' club and opened a workers' school to teach peasants to read and write. Drawing on Sicilians' tendency to define rich and poor as vastly different groups, these artisans announced their loyalty to the poor, even though we have seen that their lives in many ways more closely resembled those of the rentier “rich.” By 1900 Sambuca's artisans called themselves Socialists.<sup>90</sup> In general, however, these cross-class social alliances had little importance until the twentieth century.

### Summary

Environmental restraints overwhelmed the poor Sicilian hoping to achieve his social ideals; the agrotown was a very poor match. Peasant Sicilians had every reason to be dissatisfied with their social lives. Nor did they hesitate to express dissatisfaction with their plight, which in its larger aspects came to be called *la miseria*. Both peasant men and peasant women faced huge obstacles in their efforts to behave properly as family members and to behave “civilly” as members of a larger social group. Peasant women could find consolation in mothering their children in the idealized fashion, but they suffered under the assumption that they were unfaithful sexually. The peasant man failed, as supervisor of his wife's sexuality and as the idealized father who guided the family economically and socially.

Most of the Sicilians who migrated to the United States left their agrotown homes in search of work, as the next chapter shows. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that social dissatisfaction played a role, influencing how people perceived their economic troubles. It was not the case that migrants sacrificed a satisfying social life in order to

④ pursue economic goals elsewhere. The dissatisfaction of ordinary peasant men and women with their Sicilian social relationships is the background against which migration and life in the United States must be interpreted. Migrants left Sicily not to establish familiar social ties elsewhere but to build lives both economically and socially more satisfying than the ones they left behind.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Sicilian Migrants

Leonardo A., one of six children born to a Sambuca day laborer and his wife in the 1880's and 1890's, migrated to Chicago sometime around 1910. (This and subsequent examples are drawn from the draft records and household registration files of Sambuca.) Many other Sambuca residents lived in Chicago in the early years of the twentieth century, but Leonardo A. was the only member of his *casa* to leave Sicily. Twenty years later, in 1931, he continued to reside in America, while his elderly parents and grown siblings remained in Sambuca.

Unlike Leonardo A., the children of Sambuca barber Antonio C. enjoyed the company of many of their brothers and sisters in the United States. Castrenze C. first applied for a passport in 1897, when he was twenty-six years old. His brothers Marianno, Antonino and Giuseppe all moved to Brooklyn before reaching their twentieth birthdays. By 1931 nine of the C. siblings—three women and six men—lived in that city. Two sisters remained in Sambuca: One still lived with her aged mother, and the other had married a local man.

Giuseppe O. and Caterina M. married in Sambuca in 1891, and their first child was born there a year later. Shortly thereafter, Giuseppe O. probably left Sicily, for his wife bore no more children until, years later, she joined her husband in Louisiana. Between 1898 and 1910 the couple bore seven children, most in Patterson, Louisiana, a small town in the state's sugar-growing region. By 1912 at least part of the family returned to Sambuca, where a last child was born in that year. Of Giuseppe O. and Caterina M.'s eight children, four married and died in Sambuca. The other four lived in the United States in 1931. Both Giuseppe O. and Caterina M. died in Sambuca.

Compared to other southern Italians, Sicilians began to migrate quite late: Before 1880, fewer than one thousand left their agrotown homes annually to emigrate abroad.<sup>1</sup> During the 1880's, when Italians from the Abruzzi, from Calabria, Basilicata and Naples established Little Italies

all over the United States, only several thousand people yearly left Sicily.<sup>2</sup> By 1898, however, 26,000 departed—and the numbers increased rapidly after 1900. Thirty-seven thousand emigrated in 1901; 59,000 in 1903; 127,600 in 1906. Ultimately, every fourth migrant to the United States in the years 1880–1920 was a Sicilian. After the turn of the century, most Sicilian emigrants headed for the growing cities of the United States. A large but not calculable number contributed to New York's growing Italian-born population, which reached 340,770 in 1910.<sup>3</sup>

By the time of the New York State Census in 1905, approximately 8200 Italian immigrants and their children crowded into the tenements of Elizabeth Street. Although we have no way of knowing for sure, most probably were Sicilians. The Immigration Commission's survey of homeworkers found that "all the people who live on the west side of Elizabeth Street between E. Houston and Prince Street are Sicilians," while its survey of southern Italians in several New York neighborhoods (including Elizabeth Street) counted almost 50 percent from Sicilian provinces.<sup>4</sup> Together the residents of Elizabeth Street formed a population about the size of a typical agrotown like Sambuca.

As the examples from Sambuca suggest, emigrants from Sicilian agrotowns represented a variety of social backgrounds. Some migrated alone; others migrated as complete or incomplete family groups. One consequence was that the immigrant residents of Elizabeth Street—despite their Sicilian origins and culture—differed socially from an agrotown population. Selective migration meant an unbalanced sex ratio in immigrant populations. Historians have also emphasized the youthfulness of immigrant groups in the United States. Both characteristics could influence immigrant social behavior in the Little Italies of the New World.

While important, unbalanced sex ratios and youthful majorities do not tell us all that we need to know about how an immigrant group differed from an agrotown population socially. Social ties among Sicilians also began to change during migration, as migrants left agrotown restraints behind. Migrating, Sicilians often succeeded in expanding their social networks, especially ties to their own kin. While the population of Elizabeth Street was socially fragmented, selective migration and New World job opportunities also considerably simplified the complex class hierarchy typical of an agrotown. Immigrant social relationships on Elizabeth Street would necessarily reflect these changes. In order to avoid attributing every distinctive social pattern on Elizabeth Street to the influence of a changing physical environment, the social consequences of migration must first be described.

### Familism and Migration

Poor peasants responded in several ways to economic changes sweeping the European countryside in the nineteenth century. Migration was one response. Compared to a peasant revolution or strike, it seems a peculiarly individualistic or familistic solution to those changes. Economist J. S. MacDonald offered an explanation for Italian peasants' varying responses to economic change: In areas of household agriculture peasants migrated in large numbers, while elsewhere equally poor proletarianized cultivators instead organized militant unions and supported the Socialist party.<sup>5</sup>

Historians' interpretations of immigrant social patterns have depended heavily on MacDonald's findings. Noting the institutional weakness of Italian-American communities, Virginia Yans-McLaughlin traced its origin to those areas of southern Italy (the "Deep South") where household agriculture and familist social values produced high rates of migration.<sup>6</sup>

Sicilians engaged in household agriculture, combined with work as day laborers; culturally they were not familist. They did not resemble the typical emigrants of the "Deep South." Artisans formed voluntary associations and—in Sambuca, at least—peasants were beginning to join them in class-conscious organizations. Even peasants' lack of a large social network reflected only their failure to achieve their social ideals. Nevertheless both peasants and artisans migrated in great numbers, especially after the turn of the century.

J. S. MacDonald recognized that the origins of Sicilian migration were complex.<sup>7</sup> He explained the lateness of Sicilian emigration by pointing to peasants' failed attempts to solve their problems collectively in the nineteenth century. Only when the Italian state crushed peasant organizations—the well-studied and fascinating *Fasci Siciliani* of the 1890's—did Sicilians turn instead to the "familist" solution—migration.<sup>8</sup>

Western Sicilian evidence does not support MacDonald's explanation. Migration was not a particularly familist response to poverty. MacDonald himself popularized the concept of migration chains, which characterized migration as a carefully organized social movement.<sup>9</sup> Migration, like voluntary association, was a socially organized process. And, in Sicily, people chose not one form or the other, but tended to experiment simultaneously with both responses when faced with economic difficulties. The lateness of Sicily's migration and its volume originated not in some peculiar Sicilian social or cultural trait, but in the industrial and agricultural development of the island—which differed considerably from that of other parts of southern Italy.<sup>10</sup>

Sicily's earliest migrants were artisans; their migration coincided with a decade of vigorous artisanal organization.<sup>11</sup> A survey of Sicilian towns in 1889 listed artisans, shoemakers, "workers," and some peasants living as immigrants in New York, Chicago, Louisiana and South America.<sup>12</sup> Thereafter, artisans and workers continued to migrate in disproportionate numbers according to data collected from persons applying for the *nulla osta*, a procedure preceding the granting of a passport.<sup>13</sup> During the 1890's artisans everywhere built ties to peasants; they provided much of the leadership for the *Fasci Siciliani*, for peasant strikes and for tax protests 1892-93.<sup>14</sup> Early immigrants and those active in early workers' organizations shared similar social and economic backgrounds. In Sambuca, for example, over half the men listed in draft records of the 1880's as migrants to the United States were shoemakers—precisely those artisans most active in local politics and responsible for forming the early Socialist Party.<sup>15</sup> Immigrants and Socialists may have, in fact, been brothers and cousins.

Artisans' simultaneous efforts to organize and to emigrate reflected mainly their declining economic opportunities. While artisans in the 1860's and 1870's found a good market for their services as local *civili* built and furnished grand houses and financed the construction of theatres, public gardens and town halls, the era of expanding expectations was a short one.<sup>16</sup> Competition from imported products destroyed Sicily's native manufactories after 1870.<sup>17</sup> The threat of downward social mobility encouraged both emigration and political response during the 1880's and 1890's.

A roughly similar pattern of response characterized Sicily's peasants as prices for crops fell. First affected were wheat growers, in the 1880's.<sup>18</sup> Not surprisingly, both emigration and the organization of *Fasci* began in wheat-growing towns of western Sicily, as Table 4-1 shows. Migration from wheat towns increased and remained higher than average even after government repression of the *Fasci* in 1894; continued migration, however, did not prevent further outbursts of peasant agitation in the twentieth century.

Until 1900, the majority of Sicilian towns exporting other crops—grapes, fruits and nuts—lost fewer residents to migration and experienced relatively fewer peasant strikes during the 1890's. These peasants enjoyed a good and expanding market for their crops until late in the century, long after crisis rocked the worldwide grain market.<sup>19</sup> The cultivators of these crops emigrated late, first depressing, then raising overall rates of emigration from the island. And these peasants alone seemed to reject political organization as a response to falling

agricultural prices. These peasants were not culturally "more familist" than wheat-growers. (They organized mutual benefit societies as often as wheat cultivators, for example.) Instead, they, unlike wheat growers, worked under agricultural contracts that allowed them to raise their own food—to subsist—during periods of low prices.<sup>20</sup> This option may have undercut collective action, but it also undercut emigration: even after 1900 migration rates from these towns lagged slightly behind the wheat-growing towns.

Neither migration nor political organization threatened the social and economic centrality of the Sicilian nuclear family; both represented efforts to solve family poverty through cooperation. The long-run implications of emigration or political organization may have in fact been very different, but only hindsight makes the extent of these differences so very clear to us. It seems pointless, then, to portray emigration as a typically familist response to economic change, contrasting it to more collective solutions. In both cases, Sicilians tried as best they could to build and use social networks to their advantage. In both cases they acted according to agrotown social ideals. Migration in particular offered new and practically costless opportunities for cooperation. Sicilians responded enthusiastically: Migration to the United States was, as most historians now agree, an intricately organized social movement.

Table 4-1. Crops, Migration and Working-Class Organization

N	CROP EXPORTED	AVERAGE ANNUAL ADJUSTED INTERCENSAL POPULATION BALANCE PER 1000 RESIDENTS		PEASANT MILITANCE: % WITH <i>Fascio</i> Peasant Strike	
		1881-1900	1901-1910	1893-94	1900-10
		(a)		(b)	(c)
76	Wheat	-8.8	-14.0	80%	40%
33	Other Crops	-3.6	-12.4	42%	6%

(a) Provincial Capitals and sulfur exporting towns omitted. S. Somogyi, *Bilanci Demografici dei Comuni Siciliana dal 1861 al 1961* (Palermo: Universita di Palermo, Istituto di Scienze Demografiche, 1971).

(b) Renda, *I Fasci*, App. 1.

(c) Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio, *Statistica delle Scioperi avvenuti in Italia* (Rome: 1884-1903).

### The Social Organization of Migration

About the organization of migration, historians still know relatively little. The fact that family and communal ties facilitated migration, the theme of recent studies, is an important starting place.<sup>21</sup> But since family

and other social ties assumed several forms and functions even in one agrotown, this observation alone does not tell much about the social structure of an immigrant population. Writing with his wife Leatrice, J.S. MacDonald demonstrated that village-based chains provided the foundation for community building in urban immigrant neighborhoods.<sup>22</sup> Analysis of migration chains can reveal much about the origins of immigrant social structure. Here the focus is on the relative importance of nuclear family migration, the usefulness of kinship in forming chain links, and the size and origin of migration chains.

South Italians went to considerable trouble to keep the nuclear family together during migration, but they did not always migrate as a family unit. Like their Buffalo counterparts, about half of Elizabeth Street families in 1905 had experienced separations while migrating.<sup>23</sup> Typically, the young migrated, so that Elizabeth Street contained a disproportionate number of families with no or only young children.<sup>24</sup> These families with young children numbered among the financially most hard pressed in the immigrant population.<sup>25</sup> Finally, although family migrants were the majority, Elizabeth Street contained many more persons without families (8 percent of the population) than did a typical agrotown (about 3 percent). In agrotowns, the housing of individuals without families posed an occasional problem; migration could only increase that problem.

The decision to migrate represented a nuclear family's desire to compete, improving its position in the agrotown class hierarchy. To emigrate, however, was not simply a competitive matter. The typical emigrant needed and sought help. Early migrants willingly offered help, money or information. Much help and all information—like agrotown gossip—cost nothing, and allowed the immigrant family to expand its social network. The family expected, in turn, to benefit from future reciprocation, for the emigrant was a better social risk than the Sicilian peasant had been. The family also expected to enjoy the social respect that accompanied expansion of its social network. The point is clear: migration did not depend on existing social relationships but provided resources for the creation of new ones.

The importance of kinship in organizing migration is usually assumed.<sup>26</sup> Evidence for its importance comes mainly from small numbers of oral histories of immigrants arriving in the United States in the twentieth century, that is, after chains were well established.<sup>27</sup> The social ties linking migrants into a chain have never received systematic study, so firm conclusions are premature.

Some evidence does point to the likelihood that immigrant kinship patterns originated not in southern Italy—Sicilians neither idealized nor practiced close ties to *parenti*—but in the migration process itself.<sup>28</sup> Initially, kin may have played only a limited role in organizing migration chains. Of 765 families recently arrived in the United States in 1905 and living on Elizabeth Street, about half had no kin whatsoever living nearby. (See Appendix B for an explanation of how kinship outside the household was estimated from census data.) Better evidence comes from the group of immigrants without families who in 1905 sought housing on Elizabeth Street; 150 became boarders with nonkin while only ninety found a place with a relative. The boarders—whether new friends or former neighbors—had become *paesani*, a social category completely unknown in Sicilian agrotowns.

Kinship grew in importance, and it probably did so at the expense of friendship and neighborhood ties in the organization of migration. The ratio of households including nonkin boarders to those with kin declined on Elizabeth Street through time: from .58 in 1905, to .54 in 1915, to only .25 in 1925. And, by 1931, almost every resident of Sambuca listed in town *fogli* as living in the United States had at least one relative in the immigrant population.

Members of the *casa* cooperated most frequently in emigrating, as Sicilian social ideals would predict. Because migrants were young, it was siblings who formed most links in *casa* chains. On Elizabeth Street in 1905, brothers and sisters of household heads (or their wives) represented half of the kin included in the household. Similarly, about half of the 765 Elizabeth Street families analyzed for kin outside the household had the sibling of one spouse living nearby. Over 80 percent of the migrant children listed in Sambuca's *fogli* as residents of the United States in 1931 had at least one migrant sibling.

Cooperation among more distant kin, the *parenti*, increased most noticeably during migration. *Parenti* represented 15 percent of the kin invited into Elizabeth Street households in 1905. Twenty years later that proportion increased to over one-third. One-quarter of the 765 families analyzed had at least one more distant relative living nearby in 1905—an estimate that certainly underestimates the real proportions. A higher estimate (but still one that is probably low) comes from the Sicilian data, which reflects the ties established among *parenti* through time. Since Sambuca's *fogli* listed the full names of parents and grandparents of immigrant children, cousins, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, grandparents and grandchildren could be identified among the immigrants living in the

United States in 1931. More than a third of the immigrant children in this group had at least one immigrant *parente*. Most of these had several.

Why did migrating Sicilians come to prefer *parenti*, over neighbors or friends in building migration chains? One explanation is that young migrants left behind most of their *casa* kin, who in Sicily formed the core of their social networks. Only 5 percent of Sambuca's migrant children in 1931 could count on the company of all their siblings in the United States, and the average Elizabeth Street family analyzed had in 1905 only two close relatives of the *casa* living close by. Young emigrants may have looked more favorably on *parenti* as replacements for parents and siblings. The limited size of the *cortile* neighborhood/friendship group may also have limited its usefulness in peasants' migration. However hazy and dangerous kinship sometimes seemed to agrotown residents, it was the only nongeographical social category available to most peasants. As such, kinship may have "travelled great distances" better than the claim of *paesano*/friendship or neighborliness.

The consequences of migration for immigrant social relationships should be obvious. Immigrants could rarely recreate the multigenerational *casa* in their early years in the United States. They could eventually depend instead on siblings or *parenti* for exchange, respect and emotional support. Life in New York's tenements and in other American Little Italies would reinforce further the usefulness of intra-generational ties, eventually eliminating the Sicilian social and cultural distinction between *casa* and *parenti* to produce the distinctively immigrant kin group *la famiglia*.

Migration chains of kin and nonkin became the foundation on which immigrants could build a larger social network—their size could determine whether immigrants needed to turn to non*paesani* in their efforts. John Briggs' research showed that in Utica, Rochester and Kansas City members of a few large migration chains "lived side by side with large numbers of individuals who could count relatively few fellow townsmen or *paesani* in the colony."<sup>29</sup> He concluded that historians exaggerate the importance of *campanilismo* (village-based loyalties) and the cause of immigrant solidarity or the foundation for immigrant community.

Like the cities studied by Briggs, Elizabeth Street was socially fragmented by village chains. Observers at the time distinguished two large subgroups, one from the Sciacca region and one from the area around Palermo. While broadly correct, these observers underestimated the diversity of Elizabeth Street residents' origins and overestimated the size and importance of some communal subgroups.

Briggs used parish records—unavailable for Elizabeth Street—to iden-

tify and analyze the communal origins of Italian immigrants; as an alternative I experimented with tracing distinctive patron saint names in census listings. In every agrotown, persons named after the local patron or patroness abounded. Sambuca residents favored Audenzio and Audenzia. In a given year, Sambuca's parents named as many as 10 percent of their children after the town patron. Almost a quarter of Sambuca families had at least one child so named. Pitre's work identified the patrons of many Sicilian towns, providing a guide to town origins.<sup>30</sup> (See Appendix B.)

In 1905, persons named after Palermo's patroness, Rosalia, numbered 51, while those with the name of Sciacca's San Calogero numbered 91. If we estimate one family in four named a child after the patron, then the chain from Palermo itself contained 200 families. A larger chain originated in Marineo. This was the largest chain on Elizabeth Street. Far more typical was the small chain with only about 20 or 30 families. (Only two families from Sambuca were identified on Elizabeth Street; in both, Sambucari had married residents of Santa Margarita Belice, a nearby town with many residents on the street. Immigrants from Sambuca bound for New York normally chose a variety of Brooklyn locations as their new homes.)

None of these figures give a secure estimate of chain size. But they do suggest that the numbers of persons in migration chains varied considerably. As in the smaller cities that Briggs studied, Elizabeth Street immigrants in large chains lived alongside people with relatively few *paesani* nearby. Only a minority of Elizabeth Street residents could count on a large chain to provide them with a ready-made large social network useful to their future American life. If they wanted to build such a network, they would have to turn to non*paesani*.

### *Class and Immigrant Occupations*

Immigrants came from diverse occupational backgrounds. Not limited to agricultural labor, considerable numbers of immigrants from Sicily had worked as fishermen, artisans or petty merchants. In Sambuca, the children of both agricultural day laborers and artisans migrated in above-average proportions. Immigrants from the town represented almost every possible occupation from the group that Sicilian proverbs loosely characterized "the poor" as well as from the middling group of artisans. Only "the rich"—the *civili*—failed to migrate in significant numbers.

In Sicily occupation largely determined social patterns: artisans

achieved Sicilian social ideals while most peasants did not. Yet historians have almost completely ignored the class dynamics of immigrant groups, choosing to emphasize the typical experiences of the "working-class" majority (which is sometimes described as resembling peasants, sometimes as resembling artisans), with occasional contrasts to the *prominenti* or middle-class immigrant elite.<sup>32</sup> It is true that migration truncated the class hierarchy of an agrotown by almost completely eliminating the *civili*. Nevertheless it left intact the very important distinction between artisan/petty merchant and peasant.

This distinction could easily flourish in the New York job market. New York offered varied occupational opportunities, and most American jobs could easily fit into the Sicilian dichotomy of dirty/dependent and clean/independent manual occupations. New York at the turn of the century was a rapidly expanding city: In parts of Manhattan and the outlying boroughs, the building of houses and offices and the construction of the roads, bridges and public transportation necessary to keep increasingly far-flung parts of the city in communication created thousands of unskilled and skilled jobs. New York was also a center of much light industry, including its famous garment industry, and of commerce, trade and banking. Finally, the city's growing population, including its expanding population of Italian speakers, created demand for some commercial, skilled, and professional service workers.<sup>33</sup>

Both John Briggs and Josef Barton have emphasized that immigrants' European occupational experiences influenced the kind of jobs they took in the United States.<sup>34</sup> In New York, too, immigrants did not randomly fill jobs. Table 4-2 summarizes the occupations of Elizabeth Street residents in 1905, comparing them to the occupations of New Yorkers as a whole. It shows that Elizabeth Street's immigrants concentrated in unskilled work, the garment industry and petty enterprise.

Opportunities for middle-class immigrants were poor in New York City. Elizabeth Street's *prominenti* served the immigrant population as physicians and pharmacists, teachers, white collar workers, agents, bankers and importers. Bankers and importers were few in number in 1905, suggesting that the banker-, agent- or importer-*padrone* may have played a less important role here than in other newer or smaller immigrant colonies.<sup>35</sup> The *prominenti* provided little employment for the mass of ordinary immigrants; instead they were dependent for their success on the support of laborers and artisans. In short, they could never assume the social role of the *civili* in an agrotown.

Table 4-2. Immigrant Occupations

Occupation	All New Yorkers 1900		Elizabeth Street Italians, 1905	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Unskilled	31%	43%	49%	4%
Clothing Industry	8	27	16	94
Skilled, Building	10	-	5	-
Skilled, Other	12	7	11	1
Petty Enterprise	9	1	16	-
Other	30	21	3	1
	100%	99%	100%	100%
	N = 1,102,471	N = 243,874	N = 2,368	N = 1,018

SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census, 1900, Special Reports, Occupations* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), table 43.

By contrast New York offered expanding opportunities to work at desirable independent or skilled occupations. In fact, immigrants of artisanal or petty-merchant background came to New York in above-average numbers. Only 31 percent of the south Italian New Yorkers surveyed by the Immigration Commission admitted an agricultural background.<sup>36</sup> (In Cleveland, 50 percent did so; in Chicago, 63 percent; in Buffalo, over three-quarters said they had worked in agriculture before migrating.) Thus, while artisans or petty merchants were only a sixth of the family heads in a town like Sambuca, their representation increased to a quarter of Sambuca's male immigrants and to a third of the male workers on Elizabeth Street in 1905.

Unfortunately, census takers failed to describe carefully the work of these immigrant workers; for example, it is impossible to distinguish the independent artisan from the skilled employee. It is clear, however, that in both cases, bakers, butchers, painters, carpenters, masons, plasterers and plumbers performed work easily distinguished by Sicilian standards from dirty/dependent labor. Since Elizabeth Street was a pushcart market area, petty entrepreneurs were especially numerous among its occupants. As elsewhere in the United States, Sicilian immigrants dominated peddling and commerce in fruits and vegetables.<sup>37</sup> On Elizabeth Street, Sicilians also peddled fish. Cafe and saloon operators, restrauteurs and grocers, and dealers in coal, ice and wood completed this occupational group.

Although there were many small factories in the area immediately surrounding Elizabeth Street, large numbers of its Italian residents found work only in the clothing industry. Here again, census takers failed to



make careful distinctions among workers: It is not possible to distinguish less skilled and more dependent garment "operators" from the skilled and independent tailor. Other sources indicated that many women became factory operatives, while men performed skilled work as cutters, pressers or independent tailors.<sup>38</sup> Home finishing (mainly basting and finishing garments) attracted huge numbers of Elizabeth Street's female occupants; the street was known as a center of this work.<sup>39</sup>

Alone among New York's occupations, factory work did not neatly fit Sicilian occupational categories, for it was clean but nevertheless dependent work. For women, however, garment making, whether at home or in the factory, represented a kind of work clearly more desirable than the harvesting and domestic work of Sicilian agrotowns. Thus women migrants, too, enjoyed good opportunities for doing desirable work in New York.

In New York, common unskilled labor shared much with European agricultural labor—it was dirty, insecure, dependent and back-breaking work. Almost three quarters of unskilled Elizabeth Street men worked as laborers, digging tunnels and excavating subway passages, or carrying and digging at building construction sites. Other men performed a variety of only slightly more specialized tasks: dockwork, bootblacking, carrying hods, driving wagons, cleaning streets, picking rags, and portering.

Both selective occupational migration and New York's job market had somewhat contradictory social consequences for immigrants. As novels and autobiographies show, not all the immigrants who transformed themselves into small shopkeepers or skilled workers received training in Italy, while not every artisan immigrant succeeded in escaping the dirty and dependent unskilled work he usually performed as a recent arrival.<sup>40</sup> The clear Sicilian distinction between artisans and peasants guided immigrants in understanding and ranking most New York jobs, but the distinction itself blurred in the process. In general, however, the proportion of persons, male and female, doing artisanlike work increased with migration to Elizabeth Street.

With this change could grow the expectation of achieving Sicilian social ideals. The extent to which immigrants succeeded in achieving either their old or their newly developing ideals depended on more than expectation, hope, or will, however. In New York, immigrants faced an entirely new physical environment. Would it frustrate their social efforts as had the homes they left behind?

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Tenement Residential Patterns

New Yorkers noticed the growing Sicilian settlement on Elizabeth Street with alarm. Their dismay reflected their concern with the curious ways Sicilians occupied their tenement homes: residential patterns that to New Yorkers meant social chaos and that seemed socially and biologically dangerous. Jacob Riis in *Ten Years War* described one particularly troubling Sicilian habit:

Only the other night I went with the sanitary police on their midnight inspection through a row of Elizabeth Street tenements which I had known since they were built fifteen or sixteen years ago. That is the neighborhood in which the recent Italian immigrants crowd. In the house which we selected for inspection, in all respects the type of the rest, we found forty-three families where there should have been sixteen. Upon each floor were four flats, and in each flat three rooms that measured respectively fourteen by eleven, seven by eleven, and seven by eleven and one half feet. In only one flat did we find a single family. In three there were two to each. In the other twelve, each room had its own family living and sleeping there. They cooked, I suppose, at the one stove in the kitchen, which was the largest room.<sup>1</sup>

Riis sensibly noted that not all the "tenement house evils" they uncovered could be blamed on the Sicilian occupants. One building he described had not had water for a month, because after cold weather had frozen the pipes the building manager, an Italian undertaker, "had not taken the trouble to make many or recent repairs." When Riis asked the man why the houses had been left to decay, the *padrone* replied, "with such tenants nothing could be done." But Riis found this unconvincing and argued with the man: Italians, he had found, were "most manageable and . . . with all surface indications to the contrary, they are inclined to cleanliness." The undertaker, Riis reported, "changed the subject

diplomatically," because, "no doubt with him [it was] simply a question of rent."

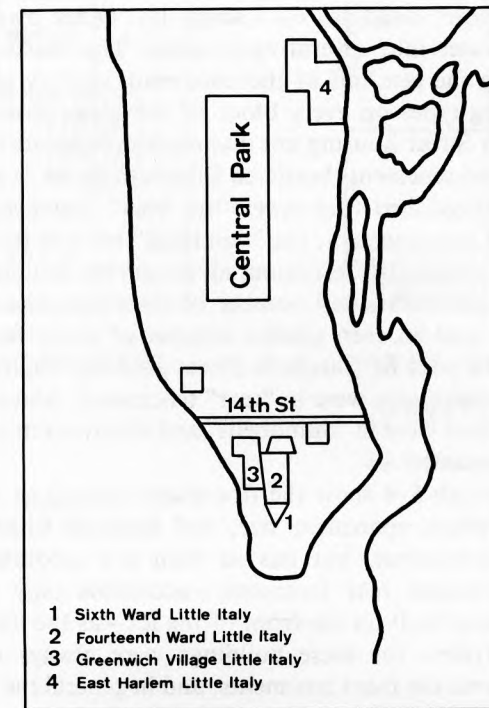
Riis, a material determinist like many early reformers, may have exaggerated the overcrowding he found on Elizabeth Street in order to demonstrate better the destruction of "the home ideal" by the "tenement house evil."<sup>2</sup> But he was correct in seeing rent as an important housing question—not just for the tenement landlord, but also for the Sicilians wishing to make new homes on Elizabeth Street. From the moment immigrants left Ellis Island, their decisions about where and how they lived were shaped by the hard realities of housing supply and demand in this growing American city. Those realities were indeed hard—tenements fell far below Sicilian housing ideals. But then, so had most Sicilian housing. The match of tenement and Sicilian ideals was certainly no worse than that of the Sicilian agrotown, and in many ways it was actually better.

### Tenements

Elizabeth Street was part of only one of several large and growing Italian neighborhoods in the expanding city of New York. In New York's best-known Little Italy, the Fourteenth Ward, Elizabeth is two blocks east of Mulberry Street. Map 5-1 shows the location of the Fourteenth Ward and other Italian settlements in Manhattan—the Sixth Ward, Greenwich Village, and East Harlem. In New York's other boroughs, Italians concentrated at the Brooklyn end of bridges to Manhattan and along several major avenues and public transportation routes in the Bronx. In 1905 most of these neighborhoods were predominantly areas of first settlement; Greenwich Village, East Harlem and Brooklyn also absorbed small groups of immigrants abandoning their initial homes in southern Manhattan.

Elizabeth Street and the Fourteenth Ward could claim a long history as an important residential area in lower Manhattan.<sup>3</sup> In the late eighteenth century, the eastern boundary of the Fourteenth Ward (the Bowery) was a country lane leading to Manhattan's farmlands; and the northern part of the ward, while already cut by today's streets, still contained pastures and gardens. It was between 1800 and 1850 that the ward filled rapidly with private dwelling houses. At this time the Fourteenth Ward provided housing for shipyard workers and mechanics as well as for some more prosperous families.<sup>4</sup> It was a native bastion—but to its south (in the Sixth Ward) grew the city's first immigrant slums.

By 1850, when New York's population reached 515,647, Irish immigrants began moving northward from the Sixth into the Fourteenth



Map 5-1. Manhattan Little Italies (New York City Tenement House Department, *First Report*. New York: Martin B. Brown, 1904).

Ward. In response, native-born residents almost completely abandoned the ward in the years after the Civil War. Rather than selling their lands and homes there, they leased them to speculative builders and lessees.

The population of the 104-acre Fourteenth Ward continued to grow rapidly in the years following the Civil War. The home of 25,196 in 1850, the ward housed 30,171 by 1880, and 35,420 by 1900—an average of 339 persons per acre. The Irish dominated what had become an entirely immigrant residential area. After 1860 Italians in small numbers sought homes in the ward; their numbers increased rapidly during the 1880's. By 1890 two-thirds of its occupants were Italians and only one-third were Irish. Ten years later Italians had completely taken over the ward.<sup>5</sup> Only a scattering of elderly Irish immigrants remained.

As the population of the Fourteenth Ward changed, so did its housing. Between 1865 and 1900, speculators built over 150 tenements in the area, mainly uniform barracks specifically intended for low-cost rental to poor immigrants. Builders erected tenements in front of older houses, produc-

ing "front" and "rear" buildings on a single lot. Other owners divided older dwelling houses into several apartments. This burst of housing speculation during the last half of the nineteenth century guaranteed a mixture of housing types on every block of the area. (Sources for the study of Elizabeth Street housing are discussed in Appendix B.)

Over one hundred tenements bordered Elizabeth Street in 1905. Housing reformers distinguished four types: the "rear" tenement, the "barracks" type of old law tenement, the "dumbbell" old law tenement, and the "new law" tenement. (By definition, all tenements contained three or more apartments.) A very small number of dwellings with fewer than three apartments, and an even smaller number of single-family houses formed a negligible part of Elizabeth Street housing. Eight percent of Elizabeth Street apartments were in "rear" tenements. Almost half were in "barracks." A third were in "dumbbells" and about seven percent were in "new law" tenements.

Figures 5-1 through 5-4 show the floorplans of each of these apartment types. In design, apartment size, and facilities Elizabeth Street buildings varied somewhat, but less so than did agrotown housing. Reformers characterized rear tenements—accessible only through an alley or the tenement built on the front of the lot—as the least desirable tenement type. Toilets for these buildings were always in the yard separating them from the front tenements, and in general the rooms were smaller than in other buildings. They were also dark, because of their location.

"Railroad flats" with rooms strung in a straight line like railroad cars on a track characterized buildings erected specifically for rental at low cost. The oldest such buildings, the "barracks" built between 1850 and 1880, were of brick, four or five stories tall. Basements and first floors often contained rooms for stores. Narrow, steep and unlighted staircases in central hallways led to upstairs apartments. Sinks and, in the newer barracks, toilets found their place off the narrow corridor on each floor landing. Barracks apartments typically contained two and three rooms. Only rooms facing the street or back yard had windows, so these apartments, too, were quite dark. The room entered from the hallway possessed vents for attaching a heating or cooking stove; in the newer barracks, this room also boasted a tiny sink. Otherwise, water supply and toilets were in the hallways or outside.

Architects attempting to correct some of the worst aspects of the barracks tenements created dumbbell apartments in 1879, but like their predecessors, these flats, too, followed the railroad plan. The central stairway remained tiny and steep, and the central hallway on each floor

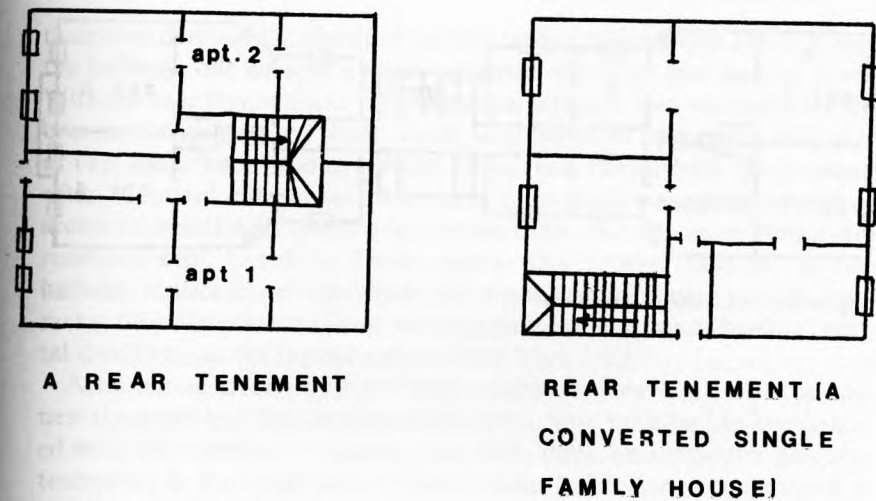


Figure 5-1. Rear Tenements

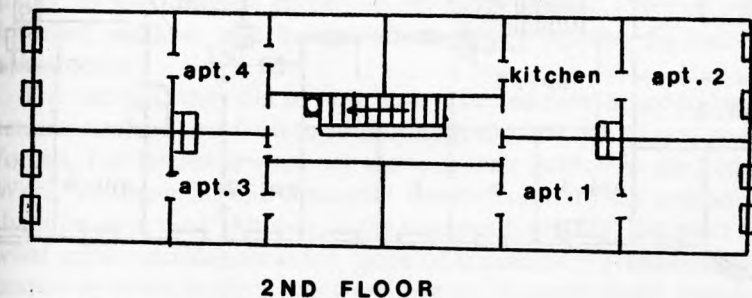


Figure 5-2. A Barracks Tenement

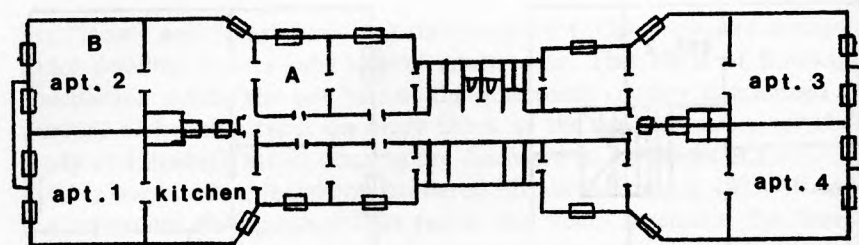


Figure 5-3. A Dumbbell Tenement

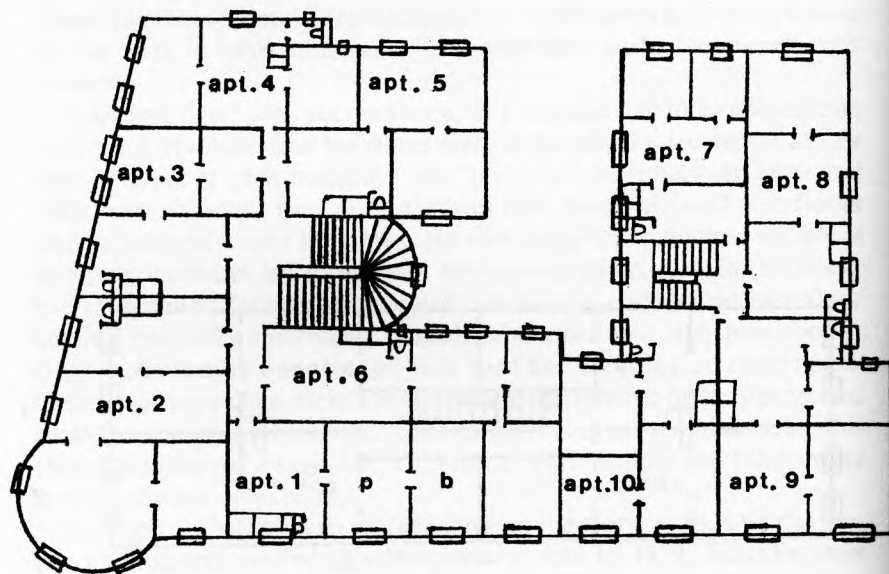


Figure 5-4. A New Law Tenement

remained narrow—as did the four apartments that opened off it. From the hallway, one entered a room equipped with sink and laundry tubs. With its own tiny window onto a central airshaft, this room inevitably became the kitchen. A “front” room faced street or rear yard, while one or two small “back” rooms obtained light from the airshaft. Back rooms often possessed independent doorways to the corridors, an addition that architects specifically called a concession to the fact that many New York residents kept boarders. Flush toilets were located outside, in the hallway. Critics found dumbbells only a small improvement over the barracks; they complained that it was impossible to construct “healthy” rental dwellings on the typical narrow New York lot.<sup>6</sup>

After heroic efforts by New York reformers, New York State passed new tenement building regulations in 1901: New York builders responded with the “new law” tenement. By 1905, there were nineteen new law tenements in the Fourteenth Ward. Italian builders had constructed a number of them. New law tenements extended over several narrow lots, so their plans could depart from the railroad flat design. The new law demanded larger and better fireproof hallways with lighting. Most Elizabeth Street new law apartments had three or four rooms; these rooms were a little larger than dumbbell rooms and each boasted a window. Residents continued to enter the kitchen (now equipped with toilet as well as with sink, vents and laundry tubs), but interior rooms were often accessible only through other rooms, as in apartment 1, Figure 5-4. Not a single apartment on Elizabeth Street, even in the new law apartments, provided a bath.

New York’s new housing laws also required landlords to improve older tenements by constructing vents and inserting internal windows in barracks apartments, by replacing yard pit toilets (“school sinks,” unattached to the city sewer) with sanitary toilet facilities and by providing fire escapes. However reluctantly, many Elizabeth Street landlords filed plans for making these alterations between 1901 and 1910. Usually they installed windows and built toilets or water supplies (in hallways or apartments).

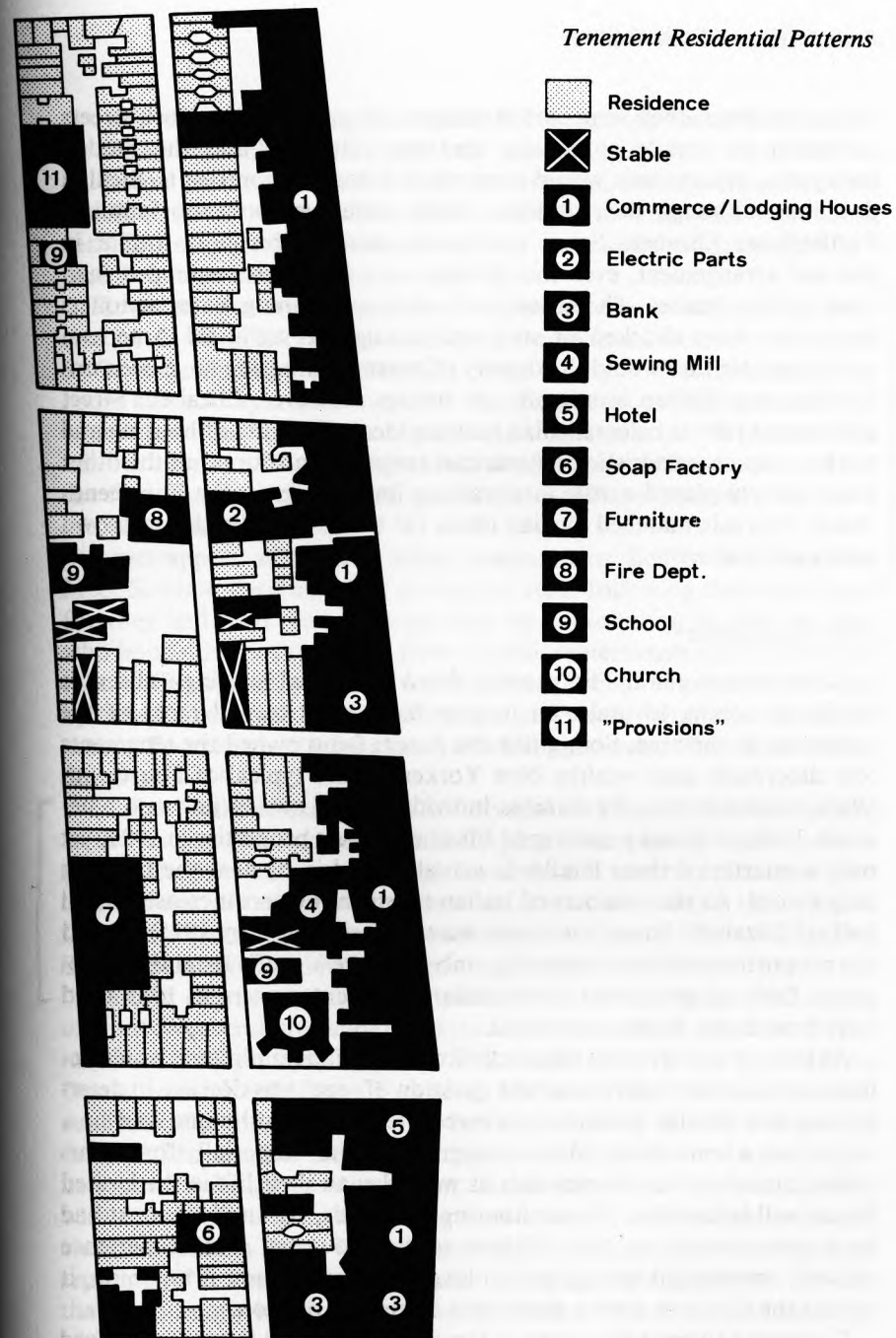
The fact that they did so may have reflected their desire to keep their tenants more than a wish to comply with city law, which was poorly enforced. For landlords were not alone in their interest in the Fourteenth Ward: Commercial and industrial enterprises had long competed with them for area land. Already in the nineteenth century, the ward became what urban sociologists call a “zone of transition.” Transition was well underway when Sicilians began arriving on Elizabeth Street. Buildings on streets parallel to Broadway were converted to loft and warehouse usage

in the 1880's and 1890's, when factories appeared all over this part of southern Manhattan. By 1900, almost every block in the ward housed some kind of manufacturing enterprise. The change in the ward was significant. Authors of *The Tenement House Problem* found it necessary in 1903 to correct a common public belief that business had succeeded in "driving out the tenement houses in the quarter."

Elizabeth Street shared with the rest of the ward this transitional character, as Map 5-2 shows. Tenement buildings covered about half of its lots, mixed with commercial and light manufacturing buildings. The Bowery and the other large streets surrounding the ward provided stores, hotels and banks, as well as major public transportation routes. Western and southern blocks of the area had the highest proportions of industrial and warehouse buildings, and garment shops, small candy and box factories, printing establishments, furniture, carriage and shoe factories, and one large "provisions" house offered workplaces among the residences. Schools, churches, and fire stations were also scattered haphazardly through the ward. Every block contained stores and shops in the tenements, and Elizabeth Street alone contained two distinct street pushcart markets.

Competition between residential and other interests continued in the twentieth century, but the transition on Elizabeth Street slowed. By tearing down and replacing barracks, builders and landlords succeeded for almost fifteen years in increasing available housing—the last new law tenement erected in the Fourteenth Ward began renting in 1913. City planning played a larger role in threatening local housing supply during these years than did industrial competition. In 1907, the City cut a new street—Kenmare—through the heart of the Fourteenth Ward. Its goal was to improve traffic access to the Williamsburgh Bridge. New housing replaced every apartment destroyed. School building became a kind of unintentional form of urban renewal, for new schools always replaced the oldest housing in the Fourteenth Ward. Thus, by 1915, the number of apartments available on Elizabeth Street had increased, but only slightly, to nineteen hundred. The housing supply also improved, for more than twice as many of these apartments were now in new law buildings. After 1915, area housing supply changed little. Industries, too, lost interest in the Fourteenth Ward as factories sought locations better served by transportation.

Unfortunately, no Sicilian immigrant arriving to make a new home on Elizabeth Street recorded his or her impression of this new urban environment. Many of the street's physical features, if compared to a Sicilian agrotown, would have seemed new and unfamiliar—the height



Map 5-2. Elizabeth Street Land Use, 1905

of the buildings, their long dark staircases, the straight New York streets unbroken by *cortile* or square, and the sidewalks and the hidden backyards. Apartments would have seemed small in contrast to Sicilian dwellings, although their darkness might have been only too familiar. Furthermore Elizabeth Street apartments were depressingly similar in size and arrangement, even though they were also better equipped than most Sicilian houses. The absence of windows, running water or toilets would not have shocked or surprised immigrants as it did American reformers. Neither would the density of tenement housing have been unfamiliar to a Sicilian immigrant. As houses, however, Elizabeth Street apartments fell far below Sicilian housing ideals. The mix of housing and work places characteristic of American zones of transition, on the other hand, clearly played a role in attracting immigrants to the Fourteenth Ward. This mix matched Sicilian ideals far better than did the agrotown settlement pattern.

#### *New Restraints*

All the housing in the Fourteenth Ward was rental housing—absentee landlords hoping to make an income from rents owned most of the tenements in the area. Some, like the Astors (who owned the tenements Riis described) were wealthy New Yorkers. More typical of Fourteenth Ward landlords was the humble individual who owned just one tenement. Italians owned a quarter of Elizabeth Street properties in 1905, yet only a quarter of these landlords actually lived in or near the building they owned. As the numbers of Italian tenement owners increased (until half of Elizabeth Street tenements were in their hands by 1925), so did the proportions of those expecting only to make a profit from their property. Only 10 percent of these Italian tenement owners in 1925 lived anywhere in the Fourteenth Ward.

As long as they lived on Elizabeth Street, Sicilian immigrants would remain renters. For that reason “the question of rent” was decisive in determining how Sicilian immigrants viewed their tenement homes, and how they chose a home there. Many immigrant renters—especially former artisans, but many former peasants as well—began their life in the United States well below their former housing standards, for in Sicily most had been homeowners or the children of homeowners. This experience scarcely encouraged immigrants to love their new homes; if anything, it turned the desire to own a home into a burning passion.

Compared to rents elsewhere in the city, rents in the Fourteenth Ward were quite low. A quarter of the apartments on Elizabeth Street had two

rooms, with rents ranging from about \$6.40 monthly for a rear tenement to \$9.50 monthly for a dumbbell tenement. Slightly over half of Elizabeth Street apartments had three rooms, renting from \$8.00 to \$15.00 a month. About a fifth of the street's apartments had four rooms, renting for from \$9.00 a month in rear tenements to almost \$20.00 a month in some new law tenements.<sup>8</sup>

However, area rents appear much higher when expressed as a proportion of an unskilled laborer's income. A common laborer earned about \$475 yearly during the first decade of the century.<sup>9</sup> The rental of a two-room barracks apartment required only 20 percent of that income, while a new law four-room apartment could consume over 50 percent of a laborer's income. The average rental of an Elizabeth Street apartment in the first decade of the century was about \$12.50, or almost a third of a laborer's monthly income.<sup>10</sup>

Rents appear still higher when compared to Sicilian housing costs. Most Sicilians lived cost-free during the years following their marriages, for they had paid their housing costs by contributing to their parents, who bought houses for them. Even Sicilian renters customarily spent less than a fifth of family income on rent. Were Sicilian immigrants shocked by New York rentals? Lillian Betts (a social worker who lived for a time among Fourteenth Ward Italians) noted suggestively, “Rent is the outlay they resent.”<sup>11</sup>

Sicilian habits of using space flexibly and defining the private dwelling as the nuclear family's eating and sleeping space proved useful tools in solving the problem posed by high rents. As Riis observed, Sicilians lived two and sometimes three families to an apartment. Census takers called these arrangements “partner households.” Almost a fifth of Elizabeth Street apartments in 1905 contained a partner household.

Careful observers found that partner households functioned not as one but as several households. In three- and four-room apartments, immigrant families used space in much the same ways the brothers Domenico and Baldassare F. had in Sambuca. The families remained economically independent, one family subletting a room from the other.<sup>12</sup> The families did not eat together; they did not own (but might use) household goods in common. Annie Daniel, a reformer familiar with Elizabeth Street's sweated garment workers, reached the same conclusion as Lillian Betts: The families sharing an apartment “lived entirely separately.”<sup>13</sup> They divided the space of the apartment between them so that each family had its own “private dwelling” for eating and sleeping, while sharing the kitchen and its cooking stove and sink.

By forming a partner household, families reduced their rent to less

than ten dollars a month, or one-quarter of a laborer's wages. Riis correctly analyzed the origin of overcrowding in "high rent, slack work and low wages," and Lillian Betts concurred, noting "It is the rents that compel the combination of families . . . ."<sup>14</sup>

Despite strong economic incentives, families formed partner households only under particular spatial conditions. Not all apartments could be divided easily in ways that Sicilians found appropriate. (See Table 5-1.) Three rooms seemed necessary, and their arrangement also played a significant role. Most new law tenements, for example, contained some apartments like "1" in Figure 5-4. In that apartment, entrance to room "b" was through room "p," so a family occupying "b" could only enter it by walking through the "private dwelling" of its partner family. In the dumbbell apartments, by contrast, entrance to every room in all apartments was through the shared kitchen or through the common hallways: A family occupying room "A" in Figure 5-3 entered without violating the privacy of the family in room "B." Partner households occupied a third of the apartments in buildings like these, while only 23 percent of the apartments in buildings with some apartments of the first design contained partner households.

Table 5-1. Family, House and Partner Household

	% Partner Household	N
Family Size		
2	45%	378
3	39	446
4	35	390
5	31	282
6	18	222
7	12	233
Family Type <sup>a</sup>		
Young Couple	46%	255
Young Family <sup>b</sup>	34	976
Transitional Family <sup>c</sup>	18	459
Old Family <sup>d</sup>	35	207
Old Couple	35	54
Tenement Apartment Size		
2 Rooms	7%	233
2 and 3 Rooms	17	384
3 Rooms	18	526
3 and 4 Rooms	25	393

<sup>a</sup>Avery M. Guest, "Patterns of Family Location," *Demography* 9 (1972): 161.

<sup>b</sup>No working-age children

<sup>c</sup>Some working-age children

<sup>d</sup>All children working age

Usually, only families willing to sleep together in one room could occupy a partner household: Young couples, old couples and those with few or only very young children did so in above-average proportions. Families with growing sons and daughters, however, sought space to divide sleeping quarters by gender. Three children seemed to form the dividing line; the proportion of families living in nuclear households increased once family size reached six. Families with six members rented an average of 2.8 rooms, while smaller families (regardless of size) rented only 2.4 rooms. By 1915, when the numbers of recently arrived small and young families had declined, the partner household had almost disappeared from Elizabeth Street.

Elizabeth Street apartments placed real limits on an immigrant family's desire for living space; here there were only "little nests." Middle-class, skilled and unskilled families alike rented an average of 2.4 rooms. This means that large numbers of artisan families and some former peasants began their life in the United States by occupying quarters considerably smaller than their Sicilian homes. Even in the early years of the century, as the population of the Fourteenth Ward increased rapidly, immigrants looking for homes there refused to rent the smallest apartments. Some rear tenements in 1905 were abandoned, and in occupied rear tenements vacancy rates were also high. By 1915 vacancy rates in other older buildings also increased, to 25 percent in barracks, for example; by 1925, with area population declining, only the new law tenements with their larger apartments enjoyed full occupancy.

In their efforts to keep rents low or to purchase more space as family size increased, immigrant families, like dissatisfied renters everywhere, moved often. "One never," wrote a puzzled Lillian Betts from her tenement home, "becomes accustomed to the kaleidoscopic changes of one's neighbors." Families could move in, "be as settled at the end of two hours as at the end of two months," or "move out in half an hour."<sup>15</sup> Four-fifths of 765 Elizabeth Street families traced in subsequent census listings disappeared from the Fourteenth Ward before the 1915 count. Not all these moves, of course, were motivated by the search for better housing: As an area of first settlement, Elizabeth Street housed considerable numbers of families and individuals with no commitment to residence in the United States or to their jobs in New York. But the desire for better housing did motivate the immigrant families who had not left the ward by 1915. All occupied a new apartment, mainly on Elizabeth Street within one or two blocks of their homes in 1905. All improved their housing by moving.

### New Opportunities

Dissatisfaction with existing housing encouraged immigrants to move frequently as incomes and family needs for space changed. High rates of residential mobility on Elizabeth Street had a number of desirable social consequences. It gave immigrants considerable choice over the exact location of their homes, a choice denied agrotown residents. Unlike Sicilian peasants, immigrants could choose to live near their changing workplaces. Unlike agrotown homeowners, they could also usually live near whichever other families they chose. Social clusters on Elizabeth Street could reflect immigrant ideals, and suggest that new expectations developing during migration guided immigrant residential choices. The expectation of closer relations to the *parenti* and, to a lesser extent, to the *paesani* would be further reinforced by urban life in the United States.

In choosing a house, middle class, skilled and unskilled immigrants made no effort to segregate themselves spatially; they were, after all, accustomed to living physically close to families of varied occupations and status, and they sometimes found cross-class social ties useful. The proportion of middle-class immigrants varied randomly from 2 to 6 percent of the occupants of any Elizabeth Street block. The proportion of unskilled workers was high on every block and in almost every tenement. As in Sicily, both more and less prosperous immigrants lived relatively close to each other, as did older and younger families. This pattern persisted through time.

The desire to keep home and workplace close together did, however, encourage considerable clustering among workers in several occupations. Male clothing workers lived in disproportionate numbers close to a garment factory located between Broome and Spring Streets. About half of the married women living on the blocks adjacent to this sewing mill did some variety of garment work; on streets to the west fewer married women worked sewing garments. (This difference was not a product of underenumeration of women workers by particular census takers.) Peddlers, too, lived close to their markets or, more accurately, created market areas near their homes. Fish and cheese peddlers clustered on the southern blocks of the street, while fruit and vegetable peddlers concentrated between Prince and E. Houston Streets. Fish peddlers formed especially dense clusters, almost completely filling the tenements at 115 and 125 Elizabeth Street. In fact, three-quarters of the fish peddlers on Elizabeth Street lived in only five tenements.

Other occupational clusters could not have reflected work locations. Dockworkers, fishermen and longshoremen lived near the fish peddlers and garment workers on the southern blocks of Elizabeth Street, while

unskilled day laborers and skilled workers in the building trades clustered further north among the fruit and vegetable peddlers. Occupational clusters like these undoubtedly reflected the fact that *paesani* and kin aided each other in finding work as well as housing. The occupational clusters did, in fact, neatly overlap with the two large migration chains from the regions surrounding Palermo and Sciacca. Households with a member named Rosalia (Palermo) concentrated on Elizabeth Street between Prince and E. Houston and around the corner between Mott and Elizabeth. Households with members named Calogera/a (Sciacca) spread through several blocks further south. Smaller chains followed a similar pattern, forming recognizable clusters that nevertheless always encompassed several tenements and usually stretched for two or more blocks. Tenement houses were almost never Sicilian villages replanted on the Lower East Side.

Immigrants lived closer to their *casa* kin than had agrotown residents, as Table 5-2 shows. A slight matriarchal bias in Sicilian kinship ideals—emotional preference for the relatives of the wife/mother—may have influenced immigrants' choice of neighbors, for married daughters lived closer to their married sisters and their parents than did married sons. Immigrants, who had become increasingly involved with their *parenti* during migration, strengthened these ties also by choosing to live close together on Elizabeth Street. The size of the kin network affected residential choice as well. A family with only one kinsman of any type living on Elizabeth Street offered a place in the apartment in 80 percent of the cases. Fully three-quarters of the relatives of families with kin ties to seven or more other families or individuals lived outside the tenement building. When the size of the kin network reached ten families or more, only about two-thirds lived on the same block or directly across the street. Thus, a sizeable minority of kin in these unusually large networks lived rather far away by Sicilian standards.

Table 5-2. Kin Clusters

KIN TIE	% Living in Same		N
	Tenement	Block	
Parents/Married Daughter	92	8	142
Parents/Married Son	77	8	95
Two Married Sisters	70	23	131
Two Married Brothers	34	37	111
Married Sister/ Married Brother	70	19	212
Two <i>Parenti</i>	45	23	223



A tenement provided apartments for at least twice as many families as a Sicilian *cortile*; it, rather than the still-larger block, street corner, or street, was the geographical equivalent of the Sicilian immediate neighborhood in the *cortile*. The social diversity of the tenement in New York often surpassed that of the *cortile*. Take, for example, 259 Elizabeth Street, a dumbbell tenement. In 1905 it housed 109 people (27 families) in 20 two room and three room apartments: Living there were 21 laborers, 12 home garment finishers, 9 garment workers, 3 fruit peddlers, 2 masons, 2 barbers, a gilder, an ironworker, a bricklayer, a laundress, a hod carrier, and a flower-maker. Young families predominated at 259 Elizabeth, but 8 of the tenement's families already had children of working age. Recent arrivals were a majority, but 9 families had been in the United States more than five years. And, while half of the families at 259 Elizabeth had a kinsman living in the tenement (and 6 had other relatives living elsewhere on Elizabeth Street), no single kin or *paesani* chain linked even a small group of the inhabitants.

Immigrants on Elizabeth Street re-created a familiar social setting and actually improved on the socially mixed agrotown *cortile*. Better-off and less well-off, younger and older families lived physically close. Relatives of the *casa* lived in the same tenement, often within calling or shouting distance. Immigrants could also continue to explore the rewards of social involvement with their *parenti*, building on their experiences in chain migration. *Paesani*—a potential pool of friends—were a significant minority among immigrants' immediate neighbors. Most important, this social diversity coexisted with a short trip to work, a fact that would liberate many immigrant men from their undesirably limited family and social roles in Sicilian agrotowns. The outlook for achieving Sicilian social ideals on Elizabeth Street seemed good; the tenements matched Sicilians' ideals far better than had their original agrotown homes.

#### *New Restraint or New Ideal? The Malleable Household and the Kitchen Salotto*

Like immigrants everywhere in the United States, Sicilians on Elizabeth Street formed "malleable households," inviting kin and nonkin to board in their households. About a fifth of Elizabeth Street families in 1905 had relatives or boarders, mostly male, living with them in their apartment homes. Boarding was unknown in Sicily; an outsider became part of the household there only by assuming the role of a child or servant in the family. Immigrant boarders did not assume that role, yet they

ate and slept with their host family, after paying a flat weekly fee in exchange for food and sleeping space.<sup>16</sup> The very term used for these paying guests—*bordanti*, a word with no Sicilian or Italian equivalent—suggests the newness of a social relationship, which, in Sicilian ideals, threatened nuclear family privacy and solidarity, and exposed wives and daughters to the temptations of other men.<sup>17</sup>

Although boarders contributed to the family income, boarding was not primarily a temporary response to the restraint of high rents by low-income families. Partner households, just such a response, quickly disappeared on Elizabeth Street, but households with boarders or boarding relatives appeared almost as frequently in 1915 and 1925 as in 1905. A typical Elizabeth Street family kept fewer than two boarders, who thus contributed about 10 percent of family income. Even partner households kept boarders, although the economic incentive for doing so was low in such families. The families of unskilled laborers or recent arrivals were no more likely to keep boarders than were other families. Boarders did not usually replace the financial contributions of departed children in elderly families, for the vast majority of boarders and boarding relatives in 1905 lived with a peer, not a person of their parents' generation. Furthermore, people lacking complete families of their own could have chosen to live as did such men in Sambuca, in nonfamily households of two or three, at only slightly higher cost than a boarding fee. Yet only 3 percent of Elizabeth Street apartments in 1905 contained such a non-family group, and by 1915 this type of household had completely disappeared.<sup>18</sup> Both immigrant families and immigrants without families may have had incentives to create boarding; but they did not do so only in response to financial or environmental restraints. Their decision to create a system of family boarding suggests that changes in their social ideals had occurred during migration.

Tenement families treated boarders who were kinsmen slightly differently from unrelated boarders—but only slightly. For example, families brought relatives into their homes regardless of the size of the apartments they occupied, while families taking in boarders rented slightly larger than average apartments. Significantly, a family renting a two-room apartment was as likely to invite a relative into its home as was the family living in a larger apartment, but families in two-room apartments included nonkin in below-average proportions. Whether kin or nonkin, however, boarders ate with the family, and usually slept in the kitchen, sharing that sleeping space with the family's older sons.<sup>19</sup> Immigrants sometimes called boarders "boys" (since they lived without

wives) a term that suggests that not all vestiges of the childlike status of the outsider in the household disappeared immediately with the creation of boarding.<sup>20</sup>

A closer look at partner households also indicated that at least some were also malleable households; not all "lived as Sicilian neighbors" in their shared apartments. The two families in a partner household had to cooperate in providing gas for lighting all parts of the new law apartments—individual gas accounts were impossible. In practice, this meant that families had to agree on when and how to feed the coin-operated gas meter—a simple but very real form of joint financial planning. Some families shared not only the partner-household kitchen, the kitchen stove, and household equipment, but also food, some meals, and child care.<sup>21</sup> Thus, like families keeping boarders, a number of partner-household families seemed surprisingly unconcerned about the private space and private functions so vigorously defended in Sicilian agrotowns.

\* Elizabeth Street immigrants chose to allow outsiders to eat and sleep together with nuclear family members. Their choice signals a significant and conscious departure from Sicilian ideals about nuclear family solidarity in its competition with others. Immigrants accepted new kinds of cooperation at the very center of family life. Just as the ideal of family solidarity had defined the division of private from public space within the Sicilian house, departures from that ideal produced a new division of space in Elizabeth Street apartments.

In the temporary partner households, the kitchen often became a kind of shared *cortile*. Nuclear households, however, made the kitchen the center of family life.<sup>22</sup> Always heated by the stove, the room became the *soggiorno* (dining and living area); in most two-room and three-room apartments it served nights as the boy's bedroom. In other words, the tenement kitchen became the equivalent of a Sicilian family's private dwelling area, much like the simple peasant house in agrotowns. In New York, however, it is clear that immigrants expected to use the kitchen as a *salotto* too. This was a surprising departure from Sicilian practice.

The kitchen in a two-room apartment was decorated, and sometimes furnished, with elements from both Sicilian bedrooms and Sicilian good rooms. The arrangement of saints' pictures, holy items, palms and ribbons that, in Sicily, hung at the head of the marital bed, often graced the kitchen wall in New York.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the *turnialettu*, a deep flounce of cloth that encircled the Sicilian bed, hiding the storage space beneath it, appeared in New York draped around sinks and laundry tubs or under the shelves of kitchen dish cupboards. New York kitchens also frequently

displayed worldly goods arranged in a large china cupboard or on a dresser with a lace or lace-edged cloth: the familiar coffee cups, clocks, pictures, certificates, mirrors, and mementoes.<sup>24</sup> Immigrants obviously expected to entertain guests in the very room that served them as private space, as the center of family life. ✓

Still, the ideal of the good room remained strong among immigrants, and many families eventually erected one in a three-room or four-room apartment. Children's earnings allowed families to purchase furnishings, generally overstuffed, for a separate *salotto*.<sup>25</sup> This good room served as a sleeping room for older daughters; during the day women often chose to work there because it was usually the room facing street or yard and consequently better lit.<sup>26</sup> But it seems to have served only rarely as a *salotto*; the kitchen remained the favored place for visiting and entertaining.

\* The formation of malleable households and the decoration of the kitchen *salotto* provide further evidence that Sicilian immigrants developed increasingly positive expectations of social ties to people outside the *casa* during and after migration. They no longer seemed to fear the competitive dangers of allowing them to enter freely the very center of family life. The concluding chapter returns to this and other aspects of immigrant social life, offering an interpretation of society and culture among Italian immigrants living in the United States.

#### *Environmental Change and Residential Patterns in New York*

New York tenement houses could not and did not alone produce distinctive tenement residential patterns. In fact, Elizabeth Street's residential patterns differed somewhat from those on the other—the Jewish—side of the Bowery, even though housing on both sides was roughly similar. Jews, for example, never lived in partner households, but took in larger numbers of boarders than did Sicilians. The experiences of Elizabeth Street's immigrants provided no evidence to support material determinism.

New residential patterns emerged on Elizabeth Street as Sicilian immigrants responded creatively to some new environmental restraints and enjoyed their new-found freedom from the old environmental restraints imposed by the agrotown. Amos Rapoport was certainly correct in stressing the importance of what an environment made impossible. High rents, for example, made it difficult for immigrants to live as nuclear families during their early years in the United States; and high rents made it even more difficult for immigrants to remain many years in a single

apartment, even if they lived long in the Fourteenth Ward. In Sicily low residential mobility encouraged close ties among female neighbors; in New York that precondition would not exist. On the other hand, mobile renters in New York's tenements could create residential patterns that should have been conducive to achieving their social ideals—whether old ones or newly emerging ones.

My discussion of the mixed match of tenement and immigrants' needs and desires points to the problem that faced Elizabeth Street residents: The tenements matched Sicilian social ideals far better than they matched Sicilian housing ideals. The major consequence of moving from agrotown to tenement was that immigrants found their housing and social ideals in conflict.

The young immigrant family, newly arrived in the United States, did not necessarily perceive that conflict immediately and clearly. Young families, after all, had low incomes; they could, when necessary, live in small quarters without offending their own notions of propriety. Furthermore, they moved about more frequently than immigrant families as a whole (only 12 percent remained in the Fourteenth Ward from 1905 to 1915) and could not enjoy the social benefits of the tenement neighborhood as fully as less mobile families. Concerned with jobs, with whether or not to return to Italy, and with making ends meet, these families had few motives for worrying about their unachieved housing ideals.

The conflict between housing and social ideals grew in families that stopped moving frequently as their eldest children began earning wages. (Almost half of such Elizabeth Street families remained in the Fourteenth Ward from 1905 to 1915.) Child wage earners allowed the family to consider its housing ideals quite seriously; older families occupied many of the largest apartments on Elizabeth Street—the new law tenements.<sup>27</sup> Moving less often, the older family could enjoy to the fullest the social opportunities of the tenement neighborhood. But better housing was in limited supply on Elizabeth Street. Houses for purchase scarcely existed. Most families could never hope to purchase a multifamily tenement, for the down payment alone represented seven to eight times the income of a family with several wage-earning children.<sup>28</sup> The number of new law apartments—the architect's answer to better housing in immigrant neighborhoods—increased with time, but older families in 1905 competed for their use with the partner households of younger recently arrived families. And, in any case, new law apartments could not become family property.

Immigrants longer resident in one tenement neighborhood felt sorely this conflict between housing and social ideals. There would be no easy solution to their predicament; they themselves knew they could rarely achieve both simultaneously. Every survey of immigrants' attitudes toward their tenement homes expressed this conflict. Tenement dwellers enjoyed the social life of their neighborhood, and they appreciated that rents there remained lower than elsewhere in the city. But they disliked their dark, small, and rented upstairs apartments.<sup>29</sup> The strength of the conflict between housing and social ideals—and the difficult choices it posed—becomes even clearer when we see how closely immigrants could actually approach their changing social ideals in their everyday life among the tenements.

## CHAPTER SIX

## Everyday Life in New York

Perhaps the best introduction to everyday life in the tenement neighborhoods of New York is not the written descriptions of a visitor like Betts or Riis, nor the account of an immigrant son like Mario Puzo, but the work of Ralph Fasanella. In his thirty-five years of painting, Fasanella captured on canvas his memories of the neighborhoods of lower Manhattan, where he grew up and worked.<sup>1</sup>

In Fasanella's paintings, there are no gray buildings—even though a quick walk down Elizabeth Street on a rainy day provides a reminder that these buildings can, in fact, appear rather grim and foreboding. Instead, Fasanella's tenements are all intense colors. Their facades are completely filled with many windows, which allow brightly colored tenement interiors to break through to the outside street scene. There are curtains of various colors and differing styles at each window, and each window is unique, throwing its own light into the outside world, rather than the other way around. Occasionally, as in "Pie in the Sky," the artist cuts away an entire wall, so the viewer gets a better look at life inside the tenement apartment. In other paintings, like "Family Supper," the interior of a tenement kitchen dominates the painting without excluding the world outside; below it, the street, while behind the kitchen loom the tenements, factories and water towers of New York City.

In Fasanella's city, the kitchens, windows, streets and tenements are full of people. "It is rare," writes a critic, "to encounter a Fasanella painting with much empty space in it. If there is a wall it will have a sign painted on it . . ." Children leave chalk graffiti on sidewalks; laundry hangs on tenement rooftops; women lean out tenement windows; men gather on street corners. But, his critic continues, "there are few single individuals." Instead, there are masses of humanity.<sup>2</sup>

Fasanella's painted memories belong, of course, to only one man—a man who obviously loved the city and the intense coming-together of people possible in urban immigrant neighborhoods. His humanity-filled

canvasses share much with the Italian immigrant neighborhoods described in immigrant novels and autobiographies and in the reports of social workers and city officials. However ugly the tenements themselves, tenement life, as Lillian Betts noted and Fasanella confirmed, was kaleidoscopic—densely-crowded, group-oriented, an ever-shifting world of changing social and physical boundaries. The tenements matched Sicilian social ideals quite well; many immigrants had the opportunity to live as they chose on Elizabeth Street. Although still financially poor, every peasant immigrant family improved its social resources by moving to New York.

*A Typical Day*

By comparing the lives of two immigrant households, we quickly grasp one reason that Fasanella painted his interiors so brightly. Although some occupation-related differences persisted on Elizabeth Street, almost every Sicilian immigrant family lived in the tenements much as had artisans in Sicilian agrotowns. The families compared below are based on real ones living in 1905 at 233–35 Elizabeth Street. See Table 6-1, which summarizes each household and its members. Their home, a new law tenement, is pictured in Figure 6-1.

Table 6-1. Two Immigrant Households, 1905

VITALE, Vincenzo	Head	35	Grocer
	Giuseppa	33	Housework
	Angelina	14	Candy Factory
	Gandolfo	12	School
	Maria	10	School
	Grazia	7	School
	Pietro	4	-
BENTAVIGNA, Marianno	Head	26	Laborer
	Rosa	25	Home Finisher
	Giovanni	7	School
	Maria	4	-
	Giacomo	1	-
MARIA, Gandolfo	Partner	29	Laborer
	Antonina	28	Home Finisher
	Giuseppe	4	-
	Giachino	1	-
RE, Michele	Partner	29	Hod Carrier
	Antonina	26	Housework
	Vincenzo	6	School
	Giuseppe	1	-



Figure 6-1. 233-35 Elizabeth Street

Vincenzo Vitale, the grocer, rose very early to enter his store from the apartment behind it. He received a shipment of rolls and bread from a nearby bakery; shortly thereafter, his son Gandolfo took a sack of breads to make deliveries to regular customers.<sup>3</sup> By 6 A.M. his wife Giuseppa and his little son Pietro joined him, helping during this time of day.<sup>4</sup> The grocer's daughter Angelina cooked coffee for the younger children, and, taking her bread with her, walked westward toward the candy factory on Mott Street where she worked.<sup>5</sup> Returning from his

chores, son Gandolfo and his two younger sisters left for school, probably P.S. 21, only a block away. During the morning hours, Vincenzo Vitale tended to the grocery business. He received his weekly payment from the fruit peddler who parked his pushcart in the space in front of his store. Later he met at a local cafe with an importer of Italian products.<sup>6</sup> To do so, he left the store with his wife, who interrupted her cleaning chores to be there. Then she returned to her housework: making and folding beds, scrubbing the "oil cloth" kitchen floor and beginning to wash clothes in hot water drawn from a boiler above the big black stove.<sup>7</sup> The grocer's young son Pietro stayed with his mother as she moved from store to apartment and back again.

At noon, the children of the family returned from school, and Giuseppa cooked a lunch of eggs and leftover potatoes before returning again to the store to help her husband.<sup>8</sup> Staying there longer than usual, she had not finished her washing by the time her three children again returned from school in the midafternoon. Giuseppa therefore left the chore of hanging clothes out the back windows to her daughters Maria and Grazia. While son Gandolfo and Vincenzo Vitale sat in the grocery store, she went out into the street to purchase vegetables from the pushcarts there.<sup>9</sup> When she returned, her daughters had taken the youngest child, Pietro, with them to play in the street.<sup>10</sup> The mother began cooking an evening meal of meat and beans. Late in the afternoon, when her older daughter returned from work, she sat with her in their good room while Angelina received a music lesson at an old piano from a young *professore*.<sup>11</sup> The grocer came to drink coffee with this young man, leaving the store to his son.<sup>12</sup>

The family gathered for their evening meal quite late, after Vincenzo and Gandolfo had closed the store. The family sat in the kitchen under the gas light for most of the evening.<sup>13</sup> After dinner, the grocer's wife made buttonholes on men's jackets, while the grocer talked about business with his son; the two school-aged daughters did the dishes and then looked at their school work. Angelina wanted to iron the dress that she would wear the next day, but her father protested that the kitchen became too warm when the stove was lit so often.<sup>14</sup> At about ten o'clock the entire family went to sleep.

The day also started early for the Bentavigna family. Marianno Bentavigna and his partner Gandolfo Maria were laborers on the same digging job. They, their wives, and the small children came into the kitchen from their sleeping rooms at the same time. His wife Antonina sent one child for bread, while making coffee.<sup>15</sup> The wife of Bentavigna's third partner, Michele Re, appeared slightly later, and cooked coffee in her

pot. The seven small children of the three families played on the floor of the kitchen while their mothers made beds. Rosa Bentavigna walked to the entrance of a nearby sewing mill, arriving there just as streams of women were entering the building.<sup>16</sup> Rosa Bentavigna found the older woman who normally went and obtained for her bundles of basting work. She carried these back to her home, where she distributed them to the two other women in her apartment, and to several neighbors as well.<sup>17</sup> During the morning hours, the three women basted pants together in the kitchen, while their preschool children played in the tenement hallway.<sup>18</sup> At noon the older children returned from school, and were sent to purchase salt and sardines. The women ate as they worked;<sup>19</sup> the children, taking their food and their younger siblings with them, left the house.<sup>20</sup>

They returned again in the late afternoon, dragging with them a number of large crates they had found on the street.<sup>21</sup> The sister of one of the partner wives, a woman who lived on the floor below, came to visit and to drink coffee.<sup>22</sup> She said that her children, too, had been looking for wood in the streets, and had not been to school that day.<sup>23</sup> Rosa looked out the window to see if she saw her own children, who had returned again to the street below.<sup>24</sup> As evening approached, the women again sent their children to Vitale's store to purchase food for dinner. Rosa Bentavigna and Antonina Maria expected their husbands to return from their jobs together. They cooked a pot of soup for both families.<sup>25</sup> The third partner, Michele Re, returned later than the other men. He, his wife, and their two children retired to their room while the other families ate. Then Re's wife went to Vitale's store and herself purchased a bit of pickled fish.<sup>26</sup> When she returned, the other families had almost completed their evening meal. She chopped one of the wooden crates into small pieces for fuel, and then took bowls and forks from the kitchen cupboard to prepare dinner for her husband and children.

When the third family finished its evening meal, all the men in the household left to walk together in the street, stopping briefly at a cafe.<sup>27</sup> The three wives worked together washing dishes, and later they unfolded the kitchen bed where Giovanni, Marianno and Vincenzo Re would sleep.<sup>28</sup> They sewed together under a small gas flame until their husbands returned.<sup>29</sup> A neighbor joined them at their work, while her husband played cards with other men in her kitchen.<sup>30</sup> The neighbor left the other women when their husbands returned and soon the entire household was asleep.

### Activity, Time and Location

Chapter 4 showed that considerable proportions of immigrant men and women, by migrating to New York, found work that resembled in some ways the work of Sicily's artisans. The comparison of two immigrant households demonstrates further that many aspects of everyday life in New York duplicated the patterns of the Mulè family in chapter 3. A clear division of labor characterized immigrant families, but also allowed some cooperation in a family enterprise, as was true of artisan families in Sicily. In a mixed settlement like Elizabeth Street, where work and home were close, all immigrant men could count on the daily services of a wife, mother or *padrona* (in the case of a boarder)—few would ever have to cook for themselves, as peasant men did. Immigrant children, at least while young, lived much as had Audenzio and Teresa Mulè. And, surprisingly, the tenements—although completely different in form from an artisan's house—helped make immigrant wives' housework much like that of the artisan wife Antonina Mulè.

Like artisans' children, immigrant children could combine work and school. Very young children worked with their mothers; boys and girls did roughly the same chores.<sup>31</sup> Reformers expressed shock when they found children of three years pulling basting threads from pants—but three-year-old workers were actually few.<sup>32</sup> An Italian mother explained why; her children of that age, she said, had to play, they could not work very well.<sup>33</sup> A weekday survey of two Elizabeth Street blocks in the 1890's found only 9 percent of the girls aged six to fourteen and 5 percent of the boys that age at home.<sup>34</sup> Continuing work requirements could, however, lead to higher truancy rates.<sup>35</sup> Children also worked gathering fuel as part of their family responsibilities—Robert Chapin estimated that half of all Italian families in 1909 burned wood scavenged in this way.<sup>36</sup> After the age of nine, boys moved outside the family to work as newsboys, delivery boys, and messengers; the sons of artisans and petty merchants helped their fathers parttime.<sup>37</sup> Daughters continued their earlier activities, helping their mothers and doing piecework production with them.<sup>38</sup>

At age fourteen, most Elizabeth Street children left school for work. Eight of ten sons and only slightly lower proportions of daughters in 1905 earned wages. At this point, the close parent-child work and training relationship typical of Sicilian artisans was abandoned. Daughters found work not with their own mothers, but in garment, box, candy, and flower factories. Boys rarely worked with their own fathers. Like their sisters they found factory jobs, and, while a third were skilled workers of

some kind, only a very small number shared their fathers' trades. Few sons worked with their petty entrepreneur fathers; instead many became white collar clerical workers or professionals.

In New York, the household work of wives of skilled and unskilled workers varied but little. Like artisans' wives in Sicily, women on Elizabeth Street could easily combine wage-earning work with child care and household chores. Relatively more wage earning proved an incentive to keep other household chores minimal, and this was more easily accomplished in partner households than in others. Census data for 1905 show that the number of women earning wages both in the garment factory and as home finishers was higher in partner than in nuclear households. Women in such households could earn wages because they sometimes shared supervision of their children.<sup>39</sup>

Women on Elizabeth Street also resembled artisans' wives in Sicily in devoting considerably more time to cooking. Food in New York was cheap in relationship to the income of unskilled workers. Whereas Sicilian laborers purchased bread, beans, oil and greens with as much as 85 percent of their cash incomes, a poor immigrant family could eat like an artisan or *civile* family and spend only 50 percent of its income to do so.<sup>40</sup> American reformers found immigrant diets inadequate.<sup>41</sup> But immigrants knew that they ate well and frequently, and, apparently, with great enjoyment.<sup>42</sup> Chapin found only 10 percent of the very poorest families to be "underfed."<sup>43</sup> Italians in New York regularly ate breakfast, a meal almost completely ignored by all Sicilians (even today).<sup>44</sup> They consumed more pasta, more cheese, and more sugar than the typical Sicilian peasant. They ate meat and drank coffee at least as frequently as the humbler rentier families of an agrotown.<sup>45</sup> Reminisced one woman with pleasurable exaggeration: "Don't you remember how our *paesani* here in America ate to their heart's delight till they were belching like pigs and how they dumped mountains of uneaten food out the window?"<sup>46</sup>

The tenement had its effect on women's household work, however. To continue the Sicilian wife's habit of baking bread required new skills and solutions to new problems. The cheapest types of oil and coal stoves were totally unlike Sicilian stoves and ovens.<sup>47</sup> Most of these ovens could not produce a satisfactory Sicilian loaf—large, with a thick crust.<sup>48</sup> Lillian Betts described her neighbors taking dough to a nearby baker, whose brick oven produced a more familiar product.<sup>49</sup> Many more simply bought bread.

Like wives in Sicily, immigrant wives worked hard to keep their floors clean, but they remained oblivious to other chores that American social workers believed essential. The scrubbed wood or oil-clothed Italian

tenement house floor might stand in odd contrast to unpainted and smoke-begrimed walls.<sup>50</sup> And women took no responsibility for garbage, the "mountains of uneaten food," once it was swept or thrown outside the house itself: Tenement house inspectors complained unceasingly of collections of garbage and junk in rear yards, air shafts, cellars and spaces between buildings.<sup>51</sup>

Few immigrant women could, like a typical artisan's wife, count on help with the housework once their families left the partner household to live alone or with boarders and relatives. Nevertheless, the tenement reduced some of the chores normally performed for the artisan family by the lower-status domestic helper. Even primitive "school sinks" and toilets eliminated the Sicilian housewife's attention to this fundamental human sanitary task. Because of limited space, fewer women kept small animals, except for a few caged rabbits, chickens, or birds. (Tenement house inspectors found sheep and goats in tenement cellars, but these larger animals were in the care of men and boys, not women.<sup>52</sup>) And, while housing reformers found the water supply on Elizabeth Street especially poor (it depended on wooden rooftop storage tanks), immigrant women judged water in New York accessible and readily available—which it certainly was, compared to Sicily.<sup>53</sup> Here was a real miracle of the tenements, completely invisible to Americans' eyes.

Finally, the wives of both skilled and unskilled immigrant workers had a new household responsibility on Elizabeth Street, one practically unknown in Sicilian agrotowns—cooking, laundering and cleaning for boarders. The wife in a household with boarders or boarding kin performed household work for an average 1.7 extra men. Only a few families had female boarders who, helping the wife with housework, had a different social role; as in Sicily, these few women became the equivalent of a servant.<sup>54</sup>

New York's industrial, seasonal and school cycles varied more than the inexorable Sicilian agricultural calendar, and these cycles affected virtually every family, again blurring the typical agrotown distinction between lower and higher status work. In New York, tailors, masons and unskilled laborers alike worked five to seven months yearly.<sup>55</sup> Skilled workers in the bulding trades and common laborers suffered unemployment from November to March, while those employed in garment production had little to do from June to September and again from December to April.<sup>56</sup> A few skilled cutters and pressers in garment factories worked ten or eleven months of the year, but only parttime during slack periods.<sup>57</sup> Some skilled workers (barbers, shoemakers or printers) and fewer unskilled workers (porters, drivers, bootblacks) worked more

regularly through the year. Among petty entrepreneurs, the coal dealer flourished in winter, while the ice dealer or the peddler of fruits and fresh vegetables was without much work.<sup>58</sup> Only the grocer could depend on year-round demand.

Elizabeth Street women and children also worked seasonally. Women averaged 221 days a year, or about as many days as their husbands.<sup>59</sup> Busy seasons in the garment industry and other sweated industries fell within the school year, so many mothers had real incentives to keep children, especially daughters, home from school during peak seasons.<sup>60</sup> Boys, finding work in a variety of trades with differing cycles, might more easily combine parttime or summertime jobs with longer school attendance.<sup>61</sup>

When immigrant families chose to live in the Fourteenth Ward or close to the father's place of work, they removed the cause responsible for many differences in the everyday lives of Sicilian artisans and peasants. Like Sicilian artisans, all immigrant married men commuted daily from home to workplace. For some the workplace was the home: Professional tailors, temporarily unemployed, sick or disabled men all worked producing garments at home.<sup>62</sup> Petty entrepreneurs also made pasta or ice cream there, or they repaired shoes, watches, or other small items.<sup>63</sup> Like Vincenzo Vitale, Elizabeth Street grocers, barbers, cafe operators and some independent artisans rented or leased ground floor shops that adjoined their apartments.<sup>64</sup> Bakers rented nearby basements, and sometimes they moved their families into these cellar workrooms.<sup>65</sup>

More important, whether porter, handyman, mason or digger on a construction project, waiter in a cafe, agent for an absentee landlord, or factory operative—unskilled or skilled men living on Elizabeth Street could find work in the Fourteenth Ward or nearby in southern Manhattan. When Edward Pratt studied the industrial causes of congestion of population in New York in 1911, he found that 55 percent of the Italian men working below Fourteenth Street walked to work, and 70 percent required less than an hour to travel to their jobs.<sup>66</sup>

Women worked even closer to home. One Elizabeth Street census taker who, unlike some, very carefully enumerated a wide variety of women's work, found 15 percent of the married women on his blocks working for wages outside the home, two-thirds in a garment factory (probably the one only a block away).<sup>67</sup> Over 40 percent of the married women he enumerated worked in their homes or in their husbands' shops—of these 130 were garment finishers.<sup>68</sup> Pratt's survey of Italian women working in Lower Manhattan found that fully three-quarters

walked to work and that 85 percent travelled to work in less than one hour.<sup>69</sup>

Like the artisan wife in Sicily, the married woman working "at home" literally worked inside her apartment, usually in the kitchen, but sometimes in the bedroom or best room.<sup>70</sup> Occasionally women moved into tenement hallways to work in warm weather, or onto fire escapes or the tenement roof.<sup>71</sup> No observer described an Elizabeth Street woman doing garment work on the sidewalk or street, although women sometimes sat together evenings on sidewalks in other neighborhoods.<sup>72</sup> Peak garment seasons coincided with early spring and winter weather, limiting work outside a warm or lighted place.<sup>73</sup> The tenement roof, even in warm weather, was still a climb away from the tenement apartment, not just outside the door as was the Sicilian *cortile*. So was the street, which had the further disadvantage of being a busy market area, crowded with men and their pushcarts.<sup>74</sup> Thus the tenements freed men but placed real restraints on the immigrant woman's choice of a workplace. ✓

Like their parents, children chose to work in or very close to their homes. Only 5 percent of Elizabeth Street sons in 1905 actually worked at home, but a fifth of daughters worked there, making garments. The majority of both sons and daughters worked outside the house. Of ten children working in the provisions house on Mott Street (see Map 5-2), nine lived around the block on Elizabeth Street. And of thirteen Fourteenth Ward immigrant children working in an Elizabeth Street metal parts shop, ten lived on Elizabeth Street between Prince and E. Houston. The street's large sewing mill also worked its attractions: More sons and daughters on Elizabeth Street found work in the garment trade than children living on the streets to the west.<sup>75</sup> ✓

Elizabeth Street women, like artisans' wives in Sicily, also did most of their household work within their own four walls. The rear yard pump was fast disappearing in the early twentieth century.<sup>76</sup> By 1911, according to the Immigration Commission, no woman in the area had to leave her tenement in order to get water, although a considerable number of families on Elizabeth Street continued to share a sink with the occupants of six to sixteen other apartments.<sup>77</sup> Caroline Ware reported that "some old timers told of resisting" the installation of water "on the score that anyone who was too lazy to lug her water upstairs was no good."<sup>78</sup> It seems unlikely that these old timers were immigrant women. Cooking facilities, too, were found only in the kitchen, thus locating cooking and related chores there.<sup>79</sup> Although most families owned their own smaller stoves, newer tenements included heavy cast iron ones permanently in-



stalled in the same room with sinks and laundry tubs. And even the older tenements offered vents for portable cooking stoves in only one room.

Women had a number of options for laundering. As long as the water supply had been a pump in the rear yard, women had gone there in good weather to do this work.<sup>80</sup> But when water was in a dark corridor or in the apartment, women usually did the washing inside their apartments.<sup>81</sup> Drying laundered clothes became a real challenge for tenement wives. In good weather, women carried wet clothes to the roof, but both soot from nearby chimneys and "laundry thieves" endangered the drying clothes.<sup>82</sup> In good weather, women also used clotheslines attached to their buildings, but those in lower apartments worried about a rain of red and blue drips from a colored wash above, or about a shower of refuse tossed from an upstairs window.<sup>83</sup> For many months of the year, laundry hung in the kitchen.<sup>84</sup>

In Sicily, artisan wives had food in their store rooms, and they could count on travelling vendors or poorer women to come to them selling other products. In New York no food peddlers wandered through tenement hallways, although a few did sell ice, notions or sewing machines.<sup>85</sup> The street market food vendors were not far away. In Italy today, women simply shout from upstairs apartments before lowering a basket to exchange coins for purchased food.<sup>86</sup> Lillian Betts—whose fine eye for curious details surely would have caught such a practice—did not report her neighbors shopping this way. Perhaps tenements were too tall or the street too noisy. Instead, Betts reported that women, anxious to avoid climbing the stairways, sent children to make the thrice-daily purchases for meals.<sup>87</sup> She insisted that women might not leave their apartments for months.<sup>88</sup> But here, Betts contradicted her own observations of women travelling with their bread dough to local bakers; other market scenes and descriptions prove that women did at least some of their own shopping.<sup>89</sup> (See, for example, Figure I-1.)

Unlike Sicilian women, however, Elizabeth Street mothers could not easily combine wage-earning or household work with continuous supervision of children's play. We need only recall that in the Bentavigna household three grown women and five children under school age would have had to share a fourteen by eleven foot kitchen if all remained together during the day. Even with minimal needs for personal space, such overcrowding was intolerable. The problem was not unique to Elizabeth Street's Sicilians. Wrote Robert Alston Stevenson in 1901, "What to do with the children in their playtime is a question that bothers mothers all over New York."<sup>90</sup> To provide nearby play places for young children, families erected barriers around fire escapes or sent them to

play in the small corridor just outside of the apartment.<sup>91</sup> School children left their mothers far behind as they sought play space on the tenement roof (where they swam in rooftop water tanks during the summer), in rear yards and on the pushcart-jammed street curb.<sup>92</sup> School-aged children often took their younger siblings with them.<sup>93</sup>

Adolescent children continued to spend much free time outside the house. Boys, of course, joined their friends, forming the street-corner groups typical of immigrant sons in immigrant colonies everywhere.<sup>94</sup> Girls, like their mothers, however, enjoyed little or no leisure. In season, there was always sweated work. And even when house chores were finished in the off-season, mothers tried to restrict daughters to "going up and coming down" or to sitting on the stoop with other girls.<sup>95</sup>

Like Sicilian artisans, immigrant men frequently left their homes and families between evening meal and bedtime. In good weather, they, too, gathered with other men in small groups in the streets and rear yards.<sup>96</sup> Weather placed limits on outdoor recreations in New York; furthermore, there were no large open spaces in the Fourteenth Ward that could serve as a central piazza; but in compensation, the Fourteenth Ward in 1910 offered numerous commercial gathering places—117 saloons, 40 cafes, and 4 five-cent vaudeville, as well as billiard halls, puppet shows, barbershops and confectionaries.<sup>97</sup> Despite these opportunities, and unlike agrotown residents, immigrant men also casually invited other men to smoke and play cards in their kitchens. Even more ritualized visits, involving the exchange of gifts, might occur there.<sup>98</sup>

The pattern of everyday life on Elizabeth Street resembled that of an agrotown—but only if we can imagine an agrotown detached from its countryside and without its peasants. On a normal winter day a substantial number of unemployed men worked in their upstairs homes or gathered with other men and sought work on the street. Employed men worked nearby in street-level jobs. Working-age children also worked nearby. Married women sat upstairs in their kitchens, sewing pants and supervising the youngest children. Most boys and girls came and went, up and down the long staircases that linked house, school, and street play places. Summer altered the pattern. Unemployed women might join their children on the tenement roof; they spent much time at their apartment windows watching the street below. Men and older boys worked longer hours, but nevertheless usually returned each evening, first to their families for an evening meal and then, if they wished, to the street for casual recreation.

*Environmental Change and Everyday Life*

Environmental change accompanied the move from Sicilian agrotown to Elizabeth Street tenement, and it affected men, women and children differently. The mixed residential and industrial character of Elizabeth Street eliminated a major impediment to women's employment and a major limitation on the Sicilian father's opportunities to interact with his own family and with neighbor men. Like artisans in Sicily, immigrant men were in a good position to interact with others. School children and older boys enjoyed similar advantages. As a result, immigrant everyday lives resembled those of Sicily's artisans. Most immigrant families came within reach of achieving their social ideals. A family of former peasants had every reason to feel that it had rapidly improved its life by moving to Elizabeth Street—even if its income was still very, very low.<sup>99</sup> For an artisan family, life on Elizabeth Street would have seemed reassuringly familiar rather than pleasantly improved.

Nevertheless, the move from agrotown to tenement also left room for discontentment. Immigrant women in particular had good reasons to be displeased with Elizabeth Street tenements, for they imposed new restraints on many women. The small tenement apartment, which adjoined an equally small and dark hallway and which was stacked either above shareable open spaces on the street or below those on the roof, placed new restraints on children at play. They could not easily find play space under their mothers' direct supervision. That supervision had been important to Sicilians, and immigrant mothers went to considerable lengths to maintain it. "There is," one writer noted, "a continual shouting up from the children on the street to the mothers at the windows and vice versa."<sup>100</sup> Fasanella, too, often painted the immigrant woman at the window, surveying the world from above. Furthermore, the large numbers of immigrant daughters working in garment factories spent far less time under their own mothers' supervision than did a typical girl in a Sicilian agrotown. Mothers complained bitterly about the separation.<sup>101</sup> The tenement made it difficult for immigrant mothers to behave in ways social ideal demanded.

The absence of shareable space just outside the door posed new restraints for the immigrant woman, and this fact reminds us that the immigrant woman's duplication of the housebound life of the Sicilian artisan wife did not necessarily reflect her choice. In fact, women's efforts to use unlikely nearby but semicomunal workplaces—the crowded partner household kitchen, the cramped, cold and uncomfortable tenement hallway—seem to suggest that at least some immigrant women were

more interested in behaving in familiar ways than they were in living in relative isolation like artisans' wives. Responding creatively, such women used the central dumbbell airshaft as a communication tube and, of course, they visited with their twenty or more neighbors on the roof, the stairways, the front stoop, out their windows, and in their own apartments.<sup>102</sup>

They also complained about the tenements—far more, for example, than did immigrant men and immigrant children. One commented

In my country peoples cook out of doors, maka the wash out of doors, eat out of doors, tailor out of doors, make macaroni out of doors. And my people laugh, laugh all a time. And we use the house only in the night time to maka the sleep. America—it is *sopra, sopra* (up, up with a gesture of going upstairs). Many people one house, worka worka, all a time. Good money but no good air.<sup>103</sup>

More than one Italian describing his life fictionally or in autobiography portrayed his mother fading away from some mysterious but tenement-related malaise. One died; another returned home, unable to adjust to tenement life; a third complained bitterly of her isolation; another missed the air and sunshine of her native Calabria.<sup>104</sup> Even allowing for fictional license, it does seem likely that women viewed life in the tenements differently than did men, for they did encounter there new restraints as well as new freedoms.

Thus it is difficult to know how to interpret the immigrant woman who, addressing a high status Italian male visitor, exclaimed "I hardly ever go out of the house!"<sup>105</sup> Was she making a simple statement of fact? Was she exaggerating a bit—quite consciously (for she herself admitted that she went out to shop)—in order to impress the man with her high-status behavior? Or was she, like another woman who concluded begrudgingly "at least here we have water in the house,"<sup>106</sup> also complaining a little? Certainly immigrant women had good reason to complain a little about their everyday lives in the tenements. Whereas the move to Elizabeth Street freed men to pursue Sicilian ideals, it limited immigrant women's opportunities to interact with others. Although immigrant women lived lives more like artisans' wives as a consequence, they seemed unsatisfied. Immigrant women's dissatisfaction helped reshape immigrant social relationships as much as their husbands' new-found freedom.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## Immigrant Society and Culture

In the past fifteen years, historians have significantly and provocatively re-interpreted immigrant society and culture. Most recent studies rightly emphasize the continuing importance of Old World values and show how these and New-World economic opportunities interacted to create distinctive immigrant families and communities.<sup>1</sup> By comparing the lives of Sicilians in Sicily and New York, this book contributes to that re-interpretation. It sheds new light on the Old-World values of one south Italian group. And it demonstrates that the housing environment—a largely neglected aspect of urban America—played a role in influencing immigrant adjustment to the New World.

The purpose of this final chapter is to examine immigrant society and culture, using the experiences of Elizabeth Street's Sicilians as illustrations. In many ways, the social lives of these Sicilians resembled those of Italian immigrants in other American cities, large and small. My purpose in describing Sicilian immigrant society is not to point to its uniqueness. Instead, by viewing immigrant society and culture against the background of Sicilian social ideals and of environmental possibilities, this chapter offers a modest reassessment of the process of social and cultural change in an immigrant colony. In particular it addresses several aspects of Italian family and community life central to studies by Virginia Yans McLaughlin, John Briggs and Judith Smith.

*The Nuclear Family and American Individualism*

Most immigrant families should have looked with some satisfaction at their closest family relationships. By moving to New York, a former peasant father or mother could behave in ways that Sicilians had defined as ideal. But many immigrant families expressed not satisfaction but considerable dissatisfaction with their family life. Some even claimed that America destroyed the family. As evidence, they pointed to their

children's behavior, "the loss of respect on the part of the children."<sup>2</sup> Historians have tended to accept immigrant parents' complaints about the children, emphasizing intergenerational conflicts that resulted in large part from children's new and individualistic ideals.<sup>3</sup> From the public school and from American popular culture, immigrant children—it is argued—learned that they had a right, as children, to play and to recreation; more threateningly, they learned that they had a right, as individual wage-earners, to their own wages. Children's individualism, according to immigrant parents and family historians, undermined the economic solidarity of the nuclear family. ✓

Of Sicilian family relationships, it is true that the parent-child tie alone seriously departed from Sicilian ideals. Mothers went to great efforts to do so, but they could not supervise young children as closely as the Sicilian mother in the agrotown *cortile*. The school took the child away until age fourteen; thereafter it was the factory that removed sons and daughters from the home. Sons sometimes learned to work, but they rarely earned wages under their fathers' guidance—a significant and undesirable change for the artisan minority, a significant but familiar form of failure for the former peasant majority. Most daughters, too, went out to earn wages, a significant and undesirable change for immigrant families of all backgrounds. Each of these changes, however, did not reflect children's choice; they were largely family responses to environmental restraints.

It is also true that, at least in some families, immigrant children struggled with their parents over control of their wages. According to studies of immigrant family budgets, Italian children in their early working years unquestioningly turned over all their wages to their parents. After age eighteen, many immigrant sons contributed only a fixed sum to the family: In effect, they became boarders. Daughters continued to turn in wages until they married, or if they did become boarders in their own families, they waited considerably longer before doing so.<sup>4</sup> This pattern raises two interesting questions: If children learned individualism in the public schools, why did they wait several years before demanding control of their own wages? And, was it really the case that immigrant boys assimilated American individualistic values more completely than did girls?

I do not feel that immigrant children "lost respect" and attempted to undermine family solidarity. Neither did they behave in new ways because they had assimilated in whole or in part "new" individualistic values. A quick review of the function of family solidarity in Sicily explains my conclusion. Sicilians believed that family solidarity was

necessary if the family was to compete successfully. In practice the agrotown nuclear family competed with others for jobs and resources; of equal importance was competition on the local marriage market, since marriage contracts were the major mechanism for distributing family property. Furthermore, the typical goal of family economic solidarity was the provision of sizeable marriage settlements including land, houses and household goods, for the children. In a very real sense each Sicilian nuclear family used family solidarity to provide the material basis for the next generation of nuclear families: they invested in reproduction of the *casa* kinship group. As a consequence, a Sicilian child expected to benefit quickly, materially and "individually" from contributing to the family.

Not so in the United States. As immigrant families started the uphill struggle to property ownership, they hoped to use children's savings to buy a house, one that would serve the existing nuclear family (and, perhaps, the family of one married child). Saving for that house made sizable marriage settlements for all the children impossible. From the immigrant child's point of view, then, it was the parents who, lacking property, first abandoned family solidarity. More than one immigrant child wondered how he or she would marry under such new conditions. The struggle over the wage envelope required no particular training in American individualism. And immigrant daughters simply reached a different agreement with parents than did their brothers: After contributing their wages, they continued to receive some kind of movable marriage settlement — furniture, household equipment or a marriage celebration.<sup>5</sup>

Immigrant parents were right about one thing; immigrant children no longer behaved as did proper Sicilian children. Older siblings and cousins — "little fathers" and "little mothers" they were called — replaced mothers in supervising children's street and backyard play groups. Far more than in Sicily, immigrant children socialized each other, at play, at school, and at work.<sup>6</sup> By doing so, they became not more individualistic, but more closely identified and involved with a social group other than the *casa*, one which Herbert Gans would later term the kin dominated peer group.<sup>7</sup> The peer group was neither a nuclear family, a *casa*, nor a typically Sicilian network of instrumental ties to others. Parents did not live cheerfully with the conflict between peer group and Sicilian ideals. By focusing on their children as the source of the conflict, however, parents ignored the fact that the children actually followed in parental footsteps.

### A Family Social Cycle

Relationships between individual, kin, and social network began to change in the immigrant first-generation. As chapter 4 showed, immigrants turned surprisingly often to their kin to form chains of migration. In their early years in the United States, immigrant families created malleable households and the kin-dominated peer group; both these forms of social experimentation were probably intended to replace neighbors in highly mobile tenement neighborhoods. In this first stage of the family social cycle, the pattern followed later by immigrant children — intense involvement with peers and a wider sense of solidarity with *parenti* — was already well established. In later years, when families moved less often, the lowered boundary between nuclear families and peer groups persisted. Still, many families late in life sacrificed the satisfactions of both peer and neighborhood friendship networks in order to seek better housing far from areas of first settlement like Elizabeth Street. An immigrant family's social network, in other words, developed dynamically through time; at almost any stage in this social cycle it differed from the social networks typical of Sicilian agrotowns or idealized by nineteenth-century Sicilians.

In Sicily, Sicilians both wanted and needed a network of useful social relationships to others, and neither immigration nor life in the United States changed their motives. For the majority of immigrants with small children, a social network was still an economic necessity. Most fathers earned too little to support a family, and even with a working mother, family income provided no margin of protection against sudden unemployment, sickness, or a return to Italy. Budget studies showed that young immigrant families survived because they received gifts of clothes and money, as well as other forms of small but critical material help.<sup>8</sup>

But from whom? In Sicily, peasants turned most often to their neighbors, a group which included a number of kin and people of higher status. In the United States they also turned to their neighbors. Mangano observed, "The Italian, inside of the week, will have spoken to all he has seen pass his door, and without a doubt will have found some one whom he has taken into his confidence . . ." Mangano wrote of "his" door, but no doubt female neighbors did the same, for he noted, "the coffee pot is constantly at hand, and if anyone should drop in between meals it is expected that he or she will accept a cup of coffee." Women recruited neighbors for garment work, after training them in the necessary simple skills of basting.<sup>10</sup> Their cooperative efforts were not completely without

success. One neighborhood network of Elizabeth Street women—surprised by a visit of state inspectors controlling violations of homework licensing—“posted outlooks and began their sweated work again.”<sup>11</sup>

Still, the younger family’s efforts to build a neighborhood social network could scarcely produce more than temporarily satisfactory results. Middle-class neighbors were few, and young skilled workers were almost as hardpressed financially as young unskilled workers; they, too, were poor potential patrons. The tenement “kaleidoscope” moved ever onward, as did the majority of young families. In its constant comings and goings, a young family behaved as Mangano described—it began establishing ties to its neighbors. Nevertheless it could not always count on long-time neighbors for the help it continued to need badly.

Whereas Sicilians had viewed their neighbors as their real kin, Sicilian immigrants responded to high mobility by attempts—often successful—to make their kin into their real neighbors. The malleable household represented a first effort to ensure cooperation under new and kaleidoscopic conditions, by lowering the family’s jealous boundary around itself. In increasing numbers, malleable households were formed with *casa* and *parenti* kin, as Chapter 5 showed. In the face of kaleidoscopic residential mobility, the clustering of kin became a further way to replace mobile neighbors with a more dependable and slowly changing group. So did, as well, the kin invited to eat, drink or play cards in the tenement kitchen. Given the youthful composition of the immigrant population, this was almost inevitably a group of peers, some of whom may have formerly lived as partners or boarders with the family. Sicilian immigrants did not respond to geographical mobility in ways theorists of modernization predict—they did not assign different roles to kin, neighbors and friends.<sup>12</sup> Instead, they gradually replaced the all-purpose neighbor of the Sicilian agrotown with the neighboring kinsman. (And since many immigrants had relatives in more than one American location, these small kin networks actually facilitated moves within the United States.)

As children began seeking work and the immigrant family settled down for a time in one neighborhood, its economic need for cooperation with other families diminished somewhat, but its idealization of a large social network did not. A neighborhood like Elizabeth Street housed growing numbers of families with working children through time; only a third of all families in 1905, they represented over half of Street families in 1925. These families enjoyed to the fullest the social possibilities inherent in the everyday tenement life described in the last chapter. For less

mobile older families, the neighbors of similar age and family composition became again a ready source of social relationships.

In the street and cafe, immigrant men and children “capitalized” on their neighborhood, as Sicilian proverbs suggested. The street, yard, or cafe drew residents not from a single tenement (a group which continued to change, since young families shared tenements with less mobile older ones), but from all the tenements on a block or crossing. Because this was the case, an immigrant man or child could move about within the area, as many continued to do, without being removed from his usual street, yard, or cafe social groups.

Personal ties among neighbors may not have sustained a rich institutional life like that of the Jewish settlers east of the Bowery, but Elizabeth Street men did create formal and informal organizations that far surpassed Sicilian peasant localism. As in Sicily, there were not one, but many ways to build a social network around the family: peddler’s markets, business partnerships, youth gangs, festival societies, *paese* clubs, funerary, and sickness or mutual benefit societies.<sup>13</sup> Festival societies left the most visible historical traces. Riis wrote, they “last as long as there is any profit in it,” and he noted that the creation of a festival society on one block soon led to the formation of a rival society on the next.<sup>14</sup> Santa Rosalia, San Faro and San Calogero, along with many other Sicilian patrons, enjoyed Elizabeth Street celebrations. The formation of a mutual benefit or *paese* society, like those that in the 1930’s joined in the *Unione Siciliano*, had Sicilian artisan precedents. And artisans seemed particularly active in these organizations. The unskilled also participated, as they had not always done in Sicily.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, we know little more about the social bases of the many networks Elizabeth Street men created. These organizations await their historian. Their existence tells us, however, that immigrant men had not forgotten the social possibilities that many Sicilian proverbs perceived in friendship and neighborliness.

Immigrant women, as chapter 6 showed, did not share these social possibilities with their husbands and children. A woman’s immediate neighbors in the tenement continued to change kaleidoscopically, even when her own family stopped moving so frequently. And she saw less of the neighbors when her family occupied a better-equipped apartment in a new law tenement: No partner wives provided company in the kitchen, and housework could be performed indoors. Even in the 1920’s when the proportion of less-mobile older families in Italian neighborhoods reached a peak, Caroline Ware found that families in buildings with shared water

supplies were more likely to know each other than were those in new law tenements.<sup>16</sup>

Tenement restraints on women's activities were not without social consequences for the immigrant family. Immigrant women, like the family itself during its mobile years, probably depended on kin for social exchange. Particularly through women, kin played a central role in the family's social network despite the relative availability of neighbors during this phase. Immigrant families lived especially close to the wife's kin in 1905, as table 5-2 showed. Women may have turned specifically to their own blood relatives as they sought a solution to the troublesome problem of supervising their children's play. Unable to keep them under her own two eyes, the mother tried at least to guarantee them acceptable playmates and supervisors in the form of cousins or slightly older aunts or uncles. Families also continued to form malleable households with kin during those years when neighbors offered an alternative source of social ties. (Boarding of nonkin, however, declined among families settled in the United States more than fifteen years.)

Years later in Boston's West End, Herbert Gans found that neighborhood groups competed with the kin-dominated peer groups for men's loyalty, and that most men opted for the latter group when they married.<sup>17</sup> Even in the early twentieth century, married men on Elizabeth Street seemed to vacillate in their social loyalties. The last two chapters showed that men sometimes chose peer-group socializing in the kitchen-*salotto* over the neighborhood cafe, street corner, mutual benefit society, or *paese* club. Kin remained important to men, too, even when men had neighbors as an alternative. Kinship and localism helped keep Elizabeth Street socially fragmented as time passed. Men's neighborhood networks extended beyond the individual tenement, but they never united the street into a single community. In 1925 the distinction between the day laborers and building-trades artisans from Palermo province living on the northern blocks, and the fish peddlers and dock workers from towns around Sciacca living further south, still persisted, little-changed since 1905.

The importance of the kin-dominated peer group suggests that the social network of an older immigrant family reached only occasionally the size of an artisan's network in Sicily, although it usually surpassed in size that of a typical peasant. Immigrant families seemed satisfied with the size of their social networks; as chapter 5 noted, they rarely complained about their tenement social lives. Their satisfaction is not puzzling. An immigrant social network was "many-stranded" and semicorporate.<sup>18</sup> Kin were neighbors and came from the same town; often they

shared a common occupation or workplace and belonged to the same mutual benefit, *paese*, or festival society. Furthermore, most members of a family-based network recognized most of the others as members of their own family's network. A peer group, then, had fluid but identifiable boundaries. Multistranded and semicorporate, the kin-dominated peer group was based on personal, emotional, and informal blood loyalties, rather than strictly on the instrumental and calculative ties that formed the larger Sicilian networks, of artisans, *civili* and *gabello*.

As chapter 5 suggested, older families rapidly faced a serious conflict between their social satisfaction and their unmet housing ideals. In 1905 this was a small group of families, and their decision to abandon Elizabeth Street attracted no attention. Twenty years later, as a majority of the population, these families behaved in ways that impressed social workers with the important role played by housing ideals in family decision-making. Although the average Elizabeth Street family in 1925 rented more than three rooms (compared to only 2.4 rooms in 1905), such a family was tempted, local professionals believed, by the call of better apartments and houses for purchase, especially homes in Brooklyn.<sup>19</sup>

Some families refused to abandon their neighborhoods or locally based peer groups to seek better housing. For example, Elizabeth Street families that remained in the Fourteenth Ward in 1925 had twice as many kin living in the area in 1905 as had the average immigrant family at that time. When slum renewal projects inquired about the plans of displaced renters, Italian immigrants in New York often indicated that they hoped to find housing nearby. A few actually moved together, in small groups, to apartments in nearby buildings.<sup>20</sup>

But many more families left Elizabeth Street, as both declining populations and local observers testified. (See Table B-1 in Appendix B.) The decisions and desires of the younger generation carried special weight in this new migration away from Elizabeth Street to the outlying boroughs.<sup>21</sup> While the older generation seemed to have achieved a delicate balance between social satisfaction and unmet housing ideals while their children remained unmarried, the younger generation was less patient with tenement apartments as housing. In 1925 young couples and families on Elizabeth Street rented an average of 3.3 rooms, more even than larger older families. Although younger families also may have appreciated neighborhood social life—their peer groups, too, had been built there—they insisted that they wanted a "better environment" in

which to raise their children. That better environment included better housing, with baths, central heating, and—probably—accessible play space for children.<sup>22</sup>

Thus new migration chains led outward from Manhattan tenement neighborhoods to the outlying regions of Brooklyn, Queens and other areas of New York City. Only a minority of families moved because they had purchased a house, but all mobile families improved their housing (by paying much higher rents after they moved).<sup>23</sup> Mario Puzo in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* left one description of the chain typical of this new migration: a young couple with their young children, the immigrant parents, and the remaining unmarried older children.<sup>24</sup> Unlike the chains that linked Sicily and New York, these new chains were intergenerational and limited to the closest of kin. Thus, in its final years, a typical elderly immigrant family returned to a functioning social group much like the Sicilian *casa*. The newly forming neighborhoods of New York's outlying boroughs were even more fragmented than were areas of first settlement. The peers, kin and nonkin, scattered; their contacts became visits rather than everyday interaction.<sup>25</sup> The large male neighborhood groups gradually dispersed, leaving behind only an institution—the San Calogero shrine and office on Elizabeth Street, for example, persists to this day, and San Calogero's feast continues to be celebrated around the corner. The former peasant family had moved, quite literally, from *cortile* to kinship localism in one generation.

The social cycle of a typical Elizabeth Street family differed only in degree from those of other immigrant colonies in American cities. Other forms of urban housing released Italian immigrants from old restraints as effectively as did the tenements. On the other hand, some urban American housing environments matched Sicilian housing ideals far better than the tenements of Elizabeth Street. Elizabeth Street had particularly high rents, which may have encouraged particularly high residential mobility and population turnover.<sup>26</sup> Even more important, low density-housing provided far better opportunities for homeownership than did Elizabeth Street. Such areas did not force older families and the emerging second generation to choose between their housing and their social ideals.<sup>27</sup> The social consequences are clear: Whereas Elizabeth Street was divided into many local and kin groups, St. Louis's "Hill" gradually became a single community. Whereas Elizabeth Street Sicilians moved from *cortile* to kinship localism in a single generation, families in low-density housing areas bought houses and forged a community that could, potentially at least, transcend the new loyalties of kinship.

The social structure of an immigrant colony like Elizabeth Street was not static; neither a relatively fixed hierarchy of discrete groups, nor a set of overlapping but relatively stable family-centered networks. Its resemblance to an agrotown in western Sicily was limited. Between 1905 and 1925 Elizabeth Street completed a social cycle, one closely tied to the cycle of thousands of immigrant nuclear families. In 1905 Elizabeth Street, with its preponderance of young families, was a rapidly changing kaleidoscope characterized by high mobility and considerable social experimentation in the formation of malleable households and peer groups. By 1915 the kaleidoscope had slowed; fewer new families arrived and a far higher proportion of families settled down as their children began earning wages. In 1915 Elizabeth Street more closely resembled a Sicilian agrotown socially than at any other time. Even in 1915, however, similarities between the two were limited by new environmental restraints imposed on women and by men's liberation from old restraints. Only ten years later the colony itself was coming apart, as immigrants organized the move to Brooklyn, rearranging their social networks in order to do so. Social change was particularly clear among Elizabeth Street residents, because of the area's high mobility, but other Italian colonies—whether of first or second settlement—also changed socially during settlement and growth. None were static urban villages.<sup>28</sup>

### The Question of Class

Rudolph J. Vecoli has observed that historians see Italian immigrants as either *padrone* slaves or primitive rebels; nowhere are they portrayed as the class-conscious backbone of an emerging and organized immigrant working class.<sup>29</sup> There were *padrone* slave scandals on Elizabeth Street, especially in the 1880's and 1890's. And street residents undoubtedly participated in strikes that swept the garment industry, the building trades and the excavations of the subways 1905–1915. Unions, radical organizations, class-based (as opposed to ethnic-based) mutual benefit associations, however, attracted little attention from American observers of the colony or from the popular Italian-language press in New York.<sup>30</sup>

Historians are a long way from understanding the significance of class among immigrant workers. Chapter 4 showed that migration left untouched the important Sicilian distinction between artisanal and dirty-dependent work, but that life in the United States eliminated many of the social and economic differences that in Sicily separated the two occupational categories of artisan and peasant. In Sicily, social similarities between artisans and the *civile* rentiers were striking, as were differences

between artisan and peasant manual laborers. Not so in New York. There, both skilled and unskilled duplicated the work and leisure patterns, the family and social lives, of Sicily's artisans. Less happily, both groups—like the poorest Sicilian peasants—suffered unemployment and low incomes, moved about a great deal during their early years in the United States, and remained renters for long periods of time, sometimes permanently. Objectively seen, immigrants did increasingly form a single working-class rather than a simple or complex hierarchy of classes as in Sicily.

It is difficult to know whether immigrants chose to focus on the positive, and artisanlike, or on the negative and peasantlike, aspects of this objective condition. The experiences of Elizabeth Street Sicilians raise many more questions about immigrants' understanding of class than the evidence can answer. Sicilians had distinguished the rich from the poor, and found their relationship necessary if antagonistic. Many of the "poor" in Sicily were nevertheless property owners—*padroni* of simple one-room houses. And we do not know if Sicilians identified artisans with the "rich" or with the "poor." We know only that they glorified the artisan while casting a suspicious eye on the merchant. Furthermore, some Sicilian artisans, at the very time of emigration, were busy transforming their long experience with occupational cooperation into class consciousness. Of these Sicilian precedents only a preference for skilled work and a continued strong desire for property ownership were obvious among Elizabeth Street's residents.

Historians have offered several explanations for the weakness of working-class organization among immigrant workers. None explains adequately the experiences of Elizabeth Street's Sicilians. Americans have long assumed that social mobility (or the dream thereof) undermined class consciousness among immigrant workers. Considerable numbers of Sicilian immigrants did succeed, by their own standards, in improving the work they did, becoming the idealized skilled worker or the less idealized but socially similar petty merchant. Even more succeeded in behaving like artisans in their private family and social lives. And immigrant sons were even more likely than their fathers to become skilled workers. Social mobility, alone, however, cannot explain limited immigrant attention to the relations of the classes, for it was precisely Sicilian artisans who valued occupational cooperation and nurtured a developing class consciousness in the years preceding and overlapping mass migration from Sicily. If immigrant skilled workers failed to do so, an explanation lies elsewhere than in the experience of social mobility.

Stephan Thernstrom—who first discovered the remarkable propensity of the American poor to move about—believed that it was geographical mobility that undermined both class consciousness and organization among American workers.<sup>31</sup> Immigrant Sicilians certainly moved as often as other immigrants, at least during certain times of their lives. Yet many also settled down long enough in midfamily cycle to support a variety of ongoing formal male organizations. Some of these were probably class-based or occupation-based. Only further study of Italian-language union locals, labor clubs, or radical groups can reveal whether these groups drew on a different group of men than did, for example, a *paese* club, a street-corner youth gang, or a festival society. Attention to the work and leisure activities of particular groups of skilled workers and petty merchants might also reveal whether the immigrant man or son who became a skilled worker in the United States adopted or rejected the similarly Sicilian tradition of artisanal cooperation and activism.

Of all interpretations, Yans-McLaughlin's seems to offer the most promise for understanding immigrant class values. She argues that strong families and powerful kinship sentiments rendered many community institutions unnecessary and made immigrants particularly skeptical of class-based organization.<sup>32</sup> Yans-McLaughlin views familism as an important part of immigrant cultural baggage; indeed, it is an explanation for their emigration. In short, familism was a serious hindrance to immigrant cooperation and provided a cultural alternative to class consciousness.

Like Buffalo's Italians, Elizabeth Street Sicilians did live in family and kin-centered social worlds during much of their early and later years in the United States. Family-centered social networks may have placed limits on working-class organization as Yans-McLaughlin suggests. But it would be incorrect to explain such social fragmentation or family-centeredness as a straightforward reflection of Sicilian cultural values. Familism was not part of Sicilians' cultural baggage; neither did it cause some Sicilians to emigrate while others organized. If familism provided immigrants with a cultural alternative to organization this was a product of cultural change among the immigrant first-generation. In short, the question of class and its role in immigrant social life still lacks an answer.

### *Social and Cultural Change*

Constance Cronin concludes her study of twentieth-century Sicilian emigrants in Australia by asking,



Have they changed? It is not really a difficult question because the respondents themselves answered it. In the public sector they are Australians and they so appear, but in private they are the Sicilians they have always been, living a Sicilian way of life and holding intact those Sicilian values, norms and behavior patterns which perpetuate their way of life in the face of intrusions from the outside.<sup>33</sup>

By "private" Cronin means "that part of one's life which is lived away from the scrutiny and direct control of society and its members"; she argues that in their food and housekeeping habits, in their friends and associates, and in their family and social values, immigrants to Australia remained the Sicilians "they have always been."<sup>34</sup>

Had a scholar in 1905 or 1915 troubled to ask Elizabeth Street residents Cronin's question, these immigrants, too, I suspect, would have announced themselves Sicilians faithful to the old ways. Recognizing that possibility, Virginia Yans-McLaughlin summarizes the experiences of Buffalo's immigrants: "Socially" they had become urbanites, but culturally they remained "folk." In fact it was folk values that enabled them to adapt socially to the requirements of an urban industrial world.<sup>35</sup> We have seen that Elizabeth Street residents considerably changed their private family and social behavior as they adapted to a new physical environment. Had they remained culturally "folk" while doing so? Social behavior and cultural values, Yans-McLaughlin notes, were not mirror reflections of each other.<sup>36</sup> My analysis of social and cultural change among Elizabeth Street's Sicilians began with that assumption. My conclusions, however, differ: Elizabeth Street's Sicilians experienced fundamental cultural change during migration to and urban life in the United States.

Throughout this book the concept of match provided a way of analyzing variations in the relationship among cultural ideals, environmental possibilities, and actual social behavior. Where match was good, people behaved as they pleased, and their behavior reflected their ideals. Far more interesting were instances of poor match. Restraints forced people to become creative socially and culturally. Drawing upon existing ideals, they decided how to respond to restraints and how to interpret their own behavior. Faced with severe restraints, people could always respond in a number of ways, each with differing cultural implications. They could pick and choose among many ideals to justify their behavior, a source of cultural diversification. They could elaborate compensatory ideals. Or they could simply and practically refuse to acknowledge any discrepancy between their behavior and their ideals.

Environmental restraints and the linkages of ideals and behavior they often required can help us understand the process of cultural change as it was experienced by Sicilian immigrants. That process began in Sicilian agrotowns with peasants' social frustrations, and it continued, in New York, with immigrants' strong dislike of tenement housing. By examining the ways in which immigrants linked ideals and behavior, it is easy to see that immigrants could feel themselves completely Sicilian, "the Sicilians they have always been," despite the fact that they differed socially and culturally from their siblings and cousins still in Sicily.

Chapters 2 and 3 showed that Sicilians responded in a number of ways when they failed to achieve their ideals. Peasants lived cheerfully in houses that poorly matched many of their housing and their social ideals. At most, they expressed in their proverbs anxiety about the social problems posed by small one-room dwellings: Their concerns about doors, windows and eavesdropping, for example, were not shared by the owner of a *casa civile*, who could offer hospitality or enjoy an open window without violating his or her privacy.

The myth of male dominance, on the other hand, was a compensatory belief. It, too, was a value limited largely to peasant Sicilians, for it compensated male peasants for the exceedingly large discrepancy between their actual family role and the ideal models for fatherly behavior.

On Elizabeth Street, Sicilians perceived high rents and small dark rental housing as obstacles to living as they might wish or as they were accustomed to doing—as nonmobile homeowners with low housing costs. To achieve their economic and later their housing ideals, immigrant families moved about far more frequently than had Sicilians in agrotowns. Mobility influenced the ways in which immigrants pursued their social ideals, freed in so many other ways from the restraints imposed by Sicilian agrotowns. Anxieties about privacy and the compensatory myth of male dominance gradually disappeared as immigrants built new social networks in New York; appreciation of *parenti*, by contrast, increased as immigrants justified their new experiments in social behavior.

Immigrant families could not have formed malleable households or peer groups had they remained obsessed about wifely infidelity, the seduction of daughters, or the necessity of male supervision of female sexuality. Most boarders and a large proportion of boarding kin were, after all, young men. Yans-McLaughlin dismisses the possibility that these men represented a threat to the family, because friends or relatives were trusted and because their interaction with women fell under family or neighborly scrutiny.<sup>37</sup> Such scrutiny existed in Sicily as well—yet it was precisely cousins and godparents who were most feared as potential

seducers. Why, then, did immigrants come to evaluate outsiders more positively, abandoning the worst misogyny of the myth of male dominance?

Since the myth of male dominance was largely a compensatory ideal, as Rogers argues, it had no function in the United States, where men fulfilled their role as ideal fathers. Immigrant families, like *civili* and artisans in Sicily, could quietly abandon the most virulent of their suspicions, making the malleable household possible. They could view the boarder or boarding kinsman as a potentially useful friend, not just as a sexually threatening man. I do not wish to imply that all anxiety about female character and sexuality or the belief in the necessity of male control disappeared overnight as fathers began returning nightly to their own families. They did not. The wage-earning daughter provided new fuel for this fire. But anxiety about the wife's chastity diminished as immigrant husbands and wives began to behave "properly."<sup>38</sup> Without this cultural change, experimentation with new social forms like the malleable household or the intimate peer group would not have been possible. Still, it should be obvious that immigrants did not change their values consciously in order to justify social experimentation. Cultural values and social behavior in this example were not mirror reflections; nor did one change to reflect the other.

Anthropologist George Foster calls the quiet form of cultural change described here "stripping down."<sup>39</sup> "Stripping down" occurred when immigrants dropped some of their cultural baggage overboard. The myth of male dominance was not the only aspect of Sicilian culture so jettisoned. In the United States, Sicilians (and perhaps other Italian immigrants) consistently justified the new social behaviors they developed to cope with rapid mobility through reference to only a limited number of Sicilian social ideals: the desirability of a social network and, most important, the positive aspects of kinship.

To justify their preference for peer-group socializing in the neighborhood over unachieved housing ideals, the older generation would refer to the importance of blood ties. To justify a move with the children to Long Island, parents could invoke a proverb about the benefits of cooperating with the kin. At the same time, emphasis on family solidarity may have helped compensate for the departure of the children's behavior from Sicilian ideals. This process of linking new behavior to *some* Sicilian ideals can, of course, only be inferred in the historical evidence. However, we do know, that immigrants' social values glorified what Leonard Covello and other writers since call *la famiglia*. The ideal *la*

*famiglia*, as Covello described it, did not resemble Sicilian social ideals; *la famiglia* was a positively evaluated category which included all manner of closer and more-distant kin (plus a few fictive ones), one which demanded loyalty, emotional involvement, and mutual support among kinsman.<sup>40</sup> *La famiglia* was a product of migration and life in the United States.

As Sicilians defined new social ideals, blood ties became more culturally and socially central than they had been in Sicily. Kinship now differed categorically from other social ties. Furthermore, blood ties of many kinds were now unambiguously positive. Kinship became the immigrants' main tool for organizing a social network that more nearly replaced rather than surrounded the once jealously bounded nuclear family and the positively evaluated *casa*. Obviously, *la famiglia* has its cultural origin in Sicily. Nevertheless, this social ideal left out much that for Sicilians was important and useful: The warnings, the similarities between friendship and kinship, and the distinction between *parenti* and *casa* had disappeared.

It is tempting to hypothesize that "stripping down" also characterized Sicilian occupational and class values. Chapter 4 demonstrated that migration eliminated the "rich" as a significant group in immigrant society because so few *civili* migrated. It is equally easy to imagine that proverbial social lessons about the relations of rich and poor quietly disappeared along with the *civili*. But only further research on the social origins of immigrant *prominenti* and their ties to ordinary immigrants can reveal whether this was in fact the case.

In assessing match it was necessary to focus on what an environment made impossible. In studying cultural change it seems important to focus on what is left out as immigrants confront new restraints or begin to behave in new ways. Disappearing ideals help to explain how immigrants could depart from their cultural origins without—as Cronin's study shows—finding it necessary to emphasize that they did so. Still, it seems important to stress that the first generation was rapidly becoming Sicilian-American; they were not, as Yans-McLaughlin believes, socially changed but culturally still "folk."

Stripping down was neither a painful nor disorienting cultural process. Because they drew on some Sicilian ideals, immigrants did not experience fundamental family and social change as particularly wrenching. They made choices as the Sicilians "they had always been." The fact that they identified themselves as Sicilians—as at least some still do today—is, of course, important. But their Sicilian cousins, themselves departing from

the shared cultural starting place, would notice the differences and find them impressive. *They* would call the immigrants *Americani*. And they would puzzle over who these people had actually become.

Both *Americani* and their Sicilian cousins eagerly changed their social behavior in the twentieth century, and both altered their ideals, too. However, the two groups evaluated culture change in very different ways. Unlike their cousins, *Americani* often seemed unable to accept that they had changed; they viewed cultural and social change negatively. Their Sicilian cousins did not. Thus the conservatism of the immigrant was not necessarily Sicilian in origin; more likely it was a product of the migration experience. Aware of the differences separating them from the people that *they* called "Americans," immigrant Sicilians saw in cultural change a threat to their identity: Inevitably perhaps, immigrant minorities view change with greater suspicion than their nonemigrant cousins who are spared that threat.

A resident of Sambuca who in 1980 had recently visited close relatives and *paesani* in Brooklyn and Chicago summed up for me his understanding of the cultural transformation of Sicilian into Sicilian-American. "Why," he asked of his recently migrated relatives, "do these *Americani* always accuse us of having abandoned the old ways? We are Sicilians, but we are proud to have changed. We are *evoluto*, but they . . . These *Americani*! Why, they seem to think that they are the only real Sicilians!"<sup>41</sup>

## Appendix A: Social Ideals in Sicilian Proverbs

### *Friends (Amici)*

La caritati 'n Curti è estinta, e l'amicizia è finta.  
A l'amicizia nun cci voli tacca.  
A li bisogni servinu l'amici.  
A lu bisognu l'amicu pari.  
'Ntra li bisogni si conuscinu l'amici.  
L'amici si conuscinu 'n tempu di nicissità.  
A lu to amicu avvìsacci lu beni.  
Ama l'amicu tò cu lu vizio sò.  
Amici di salutu cci nn'è assai.  
Amici senza 'ntentu nun cci nn'è.  
Amicizia 'ncutta, prestu nnimicizia.  
Amicizia ricunciliata e minestra scarfata mai fòru boni.  
Amicu di bon tempu e di putia, Nun è 'na bona e duci cu cumpagnia.  
Amicu di gottu ti lass 'ntra un bottu.  
Amici di gottu, tintu cui nn'ha troppu.  
Amicu di tutti, amicu di nuddu.  
Amicu d'occhi è nnimicu di cori.  
Amicu fintu è veru tradituri.  
Amicu fintu, nnimicu di morti, e guàrdati d'iddu.  
Amicu tò, Spicchiali tò.  
Chiddu è lu veru amicu chi 'un ti sparra.  
Amicu vecchiu, è sempri amicu fidili.  
Amicu vecchiu e casa nova.  
Amicu vidiri, Pasqua fari.  
Bisogna sèrviri l'amicu, ma nun cci mettiri di cuscenza.  
È bonu sèrviri l'amicu, ma nun cci vaja la cuscenza.  
N'offenniri a Diu pri l'amicu.  
Càncianu l'amici a tinuri di li cosi.

of *campanilismo*) had any meaning in Sambuca, a town where churches, with one or two exceptions, clustered along the centrally-located *corso* or an immediately parallel street.

36. Chapman, p. 131.

37. Chapman, p. 131.

38. Changes in property transmission did occur elsewhere in southern Italy: John Davis uncovered such a change in nineteenth-century Pisticci. There, families originally gave houses to sons, but as large numbers of young men migrated, fearful parents responded by giving more family property (including houses) to daughters. This made them more attractive as prospective brides in a disrupted marriage market. Davis, *Land and Family in Pisticci*, London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology (New York: Humanities Press, 1973). See also Peter Loizos, "Changes in Property Transfer Among Greek Cypriot Villages," *Man* 10 (1975): 10.

39. Navarro della Miraglia, *La Nana*, p. 33.

40. "Sviluppo della Popolazione Italiana dal 1861 al 1961," *Annali di Statistica*, anno 94, serie VIII, vol. 17, pp. 260-61.

41. Pitre, *La Famiglia*, p. 30.

42. Chapman, p. 130.

43. Bellini, p. 483.

44. Valussi, pp. 33, 48; unlike classic *mezzadria*, sharecropping in Sicily did not encourage father-son cooperation in stem-family households. See David I. Kertzer, "European Peasant Household Structure: Some Implications from a Nineteenth Century Italian Community," *Journal of Family History* 2 (1977): 333-49; Carlo Poni, "Family and 'Podere' in Emilia-Romagna," *The Journal of Italian History* 1 (1978): 201-34.

45. Jane and Peter Schneider, "The Reproduction of the Ruling Class in Sicily, 1860-1920," unpublished paper, p. 29.

46. Chapman, p. 13.

47. Caico; p. 30.

48. Luigi Villari, *Italian Life in Town and Country* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1902), pp. 109-10.

49. Valussi, p. 38.

50. Chapman, p. 13.

51. Pitre, *La Famiglia*, p. 77 and photograph, p. 87. See also Giuseppe Cocchiara, *La Vita e l'Arte del Popolo Siciliano nel Museo Pitre* (Palermo: F. Ciuni Libraio, 1938), p. 23.

52. Pitre, *La Famiglia*, p. 92; Salomone-Marino, pp. 55-56.

53. Navarro della Miraglia, *La Nana*, p. 27.

54. Pitre, *Proverbi*, I, p. 217; Giuseppe Cocchiara, *Il Folklore Siciliano* (Palermo: S.F. Flaccovio, 1957), vol. 1, p. 15.

55. Elizabeth A. Cohen, "Embellishing a Life of Labor: An Interpretation of the Material Culture of American Working-Class Homes, 1885-1915," *Journal of American Culture* 3 (1980): 752-55; H. Plath, "Elendswohnungen in der Altstadt

Hannover, um 1933," *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 68 (1972): 61-89; Lee Rainwater, "Work and Identity in the Lower Class," in *Planning for a Nation of Cities*, ed. Sam Bass Warner (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), pp. 105-123. Here I directly contradict Yans-McLaughlin, who believes that south Italians had no equivalent of "the home ideal," *Family and Community*, p. 223.

56. Chapman, p. 130.

57. Pitre, *Proverbi*, vol. I, p. 216.

58. Pitre, *Proverbi*, vol. IV, p. 221.

59. Pitre, *Proverbi*, vol. I, pp. 216, 226.

60. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 27.

### Notes to Chapter Three

1. Michelson, *Environmental Choice*, p. 27; see also Margret Tränkle, *Wohnkultur und Wohnweisen*, Untersuchungen des Ludwig-Uhland Instituts der Universität Tübingen (Tübingen: Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde, 1972).

2. Lewis Henry Morgan, *Houses and House-Life of the American Aborigines* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881).

3. Characteristically vague is John W. Dodd, *Everyday Life in Twentieth Century America* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1965). An attempt at definition, albeit not useful to historians, is Hans Peter Thurn, "Grundprobleme eines sozialwissenschaftlichen Konzepts der Alltagskultur," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 30 (1978): 47-59.

4. An Italian example of this approach is Guido Vincelli, *Una Comunità Meridionale* (Turin: Taylor Torino, 1958).

5. Emmanuel L. Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Random House, 1979).

6. Navarro della Miraglia, *Storielle Siciliane*, p. 74.

7. Giuseppe Pitre housed a considerable artifact collection in what is now the Museo Pitre, Parca Favorita, Palermo.

8. Robert F. Berkhofer, *A Behavioral Approach to Historical Analysis* (New York: The Free Press, 1969), ch. 5-6.

9. Sonnino, p. 12.

10. Pitre, *Usi e Costumi*, vol. III, p. 105; Navarro della Miraglia, *Storielle Siciliane*, p. 111.

11. Blok, *Mafia*, pp. 43-44.

12. Sonnino, pp. 31-32.

13. Salomone-Marino, p. 63.

14. Douglas Sladen, *Sicily, the New Winter Resort* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1907), p. 178.

15. "Sicilian Mountain Peasants," Arthur Stanley Riggs, "Inexhaustible Italy," *National Geographic* 30 (1916): 357.

16. Celena A. Baxter, "Sicilian Family Life," *Family* 14 (1930): 82.

17. Chapman, p. 32; Salomone-Marino, p. 258; Rudolf and Susanne Schenda, *Eine Sizilianische Strasse*, pp. 25-26.
18. Interview with Pasquale Maggio, March 11, 1977. See also K. Jaberger and J. Jud, *Sprach- und Sachatlas Italiens und der Südschweiz* (Zofingen: Ringier, 1933), map 873.
19. Pitirè, *La Famiglia*, pp. 87-88.
20. Chapman, p. 21.
21. Covello, p. 161; Cronin, pp. 93-94.
22. Chapman, p. 131.
23. Chapman, p. 62.
24. Chapman, p. 62.
25. Chapman, p. 38; Salomone-Marino, p. 298.
26. Navarro della Miraglia, *La Nana*, p. 24; Pitirè, *La Famiglia*, pp. 212-228.
27. Salomone-Marino, p. 63.
28. Pitirè, *La Famiglia*, p. 41; *Usi e Costumi*, vol. III, pp. 108-109; Sladen, p. 125.
29. *Inchiesta Agraria*, tome 2, p. 117; Paul Scheuermeier, *Bauernwerk in Italien und in der italienischen und rätromanischen Schweiz* (Bern: Verlag Stämpfli, 1956), p. 84.
30. Scheuermeier, pp. 60-61; Jud and Jaberger, map. 931.
31. Chapman, p. 15; Pitirè, *Proverbi*, II, p. 287.
32. Chapman, p. 54.
33. Covello, p. 131.
34. Schenda and Schenda, p. 53.
35. Chapman, p. 54.
36. Chapman, pp. 56-57.
37. Navarro della Miraglia, *Storielle Siciliane*, p. 4.
38. Navarro della Miraglia, *La Nana*, pp. 41-73; Sladen, p. 275; Douglas Sladen, *In Sicily* (London: Sands and Co., 1901), vol. 1, pp. 46-47.
39. Baxter, p. 82; see also Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria, *Monografie di Famiglie Agricole*, vol. 4, Taddei-Ledda, *Contadini Siciliane* (Rome: S.A. Tip. Operaia, Romano, 1933), pp. 38-39.
40. Dr. Alexander Rumpelt, *Sicilien und die Sicilianer*, 2nd. ed. (Berlin: Allgemeiner Verein für Deutsche Literatur, 1902), pp. 38-39.
41. Pitirè, *Usi e Costumi*, vol. II, p. 53-58.
42. Cronin, p. 82.
43. Pitirè, *Usi e Costumi*, vol. II, p. 170; Cronin, p. 89; Cocchiara, *La Vita*, p. 85.
44. Sladen, *In Sicily*, vol. 1, pp. 46-47; Schneider and Schneider, *Culture*, p. 15.
45. Enrico Loncaio, *Considerazioni sulla Genesi ed Evoluzione della Borghesia in Sicilia* (Palermo: Tip. Coop. fra gli Operai, 1899), pp. 210-14.
46. Chapman, p. 14; Pitirè, *La Famiglia*, pp. 87-88; for a slightly later period, Taddei-Ledda, pp. 31-32.
47. Baxter, p. 83.
48. Pitirè, *Proverbi*, vol. III.

49. Chapman, pp. 21-23; Pitirè, *La Famiglia*, p. 138; *Inchiesta Agraria*, tome 2, p. 641; Taddei-Ledda, p. 90; see also Davis, appendix VI.
50. Chapman, p. 32.
51. Chapman, pp. 21-24; Valussi, pp. 67-68; Blok, *Mafia*, p. 23. Seasonal changes described in J.M. Houston, *The Western Mediterranean World* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1964), pp. 15-35; Renée Rochefort, *Le Travail en Sicile* (Paris: Presse Universitaires, 1961), p. 87.
52. Pitirè, *Proverbi*, vol. II, p. 4; Sonnino, pp. 45, 51; Salomone-Marino, p. 172; Salvatore Francesco Romano, *La Sicilia nell'Ultimo Ventennio del Secolo XIX* (Palermo: Industria Grafica Nazionale, 1958), p. 154.
53. Pitirè, *La Famiglia*, pp. 135-156; Taddei-Ledda, p. 12; *Inchiesta Agraria*, passim, for example, tome 2, pp. 216, 266; Cocchiara, *La Vita*, pp. 56-57.
54. Pitirè, *Proverbi*, vol. IV, p. 4.
55. Sonnino, pp. 11-12; Blok, *Mafia*, pp. 46-47.
56. Sonnino, p. 11.
57. Blok, *Mafia*, pp. 48-49.
58. Alfonso di Giovanna, *Inchiostro e Trazzere* (Sambuca: Ed. La Voce, 1979), p. 52; Cronin, p. 64; Blok, *Mafia*, p. 47; Wilhelm E. Mühlmann and Roberto J. Llaryora, *Strummula Siciliana; Ehre, Rang und Soziale Schichtung in einer Sizilianischen Agro-Stadt* (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1973).
59. Chapman, p. 32.
60. Chapman, p. 15; Sereni, p. 155; Pitirè, *La Famiglia*, p. 80; Taddei-Ledda, p. 63.
61. Pitirè, *La Famiglia*, p. 89; Sonnino, p. 53; William Seymour Monroe, *Sicily, the Garden of the Mediterranean* (Boston: L. C. Page, 1909), p. 120.
62. Navarro della Miraglia, *La Nana*, p. 23; Sladen and Lorimer, p. 85.
63. Chapman, pp. 60, 62; Navarro della Miraglia, *La Nana* p. 24; William Foote Whyte, "Sicilian Peasant Society," *American Anthropologist* 46 (1944): 69-70.
64. Navarro della Miraglia, *La Nana*, pp. 63-65.
65. Chapman, p. 14; Giovanni Verga, *Tutte le Novelle*, 2 vols. (Milan: Mondadori, 1942), I, p. 24; Covello, p. 88.
66. For symbolic significance of doors and windows, see Otto Friedrich Bollnow, *Mensch und Raum* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1963), pp. 154-56.
67. *Inchiesta Agraria*, tome 1, p. 467. Leonard Covello, *The Heart is the Teacher* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958); see also Covello, *Social Background*, p. 93.
68. Pitirè, *Proverbi*, vol. II, p. 414.
69. Pitirè, *La Famiglia*, pp. 30, 36; Salomone-Marino, p. 44.
70. Navarro della Miraglia, *Storielle Siciliane*, pp. 130-31; Sladen and Lorimer, pp. 397-98; Chapman, pp. viii-ix, 46.
71. John Davis, "Town and Country," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 42 (1969): 171-185.
72. Pitirè, *La Famiglia*, p. 80; Taddei-Ledda, p. 63.

73. Chapman, pp. 111-12; Sereni, p. 155; Rumpelt p. 40.
74. Taddei-Ledda, p. 63; Covello, *Social Background*, p. 179; Benedetto Rubino and Giuseppe Cocchiara, *Usi e Costumi, Novelle e Poesie del Popolo Siciliano* (Palermo: Remo Sandron, 1924), p. 34; Giovanni Verga, *Little Novels of Sicily* (New York: Thomas Selzer, 1925), p. 63.
75. Sladen, *Sicily*, p. 178; Davis, *Land and Family*, p. 72; Sladen and Lorimer, p. 82; Giovanni Verga, *The House by the Medlar Tree* (New York: Grove Press, 1953), pp. 22-23, 97.
76. Navarro della Miraglia, *Storielle Siciliane*, p. 73.
77. Chapman, p. 129.
78. Chapman, p. 46; Navarro della Miraglia, *Storielle Siciliane*, p. 4.
79. "Female Forms of Power and the Myth of Male Dominance: A Model of Female/Male Interaction in Peasant Society," *American Ethnologist* 2 (1975): 727-56.
80. Pitri, *La Famiglia*, pp. 30, 36; Cronin, p. 76.
81. Verga, *The House*, p. 78.
82. Asked to give a reference address to the local draft authorities in the 1870's and 1880's, young men universally gave the name of their *cortile*, not a street address (although these existed). Yans-McLaughlin, p. 264, argues that community for ordinary Italians was not a place, but a "spiritual, emotional or blood tie." Obviously, I disagree.
83. Chapman, pp. 12, 39; Williams, p. 41.
84. p. 152; see also Rubino, p. 16.
85. Sladen, *Sicily*, p. 35.
86. Chapman, pp. 39, 60; Peter Schneider, "Honor and Conflict," pp. 148-49; Jane Schneider, "Of Vigilance and Virgins: Honor, Shame and Access to Resources in Mediterranean Societies," *Ethnology* 10 (1971): 3-22.
87. Briggs, ch. 2; di Giovanna, p. 52; Christian Giordano, *Handwerker und Bauernverbände in der Sizilianischen Gesellschaft*, Heidelberg Sociologica, 14 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1975), App. 1.
88. Schneider and Schneider, "Reproduction," p. 28.
89. Schneider and Schneider, *Culture*, p. 9; Blok, *Mafia*, p. 179.
90. di Giovanna, pp. 28-29; Schneider and Schneider, *Culture*, pp. 156-58.

#### Notes to Chapter Four

1. Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio, *Statistica della Emigrazione Italiana* (Rome: 1878-79, 1881-1897, 1900-15.)
2. Renda, *l'Emigrazione*, p. 42; Robert F. Foerster, *The Italian Emigration of Our Times* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1924), p. 48.
3. Walter Laidlaw, ed., *Population of the City of New York, 1890-1930* (New York: Cities Census Committee, 1932).
4. U.S. Senate, *Report on Conditions of Women and Child Wage-Earners in*

*the United States, Men's Ready-Made Clothing* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), p. 261; *Immigrants in Cities*, p. 175.

5. John S. MacDonald, "Some Socioeconomic Emigration Differentials in Rural Italy, 1902-13," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 7 (1958): 55-72; "Agricultural Organization, Migration and Labour Militancy in Rural Italy," *The Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 16 (1963): 61-75; J.S. and Leatrice MacDonald, "Institutional Economics and Rural Development: Two Italian Types," *Human Organization* 23 (1964): 113-18.

6. Yans-McLaughlin, pp. 109-10; Josef J. Barton, *Peasants and Strangers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 28-31.

7. MacDonald, "Institutional Economics," pp. 117-18; "Agricultural Organization," pp. 72-73.

8. John S. MacDonald and Leatrice D. MacDonald, "Italian Migration to Australia: Manifest Functions of Bureaucracy versus Latent Functions of Informal Networks," *Journal of Social History* 3 (1970): 248-76, suggest that Sicilian culture also changed over time. Their earlier articles characterize Sicilians as a culturally transitional group; here the MacDonalds group Sicilians with other parts of the familist "Deep South."

9. John S. MacDonald and Leatrice D. MacDonald, "Chain Migration, Ethnic Neighborhood Formation, and Social Network," *Milbank Fund Quarterly* 42 (1964): 82-97.

10. Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio, *Statistica della Società di Mutuo Soccorso* (Rome: 1873, 1878, 1885) and *Le Società di Mutuo Soccorso in Italia* (Rome: Tip. G. Bertero, 1906). See also Briggs, ch. 2. For fuller analysis of the relationship of protest and migration in western Sicily, see my "Migration and Peasant Militance: Western Sicily, 1880-1910," *Social Science History* (forthcoming).

11. Renda, *l'Emigrazione*, p. 42.

12. *Statistica della Emigrazione Italiana avvenuta nell' Anno 1888*, pp. 145-147.

13. For example, *Statistica della Emigrazione, 1900-1905*.

14. Francesco Renda, *I Fasci Siciliani, 1892-94* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), ch. 8.

15. "Lista della Leva," 1868-1935, Sambuca di Sicilia.

16. Jane and Peter Schneider, "The Demographic Transition in Sicily, Progress Report on a Local Level Case Study," unpub. paper, Table 4.

17. Francesco DeStefano and Francesco Luigi Oddo, *Storia della Sicilia dal 1860 al 1910* (Bari: Laterza, 1963), pp. 119-21; Jürg K. Siegenthaler, "Sicilian Economic Change Since 1860," *The Journal of European Economic History* 2 (1973): 368-69; 374-76.

18. Renda, *I Fasci*, ch. 2.

19. Cancila, "Variazioni," and Giarizzo, "La Sicilia."

20. *Inchiesta Parlamentare*, p. 125; *Inchiesta Agraria*, tome 2, pp. 253, 266.

21. Yans-McLaughlin; more generally, see Charles Tilly and Harold C. Brown, "On Uprooting, Kinship and the Auspices of Migration," *International*

*Journal of Comparative Sociology* 8 (1967): 139-164; Harvey M. Choldin, "Kinship Networks in the Migration Process," *International Migration Review* 7 (1973): 167-75; Robert E. Bieder, "Kinship as a Factor in Migration," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 35 (1973): 429-39.

22. MacDonald and MacDonald, "Chain Migration."

23. Yans-McLaughlin, p. 96.

24. U.S. Senate, Reports of the Immigration Commission, *Immigrants in Cities* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), vol. 2, Table 372.

25. Robert Coit Chapin, *The Standard of Living Among Workingmen's Families in New York City* (New York: Charities Publication Committee, 1909).

26. Yans-McLaughlin, pp. 62-63.

27. Richard N. Juliani, "American Voices, Italian Accents," *Italian Americana* 1 (1974): 1-25; Franc Sturino, "Family and Kin Cohesion Among South Italian Immigrants in Toronto," *The Italian Immigrant Woman in North America*, ed. Betty Boyd Caroli, Robert F. Harney and Lydio F. Tomasi (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1978).

28. Cronin, pp. 24-25.

29. Briggs, pp. 69-94, quoted material, p. 75.

30. Giuseppe Pitrè, *Feste Patronali in Sicilia*, Biblioteca delle Tradizioni Popolari Siciliane, vol. 21 (Turin-Palermo: Carlo Clausen, 1900) and Pitrè, *Proverbi*, vol. III, "Nazioni, Paesi, Città."

31. Briggs, pp. 5-7; Yans-McLaughlin, pp. 26-27.

32. Briggs' immigrants resemble artisans; Yans-McLaughlin's peasants.

33. Robert M. Lichtenberg, *One-Tenth of a Nation: Natural Forces in the Economic Growth of the New York Region* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960).

34. Briggs, pp. 3-4; Barton, pp. 91-94.

35. Luciano John Iorizzo, *Italian Immigration and the Impact of the Padrone System* (New York: Arno Press, 1980); *Little Italies in North America*, ed. Robert F. Harney and J. Vincenza Scarpaci (Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1981).

36. *Immigrants in Cities*. An exaggeration. South Italians working in the garment trade almost always claimed to have worked in the production of garments in southern Italy before migration—claims which must be regarded with more than a little skepticism.

37. Humbert S. Nelli, *The Business of Crime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 27, 37.

38. Mabel Hurd Willett, *The Employment of Women in the Clothing Trade*, Columbia University Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, 16 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1902); *Women and Child Wage-Earners*; U.S. 62nd. Congress, 2nd. Session, Senate Document no. 633, Reports of the Immigration Commission, *Report on Immigrants in Industries, Part 6, Clothing Manufacturing* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911).

39. Willett, map. opp. p. 258.

40. Covello, *The Heart*, and Garibaldi M. Lapolla, *The Grand Gennaro* (New York: Vanguard, 1935) provide examples of artisans who never re-achieve their old skilled work, and of men without training who transform themselves into artisans or merchants.

#### Notes to Chapter Five

1. Jacob Riis, *Ten Years War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1900), pp. 53-61.

2. See *The Peril and Preservation of the Home* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs, 1903), p. 34.

3. I followed Robert E. Park and Herbert A. Miller, *Old World Traits Transplanted* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1921), map opp. p. 146 and defined Elizabeth Street as the area bounded on the north by E. Houston, and on the south by Grand—including the north side of Broome and the south side of E. Houston (between Mott and Elizabeth), as well as the north and south sides of Spring and Prince (between Mott and Elizabeth) and the south side of Prince between Elizabeth and the Bowery. For the Fourteenth Ward, see James Ford, *Slums and Housing* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936), Part 1; Ira Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York City* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), ch. 3.

4. Real Estate Record Association, *A History of Real Estate Building and Architecture in New York City during the Last Quarter of a Century* (New York: Real Estate Record Association, 1898), p. 51.

5. New York State Assembly, Tenement House Committee, *Report* (Albany: James Lyon, 1895), Map 2.

6. *The Tenement House Problem*, ed. Robert de Forest and Lawrence Veiller (New York: McMillan, 1903), p. 102; hereafter, *The Tenement House Problem*.

7. *The Tenement House Problem*, p. 204.

8. *The Tenement House Problem*, Appendix IX.

9. *Immigrants in Cities*, p. 228. Average income of \$519 was reduced to the lower figure because the sample used in that study contained higher proportions of skilled workers than did the Elizabeth Street population.

10. *Immigrants in Cities*, Table 66.

11. Lillian Betts, "The Italian in New York," *University Settlement Studies* 1 (1905-06): 98.

12. Betts, "The Italian in New York," p. 98.

13. New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Second Report* (Albany: The Argus Company, 1912), vol. 4, p. 1556.

14. Riis, *Ten Years War*, p. 24; Lillian Betts, "Italian Peasants in a New Law Tenement," *Harper's Bazaar* 38 (1904): 805.

15. Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 803.

16. John Modell and Tamara K. Hareven, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household: An Examination of Boarding and Lodging in American Families," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 35 (1973): 467-79. Boarding practices are

described in Chapin; Louise Bolard More, *Wage Earners' Budgets*, Greenwich House Series of Social Studies, 1 (New York: Henry Holt 1907); Louise C. Odenrantz, *Italian Women in Industry* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1919).

17. Robert Harney, "Boarding and Belonging," *Urban History Review*, 1978.

18. Boarding provided food and housing for less than 10 percent of a yearly income of \$350. In contrast, sharing a two-room apartment required somewhat over 10 percent for housing alone. About 20 percent of New York's south Italian male wage earners over age eighteen earned less than \$400 a year, *Immigrants in Cities*, p. 224. I assumed that boarders fell disproportionately in this group.

19. *Immigrants in Cities*, pp. 59, 64; New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Fourth Report* (Albany: J.B. Lyon, 1915), vol. 4, pp. 1547, 1549.

20. Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 807.

21. Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 802; *The Tenement House Problem*, p. 437.

22. Pietro di Donato, *Three Circles of Light* (New York: Julian Messner, 1960), p. 5; see also Betts, "The Italian," p. 94.

23. Jacob A. Riis, *The Children of the Poor* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), p. 12.

24. Williams, pp. 42-43, 47; New York City AICP, *74th Annual Report* (1917): 14; New York City Tenement House Department, *Second Report* (New York: Martin B. Brown Press, 1907), plate 24; New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Second Report*, vol. 2, p. 681, and *Fourth Report*, vol. 4, opp. p. 1540.

25. Chapin, pp. 71, 202, 240. New York State Welfare Conference, *Report of the Special Committee on the Standard of Living* (New York: New York State Welfare Conference, 1907), p. 129. Typical photos are New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Preliminary Report* (Albany: The Argus Co., 1912), vol. 2, "Laight Street." See also Lewis Hines, "Photographic Documents," unit no. 1, picture 1, New York Public Library.

26. Lapolla, p. 304; New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Fourth Report*, vol. 4, p. 1547; Williams, p. 48.

27. More, pp. 48-59. The Immigration Commission, questioning families that had been in New York more than ten years, found that 80 percent of the southern Italians had lived the entire time in one neighborhood, *Immigrants in Cities*, p. 243. In a much later survey of Italian garment workers leaving the Lower East Side, Leo Grebler found that the average family had lived twenty-one years there, in an average 3.2 apartments, *Housing Market Behavior in a Declining Area* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 247. See also James Ford, p. 658; Fred L. Lavanburg, *What Happened to 386 Families Who Were Compelled to Vacate Their Slum Dwellings to Make Way for a Large Housing Project* (New York: Fred L. Lavanburg Foundation, 1933), p. 5.

28. Averages are from a sample of real estate properties advertised in *Bolletino della Sera*, 1905-1910.

29. Harry M. Shulman, *Slums of New York* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1938), p. 195.

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1. Patrick Watson, *Fasanella's City* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), p. 33.

2. Watson, p. 33.

3. Covello, *The Heart*, p. 22.

4. "The Big Flat," New York AICP, *43rd Annual Report* (1886): 46.

5. Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 804.

6. Mary E. Richmond, *The Good Neighbor in the Modern City* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott 1908), pp. 120-21.

7. Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 803; *Women and Child Wage-Earners*, p. 262; Lapolla, *Grand Gennaro*, p. 151.

8. New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Fourth Report*, vol. 4, p. 1800.

9. Florence Nesbitt *Household Management* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1918), p. 121.

10. Mabel Kittredge, "Home-Making in a Model Tenement," *Charities* 15 (1905): 180.

11. Pianos were commonly advertised in the *Bolletino della Sera* in the early years of the century; three male "music teachers" lived on Elizabeth Street in 1905; see also Shulman, p. 8.

12. Mario Puzo, *The Fortunate Pilgrim* (New York: Lancer, 1964), pp. 188-89.

13. Shulman, p. 105.

14. "The Coal Situation in New York," *Charities* 9 (1902): 357.

15. Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 804.

16. *Women and Child Wage-Earners*, p. 251.

17. Annie S. Daniel, "The Wreck of the Home, How Wearing Apparel is Fashioned in the Tenements," *Charities* 14 (1905): 629; New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Second Report*, vol. 4, p. 1524; Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 804; Elizabeth Watson, "Homework in the Tenements," *Survey* 25 (1911): 776; Lewis Hines, "Photographic Documents of Social Conditions," Unit no. 1, picture 34, New York Public Library.

18. Betts, "The Italian," p. 99.

19. Nesbitt, p. 136.

20. New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Fourth Report*, vol. 2, p. 695; Shulman, p. 180.

21. "The Cost of Living," *The Charities Review* 9 (1899): 238.

22. Antonio Mangano, "The Italian Colonies of New York City," in *Italians in the City*, p. 21.

23. Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 804.

24. New York AICP, Bureau of Public Health and Hygiene and New York City Department of Health, Bureau of Child Hygiene, *Flies and Diarrheal Disease* (New York: AICP, n.d. 1915?), p. 10.

25. Betts, "The Italian," p. 94.

26. Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 805.



27. Works Progress Administration, Federal Writers Project of the City of New York, *The Italians of New York, a Survey* (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 205.
28. Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 807.
29. Riis, *Ten Years War*, p. 110.
30. Covello, *The Heart*, p. 36.
31. Daniel, p. 625; Hines, "Photographic Documents," Unit 2, no. 40.
32. Daniel, p. 624; New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Second Report*, vol. 4, pp. 1546-1547.
33. New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Second Report*, vol. 2, p. 69; vol. 4, p. 1553; *Women and Child Wage-Earners*, p. 230; Riis, *The Children of the Poor*, pp. 20, 92, 96; New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Preliminary Report*, pp. 88-89; New York State Department of Labor, *Seventh Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor, 1907* (Albany: J.B. Lyon, 1908), p. 161; New York State Assembly, Tenement House Committee, *Report*, p. 160.
34. New York State Assembly, Tenement House Committee, *Report*, pp. 154-58.
35. Shulman, p. 14; Federal Writers Project, p. 53.
36. Chapin, p. 115. This scavenging was regarded as work, not stealing, "Punish the Real Offender and Not the Child," *Charities* 12 (1904): 858.
37. Daniel, pp. 624-25.
38. New York State Assembly, Tenement House Committee, *Report*, pp. 154, 158.
39. Thomas Jesse Jones, *The Sociology of a New York City Block*, Columbia University Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, 21 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1904), p. 124; Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 804.
40. Chapin, pp. 138-39.
41. *The Tenement House Problem*, p. 294.
42. New York State Assembly, Tenement House Committee, *Report*, p. 20; Nesbitt, pp. 104-105.
43. Chapin, p. 240.
44. New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Fourth Report*, vol. 4, p. 1800.
45. New York State Welfare Conference, p. 14; Williams, p. 61.
46. Covello, *The Social Background*, p. 295; see also Jo Pagano, *Golden Wedding* (New York: Random House, 1943), pp. 12-13.
47. Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 803; Mabel Hyde Kittredge, *The Home and its Management* (New York: The Century Co., 1917), pp. 17-19. See also, "Coal Situation in New York," pp. 357, 388.
48. Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 803; Sophonisba P. Breckinridge, *New Homes for Old* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1921), p. 59.
49. Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 803.

50. *Women and Child Wage-Earners*, p. 252; New York City Tenement House Department, *First Report*, p. 109; *The Tenement House Problem*, p. 437; Lapolla, pp. 19, 51.
51. *The Tenement House Problem*, pp. 387, 430.
52. New York City Tenement House Department, *Sixth Report* (New York: M.B. Brown, 1911), photo, p. 15. New York City Tenement House Department, *First Report*, pp. 107, 113; "Calendar of Photographic Negatives of the New York City Tenement House Department," (Compiled by Lilian Zwyns and Sylvia Szmuk for the New York Public Library, Local History and Genealogy Division), photo 169.
53. *The Tenement House Problem*, p. 431; Covello, *Social Background*, p. 39.
54. More, p. 218.
55. Italian American Directory Company, *Gli Italiani negli Stati Uniti* (New York: Italian American Directory Co., 1906), pp. 73-75.
56. *Immigrants in Industries*, p. 388.
57. *Immigrants in Industries*, p. 388.
58. *Women and Child Wage-Earners*, p. 245; *Immigrants in Industries*, pp. 385-88.
59. *Women and Child Wage-Earners*, pp. 228, 242; Willett p. 81; New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Second Report*, vol. 2, p. 698.
60. New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Fourth Report*, vol. 1, p. 250.
61. Daniel, p. 625; New York State Assembly, Tenement House Committee, *Report*, p. 153.
62. New York AICP, *68th Annual Report* (1911): photo, n.p.; see also Ford, photo, p. 464; *Immigrants in Industries*, p. 385.
63. Mary Sherman, "Manufacturing Foods in the Tenements," *Charities and the Commons* 15 (1906): 669, 672; "Calendar of Photographic Negatives," no. 146, 187, 343, 345, 768, and 773.
64. Sherman, p. 669.
65. George M. Price, *Tenement House Inspector* (New York: The Chief, 1910), p. 93; New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Fourth Report*, vol. 2, pp. 315-323, 336; Mary Brown Sumner, "A Strike for Clean Bread," *Survey* 24 (1910): 486; New York Commission on the Congestion of Population, *Report* (New York: Lecouver, 1911), p. 123.
66. Edward Ewing Pratt, "Industrial Causes of Congestion of Population, New York City," Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1911, p. 138; for a later period, see Lavanburg, p. 5.
67. *Women and Child Wage-Earners*, pp. 390, 392 reports far higher proportions of married women workers than do census listings. Compare Thomas Kessner and Betty Boyd Caroli, "New Immigrant Women at Work: Italians and Jews in New York City, 1880-1905," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 5 (1978): 19-32, to the papers by Miriam J. Cohen and Virginia Yans-McLaughlin in

*Sex, Class and the Woman Worker*, ed. Milton Cantor and Bruce Laurie (Westport: Greenwood, 1977). Census takers varied considerably in recording married women's work, especially piece work done at home. Riis reported large numbers of sweated workers in the Astor tenements, *Ten Years War*, p. 112, but census takers listed few in those buildings.

68. Betts reported even higher rates—80 percent, "Italian Peasants," p. 804.
69. Pratt, p. 140.
70. *Women and Child Wage-Earners*, p. 252; New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Second Report*, vol. 2, p. 693, vol. 4, pp. 1508, 1544.
71. Betts, "The Italian," p. 94; Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 804.
72. New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Second Report*, vol. 1, p. 109; Puzo, p. 7; Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), p. 57.
73. New York State Assembly, Tenement House Committee, *Report*, p. 93; *The Tenement House Problem*, pp. 19, 314.
74. New York State Assembly, Tenement House Committee, *Report*, p. 18.
75. As the garment district moved north and west towards Penn Station in the 1920's, fewer Lower East Side sons found work there, while daughters began to travel longer distances to work, Lavanburg, p. 5.
76. Jacob A. Riis, *The Battle with the Slum* (New York: MacMillan, 1902), photo, p. 32, pp. 38, 32; New York City AICP *41st Annual Report* (1884): 53.
77. *Immigrants in Cities*, p. 205.
78. Caroline F. Ware, *Greenwich Village, 1920-30* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, The Riverside Press, 1935), p. 150.
79. More, p. 14. Architects call this a "fixed feature" space.
80. *The Tenement House Problem*, p. 430.
81. Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 803; Betts, "The Italian," p. 92.
82. *The Tenement House Problem*, p. 428; New York City Tenement House Department, *Second Report*, p. 33; J.W. Sullivan, *Tenement House Tales of New York* (New York: Henry Holt, 1895), p. 362.
83. *The Tenement House Problem*, p. 430; Riis, *Battle With the Slum*, p. 32.
84. *Women and Child Wage-Earners*, p. 262; Daniel, photo p. 626.
85. Henry R. Mussey, " 'Fake' Installment Business and its Consequences," *Charities* 19 (1903): 236.
86. Schenda and Schenda, p. 21.
87. Betts, "Italian Peasants," p. 804.
88. Betts, "The Italian," p. 94.
89. Betts, "The Italian," p. 94; *The Tenement House Problem*, p. 414; Nesbitt, p. 121. See photos, Ann Novotny, *Strangers at the Door* (Riverside, Conn.: Chatham Press, 1971), p. 85; Oscar Handlin, *A Pictorial History of Immigration* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1972), pp. 227-28; Italian American Directory Company, p. 10; "Mulberry Bend from 1897-1958," *Saturday Evening Post*, Aug. 2, 1958, pp. 34-35.
90. "The Poor in Summer," *Scribner's Magazine* 39 (1901): 269.

91. *Women and Child Wage-Earners*, p. 262; New York City Tenement House Department, *Third Report* (New York: Martin B. Brown Press, 1908), plate 14; Handlin, p. 229; Ford, photo, p. 382 (probably Jewish children).
92. New York City Tenement House Department, *First Report*, p. 114, *Second Report*, p. 33; Lapolla, p. 7; Angelo Patri, *A Schoolmaster of the Great City* (New York: MacMillan, 1917), p. 123.
93. Kittredge, p. 180; New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Second Report*, vol. 2, p. 695; Shulman, p. 13; New York City Tenement House Department, "Prints Made from Glass Negatives," New York Public Library, Local History and Genealogy Division, no. M-14; Watson, p. 776.
94. Patri, p. 4; Irvin L. Child, *Italian or American, the Second Generation in Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), p. 25; William Foote Whyte, *Street Corner Society, The Social Structure of an Italian Slum* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1943); Herbert J. Gans, *The Urban Villagers* (New York: The Free Press, 1962).
95. Dorothy Reed, "Leisure Time of Girls in a 'Little Italy,'" Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1932, pp. 44, 50; Ware, p. 145; Lillian D. Wald, *The House on Henry Street* (New York: Henry Holt, 1915), p. 196.
96. Riis, *How The Other Half Lives*, p. 60.
97. "Social Map of the Lower East Side," p. 2; Lapolla, p. 41; Wald, pp. 272-73; Jones, p. 45; Konrad Bercovici, *Around the World in New York* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1938), p. 125.
98. More, p. 203; Lapolla, p. 41; Bercovici, p. 125; Covello, *The Heart*, p. 326; Child, p. 25.
99. Williams, p. 62.
100. Bercovici, p. 131; Reed, p. 33.
101. Wald, p. 196.
102. Jones, p. 34; Mangano, p. 21; *The Tenement House Problem*, p. 204.
103. Watson, p. 777.
104. Covello, *The Heart*, p. 46; Edward Corsi, *In the Shadow of Liberty: The Chronicle of Ellis Island* (New York: MacMillan, 1935), p. 15; Lapolla, p. 104; Antonino Marinoni, *Come ho 'Fatto' l'America* (Milan: Athena, 1932), p. 138.
105. Marinoni, p. 139.
106. Marinoni, p. 138.

#### Notes to Chapter Seven

1. Beginning with Rudolph Vecoli's criticisms of Oscar Handlin in "Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of *The Uprooted*," *Journal of American History* 51 (1964-65): 404-417.
2. Ware, p. 174.
3. Smith, pp. 112-14. See also Judith Smith, "Italian Mothers, American Daughters," in *The Italian Immigrant Woman in North America*, p. 213.

4. Williams, p. 47; Ware, p. 179; Chapin, pp. 25, 87; More, pp. 175–76.
5. Furniture advertisements in *Bolletino della Sera* called bedroom suites a *corredo*, that is, the Italian term for movable dowry items. The occasionally haphazard nature of the immigrant marriage market is obvious in some oral histories. See, for example, Sharon Strom, "Italian-American Women and Their Daughters in Rhode Island: The Adolescence of Two Generations, 1900–1950," in *The Italian Immigrant Woman in North America*, p. 195. In contrast, Yans-McLaughlin argues that children gladly contributed to family savings for a house—and grasped only much later, at the parents' death, that homeownership provided them neither a first step toward middle-class status nor material security for their own new families, *Family and Community*, p. 177.
6. Patri, p. 123.
7. Gans, ch. 4.
8. More, pp. 16–17; Mussey, p. 240.
9. Mangano, "Italian Colonies," p. 21.
10. New York State Factory Investigating Commission, *Second Report*, vol. 4, p. 1524.
11. Daniel p. 629.
12. Eugene Litwack and Ivan Szelenyi, "Primary Group Structures and Their Functions: Kin, Neighbors and Friends," *American Sociological Review* 34 (1965): 465–81; see also my article, "Sicilians in Space: Environmental Change and Family Geography," *Journal of Social History* 16 (1982): 53–66.
13. Mangano, p. 35; Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, p. 177; More, p. 42; Ber-covici, pp. 132–33; Betts, "The Italian," p. 95; Shulman, p. 25.
14. Riis, *Children of the Poor*, pp. 25–26; Mangano, p. 35.
15. The sons of shoemakers, for example, dominated the membership of Sambuca's *paese* society, "La Nascente Federazione delle Società Siciliane," *Corriere Siciliano*, March 7, 1931.
16. Ware, p. 104.
17. Gans, p. 53.
18. Boissevain, p. 32.
19. Grebler, p. 239; Ware, p. 225; Gwendolyn Hughes Berry, *Idleness and the Health of a Neighborhood: A Social Study of the Mulberry District* (New York: AICP, 1933), p. 5.
20. Lavanburg, p. 5.
21. John G. Gebhart, *The Health of a Neighborhood: A Social Study of the Mulberry District* (New York: AICP, 1924), p. 5.
22. Grebler, p. 223. The term "environment" is, of course, ambiguous. Walter Firey believed that the younger generation sought a better *social* environment; by leaving the ghetto, they declared their American identities and rejected foreign associations, *Land Use in Central Boston* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 222. Having carried a baby, shopping bags and stroller up and down the stairs of an urban walk-up, I am inclined to believe that the second generation was just as interested in a physical environment that better matched their needs and

- childrearing preferences. In areas of lower-density housing like Brooklyn, mothers could hope to supervise their children carefully, an important Sicilian goal.
23. Grebler, p. 233; Ware, p. 30. Only one of five families moving bought a home.
  24. Puzo, pp. 285–86.
  25. Interesting although idiosyncratic memories of the years immediately following the move to Queens are in Vincent Panella, *The Other Side, Growing Up Italian in America* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1979).
  26. Yans-McLaughlin dismisses high rates of mobility in her account of immigrant social life, blaming inaccurate sources (census listings and city directories) for failing to record many families, *Family and Community*, p. 79. Her interpretation stands in clear contrast to Humbert Nelli, *The Italians in Chicago* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 44–54. My own interpretation more closely resembles Nelli's. Although census listings and directories may overstate mobility, a wide variety of impressionistic sources—from both within and without the immigrant population—confirm high rates of mobility. Other immigrant Italians actually were only slightly less mobile than Elizabeth Street residents, see Howard P. Chudacoff, *Mobile Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).
  27. See, for example, Gary Mormino, "The Hill Upon a City: The Evolution of an Italian-American Community in St. Louis, 1882–1950," in *Little Italies in North America*, pp. 141–64.
  28. Most of the essays collected in *Little Italies in North America* emphasize evolution over time, rather than describing one archetypical form of immigrant social structure. All, however, give *prominenti* a large role in immigrant social life, perhaps because of the definition of colony that all essays share (p. 5). See my review of this volume, *International Labor and Working-Class History* 22 (1982): 95–97.
  29. "Italian American Workers, 1880–1920: *Padrone* Slaves or Primitive Rebels?" in *Perspectives on Italian Immigration and Ethnicity*, ed. S. M. Tomasi (Staten Island: Center for Migration Studies, 1977), pp. 24–49.
  30. See George Pozzetta, "The Mulberry District of New York City: The Years Before World War One," in *Little Italies in North America*, pp. 7–40.
  31. Stephan Thernstrom and Peter Knights, "Men in Motion: Some Data and Speculations on Urban Population Mobility in Nineteenth Century North America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 1 (1970): 7–35.
  32. *Family and Community*, ch. 4.
  33. Cronin, pp. 267–68.
  34. Cronin, pp. 166–67.
  35. *Family and Community*, p. 23.
  36. *Family and Community*, p. 20. My own understanding of culture change was very much influenced by Social Science Research Council, Summer Seminar on Acculturation, 1953, "Acculturation: An Exploratory Formulation,"

*American Anthropologist* 56 (1954): 973-1002 and Edward H. Spicer, "Spanish-Indian Acculturation in the Southwest," *American Anthropologist* 56 (1954): 663-84.

37. *Family and Community*, p. 205.

38. Yans-McLaughlin seems to concur, *Family and Community*, ch. 8.

39. Stripping down produced a Spanish "conquest culture," *Culture and Conquest* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1960), p. 10.

40. The first discussion of *la famiglia* is Covello, *The Social Background*, based on interviews with New York Italians and their children. Although emphasizing the importance of kinship in Italy, Paul Campisi offers an alternative interpretation of the immigrant family, one that stresses increased nuclearity and individualism, "Ethnic Family Patterns: The Italian Family in the United States," *American Journal of Sociology* 53 (1948): 443-49. Most recent studies, including Yans-McLaughlin, depend heavily on Covello, especially for his analysis of European family patterns. The most recent general analysis of the immigrant *la famiglia* is Lydio F. Tomasi, *The Italian American Family*, The Italian in America Education Series, no. 113 (Staten Island: Center for Migration Studies, 1982). The Sicilian *la famiglia* is analyzed in Richard Gambino, *Blood of My Blood* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974). Humbert Nelli provides an interesting sidelight to the growing importance of kinship among immigrants when he notes that in the 1930's criminal syndicates abandoned earlier terms for their associations and began organizing themselves in and calling themselves families, *The Business of Crime*, p. 258.

41. August 8, 1980; the informant wished to remain anonymous. His views were confirmed by others in Sambuca. *Evoluto*, as he used it, means "advanced" and refers to a positive process of change, much as does "evolution." Sicilians today use *evoluto* to distinguish between those with strong material, occupational or cultural ties to the modern economy (mainly through migration to northern Europe) or to the state (through party membership, patronage, higher education, or employment) and those involved in subsistence agriculture or locally based social networks. People in Sambuca found it puzzling that emigrants boast of their high standard of living while rejecting modernity as Sicilians define it. The fact that Sambuca is a town with strong leftist traditions may contribute to these tensions between Sicilians and *Americani*. Can an *Americano* see a young Communist as a "real Sicilian?"

#### Notes to Appendix B

1. Michelson, *Environmental Choice* and Daniel M. Wilner, et al., *The Housing Environment and Family Life* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962) traced families from one setting to another. Cross-sectional comparisons are Michael Young and Peter Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957) and Willmott and Young, *Family and Class in a London Suburb* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), or Sylvia

F. Fava, "Contrasts in Neighboring: New York City and a Suburban County," in *The Suburban Community*, ed. William Dobriner (New York: G.P. Putman's Sons, 1958).

2. Willett, p. 99; Antonio Stella, "The Effects of Urban Congestion on Italian Women and Children," repr. in *The Italians in the City: Health and Related Needs*, ed. Francesco Cordasco (New York: Arno Press, 1975); Robert E. Park and Herbert A. Miller, *Old World Traits Transplanted* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1921), map opp. p. 146.

3. Leonard Covello, *The Social Background*, ch. 6; see also Bruno Ramirez, "Italian Immigrants in Rural and Small Town America: A Conference Report," *International Labor and Working Class History*, no. 21 (Spring, 1982): 77.

4. New York State manuscript census listings for Manhattan are available in the New York County Clerk's Office.

5. Besides the volumes by Ford and *The Tenement House Problem*, see New York City Health Department, *The Tenement House Problem in New York* (New York: W.P. Mitchell, 1887).

6. Pitre, *Usi e Costumi*, vol. 2, p. 162.

7. Smith, "Our Own Kind," pp. 105-10.