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Ethnicity, Emotions, and Relations in an Italian-American Suburb

Pangborn, Nicole Anne

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ETHNICITY, EMOTIONS, AND RELATIONS IN AN ITALIAN-AMERICAN SUBURB

Nicole Anne Pangborn

A DISSERTATION
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY
OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
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OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the persistence of Italian-American ethnicity in the suburbs of Providence, Rhode Island. Through a year and a half of ethnographic fieldwork among 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th generation Italian-Americans, I document some of the local complexities which have led to the continued relevance of ethnic heritage in everyday life. I show how, over the course of social interaction, the legacies of Italian-American ethnicity in this particular place work to shape individuals' feelings of self-worth, to structure their relations with others, to limit occupational and residential mobility, and to inform interpretations of current events. These findings $a.)$ run contrary to the expectations of scholars who view ethnicity for late-generation European groups as no more than "symbolic" (Gans, 1979), $b.)$ contribute to a better understanding of the current historical moment in the United States, and $c.)$ complicate sociological perspectives on assimilation and ethnic group relations more generally.

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1 Introduction: The Persistence of Italian-American Ethnicity

Master baker Raymond Francesco DeAngelis[1] has spent much of his life standing at a hot bread oven in the middle of the night. Now seventy-one years old, he still wakes up at 10:15pm, seven days a week, takes his "vitamins" (ginseng, ginger root, a multivitamin, a probiotic, a water pill, and a high blood pressure pill), hops in the shower, and puts on the same outfit he wears every day — a white cotton v-neck t-shirt, black "Dri-Fit" breathable pants, and his black size 14.5 SAS-brand sneakers, which he claims are the only shoes that support his 6'1" frame as he stands for 15 hours at a time. He's had all sorts of surgeries on his toes, legs, and bulging veins from all the standing; sometimes he delights in showing old photos of his mangled feet to those who are curious. "My whole body from the waist down has been replaced," he'll chuckle. But none of it has ever stopped him from baking. "When I had two knee replacements, I spent three days in the hospital, left the hospital in a wheelchair, and came straight back to the bakery to work." His workers confirm that he was immediately rolling around the ovens in his chair, conducting business as usual.

At around 11pm each night, Ray will get into his black Ford Explorer and start his five minute drive to DeAngelis Bakery, which sits along a well-trafficked road in Johnston, Rhode Island. Johnston has for many years been known as the "most Italian" part of the state: nearly half of its residents claim Italian ancestry; all of its mayors since 1974 - aRusso,[2] Perrotta, Macera, and Polisena - have been Italian-American; and the textile mills where Italian immigrants were employed a hundred years ago still stand, less than a mile from where Ray lives. Ray will start his morning prayers as he drives by the dark outlines of those mills a bit after 11:00, and by the time he heads down the hill – past the Stop and Shop, the boarded-up general stores, the rows of identical mill houses, the law offices of

[1] Some names and location details have been changed to protect the privacy of subjects.

[2] The Mayor's name was originally "Ralph Russo," but he legally changed it to "Ralph aRusso" in 1964, when the law dictated that candidates were to be listed alphabetically on the ballot. Adding the "a" caused his name to be featured more prominently. See Martin (2014) for more details.

Stephen Delfino and associates, and the 24-hour 7-11 – he'll have already finished one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Act of Contrition. If he has a few minutes before he hits the 10-car bakery parking lot, he'll remember Saint Rocco, Saint Francis, and any friends or relatives who have died, are sick, or are no longer in his life. "So they know I'm thinkin' about 'em," he says.

The bakery building itself is a small, tan-colored box on the strip, adorned with various shapes and sizes of Italian flags and pizza stickers. Ray always parks in the closest spot to the left front door; the door on the right is the entrance to a fish store, owned by Timmy Harrington, which currently takes up about 30 percent of the building's main level. (Ray hopes that Timmy will retire soon - the man has a bad heart and seven stints in his legs - so that he can take over the whole place.) By 11:15, he'll flip on the lights, grab three blocks of cold yeast and one pound of dough from fridge number three, put on a pot of coffee, and get to work: he's got to get an idea of the previous day's sales from the registers, put yesterday's sliced bread in the oven to make bread crumbs, run one pound of dough through the bread roll machine (to clean it), and eat a piece of pastry, maybe a muffin. Around midnight he'll start mixing the first batch of bread dough, alone, dragging 50-pound bags of flour over to the giant electric mixer, which comes up to his chest.

"Nice and quiet," Ray says, as he describes the two hours he spends by himself each night, between 11:30pm and 1:30am. "The best hours." The only downside might be the dangers he'd face if an intruder were to break in to steal the mounds of cash he's got lying around from counter sales. But Ray is prepared: he has his license to carry a small handgun, which he straps to his left ankle, and which he has only used once - "shot someone in the ass," he says. He's also installed some bright lights out back, where he used to find street people shooting up, and has wired a set of 32 active cameras to send a live feed of every inch of the premises to his iPhone, which he watches from his bed at home, from the office downstairs, or even from the barber shop, according to his sister. Aside from the potential dangers, Ray likes the time to himself in the morning. He'll often think about his life, how

he got into this racket, why he's here all night while everybody else is sleeping. He might also read some stock market news or check his investments on his phone. "The good thing about having money in stocks is that you're in control," he says. Most people in his life don't know that he actually makes most of his money trading. "I just tell them that I don't make most of my money here," he'll wink. "Let them guess."

At 1:30am, the first night crew joins Ray in the back room by the ovens. Dalvin, Pedro, Miguel, and Javier are their real names, but Ray calls them Dalvino, Amigo, Bragioli, and Primo, so that they "sound more Italian." These men are the first all-Dominican immigrant crew Ray has ever employed, and while he appreciates the work they do for him in the dark hours of the early morning – stamping out thousands of small rounds of dough, for example, or spraying pans with so much oil that they need to wear a rag over their mouths to keep from inhaling too much of it – he'll often complain that they don't hustle enough. It all depends on his mood. Some mornings he'll horse around with them, throw bits of dough from across the room, or quickly take a tray out from underneath their hands and slide it out of reach, and they will laugh and laugh together. During the summer, he'll treat them to beers when they deliver dough to the Feast of Saint Rocco down the street. Some Sundays he'll even take them along to his monthly venison dinners at the Santa Maria di Prata Society with his Johnston police pals. The men have called him "un buen hombre" - a good man. But there are also times he'll yell at them, call them "fuckin' statues" when they move too slow, or lump them together with the rest of the immigrants that he feels get too much for free in this country. "These people," he'll say, are just here to "take what they can" and go back to their home countries. "They don't seem to have a need to get their citizenship," he complains. "That's what puzzles me the most."

It also puzzles Ray that his third wife, Sarah McMillan, has been spending less and less time at the bakery lately. For the past seventeen years, ever since she left her job at Mangiarelli's produce stand (where she'd always put the vegetables she knew he needed aside for him before he even walked in the door), she's been working at his side, learning

his trade, becoming a baker herself. As co-owner of the bakery now, she usually comes in to join Ray at the ovens at about 3:00am, and the two of them will stand together, Ray hunched over the table, Sarah reaching up over it, making swift and easy cuts with their small knives on the tops of bread rolls, chatting about the news or gossiping with any night-duty cops that wander in to say hello. She used to stay with him well into the afternoon, making sure the store was stocked properly and all the office work was done. But over the past year or two she's left earlier and earlier. Now, by the time the pastry team and the front counter girls come in, at around 7:00, Sarah has probably already slipped out the back door. Customers sometimes ask: "and where's Ray's little wife?"

But these puzzles appear to recede into the background as Ray continues. The work is repetitive, he says, and comforting in its urgency: the bread must be out of the oven on time, the pizza must be sliced and placed on the counters, the cases must be restocked with calzones and pastries before the first customer arrives. It is a rhythm that Ray has followed his entire life, in all fifteen of the Italian bakeries and satellite stores he has owned and operated throughout Rhode Island. He's been making Italian bread in exactly the same way for fifty one years, and the people of Rhode Island have loved it. "We make everythin' the old fashioned way," his television commercial says, "wit' original family recipes."

Since 1967, Ray's bakeries have popped up under different names — sometimes under his own family name (DeAngelis), and sometimes under his sister Anna's husband's family name (DeFazio). They were scattered around the suburbs of Providence alongside other bakeries with similar-sounding Italian-American names, run by similar Italian-American families: Palmieri's, D. Palmieri's, DeFusco's, DeLuise, Buono's, Calise's, Scialo Brothers, DePetrillo's, LaSalle, DiVozzi's, Solitro's, Calvitto's, Crugnale, Borelli's, and Catanzaro's, among others. Often, the bakers in those families started as pan boys or dishwashers at another family's bakery, and would gradually rise in rank and learn how to bake. Recipes spread this way. "Real, old-school bakers," Ray and his sister Anna claim, "are like gypsies... they move around, spend a year here, a year there, learn each other's recipes." They'll

often open a bakery under one name, close without notice, and pop up with a different name soon afterwards. (As one customer said: "The DeAngelises are famous for starting a new bakery, and then you go there again the next week and it's gone!!!")

Despite how many times Ray has changed shops, there is something about him that draws his customers in for life. They seem to find him wherever he ends up. "I'm like a hairdresser," he'll smirk. "I open up a new bakery, and my customers follow me around." This special power he feels he has over his customers made it easy for him to believe that someone would want to write about his bakery. "We're one of the biggest bakeries in the state, though you wouldn't know it," he told me over the phone, soon after I'd walked in and left my number with one of his counter girls, Tina, who used to work at DeFusco's bakery before they were forced to shut down in 2011 for selling salmonella-tainted zeppole. The business, he said, has been a family business, and most - but not all - of their 37 employees at the time were family and friends. When I expressed interest in hanging around the bakery with them, and working alongside them, he said, "well, I don't know you." I'd have to drop by in person and get to know him first.

1.1 Italian-Americans in Rhode Island

A month before I met Ray DeAngelis, I moved into an old triple-decker house down the street. I had come back to Johnston - my hometown - to study late-generation Italian-Americans, like Ray: those third-, fourth-, and fifth-generation descendants of Italian immigrants who arrived in the United States at the turn of the 20th century.

Johnston, a largely white suburb directly to the west of Providence, boasts the second-highest percentage of Italian-Americans of any municipality in the country: as of 2016, 13,164 of Johnston's 29,126 residents – 45.2% – claim Italian ancestry (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016; Parker, 2015). In fact, Rhode Island itself - where nearly one of every five residents identifies as Italian-American - has the highest percentage by population of any state in the nation. These proportions are mostly due to the 54,975 foreign-born Italians

who arrived at the port of Providence between 1898 and 1932 during the great European immigration wave. Many of them sailed aboard the Fabre line of steamships, which picked up passengers in Naples and Palermo and began service directly to Rhode Island in 1911, after the federal government asked steamship companies to relieve congestion in New York (W. Jennings and P. Conley, 2013).

The stories of these Rhode Island Italian immigrants over the course of the twentieth century closely resemble those of other southern and eastern European immigrant groups in the United States at the time. Driven away from their homeland by tax burdens, disease outbreaks, natural disasters, and poverty (especially in the *Mezzogiorno*, south of Rome, where the aftereffects of the Unification of Italy in 1861 hit the rural peasant farmers the hardest[3]), the Italians came to America in search of *pane e lavoro* - bread and work (Gambino, 1974). At first, the immigrants settled where they could afford, or where they knew friends and family members[4] — in densely-populated urban ethnic enclaves close to where their ships landed, such as Federal Hill, Elmhurst, and Silver Lake in Providence. They arrived at a time when the occupational structure was expanding in America for those willing to work in unskilled industrial positions. Largely illiterate, and with very little experience in anything outside of rural farming, the Italians were best prepared for work as manual laborers in mills, factories, construction, and manufacturing plants throughout the country. In Rhode Island in particular, which was first in the nation for textile and jewelry production and third in the nation for machinery assembly by the middle of the American Industrial Revolution (Smith, 1985),[5] factory jobs were plentiful, and the immigrants took them. A much smaller number used their agricultural experience to work on farms in more rural

[3]See Alba (1985), chapter two, for a more detailed discussion of the agricultural life immigrants from the Mezzogiorno left behind. Also see Gambino (1974) for a detailed history of the "Kingdom of Two Sicilies" between 1815 and 1860, when the Unification changed the land system and brought poverty to Sicily and all cities, towns and villages south of Rome.

[4]See MacDonald and MacDonald (1964) for more about "chain migration" and the ways that immigrants learn of foreign opportunities from personal relationships with those who have already migrated.

[5]Smith (1985) details the sorts of positions Italian immigrants in Rhode Island took up and how these positions had ramifications for the roles of members in families. Smith notes that, between 1870 and 1910, manufacturing employment in the state increased by 245 percent.

parts of the state or to sell produce from those farms in the crowded Federal Hill enclave (McGowan, 2006).[6]

The Italian-Americans endured an initial period of hostility and discrimination while they settled. Nativists across the country – including some American-born white Anglo-Saxon Protestants and northern Europeans from earlier immigration waves – felt that the newer immigrants from southern and eastern Europe would threaten the American identity with their foreign cultural and religious tendencies.[7] The southern Italians were dark-skinned (considered to be non-white upon arrival (Roediger, 2002)[8]), they were Catholics, they were laborers (and thus linked with unionization and radicalism), and were believed to bring crime and social breakdown to the enclaves and slums in which they settled.[9] Italian-language newspapers like *L'Eco* in Rhode Island documented the struggle local Italians faced, including both everyday interactional slurs and larger instances of prejudice, such as when real-estate clauses in Westerly, RI prevented owners from renting their properties to Italians (Luconi, 2004, p.65).

But as years passed, Italian immigrants in Rhode Island and elsewhere experienced decades of social and economic assimilation. The Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 virtually stopped the flow of new European migrants into the United States,[10] and those

[6]See McGowan (2006) for descriptions of the small percentage of Italian-Americans in Rhode Island who took up agricultural work. Alba (1985) also details patterns of settlement; he notes that, while southern Italians had rural agricultural experience in Italy, they did not gravitate towards rural areas in the United States. This was mostly because they could not afford to stray far from the areas in which they landed, but also was due to the fact that farming on U.S. soil was very different from farming in a Mediterranean climate. A small faction of Northern Italians did become important for the agricultural scene in Northern California, however.

[7]For a history of nativism in the United States, see Higham (2002). For more about the specific sorts of discrimination Italians faced nationwide, see LaGumina (1999) and Mangione and Morreale (1992).

[8]Roediger (2002) provides a historical perspective on the social construction of whiteness as a racial category in the United States.

[9]Many of the earliest ethnographies in the Chicago School of sociology sought to combat this view of immigrant slums. See, for example, Thomas and Znaniecki (1918) for their writings on the adjustment process of the Polish peasant group, Wirth (1928) for his treatment of the Jewish ghetto, and Whyte (1943) for his detailed description of life inside an Italian slum. Also see Zaretsky (1996).

[10]Both of these acts used a national quota system intended to mirror the ethnic proportions of the American population. The act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act) lowered the national quotas from three to two percent of the foreign-born U.S. population, and also changed the calculation of those quotas to reflect the population recorded in the 1890 census (rather than the 1910 census, as the Immigration Act of 1921 had used) in order to disproportionately affect immigrants coming from Southern and Eastern European countries.

who remained gradually became more similar to the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant mainstream in matters of work, residence, and education. During this time, it has been said that these formerly non-white immigrants and their descendants "became white" (Brodkin, 1998). While some historians argue that this change in racial classification preceded the Italians' socioeconomic assimilation, sociologists have maintained that their shift into the mainstream was rather driven mainly by important structural changes in post-World-War-II American society.[11] Such national-level changes included, for example, a proliferation of white collar jobs, an expansion of educational opportunities with the GI Bill after 1944, and the development of the suburbs and home mortgage insurance programs created by the Federal Housing Administration (Alba and Nee, 2003; Alba, 2017). In either case, the immigrants and their families were gradually able to own homes, to start businesses, and to propel their descendants into positions of upward social mobility. In Rhode Island, this meant that many descendants of foreign-born Italians moved to Providence's surrounding suburbs of North Providence, Cranston, and Johnston – lovingly called the "Tri-Guido Town Area"[12] by some locals (Henderson, 2012) – during the second half of the century, so that by 2016, the number of self-identifying Italian-Americans across the state numbered nearly two hundred thousand.[13]

[11]The "whiteness" school of historians assert that the racial transformation of southern and eastern European immigrants from nonwhite to white preceded their socioeconomic assimilation. Alba (2017) however contends that this view makes little sociological sense, since structural changes in post World-War-II American society opened up the occupational structure for the descendants of these immigrants, and they assimilated socially and economically first, *then* became white. Such national-level changes included, for example, a proliferation of white collar jobs, an expansion of educational opportunities with the GI Bill after 1944, and the development of the suburbs and home mortgage insurance programs created by the Federal Housing Administration (For more, see Alba and Nee (2003) and Alba (2017).) It is also important to note here that African-Americans were systematically excluded from all of these opportunities. Brodkin (1998) calls these events "affirmative action for white males." Alba and Nee (2003) claim that this marking of a racial out-group greatly helped - though was not essential for - the process of assimilation for descendants of European immigrants. Interestingly, the timing of this process also varied by region of the United States; California Italians were racially integrated much more quickly than were Italians who had settled in Eastern U.S. cities (Luconi, 2016), perhaps due to variation in occupational structure between the West Coast and the East.

[12]North Providence, Cranston, and Johnston are also known by the more derisive nickname of "Tri-WOP Area" – a name I picked up during an interview I conducted with Angela Maggio, a Cranston resident, in May 2018.

[13]Data from U.S. Census Bureau (2016).

1.1.1 Symbolic ethnicity: challenging dominant views

At the same time as these descendants of foreign-born Italians began to dominate the suburbs of Johnston, Cranston, and North Providence, scholars would argue that the nature of their ethnicity was changing.

During and directly following the immigration wave, being "Italian" was a source of material and cultural separation from both mainstream American society and from other immigrant groups. Immigrants often, in fact, did not at the time group themselves under the single national category of "Italian"; they instead identified along the lines of their particular *paese*, such as "Pannese" or "Itrani," or, at the very least, along broader regional lines, like "Sicilian" or "Neapolitan" (Alba, 1985; Luconi, 2004). In nearly all cases, however, particularly in Rhode Island, the *paese* of most immigrant families was located somewhere in the the rural agricultural society of the *Mezzogiorno* — the South of Italy. Alba (1985) details the class structure of the Mezzogiorno, which can be roughly broken into three groups: *galantuomini*, or landowners, professionals, doctors, and lawyers (often called "Don" or "Donna"); *artigiani*, or artisans, craftsmen, and businessmen, such as bakers or shoemakers; and *contadini*, the peasants who worked the land. The *contadini*, who had much knowledge of rural farming but extremely low levels of literacy or industrial and commercial experience, were the most important group numerically during the early 20th century migration to the United States. Through the settlement years, individuals classified as "Italian" (and those who classified *themselves* as "Italian") around Providence and across the United States - largely of this poor Southern *contadini* class - had their own neighborhoods, churches, festivals, and organizations, as well as patterns of work, education, and family life which matched their backgrounds and current needs.

But when the 1921 and 1924 immigration laws were enacted, stopping the flow of new migrants, earlier immigrants and their American-born children and grandchildren were left to become incorporated into American society for decades without a new supply of individuals who expressed the original form of their ethnic heritage. Their ethnicity was trans-

formed during the post-World-War-II years of assimilation; as they and other immigrants from southern and eastern Europe became more similar to mainstream white Americans (at least in economic terms), and as their children began to intermarry with other ethnoracial groups, scholars observed that the *material* importance of their ethnicity for the socioeconomic outcomes of their descendants declined. By the 1950s, there were Italian-American politicians, business owners, and professionals all around Rhode Island and the rest of the nation.

It was around this time that most sociologists began to view what was left of ethnicity for late-generation Italian-Americans as purely *symbolic*. In his well-known formulation of "symbolic ethnicity," Gans (1979) suggested that the descendants of European immigrants had adopted a new form of ethnic behavior – perhaps a fundamentally different kind of ethnicity than the sort most scholars of race and ethnicity had been writing about. This sort of ethnicity was more of a leisure time activity,[14] a private assertion of ethnic identity rather than a public participation in a shared ethnic culture:

> "Symbolic ethnicity can be expressed in a myriad of ways, but above all, I suspect, it is characterized by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior." (Gans (1979, p.9))

Symbolic ethnicity allows for one to *feel* ethnic rather than *be* ethnic, as the argument goes, and to occasionally - when circumstances make it convenient - identify as both part of a community and unique amidst a multiracial society. It is this newer form of symbolic ethnicity that is widely believed to be the only sort persisting today for Italian-Americans — and the only sort to leave a legacy in its wake. In this view, Italian-American ethnicity is now a matter of personal preference, an identity to pull out only on special occasions, and a relic of the past. It no longer has any real bearing on everyday life.

[14]Gans takes a look back at his original formulation in his "Another look at symbolic ethnicity" (2017).

But for Ray DeAngelis and others in the persistent Italian-American enclaves on the outskirts of Providence, Rhode Island, ethnicity *does* still inform everyday experience. I spent a year and a half living and working there among 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th generation Italian-Americans, documenting the ways in which the shadow of ethnic heritage seeps into their relationships, structures their interpretation of current events, and contributes to a way of being that is not so easily shed through multiple generations. Their stories ultimately complicate the dominant scholarly views of Italian-American ethnicity and ethnicity in general.

The following sections review the sociological literature on white ethnicity as it relates to the broader processes of assimilation and ethnic relations. The review points out what is missing from the picture — an examination of ethnicity rooted more firmly in the processes of social interaction and in the emotional dimensions of social relations. I argue in this dissertation that these missing pieces - of interaction and emotion - help to explain the persistence of Italian-American ethnicity in the suburbs of Providence.

1.2 White Ethnicity: a brief sociological history

White Americans of European ancestry make up a numerical majority of the U.S. population today. Historically, however, many of the immigrant ancestors of this group — particularly those hailing from Southern and Eastern Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, like the Italians — were regarded as nonwhite when they arrived (Roediger, 2002). The term "white ethnics" is typically reserved for those late-wave European immigrant groups who "became white" over the course of the 20th century (Brodkin, 1998). They are the group around which American assimilation theory was born. As objective differences between them and mainstream white Anglo-Saxon Protestants declined, the sociological literature concerning them shifted from a focus on assimilation to a focus on the curious nature and persistence of their "symbolic" ethnicity (Gans, 1979). Below I provide a brief overview of this shift and the historical events which accompanied it.

1.2.1 The Chicago School Era: Assimilation's Roots (1920s-1940s)

Northern cities all across the country experienced a rapid influx of European immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century. By the 1920s, these immigrants and their descendants had become a major focus of Robert Park and his students at the University of Chicago. At this time, immigrant groups posed a major problem in the eyes of many native-born Americans. Not only did the immigrants' foreign cultural and religious tendencies seem threatening, but since most of them were industrial workers, they were often also linked to unionization and radicalism. The fact that they first settled where they could afford — in run-down ethnic enclaves and inner city slums — only exacerbated such anti-immigrant sentiments, since these areas were largely associated with crime and social breakdown. Many of the earliest Chicago School monographs sought to combat this viewpoint: at their most basic level, these ethnographies uncovered the social worlds of European immigrant groups, finding them to be highly organized and steadily adjusting to American life and culture (Zaretsky, 1996).[15]

Because the Chicago School sociologists began their fieldwork nearly 20-30 years after the first immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe began arriving, many of the individuals they encountered were second generation Americans (Gans, 1997). These sociologists also observed the ethnic population in the wake of the two immigration acts which severely limited immigration from Europe. As a result of these two occurrences — contact with the second generation and the essential stoppage of European immigration, which meant that ethnic enclaves were not being replenished with new immigrants — the Chicago School sociologists could begin to speculate about more generalizable processes of assimilation and upward mobility.

Park himself is often credited with one of the first articulations of assimilation, the last stage in his widely-used "race-relations cycle" of contacts, competition, accommodation,

[15] See, for example, Thomas and Znaniecki (1918) for their writings on the adjustment process of the Polish peasant group, Wirth (1928) for his treatment of the Jewish ghetto, and Whyte (1943) for his detailed description of life inside an Italian slum.

and eventual assimilation (Park, 1926a). Park and Burgess envisioned assimilation as a generalized social process "of interpenetration and fusion," in which previously different groups become less different from each other by "sharing their experience and history" and becoming "incorporated... in a common cultural life" (Park and Burgess, 1921, p. 735). Park and his students sought to understand a two-way process of immigrant incorporation: how foreign-born and their descendants "abandon[ed] the political allegiances of the old country" and "gradually aquire[d] the culture of the new," but also how they "contribute[d] something of [their] own in temperament, culture, and philosophy of life to the future American civilization" (Park and Burgess, 1921, p. 734). This two-way process would theoretically result not only in an adjustment for immigrant groups and their descendants, but for mainstream society as well.

Park's oft-quoted formulation of assimilation seems largely focused on the *cultural* incorporation of immigrants (in matters of "memories, sentiments, and attitudes" (Park and Burgess, 1921, p. 735)). But his students and other scholars of his era speculated about how descendants of immigrants would fare socially, economically, and spatially as well. In *Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups* (1945), an account of immigrant groups in a New England town, W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Stole reported that many immigrants and their children moved away from the less-desirable ethnic enclaves in which they originally settled as they gained economic footing and rose in occupational status (cited in Alba and Nee (2003)). This matched quite nicely with Park's assertion that "social relations are... inevitably correlated with spatial relations" (Park, 1926b). In addition, different ethnic groups took different lengths of time - measured in generations - to adjust culturally and socially, which the authors attributed to the varying times of arrival and the set of institutions available for the perpetuation of each separate culture. The dark-skinned Southern and Eastern European Italians, for example, were projected to take a "moderate" time to assimilate (6 generations or a bit longer), while other groups - like the "dark-skinned Jews," blacks, and other non-Europeans - were to take the longest.

It is due to the work of these early Chicago School era sociologists that mid-century scholars had concepts of assimilation that they could use to understand the future trajectories of European ethnic groups in America. As Alba and Nee (2003) point out, the "two-way" generalized process that Park outlined was largely neglected in the mid-century quantitative research that followed, but Warner and Stole's view of assimilation — as the "point on the horizon toward which all groups were moving" — guided the formation of the assimilation canon in the 50s and 60s.

1.2.2 The Post-War Transition to Whiteness (1950s-1960s)

The bulk of assimilation for the white ethnics happened in the years directly following World War II. Some of the declining objective differences between these groups and mainstream Americans – in matters of work, education, and residence, for example – were heavily influenced by the historical events of the time period. First, upward social mobility was greatly enhanced by a proliferation of white collar jobs, an expansion of educational opportunities with the GI Bill, and the development of the suburbs and home mortgage insurance program created by the Federal Housing Administration (Alba and Nee, 2003). Second, cultural attitudes had shifted in the mainstream after the war; after serving side-by-side in battle, the same white ethnic men who had previously been reviled as members of inferior races were now the moral equals of the mainstream and "model middle-class white suburban citizens" (Brodkin, 1998). Third, some collective actions on behalf of the white ethnics themselves continued to propel them forward in institutions from which they were previously excluded; Jewish organizations, for example, continuously campaigned against the use of religious and racial criteria barring them from University admissions (Alba and Nee, 2003).[16]

It is during this era that Milton Gordon published his highly influential *Assimilation in*

[16]Importantly, in all of these matters, African Americans were still systematically excluded. Brodkin calls these events "affirmative action for white males" (Brodkin, 1998). Alba and Nee (2003) claim that this marking of a racial out-group greatly helped - though was not essential for - the process of assimilation for white ethnics.

American Life (1964), which developed a multidimensional concept of assimilation stages for all ethnic groups in America over the course of the 20th century.[17] Different white ethnic groups, Gordon claimed, displayed different levels of assimilation along this set of dimensions: Jews, for example, were "substantially" similar to the cultural and civic mainstream at the time of Gordon's writing, yet less assimilated in terms of identity, institutional incorporation, or intermarriage; Italians (and other Catholics) were similar to the Jews in their adoption of mainstream culture, but were less incorporated into American civic life and displayed a higher level of intermarriage; and Puerto Ricans were very nearly completely unassimilated (1964, p. 76). Gordon's central thesis was that the "structural" dimension of assimilation - integration into mainstream institutions - stimulated all other dimensions. His conceptual dimensions made it easy for other scholars in the second half of the 20th century to quantify the process of assimilation and upward mobility for European immigrant descendants.

Various assimilation concepts in the years following built upon Gordon's work. Blau and Duncan (1967) developed the concept of "socioeconomic assimilation" — the extent to which the income distribution of an assimilating group resembles that of the majority (Neidert and Farley (1985), cited in Alba and Nee (2003)). Shibutani and Kwan (1965) furthered the understanding of these processes by invoking Park's earlier ideas about intergroup contact and competition, adding the notion of power-based segregation of minority groups into the picture. Later, Douglas Massey began to focus on residential mobility, developing a model of "spatial assimilation" which sought to describe the degree of assimilation in terms of distribution in geographic space (Massey, 1985). It was clear by this time that the white ethnics had made substantial gains in all dimensions identified by these assimilation scholars: they had obtained college educations, white collar jobs, and moved into the "great mixers" (Gordon, 1964) of the suburbs.

Other minorities, however, had not. At the same time these studies were conducted, a

[17]The stages Gordon outlined were: Acculturation, Structural assimilation, Marital assimilation, Identification assimilation, Attitude reception assimilation, Behavior reception assimilation, and Civic assimilation.

new set of immigrants began arriving. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was intended to eliminate the former restrictions placed upon Southern and Eastern European immigration, but policymakers at the time did not anticipate that the family members of the white ethnics would remain in Europe. The law fundamentally changed the racial and ethnic composition of the US: most of the new set of immigrants actually came from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. While the white ethnics seem to have had entered the mainstream in nearly all ways, these newer minorities were just beginning the process, and under a different set of historical conditions. The assimilation literature turned to the new immigrants,[18] and the scholarly attention directed at white ethnics shifted to different matters.

1.2.3 Primordialists, Circumstantialists, and "Symbolic Ethnicity" (1970s-Today)

Once these descendants of immigrants had inched closer to mainstream white Anglo-Saxon Protestants in work, education, and residential patterns, sociologists predicted that the importance of their ethnic heritages would decline. Yet, paradoxically, the subjective importance of ethnic origins to the new middle class white ethnics remained strong through the 1970s, 80s, and 90s (Alba, 1990).

This seemed at first to mark an ethnic "revival" in the eyes of mainstream journalists and essayists, who wrote about how third- and fourth- generation descendants of European immigrants began to celebrate their own family heritage and their personal ethnic identi-

[18] It is with this new set of immigrants that the "segmented assimilation" alternative was developed. This alternative argues that new immigrant groups face unique historical conditions and higher levels of discrimination which work to put them on more severely disadvantaged trajectories than the earlier white ethnics (see, for example, Portes and Zhou (1993)). But Alba and Nee (2003) take a more optimistic stance towards the generalizable process of assimilation, independent of historical conditions, and point out that these newer minority groups are showing signs of similar assimilation patterns. Alba and Nee borrow the concept of "bounded rationality" (Simon, 1982) to construct an incentive-based theory of assimilation which works to explain the outcomes of both the old and new waves of immigrants: in their view, which is based on new institutionalism, immigrant actors and their descendants make choices according to the perceived costs and benefits embedded in the institutional environment in which they find themselves. In striving for the typical goals of a good education, job, and place to live, for example, immigrants can assimilate without realizing it, as the ways to achieve those goals often coincide with incorporation into the mainstream.

ties. The trend was sometimes described in the popular language of what became known as Hansen's principle of third generation return: "what the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember" (Hansen, 1937). Suddenly, "Italianness," "Jewishness," "Greekness," and "Irishness" became sources of pride rather than shame (Jacobson, 2009, p.2). These decades not only saw increased interest in ethnic heritage among the descendants of European immigrants themselves, but also saw an increased level of support from key institutions and organizations. Tour companies across the country began running "discover your homeland" tour packages, for example, and President Johnson formally recognized the immigration center at Ellis Island as a national landmark, incorporating it into the Statue of Liberty National Monument (Jacobson, 2009; National Park Service, 2015).

Scholars of race and ethnicity were surprised by the puzzle of the "ethnic revival." Even the very earliest and most prominent sociologists had predicted that the importance of ethnicity and race would decline over the 20th century. Robert Park, for example, thought that globalization would lead to increased contact between different ethnic groups, eventually spurring the "race relations cycle" which would end in complete assimilation (Park, 1926a). Marx had predicted that the rise of capitalism would force class to be the main driver of difference rather than race and ethnicity (Cornell and Hartmann, 2006). And Max Weber had anticipated that modern rationalization would render ethnic identity - fundamentally an emotional phenomenon, he thought - obsolete (Weber, 1922).[19]

Alternatives to complete assimilation theories for modern ethnic groups began to proliferate. Some scholars argued that there was some "primordial" connection between those who share an ethnic heritage with each other — that ethnicity is something *fixed*, something deeply embedded in the human psyche, a complex and unchangeable connection to one's roots (Shils, 1957). Geertz (1973a), for example, wrote of the tie to one's ethnic identity as a sort of "claim to personal significance"; these "congruities of blood, speech, custom,"

[19]See also Stone (1995). Blau and Duncan (1967) also note that "a fundamental trend toward expanding universalism characterizes industrial society. Objective criteria of evaluation that are universally accepted increasingly pervade all spheres of life and displace particularistic standards of diverse ingroups, intuitive judgement, and humanistic values not susceptible to empirical verification" (quoted in Yancey et al. (1976)).

he wrote, are "seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbor, one's fellow believer, ipso facto; as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself."[20] One strength of these so-called "primoridalists" came from the fact that they addressed the emotional attachment that many groups display towards their ethnicities, pointing to one possibility for why they are not so easily shed. McKay (1982), for example, argued directly that primordialism "focuses our attention on the great emotional strength of ethnic bonds" (cited in Eller and Coughlan (1993), page 397).

Other academics took the opposite stance, observing how *fluid* ethnicity could be – how varied ethnic categorizations are, how they depend on the circumstances groups of people find themselves in, how they can be shaped and molded from the outside by economic, political, and social forces. Cornell and Hartmann (2006), in their *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World*, label Glazer and Moynihan's classic *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1963) as a "circumstantialist" text, since it portrayed ethnic groups as interest groups, and interests as "the products of the circumstances in which the groups found themselves."[21] Circumstantialists could better account for change and variation than primordialists could. In the case of the European-American ethnic revival, circumstantialists noted that after 1965 — when immigration laws were altered again, opening the borders to new (notably non-white) migrants from Asia and Latin America, and also coinciding with the Civil Rights movement — the Italian-Americans (and Polish-Americans, and Greek-Americans) were left in a new position within the country's racial mosaic. They suggested the possibility that European-American ethnicity gained force in response to these changing circumstances, which were accompanied by government-mandated desegregation busing and racial integration of neighborhoods (Goldberg and Greer, 1990; Rieder,

[20] Taken from Chapter 10 of Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures*.
[21] See also Roosens (1989).

1985). European-Americans may have reacted by hardening the ethnic boundaries between themselves and the newly visible groups of "others" (Alba, 1990).

Finally, a third major group of thinkers declared that neither one of these perspectives could fully explain the nature of ethnicity: ethnicity is certainly affected by circumstance, but it is also emotionally meaningful, as well as continuously constructed and changed by ethnic individuals themselves — during the course of daily social interaction and through the ways in which individuals play out their assigned and asserted identities in the world.[22] This third "constructionist" approach puts the agency of the ethnic group members at the center of analysis while simultaneously acknowledging contextual constraints. People continually negotiate their self-classificatory schemes, co-create ethnic culture with one another, and act upon these shared meanings within the confines of their historical positions. They can make choices about when, where, and how to emphasize their increasingly varied ethnic identities. Gans's symbolic ethnicity (1979) could be placed into this constructionist category (and perhaps also the circumstantialist category), since, in his eyes, ethnicity eventually became a creative choice to identify with the culture of the immigrant generation. Waters (1990), too, calls attention to the varied ways in which individuals make choices about ancestry when filling out census surveys. Some important factors can influence their choices, such as knowledge about ancestors (which is typically higher in those of higher socioeconomic status), their surname, their physical appearance, and the relative rankings of each ancestral ethnic group in the society in which the individual is currently living.

Importantly, all of these alternatives to complete assimilation – from the primordialists, circumstantialists, and constructionists – acknowledge that ethnic identities can leave a legacy in their wake, often with far-reaching consequences for group relations more generally. These consequences are the subject of the next section.

[22] Cornell and Hartmann (2006) call attention to examples from Ito-Adler (1980), Sollors (1989), and Espiritu (1993). See also Nagel (1994).

1.3 The Legacy of White Ethnicity

> *"To ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalizing it..."*
> -Coco Fusco, quoted in Roediger (2002)

Symbolic ethnicity enables immigrant descendants to define themselves in a purely historic sense. Each of the white ethnic groups, whether Italian, Jewish, Polish, or Irish, for example, has a history of immigration, discrimination, and social mobility to draw upon when forming their ethnic identities. Alba (1990) argues that a new functional group of "European Americans" — comprised of white ethnics with *any* European heritage — has emerged from the set of previously distinct white immigrant groups and their descendants. This, he claims, is the inevitable product of assimilation in a fundamentally multiethnic and multiracial society.

This history of immigration does not merely contribute to the formation of symbolic ethnicity for the descendants of European immigrants themselves. It also plays a role in forming the viewpoints that these groups - as well as other groups - take towards racial minorities, such as African Americans or Asians, Latinos, and Caribbeans from the new wave of immigration. Because of their own immigrant histories, white ethnics can feasibly (and often do) draw upon the rags-to-riches stories of their own ancestors to justify their lack of empathy for non-white groups who haven't "made it" in the same way they did. Waters (1990) claims that sentiments like these stand on the flawed premise that all immigrant heritages are equal.

But as Steinberg (1981) points out, the heritages of American ethnic groups are anything but equal. White Anglo-Saxon Protestants, African American slaves, European immigrants, and others all came to this country at different times, with different economic resources and backgrounds, and were treated differently by the host society when they arrived. Jews, for example, came with experience in urban industrial positions that other European immigrants of the last immigration wave did not have. Italians came with high rates of illiteracy and little knowledge of matters outside of rural farming. African-Americans

were brought here, were denied access to the industrial jobs that any of the European immigrants were given, were blocked for many years - and in a largely invisible manner - from moving out of segregated areas into decent housing (Duneier, 2016), and were systematically subjugated in ways that reach beyond the scope of this work. All of these groups may have started at the "bottom," but, as Blauner (1972) notes, the "bottom has by no means been the same for all groups" (quoted in Steinberg (1981)).

Despite this inherent unevenness in heritages, Americans continue to rely on explanations invoking cultural values to understand difference in outcomes: Jews quickly rose to the top because of their "appreciation of education" as a "people of the book"; Italians remained at the bottom longer because their families bred a certain "anti-intellectualism" and were tied up with organized crime; African-Americans had broken families (Moynihan, 1965) and a "culture of poverty" which was largely responsible for their problems (a misinterpretation of Lewis (1971)). In ignoring historical heritages, or in equating their own heritages to those of others, Americans continue to leave themselves "deeply unaware of the complexities of their country" (Steinberg, 1981). In addition, the white ethnics' family histories of incorporation into the American ethnoracial map - after a period of being considered to be alien "others" - tends to eclipse the fact that the white-black binary in that map remains unchanged (Brodkin, 1998).

This has remained problematic in our current era, when the story of the European-American experience has subtly become the story of *The American* experience, even when it is at odds with the experience of non-white ethnics (Alba, 1990). This story — of "making it" in America by pulling oneself up by the bootstraps, overcoming discrimination, rising from poverty, and propelling descendants into positions of upward mobility — has become the standard to which disadvantaged non-white new immigrants and other ethnic groups are held. Such rags-to-riches myths have been blatantly perpetuated on the political stage over the past years: Pennsylvania Republican representative Rick Santorum, for example, in an interview with an undocumented Mexican-born young woman on November

29 2016, used his "own personal story" of his father's migration from Italy in his justification for the end of the DACA immigration policy.[23] President Trump, in his inauguration speech on January 20, 2017, told Americans: "When you open your heart to patriotism, there is no room for prejudice."[24] Yet when the American experience of only one ethnic group – the white European-Americans – is subsumed under the label of "patriotism," precisely the opposite is true.

White ethnicity, then, makes "whiteness" less visible to whites. In so doing, it obscures the privileges which accompany it (Lipsitz, 1998; Torkelson and Hartmann, 2010). All of this is happening in an era when opposing political and ideological notions about what it means to be "American" have polarized the nation. Part of this project's significance lies in its commitment to understanding the forces which perpetuate contemporary myths of "ethnic heroes and racial villains" (Steinberg, 1981) among suburban European-American descendants.

1.4 Conclusion: this project

This view of ethnicity for late-generation Italian-Americans – that it is purely symbolic, and that its most noteworthy legacy is its obscuration of whiteness – has come to dominate the field of sociology.[25] But as I began my own research in Providence, I gradually began to believe that the case of Italian-Americans there could add some important missing links to this already complex discussion. Many of these earlier ideas about symbolic ethnicity, nuanced as they were, emerged through comparing studies with wildly different methods — comparing "ethnicity" as it was found in in-depth ethnographies of early 20th century immigrant enclaves (e.g., Whyte (1943) and Gans (1962)) with "ethnicity" as it was un-

[23] http://www.rawstory.com/2016/12/straight-up-scumbag-internet-eviscerates-rick-santorum-for-telling-dreamer-to-leave-his-country/

[24] http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/20/politics/trump-inaugural-address/index.html

[25] See Gans (2017), Alba (2017) for a reassertion of this view, and Sala and Baldassar (2017) for a recent critique using interview data from Italian-Australians.

covered in top-level survey research of suburban ethnics in the later part of the century (e.g. Waters (1990) and Alba (1990)). This is largely because modern suburban ethnics are a notoriously hard-to-reach population: they typically inhabit scattered spaces which are not as amenable to traditional "total immersion" fieldwork methods as the older European ethnic enclaves and urban villages were. But this is not the case in the metropolitan area surrounding Providence, which is among the few remaining places to boast a persistent high concentration of a single European immigrant ethnic group (Wright and Sullivan, 1982). Second, despite stressing the importance of this new mode of *feeling* ethnic, studies of symbolic ethnicity have largely included only very top-level, general discussions of the intersection of ethnic identity and emotional environment (Epstein, 1978). Even the most recent critiques of ethnic studies discuss ethnicity as more of a cognitive than an emotional phenomenon (Wimmer, 2008, 2013; Brubaker et al., 2004), or push for a "more relational" understanding of it while employing few, if any, interactional methods (Brubaker, 2004). Such studies ignore the parts of ethnicity which reach the deepest recesses of the self.

This dissertation seeks to complicate the conclusions of existing late generation ethnicity and assimilation studies by stretching out their foundational concepts.

Chapter two discusses the broader demographic and historical forces which helped create high concentrations of Italian-Americans in the suburbs of Providence. It examines how the early industrialization of the city impacted patterns of suburbanization, and how the lines of work Italian-Americans took up in the local economy fit into those movement patterns. It also takes a look at the properties of the notably small city of Providence as it compares to other (much larger) cities which experienced an influx of Italian-Americans. This chapter ultimately points to how these geographical properties and high ethnic concentrations create particular structures of interaction.

Chapter three notes how these high concentrations and geographical constraints were experienced in everyday terms. It takes my entree into the field site - at DeAngelis Bakery - as a starting point to discuss the "smallness" of the state of Rhode Island, and how indi-

viduals find themselves within (and help to maintain) dense social networks in this small place. In those dense social networks, individuals act with the assumption that they will repeatedly interact with one another.

Chapter four hones down further into the level of those interactions themselves. These pages focus on the gender-typical beliefs and values of the Italian-Americans I worked with at the bakery, demonstrating how they invoke their ethnic "upbringing" in explanations of their behavior. Through this chapter, I show that these ethnically-tied beliefs became ways of relating to others emotionally, over the course of social interaction, and that they formed the substance of social bonds. I suggest here that these parts of ethnicity - passed from generation to generation - reach the deepest and most emotional level of the self.

Chapter five then zooms out again, applying the interactional mechanisms of chapter four to contemporary ideology. Here I describe how the substance of local social bonds intersect with national-level conversations during the historical moment at which this dissertation was written. I find that individuals use their ethnically-tied values to justify their responses to two contemporary ideological discussions: 1.) feminism and gender relations (via the #MeToo movement), and 2.) nativism and immigration.

Finally, chapter six explores implications for the processes of assimilation and ethnic relations more generally. It points to the logical conclusion of the preceding chapters — that different ethnic groups in different places find themselves in different interactional environments, which affect the speed at which each group experiences cultural change. Despite these variations in speed between groups, all ethnic groups intersect simultaneously with any given historical moment, and these intersections are important to consider when trying to understand group-level trends in ideology.

2 The Pocket of Providence: Geographical Particularities

The house I moved into on the outskirts of Providence was a gray triple-decker, made for three families, each stacked on top of the other.[26] Since 1900, when it was built, it has been the tallest building on Maple Avenue: it stands out among the other white or pastel-colored duplexes and raised ranches, spaced only a few yards apart, whose brown rooftops and brick chimneys poke up at different heights between scattered trees. The house towers over the neighbors' cars in their short driveways, the minivans with New England Patriots stickers in their rear windows, and the pickup trucks with their yellow snowplows. It rises above the rusted metal poles in the backyards – between clusters of multifamily houses – where mothers years ago would run clotheslines from their kitchen windows. It overshadows the few neatly-trimmed shrubs, the modest front lawns, and the gray cement streets. The only structures taller than that three-family on Maple are the telephone poles, which carry bunches of black cables up and over cracked sidewalks. These cables criss-cross the street, drape back and forth, then again, so that from any window, of any house, the sky looks thick with wire.

In its heyday, between about 1900 and 1960, this neighborhood - called Thornton - was one of the Providence area's mill communities. Three major textile mills, Pocasset Worsted Company, Priscilla Worsted Mill, and Victoria Mill, all built by Englishmen, employed hundreds of Italian immigrants and their families, families who lived in the duplexes, in the triple-deckers, who hung their sheets to dry on the clotheslines attached to rusty poles on Maple Avenue. The mills were connected by wide, bustling Plainfield Street, which, with its trolley tracks and storefronts, formed the tree trunk of Thornton's map: Plainfield ran a mile between the mills from East to West, with smaller streets of duplexes like Maple Avenue branching outwards from it on either side. As years passed, store windows started to feature Italian names. There was DiPrete's hardware store, Ricci's gas station, Pezza

[26]For a discussion of the history of the three-decker and classic New England architecture, see Heath (2001).

market, Iannuccilli's grocery, and Mario Votolato's theater on the Ferri block.[27] Further down Plainfield, in the early 1940s, Lombardi's 1025 Club Restaurant opened, serving as the hub for nearly every dance, sports banquet, or political gathering in town for over sixty years.[28] Black-and-white photos from this era show short, stocky men with dark slicked hair standing proud, hands in pleated pant pockets, in front of their stores and restaurants, their round wives in long cotton skirts sometimes holding children in the background.

Nowadays, most of these storefronts are blank, abandoned, or replaced. There's a liquor store, a tattoo parlor, two daycare centers, a body shop, a Walgreens, and DeAngelis Bakery. The trolley tracks have been ripped out. The long windows of Pocasset Worsted Mill are now the windows of expensive loft apartments, which have a reputation for quickly cycling through short-staying tenants. But traces of Italian immigrant presence remain: the mill's water tower – rusted, green, and capless – looms large; Saint Rocco's Church still holds Mass in Italian at 8:00am each Sunday morning; and the giant, brown cursive "L" from Lombardi's 1025 Club is still emblazoned on the side of its old building, which is now *Iglesia Pentecostes: Jesucristo Fuente De Vida.* In the winter, smoke rises from the chimneys, snowplows and trucks with names like "Micheletti Oil Service" or "Macera Bros. Construction" rumble through the streets at all hours of the night, and families on the top floor of duplexes can see through the telephone wires and the bare and ragged trees all the way to Scituate, the next town over. In the summer, the lush green leaves and overgrown lawns block that view, and landscaping services like "Antonelli & Sons" or "Rainone Landscaping" drive by to trim them.

*

Old mill villages like Thornton are scattered throughout Providence's surrounding suburbs of Johnston, North Providence, and Cranston. In each of these towns, the concen-

[27] I gathered most of this data from research subjects, but some is mentioned in McGowan (1997) and McGowan (2006).

[28] From McGowan (2006): "Few Rhode Islanders have not attended at least one wedding reception, sports banquet, or political function here."

tration of residents who identify as Italian-American remains unusually high, despite a growing population of residents with Hispanic or Latino origins.[29] Together these suburbs form a "pocket of more resilient ethnicity" – an area with a persistent concentration of late-generation European immigrant descendants, viewed as an exception in the larger scheme of assimilation (Alba and Nee, 2003). These concentrations are partly due to a combination of local economic and geographical factors which prompted Italian immigrant families to move to the suburbs earlier - and to continue to populate the same few suburbs for a longer time period afterwards - compared to similar immigrants and their descendants elsewhere. This chapter outlines some of these historical patterns and discusses their potential implications for ethnicity as it is experienced in the suburbs of Providence.

2.1 Local industrial history and patterns of suburbanization

Rhode Island was one of the first places in the United States to be touched by the Industrial Revolution. Samuel Slater, "father of the American Industrial Revolution," introduced his water-powered cotton-spinning technology as early as 1790 in Pawtucket (Conrad, 1995). Such early and continued industrialization meant that manufacturing was not centralized in any one district: as seen in Figure 1, many of the larger mills and factories had been built in Providence's surrounding area, along rivers and railroad lines, well before the immigrants arrived (Smith, 1985). Johnston, North Providence, and Cranston, while all considered suburbs of the city of Providence today, were actually within the city of Providence proper until the late eighteenth century (Greene and Durfee, 1886), and thus were each themselves home to some of the earliest textile mills and industrial sites, where villages of immigrant mill workers had already been established by the turn of the twentieth century.[30]

[29] In 2016, for example, Johnston was home to 2,109 residents who classified themselves as having Hispanic or Latino origins (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). This is an increase of 68.5 percent over the past seven years, up from 1,252 in 2009.

[30] See Fuoco (1997) for history of mills in the area, and also Kulik and Bonham (1978) for a comprehensive list of historical industrial and engineering sites in the state, also Wright and Sullivan (1982) for geographical details of where mill villages foreign-born population settled.

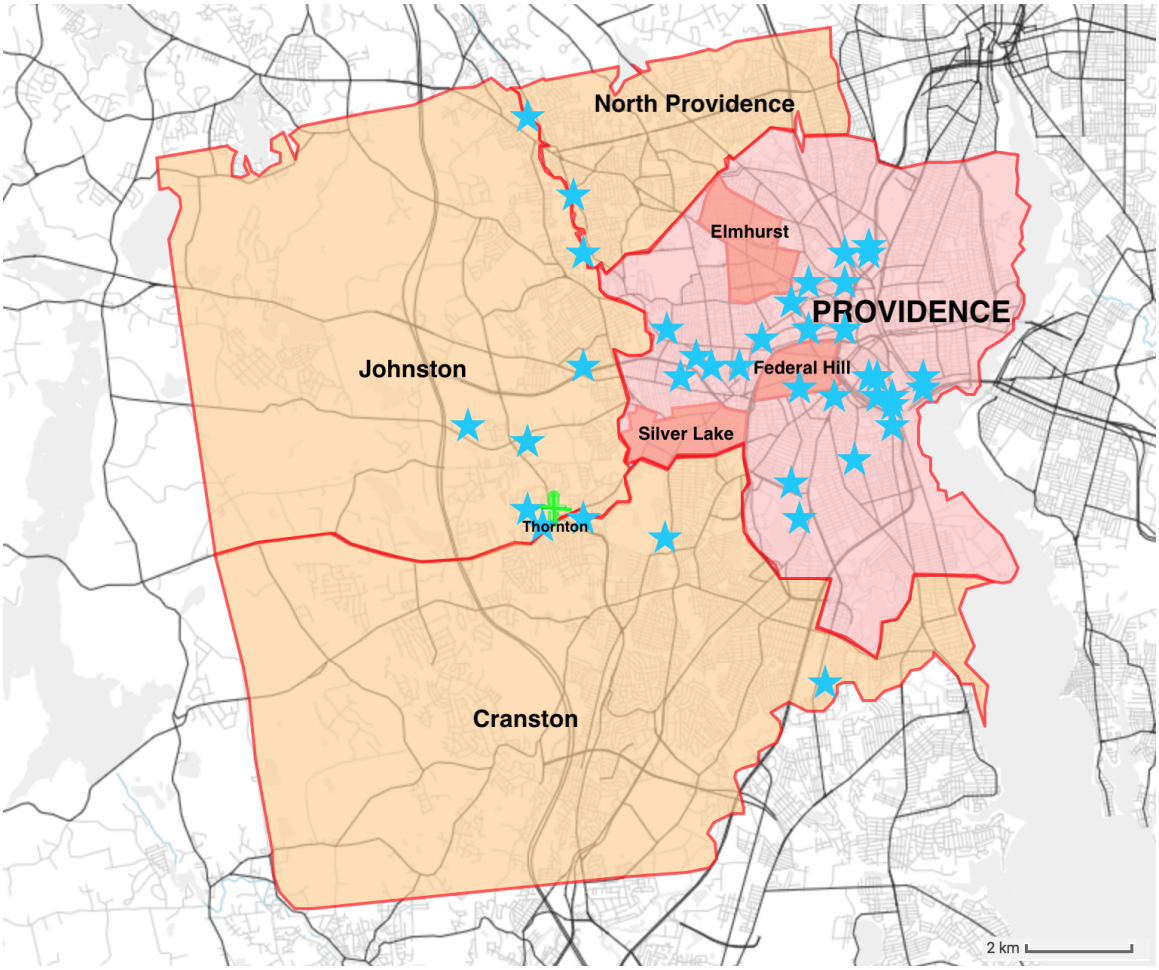


Figure 1: A map of Providence and its three closest surrounding suburbs, North Providence, Johnston, and Cranston. Federal Hill, Elmhurst, and Silver Lake — Providence's more dense historically Italian ethnic enclaves — are shown in red. The location of Thornton, the Johnston/Cranston neighborhood I moved into, is shown with a green cross. All "historically significant" mills and industrial manufacturing sites, built 1900 or earlier, are marked by blue stars. As seen in the map, a sizable portion of these industrial sites were on the outskirts of Providence, outside the central city area. [Sources: map made with `scribblemaps.com` (2018); data compiled from Kulik and Bonham (1978), McGowan (1997), and Fuoco (1997).]

City/Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
Providence	224,320	237,595	252,981	253,504	248,674	207,498	179,213	156,804	160,728
Cranston	21,107	23,407	42,911	47,085	55,060	66,766	73,037	71,992	76,060
Johnston	5,935	6,855	9,357	10,672	12,725	17,160	22,037	24,907	26,542
N. Providence	5,407	7,697	11,104	12,156	13,927	18,220	24,337	29,188	32,090

Table 1: Total populations of Providence's heavily Italian-American suburbs, growth over 1910-1990. Data from US Census Population and Housing Reports.

By 1919, the entire state of Rhode Island had come to rely heavily on its textile industry, which employed 55% of all wage earners in manufacturing — many of whom were foreign-born Italians (Mayer, 1953). But the textile industry began to decline just as the immigrants were settling: Rhode Island could not offer the same incentives that the South could, such as non-union labor, more modern facilities, and reduced energy and transportation costs (Frank, 2005). This local decline, combined with the national Great Depression, meant that textile mill workers took the brunt of wage cuts and job losses between the years of 1919 and 1939, when Rhode Island manufacturing employment decreased by 20 percent — much larger than the nationwide decrease of 3 percent (Smith, 1985). Many immigrants who were previously employed in the textile industry had to move to "tertiary industries," becoming tradesmen (e.g., mechanics or plumbers), service providers (like heating, oil, and ice), seasonal workers (in landscaping, stone masonry, mulch services, etc.), restaurant owners, or bakers, for example (Mayer, 1953). These sorts of jobs were available in the suburb of Johnston, which not only already had many Italian villages set up around mills, ready for service sector employment opportunities, but also had plenty of farmland and stone quarries nearby for seasonal work (Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, 1976). Many of these Italian- and Italian-American-owned businesses continue to persist today: Pezza Farms, Baffoni Poulty Farm, Macera Decorative Stone, and Jacavone Gardens are just a few examples of them.

As seen in Table 1, the population of Providence was increasing by fewer percentage points each decade - while Johnston was growing - well before World War II. After the war, Providence lost more of its population to the suburbs than any other city in the country

(Smith, 1985). Johnston was a prime suburban destination for Italians who still resided in the dense inner-city enclaves of Federal Hill, Silver Lake, and Elmhurst by this time, since it was easily accessible from those neighborhoods by the streetcar lines put in place at the start of Providence's early industrialization, and it was already home to many other Italians and Italian-Americans — descendants of those who had originally settled in Johnston to work in textile mills, and also of those who had sought employment in the town's well-populated villages for service jobs or seasonal work during the textile market crash and Great Depression. These were attractive areas to settle, offering "wider streets, more stately triple-deckers, and the possibility of small yards" (Smith, 1985).

By 1970, Johnston's position as both an area of original immigrant settlement *and* a suburban destination helped establish it as one of the most ethnically homogeneous parts of the state. Wright and Sullivan (1982) show that, through the 1970s and 80s, Johnston was one of three communities with "a low ethnic variety but a high dominance of one group" — Johnston had a concentration then of 24.5% Italian "foreign stock" (foreign-born or children of foreign-born), North Providence had a concentration of 21.5% Italian foreign stock, and Woonsocket had a concentration of 26.5% French Canadian foreign stock. These figures point to the fact that Providence's suburbs were interestingly *not* the sort of "great mixers" that Gordon (1964) and other sociologists have written about.

2.2 Geography and Ethnicity

By nature, "ethnic" labels and classificatory schemes themselves link a group of people to a particular place — a "belief in common origins" (Weber, 1922). But ethnicity can also then be shaped and transformed by new geographies of settlement (Stanger-Ross, 2010; Yancey et al., 1976). This is particularly true in the case of immigrants and their descendants, who negotiate their old and new national identities in the historical context of their host society. In this light, geographical layout is not only essential for understanding how the Italian-American "Pocket" around Providence was formed, or how its particular industrial industry

contributed to high concentrations of Italian immigrants, but also what the properties of this particular place – as a geography endowed with meaning, through settlement and through the social forces which spurred its development (Gieryn, 2000) – *did* to the ethnic identities of those who found themselves there over the second half of the twentieth century.

2.2.1 Properties of the Providence metropolitan area

Perhaps the most important geographical trait to note about the Providence metropolitan area is that it is *small*. By Wirth's (1938) three classic measures of city size — population, density, and heterogeneity — Providence ranks low among other American cities with large European immigrant populations. As seen in figure 2, which presents these measures in 1930 (the first decennial census year after immigration to the United States was severely limited in 1924), Providence was significantly lower in population and land area when compared to major ports of entry such as New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Boston. Its density (in people per square mile) and racial heterogeneity, however, while also lower, were slightly more comparable to these large ports. (I calculated the racial heterogeneity measure in figure 2 by using population proportions of "Native White," "Foreign-Born," and "Negro" categories in the 1930 Census, with the following formula for entropy H from Lieberson (1969), taking p_i as the proportion of the population in racial category i: $H = 1 - \sum_{n=1}^{N} {p_i}^2$. See also Hansmann and Quigley (1982) and Theil (1972).)

Equally important is the fact that Providence has *stayed* small over time. It is often classified as a "slow-growing" city in the years after World War II: by the 1950s, most manufacturing industries (with the exception of the jewelry industry) had left the city for good; in 1974, Providence lost one of its only two major department stores - Shephard's - and lost the other - the Outlet - in 1982; unemployment rates grew, and the rise of real-estate prices outpaced any rises in income; and nearly all of Providence's population change in this postwar era occurred in the suburbs surrounding the central city (Norman, 2013).[31]

[31] Norman (2013) claims that faster-growing cities display more central-city growth than Providence and other "slow-growers" do.

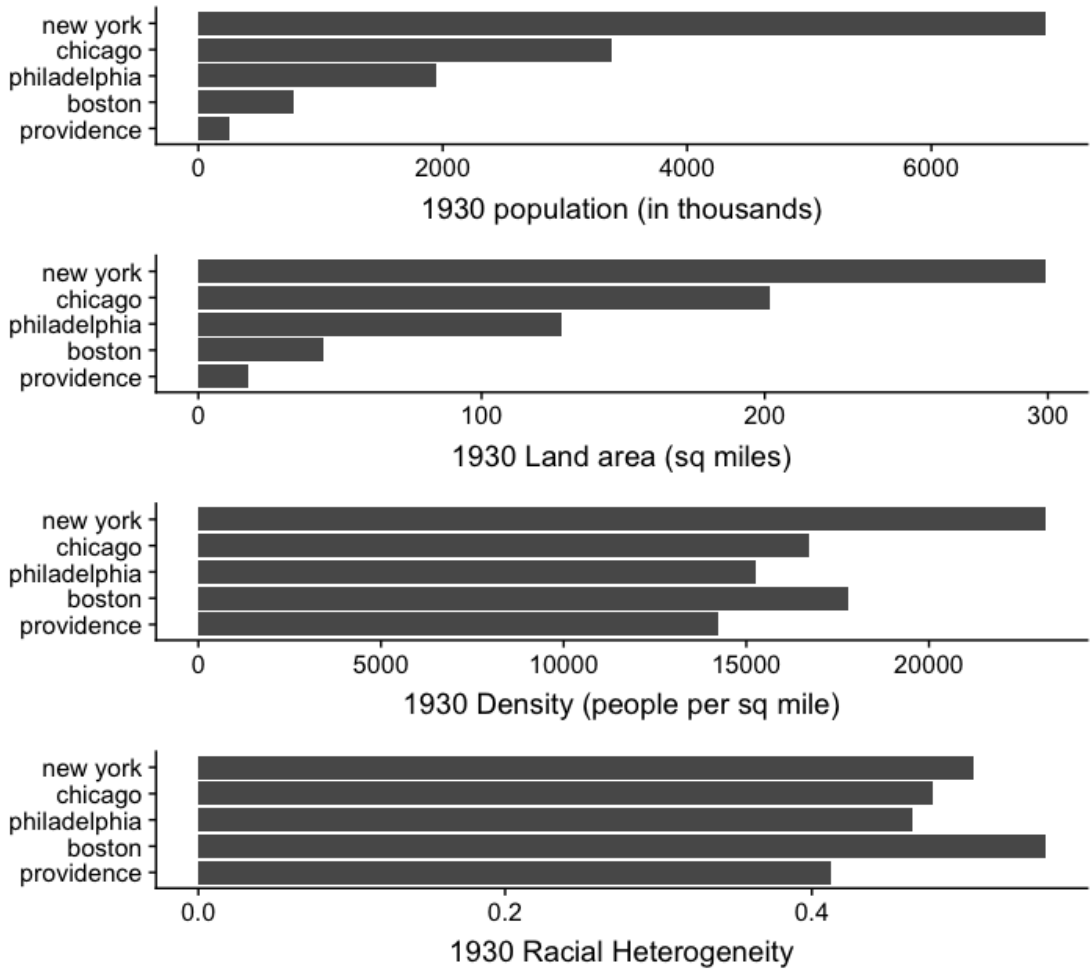


Figure 2: A comparison of city size among major U.S. immigration ports, 1930. Land area within city boundaries and population density calculated from U.S. Census data. Racial heterogeneity measure calculated with population proportions of "Native White," "Foreign-Born," and "Negro" categories in the 1930 Census, using the following formula for entropy H from Lieberson (1969), taking p_i to be the proportion of the population in racial category i: $H = 1 - \sum_{n=1}^{N} {p_i}^2$

Figure 3 shows the slow growth over time of the Providence metropolitan area compared to other metropolitan areas known to have high concentrations of Italian-American descendants. This slow growth is often attributed to the loss of the manufacturing industries which built the state in earlier eras, leaving Providence in the 1990s as a "somewhat forlorn industrial city sandwiched between the powerhouses of Boston and New York" (Leazes and Motte, 2004), only experiencing a "renaissance" in the post-2000 era (Orr and West, 2002). In fact, its geographical placement between these two much larger "powerhouses"

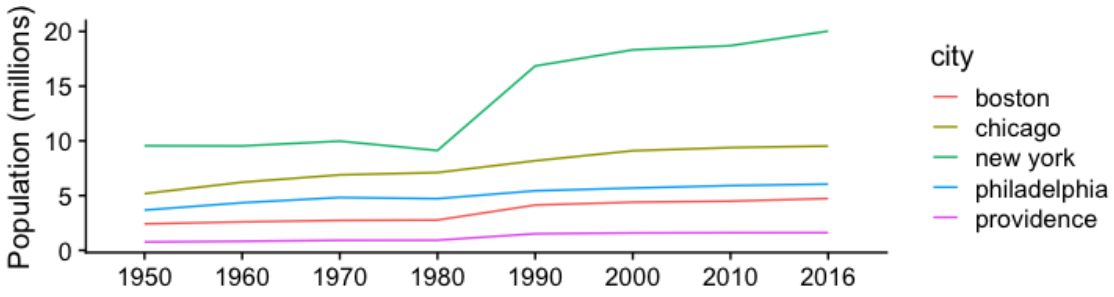


Figure 3: Metropolitan area populations in the postwar decades. [Data from U.S. Census with knowledge that definitions of "standard metropolitan areas," "standard metropolitan statistical areas", "metropolitan statistical areas" and "metropolitan areas" have changed over time (U.S. Census, 2018).]

most likely contributed to its decades-long stagnation; as Park and Burgess (1921) note, differences between the growth rates of cities often arise due to their differential access to regional resources and their functional symbiosis — the ways in which they fit together (see also Logan and Molotch (1987)). In this light, Boston and New York - two much larger deep-water ports, each within a short distance from Providence - might have presented a more powerful draw for industry in the 70s, 80s, and 90s.

In addition to Providence's smallness and slow growth, physical and geographical options for movement out of the city were limited. As European ethnic populations like the Italian-Americans began to populate the suburbs of Providence over the second half of the twentieth century, they were bound by the Massachusetts state line directly to the East, as well as the Providence River and Narragansett Bay directly to the South. Suburbanizing Italians moved directly West from the Federal Hill enclave into Johnston, Cranston, and North Providence, as seen in figure 4.[32] Other ethnic pockets were formed in the metro area: for example, the French Canadians settled in Woonsocket, along the Blackstone River to the north (Podea, 1950; Gerstle, 2002), and the Portuguese settled mostly in Massachusetts, across the state line, in New Bedford and Fall River (Cabral, 1989). Figure 5 shows the geographical placement of these varied ethnic "pockets" in the Providence metro area (along

[32]Though there was also a significant - not as persistent - Italian enclave which formed in Westerly, in the southern region of the state (Santoro, 1990).

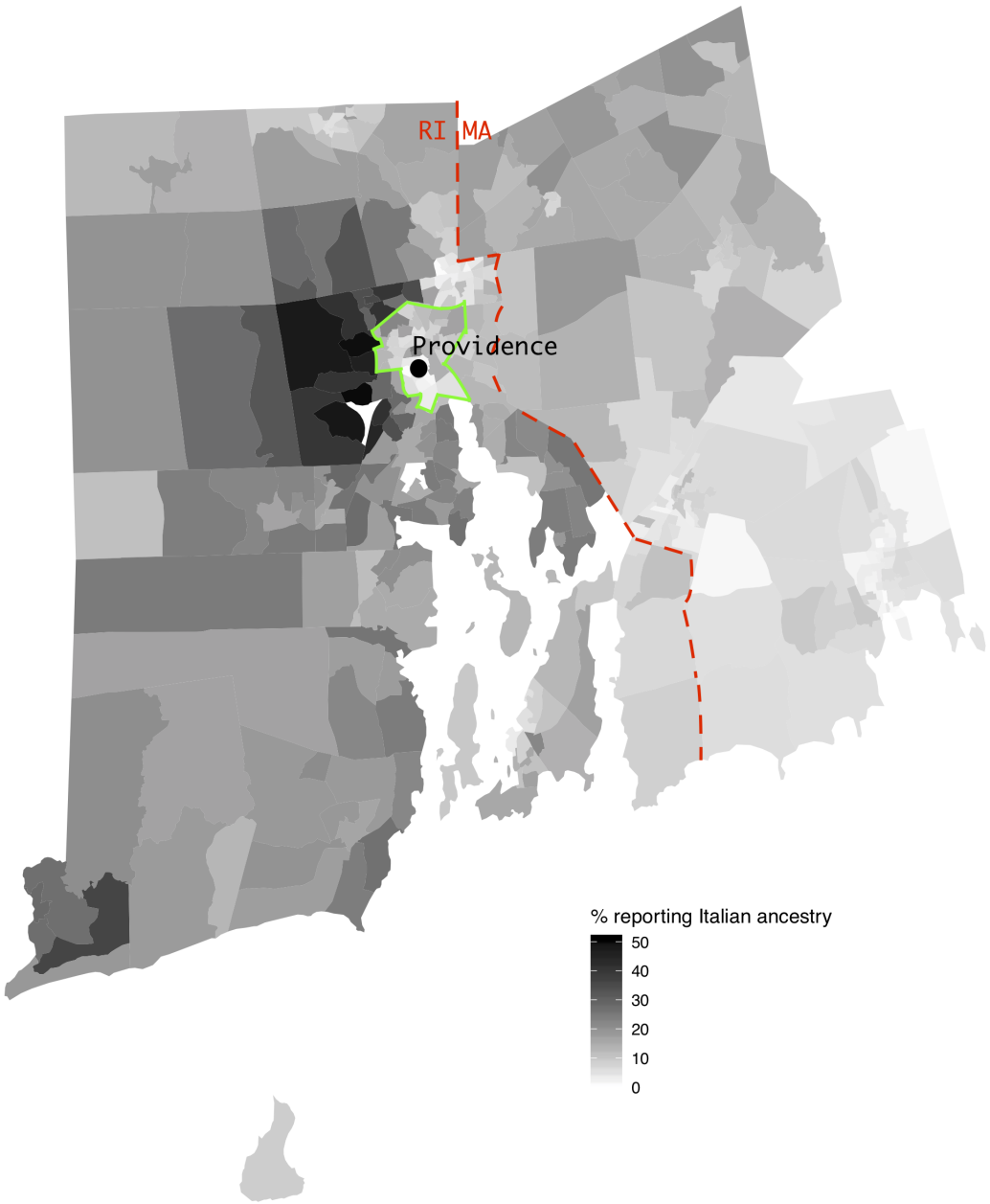


Figure 4: Identification with "Italian" ancestral origins by census tract in the Providence metropolitan area (including counties in Massachusetts). [Data from U.S. Census Bureau (2016).]

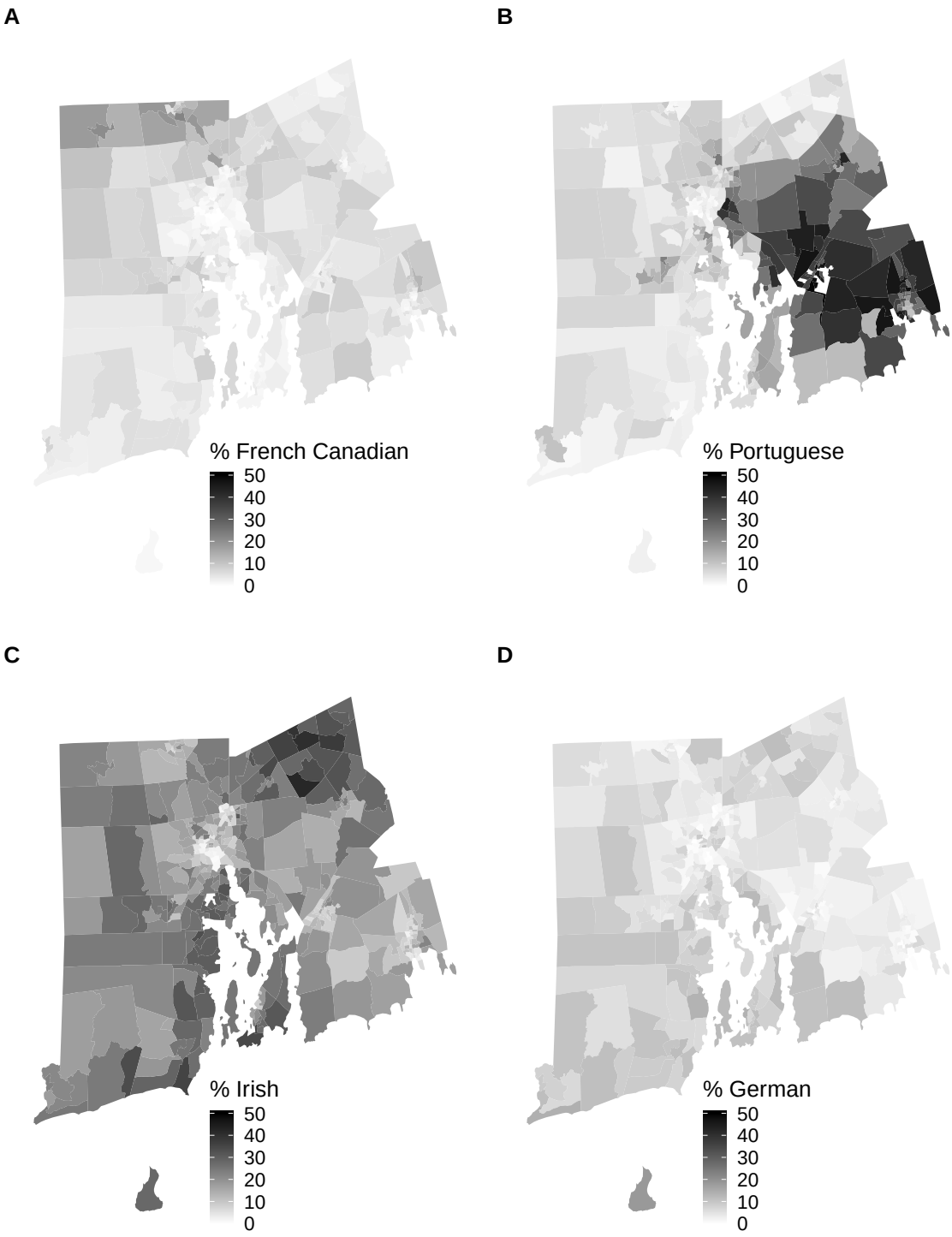


Figure 5: Today's concentrations of varied European ethnic groups in Rhode Island [Data from U.S. Census Bureau (2016)].

with a comparison of the more diffuse settlement of earlier European groups, such as the Irish and the Germans). Immigrants from each of these groups were most likely drawn to these varied pockets by social connections with coethnics who had already settled there. In the case of the Johnston and Cranston Italian-Americans – many of whom were from the southern Italian villages of Itri and Panni (Santoro, 1990) – exposure to kinship and friendship ties outside of their home villages was rare, and it was much more likely that their social connections were from the very same *paese*; so chain migration in original settlers and their later social connections and descendants kept Italian-American "pockets" relatively homogeneous (MacDonald and MacDonald, 1964).

2.2.2 Housing: comparisons and implications

Another force which kept the Italian-American pocket in the outskirts of Providence relatively homogeneous in the second half of the century was a heavily ethnic housing market. As Logan and Molotch describe in their volume *Urban Fortunes*, a neighborhood can be preserved when exchange interests "do not lend themselves to schemes of profiting for neighborhood transformation" (Logan and Molotch, 1987). In enclaves and areas where new immigrant groups settle, those schemes of profiting can remain endogenous for a time: ethnic property owners rent or sell to other coethnics, and these patterns can keep the neighborhood temporarily stagnant.

In Johnston, during the years from 1930 to as late as 1970, Italian-American residents owned most of the local property and transferred or sold that property disproportionately to other Italian-Americans. I spent weeks combing through individual-level property deeds from the Johnston Town Hall, separating out grantors and grantees with Italian surnames.[33] As seen in figure 6, the percent of deeds granted to individuals with Italian surnames

[33] Like Stanger-Ross (2010), my work with surnames is based on a "conservative reading" of the names as they compare to those found in common surname dictionaries. Most of the cases were relatively unambiguous, since the majority of settlers in Johnston historically were either of English or Italian descent, and I would be comparing names such as "Smith" or "Thornton" to names such as "Gesualdi" or "Pezzullo." This method is not perfect, and as I approached the 1990s I saw instances of some (though relatively few) Hispanic names, which were closer to the Italian ones.

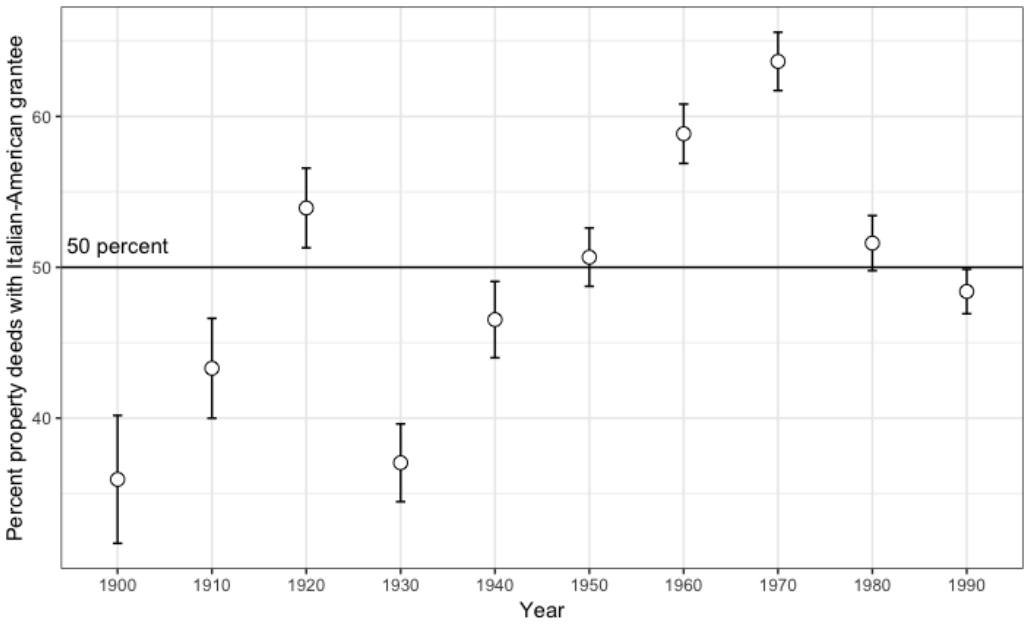


Figure 6: Percent of all deed grantees with Italian surnames in Johnston, Rhode Island, 1900 - 1990. Note the steep rise between 1930 and 1970. Data from Johnston Town Hall, available online at `i2e.uslandrecords.com`.

climbed from 37.0 percent to 63.7 percent over the years from 1930 and 1970 (though it declined and trailed off to just about 50 percent by 1990). In addition, in the years after 1930, the rate of Italian grantors transferring to Italian grantees with the same surname - indicating a transfer of property among coethnic family members - climbs from 19.2 percent up to 43.4 percent — a much more striking increase than the small increase (and subsequent level-off) among deeds granted to or from individuals with non-Italian surnames, which rises from 11.3 percent to 19.0 percent (see figure 7).

In his *Staying Italian: Urban Change and Ethnic Life in Postwar Toronto and Philadelphia*, Stanger-Ross (2010) uncovers a similar trend of owning and selling homes to fellow co-ethnics and family members among the Italian-Americans in the enclave of South Philadelphia. The trend was much more common there than it was among the Italian-Canadians in Toronto's College Street Little Italy, and it was just one of many forces that Stanger-Ross claims was behind the persistence of ethnicity in the South Philadelphia neighborhood (as compared to the declining significance of Italian ethnicity in Toronto).

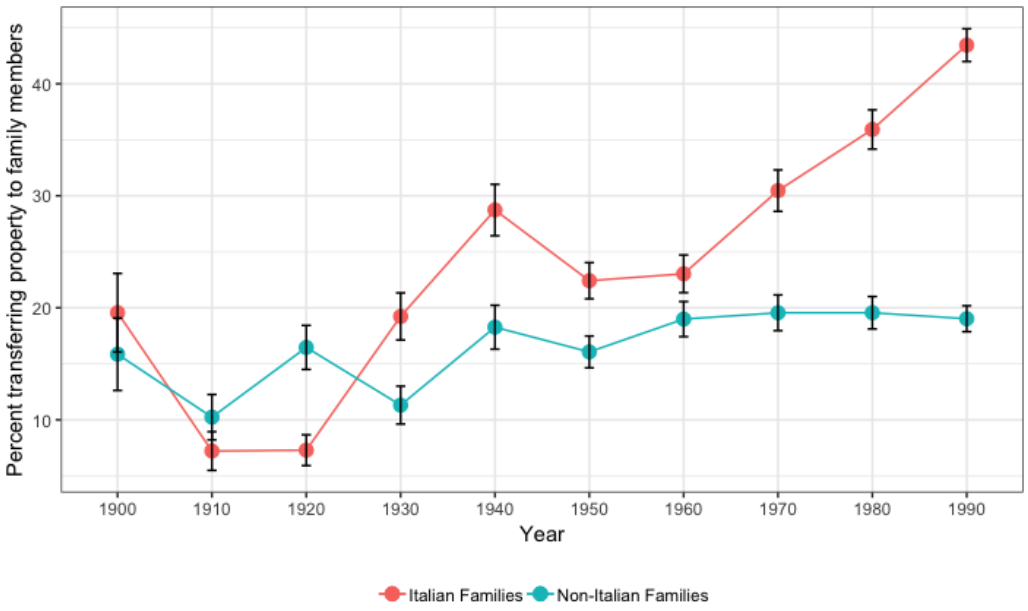


Figure 7: Percent of all deed grantors transferring property to family members (i.e., those with the same surname) among grantors with Italian vs. non-Italian surnames in Johnston, Rhode Island, 1900 - 1990. Data from Johnston Town Hall, available online at `i2e.uslandrecords.com`.

Other forces included, for example, a slow-growing or declining economy in Philadelphia - which suffered from the movement of industry to the suburbs - versus a successful transition to an integrated service sector economy in Toronto. Stanger-Ross claims these differences in overall economic health can be seen through comparing housing values between cities. As seen in figure 8, in Philadelphia - as in Providence - housing values stayed much lower and rose much more slowly in the postwar era than they did in the more "global" city of Toronto.

Stanger-Ross also claims that an influx of a new urban Black population – migrating from the rural south between 1950 and 1980 – contributed to the persistence of ethnicity and ethnic practice in South Philadelphia. This is especially noticeable when compared to the relatively much smaller black population in Toronto; there, racial tensions played a lesser role in shaping the local social geography. In South Philadelphia, residents were moved to harden the boundaries - both geographical and social - between them and the

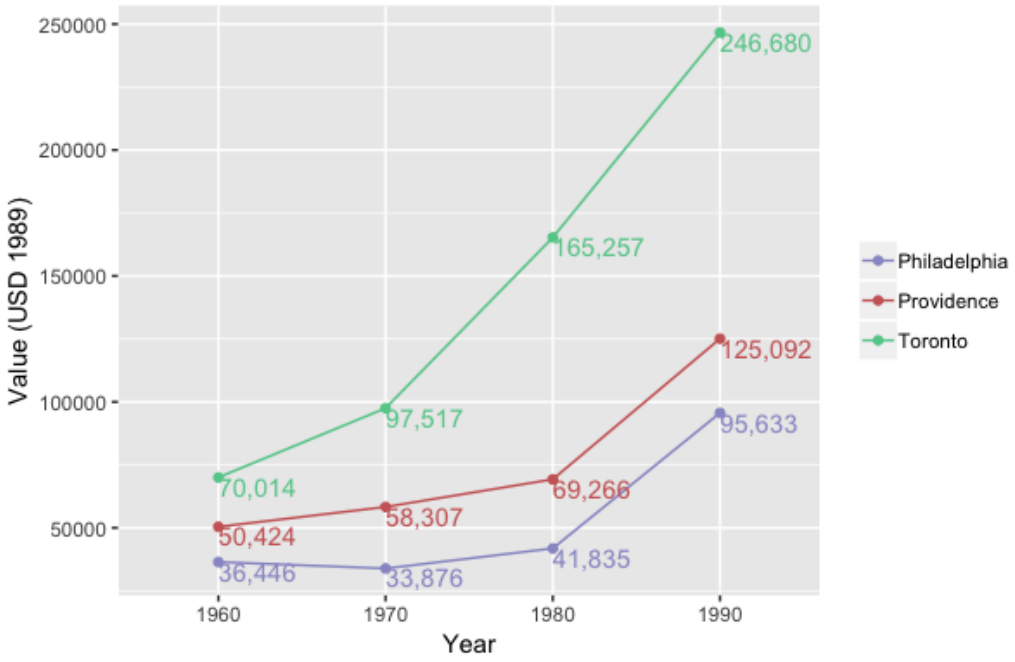


Figure 8: Median values of owner-occupied dwellings in Philadelphia, Providence, and Toronto, 1960-1990. Data compiled from Stanger-Ross (2010) and US Census.

new residents. (This seems to be not quite as strong of a source of ethnic persistence in the outskirts of Providence as it was in South Philadelphia historically, though perhaps it is something I should investigate further; as Lieberson and Carter (1982) note, in Providence the percentage of blacks in the city's population remained relatively low and unchanging during this era, from 1.77 percent in 1960 to only 2.31 percent in 1970). These works ultimately show how the specifics of a particular ethnic group in a particular place — for example, the timing of that group's arrival, the urban setup, and varied economies — can contribute to different forms and expressions of ethnicity, leaving ethnic individuals in different initial circumstances from which to begin making their own creative choices about ethnic practice in the years to follow. In short: the properties of a place can substantially change ethnic practices, and there is reason to suspect that the very specific properties of the "Pocket of Providence" have shaped the form of Italian-American ethnicity I have encountered here.

2.3 Conclusion: the ethnic setting of Providence

Both the pure geography and the constructed geography (Gieryn, 2000) of the Providence metropolitan area over the twentieth century have contributed to its current ethnic composition. The anomalous "pocket" that developed in the years that followed brought high concentrations of Italian-Americans into bodily co-presence with one another over an unusually long period of time and within only a few clustered and relatively homogeneous suburbs. Such a setting encourages particular structures of interaction (Boden and Molotch, 1994; Logan and Spitze, 1994; Sennett, 1996) and personal network formation (Fischer, 1982) that have consequences which span over decades. The chapters that follow take these particular settings as a starting point to examine how ethnic interactions and social relations are experienced in everyday life here today. Through this examination, I arrive at a deeper and more relational understanding of ethnicity as interactional environment.

3 Small Place, Dense Networks: Everyday Life in the Suburbs of a Small City

I first thought about visiting DeAngelis Bakery when I heard their jingle on local radio B101.5, the "Oldies" station. The song starts off with a simple guitar strum - a G chord - and then an old man's voice cuts in soon after: *"Spinach calzones, oh what a treat, pigs in the blanket, come on, let's all meet! At the DeAngelis Bakery."* The commercial goes on to say that they are close to Saint Rocco School and Church — where Mass is still held in Italian on early Sunday mornings, and where I went to elementary school, just a short walk from my triple-decker house. When I was a student there, in the early 90s, the building nextdoor had been a Chinese restaurant, but in 2007, the well-established DeAngelis baking family took it over. They had moved outwards from their old central Providence locations to Johnston, taking the same path as their Italian-American customers.

I soon learned that the place had become locally famous for giving away free baggies of pizza rounds - called "pizza chips" - on a seemingly random basis. My aunt, a frequent customer, told me that she could never figure out their logic: sometimes she'd get some freebies, sometimes she wouldn't; sometimes the person in front of her in line wouldn't get some, but she would. My grandmother thought that the practice was somehow related to the time of day — that later in the day they would try to get rid of whatever they couldn't sell. But then my grandmother's friend pointed out that whenever she went in after church, the freebies appeared. Maybe, my aunt guessed, this was to please the little old Italian ladies, who would surely be at Mass, and who were the bakery's best customers. Or perhaps it had to do with the amount of money each person spent. No one was certain.

I began to pop into the place now and again. Occasionally the young girls or older women – always women – working at the registers would simply hand me my change, say "thank you," and wave goodbye. Sometimes they'd swoop their arm under the counter at the last second and pull a baggie from some hidden source, saying, "these are on us."

Other times they'd just slip one right into my bag without saying anything at all. Within a couple of weeks, my father was getting used to having pizza chips around, since I'd started dropping them off at my parents' house down the street. ("These are from DeAngelis's? Like the old DeAngelis's pizza on Academy Ave?" my dad would ask. He used to eat an entire box of their hot pizza when he was young and skinny, and he still remembers what it tasted like. "I don't know how they got those little tiny pepperonis to curl up," he'd say, mouth full. "Tiny, curled up pepperoni and really stretchy cheese.")

It was May of 2017 by the time I started to think seriously about trying to get a job at this bakery as a way to meet more local residents. I walked in again one day when I was feeling bold – résumé in hand, completely devoid of any food service jobs, baking experience, or practical skills – and took a more careful look around: the space in front of the counters was small, maybe 10 feet deep and 20 feet wide, but it was packed tight with food, on all four sides. Colorful cold pastries, jelly rolls, cream puffs, cannoli, eggplant parmesan calzones, meatball calzones, bags of pizza chips, spinach pies, lemon danish, cinnamon buns, red strips of pizza, southern Italian sfogliatelle, hot cheese and pepperoni pizza, wine biscuits, cold bags of pizza dough — all blended into each other and surrounded me. The walls were full of posters, cartoons of bakers in aprons and white puffy hats, photos of cream pastries with cherries on top, the same as those in the cases, and another which read, "DeAngelis Bakery, Sarah McMillan / Ray DeAngelis." There were eight security cameras mounted on the ceiling.

There was clearly a bigger back section, but it was hidden from view; it was blocked by a tall bread case behind the counters, almost as high as the ceiling, filled with different shapes and sizes of loaves, long, round, braided, rolls, some dark, some light, some big, some small. The bags of pizza chips were piled so high on top of the counters that when a middle-aged woman with glasses and brown bangs came around this wall of bread - "Can I help you?" - I could really only see the top half of her face. I asked her if she was the manager.

"No, I'm not... and Raymond's just left."

She looked at me blankly. But as I told her a bit about what I was doing – writing a book about Italian-Americans in Johnston, my hometown, that I wanted to try to get a part-time job in a bakery as part of the project, that I wouldn't need to be paid – she softened. I found out that her name was Tina.

"Well, that's Ray's sister back there," she pointed behind the wall of bread, "and his mother-in-law." I saw that there were two ladies watching us through the bread rack — one older woman, in her 70s, with large glasses and very short, brown, permed hair, and one middle-aged woman, with long brown hair tied back in a ponytail. I assumed that the older woman was Ray's mother-in-law, and that his sister was the other, younger woman. "Let me go check and see if they can talk to you or something."

Tina went back for a few minutes, and I watched as the three of them huddled together in the corner, by the telephones, whispering to each other. I was a little disheartened when I saw Tina nod and grab a small piece of paper from the table.

"She said she doesn't want to say anythin' to you without Raymond around," Tina told me, as she walked back up to the counter. "So we're gonna have him call you." I watched as she took down my name, and also that I was "writing a book about Italian bakeries." As she wrote, I asked whether or not the bakery was a family business.

"YES," she said, looking up over her glasses. "And sometimes there's *lots* of drama!"

3.1 Small Town Feel

A few days passed after my visit with Tina. During those days, I figured I would probably never hear back from Ray, and, defeated, I began to look around elsewhere.

I took long walks down Atwood Avenue, into the center of town, a mile or so from the village of Thornton, through the main stretch of plazas and strip malls full of chain stores — a Dunkin' Donuts, Stop and Shop, Home Depot, Denny's, KFC, Bank of America, CVS, Burger King, and the Ocean State Job Lot discount store, for example. It was this side of

town, with its stoplights and store signs, that had prompted one of my cousin's high school friends - from a wealthier, more rural town called Exeter - to exclaim when we were young, *"Johnston looks just like Las Vegas!!!"* Yet among the lights and parking lots, it still *feels* like a small place: nearly every other week, I'd watch two people driving in opposite directions on Atwood Avenue stop, beeping, to wave to each other, or in some cases even reach out their windows to try and greet the person they knew. Local, family-owned businesses are peppered throughout the main drag — there's Ricotti's sandwich shop, My Cousin Vinny's party rentals, Silvio's restaurant and pizzeria, the Pagliarini family's Central Nurseries, and the popular Atwood Grille, owned by the DiRaimo family, where Hillary Clinton in April 2016 had stopped in to try and convince undecided Johnston voters to support her in the presidential primaries (Forsberg, 2016).[34] Plenty of other options, I thought.

I tried - and failed - to get a job waiting tables at Luigi's Italian Restaurant, where Mark Zuckerberg had one month earlier grabbed some lunch while on his nationwide tour of towns he thought were under-visited (Bui, 2017). I scouted out the Jacavone garden center (run by the Jacavone family, whose son I had gone to school with), where I overheard one middle-aged woman tell a married couple among the tomato plants that a recent trip to Italy had inspired her to re-plant a fig tree in her yard, like her family had when she was younger. I wandered into D. Palmieri's bakery, just to scope out the scene, where I bought a "mini-spinny" (a mini spinach pie, like a small calzone) for 99 cents, and where the counter lady remarked on the kids'-sized watermelon Dunkin' Donuts coffee coolata I was holding; it reminded us both of the watermelon flavor from Mister Lemon, a small stand in Providence's Elmhurst neighborhood,[35] off Admiral Street.

I started to think that while the suburb of Johnston itself was not a "small town" by any conventional definitions – the town has over 29,000 residents – it had been settled largely by a dense network of Italian-Americans, an outpouring of a homogeneous population from

[34] Clinton did not succeed; Bernie Sanders won Johnston's majority vote during the 2016 Democratic primary, and Donald Trump won the majority vote here during the general election.

[35] Elmhurst was one of the original Italian enclaves of Providence, closer to the central city. See map in figure 1 on page 28.

the same enclaves within Providence, a small *city*. By focusing on these Italian-Americans within the larger population, I was paying attention to a group of people who were, in many instances, already connected to each other, who perceived their town as small, regardless of whether or not it actually was small. The following subsections describe some of this group's perceptions - of the place and its people - in the order in which I discovered them.

3.1.1 Class attitudes: Cumberland Farms kind of people

Dunkin' Donuts is usually the coffee spot of choice among the Johnston residents I knew and came to know. Locals are drawn in not only by its familiarity and omnipresence – there are over 120 Dunkin' Donuts stores in Rhode Island, and some joke that residents give directions with reference to them (Henderson, 2012)[36] – but also by the image it portrays as a real-deal, no-nonsense, working-class New England kind of joint.[37] But a growing faction in Johnston had recently splintered off from the Dunkin' Donuts camp, becoming fans of Cumberland Farms coffee when its new location opened on Killingly Street, which runs parallel to Atwood. Cumberland Farms coffees are only 99 cents, for any size, and this bang-for-your-buck quality led many to convert. (One of my uncles, for example, claimed to be on a "crusade" against Dunkin' Donuts. "Why would I pay $3.00 for a cup when I could pay 99 cents!?" he told me.) A Cumberland Farms commercial[38] which aired on local channel ten depicted exactly this sentiment, and was a hit among my family and neighbors. In it, a man with a heavy New England accent is driving his car, his Cumberland Farms coffee in hand. "There are two types of people in this world," he starts. "Those who *willingly* overpay for coffee" - he takes a sip - "and normal people."

The appeal of the "average Joe" - which places like Dunkin' Donuts and Cumberland

[36] Also see Poisson (2018) for more about local Rhode Island habits (this was an article posted on Facebook by one of the younger women I came to know at the bakery during my fieldwork).

[37] Casey Affleck's infamous Saturday Night Live skit about the "real customers" of Dunkin' Donuts parodies this image. (See Saturday Night Live (2016)).

[38] The archived commercial is currently available (as of January 13, 2019) online at the following URL: `https://www.coloribus.com/adsarchive/tv-commercials/cumberland-farms-normal-people-22286515/`

Farms are eager to portray - perhaps hints at something larger about social class in Johnston. Class has had many definitions in the social sciences (Lareau, 2008) — among them have commonly been "how people earn their money, how much money they have, or what they do with their money" (Hout, 2008) — and most empirical examinations of it have involved some measure of wealth, income, occupation, or education (Conley, 2008). By these metrics, Johnston presents an interesting combination: in 2016, the town's median family income was 15.4 percent *higher* than the average median family income in Rhode Island, but its proportion with bachelor's degrees was 31.4 percent *lower* than average.[39] In fact, Johnston's spread between income and education levels is the largest in the state: it is, on average, a place where families have higher incomes, but lower levels of education. During my time there, I came to know many individuals whose parents never graduated from college (or, in some cases, from high school), but who perhaps began a successful plumbing business, were contractors, or owned popular restaurants, and many of such businesses were passed down through generations of family members. This was the case in some of the local ethnic businesses mentioned earlier — Mancini's gas station, Jacavone Garden Center, the Pagliarini's Central Nurseries, and the DeAngelis baking dynasty, to name a few. The trend presents an alternative path to upward mobility in future generations: it may pass on financial wealth, but it does not pass on the sorts of social and cultural capital that can accompany an upwardly mobile path which includes an education.

Regardless of the way Johnston stacks up by the traditional measures of social class, the residents I came to know maintained a pride in viewing themselves as the "normal," or "working" sort, distinguishing themselves from those who don't wake up early to work every day, or from those who buy their expensive coffees at places like Starbucks. This attitude, as far as I could tell, is held by all sorts of residents, including those with and without bachelor's degrees. In fact, my own younger brother - who does have a bachelor's degree, but who works as a construction supervisor alongside many who do not - became

[39]Data taken directly from U.S. Census Bureau (2016), American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

angry with me one day during my early fieldwork, since I didn't seem to be "working" in his eyes, as he does, waking up at 5:00 every morning to get to his work site, and yet I was still somehow getting paid by the university. He put me in the second, shameful, non-worker category: to him (and of course this is true), I am a free-floating elite, a lucky person, buying coffees occasionally at places like Starbucks and having unstructured time to read and write. (This angry episode eventually turned into a running joke; whenever we would try to plan family events, or doctor's visits, or car maintenance appointments, I would always have a much more flexible schedule than everyone else, and if I ever remarked on this, my brother would snap back: "yeah, well, some of us *work*!")

Admittedly, over my first month back in Johnston, this local attitude and pride in work among the residents I knew began to take a toll on me. The yardstick I started using to measure my own worth changed; I watched everyone around me - old neighbors, new neighbors, those I knew from childhood who had remained in Johnston, my own family members - go to sleep before 10:00pm, knowing it was because they would have to leave their houses by 6:30am the next day, or put their children on schoolbuses at 7:30am. I would listen to the neighbors' pickup trucks rumble away at dawn as I lay in my bed in my three-decker house on Maple Avenue. I would watch my father pat my brother on the back with a kind of pride I rarely saw from him. I would marvel at my neighbor, who would get to his job at a nearby stone yard by 7:00am and stay until 6:00pm, only to do *more* work when he came home — cut the lawn, for example, or fix a friend's car. In those moments, when I compared my work to theirs, from their perspective, I understood more clearly why they were so proud, and I felt ashamed.[40]

[40]It is interesting to think about this feeling, since, as the examples in this paragraph make clear, I had been comparing myself mostly to the *men* who surrounded me. Many of the women from Johnston that I knew at this time also worked, but had slightly more flexible schedules, as schoolteachers, hairdressers, or part-time managers, for example. The important sphere for them, and the one in which they spent most of their time, was still the home. Yet I did not feel quite as shameful at this particular moment that I did not have a home or family of my own to tend to; the shame in not matching the men's hard work had a much deeper effect on me, perhaps pointing to the ways in which some women of my generation - especially those like me, who were privileged enough to leave home - were raised to feel equal in matters of education and work (but not so much in other ways, as we will see later).

3.1.2 That's Rhode Island For Ya: statewide social networks

My shame did not last too long, and, in fact, I soon forgot what it felt like. Ray DeAngelis called me back, seemingly eager to talk, and told me to "stop by the bakery," that he'd "give me a tour of the place," and we could get to know each other. At the time, such a welcome felt quite special. I later learned that he says the same thing to nearly everyone he meets.

I started working on my first visit, but not until after I heard part of Ray's life story. "I just sat down," he told me, at 10:30am that day, after a counter girl had taken me behind the front registers, past a large brown table for cutting pizza, down a set of creaky wooden stairs, and into the bakery's basement, where an entire world opened, at least three times the size the bakery appears to be from the street, full of haphazardly-stacked cardboard boxes, silver sheet pans, rolling racks, walk-in refrigerators and freezers, a cake and pastry room, and more, to meet Ray in his small, fluorescent office, next to a refrigerator full of mozzarella cheese. He beckoned me inside and told me to close the door; he had an air conditioner in there, and he wanted to keep the cold air inside.

He looked weary. This might have been partially due to his gray hair, receding hairline, his ears that stick upwards and out to the sides a bit, his wide, rounded nose, and his grey-green eyes, which droop on the outside corners down. But it was probably more due to the fact that he'd been awake all night. He was wearing his usual white V-neck t-shirt and black pants, covered in flour and other stains. "Just finished all the baking for the day," he continued. I stood to listen to him, since there was only room for one chair in his office, and he explained his morning ritual to me for the first time: he woke up at 10pm, he had baked while the world slept, and right now he needed to "make the mixers" (a secret family recipe, of mixed herbs for the red pizza sauce) before he could even think about going home.

He was eager to talk to me. When I asked him how he got into the baking business, he began to tell me about his past, to reveal all the details immediately about how hard he's worked his whole life. I had a feeling he had explained the story before — how he

worked seven paper routes as a boy on Federal Hill ("The Hill"), worked in a jewelry shop, worked in Caserta's Pizzeria on Saturdays and Sundays ("Sad-deez 'n Sun-deez"), worked in Palmieri's bakery on Ridge Street, worked helping his brother-in-law making wholesale biscuits, worked, always worked. Even during the time he had spent a couple of years studying at Wentworth Institute of Technology - he was the pride and joy of his family - he was still working at Caserta's, walking up to The Hill from the bus station after classes, and also working for the post office part time, "driving truck" and "makin' good money."

He told me that he had been offered a job at Boeing in Seattle in the late 60s, but he couldn't take it because he got very sick. Almost died, in fact: his appendix burst. Stuck in Providence, he and his brother-in-law Bobby DeFazio pooled their resources and opened a bakery on Branch Avenue. For quite some time, Ray hid this fact from his mother, the daughter of Italian immigrants. She had worked so many hours at the jewelry shop to send her son to Wentworth - so that he could rise up and out of The Hill - and here he was, digging his roots even deeper into the old neighborhood. He got caught up in the work, kept making money, and stuck with it. "It was all about makin' money," he admitted.

And it was *still* all about making money, now, today, in this bakery, which he built after years of bankruptcies, a brief stint in Florida, and two failed marriages. "Baking really messes with your family life," he told me. "They start off bakin' with you, comin' in for the night shift, wanting to do it all together. Then they don't work as much, they come in here and there. Then they feel neglected or somethin' when I have to spend so much time at the bakery." He shrugged. "They love spendin' that money though."

In the middle of his recollections, we heard a knock on the door. "Yeah!" Ray shouted.

Another man with gray hair, looking to be in his late 70s, maybe a few years older than Ray, appeared as the door opened.

"Oh heyy, it's my grandpa!" Ray laughed, and the man, named Walter, smiled. I didn't get the joke at the time, but he explained it to me later: Walter was the grandfather of Ray's third wife. It was then that I realized Ray's wife was much, much younger than him.

Walter had come in just to hand Ray a bagel that he had cooked for Sarah, his granddaughter (and Ray's wife). Sarah likes her bagels cooked with butter, in the frying pan *only*, Walter carefully described to me, without knowing who I was.

Ray soon realized this lack of introduction, and told Walter the details he knew about me. "She's from Princeton," he said. "She's writin' a book about Italians."

"She's writin' a *book*?" Walter repeated, as he looked at me and smiled.

"Yeah, what's your last name again? Pangborn?" Ray asked me. "What's that, Irish?"

I nodded,[41] but clarified that my mother was a Russo, from Jastram Street.

"Jastram Street! You know the DePaolos?" Ray explained that he spent a lot of time on Jastram Street when he was younger, at his uncle's house, which turned out to be right across the street from where my mother was raised. I didn't know them myself, but I was sure that my mother and grandmother would. I took this opportunity to ask a question my grandmother had when she found out I'd be visiting the bakery: did Ray know her closest friend - and her children's "gumada"[42] - Lina Pella?

"How would I know her?" Ray eyed me skeptically. I said that my grandmother's best friend had mentioned that she'd grown up next to the DeAngelis family on Whitehall Street, in Silver Lake.

"Ah! My father came from Whitehall Street," he said, pleased. "Musta been him!" He told me then that he himself had grown up on Almy Street in Federal Hill, but his father grew up on Whitehall, in a house with nine brothers and two sisters. His mother grew up nearby, too, in a house with nine sisters and two brothers. So he had twenty-two aunts and uncles when he was younger.

"Small world," Ray said.

"That's Rhode Island for ya," Walter said back to him.

[41] "Pangborn" is technically an English surname, but I knew that my particular Pangborn relatives had settled in Ireland and had migrated to North America from there.

[42] "Gumada" is a slang word thought to be derived from the Southern Italian *comare*, which does mean "godmother," but "gumada" is often also used to mean a man's mistress — the idea being that if a man is seen out with a woman who is not his wife, he can tell anyone he bumps into that the woman is his children's godmother, legitimizing the social situation.

3.1.3 Network density and its effects

I could tell that Ray and Walter were immediately put at ease by our common connection. It almost became a way for Ray to brag as he introduced me to everyone in the bakery that first day, though he'd often get the particulars of our connection a little mixed up. "Her grandmother grew up next to my father!" he'd say, beaming, and anyone he introduced me to would smile, more trust in their eyes now than before, and utter the same sentiments, like "huh, small world!" or "that's Rhode Island, where everybody knows everybody!" I noticed that the fact that he and my grandmother had a tie in common from the older neighborhoods in Providence - where he was raised - seemed to mean much more to him than the initial fact I had presented when we first spoke: that I myself am from Johnston, close to where he lives and works today.

As we dug deeper into our connections, we found that my grandfather Tony's barber shop was just across the street from Ray's uncle's gas station in the Federal Hill enclave through the 60s and 70s. Other connections like this came up as I met more of the bakery workers, some of whom - like the Rhode Island College student Jessica Russo - had close friends who had introduced her to my cousins years ago, or - like another young Rhode Island College girl, Emily Tocco - had a relative who had married a boy my younger brothers played baseball with. Some of these conversations between workers establishing their connections with me resulted in the discovery that *their* friends and neighbors were connected to each other. The overarching sentiment that accompanied my entry into the bakery world - and my time in Rhode Island more generally - was this: not only did everyone seem connected to me in some way, but their connections were often also connected to each other.

It was an official sentiment, too, quoted frequently in programs on local television, in newspapers, and on the radio. Even such illustrious figures as Buddy Cianci — the Providence mayor who was famously re-elected after he was found to have assaulted a man by putting a cigarette butt out in his eyeball and hitting him over the head with a fire

log (Stanton, 2003) — would speak of Rhode Island's smallness often, touting its tight-knitness as a beautiful thing, or praising the fact that the state has always been perceived of as a place where "people get to know more about each other" (Seay, 2014). In a recent piece about the Providence-focused podcast *Crimetown*, former Rhode Island attorney general and radio personality Arlene Violet laments this very same perception so commonly held among Rhode Islanders: that Rhode Island is a close community, that "somebody always knows somebody, and you end up being related" (Violet, 2017). In her eyes, however - by contrast to Cianci's - the small state's ultra-connectedness is a source of "crookedness" and political corruption. Regardless of whether or not this connectedness is good or bad, it is certainly perceived as real, and it is believed to be an inevitable and unchangeable fact of life in a small state.

If we were to name Rhode Island's connectedness in social networks terminology, it would be referred to as "density" (or, sometimes, "clustering"[43]). Density is a measure of how far a social network is from a completely connected one. It is often calculated by examining the number of *actual* connections between people in a given social network and comparing it to the number of *possible* connections in that network (Scott, 2017). In effect, a measure of density then becomes a measure of how likely it is that one's friends are also friends with each other. In a network with the highest possible density, everybody knows everybody; in a network with the lowest possible density, everyone is isolated.

Some of the very first social network studies investigated the effects of network density on behavior before the term itself existed. In a well-known study of mid-century urban British families, Bott and Spillius (1955) found that the more "close-knit" a family's social network was (consisting of neighbors, coworkers, and friends), the higher the level of conjugal segregation (the separation of husband's and wife's duties) within the family's household. More recently, higher levels of network connectedness have been shown to be associated with lower residential mobility, due to the "pull" of local ties (Uhlenberg, 1973;

[43] See Wasserman and Faust (1994), chapter four for an overview of measures of density and clustering coefficients.

Dawkins, 2006), limited prospective mobility (Connerly, 1986), lowered rates of crime and deviance (Sampson and Groves, 1989), higher levels of social influence (Haynie, 2001; Kohler et al., 2001), the faster spread of disease (Bearman et al., 2004), and the more efficient spread of ideas and adopted behaviors (Centola and Macy, 2007). The thread common among all of these studies relates the structure of a group of people to the ideas, attitudes, and behaviors of its individuals: a dense and clustered social network – even in terms of locally experienced network (rather than global network) – can have a very real effect on the reinforcement of certain norms and values (Mitchell, 1974).

Network density varies directly with the mean number of individuals in a network (Niemeijer et al., 1973). This means that smaller networks - in smaller places - are inherently more dense. Indeed, as Fischer (1982) points out in *To Dwell Among Friends*, the social networks of individuals living in "towns" are generally much more dense than the networks of those living in "cities." (In his terms,[44] Johnston - while technically within the Providence metropolitan area - would be considered a "town.") In addition, Fischer found that those denser networks were much more filled with ties to kin than the more classically "urban" networks were: the more "town"-like the communities of his respondents were, the more relatives - and fewer non-relatives - they named. Such kin-centric, high-density networks – similar to those described by the bakery workers and Johnston residents I knew and came to know – are often associated with better mental and emotional health (Kadushin, 1983), but are also frequently accompanied by a higher instance of values and belief systems which are labeled as "traditional" (Marsden and Copp, 1986; Marsden, 1987).

This discussion of social network density could feasibly extend beyond such a cross-sectional impression of the way the networks of these particular Johnston Italian-Americans are experienced today. If we couple the Providence metropolitan area's geographical prop-

[44]Fischer placed the neighborhoods in which he studied social networks into the following four categories, ranging from most urban to least urban: *regional core* (in the core of the city of San Francisco or Oakland, as well as some denser directly-adjacent suburbs); *metropolitan* (semi-dense suburbs of San Francisco or Oakland); *town* (cities outside the San Francisco-Oakland metropolitan area, as well as some of the less dense suburbs); and *semi-rural* (small towns of under 10,000, far from other communities.)

erties - its size, its proximity to the Massachusetts state line, its limited choices for in-state suburban dispersal - with the historical patterns of immigrant settlement and suburbanization laid out in Chapter 2, we might arrive at a more *historical* version of network density — one that takes into account not only the probability of certain ties forming within the constraints of a place (Logan and Spitze, 1994), but also the ways in which those ties were organized through time and across ethnic lines. How, precisely, might ethnic homophily (McPherson et al., 2001) have surfaced in the configuration of ties in the suburbs of Providence? How do the ties formed in original ethnic enclaves connect future descendants to each other? How did local rates of ethnic intermarriage (Lieberson and Waters, 1988) shape this very particular, already-geographically-constrained network through decades? These thoughts reach beyond the scope of this particular project, but could be fruitful to tackle directly one day.[45]

So while Johnston is not a "small town" in any classic sense, it is a suburb of a small city, and local social network experience contributes to it *feeling* small. It is difficult to pinpoint the source and accuracy of these perceptions: the idea that Rhode Island is small is not only promulgated through local news and media channels, but it is also built up from the everyday experience of discovering social connections, many of which can be traced back to the fact that a large portion of residents in the Providence metro area were descendant from families who dispersed outwards from the same ethnic enclaves in similar ways, during similar times. Perceptions of small-town community – however accurate or inaccurate they are – can shape the values and actions of residents in important ways (Wuthnow, 2013). The sections that follow focus on this process.

[45] I have an idea about a way to simulate historical density: maybe I could design an agent based model (see Macy and Willer (2002) — ingredients: agents interacting with each other, a world in which they move [defined by space and choices for movement, e.g. providence vs new york city], a set of rules to determine what agents are allowed to do [e.g. marry other ethnics with probability p, given neighborhood constraints and some definition of homophilic tendencies, and a loop for repeating interactions] and measure the density of each manufactured network over time, varying by metro area properties from 1930 and choices for movement out of the central city. One big problem with this approach might stem from the fact that density is a tricky measure when used to compare networks of vastly different size (Scott, 2017; Niemeijer et al., 1973), so I'd have to find a way of measuring local experience of density rather than global density.

3.2 Cul-de-sac dreams: the values of smallness

Right after we established our common connections, Ray took me on my first tour of the bakery. As I followed him up the wooden stairs, I watched him climb in a crooked kind of way, clutching onto the railing, his big black shoes pointed sideways. He showed me the bakery's giant freezers and refrigerators; he told me about the history behind his two body-sized rotating ovens; he explained how he mixes the dough in his chest-high mixing bowl; I felt the slippery oil beneath my sneakers for the first time, the warmth from the ovens on my skin; I smelled the smells of dough, of tomato sauce, of pizza in the oven, of cake batter stirred. But I also then learned about the cast of characters he surrounds himself with. He introduced me to everyone as someone who was "gonna write a book about Italians," told them I'd be around, that I'd be asking them questions, and that they should be willing to answer me. In each of them I saw the extent of Ray's influence, his power in the bakery, the awe and respect he inspires in and commands from his workers. His authority became so instrumental in my gradual acceptance there.

Many of Ray's thirty-seven workers were his own family and friends. I met Rob DeFazio, his grand-nephew, the grandson of the original Robert DeFazio, who had started that very first bakery with Ray on the corner of Branch and Veazie. "Little Rob," as he is called, is head of the pastry department. He is bald, wears thick-rimmed black glasses, and has strikingly white skin — perhaps because he spends nearly all of his waking hours in the cold, fluorescent pastry room, in the basement of the bakery. As I shook his hand, Ray had to head back to his office for something, so I had a minute to chat; I remarked about how difficult Ray's sleep schedule must be, and how many hours he works. "Well, that's all he's ever known," Little Rob said plainly, as if any lifestyle could become easy, comfortable, if you were used to it. It was the same with himself; when I asked what it was like to work with his uncle, with his family surrounding him, he said, "Well, that's all I've ever known too, so..."

I next met Tony DiBiasio, also known as "Tony D" or "Pizza Chip Tony," who was

in his mid 70s, just a bit older than Ray, and a friend of his for the past fifty years from "the neighborhood" — Federal Hill. Tony had composed and sang the song I had heard on the radio - *I love those pizza chips that they make at The Original Italian Bakery* - and continues to help his buddy Ray out in the store on weekend mornings, from about 5am to 1pm, Thursday through Sunday. He'll roam around the bakery in his white baseball cap, his large, thick glasses, and his long white apron, cutting pizza strips, rolling racks of pizza from the ovens to the front, so the girls can sell them, and chatting up the customers – "Heyyy uh nice hat you got there, I gotta get me one of them hats, where'd you get it?" – but he won't learn how to use the registers. I had seen his face before on a clip of The Rhode Show, a variety show on local television, where he was on stage singing the Pizza Chip Song. When I mentioned this, as Ray introduced us, Tony lit up; he became immediately very friendly, excited that I would write a book about them, and suggested to Ray that the next time they went on the Rhode Show, they should bring me. I saw in that moment a flicker of something I learned more firmly later: that Tony was always thinking about how to advertise, how to propel Ray - and perhaps himself as well - into stardom.

"We can take a picture!" Tony smiled, "and you can put it in your book! Right, Ray?"

Ray didn't completely hear him; he was distracted watching over his oven staff. "Wha??" When Tony repeated himself, even more enthusiastically, Ray just waved him off, frustrated. "Yeah, yeah. I wanna show her this freezer."

We kept going. I met two of Ray's daughters from his first marriage, Diane and Deborah. Both in their 40's, Diane and Deborah hold other dayjobs – they work as middle managers at the local Johnston branches of Citizens Bank and Progressive Insurance Company, respectively – but their father's bakeries have been such an integral part of their lives that they can't keep away: they continue to help out in the back on weekends, making pizza, bagging one-pound chunks of dough, or cooking "lunch" (at about 8:00am) for the Dominican immigrant oven staff. The two of them looked quite similar, almost like twins, except that one had long, wavy brown hair, and the other had long, wavy brown hair that

was dyed blonde on the tips. As I watched them make pizza, and as I commented on how delicious it all looked, Deborah explained to me that it takes 7 hours from when the dough is made until the first piece of either bread or pizza can come out of the oven. Diane chimed in, too, in response to my saying it looked delicious. "You get so sick of it all," she said. "You don't even have to worry about gaining weight."

"At 10pm," Ray explained, as he led me into the front room, closer to the registers, "this place looks totally different. None of these trays are out, none of the racks, everythin' disappears." The girls clean it all, he said, getting ready for the next day, more baking.

Anna DeFazio, Ray's big sister, is one of these "girls," though, at 74, she is firmly a lady. She was the older woman with large glasses, a distinctive cheek mole, and short, dark brown permed hair that I'd seen through the bread rack on one of my first visits to the bakery. On the day I met her - like every day, I found out weeks later - she wore a golden medallion around her neck, with a man's face engraved on it. That face was the face of her son, David, who had been shot and killed over a drug deal in the middle of the night in one of the old DeAngelis bakeries in Providence. She works six days a week at the bakery, from 6am until 6pm sometimes, only in order to distract herself, she told me that summer. "I *have* to work," she said. "What am I gonna do, sit home and look at the four walls?" (Ray told me that this was only partially true: she also needed the money.) But when I met her, she mentioned none of this. "I'm the one that makes the eggplant!" she said proudly as Ray introduced her to me, gesturing behind her towards a rack filled with breaded and baked eggplant slices, ready to be used to make calzones. I noticed that the slices were thick, rather than thin,[46] and I told Anna that I liked thicker slices of eggplant myself. "I like it thick too," she nodded. "So does my brother!"

Ray shrugged. "Yeah. They're alright."

"He'll never give me a compliment!" Anna laughed.

"My mother made it better," Ray said, and Anna agreed with that, smiling.

[46]There was a long-standing debate among the Italian-Americans I came to know about the merits of thin vs. thick eggplant.

Downstairs rolling out some pepper biscuit sticks was the third DeAngelis sibling — Ray's fraternal twin brother, Paul, who looked a bit like Ray, but slightly different: he had a gray mustache, buzzed hair, and was fairly trim. "When we were in utero," he said, "I was the second baby... came out feet first and kicked Ray right outta there!" While his brother was within earshot, he joked with me about writing a book, which he assumed immediately would be focused on Ray himself. "There is not enough ink and paper in this world to write a book about Ray," he laughed. Paul was a firefighter by day and a blackjack dealer by night for 25 years — dealt to Whoopi Goldberg and Ricki Lake, he bragged. Ricki Lake was his least favorite. She'd wear a big sweatshirt and a hood. "You could barely see her face," he complained. "Tried to tip me 50 cents. I gave it right back to her!" (Ray was fairly passive during this encounter, but I discovered over time that he views himself as the opposite of his twin in most ways. "I'm generous," Ray will say, constantly giving things to people, moving forward, keeping the business going, while Paul is laid back, likes to gamble away his money - that's why he still has to work, in fact, even on top of his pension - and thinks only about himself. Very selfish, in Ray's opinion.)

Other DeAngelis relatives were constantly in and out, either working or visiting. Ray's own mother - Louise "Ma" DeAngelis - sliced eggplant by Anna's side until she died at 93. His granddaughter, Isabella, would work the 3am shift sometimes on the weekends, leaving at 9am on Saturday morning with frizzy, curly brown hair, full of oil from the pans and pizza she'd handled all night. His grandson, Stephen, would pop in now and then, occasionally making deliveries for his grandpa, placing hot rolls - fresh out of the oven - in large brown paper bags to load up in his car and bring to restaurants on Federal Hill. And his cousin, Kathy, would wander in about once a week, looking for some free bread and pizza — her privilege as a blood relation, she seemed to feel. "She belongs in a fuckin' mental institution," Ray would complain whenever her eager face appeared on the other side of the counter, *HI RAYMOND!*, waving homemade crocheted pot-holders in the air, trying desperately to catch his attention. "My wife has 300 of these potholders," Ray will

roll his eyes. But he'll always give her something, maybe a bag or two of pizza chips, or some pastries that were already on sale, pretending they were put in a box all special just for her. "What am I gonna do. She's my cousin," he'll say. "You can't pick your relatives. You're stuck with 'em."

And the DeAngelises aren't the only family centered at the bakery. The Gesualdi Brothers, Frank and Dominic - former owners of Gesualdi's bakery - help Ray's brother Paul downstairs with the biscuits and pastries, despite their injuries and health problems: Dominic often wears a back brace to work atop his black-and-white chess-checkered pants, and Frank, who has a heart transplant, moves slowly, carefully, and never comes in if someone is sick, since he has such a weak immune system. Dalvin Polanco, too, one of Ray's oven staff, born and raised in the Dominican Republic, had his own cousin Pedro hired, and together they would work on the "pizza chip machine" in the back — a large silver slicer, attached to a basin, where small spheres of dough are squeezed out and slashed into tiny discs, setting the rhythm for the back of the bakery, *cha-CHUNK, cha-CHUNK, cha-CHUNK*; the two of them would churn out hundreds of sheet pans of chips per day, grabbing the bits of dough from the machine and placing them - without even looking - on endless stacks of heavily oiled sheet pans, to be stamped and eventually baked. Nearby on the calzone bench, neighbors Rosa and Andre - also immigrants, from the Dominican Republic and El Salvador, respectively - would line the surfaces of every table with flattened, round pieces of dough to be filled with spinach, or eggplant, or meatball parmesan, rolled up and baked into their distinctive half-moon shapes. Before too long, Andre's wife Maria was also hired, and she now works the registers out front.

Ray's wife Sarah McMillan has her own family clan there, too — with a mixture of Italian, Irish, and English ethnic heritage. This includes Walter, her grandfather and Ray's "grandpa" I had met in his office; Lucy, her grandmother (Walter's wife), who serves as the resident bakery decorator, climbing on ladders before every holiday to change the streamers and little dangling pumpkins or Santa Clauses from the ceiling tiles; and Pat, Sarah's

mother, who is the only woman - only person, really - who could talk back to Ray and tell him what's what. "Uh, who are you?" Pat had asked me, bluntly, aggressively, without a hint of a smile, the first time we encountered each other.

It became clear very quickly that any outsiders were immediately spotted. Customers, even, were frequently friends of one of the bakery families, or at least friends of Ray — his cop pals, some local farmers, and other male friends of his would often wander in, wishful eyes peering over the counter, hoping to catch a glimpse of Ray, just to say hello, or to walk out with some free bread, cementing their connection to him, and through that connection, their own importance. To be among these various neighbors, friends and family members was an all-encompassing emotional experience; it seemed as though nearly everyone who mattered to those in the bakery were there in the bakery themselves. Pat, in fact, didn't own a cell phone for precisely this reason. "Why would I need one?" she explained to me. "Everyone I would need to talk to is already here."

3.2.1 How Life Should Be: the persistence of smallness

Surrounded by family, bound up in the local — this was not only how most of the bakery workers lived, but it was also how they *wanted* to live, at least when asked about it. During the midst of some talk about the Powerball jackpot (a generally very popular topic of conversation around the bakery), Anna confessed her Powerball wishes to me, telling me what she'd do with all the money if she'd won it:

> *Anna:* "If I won Powerball, I'd buy every house on a cul-de-sac and give one to each of my sons and family. It would be the DeFazio cul-de-sac! That's my dream. We'd all be near each other."

Her family was all in Rhode Island already - with the exception of one granddaughter, who had followed a man to North Carolina (and who had returned home over the course of my fieldwork) - but she wanted them even closer, on the same street, nextdoor, always around. She valued being close to her family above all else, and it showed in the way she

lived her life. On Sundays, her only day off per week, she told me she usually made 13 or so pounds of pasta and a giant pot of gravy and meatballs for her family to come over her house and have dinner together. "They use it to congregate, to see each other," she beamed. It gave her a sense of great pride and purpose to think of her Federal Hill triple-decker as a central gathering location for everyone she loved.

And it wasn't just Anna who felt this way. Most of the Johnston residents I grew to know inside and outside of the bakery felt similarly: it just made sense, felt good, to be rooted, to live near one's family, to stay in a place where it was possible to be known. Movement out of the state was in some cases actively discouraged, especially by middle-aged and older residents. Jo-Ann Ricci DeBellis, a 61-year-old raspy-voiced Pall-Mall-smoking dance instructor down the street – who would sometimes have her dance students sell raffle tickets outside the bakery's door – told me once that she felt no need to leave Rhode Island, not even to travel; if she wanted to see something different, she said, she'd "watch it on television." She continued:

> *Jo-Ann*: Like, I could live in the Hallmark movie channel, Christmastime town, that's never seen another state. Like live in that little village every day, go to the same butcher and the hairdresser... that's like, how I think life should be.
>
> *Me*: What's appealing about that?
>
> *Jo-Ann*: It's closeness, it's warmth, it's togetherness. That's what's important to me. Not seein' Hawaii, and spendin' ten thousand dollars, and then all you do is remember it when you go home. Big fuckin' deal! So you saw some water and hula dances![47]

Jo-Ann's 28-year-old daughter, Brittany DeBellis, business parters with her mother at the dance studio and a frequent bakery customer herself, lamented what she saw as her mother's unwillingness to step outside of her "comfort zone" in Rhode Island. "It hindered

[47]Interview with Jo-Ann DeBellis, 1/5/18.

[her] from experiencing a lot of things," Brittany told me. Brittany herself does like to travel, does like to get out of Rhode Island every once in a while. "I think being from Rhode Island, from Johnston," she told me once, "because it's so small, I feel like I need to go see other places!" This impulse led her to travel to New Hampshire, Florida, Maine, Cancun, and Italy, her mother said. But Brittany still comes back; she has always lived here, in Johnston, now in her own unit in a four-unit house on Lafayette street, where most of Jo-Ann's family also lives – her stepson, her sister, and both her daughters – and has no impulse to actually move away. (The land was all owned by Jo-Ann's father, and when it was passed down to her, she and her husband developed it and parceled it out among their family.)

Being close to family was often also why some residents claimed to have chosen to move to Johnston from Providence in the first place. "We just liked it," 56-year-old Carol Pannetti told me. "It was close to my family, close to [my husband's] family, 'cause his parents and my parents are both in Providence. And yeah it was right near the highway and everythin.'"[48] People here, according to the town clerk Vince Baccari, are homebodies. "My wife's like, let's just move to Florida," Vince told me as I looked through housing deeds at the Johnston town hall.[49] "Everybody says that. But your family is here! You don't just get up and leave your family."

It was hard to tell which came first. Was being close to family valued first, and movement patterns developed second? Or did settlement patterns mean that a critical mass of Italian-Americans were close to their family members first, and then came to value that closeness? Either way, whenever I asked bakery workers or other residents about where their friends and family lived, all of them gave local answers. "They're mostly here in Rhode Island. Not like Massachusetts or anythin' like that," 59-year-old Lori Salatino told me. "Who lives outside of Rhode Island?" she brainstormed aloud. "Nobody!"[50]

[48]Interview with Maria and Carol Pannetti, 12/13/16.
[49]Discussion with Vince Baccari on 10/18/18.
[50]Interview with Lorin and Lori Salatino, 12/16/16.

3.3 Taking action: small social bonds

So Rhode Island was small. This was how it was perceived - as well as how it was constructed - in everyday life, by the particular group of Italian-Americans I began paying attention to in the suburbs of Providence. Moreover, that smallness was often valued for the emotional experience it seemed to provide — a feeling of warmth, closeness, and togetherness, of knowing and being known, of living in close physical proximity to both immediate and extended family. But this smallness was not only perceived and desired: it also factored into how individuals thought about their social relations, affecting the actions they took in their own relationships. The following subsection details ways in which these actions served to structure the social world of individuals I encountered around the bakery and Thornton.

*

Towards the end of my first tour with Ray, I spent some time in the front of the store with the Saturday morning counter girls. These younger girls were all between 18 and 21, all had long, dark hair and brown eyes, all were wearing black yoga pants and black t-shirts - it seemed to be a sort of uniform - and all were going to college nearby. Isabella ("Bella") DiPalma, the girlfriend of Ray's grandson, finished up at Johnston High a couple of years ago and was now studying physical therapy at Fairfield College in Connecticut; Isabella (also "Bella") Buonanno, daughter of a locally famous channel news anchor, graduated from LaSalle Academy high school a few days prior and would also attend Sacred Heart in the Fall; and Jessica Russo, from Cranston, was studying to be a nurse at Rhode Island College. The girls were having fun around the table, joking with Ray's buddy Tony DiBiasio, the songwriting, fame-seeking old man who wandered around pushing racks and chatting up customers. Tony seemed to be very playful with them.

"Can I have your straaaaawberry, Tony? *Pleeeeeease*?" one of the Bellas asked him as he took a piece of strawberry-covered cheesecake from refrigerator number five, planning

to eat it himself. He smiled, rolled his eyes a bit, and, powerless against Bella's young charm, gave in to her request.

Tony was generally a playful person, quick to tease and easy to laugh. "I thought of the opening for your book," he told me as I stood around the table with him and the counter girls, who were teaching me how to put eight of the small pizza chips in a bag — two on the bottom, then six more, in three pairs, all facing outwards, to be tied with a twist tie and placed in the piles on the counters to be sold. "*I walked into the Original Italian Bakery, and I saw a very handsome middle-aged man in a baseball cap...*" he snickered.

Tony and I soon started talking as we worked; he seemed to be able to talk about anything, was curious about sociology, about writing, and had even tried to do some writing himself, though he said he had to work hard to build up his vocabulary after he dropped out of school in 9th grade. The details of his life's work and occupation after that seemed hazy: he'd spent years "on the corner" in Federal Hill, trying to sell jewelry, or purses, or anything; he was a woodsman, a hunter, a wild mushroom forager, and had bred racing dogs at one point; he had lived for at least a decade in Florida with his ex-wife; and he had even moved to California briefly, when he was young, to try his luck at becoming a singer-songwriter. So far, his only songwriting claim to fame was the "Pizza Chip Song" I had heard on the southern New England Oldies radio station. But he still picks up his guitar every day. "If it's sittin' there, I pick it up and play." He plays all sorts of stuff, he told me, and belongs to a bluegrass group that meets once a month in Foster. Once the "hardcore bluegrass people" leave at the end of the night, he whispered: "then we start playin' The Rollin' Stones."

"It's a good thing you two aren't on the clock," Ray shouted, interrupting us as he popped his head around the corner from the back room. "Cuz I'll tell ya, you talk too much."

Tony belly-laughed. "She got me started on music, Raymond!" he put his hands to his chest. "Now she's got my heart!"

And Tony had my heart, too — I liked him immediately. He was familiar, easy to talk to and to joke with. He wrapped me into the action of the bakery whenever I came to work. "Nicole, come here, let me show you how to put the breads in the case," he told me forcefully, on my third morning, pointing first to the 9-grain bread, then the small and large braided Sicilian loaves, then the Italian loaves, and onwards through the entire bread inventory, giving me the knowledge necessary for me to feel useful. We became fast friends. Others around the bakery noticed this and soon began commenting on it. Some - to my surprise - warned me not to get too close to him.

"You don't *know* him," Anna told me in a hushed voice, my first week, when she saw that Tony and I were becoming pals. "It's fine for you two to talk about music," she said, "but I wouldn't go over his house, or let him come over yours. He might think somethin' else."

"Tony is *scum. of. the. earth*," Sarah's grandpa Walter told me just a couple days later, completely unprovoked. "Used to hang out with strippers and everything. I just wanted to let you know that."

I was left feeling disoriented in the wake of these comments; the impression that Tony made on me was that he was open-minded, perceptive, and inquisitive — he would continually want to talk about Rhode Island, about "being Italian," about how he was raised, about his observations of others in and outside the bakery. He seemed genuinely interested in understanding patterns of Italian-American geographical dispersal, and he would often ask me what I was thinking of writing about. "So you got an outline or somethin'? Some writers who are published many times and stuff, they know what they're settin' out to do, so they make an outline." He very clearly wanted to be involved in every stage of my research process. So when he suggested that we have a jam session at my place down the street - he'd be on the guitar, I'd be on the piano - I ignored the warnings from Anna and Walter and said yes.

3.3.1 Cuz you'll see 'em again: expectations for repeated interaction

On the day of our first jam session, Tony drove his dilapidated navy blue minivan — which he calls his "museum," and which smelled quite strongly of trash, packed with old styrofoam Cumberland Farms cups, piles of scratched CDs, some clothes, sometimes jewelry and purses he would get from his friends to give away as gifts, and, of course, his guitar, without which he never left his home (at a senior citizens' condo development on the North Providence border) — over to my triple-decker down the street from the bakery. The plan was for us to fiddle around with adding some piano and special effects to two songs he had recently written, including a children's song called "All You Have To Do Is Dream," as well as a country rock tune about the importance of being free.

We spent a few hours on these projects; we came up with some little piano melodies over Tony's guitar strum, and we recorded them ourselves on my SONY digital recorder, which I would use for capturing conversations at the bakery. At the end of our session, Tony seemed to feel like he owed me for the time I spent working on his songs – like he needed to repay the favor. So he started talking about my research.

"Wanna talk about your book now?" He asked. And before I could even answer, he cut straight to the point. (The recorder was still running.) "I don't really know where you're goin," he told me as he stood with his guitar at my front door, white baseball cap over his thick glasses. He was worried that I would use what I'd learn about the Italian-Americans in Rhode Island - through the bakery - to write about Italian-Americans in general. "When you said, you know, I heard you say that you're gonna zero in on Johnston, the bakery and what not... I would ask myself... what is she doin', where is she goin' and what does she wanna say? You know what I'm sayin'? And you know, if you want to say just about Italians in Johnston, that ain't gonna get you explainin' a national book. If you do, it's not gonna be right."

"What do you mean?"

"If you go to... Texas, and meet Italian people, you'll find that... they're way different

than in Rhode Island," Tony explained. "If you go to California, way different. I don't know if it's an old Italian saying, but my father said it many times: 'when you're in Rome, you do as the Romans do.' Well you're in Rome now, you understand? Small town, everybody knows everybody, um, everybody is, um, not shy, but they're cautious in this town."

"Why?"

"On what they say, and what they do, everythin' most of the time is calculated because it's a small state and they may have to deal with these people somewhere along the way," he went on. "It's like lawyers. No matter how much money a lawyer's gettin', he's gonna go to court and there's certain things he won't do for nothin', because he's gotta work with them lawyers all the rest of his life. See what I'm sayin'? And you're not gonna get honesty. You're not gonna get the real thing."

From the conversation that followed, I gathered that Tony was worried about two interrelated ideas. First, he felt that Rhode Island Italian-Americans were in no way representative of Italian-Americans nationwide. He told me a bit about his travels beyond the Ocean State: "You take people from L.A., or even from Pennsylvania! From Philadelphia, or from Harrisburg. I don't care if they're Italian. I know Italians from Harrisburg, and you wouldn't believe that they're Italian. They cook Italian, you go to their house, you eat, and everythin' and what not, but there's a little more trust there." In his eyes, the uniqueness of Rhode Island Italian-Americans - and Rhode Islanders in general, it seemed - is connected to a second point: that the small size of Rhode Island encourages people to be more "calculating" in their social relations. There is a general awareness among residents that they'll have to "deal with" each other "somewhere along the way," and this awareness, in Tony's eyes, constantly affects their actions, viewpoints, and relationships.

I took these ideas back to the bakery a few days later, on an unusually slow Saturday morning. While bagging pizza chips with the young counter girls up front, I asked the group of them what they thought about Tony's ideas.

"I think it's true what he was saying," Jessica Russo told me. "I really do."

I prodded her a bit more, and she proceeded to tell me about a friendship she had with a college classmate, Cynthia, whom she had met in Biology 101. The two were both nursing students, and they had quickly become close friends, but Jessica claimed that a miscommunication (involving a boy) had recently soured their relationship.

"What I think about sometimes is basically... I always think that because Rhode Island is such a small state, and I know we're going into the same profession - she's going into nursing, I'm going into nursing - I always think, we may be in a fight, but when am I gonna see this girl again? I might see her years from now. And I have to, you know, kind of plan on how I'm gonna act towards somebody. 'Cause you never know who you're gonna see! You know?"

*

Both Tony and Jessica understood their social world as one in which repeated interactions with the same individuals were to be expected. In a town like Johnston or state like Rhode Island – which were experienced and constructed as small and hyper-connected, especially within the network of Providence-based Italian-Americans – it was inevitable that Tony and Jessica would encounter many people they knew daily and repeatedly. This knowledge led them to "plan on how [they're] gonna act," restricting their behaviors during interaction to those that would be appropriate given the imagined scenario of encountering the other person again.

This restrictive force itself is one that appears in any small group setting, where members interact with each other repeatedly. Such a setting generally encourages normative conformity — the constraint upon and/or reinforcement of any social norms that are already present, through the provision of rewards and punishment (Hechter, 1988; Boyd and Richerson, 1992; Hechter and Kanazawa, 1993; Henrich and Boyd, 2001; Boyd and Richerson, 2002). This leads to a *stability* in the sorts of interactive behavior observed in a group which is well-connected (Boyd and Richerson, 1992), and it can be achieved through multiple mechanisms: a greater willingness among members of a cohesive group

to directly sanction other members (Homans, 1961; Sampson et al., 1997), for example, or indirectly increasing the rewards given to those who punish deviant behavior (Horne, 2001). Through any of these mechanisms, the result is the same: stability of group norms and behavior is encouraged by the structure of repeated interaction — exactly the sort of structure I encountered in the bakery.

The bakery was its own small world, within the small world of Johnston, within the small world of Rhode Island. Inside the bakery walls, daily, repeated interaction was guaranteed among the same group of individuals. The force towards normative conformity operated behind many of the relationships I observed there: it drove Ray to reluctantly give his cousin Kathy free baked goods each week, for example, invoking shared beliefs in the value of one's family, and also led Anna and Walter to treat Tony DiBiasio in a generally pleasant or neutral way to his face - tolerating his presence - while simultaneously harboring animosity towards him and spreading the word about his character behind his back. Everyone was stuck with each other, they seemed to believe, and they would all behave accordingly.

It was easy to imagine that this same force operated at larger levels within which the bakery was nested — at the level of the village of Thornton, the town of Johnston, the three "tri-Guido town area" suburbs of Providence, or the entire state of Rhode Island. At each of these levels, a partially-constructed sense of smallness meant that interaction occurred repeatedly within restricted networks, and could affect the structure and substance of relationships inside those networks. This was something to keep in mind as my research continued: anything I observed about local norms, customs, culture, or symbolic behavior – the "content" of local ethnicity (Radzilowski, 1986) – needed to be placed in light of the perpetuating forces operating within this small and particular social world.

3.4 Conclusion: "smallness" as perceived, valued, and acted upon

This chapter has explored the size of Rhode Island as it was experienced in everyday social relations. The Italian-Americans I got to know in the suburbs of Providence perceived their world as small, valued that smallness for the emotional warmth it provided them (while working to perpetuate that source of emotional warmth), and took action in their own social relationships with such smallness in mind. This combination resulted in a continued structuring of their social world from the bottom up, many decades after it was structured from the top down through migration and geographical settlement patterns.

I only fully understood the effects of this continued structuring once I was well into my fieldwork. But over my first months back in Thornton, I simply noted that the experience of smallness was real, and that it had an impact on norms, values and actions, as well as potentially on how quickly or slowly those norms and values changed over time, through history, given what we know about the ways norms of any kind can be reinforced within particularly dense social networks in which individuals interact with each other repeatedly. It was something that I grew to believe would have an impact on whatever I would learn about the customs, behaviors, interactions, shared meanings, and ethnic practices among the group of Italian-Americans who lived here — a group with a particular subculture (Fine and Kleinman, 1979), in a particular place, with a particular size, which encouraged a particular form of interaction, resulting in particular creations of meaning and shared understandings (Blumer, 1969). The chapters that follow detail the content of this subculture and how its intersection with our current time period points to the continued relevance of "white ethnicity" in the suburbs of Providence.

4 Your Bringin'-Up: Ethnicity, Emotions, and Interaction

I went to the bakery every day except one during that first month. I wanted to keep the momentum going. I came in at all different times — 1am to work the bread shift, 7am to work the morning counter girl shift, 2pm to 10pm with the "night girls," cleaning and closing up the shop. Slowly, I settled into what felt like the most natural spot for me as a woman; with the exception of a notable few, bakery workers were somewhat segregated by gender, with women in the front, waiting on customers, cleaning, taking care of the shop, prepping certain types of pizza and pastries, and men in the back, by the ovens, working overnight and producing the raw goods. Ray, in fact, refused to hire men to wait on his customers in the front of the store. "You think I'm gonna hire guys to work up here with a bunch of girls?" he once told me. "Nothin' would ever get done. Plus then I gotta worry about two of 'em disappearin' on me, goin' off in some closet together." He often would exaggerate for effect like this, but at heart it was what he believed: sex was always on the table when men and women were in each other's presence.

So I became a counter girl. I learned how to use the registers, how to make a hot pizza when a customer asked for one, how to mop the floors in exactly the way Ray likes them to be mopped. I thought that most of the bakery staff was being especially welcoming to me during this period, teaching me everything they knew, telling me about their lives. They *were* especially welcoming, but it turned out that training and teaching happened all the time. Girls would often ask to change their schedules, would want to take summer courses, have more time for their homework or their boyfriends, and would offer up a new girl, a sister or friend, maybe, to take their place on the days they could no longer work. Ray was the only boss, it seemed (though there were other informal hierarchies within his cast of 37 employees), so every decision - no matter how small - had to go through him. He did not have much time to worry about the girls' schedules, and so they organized it all themselves, seeking his approval once it was already settled. As a result, training new girls was common; my own training was nothing out of the ordinary.

Ray started treating me as one of his own very quickly. "Get me one of them thank-you bags," he ordered me on my fourth day, while I stood nearby, listening to him talk to one of his Johnston police pals who had dropped by to visit him. I wasn't even sure what he meant, and was about to ask him when he corrected himself. "Look at me," he smiled. "Talkin' to you like you're workin' here already." Truth be told, I was comfortable working among the counter girls; the tasks themselves, as well as my position there relative to Ray, felt familiar to me. Ray reminded me of the men in my own family. I had grown up watching my mother, my aunts, and my grandmother cater to those men, hanging on their every word, ironing their shirts, letting them have the final say.[51] Fulfilling the well-defined role of counter girl - serving customers, preparing food, and doing whatever Ray asked of me - made me feel useful in a way that I had not encountered since leaving Johnston at age seventeen. It was a deeper sort of pride that filled me when Ray thanked me for quickly putting pizza together for him, or for preparing a packet of instant oatmeal for him to eat as he worked shoveling bread out of the oven — a pride that I sensed might have something to do with the fact that Ray is a man and I am a woman. I didn't mind being ordered around by him. Part of me almost liked it.

It seemed I wasn't the only one who felt this way. I saw signs of the same gendered role satisfaction in pretty much everyone in the bakery: men would relish in hard work, would put work before all else, would try to impress other important men around town with their talent, money, and connections. Women would relish in hard work, too, but derived much direct satisfaction from supporting the men surrounding them — particularly when it came to food and caretaking. I was surprised by how closely these conceptions of gendered duties matched those described in studies of Italian-Americans from decades past, in the 1980s and earlier (see, for example, Gambino (1974); Di Leonardo (1984); Johnson (1985), and also Dottolo and Dottolo (2018)). "That's the way I was brought up," Ray told me one

[51] There was, of course, a more complex relationship behind these behaviors; often, as Paul Gambino (1974) notes in his work on Italian-American family life, men perhaps were often the "head" of the household, but women were the "center."

day, when I prodded him to talk more about his idea that women should be completely dedicated - in every way - to their men. Explanations like this one came freely whenever I'd ask about a particular behavior, or a particular idea anyone had about the way the world works: reasons like "that's how I was raised," "it's all in the upbringing," "that's 'cause of your bringin-up," or "that's what my mother and father taught me." Things were as they were because of the way they had been before.

I began paying closer attention to these explanations centered around upbringing — when and why they were invoked, how they entered into the substance of relationships (especially between women and men), how they provided emotional reinforcement to individuals, and how all of the above was related to ethnicity, even if only because "bringin' up" - the way of being and relating to others that one learns from one's parents - roughly maps onto ethnic heritage. I saw it operating in myself, too, in how my emotions, the ways in which I related to the men and women in the bakery, were wrapped up in the way I was taught in my earliest years to feel good about myself. As feminist scholars have urged (e.g. DeVault (1999), or Smith (1999)), I used my own female experience as a starting point for understanding the experiences of the other women I encountered. I found some variations, of course - especially among bakery workers of different ages and generational cohorts - but overall, the power behind "upbringing" explanations for gender-typical behavior was strong and remarkably consistent. This chapter details this power and describes how it entered into relationships and identities in and around the bakery.

4.1 Counter Girls

There were two sets of counter girls at the bakery. One group – the younger, high-school and college-aged girls – worked the busier hours, at nights and on Saturdays and Sundays, usually only so that they could make some extra money and propel themselves forward on their way to better, "real" careers. Most were in school for nursing, or physical therapy, or business administration, for example. Isabella ("Bella") DiPalma, Isabella (also "Bella")

Buonanno, Jessica Russo, Lauren Mancini, and Christine O'Brien were some of the regulars over the year and a half that I worked there, and they were usually - but not always - hired by knowing someone who knew Ray — one of the Bellas was his grandson's girlfriend; the other Bella was the daughter of a locally famous news anchor who'd crossed paths with Ray before; and Lauren Mancini was the daughter of a friend of Ray's wife's mother, for example. Jessica Russo, though - with her long black ponytail and round cheeks - was one of the few who'd walked in off the street, looking for a job. Jessica gushed as she recounted the story to me one day of how she was hired: one of the other counter girls had brought her back behind the registers, and Ray asked the other girl who she was. ("This is Jessica, she wants to work here," the girl told him.) "Hire her," Ray responded. "She's beautiful."

Being told of their own beauty was not quite as common for the second group of counter girls, who were really counter ladies — middle-aged and older, more serious about the daily workings of the bakery, more resigned to their fate of working there as a regular, full-time job — but it certainly cropped up now and again. This group included Anna DeFazio, Ray's eggplant-baking older sister; Pat McMillan, Ray's wife's mother; Lucy Brown, Walter's wife's *grand*mother; Tina D'Amico, who'd worked with one of Ray's connections at DeFusco's bakery down the road; and Linda Blanchette (née DiMartino), who - like Jessica Russo - had walked in off the street one day, looking for a job. Linda, 47, has long, wavy, dyed blonde hair, large hoop earrings, and strikingly baby blue eyes. Male customers would often compliment her on those eyes, she later told me. ("I mean, I just don't get it," she'd say. "They're just fuckin' blue eyes.")

On the day I met Linda, I found her hovering around the front table, moving back and forth between the refrigerators and the display cases, replacing empty trays of pastry with fresh new ones to be sold. She was single, it seemed (divorced, I later found out), because the younger girls were laughing about setting her up with Tyrone, the bakery's refrigeration man, who is black. Tyrone had come in through the front door and had walked by the table

twice that morning, and one of the Bellas pretended to call out his name as he passed. "Oh my god *stop it*," Linda chuckled.

Ray wasn't in sight at the time — he had gone either downstairs by the freezers and pastries, or back by the ovens — so the chatter continued.

"Ooh Jessica," Bella DiPalma suddenly remembered. "I forgot I have some bottle caps for you."

Jessica Russo happily went to get the bottle caps from Bella and put them inside a large glass jar on top of the counter, by the phones and the clock. I asked her about it.

"Oh, well one of my aunts is having chemo... that's how you say it, right? Chemo? Like cancer treatments." I nodded. She explained to me that there is a foundation that melts the plastic caps to make ports for chemo patients. "So I told my aunt I'd have all the girls at the bakery throw in any extra soda caps they have lying around." She then showed me: the jar was almost full.

A few minutes later, Linda started discussing a bunion that she had on her foot that was really bothering her. She mentioned an onion "trick" she had learned on the Internet — to leave a raw onion under the sole of her foot overnight, inside her socks. "Yeah, it flushes the toxins outta your system," she said earnestly.

Bella Buonanno looked at me and rolled her eyes. "Linda believes everything she reads on the Internet." Linda laughed and gently slapped her; Bella smirked. "Your feet hurt Linda, well, so do mine! I've been standing since 5am! I can't *wait* for vacation," she whined. "But I'm too scared to even tell Ray that I'm going on vacation!"

"You better tell him soon," Linda told her. "And all of you... you better speed up, get busy. I mean I know you're busy but make sure you *look* busy." Linda looked up at the camera in the corner of the ceiling. "You know he's always watchin'."

The girls quickened their pace, and I tried to match them, but I couldn't; they could fill a bag of pizza chips in four seconds flat, in four sweeping motions. I said something about how quickly they all bagged chips, and how slowly I did.

"Yeah, you're slow now," Tony DiBiasio snickered; he heard me as he came around the corner. "But just wait 'til Ray comes and yells at ya. You'll speed right up!" All the girls laughed, nodding.

4.1.1 Lemonade and Coffee: "womanly duties" and self-worth

I approached such conversations around the front table as DeVault (1990; 1999) and other feminist scholars approach female "chit chat" — as full of "meanings worth discovering" (DeVault, 1999, p. 57). I soon learned, through paying attention to this kind of talk, that despite any differences in age and attitude, all of the bakery women had a similarly subservient relationship to Ray. It was difficult to distinguish what portion of that subservience was due to his status as the "boss" and what portion was due to his status as a man. When other men who were not the boss came into the space — like Paul, Ray's twin brother, who makes biscuits downstairs on Tuesdays and Thursdays and who Ray claims is much more selfish than he is; or like Tommy Shea, with his gray mustache, the most well-known construction company owner in Johnston, who financed part of Ray's start-up costs and so feels entitled to unlimited free baked goods for life; or like any of Ray's cop pals, local farmers, and other men who would wander in, hoping to say hello, to give Ray a gift, or to get some free bread themselves — the girls would treat them all in the same way, would have the same reaction to them as they had to Ray, would drop whatever they were doing if one of these men turned to them and began to ask for a calzone to be heated, a loaf of bread to be sliced, or a danish to be packaged. "Hey sweetie, could you get me a...?"

Linda, with her hoop earrings and blue eyes, would often be the woman that Ray - and these other men - would ask to serve them. Linda was around a lot; she worked six days a week, and workers and visitors alike were used to her presence. "LINNNN-DAAAAAH," Ray would yell from the ovens. "Take care of the linen guy, will ya?" Linda would then stop what she was doing, leave her white rectangular plastic tray, half-filled with cold cream pastries, on the brown wooden table, take off her gloves, and scurry over to the front of the

store to grab a white plastic thank-you bag. “Get ’em three red, two spinach, one meatball,” Ray would finish his order. She’d nod, race to fill the bag, and bring it back with pride to the linen man - a small, gray-haired man from Falvey linen company, dressed in uniform, who came in twice a week to wash the stacks of white aprons and rags after they’d become stained red and brown, soaked with pizza sauce and chocolate and oil. The man would often accept the bag with a quick smile, if any smile at all, as he continued talking with Ray by the ovens.

Though completing these acts of service were technically extra tasks, unrelated to waiting on real customers or to restocking the spinach calzones and pastries, which were Linda’s official duties, she often didn’t seem to mind; in fact, sometimes I noticed that she would anticipate the needs of these men, would search for an excuse to stop what she was doing and gather up whatever was necessary to please them. Ray and his friends were more important than restocking the cases. She would jump at the chance to bring Ray his daily cup of frozen lemonade from the Del’s lemonade machine he has in the front of the store, which he got at a discounted price (he knows the owner of the Del’s franchise personally). I saw her once stop Ray in his tracks as he was on his way out of the bakery, going home to sleep at 3 or 4pm. “Let me get you your lemonade before you leave!” she said; she wanted badly - at least in those moments - to be needed by him. She’d often act this way with other men, too, men who were not in any position of authority over her, like a few of the Dominican men who worked the ovens. Dalvin, Miguel, and Pedro would sometimes peek their heads around the corner into the front room and search for Linda’s eyes. “Ma*ma*,” they’d say, and make a quick motion with their hand, as if drinking a cup. “Okay I’ll make you guys your coffees,” she’d beam, and she’d spend the next ten minutes scrubbing out glass coffee pots in the sink, replacing the filter in the old industrial-sized drip coffee maker, brewing the coffee, and pouring it into styrofoam cups - each with no milk, but with three spoonfuls of sugar - and carrying the cups back to them.

This was a typical scene. Linda, Tina, Anna, Ray’s daughter Diane: the bakery women,

particularly those who were middle-aged and older, would often make coffees for the "guys in the back," would make them "lunch" at 8:00 in the morning after they'd been in front of the hot ovens overnight, would rush to feed them, to feed Ray, to take care of these men in the way they knew how. Tina would present Ray with fresh blueberries she'd picked from her blueberry bush. ("Blueberries are Raymond's *favorite*," she would tell me.) On Monday mornings, Anna would bring Ray any extra food from her Sunday dinners – lasagna, maybe, or some of her Italian sausage, peppers, and potatoes, suspended in tomato sauce, dripping with oil, in small plastic containers which she'd saved from the sandwich shop next to the bakery. Pat, too, would sometimes arrive at her usual time, 7:00am sharp, carrying a plastic bag with a pyrex full of the dinner or snacks she'd made for her husband the night before. ("I made some duh-LISH-us boiled pepper biscuits last night, Raymond, you want some?"). And Diane would cook eggs and sausage for the Dominican men in whichever of the small half-sheet pans weren't being used on Saturday mornings; she'd slip the pan into the 800-degree oven, in between tomato-covered pizzas, and a few minutes later – once the sausages were sizzling – she'd have split buns ready at the table, ripped in half, their soft white insides steaming, and would scoop the egg and sausage mixture into the buns as she called the men over.

In general, these women seemed quite comfortable with the idea that men needed to be taken care of in this way, and that they themselves were uniquely able to do it. The men that surrounded them - especially Italian-American men - were frequently viewed as somewhat helpless, dependent upon women for their care. Their characterizations often matched those found in other studies of Italian-American men and women — e.g. in Di Leonardo's (1984) study of Northern Californian Italian-Americans, in which the female support of adult men and children in the domestic sphere was "necessary to keep men healthy and emotionally stable enough to work," aligned with what Marxists call the "reproduction of the labor force" (Di Leonardo, 1984, p. 195). Tina, for example, would complain that her husband "don't know anythin" about computers, laundry, or tasks around the house.

“It’s the mothers!” Anna DeFazio told her once in response. “They can’t help it, because that’s the way they were treated growin’ up.” The men that Anna knew were always spoiled by their mothers, to the point that when they became adults, they didn’t know how to do anything for themselves. Anna would often joke about when her son, Rob DeFazio, would call her up: she can always tell when he needs something. “They’ll say, so, Ma... whatcha doin’? That’s when ya know... they need something!” All the ladies laughed at this, would say, “yep, my husband is the same!”, and would often repeat their well-worn saying: “a woman can live without a man, but a man can’t live without a woman!”

About a month or two into my time as a counter girl, I felt close enough with the girls to ask Linda how serving the guys coffee made her feel. “I dunno, I think the rapport is actually better when you make them coffee,” she answered. “Cuz that puts them in a better mood, and then they work faster! And then Ray’s in a good mood too,” she laughed. All topics led to Ray; everything was about him. She almost stopped there, but then she had more to say. “And then I kinda feel important too.”

“Why?”

“Cuz you’re helpin’ em out and doin’ em a favor, and you’re... kind of bein’ their wife, so to speak, cuz their wife’s not here!” Linda kept laughing; she often amused herself. “I enjoy makin’ it, I do. I feel like I’m doin’ my womanly duties.”

Linda - and others - were in many instances happy to fulfill what they viewed as their “womanly duties,” even if they didn’t explicitly name these acts as such. Linda told me on a separate occasion — as she smoked a cigarette in the small living room area of her studio apartment, on the ground floor of an old storefront around the corner from the bakery — that she got the impulse to serve men from her Portuguese mother, who would stay home and cook all the time, making sure that she, her siblings, and her Italian father were well-fed. It was a clearly defined role for Linda and these other women, even if they occupied that role situationally, in certain moments: girls young and old would anticipate the needs of Ray and his friends, would often ask the men - before the men would ask them - whether

or not they wanted their bread sliced in the slicer, would happily package it up, would proudly deliver it. "Gotta walk around the men!" Anna DeFazio chuckled to me once as she limped the long way around the large table - she always walked with a limp, from the edema in her legs - so that Ray and two of his friends, who were talking business, could stay there and keep talking, undisturbed.

Completing these acts of service, of deference, seemed to be one unquestionable way for the counter girls to relate to the men that surrounded them. As I watched, and as I participated in the system myself, I was often reminded of what sociologist Eva Illouz terms the "pleasures of inequality" (Illouz, 2014) — the emotional satisfaction that is so inherent to unequal relations between women and men. In Illouz's formulation, traditional gender roles - which are built upon a "natural" mutual dependency, viewed as such by those who take up the roles - can be difficult to step out of, precisely because they bring such strong emotional satisfaction to their participants. Within this type of micro-level, interactionally-tied inequality is a sense of obligation, and within obligation is a sense of purpose, of usefulness, of positive reinforcement of self-worth. These sorts of dependent relations, Illouz claims, provide a "thick emotional glue" that binds individuals with clear social roles to one another. In this way, women and men play out "dramas of self-worth" during the course of each and every interaction they have, and their self-worth becomes inextricably tied to their gender identities (Goffman, 1977).

Within the bakery, these interactions did often occur between high-status men and lower-status counter girls; but such a pattern is not atypical of the field of interactions between men and women outside of the bakery's walls, especially in the rest of Thornton and Providence suburbs. Men and women generally interact frequently - as gender divides people into two equal-sized groups - but only a minority of those interactions are between men and women who are equal in status and power (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin, 1999). While, in the bakery, women's interactional behavior might be partially due to the "goal-oriented" setting and "situation" of the lower-status role of

counter girl (Berger et al., 1972), their behavior also illuminates on some level the expectations which lurk beneath the surface — expectations wrapped up in cultural beliefs about the relative status of men and women, often learned in childhood and adolescence (Goffman, 1977; Adler et al., 1992), rooted in emotional development (Thoits, 1989), and passed down from generation to generation (Lewis and Saarni, 1985; Campos et al., 1983).

4.1.2 The Bakery Bar: male attention as relational currency

A few times a week, a tall mustached man in his 50s named Tommy Shea - a quarter Irish, but mostly Italian, *thankyouverymuch* - would come to visit the bakery. He wasn't extraordinarily tall, just tall in an ordinary kind of way – about 6'1", perhaps – but he'd seem taller, partly because he'd take over the whole place immediately, like a celebrity. He'd start talking, start turning heads, as soon as the front door burst open. "HEeEEeyyyy how are ya?" he'd boom. "What's goin' on in here, mama? Heyy papi, heyy mami, how's my little cub doin' today? Heyy heyy, how you all doin'?" His grinning teeth and big gray mustache took up his whole face. If it was early morning, he'd be wearing work boots and a yellow sweatshirt, the left breast embroidered with *Shea Angeloral Services*, his concrete and stone masonry company; but if it was the afternoon or the weekend, he'd be in loafers, khakis, and a multicolored Hawaiian shirt. He'd always let himself right around the registers and into the front room, like he owned the place, which in some ways he did: twelve years ago, he had lent Ray fifteen thousand dollars to help with start up costs, after Ray had impressed him when he'd walked in to buy some bread. "These rolls fresh?" Tommy had asked. Ray knew the rolls were burning hot - they were fresh out the oven - and so he threw one to Tommy, who caught and juggled it like a hot potato — *ow ow owww!* (Ray is still pleased with himself whenever he tells this story.)

The counter girls appeared to appreciate Tommy's presence. He'd often give out hugs to his favorites as he walked towards Ray at the back ovens. "Look at this kid," he'd say to Ray, taking one of the girls under his arm. "Ain't she beautiful?" Bella, Christine,

or Jessica, whichever one he focused his attention on that morning, would blush, would smile, would ask Tommy if he needed anything, and he'd put his order in — a box of red and jalapeño pizza chips, maybe, or an assortment of mini calzones to take back to the guys working on his trucks, his excavators and dump trucks, which he polished regularly; he'd sometimes show us girls pictures of how the trucks sparkled, or how spotless the gray cement floor of his big garage was. "If I wasn't so old, I'd date you!" he'd laugh, switching his glance between whichever girl he was holding and Ray, establishing a sort of closeness with them both simultaneously. Everyone would roll their eyes and chuckle together, and then Tommy would soon be on his way, pizza and calzones in hand.

19-year-old Christine O'Brien (who identifies with a mixture of Irish, French, and Italian heritages) would brag sometimes about the attention she got from Tommy. "Tommy is my buddy," she'd beam in front of the other girls. "Middle-aged and older men like him love me!" Tommy's jokes provided Christine with some confirmation of her feminine desirability. She found them to be quite flattering, distinguishing them from some of the more crude remarks she'd often get from customers or strangers. She told me one day that Tommy is polite, very nice, that he didn't "overstep his boundaries" with his compliments, which only began once they became comfortable with each other:

> *Christine*: Now that I'm comfortable with him, he knows like, he'll come up to me, give me a hug, kiss me on the cheek, *Hi Mami, how are you gorgeous?* Like you know, but when he first started, when I first met him, he was more like, *hi, how are you?* Like you know what I mean? When he... when we got more comfortable he was more flattering towards me.

To Christine, the attention Tommy gave her was not only an expression of her general desirability as a woman, but also of her level of comfort and closeness with him. This very sort of closeness is what Goffman (1971a) describes as "familiarity," and it is often built upon what he terms "territorial offenses" — words or acts which encroach upon another's territory of self, putting one's arm around someone, for example, or making a remark about their appearance. Such acts would typically mark a violation of the "normal" rules of con-

duct (rules which protect selves and form the basis of Goffman's interactional order), but become commonplace as the level of intimacy and familiarity grows between two individuals connected by a social bond:

> "...if an individual is to join someone in some kind of social bond, surely he must do so by giving up some of the boundaries and barriers that ordinarily separate them. Indeed the fact of having given up these separatenesses is a central symbol and substance of relationship." (Goffman, 1971a, p. 83)

Among the bakery workers, gendered identities seemed to provide an easy route to the "territorial offenses" which in fact brought them closer to one another, and which were conferred with "no great expectation or hope that something beyond the contact [would] come of them" (Goffman, 1977, p. 312). Interactions similar to those between Tommy and the girls would happen constantly with other men: Frank and Dominic Gesualdi, the pair of brothers who would make biscuits with Ray's twin Paul downstairs, would come by and joke whenever one of us happened to be in the back with the guys, preparing a pizza – "how come you get to work with all the pretty girls," Frank would say, pointing to his brother, "and I have to work with *this* guy?" It would happen with customers, too: lanky old Lou, with his slight hook nose, who would come in at the same time every morning for his single split roll, would joke with Linda over the counter about how he wanted to take her on vacation with him, or about the flour she had on her "beautiful" behind. "What is this, the bakery *bar*?" Linda would laugh and laugh.

This sort of talk wasn't always comfortable and humorous, of course; male customers in particular would sometimes cross the line with their remarks to the girls, and the girls - as part of their job - would have to receive these remarks in acceptable ways, keeping customers happy, as has been documented elsewhere by others — for example, those studying "emotion-work" (Hochschild, 1983) or sexualized work relations (Adkins, 1995). (These instances were described by the counter girls as "scummy" or "creepy, and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.) For now, I wish to emphasize that when such talk occurred between men and women who were already familiar with one another, and

when their intentions did not extend beyond the confines of the present interaction, it was viewed by all - both young and old - as "harmless," as a well-worn technique for individuals to express their connection and closeness — not just between women and men, but also between men and men, and women and women. Tommy Shea would seek out Ray's eyes as he complimented the girls. And the girls would often joke with each other, would try to one-up each other on the level of attention they received from the men: Linda would sometimes brag after she "made [her] guys coffee" in the back, as Christine would brag about how much Tommy loved her. Tina, too, would sometimes pronounce that she'd gotten more tips in the tip jar after she "showed a little shoulder" to her customers. (The girls would later joke with each other about these one-ups; Lucy would imitate Tina, pulling her t-shirt off her shoulders, pretending to "flash" and bat her eyes, and Linda would imitate Christine, grabbing two large round pound cakes and holding them on her behind, walking with the hip-sway that Christine often used when Tommy was around.)

It was a way of relation that the girls were used to — not simply from working at the bakery, but also from experiences during their childhood years. When I asked 20-year-old Jessica Russo about her interactions with men in the bakery as they compared with her interactions with men in her family, she told me that she would get compliments on her beauty from her uncles and grandparents "all the time":

> *Jessica Russo*: All the time. I would get um, how pretty you are, how sweet you are, or you're gorgeous, um, *bella*, in Italian, it means beautiful... Come sei bella... yeah... I used to get it a lot as a kid, as a teenager, and I still get it now, from like my whole family.
>
> *Me:* How did it make you feel?
>
> *Jessica Russo*: Amazing. Because I mean like in teenager years you know, it's like, that's the time where you care what other people think of you. You're always, everybody judges. No matter who you are, they judge in some type of way, and you care about what people think of you. So to hear that, you're like, alright, well now I'm like the ideal person, that's known to be like that because everybody, the ideal person is to be beautiful. Or the ideal person is to be sweet. Or the ideal person is to be... I don't know, funny. So I feel as though

> when people say that as a teenager, you're like, okay, well now I'm like, part of society, or I'm like, the ideal girl, the ideal woman.

Jessica indirectly expressed the impact that those crucial "teenager years" had upon the ways she learned how to live up to the expectations her family had of "the ideal woman," and how she learned to interact with men in light of those expectations. Furthermore, she acknowledged the emotional impact that such training had on her; when men complimented her on her beauty as a teenager, it made her feel "amazing" about herself, just as it does today:

> *Jessica Russo*: Well, a lotta times, regarding males, it is older men, they compliment me on my looks or my smile, or my personality, um, I get flattered by it. I know that you know, I'm pleasant, I'm appealing. I don't get offended at all. I actually, I'm flattered, because you know... I feel pretty! Like, I feel good when somebody says, calls me beautiful.

Appearance-based compliments, then, not only were typically viewed as "harmless" when they were from male workers or familiar customers, but were also reminiscent of interactions with male family members, stirring the sort of gender-based "childhood training of the heart" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 163) that caused the counter girls emotional satisfaction in their youth. The comfort and positive feelings these sorts of interactions brought about in the counter girls, both young and old, would bind them to the men, as well as to each other, in part due to the familiarity generated by "territorial offenses" against their gendered selves (Goffman, 1971a, 1977). In these ways, behaviors and words associated with traditional gender roles and patriarchal organizational schemes — the same sort that have been so frequently documented in older studies of Italian-American communities and families (Di Leonardo, 1984; Johnson, 1985; Smith, 1985) — still, today, in the suburbs of Providence, form the very substance of social bonds.

4.2 Hard-Working Men

If I came in early enough, I was sometimes allowed to help the men (and few chosen women) in the back of the bakery - before my counter girl duties began - with the business of baking the morning's bread and pizza. This set of hours, between about 3:00am and 8:00am, was where the bulk of the hard work happened: the atmosphere was for the most part serious, urgent, and careful.

On my first morning in the back, I found myself helping the Dominican immigrant Dalvin Polanco — often called "Dalvin" or by Ray's Italian nickname "Dalvino" — on the pizza chip machine. Together we would grab small discs of sticky dough as they flew out of the silver cylinder and were sliced by the automatic knife (*cha-CHUNK, cha-CHUNK, cha-CHUNK*), placing them 7 x 5 on oily trays that Dalvin had laid out. "Harina. Flour," he'd say, indicating in his limited English that I should flour my hands before grabbing the bits of dough, and beginning what would become our year-long Spanish baking vocabulary lessons. Despite how slow I was, and how the pile of dough kept growing with every piece I missed, Dalvin was generous with his time and humor. "You work on the machine before!" he said, laughing, while frantically making up for my lack of skill.

Soon a piercing timer went off - *bee-bee-beep, bee-bee-beep, bee-bee-beep*. Dalvin, with concerned eyes, abruptly stopped the machine and ran to the ovens, where he used an old oven mitt, caked with black grime, to grab the hot pans of pizza; he was careful not to spill the inch of oil the pizza was sitting in, which was near boiling, and which he'd soon pour with grace into a large yellow empty can - of what used to be *Cento San Marzano* peeled tomatoes - on the floor. But before I could really even tell what was happening, Dalvin's cousin Pedro — who had been taking some tall racks of dough out of the wet, warm steam box and standing on his tippy toes to cover them with plastic, so the hungry yeast could keep feeding, making the dough puffy and sour-smelling — stopped what he was doing, and, without missing a beat, spun around to slip into Dalvin's place at the table, to resume working on the machine with me in his stead.

Pedro made a face, turning the frequency of the machine down to 50 slices per minute, instantaneously establishing comradery, suggesting with his eyebrows that Dalvin's 90-per-minute rate was crazy. The pace of it all was so fast, so seamless, as if every person in the bakery could keep track of at least ten different processes at once in their heads, going about the space in smooth, quick motions, pure muscle memory. Pedro and I worked in silence for a bit, speaking only when necessary: he would motion when to get more trays, when to stop the machine, where to move. We began a new task together, making piles of larger pieces of dough for rectangular pizza crusts, and he showed me, without speaking, how he would roll the triangular chunks coming out of the machine - more slowly this time - into flat ovals, patting them with flour, slapping six of them onto heavy wooden boards, and picking the boards up with all his strength, and mine, to place them on every other slot in the metal rolling rack. I was covered in flour by this point, and I felt my arm muscles working much harder than they were used to. We all kept moving, switching tasks whenever the dough in the large basin of the machine ran out. "*DOUGH'S READY!*" Ray would yell, and Dalvin, along with Miguel and Primo - two more immigrants from the Dominican Republic, who spoke very little English, and with whom I had been communicating up to this point only with smiles from across the room - would drop whatever they were doing to scurry over to the mixing bowl to transfer the new batch of dough to the top of the machine, or to the table near the machine, in large chunks that they would cut and carry in the air, over their heads; I could see their brown biceps and forearm muscles straining under their short sleeve shirts. Once the machine was filled, we'd start again, grabbing discs of dough, *cha-CHUNK, cha-CHUNK, cha-CHUNK.*

Whenever Ray would walk by, I would quicken my pace; I had already started wanting to impress him, just like everyone else. I kept checking for his figure out of the corner of my eye, hoping to prove myself to him, to let him see me working hard. That seemed to be the fastest way to gain his trust. Sometimes my eye caught Tony DiBiasio instead, rolling a rack either to or from the ovens, keeping busy under Ray's gaze. Tony often

would comment on my progress. "Hoooo, you got her doin' the grunt work now!" Tony would chuckle, looking at Ray for a reaction. Ray was pleased about this; hard physical labor energized him, brought joy to his core. "That's right!" he laughed, delighted, as he shoveled hot bread out of the oven with his wooden peel.

4.2.1 Bread and Concrete: intergenerational mobility and identity

Ray has always had a deep attachment to the value of "hard work." He'd often stay working at the bakery fifteen (or more) hours per day, and then brag about it. "When I go home," he'll say, "I'll sit on the stairs, take my shoes off and think: why am I here? I should be at the bakery!" He claims to have picked up his work ethic from both of his second-generation Italian-American parents, but his father in particular (whose name was Francesco, Ray's middle name) is his real inspiration. Francesco was the son of Italian immigrants from Roccamonfina, near Naples, and though he had baked alongside Ray for most of his later years, he held all sorts of odd jobs when Ray was younger: he was a tube drawer for A.T. Wall (a jewelry company), an ice man, sold balloons on the streets of Providence, worked in maintenance at the downtown auditorium, and worked at a Vesta underwear clothing factory, where he met Ray's mother, Louise Coletti, also the child of Italian immigrants. Ray can still picture his father falling asleep at their kitchen table at night, face down in jewelry molds, putting pieces together that he'd taken home as "piece work" from the jewelry factory.

"That's just the way I am," Ray will say. "Just like my father. I just love to work." Work was a part of Ray's identity, how he understood himself, how he judged himself, as well as how others judged him (Hughes, 1958). "It's part of [Ray's] family foundation," Tony DiBiasio once told me, as we sat in his trash-filled blue minivan before another one of our jam sessions. "It's his comfort zone. He's been bakin' all his life, with his father, with his uncle, with his nephews, all his family." Tony felt he himself was like this, too: he was always "hustling" when he was younger, making money working at jewelry factories,

selling watches on the street. Now, in his 70s, Tony still worked for Ray, for free, five days a week, on his feet for eight hours each day. "That's probably why we (he and Ray) get along," Tony thought. Big Rob DeFazio, Ray's nephew, former co-owner of DeFazio's bakery - where Ray used to work - told me once that he'd raised all his kids to work hard, like him. ("It's all in the upbringing," he'd say.) And Tommy Shea, too, with his grinning mustache, admired hard physical labor; he'd told me once, excitedly, all about a documentary series he was watching called *The Men Who Built America* on the History Channel, how amazing men like Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, and J.P. Morgan were, how he idolizes them, how proud he was of the Italians who built the bridges that these powerful men financed, and how he loves to work hard himself, at his own concrete business, making as much money as he can. "I love to work. Love it," Tommy would say. "It's a good feeling to be tired at the end of the day." And though he and Ray were cut from the same cloth, Tommy acknowledged that Ray went above the rest: "Nobody works like Ray," he'd say. "Look at him! The man's a magician, a chemist... every move he makes is productive. A guy who gets nine hours outta an eight hour work day, now *that's* the guy I wanna talk to." Working hard - efficiently and profitably - was the highest praise a man could give another man.

And the fact that the "hard work" these men referred to was physical work, work involving material goods, the work of owning small businesses wrapped up in tangible items, bread, concrete, stone, landscaping — this was what tied their work identities to their ethnic heritage, to the line of labor they had come from, passed down from their Italian immigrant ancestors in the not-so-distant past. Ray's mother, Louise, didn't think much of any sort of work which wasn't "workin' wit' your hands," his sister Anna told me, since, for many local Italian families, "workin' wit' your hands" was the quickest way to make money, to rise up in society. "It was all about makin' money," Ray would say about his life, because in his world, goodness meant money, meant being generous with it, helping out his friends who needed it, being known as someone who had it. The men around him would reinforce

this view, and the women around him would do the same. (Pat, for example, around the table one day, told me how impressed she was with the yacht of a man that her sister-in-law Sherri knew, describing all the oriental interior, its beautiful golden state rooms; she, like most others, had no qualms about talking about how much money people made, praising them for it – "oooh, her husband's got a looottttta money," she'd say, wide-eyed, or "I have a *rich* brother-in-law, Jerry Magnone, he's in trash, his father owned all the land way up Plainfield Pike, sold it for 75 million!" Linda, too, felt that in order to be a "better person," she'd have to have money.[52]) If the quickest way to money in Johnston was acquiring a local family business, baking bread, paving driveways, transporting trash, selling land, managing real estate passed down through the generations — it would make sense to choose these pathways, alternative routes to upward class mobility compared to those that are emphasized in most sociological discussions of it (e.g., education (Conley, 2008)). Views and values like these perhaps point to some of the reasons behind Johnston's standing as a higher-than-average-income, lower-than-average-education suburb (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

None of this is to say that *all* the Italian-American men I came to know around the bakery were completely dedicated to these material ways of making money and carving out identity. Younger generations were around and working, certainly — Big Rob DeFazio's son, 35-year-old "Little Rob," who was the pastry chef, often had *his* son, Rob Jr., just ten years old, up on a stool in the pastry room with him, wearing a standard-sized white apron, which reached down to his ankles, like a dress, learning to decorate cakes — but they often had different feelings about the work, different attachments to it when piecing together their

[52]This excerpt from my field notes on 8/28/17 demonstrates Linda's thoughts about money and goodness: "Linda spoke slowly as she struggled to find the words. "It's like, I know what I'm tryin to say but I don't know the words!" she chuckled. "Ok it's like... in order to be a good person, you need to have... tools. And I don't have the right tools." She told me a quick story about a homeless man she saw while she was with her daughter the other day - he had five dogs with him, which really broke her heart. "A person can go out and get a job and do something about it, but the dogs are just helpless. SO I had four dollars on me from tips, and I actually gave him four dollars. But you know, if I had more money, I would give more - I would give to charities. But I can only give what I have, which is not a lot. *So if I made more money, I would be a better person.*"

identities. Little Rob himself had left Rhode Island for a while; he'd gone to the University of Missouri for his bachelor's degree. Still, he'd ended up back here, drawn back to his family and his roots. He had mixed feelings about it: he felt a lot of pressure to uphold those "old school values of keeping the family name alive," but he didn't like putting in all the hours that his uncle did. He'd rather spend more time with his wife, Amanda, at home with Rob Jr. Nevertheless, he'd gotten "sucked back into [his family's] web," he told me, caving under the pressure of "family tradition" — "it makes it seem like it's something you have to keep going."

In general, within the group of men who hovered around the social world of the bakery, deep attachments to the same sorts of hard physical labor that they had been exposed to in their families and surrounding local circles reigned supreme, and these ways of understanding themselves in light of their work were reinforced by the judgments and values held by those they interacted with daily. It is useful here to evaluate the situation of these Johnston Italian-American men in light of the two dimensions of occupational mobility laid out by Everett Hughes (1958) — mobility of the *individual* versus mobility of the *occupation*. For these men, individual mobility has led them to acquire immediate self-satisfaction, to help them rise in status among peers in their direct vicinity, through the channels available to them (which in this case involve small family businesses of tangible goods). At the same time, the mobility of these locally-tied occupations that they have taken up relative to other American occupations and pathways – many of which require education, or familiarity with the new economic sectors which touch more "global" cities (Sassen, 1991; Temin, 2018) – has remained stagnant.

4.2.2 Taking care of each other: solidarity and a persistent enclave mentality

A major perk of "makin' money," for Ray, was the fact that it allowed him to "take care" of his friends. He was known around town for his generosity. "Oh he's just soooo generous," his friends, Johnston cops, and ex-mobsters would say, after Ray would force them to

leave the bakery with their fingers clenched tight around 3-4 heavy plastic bags, filled with free pizza, calzones, or egg biscuits. He'd often establish chains of reciprocal gift-giving with men like him, or men in some sort of position to do him a favor someday: his PR contact at local channel 12 for example, Joe Lupo – nicknamed "Joe Cologne" by Tony DiBiasio, since you could smell him as soon as he walked in the door – would constantly leave the bakery with his arms full of 4-5 boxes of pizza for everyone at the news station. (Joe would occasionally come into the bakery with free tickets to shows at the Providence Performing Arts Center in exchange, which Anna and the ladies happily received.) Angelo Ricci, another local television and radio host, would not only get free goods himself, but so would his daughters: Ray would send them pizza chips to their college dorms. (Angelo, in return perhaps, would make the occasional plug for Ray's bakery on his radio show.[53]) And Frank Ferrante, a short, bald "loudmouth" with a round nose who lived just down the street, would get his bread for free, since he would often have his wife fry up squash flowers for Ray to eat on early summer mornings, after he'd been slaving away in front of the hot ovens all night. (Ray would get the raw squash flowers from a local farmer - another friend of his - and would call Frank up to come get them and bring them to his wife to fry in her special batter, made with bisquick, salt, pepper, garlic, and parmesan cheese.)

But Ray would also "take care" of those who - like him - were hard workers. The most notable examples of this came from his favorite employees, whom he'd often help out with money if they were short on cash. 20-year-old Jessica Russo, for example, was "a good worker, the best counter girl" Ray claimed, worked fast, and always worked the busiest hours, too; so when her car broke down, and she didn't have the money to pay for it, he took care of the $800 bill. "You gotta help people when you can," he said to me. (Jessica Russo confirmed this as we left the bakery and walked out to her car, which has

[53]Tony DiBiasio and I actually recorded a theme song for Angelo's radio show on my laptop, in my living room, and Angelo occasionally played our song on the air. On the day we showed the song to Angelo, I noticed Tony whispering something into his ear and pointing at Raymond; later on, my suspicions of what this was all about were confirmed: Tony bragged to Raymond - "I told him that you financed all of this, the CD production," he smirked. Raymond was grateful. "I know, I heard ya. Thanks for that."

a little magnetic Italian flag stuck on its rear bumper.) Linda, too, was the beneficiary of Ray's generosity; when she left her abusive ex, she had nowhere to go, so Ray called up a guy he knew who had an empty apartment on Plainfield St., just a block from the bakery, and got Linda set up there, paying her security deposit and first month's rent. And Dalvin "Dalvino" Polanco, who always worked the pizza chip machine in his backwards Yankees baseball cap, was Ray's favorite among his Dominican oven staff: he'd work 13 hour days, six days a week (seven around the holidays), and had saved up enough money to buy his family a house in Providence. This pleased Ray greatly, and so Ray would help Dalvin out, would take him on late morning rides to Restaurant Depot (a bulk grocery store, just for restaurant owners) to buy ingredients with him, and they'd always stop for steak and eggs afterwards at the diner down the street. While there, they'd talk about stocks, and investments — Ray had helped Dalvin put some of his earnings aside each month and had set up both savings and investment accounts for him. (Sometimes Dalvin's wife would send him in with Dominican food - some moro de guandules or some tostones - for Ray to eat, to thank him.)

Ray tried his best to "take care" of *me*, too (though of course these efforts were complicated by the fact that he - and others - knew I would be writing about them, and most likely worked to paint themselves in the best light possible). When I insisted on not getting paid, and not taking tips — which I blamed on "university rules," but which really was to avoid being too ensnared in the webs of mutual obligation which were so thick in the air — I could tell that Ray felt bad for me. "You work like a dog out there," he said, and a few minutes later waved me over and whispered to me by the ovens. "How about I put aside a couple hundred bucks for you every week, and give it to ya right after you finish the book? You can put it right into your bank account yourself. No one will know!" (I refused, but only after I thanked him profusely; it was a kind, sensitive gesture.) Others around the bakery would do the same with me, would wrap me into their parties, would cook for me, would feed me, would take on my project as a collective effort. "Come over, ask us some

questions," Frank Ferrante said when he suggested I interview him and his Uncle Nondo at his house down the street. "We'll get that PhD done for ya!"

In general, the tone of relationships among bakery workers and their extended connections was one of solidarity, mutual dependence, and obligation. I remember on one occasion, when Ray overslept his alarm, he got angry at his dishwasher, Tony Martino - who usually left when Ray arrived just before midnight - for not calling him to wake him up, not intervening in his life the way he felt he should have. It was good, it was right, it was *expected* that everyone would be involved in each other's affairs, monetary, personal, or otherwise. Ray, in many ways, was at the center of this system of dependence, sponsoring his favorites who worked hard and proved to share his values. His sponsorship in these cases extended to some of those who were outside of his Italian-American family and friends — namely, to Dalvin, who "hustled" as hard as Ray himself did; there seemed to be a natural sort of partnership between them, between an "old" one-generation-removed immigrant who knew what it took to start a life in a new country, who still had in his memory days when his own father fell asleep face-first in jewelry molds, and Dalvin, a "new" immigrant, one who had bought a house and who worked as many hours as he could, overnight, alongside Ray, carrying heavy chunks of dough over his head, slipping around on a floor filled with oil.

The atmosphere very much resembled what Portes and Manning (2012) describe as ethnic solidarity — the same sort as that typically found in immigrant enclaves. In Portes and Manning's formulation, relationships between enclave employers and employees "generally transcend a contractual wage bond": wages are only "one form of compensation." Other sorts of compensation include informal opportunities that employers might create for their employees' self-advancement (for example, Ray setting Dalvin up with savings and teaching him how to invest), or aid in times of need (such as Ray providing emergency car repair funds for Jessica Russo and apartment payments for Linda). In return, workers remain dedicated to their employers, and work in ways they might not if they were not in

some way dependent on them. This system upholds a set of "paternalistic labor relations" and "strong community solidarity" which propel members of the community into upward social mobility (Portes and Manning, 2012).

This type of community solidarity, featuring systems of paternalistic labor relations, is not typically documented in groups considered to be ethnically "white," but rather is much more common among immigrant-minority workers (Wilson and Portes, 1980) and among black workers. In *The Dignity Of Working Men* (2009), for example, Michèle Lamont contrasts the "individualism" exhibited in the "dimensions of morality most salient" to the groups of white working-class men she interviewed with the "collectivism" most salient to black working-class men (Lamont, 2009, p. 21). In her interviews, black workers "defined their financial goals in altruistic terms," citing such abilities as to "try to help a lot of people, create jobs for them, and keep them working" (Lamont, 2009, p. 47). In this realm, the Italian-American bakery workers much more closely resembled immigrant-minority workers and black workers than they did the average "white" worker, perhaps pointing again to the need for breaking apart the all-encompassing category of "white" into its varied and heterogeneous populations.

Beneficial effects stemming from such types of solidarity do exist, but they have shown to be limited. As Sanders and Nee (1987) note, employers can draw upon notions of solidarity in order to sustain poor working conditions and low wages. At the bakery this was certainly the case: Ray's generosity always came with a price. Linda, for example, was expected to work more hours than anyone else, and she was always the girl chosen to cover shifts for the other counter girls if they didn't show up. Tony DiBiasio thought it was right it turned out that way. ("She should be running around the place like a crazy woman, trying to do everything for Ray that she possibly can!" Tony told me. "If it wasn't for him, she'd be homeless!") But Linda felt trapped sometimes by Ray's favor; I watched her cry one Thursday, out by the creek on the side of the bakery, smoking a cigarette, because she

hadn't had a proper day off in weeks.[54] And Frank Ferrante, too, though not one of Ray's employees, became sick of the unofficial arrangement he and Ray had, where he traded fried squash flowers for free bread and pizza:

> "He keeps givin' em [the squash flowers] to me! I say, wait a minute, now my wife's gotta get up early! I gotta wake her up to make these friggin' things for you! ... And I mean, then he gives me somethin' for nothin', and I don't want it. Like I got into an argument with him this morning, I says, listen. I says to him. You know, when my daughter comes down, I wanna pick up a little extra, because she likes your spinach pies, they like your bread. I wanna PAY for it!" [interview transcript, 8/7/17]

I gathered from my discussion with Frank that he felt two things simultaneously as a result of Ray's generosity. First, he felt that he couldn't go into the bakery as often as he'd like, to buy bread, pizza, or cookies, since he didn't like the feeling he got when Ray insisted he take whatever he wanted without paying for it. Second, Frank felt obligated to have his wife make Ray his fried squash flowers at any time, on a moment's notice, whenever Ray called him up — even at times when it was inconvenient, or when Frank's wife might have liked to sleep in. Frank pinpointed how being "generous" often benefits Ray himself:

> "But he likes all the attention! Everybody comes in, 'Heyyy Ray, How are ya!?' you know, Guido comes in, Carlo comes in... you know what I mean? 'Heyyy HOW YOU DOIN!' You know what I mean? 'Give 'em whatever they want!' he says, hey hey, take it! He LOVES doin' it!"

The "perks" that Ray, as an employer in this community, received for his generosity were often social ones; they were situated in relationships, and they gave him status among people in his immediate social circles. The behaviors of Ray (and others) which contributed to the maintenance of an "enclave mentality," then, were tied up in the substance of their

[54] Linda's crying when asked to work on her day off then became a bit of a joke around the bakery — "ohhh watch out, don't make Linda do it, she might cry!" Sometimes, she'll push back when she feels exploited or mistreated: once, when Ray yelled at her and called her 'retarded' for messing up some small task around the bakery - as he's been known to do - and then asked her later to fix some pastries in the front display case, she snapped back at him. "Oh I don't know if I can do that, because, you know, I'm retarded."

on-the-ground relationships and their status relative to other men in their local milieu. This force, combined with the emotional bonds created by systems of mutual dependence, might encourage very particular pathways of social mobility, preserving enclave-like economies many decades past when they existed in their original forms.

4.2.3 Sharing the bust: background expectancies and interactional playfulness

The value of "hard work" was often embedded in the substance of jokes. Bakery workers and any friends of the bakery who wandered in would frequently "bust" each other about how hard (or how not-hard) they were working. Tommy Shea, for example, in the same breath that he would praise Ray's work ethic, would poke fun at Ray's twin brother's tendencies. "Ayyyyy, it takes [Paul] one and a half hours to work 60 minutes!" Tommy said once, and everyone laughed. Other men, too, like Pasquale Pezzullo, the owner of a popular restaurant down the street, who would stop in every morning to get bread to serve on his tables, would join in; once he "busted the balls" of one of Ray's produce delivery men, who had come into the bakery with a bushel of apples. "You should get a real job!" he told the man. "You deliver apples for a living!" (The man chuckled and slapped Pasquale on the arm; Pasquale followed up with "and stop wearin' that cheap cologne, too!") Ray was usually at the center of it all; he would make fun of his employees often. "Eeeyyyy, lookit my sister," he'd say about 73-year-old Anna, shuffling with her limp from her fluid-filled legs. "She's workin' so slow she's movin' backwards!" (Anna's response to this was to laugh and give her brother a hug.) In another instance, when Dalvin's cousin Pedro was in the hospital and had to take a few days off work, Ray said: "ohhh he's in the hospital, huh? Must be nice! Gettin' fed and waited on while he lies in the bed!"

Shared expectations about the virtues of "hard work" were lurking beneath all of these jokes, and in fact, those shared expectations were precisely what made the jokes funny. But the jokes also contained traces of connection, of ways for these workers to emotionally tie themselves to one another. Ray in particular was quite gifted with these sorts of

interactions: he was very swift, easy, and quick with his jabs, and he'd integrate multiple workers into the conversation seamlessly. I observed him on Thanksgiving day, for example, "bustin'" his niece Karen - who had a full-time job, but came to help out her uncle on some holidays - for not working fast enough. "OH, whaddaya, sleepin' Karen?" he said, while he and Karen were both on the other end of the long front wooden table, slicing pizza strips together. He looked at me on the other side, across the room, as he said this, and winked, "sharing the bust" with me. Karen then turned to me, too, half-smiling: "He's crazy! I've been runnin' circles around these girls, right Nicole?" The process simultaneously established closeness between all three pair combinations: between Ray and Karen, since Ray committed a "territorial offense" (Goffman, 1971a) that re-established their familiarity; between me and Ray, since his wink was an act of collusion against Karen; and between me and Karen, since her assertion of Ray's craziness was an act of collusion with me against him. These acts of collusion, of "tacit betrayal" of a third party, according to Goffman, form "one of the main ways in which two persons express the specialness of their own relation to each other" (Goffman, 1969, p. 359).

In the vast majority of these instances, the jokes went over well, but in some cases, they did not. Some of the younger counter girls knew how to handle this sort of playfulness; Jessica Russo in particular was able to pop right back at Ray, calling him "RAAAY-MOOOND!", saying things like "don't gimme that" or "I don't give a shit!" - all in a good-natured tone - whenever she caught his grief. Others were sometimes offended: 19-year-old Stephanie Votto, for example, a local who went to college at Sacred Heart in Connecticut and who only worked in the summertime and on holidays, took Ray's jokes to heart. On one occasion, while Stephanie was a little sick and tired, making "SPCs" (spinach, pepperoni, and cheese calzones, which required cutting open a regular spinach calzone and stuffing it with pepperoni and cheese), Ray started busting her for how slow she was moving. "OHH! How come you're so slow over there? When you started workin' here I think you were faster!" Stephanie didn't pop back like Jessica would have, but instead looked down and

tried to pick up her pace. (I noticed that she cried a bit in the corner a few minutes after Ray said this, and she seemed upset throughout the rest of the day.)

Emily Tocco, with her long, curly, flaming red hair, was another counter girl who lamented her inability to joke back with Ray and the rest of the crowd in the same way that Jessica Russo did. "Jessica does well around here," Emily confided in me once. "She knows how to talk to everyone. She also knows how to like, talk to all the little old Italian ladies, the customers." Emily thought it was because Jessica had grown up in the same sort of environment as most other bakery workers and customers. I asked her if she felt she couldn't "talk to all the little old Italian ladies" in the same way that Jessica Russo could. "Sometimes," Emily said. "I guess growing up, my family was more reserved." Emily's father was Italian-American, but her mother, she told me, was of German descent, and she thought that had something to do with it. "We didn't show as much emotion." When Emily *did* try to joke with the bakery workers, it didn't always go well; once, she made a joke about the slimy canned mushrooms - which she was putting on hot pizzas - having the consistency of fish. ("Mushrooms are the fish of the land!" she said to Anna.) "When I told that joke," Emily recounted to me, "it was met with Anna's stare. Crickets." She smirked. "I thought to myself... wrong crowd."

The fact that Emily felt she didn't know "how to talk" back to Ray was, in her eyes, related to her unfamiliarity with the emotional frankness so common in his "ball-busting" scenarios. In order to "get" Ray's jokes, or to be able to pop back at him, Emily, like any of Ray's workers, would need to not only be familiar with the fact that "hard work" was highly valued within this particular social setting, or that *Ray himself* felt that hard work should be highly valued, or that Ray was known as a boss who harps on his workers if they aren't working fast enough, but also - and most importantly - that this particular form of "ball-busting" was intended as a mode of connection, a method Ray and others used to feel closer to each other. Emily hadn't used these tactics in her own family, while Jessica Russo had. These episodes of understanding and misunderstanding connect the

"background expectancies" lurking beneath the surface of conversation (Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 2013) with broader types of background expectancies — those bound up in more "basic structures of social differentiation" (Mulkay, 1988; Fox, 1990), such as age, class, gender, or ethnicity. Differences in these larger categories can factor into whether or not two individuals know "how to talk" with one another.

On more than one occasion, I took note of how my own background - in my mother's large, Italian-American family in Providence, where most men joked in ways very similar to Ray - factored into my interpretations and my emotional reactions to the forms of talk I was seeing in the bakery. If I ever came in late, for example, Ray would yell — "List*EN*," accenting the second syllable of the word: "You gotta get here at 6 o'clock! Let's go, fire it up, you had a whole day off to rest!" In his voice I heard my great uncle Gennaro, who had owned a fruit and vegetable market with his wife, my aunt Civita, off of Valley Street, where my mother, my aunts, and most of my uncles and cousins had worked, and where I'd visited as a child. I grew up listening to stories about what it was like to work there: how he would yell at my mother, playfully (but also seriously), to pick up the potted plants in one area of the outdoor market and move them to another, one by one in a row, just to keep busy when there were no customers around. "Alright, let's go, party's over!" he'd say to them. "C'mon ya big chooch,[55] get these out to the lady's car!" He talked to my brothers and me in the same way, like we were his workers, whenever we would run to the small yard on the side of his house - which was right next to my grandmother's house, on Jastram Street, where they and all nine siblings of their generation were born and raised - and help him carry tomatoes up the stairs to my aunt, who waited for us in her small kitchen. "OH! Let's go, ya chooches!" Uncle Gege would yell, whistling out the corner of his mouth, and my brothers and I would laugh and laugh.

[55]Slang for "stupid person," derived from the Neapolitan dialect *ciuccio*, meaning "donkey" or "ass."

4.3 Conclusion: learning to love

The way of working and of being among the Italian-Americans I came to know at the bakery was, as I have tried to show, fundamentally a way of *relating*. Beliefs and values — such as the ways men and women should behave with one another, or the meaning of "hard work" — were embedded within the substance of social bonds, were inextricably tied to self-esteem, and were emotionally reinforced during the course of everyday interaction, in attempts to connect with others, to understand and be understood as a person, a woman, or a man worthy of respect. Their "values," then, were not simply external concepts, lofty ideals, rules, or cognitive schemas about the way the world worked, but were rather at heart a way of interacting (Keane, 2015) and showing regard for one another (Goffman, 1967a). Whenever I asked anyone in the bakery to explain or describe these shared ways of being, they would inevitably focus on their upbringing — what they had been taught from their mothers, fathers, and other family members. Those critical years of emotional socialization were when they learned how to be the "ideal person" or the "ideal woman," when they learned "how to talk," and when they learned how to feel good about themselves in light of the expectations of those around them. In short, those years were when they learned how to love and be loved.

If we situate these ways of being "brought up" in their historical context – the suburbs of the small, slow-growing city of Providence, in the second half of the century – we can tie them to the lines of work and configurations of family organization which dominated among Italian-Americans during those years. This connects the substance of social bonds today to larger demographic trends historically—namely, the extraordinarily high concentration of southern Italians, who settled in areas outside of central Providence very early, and continued to populate those future-suburban areas for many decades, continued to pass down family businesses to later generations, continued to sell houses to one another, and continued to repeatedly interact with one another within the confines of their small state, forming a "pocket of more resilient ethnicity" (Alba and Nee, 2003). The time frame and

speed at which these processes occurred in this particular place determine how the beliefs and values of this group intersect with our nation's current historical moment. This intersection is the subject of chapter five.

5 Kiss The Other Hand: Intersections with Contemporary Ideologies

The previous chapter has described how certain "values" common among the Italian Americans I came to know in the bakery were emotionally reinforced within the context of everyday interaction. These stories imply that some elements of ethnicity - in the sense of forms of talk and ways of relating passed down from parent to child of shared heritage - can remain persistent in certain environments, particularly those in which a critical mass of interacting individuals is maintained. The geographical area surrounding the small city of Providence has encouraged precisely this for local Italian-Americans. In the current chapter, I examine how these cultural remnants of ethnic heritage – which have been crystallized in interaction and modes of relation over generations in this particular place – inform individuals' interpretations of current events. I make use of both interactional observations in the setting of the bakery and in-depth interviews with customers of the bakery who reside in Johnston to better understand how local values intersect with two contemporary national-level ideological discussions: 1.) feminism and gender relations (via the #MeToo movement), and 2.) nativism and immigration in the age of Donald Trump.

5.1 A gender system under strain

Almost a full year into my time at the bakery, an incident occurred which caused a stir among the counter girls. They talked about it for weeks afterwards.

"One of the girls had a problem with this guy that come in..." Ray started to tell me. The girl, named Jenny – a new hire in the Spring of 2018, who was not Italian-American, but who was a cousin of Christine O'Brien – was nearby as Ray started to tell me what happened. So I asked her to tell me herself.

"This man," Jenny started. "He was asking for business from Ray, and so I was like going to get a paper, and he was like 'oh you're fine,' and I was like, oh you don't want me

to write it down? And he was like no, like you're *fine*, like I think you're attractive. And I was like... *[Jenny stuck her tongue out in disgust.]* And he said, I'm 46, I don't really mean it like that. And I'm like, so, I'm 16 years old. And he continued to say stuff to me... and at the end of the conversation, of me ringing him out for whatever he was buying, he went to shake my hand and I was like alright, he's leaving. And this guy basically tricked me, and turned my hand over really fast and kissed my hand and ran out the door. Knowing that he was 30 years older than me and knowing I was uncomfortable."

"Now, twenty-five years ago," Ray piped up, "Twenty years ago, that woulda been perfectly acceptable."

"What do you think about that interaction now?" I asked him.

"Well at this time of day and age, it's not acceptable."

"So you agree with Jenny?"

"I wouldn't do that!" Ray made sure we knew. "No, I wouldn't do that."

Jenny was still visibly angry about what happened. "That's inappropriate behavior," she said. "That's not normal. If you wanna... like I've had people come in here and say, oh you're so beautiful, that's fine. They can say that, that's cool. But this? No."

I found out soon after this episode that Jenny had reported the man - who turned out to be related by marriage to Ray's sister Anna - to the Johnston police. The police had to come to the bakery and talk to Ray about it. Other counter girls had varying reactions to this, which seemed to be somewhat dependent upon their ages - whether they were among the older or younger generational cohort - in combination with their ethnic status.

56-year-old Lori Feruglio Callenda, whose parents were both Italian, and who was also a new counter girl on the scene in Spring of 2018, thought that Jenny's reaction was "over the top." She told me that she thought there was really no good reason for Jenny to get upset, let alone report the man to the police. "He kissed her hand and she went frickin' ballistic!" Lori told me. "She told her boyfriend, told her father, she found out who this guy was... I'm like, give the man a break!" Lori told me that the man actually does the

same thing to her all the time over the counter when he comes in to buy his bread. "I'm like, here, kiss the other hand!" she said, laughing. She thought it was "a gentleman thing to do."

17-year-old Lauren Mancini, also Italian-American from both her mother's and father's sides, told me that if the same thing happened to her, "depending on the age" of the man, she would be flattered. "If it was an older guy, I wouldn't really take it as anything, unless he started like, saying other things and being really a little too friendly." When I asked her why she thought she felt that way, she shrugged. "I don't know, I just think that some people may just be trying to be nice." I asked her if she was used to gestures like that, and she said she was. "Like that was how I was grown up, everyone would like kiss each other, or kiss each other on the cheek, but some people don't do that. So like, yeah, I'm used to that type of thing."

19-year-old Christine, only partially Italian-American, and also Jenny's cousin, butted into our conversation when she heard Jessica Mancini say that she was used to it. "Well I mean that's how my family is too," Christine said, "but I feel like when somebody... when somebody is a stranger it's weird." Christine felt similarly to the way she felt about Tommy Shea's gestures — that if she was comfortable with the man, felt close to him already, then the gesture would be "cute." "But if it's like a complete stranger that I'm helping at a bakery?" she frowned. "I'm literally not here because I want to be here, I'm here because I have to be. I'm helping you because I have to, not because I chose to talk to you. You were just next in line, you were just number 34, you know?"

23-year-old Rosa, an immigrant from the Dominican Republic (and one of the few women who worked regularly in the back of the bakery, making calzones), was horrified when I told her about the hand-kissing episode. "Ohhh my god, that's not right!" she said; an older man kissing a younger girl's hand "doesn't look good," in her opinion. She contrasted the episode - an older man kissing a young girl's hand - to what the reaction would be if the man was younger. "What you think if a *young* guy comes in and kiss one of

these girls' hands? They are not gonna say, *oh my god!*" Rosa batted her eyes in a flattered sort of way. "They are gonna be uncomfortable." Rosa said that she didn't like it either way, though she did know that "the older generation used to do that, kiss the ladies' hands and say 'oh you are beautiful.' That was respect before." She also offered up an explanation which focused on ethnic background. "I think Latin men or Latin people think different... they *say* ohhh you look pretty, it's what they *say*, I mean, they don't kiss their hands, the girls' hands. They talk."

16-year-old Hannah, who was half Italian-American, didn't like it at all. She had dealt with something similar from a male customer herself. "Every time this guy comes in," she told me, "he like calls me beautiful and everything, he knows my name, he'll ask for me when he comes in. And like one day, he just grabbed my hand and kissed it! He said 'oh, beautiful Hannah,' and then kissed my hand." I asked her what her reaction was in that moment. "I don't know, I didn't know what to do. In the moment I kinda just like kept going, kept getting his stuff, and then when I came back (away from the registers), I was like, what the hell?" Now, she told me, she just avoids him, and she will go into the back room if she sees him come into the store.

20-year-old Jessica Russo, though, Italian-American on both her mother's and father's sides, thought it was just fine. She told me the same story that Hannah did — that she herself had one male customer who comes in every week and specifically asks for her to wait on him. But she had the exact opposite reaction. "He calls me beautiful every time I see him. I don't get offended by it at all, I actually, I kinda get flattered by it. It's a nice gesture to kind of hear that." She mentioned to me that she had just posted a facebook post the previous day about him, and she told me to look it up: "I love my customers, I really do," she had shared with her friends. "I went into work today and I was helping an old man and he looked at me and said 'you have such a beautiful smile and a beautiful face' and then another man came in and said 'you're gorgeous, you have such a great attitude, you must of been raised by a good mother'. Honestly made my night."

These seven quick accounts demonstrate the range of responses among the bakery women, but the majority - about half of the younger generation workers, and all of the older generation - felt that Jenny's reaction to the hand-kissing gesture was "over the top." Some useful preliminary patterns within this small varied range do jump out, however: generally, no matter the age of the woman, the "more Italian" she was - i.e., if both of her parents were Italian-American vs. if she had mixed heritage - the less likely she was to be offended by the gesture. It is of course important to remember that such classifications are inextricable from other variables, such as the class status of the woman's family. Lauren Mancini and Jessica Russo, whose parents were all Italian-American, and both of whom were not offended, came from working-class families, whereas Hannah and Jenny, of mixed heritage, came from more middle-class families. But this is in fact the point of complicating the concept of "ethnicity," as this dissertation does — ethnicity for European-American descendants becomes inextricable from - and in some ways determines - class status, via shared pathways of economic mobility, lines of labor which, in some geographical pockets, have still strayed away from education and towards material goods.

The connection between class and ethnicity is by no means a new argument. Commonalities in the American experience of Italian immigrants in the first part of the twentieth century meant that they "[came] at the same time, settle[d] in the same places, and work[ed] at the same jobs" (Alba, 1985). Those patterns of work and life were dependent on both the occupational structure of America at the time of arrival, as well as the knowledge and resources - both material and cultural - brought over by the Italian immigrants themselves. The new addition here to the class-ethnicity link is rather that the particular pathways that descendants followed in the decades after immigration have been partially encouraged and reinforced by more local mechanisms — such as the concentrations of Italian-Americans in different geographical areas, the size and development patterns in those areas, the structure of their social networks as determined by these geographically-tied variables, and the cultural elements which then flow through those social networks via everyday interaction.

5.1.1 Intention and intuition: the fine interactional line

The bakery women who were not offended by the hand-kissing episode did acknowledge that the line between "gentlemanly" and "creepy" was a fine one — one that was negotiated between both parties during the course of the interaction. Some mentioned being able to "just know" when the line was crossed. "I feel like, it's more of an intuition," Christine told me. "It's like kind of one of those things where it depends on like, how they're saying it, and like if they're trying to get closer to you, know what I mean? If it's just a simple compliment, like I don't know... nothin' weird about that, just kind of like a general compliment. But when someone right off the bat, if their initial intention is kind of, scummy, in a way (then that's different)." Christine thought it was all about "intention," and knowing intent was a matter of "intuition."

When I asked Linda to describe to me what she would do in this particular scenario - a customer taking her hand and kissing it - she detailed some of the interactional variables that she would use to determine intent, and these in turn would determine her response. (Her thoughts were typical for the older generation of ladies at the bakery - age 40 and up - as well as about half of the younger high-school and college-aged girls.)

"Well I think it depends," Linda told me. "If it's a joking kind of way... cuz you can always kind of tell. If it's joking it's funny and like I'll joke around too." She recounted some of her interactions with Dominic Gesualdi, one of the bakers in the back, who makes danish and biscuits with his brother Frank Gesualdi: Dominic will joke constantly about how attractive Linda is, how he has a loaf of bread in his pants when she walks by, and how when they have babies together they'll have so many that the babies will be 'comin' out of Linda's ears' soon. "I think it's hilarious," Linda said. So there's nothing wrong with that type of joking? "No, I don't think so, *as long as you both know*, like I know that he's married, I'm not gonna be like oh, come to my house and we can get it on. Do you know what I mean? Like, it depends... I know maybe there should be either black or white, but sometimes there really can be like a gray area."

Linda's requirement for a successful interaction — "as long as you both know" — points to the power of the shared interactional understandings of chapter four, which, I have argued, build up over time, through experience in relations and repeated encounters with others who have been raised similarly and who interpret conversational moves in similar ways. She went on to tell me that sexual jokes from Dominic don't bother her because she likes Dominic's personality - "he's just a trip" - and also because he treats her with respect. "You know, we're just jokin' around. Obviously nothin' would ever happen. And I like that, cuz we know each other's boundaries. I think that's important."

She contrasted her interactions with Dominic with interactions she's had in the past with another male bakery worker — one whose advances were more serious in nature and were unwelcome. "He was annoying," her face turned to one of disgust. "And I think he was a little bit more pushy in terms of like, oh, you know, 'let's go (leave the bakery), I'll help you make a dentist's appointment, we can go together in my car.' Like, first of all, you think I'm brain dead, I can't make an appointment on the phone? You know what I'm tryin' to say? So don't insult my intelligence, first of all. And don't be so pushy... like you don't hear Dominic doing that." This man was also disrespectful in other instances, in Linda's opinion — for example, *telling* her to get a calzone - "Linda I need a calzone, I need this, I need that," he'll say - rather than asking. "ASK me when I have a chance. Like Dominic does that. He'll be like, oh when you get a chance, could you get me this or that?" These other unrelated instances factored into Linda's interpretation of the other man's more sexually-tinged remarks. "If you're gonna be respectful to me, I'll joke around and be respectful to you. But if you wanna be an asshole to me, I'm gonna be an asshole back."

Linda felt that this man was most likely used to behaving this way, was used to treating the women in his life like he treated her. "I mean, he probably treats his wife like that, and then she tolerates it." But just because he was used to talking to women like this didn't make it okay. Linda fixed the situation immediately herself, "nipped it in the bud," as she

phrased it. She told him off one day, in front of Ray. "I told him, I'm not your mother, not your girlfriend, not your friend, I'm not your this and that, so don't talk to me like that. Some people think because they get away with it with other people, they'll try to test it with somebody else, and it's like, well, I don't work like that. Treat me with respect, you'll get respect back." She said that if it happened again, with someone else, if someone expressed some type of intent which extended beyond the confines of the present interaction, she'd handle it in the same way, would "let it be known" by explicitly telling the man — "I would say, excuse me, you know, I'm dating somebody, or you're making me feel uncomfortable" — or, if that wasn't an option, she would "distance herself" and not play into that kind of talk. Either way, she felt empowered enough in her interactions with men to handle the situation directly, with the man himself.

For Linda, then, hand-kissing, appearance-based compliments, and even verbal comments that were sexual in nature were all permissible — "as long as you both know," she said: as long as the expectations and interpretations of the encounter were shared by both parties. I tried to press her on how she came to these interpretations: how did she learn to tell the difference between a flattering comment and a creepy comment? "I don't know!" she laughed; she had trouble explaining. "Like, just by experience!" she settled on. "I guess as you get older... I been around. I'll be 48 this month. And I don't know, I can just tell the difference, of being like, somebody's talking to you like you're an object or a person. It's just experience."

Ray also felt similarly to Linda. In his eyes, experience was what alerted either person in a sexually-tinged interaction as to whether or not the other person was "playing along" and enjoying themselves. "Some women play along," he told me, "and some don't. And you just know that, you definitely would know that." How would he know? "It's called experience!" he almost yelled. "Experience."

5.1.2 Reactions to the #MeToo movement

If experience was what dictated the women's responses and interpretations of their own interactions with men, it was also what dictated their responses to other women's interactions with men. My time at the bakery coincided with what became known as the "#MeToo Movement," towards the end of Fall 2017, when countless women - both famous and not - began to come forward with stories of past sexual abuse and harassment. Powerful men like Harvey Weinstein and Matt Lauer were in the headlines each week, it seemed, accused of sexual abuse or harassment in the past. While most of the bakery women hadn't heard about the "#MeToo" hashtag and the uproar over social media that followed, they had heard stories about these men and women through talk and local television news, and they had much to say about the accusers.

"Oooh I got a good answer for that one," Linda told me when I asked her what she thought. "Why didn't you come out with it when it happened? Why did ya wait ten years? Doesn't make any sense. Why would you do that?"

Jenny – the 16-year-old whose hand was originally kissed, who had called the cops, from a middle-class, non-Italian-American family – responded thoughtfully to Linda's questions, pointing out that higher-level power dynamics were at play; in some cases, she said, women might not be in the position to "come out with it when it happened," as Linda thought they should. "I think though," Jenny started, "I think that you might not come out and talk about it right away because you might be scared. It's easy for people to say, why didn't you do something? But I've been in that situation myself and you don't know what to do."

Linda had been in a similar situation, too, though not one in which the man had some sort of power or authority over her. She was firm in her assertion that if any kind of sexual assault or harassment had happened to her, she would handle it herself, the way she had done with men in her own life - for example, that man at the bakery. She'd have to "nip it in the bud," she said, and would talk to the man directly. "If it happened to me, I would have

to say it politely, be nice about it, I wouldn't go tell people. I think it's all the way you go about things... it's the way you say it." It didn't make sense to her that a woman would wait many years; she had little empathy for any woman who "sat there and wait[ed]" without saying anything if she was made to feel uncomfortable. "God forbid you get raped. Well why would you sit there and wait 30 years? Like it doesn't make sense. Why? I don't get it. If it ever happened to me, I'm gonna say it at that time."

Linda, Lori, and Anna, the three older (40+) counter ladies around for this discussion, all agreed: their own experiences with men had taught them that this was simply the way men were, and that, as women, they themselves were responsible for letting it be known whenever a man made them uncomfortable. It was not someone else's responsibility to do that work for them. They couldn't imagine a scenario where it would make sense for a woman to wait, except for one: if the woman was after the man's money. Ray, too, chimed in during this discussion:

> *Linda*: What gets to me is 25 years later you come forward.
>
> *Anna*: Why though? Cuz they want money?
>
> *Ray*: No, because they wanna get involved in this "Me Too" movement and they wanna make a name for themselves. But they were the ones that enticed everythin'...
>
> *Anna*: Yeah. There's women that go after men!
>
> *Ray*: Just like that guy in Hollywood, the guy that was the head of whatever
>
> *Me*: Harvey Weinstein?
>
> *Ray*: Yeah. Every woman wanted to go to bed with him so they can move up.
>
> *Linda*: Oh he's disgusting-lookin'!
>
> *Ray*: Whatever! They're not, they didn't care! It doesn't matter, it was how far they could get in life and how famous they wanted to be. That's what it was all about.
>
> *Anna*: Is this (the #MeToo movement) just wit famous people? Or is it for general, like, everyone?

This last question that Anna posed – "is this just wit famous people?" – was one that came up frequently. Linda, too, observed, later on in the conversation:

> *Linda*: I think it's more of a money issue, because it happens more to celebrities. You don't see it happening to other people. You don't see it happening to like, regular people that don't have any money, or just like, normal people like us.

The younger crowd of women was split in half; of those girls who had been around during the year, 16-year-olds Jenny and Hannah, from middle-class backgrounds, had heard of the movement and supported the women without question. ("I don't think anybody should accuse the women of lying," Jenny had said.) But 19-year-old Christine, from a working-class background, felt differently. "But why would you wait, after 20 years? Why wouldn't you just do it right away? Cuz that's the right thing to do," Christine told me. She thought - like Linda, Ray, Lori and Anna - that "A lot of it is publicity, and it's bad publicity." I asked her if she meant it was bad for women. "Bad in general," she said. "Almost like 'Black Lives Matter,' like it's for a good cause, but it got blown up by the media, and now it's completely misconstrued." She admitted, though, that her thoughts were surface-level; she "didn't really have a lot of thoughts," because the movement "didn't really personally involve [her]." 20-year-old Jessica Russo and 17-year-old Lauren Mancini, also from working-class backgrounds, felt similarly: they hadn't heard of the movement, and so they didn't have many thoughts about it, but were generally flattered by the same comments and gestures from men which Jenny and Hannah labeled as harassment.

The older women, and half of the younger women (those with both more Italian heritage and more working-class backgrounds), simply could not relate to the #MeToo movement. Their own experience taught them that they were solely responsible for taking care of themselves in their relationships with men, and that women sometimes - often, perhaps, in their eyes - used men for their money, to gain fame, or to rise in social status. When these learned experiences were coupled with the fact that they hadn't known any "normal people like us" who were speaking out against sexual harassment, either in person or online, it

meant that they felt very far removed from what was at the time considered a sweeping, national-level movement.

5.1.3 "It affects you at a deep level": emotional vestiges

As we have seen, most of the bakery women relished in appearance-based compliments, which were tied to the ways they had learned to build their self-worth in their earliest years. They interpreted their interactions with men, as well as other women's interactions with men, through the lens of their experience, and this made them less sympathetic to the claims of accusers during the #MeToo movement.

Many other Italian-American women in Johnston - across varied class backgrounds - felt similarly. I had the chance to interview some customers of the bakery and other local residents about their attitudes towards sexual harassment, towards Donald Trump's *Access Hollywood* comments (in which he mentioned that when in power, a man can do whatever he wants, including "grab[bing] them (women) by the pussy"), as well as their relationships with men in general. Some of them echoed Linda's sentiments.

52-year-old Patricia, for example, a local physician, felt that the "real world" was the one the bakery women had described — one in which women sometimes use their sex appeal to get ahead. I had a conversation with her and 56-year-old schoolteacher Susan, and these women both agreed: women "use" men frequently to rise in the ranks, and these instances should be distinguished from those in which a woman is specifically demoted for not engaging in unwanted sexual activity.

> *Patricia:* The real world is... women use their appeal to their advantage when they want to, but when they don't want to, then they turn it around and go... 'well he came onto me! oh my god!' They're standing there with their sexy tanned legs and heels!
>
> *Me:* Why do you think they do that?
>
> *Patricia:* Because they want the men to notice them. Why, they're gonna get higher-up if they're looking frumpy? In their moo-moos? Ha!

Susan: If someone invites me to his hotel room, I will say... no thank you! Do I have to go to a lawyer now? Because he invited me to his hotel room?

Patricia: No.

Susan: No. 'Thank you, I'm not interested.' Now if he pursues it...

Patricia: Or holds it against me

Susan: Then maybe I will get a lawyer involved. Did he demote me because I didn't go to his hotel room? Well then, that's a different story.

Both Patricia and Susan took it as fact that many women they knew used their sex appeal to get ahead. Donna, too, a 58-year-old part-time campground manager, told me that she and other women used to tell each other that "if you let him [the male boss] chase you around the desk, maybe you'll get a little more money in your paycheck." She was also - like Linda and the bakery women - quite used to sexualized comments in the workplace. She was so used to them, in fact, that Donald Trump's comments on the *Access Hollywood* tape didn't bother her at all:

Donna: You don't think other men have said that? I bet Bill Clinton talks like that.

Me: Have you encountered that kind of talk yourself?

Donna: Yes, sure, when I first started out. It was very common in my generation. I was a secretary and all the others were women and all the bosses were men. It's not something that upset me. Look, if someone called me eye candy, I'd be thrilled (chuckles). But we come from a different generation. It would be bad for a man to say 'she's not gonna get the promotion because she is a woman.' That would bother me more than comments about my appearance.

Me: Do you think those two things are related?

Donna: No I don't think those two are related. I think they are separate issues. I don't think just because men think you are eye candy you don't get a promotion. Look how far women have come. We're doctors, we're judges, running businesses, on the Supreme Court. I've seen a lot of progress in my day for women. It's hard for you girls because you've only had a few years.

Soon, Donna's 26-year-old daughter Rebecca - also, like Donna, fully Italian-American - had come home from work and joined our conversation. Rebecca, an only child, had -

importantly - gone to both college and law school outside of Rhode Island, and had been exposed to a much wider range of social connections and ideologies than her mother had. Rebecca was a proud Hillary supporter and was disgusted by Donald Trump's comments:

> *Rebecca:* I wouldn't want my boyfriend or my friend to talk like that, never-mind my President! Imagine if your boyfriend said he wanted to grab someone by the pussy. I would not date a man who said that, even to his male friends. Garrison [her old college boyfriend] never talked like that.
>
> *Donna:* Oh, I think you're being a little naive.
>
> *Rebecca:* No, I'm not naive. I'm not going to turn a blind eye.
>
> *Donna:* Becca just has a lot of respect for the president's office. But don't forget, there were presidents before Obama who said or did bad things and nobody hated them for it.
>
> *Rebecca:* I dunno, I think there is a generational difference. I think older women don't have enough self pride. When I hear my mom say it doesn't bother her, in my mind, they don't have enough self-pride, they've been told it doesn't matter.
>
> *Donna:* We weren't raised the way you were raised. We'd say, if you let him chase you around the desk maybe you'll get a little more money in your paycheck.
>
> *Rebecca:* See, middle aged women say oh it doesn't bother me. Deep down they think they couldn't be the boss themselves. They weren't raised as equal. They weren't even given a thought. It affects you at a deep level. I don't know any woman below 30 who says that those comments don't affect them. ... Like I said, if I ever found out my boyfriend had said those things, I'd be livid.
>
> *Donna:* What if you found out your father said those things?
>
> *Rebecca:* I'd be disgusted. I would think of him much differently.
>
> *Donna:* I think you're being naive. If you knew more men that talked like that... well maybe boys your age have been raised differently. Did we take it for granted? That's how men talk to each other. Not in public (with women) but with each other.

Donna felt that being called "eye candy" was not at all connected to larger issues of gender discrimination in the workplace. But she implicitly mentions how receiving an appearance-related compliment is tied to her self-esteem; she says she would be "thrilled"

if a man were to say something positive to his friend about her appearance, even if in a crude way. Rebecca, on the other hand, one generation younger, hones in on a point she feels her mother fails to recognize — that the acceptance and dismissal of such crude comments from men is intimately connected to a woman's self-concept - her "self pride" - and to what she has learned over her lifetime about her own worth. Donna's view here, many feminist scholars would claim, demonstrates how deeply women internalize messages about patriarchy (Anderson, 2014). Women might want to be complimented on their appearance in order to be recognized and seen" by the dominant group — men. Some may even feel safe in a system which "benefits from their inferiority." In this way, they are "unaware that they're complicit in their own subjugation," Anderson (2014) claims; sexism isn't just wage inequality or sexual assault, but also "works in these really insidious ways" (Dastagir, 2016).

And while being "complicit in their own subjugation" might be what is happening to women like Donna in a broader sense when she lets the boss "chase [her] around the desk" in order to "get a little more money in [her] paycheck," interactionally, relationally, in the immediate situation between her and her male boss, her actions and her complicity feel like a source of power. The same was happening when half of the younger women at the bakery – those who had stayed in Johnston their whole lives, unlike Rebecca – had relished in appearance-based compliments, or felt uniquely useful when serving food and coffee to the "helpless" men around them. These women were "affect[ed]... at a deep level," just like Donna had been, but were one generation younger.

After my conversation with Donna and her daughter Rebecca, I began to interview other mother-daughter pairs in Johnston, of 3rd and 4th generation Italian-American women, all of whom had lived in Rhode Island their entire lives, and all of whom voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential election. (This was not the case with bakery women.[56])

[56]Most of the bakery women, in fact, did not view themselves as particularly political people. Anna, Linda, and Tina were not registered to vote, and hadn't voted in many years. Anna told me she had thought to herself: "What do these politicians do for me? Nothin'!" Tina, too, told me that she "doesn't pay attention to any of that stuff, really." Generally, conversations in which I brought up the president or other political

I found that most of this subset of women had no problem whatsoever with the way that Donald Trump spoke on the *Access Hollywood* tape.

55-year-old Hairdresser Carol, for example, called Trump a "real *cavone*[57]" — "you'd swear he was Italian, 'cuz he sounded just like my cousin Tommy!" She felt a certain sort of familiarity in the way Trump spoke, and she thought that the way he spoke of women was quite typical. "You don't think every guy that's sittin' on the beach that see women walk by, say to themselves, she's a fat pig, or oooh she's gorgeous, or ooh I like her ass" ? They, they're all thinkin' it, and he just said it!" Her 23-year-old daughter, Maria, a Rhode Island College graduate, felt the same. "I wasn't affected," she told me. "Hearing him say that it's like, oh, he's another guy. Basically." Maria told me that Trump talked just like her friend Vinny. ("He's Italian too," she made sure I knew. "He's horrible!)

35-year-old dental hygienist Lorin agreed. "Oh god, every man talks like that." She confirmed that she's heard men in her own life constantly speak in the same way. Her mom, Angela, a 58-year-old homemaker, said, "If they didn't, they'd be weird!" Angela also thought that kind of talk was totally normal. "I mean, if people say it's not normal, then they're, they're livin' in a bubble."

50-year-old small business owner Vicki and her daughter, 22-year-old Danielle, joined the chorus. "I can't say *all* men," Vicki told me, "but, men talk like that! I mean, I'm with my friend, or my cousin, and... WE talk like that! So it didn't bother me at all, no." Her daughter felt the same. "I have a lot of guy friends, and they talk that way," Danielle contributed. Her mother also mentioned that this type of talk was not just a feature of Danielle's talk with "guy friends," but also happened within their own family: "I mean... we talk freely and openly about everything, so it didn't really bother me," she said. "My cousin, my mother and father, like you know, I can say penis or whatever! We're not afraid to say things in front of each other."

issues usually fell flat among these women.

[57] *"Cavone" is Italian-American slang for someone who is disrespectful, unrefined, and perhaps uneducated. It is typically used to refer to men.*

61-year-old dance teacher Jo-Ann generally loved Trump. "Yes, I mean he's a moron at times, but he's a brilliant man when it comes to business," she told me. "And yes, he's not a politician! Therefore, he's not gonna talk like a politician – he's gonna talk like *me*, which I think is fine!"

These snippets of my conversations with Trump-supporting Italian-American women can be summed up concisely by something that 56-year-old schoolteacher Susan told me when I asked her why she thought most of her female friends had no qualms with the way Trump spoke - about women or in general. "They *more* than tolerate it," Susan told me. It was "more than toleration":

> *Susan*: I think they feel comfortable with it. It's more than toleration. 'Cause they're used to it, that's the way they grew up, in their families... they're comfortable with men saying things that are kind of off color remarks, used to men talking like that, and they more than tolerate it, sometimes they actually feel comfortable because a man talks like that. They almost gravitate towards him more because that's the way the men they had growing up, that's the way they talk.

I want to point out here that this last set of women responding to Trump's comments were extreme cases, in a way: they were all Italian-American on both their mother's and father's sides; all had lived - and chose to stay - in Johnston for their entire lives to date (some citing the same sort of emotional attachment to family that other informants did in chapter 3 — there I argued that these attachments worked to keep this social world 'small'); and most had very little experience with higher education (and if they did, that experience was at a local four-year college or community college). In terms of education level, then, most of these women would be categorized as "working class," but in terms of income, they would be categorized firmly as "middle class" or even "upper middle class." These particular women are the same set of women most likely to have experienced repeated local social interaction and the emotional reinforcement which accompanies it (see Chapter 4). By isolating these extreme cases and drawing out their sociological implications, we can see how "deep" some of the more comfortable ways of relation can run. In a histor-

ical moment of strain on the gender system – in the era of movements such as #MeToo, perhaps an "unsettled" time (Swidler, 1986) – these women have relied on ways of talking, interacting, and interpreting the world which make them feel the most comfortable.

5.2 New and old immigrants: nativist and nationalist ideologies

Scholars of race and ethnicity in America have already established that the descendants of European immigrants often draw upon their ethnic backgrounds when forming their opinions of other, more recent immigrant groups. Some Italian-Americans, for example, have been known to assert how their families came to America the "legal" way; how they assimilated, stopped speaking Italian, and spoke only English; how they grew their families here, made a home, and did not send much money abroad; or how they worked hard, didn't get any handouts from the government, and didn't feel that America owed anything to them, the way they believe the more recent immigrants do. They draw upon the rags-to-riches "ethnic myths" of their own ancestors, still in their memories, to justify their judgments of non-white groups who haven't "made it" in the same way they did (Steinberg, 1981). As some sociologists have pointed out, sentiments like these stand on a flawed premise that all immigrant heritages are equal (Waters, 1990). Their judgments also ignore some of the government-initiated opportunities historically afforded to their own immigrant families — such as the Federal Housing Administration's 1934 home mortgage insurance program, which gave many European immigrants and their descendants a chance to own a home in the suburbs (Alba and Nee, 2003).

But discussions of these "ethnic myths" and their effects on nativist tendencies in Italian-Americans and other European-American descendants have largely remained in the realm of ideology, as uncovered by surveys and interviews. They could benefit greatly from the study of social interaction as laid out in this dissertation. Working class Italian-Americans, like those in the outskirts of Providence, may not bring broader understandings about the inequality of immigrant heritages or historical government-initiated opportuni-

ties to their everyday encounters with each other (or their encounters with more recently arrived ethnic groups - for example, Ray and his Dominican immigrants at the bakery). The local interactional mechanisms which bolster social standing and increase feelings of self-esteem among this particular group of people, such as those laid out in chapter four, are in fact at odds with these more top-level pieces of historical knowledge.

5.2.1 "They get it for nothin'": the perspective of a small business owner

Back at the bakery, Ray and the other men in his closest social circle – Tony DiBiasio and Tommy Shea were two who seemed to be always around – had strong opinions about immigration. Their opinions would often be reinforced during the course of their interactions with one another.

Tommy and Tony, both big Trump supporters, did not view themselves as harboring any resentment towards immigrants in general, but they were staunchly against those who were undocumented, whom they termed "illegal." It seemed that, often, the vision they had in their heads of contemporary immigration in America was one in which most immigrants were undocumented. "There's nothin' wrong with immigrants," Tommy told me, when I asked him - in front of Tony DiBiasio - if he had any opinions about current trends in immigration or immigration policy. "As long as they're legal, doin' what they need to do, and in no trouble, there's no problem. If they're hard workers, and they do the right job, then ok, but there's others that don't do the right thing, and that's what makes [immigration] not good." I asked Tommy if he'd known - or employed at his concrete business - any immigrants himself, and his answer invoked some of the same nationalist anxieties described in Lamont (2009), centered around language (see also Zolberg and Woon (1999)):

> *Tommy*: No, I do not, I don't have any immigrants, no. I hire Americans, I mean... not to say there's anything wrong with 'em (immigrants), but I can't have a language barrier, that's how people get hurt... you can't speak English, and I tell you to get out of the way, and they I hit you in the head with a bucket, you're dead. So that's no good. If you can't communicate, it's no good. So

> in other words, if you speak English and understand what we do, then you're good. But if we gotta go out of our way to understand you there's somethin' wrong with that picture. We should move to *your* country! Right?

As Tommy said this last bit, Tony DiBiasio bent over with laughter, slapping Tommy on the arm. Tommy smiled.

"What else you got for me?" Tommy asked, as if my questions about immigration were some sort of challenge for him to conquer in front of his audience.

Tony piped up instead. "How bout I ask him a question?" I waved him on. "What do you think about illegal aliens?"

"OUT!" Tommy yelled. (Tony was still laughing.) "See ya later. You don't belong here. You're wastin' our time and our tax money."

"And," Tony managed to get out in between his snickers, "what do you think about the wall?"

Tommy thought this was an easy game. "They should put the wall up. We need the wall. We need to put that wall up! Lots of people, how come movie stars got walls around their houses? Must be a reason, right?"

"He's got some very straight, complete answers," Tony said, looking at me now.

But these answers weren't straight and complete - at least not in terms of reason (the connection between a proposed wall at the Mexican border and the fences around celebrities' houses confused me). I wasn't clear in that moment where, precisely, these views came from. But what *was* clear was that even simply saying these views in front of Tony DiBiasio was viewed as funny, an affirmation of Tommy's approval in Tony's eyes, as well as of his ability to entertain, to be well-liked among other men like him.

I had much more time to talk to Ray about these issues, and he did give me more sincere, "straight, complete answers" over the year and a half I spent working alongside him. Ray told me that immigration policy was *the* main reason that he voted for Donald Trump in 2016. Even though he himself employed Dominican immigrants whom he relied upon and loved — he "treated Dalvin like a son," as his wife told me, setting him up with a savings

and investment account, sponsoring him in a sort of paternalistic ethnic enclave employer-employee relationship — on an abstract level, he thought that immigrants in general were just here to "take what they can," to "suck everything out of the American people," and then go back to their home countries, where the American dollar would turn them into "rockstars." He resented the fact that some of his own employees received state benefits – "they get free day care, free medical, free schooling, they get everything!" As he said these things, he would often point towards the ovens in the back of the bakery, where his own Dominican immigrant oven staff were working. I asked him to clarify: do you mean "they" as in Dalvino, Primo, and Bragioli?

> *Ray*: Yeah, they get everythin' free, because there's only two of 'em that keep their pays at a minimum.
>
> *Me*: Keep their what?
>
> *Ray*: Their pay at a minimum. So they don't go over the limit. ... one needs a three thousand dollar shot [in his stomach] every month, and one other can't make too much, so he has to limit his hours so he don't work so much. So like they keep it down so they can keep their benefits.

This particular discussion coincided with a time during which Big Rob DeFazio – Anna DeFazio's son, also Ray's nephew, and the father of the pastry chef, Little Rob DeFazio – had been diagnosed with esophageal cancer. Big Rob was also a manual laborer (and former bakery co-owner with Ray); he had been on a contracted job for the Providence Performing Arts Center, putting up scaffolding and stage and sound equipment for shows, when he'd gotten the news about his health. He was over 65 and on Medicare, and he had to pay for some of his supplementary care, as well as wait quite a while in order to get a PET scan. Ray immediately contrasted Big Rob's situation with the situation of his immigrant staff, as he perceived it:

> *Ray:* I mean, my nephew, he can't even get, he has to wait to get an OK to get a test, when he knows, they know he's got cancer! ... And these other people, they just, they get whatever they want, for free. They go to Rhode

> Island Hospital? They don't ask them nothing. They just sign the paper and say here you go. That's the problem in this country.

It wasn't clear that Ray knew the specifics of how his nephew's Medicare contrasted with his workers' Medicaid benefits, but it made him angry to think about his nephew paying for his care and waiting weeks for a PET scan while the cancer "ate him inside." What made him even *more* angry, though, was what these benefits to non-citizens meant for small business owners, like him:

> *Ray*: They're killin' us! Taxes, more and more taxes come out of our pay. It's not because of anything else, it's because of these people that are costing us all the money.

Ray made a seamless connection between a concern about immigration and a concern about taxation. The two topics were the same for him. He told me that the "corporate tax rate" was "outrageous":

> *Ray:* I have to pay 33 percent of every dollar that is made! Then it comes down to me, then I have to pay tax again on a personal tax, cuz [the bakery] is a chapter S corporation. So I actually, I pay 33 cents on every dollar that this business makes... there's no reason why I should be paying all those taxes. I should be reinvesting into the business and getting people more jobs! ... If the corporations grow, and get more people jobs, the national debt will come down. But they think about it the other way, drilling people for taxes, and American people can't prosper! The only people that can prosper are the immigrants, 'cause they get everything for fuckin' nothing!

In these excerpts, the "they" that Ray is angry about switches from the immigrants themselves to those who "think about it the other way" and are "drilling people for taxes" — namely, the Democrats. He used these views, which tied immigration into the taxes he pays for his small business, to then inform his view of the entire Democratic party. "The Democrats make 'em come in for votes and stuff," he said. "The Democrats get the vote cuz they're the ones that give them all the benefits... They do it for votes. Give people

whatever they want. They don't care about the national debt. They just keep pumping... all they care about is gettin' back in office, or gettin' the Democratic Party back in office."

Ray was angry about his nephew not receiving the sorts of benefits that he perceived the immigrants to be receiving. The solution to this problem, in his eyes, was to keep the immigrants out, to build a wall, or maybe "make a wall out of surveillance, drones and stuff." He could not envision an alternative solution to this problem — of universal health care for all, for example — because of his position as a small business owner, which put him firmly in the anti-taxation camp.

Other small business owners around town felt the same way. "I been payin' for years," Tommy Shea told me, angry about the 39.6% rate at which he pays taxes on his concrete business. "Payin' for years. I'm tired of it. If I make 100 dollars, I gotta give you 40. And then I gotta make dog food outta dog shit. I only got 60% left and then I gotta buy stuff and pay for everything and everybody outta that!" Angela Maggio, too, the owner of a small salon down the street in Cranston, voted for Trump to keep taxes down, she told me, and fired one of her immigrant employees who requested to get paid in cash so she could get her "bennies" — benefits from the state.

The issue of immigration, then, for these small business owners, was deeply entwined with concerns about taxation, about the corporate tax rate that they paid each year to keep their businesses running. Furthermore, their views were reinforced - in the same manner of those in chapter four - during the course of everyday interaction, with other small business owners and employees. We can connect these concerns with their Italian-Americanness indirectly, again, in a way the literature hasn't so far — by making note of the manual lines of labor, family businesses of bread and concrete passed down between generations of Italian descendants in this particular geographical region, reproduced in families partly for emotional reasons, as Rob DeFazio told me. "Family tradition makes it seem like something you have to keep going."

5.2.2 The everyday morality of hard work

Abstract views about immigrants were not only reinforced in interactions with other business owners. For Ray DeAngelis, they were also reinforced during the course of social interaction with immigrants themselves - particularly those Dominican immigrants whom he employed. The ways in which these interactions unfolded sometimes determined how Ray viewed the Dominicans Dalvin, Miguel, and Pedro in moral terms, in light of his own upbringing.

Everyday social interaction – which this dissertation maintains is the most crucial site for the reinforcement of "values" and ideologies – is inherently a moral enterprise. Microsociologists have long posited that persons who are interacting hold themselves and one another morally accountable for the work they do while they interact: they each expect the other to $a.)$ cooperate to maintain the dignity of each person involved in the interaction, and $b.)$ to help establish a mutual understanding of what is going on (Heritage, 2013). Individuals accomplish these tasks in various ways: they take turns responding to each other (Sacks et al., 1974), they show regard for one another through displays of "deference," and they protect one another from embarrassment, by, say, ignoring a social mistake of another in order to "save face" (Goffman, 1967a). Such "joint ceremonial labor" (Goffman, 1967a, p. 85) becomes an expected feature of successful social interaction, and because of these expectations, the moral worth of each person hinges upon whether he cooperates (or whether others cooperate with him). As the anthropologist Jack Sidnell (2010) describes, some of the "most basic ethical questions of ordinary social life" happen in the realm of everyday interaction: Is this other person really listening to me? Paying attention to me? Understanding me? Acknowledging me as a worthwhile person?

Face-to-face talk provides plenty of momentary opportunities for the answers to the above questions to be "no." In these moments, the dignity of one or more of the individuals is jeopardized, and the interaction is disrupted as a result. This possibility may be particularly strong when the individuals are socially or culturally different from one another, since

they may have varied understandings of interactional processes or of each other (Keane, 2015). Importantly, in these cases, not only do larger social structures such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, or culture enter into the ways in which individuals establish mutual understanding and preserve dignity while they interact, but whether or not they do establish understanding and preserve dignity can then "loop back" to influence their abstract ideas about the ethnic group, gender, class, or culture to which the other individual belongs (see, for example, Duneier and Molotch (1999)). This means that any disruptions in moments of everyday interaction between individuals can have larger ramifications for cultural and group relations more generally: the "ongoing exercise of judgment" (Lambek, 2010) that occurs in the background of any face-to-face social interaction is connected to moral judgment on a level outside of the interaction as well.

One day, Ray recounted to me a tale of an important interaction he had with his Dominican oven staff — one which left him angered and offended, and which also resulted in him making an unfavorable moral judgment about the work ethic of Dalvin, Miguel, and Pedro.

As Ray left the bakery parking lot in his car, he told me, trailing behind a customer who had just bought some pizza chips, he noticed that the customer was throwing the crusts of the pizza out the window as he ate. After investigating the issue further, he realized that a batch of pizza made early that morning had been much too crusty. "All the sauce was on one side of the chip, and the other side was dough!" he said as he recounted the tale to me. This pizza was part of a batch that a few of the Dominican men had made, and Ray was furious about how little they seemed to care. "There was no pride attached to what they were doing," he explained. "They don't have the drive to make it, to move faster, or to make things better. There's no hustle... and all I do is yell at them all fuckin' day long, and say come on, hurry up, hurry up!" Ray was getting visibly angrier as he continued. "If I tell them to hurry up, they either stand there and do nothin' or go backwards," he told me. "I'll prove it to you, watch. I'll say hurry up. They won't even run, they won't even walk

fast."

In Ray's account of his interaction with these men, he was clearly offended by what he interpreted as a non-response: the men did not acknowledge his orders or even respond at all to his requests for them to hustle. Throughout the conversation that followed, he gave me four layers of reasoning to support his being offended. The first reason centered around his business. "They don't care how much they produce in their hours," he told me. "I try to make the place more profitable... [but] they don't realize that the more money *I* make, the more money *they* make!" A second reason he gave for being offended centered around his own status relative to them: by not responding to his orders, the Dominican men did not show him the level of interactional deference (Goffman, 1967b) that he had been expecting. "You know, I shouldn't be working for *their* pay," he mentioned, "everybody in this place should be working for *my* pay! I'm the owner!!!" His third reason had to do with the values passed down to him from his parents: by directly contrasting his own work ethic with that of the men, Ray passed a judgment on their upbringing, which he believes must have been different from his own. "I think it goes back to your childhood," he claimed. "It goes back to seein' your mom and dad go to work every day, hustlin' and giving you the best of everything... from what I understand, Amigo (his nickname for one of the men), he just hung on the corner and smoked cigarettes and drank all day long (in the Dominican Republic)." And his fourth reason seamlessly shifted from a discussion of *these* men, in *this* bakery, to recent immigrants in general. "But just, I think this country's in for a rude awakening when it comes to all these foreigners coming over," he explained. "It's a whole different nationality, a whole different crop of people... A lot of 'em just don't wanna work! They just want the money! America is a great place to get money."

In under ten minutes of conversation with me, Ray swept through the social levels on which his dignity had been undermined by these particular encounters with the Dominican men. Multiple dimensions of his own moral worth — as a business owner, as a person of higher status inside the bakery, as a hardworking Italian-American man, and as an Ameri-

can citizen — had all been called into question during the moment in which the men did not respond to his requests for them to work harder. Moments such as these expose what Keane (2015) terms an "ethical vulnerability": as the "ethical self" depends on the cooperation of others, it becomes vulnerable in situations in which it is "sustained or defeated by the responses" of those others (Keane, 2015, p. 104). The moral undermining of that ethical self can prompt a strong emotional reaction, since the self, as Goffman (1971b) writes, is "the ego, the part of [one]self with which [one] identifies positive feelings." Ray's anger, then, is understandable given what we know about the practical dynamics of social interaction. In moments such as these, strong feelings accompanying a loss of dignity can make any judgments passed on a group of people all the more powerful.

5.3 Conclusion: the dark side to comfortable relations

In this chapter, I have tried to show how some of the interactional mechanisms in operation in chapter four - which formed the substance of social relations for the Italian-Americans I came to know - extended into and informed broader ideologies.

Among the women that I spoke to, comfortable ways of relating to men - as well as their personal experiences with the men in their own social circles - left them feeling far from the #MeToo movement and other feminist modes of thought. Where these women landed more precisely on this issue, and whether or not their "intuition" led them to feel flattered or offended by sexually-tinged comments from men, seemed to be dependent on age, ethnic and class status, and experience outside of the geographical pocket of Providence.

Many of the men I spoke to, like Ray, displayed strong nativist and anti-immigrant tendencies — and not only for the reasons typically laid out in the literature on white ethnicity (see, for example, Gans (1979), Alba (1990), Waters (1990), and Steinberg (1981)). While he and others did occasionally draw upon the "myths" of their immigrant heritages to justify their lack of empathy for newer immigrants or nonwhites who haven't risen into upward mobility the way they perceive their own ancestors to have done, their positions

on contemporary immigration were more immediately bound up in their status as small business owners. Immigration and Taxation were inextricably linked.

These ideas were, as the rest of this dissertation has argued, continually emotionally reinforced during the context of everyday social interaction. Furthermore, I witnessed these two ideological ramifications in a combined sense: male small business owners' views on the immigration-taxation connection were not only reinforced in interactions with other small business owners, but also with non-business-owning women who were connected to them. 35-year-old dental hygienist Lorin, for example, a customer of the bakery and a Johnston resident, told me that she began supporting Trump as a presidential candidate when her father - a small jewelry manufacturing business owner - began supporting him. "Honestly, I just go by the thoughts of my dad," she told me. This observation combines the immigration-taxation link among small business owners with the comfortable ways Lorin has learned to view herself in light of the men in her life, and both of these are indirectly connected to ethnic heritage, to ways of relation and lines of work common in this particular place, among these particular people.

These processes have broader implications for the study of assimilation and ethnic relations more generally. If demographic and other geographical forces affect the concentrations of certain groups in certain areas, and that concentration then inhibits social mobility and constrains social networks, and the constraint of social networks and mobility then cause "older" cultural elements to persist for longer periods of time in this particular group in this particular place, structuring social interaction in powerful ways, which then move on to inform political ideology and knowledge of national-level events — it follows that considering how these processes connect and happen differently in different places is essential for understanding modern ethnic relations. It is probable, I think, that different ethnic groups in different places go through this process at different speeds, intersecting with historical moments (for example, the presidency of Donald Trump) at different places in the process. This implication is discussed in more detail in the Conclusion.

6 Conclusion: Ethnic Culture, Interactional Environment, and Assimilation

This study has examined the interactional mechanisms which work to perpetuate the resilience of certain cultural values among Italian-Americans in the suburbs of Providence, Rhode Island. I have tried to show that what individuals took to be ethnically-rooted attitudes - about the relative roles of men and women, for example, or about the virtues of hard physical labor - fundamentally became ways of relating to others, and were thus intimately connected to individuals' feelings about their own self-worth. These ways of relating were learned, my subjects told me, during their childhood and adolescent years, passed down from their coethnic parents, and reinforced during the context of everyday interaction — in suburbs still containing dense networks of fellow coethnics, which have been shaped by local industrial history and patterns of suburbanization.

Importantly, these ways of relating had ramifications which reached beyond the confines of interactions and into the realm of broader political ideology. The forms of male talk, for example, which both working- and some middle- or upper-middle income Italian-American women were comfortable with, made them less likely to be offended by sexually-tinged comments made by political figures and less sympathetic to female victims of sexual harassment in national-level discussions. In another example, the lines of physical labor which many of the Italian-American men I met took up - by carrying on in small family businesses, for instance, or starting their own - served as a lens through which they judged newer immigrants' ways of working. Their business-related concerns, such as taxation, then became tied to these "other" immigrants, reinforcing their feelings about an *other* group of "others" – the Democrats – who supported those immigrants.

Such a discussion of ethnic culture moves us away from the typical sociological approach to ethnic relations involving stark, abstract cognitive classifications or "boundary making" procedures, and moves us instead towards a study of ethnicity which is located in

the practical dynamics of social interaction, structured by historical circumstance. In this view, ethnicity becomes a sort of interactional environment: the environment itself in which members of an ethnic group reside, work, go to school, or otherwise interact is shaped and molded from the top-down, by demographic, political, and economic forces - for example, the initial influx of an immigrant group, or particular patterns of suburbanization which create high ethnic concentrations in certain areas - but is then also shaped and molded from the bottom-up, through emotional reinforcement and creative choices during the course of social interaction. If we think of ethnicity in this interactional way, it contains elements of all its previous formulations: the emotional attachments that primordialists were so focused on (e.g., Geertz (1973b), Shils (1957), or McKay (1982)); the fluidity which circumstantialists argue links ethnicity to historical position (Glazer and Moynihan (1963), Gans (1979), and Alba (1985)); and the creative choices which constructionists believe are at the root of late-generation forms of ethnicity (Waters (1990)).

It is important to note again here that any elements of Italian-American ethnicity as they exist in the suburbs of Providence are particular to this place. The high concentrations of Italian-Americans in Johnston, Cranston, and North Providence - and the relatively low concentrations of other racial and ethnic groups in bordering neighborhoods in the 1980s (Lieberson and Carter, 1982) - are unusual when compared to the situations of other late-generation white ethnic groups elsewhere. In this light, Providence, as a "pocket of more resilient ethnicity" (Alba and Nee, 2003; Alba, 2017), is an anomalous case in the broader story of the assimilation process for late-generation European immigrants. Because of this, my findings here must not be taken to be representative of all white ethnic groups, or even of the average late generation Italian-American experience nationwide. (As Tony DiBiasio told us in chapter three: "You take people from L.A., or even from Pennsylvania! From Philadelphia or from Harrisburg. I know Italians from Harrisburg, and you wouldn't believe that they're Italian.") But this does not make the case useless; in fact, precisely because of its unusually heavy concentrations, Providence presents the remnants of ethnic heritage in

perhaps their strongest forms. The city and its surrounding area form an extreme example of persistent ethnicity, but the example uncovers the same interactional mechanisms of cultural maintenance which are at work in other groups, in other places, to varying degrees — degrees which depend upon whatever local demographic and economic forces structure ethnic concentrations in each particular place.

These degrees of variation perhaps point to the most noteworthy implication of the Providence case for the study of assimilation and ethnic group relations more generally. This work does not challenge the "new assimilation" synthesis laid out by Alba and Nee (1997; 2003). As these scholars argue, the historical circumstances under which early twentieth century immigrants and their descendants became incorporated into American society encouraged upward mobility from multiple fronts, including a proliferation of white collar jobs, an expansion of educational opportunities with the GI Bill after 1944, and home mortgage insurance programs created by the Federal Housing Administration (Alba and Nee, 2003). I do not wish for my focus on the "persistence" of some elements of Italian-American ethnicity in Providence to suggest that this group has not "assimilated" fully; it is of course the case that, on average, in Providence and across the nation, the descendants of Italian immigrants - along with other Southern and Eastern European immigrants to the United States - over the twentieth century achieved parity in matters of work, education, and residence with "mainstream" America (at the time, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants and other Northern European groups).

Rather, I wish to call attention to the local complexities — such as Providence's unique suburbanization patterns, its economic history, its geographical position relative to bigger east coast cities, its slow growth, its small size (and resulting dense social networks), and its limited options for movement out of the central city — which have likely contributed to the relatively high ethnic concentrations and slow speed of some elements of cultural change among Italian-Americans here. These complexities gesture towards the continued relevance of local particularities for shaping cultural and ideological profiles of ethnic

groups. The Italian-American men and women I spoke to had ways of being and relating to others that were ethnically rooted - by way of the family and by way of lines of occupation - and their beliefs, which crystallized in interaction in this "pocket of more resilient ethnicity," played a role in structuring their interpretations of current events and ideological discussions, such as the #MeToo movement and contemporary immigration.

These ideas - while foregrounding some elements of ethnic subculture - still do not take "culture" to be paramount in explanations for group differences in outcomes. Such purely cultural explanations – e.g., that Jews became upwardly mobile because of their appreciation for education as a "people of the book," or that Italians were held back by their "anti-intellectualism" and under-appreciation of education – are what Steinberg (1981) laments in his work uncovering the more material differences between ethnic groups in America: Steinberg argues that in fact, each of these groups entered the country at different times, with different economic resources and backgrounds, and encountered different structures of incorporation when they arrived. But "culture" has worked – *still* works, here in Providence, for Italian-Americans – in tandem with larger structural forces, in some cases keeping individuals bound to their neighborhoods and families by emotional ties (for example, Jo-Ann DeBellis's ideas about staying local in chapter three), decreasing occupational mobility (for example, "Little Rob" DeFazio's feelings about taking up his family's line of work in the bakery), or in fostering ideas about how men and women relate to each other, which could feasibly affect their choice of co-ethnic or non-ethnic marriage partners.[58] Such cultural remnants have importance here because they are upheld and are emotionally reinforced within a critical mass of interacting individuals, in an area with an unusually high concentration of ethnic descendants.

[58] In my interviews with some Johnston female residents, third generation mothers were still often concerned with the ethnicity of the men their fourth generation daughters were marrying. ("I just think, what kind of person would be the best husband (for her)?" 58-year-old Donna told me. "I do have some kind of sentiment attached to Italian men though, if only because I'd know what to expect!") I hope to include these findings and discuss them more thoroughly in the book version of this dissertation, as ethnic intermarriage has functioned as a critical indicator of assimilation within the immigration literature (see Alba (1985), Blau et al. (1982), Lieberson and Waters (1988), and Pagnini and Morgan (1990)).

If local mechanisms, then, have determined the speed at which some Italian-Americans and their descendants in Providence shed elements of their cultural past (such as traditional gender roles and patriarchal household schemes, or a tendency towards physical labor), and that particular speed then determined how group culture intersects with our current historical moment (see chapter five), it is reasonable to assume that other ethnic groups - all ethnic groups, perhaps - and immigrant groups elsewhere, in varied locations, have particular speeds at which they, too, undergo this process of cultural change, and that these varying speeds will be at least partly due to whatever local mechanisms structure their interactions. Regardless of differences in the speed of cultural change, however, they will all intersect with any given historical moment simultaneously. This last vision — of groups in different locales, at different stages of cultural change, intersecting with national-level events at the same time — is the most consequential addition this dissertation provides to the already complex assimilation literature.

This work also illuminates a neglected level of heterogeneity within the category of "White" in the American "ethnoracial pentagon" of "African American, Asian American, Native American, Latino, and White" (Hollinger (1995), see also Brubaker (2004)). As Alba (2014) acknowledges, this pentagon would have "require[d] a considerably more elaborate geometric figure" 50 or so years ago, as demonstrated, for example, by the social and political fault lines between ethnic groups in Glazer and Moynihan (1963). And while the broad assimilation of Italian-Americans and other second wave European immigrant descendants places them firmly into the "white" category of this pentagon (see also Brodkin (1998)), in certain places, the category can be broken down further — at least in terms of those cultural elements which have worked to keep some members of this group in working-class status, or which have passed on working-class "values" to middle-class descendants. In terms of political ideology, these complexities could feasibly make a difference: while many Italian-American residents in Johnston voted for Donald Trump in

2016,[59] for example, similarly to other whites across the nation (see Alba (2017)), their reasons for doing so were particular to their own interactional environment and the local pathways by which their families achieved upward mobility.

Future work might consider a more comparative framework — examining comparisons between, for example, the interactional environments of other late-generation ethnic groups, in other places, as well as the interactional environments of ethnic groups from generations of newer immigrants. Uncovering how the variations of ethnicity surface in interactions across these varied groups could yield more complex explanations behind regional differences in assimilation and ideology. Another possibly fruitful avenue could be to hone in on the more mathematical properties of the social networks of both late-generation and contemporary immigrant groups; rather than speaking broadly about the effects of demographic shifts and sizes of geographical places on the density of social networks of individuals (results from Fischer (1982), which this dissertation uses as a springboard for discussing the everyday network experiences of Providence Italian-Americans), future studies might collect longitudinal network data to map out these networks and to examine more closely the transmission of ethnic culture and practice. (Alternatively, one might simulate this process over historical time, varying parameters of geographic and demographic constraint and observing the resulting interactions and network shapes.[60]) And a further possibility would be a closer study and extension of the ethnic "ways of talking" mentioned in chapter four: one might use, for example, conversation analysis methods to compare forms of talk among these groups, and observe how well they match with more mainstream forms of talk, or how they align more closely with particular political orientations. This might lead us towards more nuanced ideas about how different groups think about "political correctness" and the weight of words themselves.[61]

[59] Data gathered from my own fieldwork and interviews. Overall Johnston election statistics - which show that the majority of registered residents voted for Donald Trump - from the RI Board of Elections, accessible at `http://www.ri.gov/election/results/2016/general_election/johnston/`

[60] See note 44, chapter 3.

[61] This idea stems from a conversation I had with Tommy Shea in the bakery on 10/21/2017, during which he told me that he says things that he "don't mean" all the time. "Nothin' malicious, just stuff that's bullshit,

Overall, this study points to the continued relevance of late-generation ethnicity for some Italian-Americans in Johnston, Cranston, and North Providence, in as much as it worked - over the course of social interaction - to shape individuals' feelings of self-worth, to structure relations with others, to limit occupational and residential mobility, and to inform interpretations of current events. By these observations, ethnicity has not faded completely into "darkness" (Gans, 2014) or even a uniform "twilight" (Alba, 2014) across all late-generation European immigrant descendants, but rather remains as a shadow — one that lingers in a different manner in different locales, and one which is still clearly visible in the suburbs of Providence.

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that's all it is," he told me. "Listen. Cows may come, and cows may go, but the bullshit goes on forever." The ways he spoke - and the lack of meaning he attached to his own words - affected the way he thought about political correctness. "Some people say somethin, and then the far left takes it out of context, and they wanna make it sound bad when it's not bad. That's political bullshit, that's the way the far left works."

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