



Australian
National
University

THESES SIS/LIBRARY
R.G. MENZIES LIBRARY BUILDING NO:2
THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
CANBERRA ACT 0200 AUSTRALIA

TELEPHONE: +61 2 6125 4631
FACSIMILE: +61 2 6125 4063
EMAIL: library.theses@anu.edu.au

USE OF THESES

This copy is supplied for purposes
of private study and research only.
Passages from the thesis may not be
copied or closely paraphrased without the
written consent of the author.

RECEIVED
SEP 14 1955

The Italians of Port Pirie
Dissertation
Presented for the degree of
Master of Arts
in the
Department of Anthropology and Sociology
at the
Australian National University.

J.F. Bromley,
September, 1955.

CONTENTS.

Synopsis

viii -xv.

Chapter One :	What the enquiry is about: the study of an Italian migrant community with special reference to the problem of assimilation.	(pp.1-15)
	Three Requisites to Assimilation	3.
	The Minority Group and Assimilation	8.
	Special Features of the present enquiry	12.
Chapter Two :	The locus and the people - an historical account of migration, indicating how the outlook of the Northern Italian differed from that of the Molfettese, and how they more readily modified this to the predominant working class ethos of the host society	(pp.16-67)
	The migration of Molfettese to other parts of Australia, and their forming other communities differing from the community formed at Port Pirie	16.
	The growth of Port Pirie as a Community	18.
	The Coming of the Italians	25.
	Italy and Migration	27.
	The Migration of North Italian Labourers from Rocca D'Arsie.	29.
	Opportunities and Conditions for their Employment in Port Pirie	31.
	Some General Remarks on the Molfettese Migration	36.
	The Background of Molfettese Fishermen, and its bearing on migration.	37.
	The Migrations of the Molfettese	42.
	Their migration to Port Pirie	44.
	The Molfettese Family and Migration	49.

Restrictive Upbringing of Children in Italy in the early part of the Century	119.
Changes in the Holding Power of the Family, and the Authority Structure in Port Pirie	120.
Changes attending Child-Birth, and the Management of the House	124.
The Increased Importance of School and Literacy	126.
Size of Family and Attitude to Children	129.
Increased Freedom and Leisure Time given to Women and Girls	129.
Changes concerning attitudes to marriage, and husband-wife relationship.	132.
Chapter Six : Social Activity within the Molfettese Community (pp. 137-174)	
The Community from the point of view of entering Migrants	137.
The Community Defined	138.
Marriage Ceremony	140.
Burial Ceremonial	142.
Religious Ceremony	143.
The Club	146.
Name Days and Visiting	148.
Young Men's Sub-Groups	152.
Family Rivalry and Alignments	156.
Status within the Community	164.
Loss of Cohesion within the Community	168.
Relationships with the host society	171.
Chapter Seven: Value and Value-Orientations (pp.175-191).	
What is meant by "value" in this context	175.
Traditional Molfettese Values	176.

The Migration of Molfettese Women, and the Changing Attitude towards repeated Migration of men during the Second Period of Migration	53
The Migration of Women, and the Growth of an Italian Community during the Third Period of Migration	57.
Fascist Activity and the War	62.
Post War Migration	64.
Chapter Three : The establishment of a Molfettese Fishing Community (pp.68-84)	
Statistics on the growth of the Community in connexion with the number of children born locally, and the number of nuclear families	68.
The Establishment of the Community Residentially	69.
The Importance of Buying Houses	71
Fishing Conditions During the Third Period of Migration	75.
Family Economy	77.
Chapter Four: The Solidarity of the Molfettese Family- and the Socialization of the Individual within the Family (pp.85-119)	
Introductory - the family as a protective and co-operative unit	85.
Child Birth, and the early care of Children	87.
First Disciplining- the learning process	90.
The roles of Father and Mother, Husband and Wife	96.
Segregation of the Sexes in Preparation for Future Roles	101.
Chaperonage, Courtship, and the Selection of Marriage Partners	102.
Types of Marriage and Family Alignment	109.
Family Solidarity	116.
Chapter Five: Changes in the Role of the Family (pp.119-136)	

The Place of Religion in the lives of the Migrants 181.

Changes in Values and Value Orientation 186.

Chapter Eight : Assimilation : the relationship between Italian Groups and the host Society. (pp.192-219).

Criteria of Assimilation and their unimportance when detached from group analysis 192.

A Comparison between North Italians and Molfettese 194.

The Italian Orientation of the Molfettese. 197.

Migrant Perception of the Host Society 201.

Assimilation and Social Change 205.

The attitude of the Host Society towards the acceptance of Italian Migrants. 211.

The further acceptance of Migrants of an Australian set of values, and summary conclusions 216.

APPENDICES.



Appendix One : The Estimated number of Italian migrants arriving to Port Pirie for the first time

One (a) : The Italian Population of Port Pirie, 1953.

Appendix Two : Residence Maps of Solomontown and David Street areas from 1920 to 1953.

Appendix Three : The Relative Cost of Living in Australia and Italy from 1929 - 1953.

Appendix Four : Sample story illustrating Molfettese Interest

Appendix Five : Some common maxims.

Appendix Six : The Relation between the number of Second Generation Molfettese children born in Port Pirie and the number of Child-Rearing Molfettese women.

Appendix Seven : Racial Prejudice scales

(a) National preferences

(b) Stereotypes held about Italians.

(c) Qualities esteemed and disliked by Molfettese children compared with an Australian control group.

(d) Rationale of the method used, and its limitations

Appendix Eight : Sample Genealogy showing household grouping of some thirty families.

Appendix Nine : Statistical Data on Re-Migration.

Appendix Ten : The Greeks and their reception in Fort Pirie

Bibliography.

Illustrations.

Balloon view of Fort Pirie, 1898, showing part of the Smelters, the Wharves, and looking towards Solomontown

p.20

Map of Port Pirie showing relative positions of Solomontown, and the David Street, and Pavlich Street areas.

p. 70

Sample Molfettese houses in Alpha Street, Solomontown.
Fishing Boats being prepared at the Wharf before sailing

p.72

Figures.

I.	Intramariage between two extended families	114
II.	Brother/sister Exchange Intramariage	115.
III.	Fission and alignment between Families of the Port Said / Molfettese sub-group	159.

Synopsis.

This study is concerned with Italian settlement in the industrial city of Port Pirie, South Australia. The problem to explain the kind and degree of assimilation among migrants of Italian descent was bound up with the further problem of group integration, since the Italians who appeared least assimilated formed themselves into a cohesive racial group, and the most assimilated Italians resisted group integration. Because of this variation in grouping the study of the assimilation of Italians in Port Pirie became one of the effect of group integration on assimilation into the host society - that is, that portion of the adopted country where the migrants chose to settle.

The degree of assimilation was not amenable to quantitative measurement, but was gauged comparatively by the knowledge that the migrants had of the host society, their readiness to accept its norms, and the willingness of the host society to accept them on a similar footing in the society. The problem of assimilation was complicated because the adopted country and the host society were not themselves uniform, and it is dubious whether there was any one set of values about which all Australians were agreed. Thus the type of explanation of assimilation which depended on the replacement of an Australian ethos, described by listing typical Australian behaviour traits and expectations as criteria by an Italian ethos was too facile, and the study of such a transformation would have meant that equal attention should be given to Australian and Italian folkways. Such a study would have demanded more time and resources than I had at my disposal.

Uniformity could be more easily achieved by the migrant group than the host society, and so long as it remained small in size it could

retain a fair degree of homogeneity, which made the study a less imposing one to begin with. But, since the more coherent Italian group composed of Molfettese fishermen and their families was virtually a closed community, and the fishermen were not given to making abstractions or verbalising their motives for action, there were many initial difficulties. The study became to depend on patient and participant observation of group behaviour in a variety of settings. This gave an interactional bias to the study which, however, was not a shortcoming since interaction was implied in group analysis.

Group membership and interaction were both selective processes. People belonged to groups for the same reason that they made friends - they wanted to express themselves freely and economically on a variety of subjects, and to have their wants recognized by others. Successful interaction tended to draw people together because there were always other people outside, with whom it was difficult to interact and become intimate. Temperamental and experiential differences put restraining barriers on interaction. Also, before people could communicate with one another they must at first agree about the meanings of the symbols they used. Some of the symbols might attain special emotional overtones in that they were adopted at a critical stage in the development of the individual. The interactional approach to assimilation raised at the outset the problems - Why do groups arise, and why do some groups persist? - and indicated that the answers to the problems would have to be sought in the values upheld by the groups.

The first problem was met in relation to the formation of an Italian community in Port Pirie in Chapters Two and Three. The answer to the second was sought in an account of family solidarity

and the socialization of the individual in a family setting in Chapter Four. The discussion of values themselves was left to Chapter Seven. The question of changes in value and value orientation led directly to the problem of assimilation, which was considered as a part of social change in the final chapter. Material more directly concerning change within the most solidary of institutions in the Molfettese community - that of the family - were considered immediately after the discussion of the family, and in Chapter Five.

The influence of size and common experience were crucial to group formation and integration. They explain why illiterate Southern Italians coming from Sicily and Naples did not affiliate themselves with Italian groups in Port Pirie. There does not seem to have been sufficient number of them to have formed a group of their own at any time, and their experiences seem to have been too remote from those of the North Italians or the Molfettese to allow them to interact freely with them. This is born out by the fact that the two literate Sicilians who attached themselves to particular North Italian friends left the group when the North Italians married. When the Molfettese group expanded rapidly in size after the Second World war the community tended to split into sub-groups, and this splitting in turn undermined group control. Where the community no longer provided a source of security against the more remote out-group, interaction within the community itself became restrained and group values were not reinforced.

Group solidarity was achieved at the expense of the out-group or host society. But where the outgroup seemed, to a sufficient number of deviants, to offer fuller economical and social rewards without personal restraints, group disintegration would soon be under way. If this was

met with acceptance on the part of the host society then assimilation would be accelerated. Knowledge of the out-group was obtained chiefly through the steady indoctrination of schools and newspapers, by radio and through films. The process of assimilation in this respect became one of the extension of knowledge and experience, and of accepting for consideration alternative modes of response. It was characterized by an extensity of interaction at the expense of an intensity of interaction. Extensity of interaction lessened racial prejudice as such, and opened the way for assimilation. For, two freely communicating individuals will tend to know, and not to know, many of the same things, and through sharing the same opinions will reinforce one another's opinions and come to regard other opinions and values as incorrect and pernicious. Thus group life has a cumulative aspect, and group values become clearer when the life of the group is intense and self-contained.

The main groups considered in this study were the Family and the Community, and some reference was made to recently formed sub-groups. The community was residentially split into major areas, so that the effect of propinquity could be studied in relation to assimilation. The Italian living in the less-concentrated area were not invariably more assimilated than those living in the more concentrated area. Children, however, in the predominantly Australian neighbourhood picked up English more quickly than the dialect spoken by their parents, and presumably they acquired many Australian culture traits at the same time.

The institution of visiting kept up communications within the two communities, and if a family lived away from the main residential groups it was obliged to make periodical calls upon relatives within the community. Although relatives often sought to live next to each other, the converse proposition that related neighbours were invariably

on good terms did not apply. Each family had an autonomy of its own, theoretically vested in the father, or leader of the house, and outside interference in family affairs would lead to quarrels and estrangements. The community was not structured to accept a leader, and attempts to alter the community structure in this direction were resisted.

The community was held together through intra-marriage and "other-family" reference. The intense concern with other families led to rivalry and fission where some families became more prosperous than others, and temporary co-operation in the early periods of settlement gave way to competition. The rivalry was expressed through the display of Australian goods, showing that the owner had been successful in the new environment. The material adoption of Australian objects thus preceded the cultural adoption. Competition itself encouraged further innovations and the adoption of more Australian folkways than did co-operation. Where the possession of goods rather than the faithful observance of group standards brought increased prestige and respect, a change in value-orientation occurred in the minority group, which was of vital importance to assimilation. Through his increased desire for Australian goods the Italian was placing himself on a competitive plane with Australians, who were also in a position to note his success and to accord him due recognition. His seeking of the recognition of Australians made him more aware of group pressures in the host society, which he did not previously recognize as applying to him. His success in the new environment together with the disintegration of his group was leading to his acceptance of Australian ways, although it was accompanied in some individuals, and in North Italians, with a certain amount of marginal self-consciousness which impeded assimilation.



II

Chapter One sets out the problems, and makes preliminary definitions. Chapter Two sets the background for the study, both in Italy and Port Pirie, and pursues the theme of motives for migration, and compatibility of the new environment with the old. The previous experience and education of the migrant in the country of origin were part-determinants of the adjustment and assimilation in the adopted country. The most conservative migrants were the least educated, and the women whose duty to their own family and the relatives of their lineage tied them to the home.

Assimilation was retarded with the establishment of the Molfettese community and the importation of large numbers of Molfettese women from Italy. It was retarded while the Molfettese found employment within their own group, and apart from the host society. The economic apartness of the Molfettese community is described in Chapter Three.

Chapter Four describes how family solidarity is achieved through the socialization process. Religious and educational influences outside the home were not first encouraged by the Molfettese family, and had less weight than might have been supposed. The Family was an omni-present group; its roles and norms were clearly defined; respect, love, hospitality, thrift, and industry were enjoined upon members, and common consultation over family decisions was an important feature.

The break down of the Family as an omni-present institution was achieved when governmental and commercial agencies took over many of the non-essential functions of the family. The encroachments of the Government had been resisted before the war; most resistance was disappearing, by 1953.

Interest in Family affairs was kept alive by visiting,

family discussions, contiguity of relatives, the display of portraits and group photographs. These partly make up the social life within the community, which is described in Chapter Six.

Chapter Six gives more stress to conditions as they existed in 1953 whereas Chapters Two and Three make reference to the evolution of traditional institutions. Since it analyses sub-groups as they existed at one point of time, it may give a false emphasis to the importance of some of these institutions in the long run. Sub-group formation was accompanied by an increased value of education, freedom, independence and leisure. Chapter Seven analyses traditional Molfattese values, and changes in value. Concessions made to young men were extended in a modified form to girls. The prestige of the mother was rising where the authority of the father could recall the past, and cause strain if the authoritarianism of the father was no longer necessary for group survival.

Chapter Eight attempts to show the interrelatedness of the standard of living and the knowledge of the migrant on his acceptance of an Australian way of life, and the acceptance of the Australian of him. Through the analysis a certain resistance to change was noted, so that the migrant tended to adopt as far as they were able behaviour patterns with which they were familiar in their country of origin. Once one pattern is formed it tends to affect through cultural inertia the adoption of other cultural patterns. The adjustments of migrants and host society are cumulative, so that if adjustments are not made the host society will be conceived as inhospitable, and this inhospitality will discourage further adjustments. The balance between low acceptance of the migrants and the host society was upset by the other balance-upsetting disturbances of a major world war.

In general, the North Italians are, except for their self-consciousness and some inhospitality in the host society, well on the way to complete assimilation. The Molfettese are still relatively unassimilated, though as fishermen they have been given a place in the host society, and the cessation of the fishing industry would be noted with some regret by the host society. Before the war they were almost entirely cut off from the host society. Since the war new groupings, institutions and values have been introduced which, although they do not invariably make for assimilation, tend to undermine the solidarity of Italian groups and remove some of the barriers to assimilation.

.....