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**“Matrimonio”: Italian Brides, Grooms and Birthplaces at Our Lady of Pompei in
Greenwich Village, 1924-1933**

by

Brendan O’Hagen

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Thesis Sponsor

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Second Reader

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Patricia Guarasci O'Hagen, who grew up in an extended Italian family, and introduced me to Italian Greenwich Village when I was 12. That night at the Grand Ticino restaurant with Mom and my brother remains one of my strongest childhood memories of an Italian world outside of our family. She did not see the end of this project, but her life and stories were its true origins.

B.O'H.

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B.O’H.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In 1925, an Italian immigrant couple married at the Roman Catholic church of Our Lady of Pompei (OLP) in the New York City neighborhood of Greenwich Village. The groom, a grocer, lived in Queens while the bride, whose occupation went unrecorded, lived on Sullivan Street in the heart of Greenwich Village's South Village Italian neighborhood, just a few blocks from OLP. Although they lived in different boroughs of the city, they were connected by their birthplaces in the province of Genoa, Northern Italy, and had both been living in the United States for less than five years.¹

In many ways, this couple was similar to hundreds of other couples of Italian background who wed at OLP during the 1920s and 1930s. Like many of the immigrant brides and grooms in the parish, they married a person who came from the same region of Italy at a time when the neighborhood's growing Italian community was made up mostly of immigrants, many of whom were also recent arrivals in the United States. But they arrived just as America's immigration system underwent profound changes that would curtail future Italian migration to the United States. Based on the marriage record the bride had resided in America for four years, which would place her arrival around 1921, the year that the federal government passed the Emergency Quota Act that limited the numbers of immigrants from Italy. The groom had been in America for only two years, meaning that he arrived around 1923, after the act took effect.

This study analyzes marriage patterns in a single Italian Catholic parish, Our Lady of Pompei (OLP) in New York City, between 1924 and 1933. It investigates whether marital practices, particularly intermarriage, were changing for Italians at OLP during the interwar years.

¹ Marriage Announcements Vol. 26: 1924-1925, p.101, Series X: Marriage Records, Church of Our Lady of Pompei, New York, NY, Records, 1892-1967, The Center for Migration Studies Archives, New York (hereafter cited as Marriage Records OLP).

But it also compares marriage patterns at OLP with those from larger-scale studies to ascertain whether the story of Italian marriage during the interwar years was different in a local parish than it was in cities or at the national level. In the decade following this couple's wedding, OLP and its parishioners were confronted with a series of changes that transformed their community, including policies imposed by governments as well as demographic changes. This study analyzes how these transformations were reflected in marital practices at OLP between 1924 and 1933.

Studies of Italian marriage have demonstrated extremely high endogamy and very low exogamy for Italians in the early 1900s, with endogamy levels especially high among immigrants.² Other data from some of these studies indicates that intermarriage increased substantially for Italians during and after World War II, especially in the second generation.³ Fewer studies have looked at marriage patterns for Italians during the interwar years compared to the other two periods, but the available evidence is mixed. Some studies show high

² Maria Enrica Danubio and Davide Pettener, "Marital Structure of the Italian Community of Boston, Massachusetts, 1880-1920," *Journal of Biosocial Science* 29, no.3 (July 1997): 257-269; Julius Drachler, *Intermarriage in New York City: A Statistical Study of the Amalgamation of European Peoples* (New York: 1921), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=miun.aed6209.0001.001&view=1up&seq=7>; Martin Dribe, J. David Hacker, Francesco Scalone, "Becoming American: Intermarriage during the Great Migration to the United States," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 49, no.2 (Autumn 2018): 189-218, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/702486>; Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy, "Single or Triple Melting Pot? Intermarriage Trends in New Haven, 1870-1940," *American Journal of Sociology* 49, no.4 (Jan. 1944): 333, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2770448>; Robert McCaa, "Ethnic Intermarriage and Gender in New York City," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 24, no.2 (Autumn 1993): 214, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/205357>; Deanna L. Pagnini and S. Philip Morgan, "Intermarriage and Social Distance Among U.S. Immigrants at the Turn of the Century," *American Journal of Sociology* 96, no.2 (Sept. 1990): 405-432, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2781107>; Sharon Sassler, "Gender and Ethnic Differences in Marital Assimilation in the Early Twentieth Century," *The International Migration Review* 39, no.3 (Fall 2005): 608-636, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/27645527>.

³ B.R. Bugelski, "Assimilation Through Intermarriage," *Social Forces* 40, no.2 (Dec. 1961): 150, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2574294>; Kennedy, "Single or Triple Melting Pot," 333; McCaa, "Ethnic Intermarriage," 214-219; Paul Moses, *An Unlikely Union: The Love-Hate Story of New York's Irish and Italians* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 273-295.

intermarriage rates on par with those of the post-World War II years, while others show levels that appear transitional between the early and later twentieth century.⁴

Despite their varying assessments of Italian marital patterns during the 1920s and 1930s, studies of the interwar years have usually analyzed marital behavior at either a citywide level or on a national scale utilizing sources such as marriage licenses or census samples. The records from OLP provide the opportunity to assess marital patterns for the population of a single parish, and to compare local Italian marriage practices in Greenwich Village with the patterns from the larger-scale studies.

This study asks questions about marital change in the interwar years, including whether the parish's patterns remained like those observed for Italians in the early twentieth century or shifted towards the patterns of the post-World War II years, and whether intermarriage increased, and if so to what degree. But this study also investigates whether a hyper-local study will yield different *kinds* of insights about marriage behavior than larger-scale studies have. These insights include links between marriage patterns and factors which should be more evident at a local level, such as demographic changes experienced by a particular community.

Studies of larger geographic areas or longer time spans offer a broad picture of marriage, but a parish setting can provide a more in-depth understanding of marital behaviors within the

⁴ Bugelski, "Assimilation Through Intermarriage," 150; Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy, "Premarital Residential Proximity and Ethnic Endogamy," *American Journal of Sociology* 48, no.5 (Mar. 1943): 582, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/2769181>; Kennedy, "Single or Triple Melting Pot," 333; Carol Lynn McKibben, *Beyond Cannery Row: Sicilian Women, Immigration, and Community in Monterey, California, 1915-99* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 57-74, ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/huntercollege-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3414050>; Joel Perlmann, "Mexicans now, Italians then: Intermarriage Patterns," (Working Paper, No. 376, Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, April 2003): 15, <https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/31548>; Joel Perlmann, "Demographic Outcomes of Ethnic Intermarriage in American History: Italian-Americans Through Four Generations," (Working Paper, No. 312, Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, Aug. 2000): 6, 16, <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/79198/1/468505385.pdf>.

context of a local ethnic population, and how those behaviors interact with other social forces.⁵ OLP's records are especially thorough concerning marriage patterns for women parishioners due to the Catholic custom of holding weddings in the bride's parish. OLP's records also noted when Italian men from Greenwich Village wed in other parishes, so cover marriage patterns for male parishioners broadly if not quite as completely as those for women. This study therefore unearths a full picture of marriage behavior in a parish and its associated community.

CHAPTER II: OUR LADY OF POMPEI AND GREENWICH VILLAGE ITALIANS

As one of the Archdiocese of New York's national ethnic parishes, tending to the spiritual and temporal needs of Italians had long been OLP's unique mission since its founding in 1892. The parish originated with two organizations begun during the late nineteenth century by the Italian Bishop Giovanni Battista Scalabrini: The Pious Society of Saint Charles, a religious order also known as the Scalabrinians, and the Saint Raphael Society, an aid society for Italian immigrants. The Scalabrinians arrived in New York in 1888 to assist the large numbers of Italian immigrants arriving in the city, and set up headquarters for the Saint Raphael Society at 113 Waverly Place in Greenwich Village. They opened a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Pompei in the building, and a parish of the same name under the care of the Scalabrinians developed in the neighborhood over the next several years, eventually incorporating as an independent entity in 1898.⁶

⁵ Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 50-106; Evelyn Savidge Sterne, *Ballots and Bibles: Ethnic Politics and the Catholic Church in Providence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 111-130.

⁶ Our Lady of Pompei is the name of a shrine to Our Lady of the Rosary which was established in Pompei, Italy during the late nineteenth century, and would have been familiar to many Southern Italian immigrants. Several Italian parishes in America, including OLP in New York City and Our Lady of Pompeii in Boston, were named after the popular Madonna. Mary Elizabeth Brown, *From Italian Villages to Greenwich Village: Our Lady of Pompei 1892-1992* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1992), 5-7, 16, 28.

OLP was one of many parishes established for Italians in the Archdiocese of New York between 1890 and 1910, a period when the number of Italians in the city increased from 12,223 to 554,449. Most parishes in New York were territorial units defined by geographic boundaries, and Catholics were usually assigned to parishes based on where they lived. OLP had territorial boundaries, but as a national parish its boundaries were also defined by language and ethnicity. Its mission to serve a particular ethnic group meant that OLP could be utilized by Italian immigrants or Italian language speakers throughout the Archdiocese, not just the ones living within its geographic bounds.⁷

Besides serving a wider diocesan ethnic community, OLP was also the center of Greenwich Village's own Italian neighborhood, which has been referred to as the third of Manhattan's "Little Italy" enclaves. Located between Washington Square Park and Houston Street, the South Village was smaller in terms of both area and population than the Italian communities on the Lower East Side or in East Harlem. But between 1880 and 1920, over 50,000 Italians settled in the South Village, and by the time of the interwar years it was one of the largest Italian neighborhoods in the city. OLP's population reflected the changing regional demographics of Italian migration. In its early years, 81% of the people marrying and having children baptized there were Northern Italians since they were the first Italians to colonize Greenwich Village, but by the 1920s Southern Italians had become a majority of the immigrant population at OLP, as they were in most New York City Italian communities.⁸

⁷ Mary Elizabeth Brown, *Churches, Communities and Children: Italian Immigrants in the Archdiocese of New York, 1880-1945* (Staten Island: The Center for Migration Studies, 1995), 18-19; Thomas J. Shelley, "Catholic Greenwich Village: Ethnic Geography and Religious Identity in New York City, 1880-1930," *The Catholic Historical Review* 89, no.1 (Jan. 2003): 74, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25026323>.

⁸ Mary Elizabeth Brown, *The Italians of the South Village* (New York: Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, 2007), 1, 11; Shelley, "Catholic Greenwich Village," 75.

According to sociological research conducted by Caroline Ware during the 1920s, the most common occupations for men of the “tenement population” in the neighborhood were truck or taxi drivers, longshoremen, skilled artisans, common laborers or small business employees. The neighborhood also contained garment, millinery, artificial flower and other factories that employed many local women, particularly Italians. By the 1930s, local Italians owned most of Greenwich Village’s speakeasies, which had become an important revenue source for them. OLP’s marriage records reported a similar occupational profile for grooms of Italian background, for whom the most common occupations were chauffeur, laborer, mechanic, tailor, carpenter, waiter and barber. Less common but still well-represented occupations were clerk, salesman, grocer, shoemaker and electrician. Some occupations (laborer, waiter, tailor and barber especially) were strongly associated with immigrant grooms while most chauffeurs and clerks were second-generation Italians, because those were jobs that required some ability to understand and speak English.⁹

Though Italians clustered in the South Village section, as residents of Greenwich Village they were also part of an ethnically diverse area. In 1910 there were 61,000 total residents of Greenwich Village, and by that point Italians were the largest ethnic group with 25,000 residents, of which 17,000 were immigrants and 8,000 were second-generation. Children of American-born parents (native born of native parents) were the next-largest bloc at 13,000, and there was also a substantial community of immigrant and second-generation Irish (12,000), and smaller numbers of Germans, Spanish and French. By the 1920s the Irish were concentrated in the western part of Greenwich Village adjacent to the Hudson River piers, which reflected their

⁹ Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30; Caroline F. Ware, *Greenwich Village, 1920-1930: A Comment on American Civilization in the Post-War Years* (1935; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 34-49.

decades-long control of longshoreman jobs there. After World War I, Italians and Spaniards who lived in the neighborhood and African-Americans from outside of it increasingly competed with the Irish for longshoreman jobs on the Greenwich Village piers.¹⁰ Notwithstanding the presence of ethnic clusters in the Village, historian Shirley Yee has argued that perceptions of urban areas as “ethnic enclaves” socially isolated from each other have often overlooked the ethnically mixed residential patterns within supposed enclaves such as “Little Italys” or “Chinatowns.”¹¹

By 1920, Italians comprised 26,000 of Greenwich Village’s 47,000 residents, their numbers having slightly increased since 1910 even though the general population of the neighborhood had decreased. But only a few years later, forces that would destabilize the local population began to take shape. In 1923, OLP’s pastor Father Antonio Demo learned that New York City planned to extend Sixth Avenue south through Greenwich Village to connect traffic with what would become the Holland Tunnel. Before its extension, Sixth Avenue terminated at Minetta Lane and Carmine Street, nearly next door to the parish’s church at 210 Bleecker Street, which was now directly in the way of the planned thoroughfare.¹²

In 1926, OLP received an eviction notice from the city for its church, on the same day that nearly 10,000 of its neighbors, including homes and local businesses, received theirs. The parish had already purchased the site for a new church at the corner of Carmine and Bleecker Streets (its present location), but the new building was not completed for another two years,

¹⁰ Brown, *Italians of the South Village*, 8; Ware, *Greenwich Village, 1920-1930*, 51-52.

¹¹ Shirley Yee, *An Immigrant Neighborhood: Interethnic and Interracial Encounters in New York Before 1930* (Temple University Press, 2011), 5, ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/huntercollege-ebooks/detail.action?docID=798019>.

¹² Brown, *From Italian Villages*, 81-82; *Italians of the South Village*, 9.

though masses were held there as early as 1927. The evictions not only forced thousands of South Village residents from their homes in a matter of months but also greatly reduced the supply of local apartment buildings, making it even more difficult for longtime residents to stay in the neighborhood. Once completed, the extension cut through nearly 15 neighborhood streets to reach Canal Street, resulting in the complete destruction of Hancock and Congress Streets and the widening of many others. Hancock Street alone was home to 13 brides and 11 grooms who married in the parish between 1924 and 1929.¹³

It is unclear exactly how many parishioners that OLP lost from the evictions, but in December 1926 Father Demo stated in a form he filed for the US Census that he had 12,000 parishioners, down from the 20,000 he claimed earlier in the 1920s. The discrepancy between the two figures may have resulted from his estimating the number of people the parish lost through the extension of Sixth Avenue.¹⁴ The decimation of OLP's congregation and the demolition of their homes and livelihoods through eviction illustrates the power of local government projects to upend the lives of a community. But it was not the only disruption that the parish would experience from government policies during the 1920s.

Although immigration declined during and immediately after World War I, nativist anxieties that “innumerable hordes” of poor foreigners were poised to flood the United States persisted into the 1920s. Partly as a response to this national impression and the post-war Red Scare, Congress passed the Emergency Quota Act of 1921, which created the first numerical cap in American immigration history. Clearly intended to reduce immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, the provisions of the 1921 act did not apply to Western Hemisphere migrants but

¹³ Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-29; Brown, *From Italian Villages*, 84-85.

¹⁴ Brown, *From Italian Villages*, 86.

set a quota for Europeans at three percent of the number of foreign-born from each country that had been listed in the 1920 census. The law was passed as a one-year measure and was extended for two more years until 1924, when Congress devised a more permanent quota system in the form of the Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act. The Johnson-Reed Act was the latest in a series of immigration restriction laws that began with the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 and continued during World War I with the Immigration Act of 1917, which enacted the first general immigration restriction ever passed in the United States in the form of a literacy test.¹⁵

The 1924 act changed the basis of the quota system to two percent of the foreign-born per country in the 1890 census, which was referred to as the “Anglo-Saxon census” since it predated the heaviest period of immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe.¹⁶ The potential impact of this change can be seen in calculations made at the time by Representative Albert Johnson, one of the act’s architects, when he estimated that the new system would reduce the number of annual quota spaces for Italians from 42,000 under the 1921 law to 4,000. The law added another layer of regulation to immigration policy by requiring visas and photographs of all foreign migrants for the first time. The visa requirement was considered by the law’s proponents

¹⁵ Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2005), 30-49.

¹⁶ The Johnson-Reed Act required that the government create a system of “national origins” that would set immigration quotas after 1929 based on the proportion of the American population in 1920 that derived from each nation. The system was based on an ostensibly scientific study which concluded that 43% of the 1920 population descended from the Colonial inhabitants of British North America, and the rest from immigrants after 1790. But the study’s claims rested on several questionable assumptions and methodologies. It assumed that even given past intermarriages, a population’s national origins could be quantified as specific fractions of nationalities that remained discrete over time and did not mix. This assumption was in line with contemporary concepts of race as defined by bloodline. The study also arbitrarily gave more weight to population data from earlier decades to ensure that a larger proportion of the population in 1920 would derive from Colonial-era inhabitants, despite the fact that the first census in 1790 did not record respondents’ ancestry, and censuses did not identify whether people were native or foreign-born until 1850. The study also explicitly excluded from the population count all African Americans, immigrants from the Western Hemisphere and their descendants, Asian immigrants and their descendants and Native Americans, in effect defining American nationality as white-only. Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 57; Mae M. Ngai, “The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924,” *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 1 (June 1999): 70-72, 78-80. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2567407>.

as a crucial tool for controlling immigration, because prospective immigrants had to present themselves at an American consulate to obtain a visa, subjecting them to the discretion of the Department of State's consular officials, many of whom were nativists. The effects of the new system on Italian immigration were swift and drastic. In 1921, the last year of pre-quota migration, 220,000 Italians arrived in the United States. But during the six years from 1925 to 1930, fewer than 90,000 entered the country.¹⁷

By ending the mass migration that previously brought a constant inflow of new immigrants into the United States, the legislation marked the beginning of a new era for Italian communities and hastened demographic changes that had already started to redefine them. In tandem with the loss of local residents, the steep drop in immigration transformed what was once a growing Italian community in Greenwich Village into one undergoing a marked decline. In 1920, Italians were the largest ethnic group in the Village, and immigrants made up more than half (15,000) of its population of 26,000. But by 1930, the Italian population had diminished to 16,000, of which immigrants were a minority of 7,000 while the second generation had become the majority with 9,000.¹⁸

CHAPTER III: SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The sources of this study are church records, specifically marriage announcements. Parish marriage records differ from census records because the latter document *existing* marriages, while the former, like marriage licenses, show marriages *as they occur*.¹⁹ Nineteen

¹⁷ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 53-57.

¹⁸ Brown, *Italians of the South Village*, 9.

¹⁹ Deanna L. Pagnini and S. Philip Morgan, "Intermarriage and Social Distance Among U.S. Immigrants at the Turn of the Century," *American Journal of Sociology* 96, no.2 (Sept. 1990): 415, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2781107>.

twenty-four serves as the starting point for the study because it was the year that the restrictive Johnson-Reed Immigration Act was passed.

The study ends in 1933, which was the last year covered by the registers. The final volume of marriage announcements ended in April 1933 and contained only 22 weddings for that year, but otherwise the registers used in this study recorded nine full years of marriage in the parish. The inclusion of nearly 10 years of marriage data was intended to document changes (and/or continuity) in parish marriage patterns over a continuous stretch of time. To include as many weddings as possible, every marriage at OLP involving at least one person of evident Italian background was recorded, which constituted 1,428 weddings. Approximately 30 other marriages were excluded for incompleteness of data or for other reasons, such as notes in the register raising the possibility that the wedding may not have taken place. A similar number of marriages not involving at least one Italian (25) were also excluded from analysis.²⁰

OLP's registers contain a wide range of details about couples, their families and the situations surrounding their weddings, which make them an especially rich source about marriage in an Italian Catholic parish.²¹ For both bride and groom, entries typically included their date and place of birth, age, names of parents, place of baptism, address at time of marriage and names of witnesses. For Italian immigrants, birthplaces were often described in minute detail, with both the town and province in Italy noted, and many records also listed the length of time an immigrant had been living in the United States. Occupations were usually listed for the

²⁰ Guide to the Church of Our Lady of Pompei, New York, New York Records CMS.037, The Center for Migration Studies Archives, New York, 42, https://cmsny.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/cms_037.pdf.

²¹ Marriage records also included details such as the dates that banns were read, and any dispensations granted to couples to remove impediments to their wedding under canon law. The latter were often granted for weddings between a Catholic and a non-Catholic for the impediments of mixed religion and disparity of worship. Some records indicated whether a person living outside of Greenwich Village had previously lived in the area, and others noted how much money the couple still owed for the service, or whether a couple was already living together before their wedding.

groom only. The entries indicated when weddings took place with Italian phrases such as “Matr.il” (short for “Matrimonio”), “Celebrato” and “Sposati a” written before the date.²²

Data entries were made in an Excel spreadsheet for each of the 1,428 marriages, transcribing the names, ages, addresses and birthplaces for both the bride and groom, and the groom’s (and very rarely the bride’s) occupation. For each wedding, a mapping variable was created based on the bride and groom addresses to track the geographical distribution of marriages. In most cases both the bride and groom lived in New York City, so the mapping variables often reflected a combination of boroughs and neighborhoods; a wedding between a bride from Greenwich Village and a groom from Brooklyn would be designated as “GV-BKYN.” In weddings between a Greenwich Village resident and a person living in another part of Manhattan, a determination was made of the latter’s neighborhood using a near-contemporary source, the 1939 *WPA Guide to New York City*.²³ Segmenting marriages more finely by location made it possible to better understand the pre-marriage distances between brides and grooms, and the connections between the parish and different parts of the city.

The most important variables for this analysis were the ethnic backgrounds of brides and grooms, which were necessary for determining the other important variables, whether a marriage was endogamous or exogamous. For immigrants, ethnicity was usually based on their country of birth. The notations in the registers about Italian immigrants’ towns and provinces of birth were used whenever possible to further classify their ethnicity according to the part of Italy they came from. Southern Italy, Northern Italy, Central Italy and Sicily were the largest regions of origin for Italian immigrants who married at OLP, and most of them fell within these four main

²² Marriage Records OLP, Vol. 26: 1924-1924, p.152, Vol. 27: 1925-1927, p.80, Vol. 28: 1927-1929, p.131.

²³ Federal Writers' Project (New York, NY), *The WPA Guide to New York City* (1939; repr., New York: The New Press, 1992).

ethnicity categories. Southern Italian was defined as a birthplace within the Italian mainland regions of Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, and Calabria, the part of the country historically referred to as the Mezzogiorno.²⁴ Northern Italy is traditionally defined as the regions of Piedmont, Veneto, Lombardy and Liguria, while Central Italy comprises Emilia-Romagna, Marche, Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio (which includes Rome).²⁵ Although Sicily is usually considered part of the Mezzogiorno, it was categorized as a separate regional ethnicity since Sicilians often settled in distinct subgroups within Italian colonies.²⁶

In the cases of a small number of immigrants with Italian-sounding surnames, their ethnic background was not as easily determined because they were born outside of Italy. These situations commonly arose for persons born in Switzerland, and different determinations were made based on parents' names and contextual information such as the history of their birthplace. The ethnic background of a bride born in Berne who married at OLP in 1925 was logged as Swiss based on her birthplace, because the register listed two possible spellings of her surname, making it difficult to assess whether she had any Italian ancestry. But a groom born in Preonzo, Canton Ticino, Switzerland who wed at OLP the next year was categorized as of Italian-Swiss ethnicity, because of the historically high population of Italian-speakers in Canton Ticino.²⁷ In

²⁴ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v., "Mezzogiorno," last modified June 9, 2011, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mezzogiorno>; F. Martinelli, "Cassa per il Mezzogiorno," *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, vol. 1, 447, Elsevier 2009, Gale eBooks, link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX4098300081/GVRL?u=cuny_hunter&sid=GVRL&xid=c607e7c6.

²⁵ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v., "Italy-Traditional regions," last modified March 3, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Italy/Traditional-regions#ref923420>; Elisabeth Giacon Castleman, "Northern Italy," *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, vol. 2, 298-302, Gale eBooks, link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3403400358/GVRL?u=cuny_hunter&sid=GVRL&xid=99ec7e2a.

²⁶ Donna R. Gabbacia, *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street: Housing and Social Change Among Italian Immigrants, 1880-1930* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 54.

²⁷ Marriage Records OLP, Vol. 26: 1924-1925, p.128, Vol. 27: 1925-1927, p.113; Barbara Waldis, "Swiss, Italian," *Encyclopedia of World Cultures*, vol. 4 (Europe, Macmillan Reference USA, 1996), 259, Gale eBooks, accessed March 5, 2021, link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3458000716/GVRL?u=cuny_hunter&sid=GVRL&xid=31150b1e.

the overwhelming number of cases, there were enough pieces of information in an immigrant's marriage record to determine ethnic background from more than just their names.

Determining ethnic backgrounds for US-born persons also required a combination of evaluating names and contextual information from the marriage records. The registers listed birthplaces for the bride and groom but not their parents, so descent from an Italian immigrant could not be used to designate someone as an Italian American. However, the registers usually listed the mothers of brides and grooms by their maiden names. So determinations were made based on any evident ethnicity in parental names and other factors, such as baptism in a parish or residence in a neighborhood known to be affiliated with a particular ethnic group. A person with an Italian surname who was born in the United States, and whose two parents also had Italian-sounding names, was classified as Italian American. In most cases these decisions were supported by the fact that many of these persons were baptized at OLP and had a South Village address, or resided in other neighborhoods with large Italian populations such as East Harlem or the Lower East Side.

US-born persons with one Italian parental name and another parent whose ethnicity was either unclear or not Italian were classified as part-Italian American, to reflect the possibility that they may have been the children of intermarriages. Carefully assessing ethnic backgrounds was especially important for identifying possible intermarriages. Consider a hypothetical wedding at OLP between a bride with the surname of DiSenna and a groom with the surname of Flanagan. The bride's ethnic background was called as Italian American given her name, New York City birthplace and baptism at Our Lady of Loreto on Elizabeth Street, another known Italian parish.²⁸

²⁸ Brown, *Churches, Communities and Children*, 56.

The groom was judged to be Irish American based on his name, his mother's distinctly Irish maiden name, and his address in the solidly Irish West Village section of Greenwich Village.²⁹

In the above case the ethnicities were easier to identify, but in most intermarriages the ethnicity of the person with no evident Italian background was recorded as undetermined due to a lack of verifiable ethnic associations. In the 59 intermarriages involving an Italian American bride, the ethnic background of the groom could not be determined in 37 cases. A similar proportion of brides who intermarried with Italian American grooms also had undetermined ethnicities. Despite this uncertainty, these marriages were considered exogamous because they involved people with evident Italian ethnic background marrying someone with no discernable Italian ethnicity in their names, their parents' names, or in contextual information.³⁰

Religious affiliations listed in marriage records sometimes provided additional evidence that a person of undetermined ethnicity was most likely not Italian. In the intermarriages with Italian American brides, eleven of the 37 grooms of unknown ethnicity had a non-Catholic religion listed in the registers, which generally noted baptisms in other Christian denominations and denoted Jewish ancestry with phrases such as "genitori Ebrai" (Jewish parents).³¹ The different religions of these 11 grooms were interpreted as evidence of a non-Italian background in combination with the other factors described above.

In other cases, further research helped to at least establish a lack of Italian ethnic background, even if it did not resolve the person's ethnicity. These results were a byproduct of conducting additional research on 30 selected couples using census records and marriage licenses

²⁹ Shelley, "Catholic Greenwich Village," 62-69.

³⁰ Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30.

³¹ Ibid.

to learn more about their family histories and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as about the blocks and buildings where they lived. In a 1927 intermarriage, the bride was Italian American but the groom's ethnicity was undetermined; his surname did not hint at any particular ethnic background. He was baptized at Saint Anthony's in Greenwich Village, an Italian national parish that also had a large Irish congregation at different points after its founding in 1866.³² His address at the time of marriage was in East Harlem, a neighborhood with a large Italian population, but the 1920 United States Census indicated that he previously lived with his family in the West Village on a block where the buildings housed people of Irish and German background, but no Italians. The groom and his widowed mother were both US-born, so the only inkling of ethnicity was his maternal grandmother's birthplace in Ireland.³³ No indications of Italian ancestry were identified for the groom, even though he had associations with an Italian parish and neighborhood.

Together with the ethnic backgrounds of brides and grooms, the other variable for this analysis was marriage type: whether a marriage was endogamous or exogamous. Marriages between two persons with Italian ethnic backgrounds were defined as endogamous, including those between an Italian immigrant and a second-generation Italian.³⁴ Weddings between a part-Italian American and another person with Italian background also counted as endogamous to address their partial shared ethnicity, even when both spouses were part-Italian. As described above, exogamous marriages were defined as those between a person with Italian ethnic

³² Thomas J. Shelley, *Greenwich Village Catholics: St. Joseph's Church and the Evolution of an Urban Faith Community, 1829-2002* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 131-133.

³³ 1920 United States Federal Census, Manhattan Assembly District 3, New York, New York, Roll T625_1189, Page 1B, Enumeration District 237, digital image s.v. "Paul Early," *Ancestry.com*.

³⁴ Although most reviewed studies considered inter-generational marriages between Italians as endogamous, a notable exception is Maria Enrica Danubio and Davide Pettener's study of Italian parishes in Boston, which considered them intermarriages. Maria Enrica Danubio and Davide Pettener, "Marital Structure of the Italian Community of Boston, Massachusetts, 1880-1920," *Journal of Biosocial Science* 29, no.3 (July 1997): 259-261.

background and a person with no evident Italian ethnicity, including when the latter's ethnicity was undetermined. Exogamous weddings included six marriages between a part-Italian American and a person of undetermined ethnicity, which represent a possible gray area since the couple could have shared ethnicity on the non-Italian side of their backgrounds.

As the following section will reveal, the marriage patterns at OLP between 1924 and 1933 continue some of the patterns shown in studies of Italians during the earlier twentieth century and interwar years, but also shift in reaction to demographic changes within the community and to pressures imposed by entities beyond the community's control.

CHAPTER IV: PATTERNS OF STABILITY AND CHANGE IN A LOCAL PARISH

Between 1924-1933, marriage at OLP was overwhelmingly an Italian affair. The parish's marriage registers indicate that nearly 94% of all brides and grooms who married there from 1924-1933 were of Italian background. For immigrants, ethnicity was determined based on a birthplace in Italy which was stated in their marriage record, and their towns and provinces of origin were used when available to specify the part of Italy from which they came. Southern Italy, Northern Italy, Central Italy and Sicily were the regions of origin for most immigrants who married at OLP. The ethnic backgrounds of US-born persons were evaluated using a combination of any evident ethnicity in their names, in parental names and contextual factors such as baptism in a parish with known ethnic affiliations. A US-born person with an Italian surname whose parents also had Italian-sounding names was designated as Italian American.

The distribution of birthplaces reflects gendered patterns of Italian migration to the United States as well as the specific regional mix of the parish's immigrants. Over 50% of brides were Italian American, with immigrants from Southern Italy (17%), Northern Italy (13%) and Sicily (9%) forming much smaller groups. Immigrants, however, were a much higher

proportion of the groom population, in which only 31% were Italian Americans, but Southern Italians, Northerners and Sicilians together comprised 55%.³⁵ The different proportions of immigrants in the bride and groom populations at OLP partly resulted from the historically skewed sex ratios among Italian immigrants in the United States, 77% of whom were male between 1880-1910.³⁶ The greater number of Italian American brides than grooms may also reflect the custom of weddings being held in the bride's parish.³⁷ Southern Italians remained the largest population bloc at OLP until 1928, when Italian Americans comprised 41.5% of persons married at Pompei.³⁸ This demographic shift was a crucial factor influencing marriage patterns in the parish during the interwar years and will be discussed further below.

Weddings at OLP were often local events between people that lived in the neighborhood, and in many cases lived on the same street or in the same building. Based on the mapping variables created from addresses in the marriage records, in nearly 40% of weddings both the bride and groom lived in Greenwich Village. Seventeen percent of marriages involved a Greenwich Village resident and someone who lived in the outer boroughs of New York City (mostly Brooklyn), while 13% were between a Greenwich Village resident and a resident of another Manhattan neighborhood. Even more deeply local were the 14.6% of weddings where the bride and groom lived at the same address or on the same street, the vast majority of which

³⁵ Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30.

³⁶ Brown, *Italians of the South Village*, 3.

³⁷ Since Catholic weddings traditionally took place in the bride's parish, it is likely that a larger number of women in the parish married at OLP since male parishioners could marry in their bride's parish. OLP's registers contain records of 37 weddings that occurred in other parishes, 25 of which were grooms marrying in the bride's parish. In these 25 weddings, all the grooms were of Italian background and had an address in Greenwich Village, so were probably parishioners. However, it is unclear if these figures represent all the male OLP parishioners who married outside of the parish between 1924-1933.

³⁸ Brown, *Italians of the South Village*, 11.

were locations in Greenwich Village. Of the 122 same address weddings, 102 involved a shared address in the Village.³⁹

Of the 1,428 weddings at OLP between 1924 and 1933 that were analyzed in this study, the data indicates that 1,276 were endogamous and 140 were exogamous, yielding overall rates of 89.4% and 9.8%, respectively, for the period.⁴⁰ These results are consistent with, though somewhat below, the high endogamy that previous studies documented for Italians in the early twentieth century and the decades prior to World War II.⁴¹ OLP's results also differ from the pattern of declining endogamy and increasing intermarriage that these studies and others have shown for Italian communities in the post-World War II years.⁴² Most of these studies described the Italian population in generational terms as "first generation" and "second generation," and this study also uses those terms when discussing their work. But for the purpose of clarity,

³⁹ Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Julius Drachsler found that Italians in New York City had a low overall intermarriage rate of 6.8% in 1908-1912, though rates diverged from this figure when broken down by generation, Italian region and gender. Maria Enrica Danubio and Davide Pettener analyzed 15,579 marriages from three Italian parishes in Boston between 1880-1920 and found an overall endogamy rate of 96.6%. Intermarriage rates for the Boston parishes were overall very low but differed between neighborhoods over time, ranging from a low of 1.8% at Sacred Heart in the North End in 1910-1920 to a high of 9.2% at Our Lady of Pompeii in the South End in 1900-1909. Based on census data, Robert McCaa showed that Italians in New York City in 1900 and 1910 in-married at 98% and 96% respectively, and Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy found a similarly high in-marriage rate of 97% for Italians in 1900 in New Haven. Danubio and Pettener, "Marital Structure of the Italian Community," 259-261, 263; Julius Drachsler, *Intermarriage in New York City: A Statistical Study of the Amalgamation of European Peoples* (New York: 1921), 44, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=miun.aed6209.0001.001&view=1up&seq=7>; Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy, "Single or Triple Melting Pot? Intermarriage Trends in New Haven, 1870-1940," *American Journal of Sociology* 49, no.4 (Jan. 1944): 332, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2770448>; Robert McCaa, "Ethnic Intermarriage and Gender in New York City," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 24, no.2 (Autumn 1993): 208, 214, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/205357>.

⁴² According to McCaa's research, in-marriage rates for Italians in New York City stood at 78% in 1960 and 77% in 1980, remaining unchanged in the later decade because the 1980 census asked respondents about their ancestry, which enabled McCaa to detect more distant Italian ethnic identity in people third generation or later who would otherwise be categorized as native born of native parents. Postwar marriage trends were even more pronounced among Italians in Buffalo, New York, where B.R. Bugelski noted lower endogamy rates of 61% in 1940 and 46% in 1950. He also noted marriage rates by gender, showing that men intermarried more frequently than women every year except 1950, when they both did so at 36%. B.R. Bugelski, "Assimilation Through Intermarriage," *Social Forces* 40, no.2 (Dec. 1961): 150, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2574294>; McCaa, "Ethnic Intermarriage," 214.

“immigrant” and “Italian American” are used as equivalent terms for “first generation” (1G) and “second generation” (2G), respectively, throughout this text.

However, analyses that focused specifically on the interwar years (and did not include the first two decades of the century) revealed a more complicated picture and differences among locations. While endogamy remained high, change was taking place. In Buffalo, for example, B.R. Bugelski calculated a much lower in-marriage rate for Italians of 71% in 1930, including intermarriage rates of 23% for men but only 10% for women.⁴³ Joel Perlmann’s study comparing intermarriage for Mexicans during the late twentieth century with that of Italians in the 1920s utilized census records to obtain a national sample of marriages for Italian women, yielding a complex set of results that varied by birth cohort and generation. In the cohort of Italian women born between 1901-1905, who would have reached the age of 20 between 1921-1925, immigrants intermarried at 6% while 2G women did so at 22%. In the 1906-1910 cohort, immigrant women intermarried at 9% while the practice fell slightly to 19% among 2Gs. Women born in those two birth cohorts would have been in their twenties from the early 1920s through 1930, and therefore similar in age to many of the people who married at OLP during those years. Based on OLP’s overall rates, though, Italians in the parish were intermarrying much less frequently during the interwar years than 2G women were in Perlmann’s study. The patterns identified in Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy’s classic studies of intermarriage in New Haven are closest to those at OLP, revealing that Italians in New Haven in-married at 86.7% in 1930,

⁴³ Bugelski, “Assimilation Through Intermarriage,” 150.

indicating moderately increased intermarriage compared to the earlier years of her study which focused on the years between 1870-1900.⁴⁴

Although endogamous marriage patterns were not the focus of this study, data on them were included to provide greater context for the intermarriages at OLP, and as a point of comparison for any changes in the latter. Specifically, were the ways that Italians married within their own ethnicity also changing during the 1920s and 1930s? As mentioned in the previous section, marriages between two persons with Italian ancestry were categorized as endogamous, including those between an Italian immigrant and an Italian American. Persons with one Italian parent and a non-Italian parent were classified as part-Italian (or part-Italian American if US-born), and marriages between them and other persons of Italian background also counted as endogamous.

In order to gain a more specific sense of the structure of endogamy in the parish, endogamous marriages at OLP were further subdivided into three kinds: those between two immigrants, between two Italian Americans, and between an immigrant and an Italian American. At the start of the twentieth century, Italian communities in the studies discussed above were composed mainly of immigrants. There were comparatively few marriages between the first and second generations in the early 1900s because most Italian migration to America was recent enough that there were relatively few 2Gs of marrying age during that time. In Julius Drachsler's sample of 6,778 marriages involving Italians from 1908-1912, 5,317 of them were between 1Gs. Only 650 involved 1G Italian men and 2G Italian women, and there were just 167

⁴⁴ Kennedy, "Single or Triple Melting Pot," 332; Joel Perlmann, "Mexicans now, Italians then: Intermarriage Patterns," (Working Paper, No. 376, Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, April 2003): 15-16, <https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/31548>.

between Italian 2Gs.⁴⁵ Marriages between two immigrants and between two Italian Americans thus serve as opposite poles in the generational structure of endogamy at OLP.

Table 1 shows the number of each type of endogamous marriage at OLP per year. During the first years of the study period, the in-marriage patterns in the parish resembled those for Italians in the early twentieth century. From 1924 through 1926, the vast majority of endogamous weddings involved two immigrants (“Immigrants” in the table, hereafter referred to as “immigrant weddings” in the text), with more than twice as many weddings as the middle category, immigrant-Italian American unions. Marriages between two Italian Americans (“Italian Ams” in the table, hereafter “Italian American weddings” in the text), on the other hand, were a small minority of in-marriages through 1927.

By 1928, immigrant weddings were still the largest category, though their numbers had fallen since 1925. However, in that year the number of Italian American weddings spiked from only 19 the previous year to 50, nearing parity with immigrant-Italian American unions for the first time. In 1929, immigrant weddings declined sharply to 36 and replaced Italian American weddings as the smallest in-marriage category for the rest of the study period. From that point on, immigrant-Italian American marriages became the largest group, with Italian American weddings a close second until 1932. In the latter year, just 20 immigrant weddings took place at OLP, compared to 116 at their peak in 1925.

The opposite trajectories of immigrant weddings and Italian American weddings at OLP crystallized in 1929, marking a shift in the demographic balance of the parish from an immigrant-dominated population to one where Italian Americans were becoming the majority. The numbers of immigrant-Italian American marriages remained comparatively stable as

⁴⁵ Drachsler, *Intermarriage in New York City*, 119.

immigrant weddings fell, indicating that if immigrants married another Italian at OLP as the 1930s began, there was a greater likelihood that it would be a US-born one. Beyond the parish boundaries, this altered generational balance was also evident in the wider neighborhood of

Table 1. Endogamous Marriages at Our Lady of Pompei, 1924-1933

Type and Number of Marriages

	Immigrants	Immigrant-Italian Am	Italian Ams	Total No.		Immigrants	Immigrant-Italian Am	Italian Ams	Total No.
1924	97	42	25	164	1929	36	56	52	144
1925	116	56	28	200	1930	31	49	45	125
1926	74	49	23	146	1931	25	48	45	118
1927	55	34	19	108	1932	20	29	38	87
1928	62	52	50	164	1933 ^a	5	5	10	20
Total	404	233	145	782	Total	117	187	190	494

Endogamous Total: 1,276

Immigrants Total: 521

Immigrant-Italian American Total: 420

Italian Americans Total: 335

Source: Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30.

^a The last volume of Marriage Announcements ended in April 1933, so only 22 total weddings were recorded for that year.

Greenwich Village. In 1920, the neighborhood's Italian community consisted of 26,000 members, of which around 15,000 were immigrants and 11,000 were US-born, but by 1930 2Gs had become the majority with 9,000 while immigrant numbers fell to 7,000.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Brown, *Italians of the South Village*, 9.

Perlmann described a similar demographic shift occurring in Italian populations based on national census samples. The Italian birth cohort of 1886-1900 was made up of 1,210 1Gs and only 293 2Gs. But in the next birth cohort (1901-1905) the number of 1Gs dropped to 456 and 2Gs increased to 448, drawing the generations essentially even. In the following cohort (1906-1910) the number of 2Gs continued to rise to 871 while those of 1Gs declined further, as the second generation began to outnumber immigrants.⁴⁷ As mentioned earlier, the latter two cohorts approximate the ages of many of the brides and grooms who married at OLP during the study period, signifying that this demographic seesaw was happening during the interwar years.

Both the reduced numbers of immigrant weddings at OLP and the falling numbers of 1Gs in census records reflect the impact of federal immigration laws, especially the more draconian quotas imposed by the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act. As noted above, 220,000 Italians arrived in the United States in 1921, the final year of pre-quota migration, but this number was reduced to 42,000 per year by the Emergency Quota Act of 1921. The Johnson-Reed Immigration Act further winnowed the annual quota for Italians down to 4,000 after 1924.⁴⁸

At the parish level, the shrinking pool of arriving immigrants and the increasing numbers of available Italian Americans must have altered the options for those who married within their ethnicity. This applied particularly to immigrant men and Italian American women at OLP,

⁴⁷ Perlmann, "Mexicans now, Italians then," 15.

⁴⁸ Despite the reduced number of annual quota spaces, immigrants quickly learned how to work within the new restrictions. The annual total of Italian immigrants rose from 8,000 in 1924 to 22,000 by 1930, which was probably the result of growing numbers of migrants admitted under family reunification provisions of the 1924 law. However, the increased numbers only represented a fraction of the Italian immigrants that arrived before the law took effect; 371,000 arrived between 1921 and 1925 and 220,000 in 1921 alone. The law exempted certain categories of immigrants from the quota system, chiefly the wives and the unmarried, under-18 children of citizens. Within the quota system, family reunification was a priority and became a cornerstone of American immigration policy. Fifty percent of the quota visas for each country were designated for the parents of citizens who were 21 or older, and for the husbands of citizens (wives of citizens were exempt). The remaining 50% of each national quota was reserved for relatives of legal resident aliens, including their wives and under-21 children. Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 50-57; Joel Perlmann, "Demographic Outcomes of Ethnic Inter-marriage in American History: Italian-Americans Through Four Generations," (Working Paper, No. 312, Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, Aug. 2000): 12, <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/79198/1/468505385.pdf>.

whose marriage patterns changed at nearly the same time during the late 1920s. As shown in Table 2, from 1924 through 1928, when immigrant men in-married it was usually with another immigrant. During the first two years especially, they married Italian immigrant women nearly three times more frequently than they married Italian Americans. Although immigrant weddings had fallen from their peak by 1928, they were still the largest category of endogamous marriage.

Table 2. Changes in Endogamous Marriages Patterns at Our Lady of Pompei

Type and Number of Marriages

	Immigrants	Immigrant man- Ital Am woman	Italian Ams		Immigrants	Immigrant man- Ital Am woman	Italian Ams
1924	97	33	25	1929	36	45	52
1925	116	44	28	1930	31	36	45
1926	74	40	23	1931	25	41	45
1927	55	28	19	1932	20	22	38
1928	62	40	50	1933 ^a	5	4	10

Source: Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30.

^a The last volume of Marriage Announcements ended in April 1933, so only 22 total weddings were recorded for that year.

In 1929 immigrant weddings plummeted to less than a third of what they were in 1925 and, for the first time, immigrant men had more weddings with Italian Americans than with other immigrants. This transition continued after 1929, and marriages with Italian Americans became the most common type for immigrant men until the end of the study period. Although this adaptation allowed immigrant men to retain ethnic ties in marriages, it was also associated with other changes. During the early years of the study period (1924-1927) when immigrant men

married Italian Americans, their average age was 26 and their brides' average age was 21. But the average age for immigrant grooms in these marriages rose to 29 by 1932 while average bride ages held steady at 22, showing that their age differential had increased to seven years by the end of the study.⁴⁹

The fact that immigrant men marrying in the parish by the early 1930s were on average older than they were only a few years before may indicate that it took a longer time for them to find brides after immigration slowed, even with the option of marrying Italian Americans. While this study may not account for all immigrant men whose weddings took place in other parishes, OLP's ledgers did record some of those weddings and they are included in the analysis. Table 2 indicates that the marital behaviors of Italian American women at OLP also changed as immigrant weddings fell. From 1924 to 1927, most of their in-marriages were with immigrants, but their marriages with Italian American men increased from only 19 in 1927 to 50 in 1928. After that year, marrying other US-born Italians became the most common kind of endogamous union for Italian American women.

The falling numbers of immigrant weddings at OLP are probably the clearest evidence of the power of federal immigration laws to alter the ways in which the parish's Italian community married. However, the general drop in Greenwich Village's Italian population from 26,000 in 1920 to 16,000 by 1930 must also have been impacted by the mass evictions of neighborhood residents in 1926 because of the extension of Sixth Avenue.⁵⁰ At OLP, these local disruptions likely contributed to the fluctuating numbers of total weddings per year in the parish. Following

⁴⁹ Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30.

⁵⁰ Brown, *Italians of the South Village*, 9.

the evictions, total weddings sank from 157 in 1926 to 121 in 1927. They climbed again to 178 in 1928, which was likely due to the completion of OLP's new church that year.⁵¹

Against the backdrop of these changes in endogamous marriage patterns, did intermarriage patterns also change for Italians at OLP? Table 3 compares endogamous and exogamous rates for each year and shows that between 1924-1926, in-marriage rates in the parish ranged from 91% to nearly 94%, close to those that Drachsler, Kennedy, Maria Enrica Danubio and Davide Pettener, and Robert McCaa found for Italians during the earlier twentieth century. In-marriage rates were highest at OLP during these three years and intermarriage rates were at their lowest, between 6% and 8%, similar to the intermarriage rate of 6.8% for Italians in Drachsler's study.⁵² These three years were also the peak ones for immigrant weddings at OLP, and the years with the fewest Italian American weddings.

In 1927, endogamy rates declined to 88.5% and exogamy rates climbed to just over 10% for the first time in the study period. However, this anomaly may be due to the drop in the total number of weddings that year. There were only two more intermarriages in 1927 than in the previous year, so the rates were probably driven up by a low wedding count rather than by changing behavior. The low count may be explained by the extraordinary circumstances of that year, namely, the eviction of the parish from its church and of many neighborhood residents from their homes towards the end of 1926.

Nineteen twenty-eight coincided with a return to the parish's earlier pattern of higher in-marriage (92%) and lower intermarriage rates (7.3%). Nineteen twenty-nine, however, marked the beginning of a sustained rise in intermarriage that continued through the end of 1932.

⁵¹ Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30.

⁵² Drachsler, *Intermarriage in New York City*, 44; Danubio and Pettener, "Marital Structure of the Italian Community," 259-261; Kennedy, "Single or Triple Melting Pot," 332-333; McCaa, "Ethnic Intermarriage," 208, 214.

Table 3. Endogamous and Exogamous Marriages Rates at Our Lady of Pompei

	Endogam		Exogam		Total	Endogam		Exogam		Total	
	No. and %	No. and %	No. and %	No. and %	No. ^b	No. and %	No. and %	No. and %	No. and %	No. ^b	
1924	164	93.7%	11	6.3%	175	1929	144	88.9%	16	9.9%	162
1925	200	91.3%	17	7.8%	219	1930	125	85.6%	17	11.6%	146
1926	146	93%	11	7%	157	1931	118	83.7%	23	16.3%	141
1927	108	88.5%	13	10.7%	122	1932	87	82.1%	17	16%	106
1928	164	92.1%	13	7.3%	178	1933 ^a	20	90.9%	2	9.1%	22
Total	782		65		851	494		75		577	
Total No. Weddings: 1,428 ^b Endogamous Total: 1,276 Exogamous Total: 140											

Source: Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30.

^a The last volume of Marriage Announcements ended in April 1933, so only 22 total weddings were recorded for that year.

^b Total number of weddings per year includes several for which marriage type could not be determined as endogamous or exogamous. Total undetermined for the whole period=12.

Intermarriage rates increased moderately to 9.9% in 1929 but rose more substantially over the next two years to 16% in 1931 and 1932. In the latter two years, in-marriage rates fell to between 82% and 84%. By the end of the study period, OLP’s marriage patterns looked more like those that Kennedy observed for New Haven in 1940, when Italians had in-marriage rates of 81.8% and 85.5% in two studies and an intermarriage rate of 14.5% in her study of propinquity.⁵³

Table 3 indicates that intermarriage was increasing in the parish, despite its lower overall rate for the period. The nearly 10-point increase between 1924 and 1931 could mean that OLP’s marriage patterns were in the process of transitioning between the low exogamy that typified Italian communities during the earlier twentieth century and their higher post-World War II

⁵³ Kennedy, “Single or Triple Melting Pot,” 332; “Premarital Residential Propinquity,” 582.

exogamy levels. However, the timing of the increases may be significant. Intermarriage rates began to increase in 1929, the same year that the parish crossed another threshold when the number of immigrant weddings ebbed to the point of becoming the smallest category of endogamous marriage.

Reflecting the drop in immigrant weddings, the *total number* of weddings per year in the parish also declined after 1929, and never rose again. Before then total weddings increased in some years and decreased in others, but after 1929 they fell steadily until there were only 106 in 1932, less than half of the 1925 total. It is not coincidental that changes to intermarriage rates and in-marriage patterns at OLP took shape in the same year. The number of intermarriages per year went up modestly after 1929, but the falling wedding totals raise the possibility that the rising rates did not necessarily represent more intermarriage, but rather a larger part of a smaller marriage pool. Endogamy rates on the other hand were highest between 1924-1926, when immigrant weddings *and* total number of marriages per year were also at their apexes.

Danubio and Pettener found a similar relationship between intermarriage and total number of marriages in their study of Italian parishes in Boston. At St. Leonard's and Sacred Heart in the North End, intermarriage rates dropped in years when the number of weddings increased, an inverse of the situation at OLP where rates increased as the number of weddings dropped. The authors explained the dynamic as the result of the "Italianization of the North End," in which intermarriage rates were higher during the last two decades of the nineteenth century because the North End was still home to other ethnic groups, providing more opportunity for Italians to meet potential spouses from different backgrounds. Endogamy increased in the

parishes during the early twentieth century because those were the years when the Italian community in the North End grew and the presence of other groups diminished.⁵⁴

At OLP during the interwar years, falling total marriages reflect the opposite reality: an Italian community in Greenwich Village that was declining both in numbers and territory. However, one part of the community *was* growing during these years: the second generation. Since its publication in the early 1920s, Drachsler's *Intermarriage in New York City* has been one of the most frequently referenced studies on ethnic marriage patterns of the early twentieth century.⁵⁵ His primary conclusions were that intermarriage occurred mostly within generations, and that it became much more common in the second generation for most ethnic groups in New York City from 1908-1912. Did these patterns still hold at OLP twenty years later?

To compare the data from OLP with Drachsler's, intermarriage at OLP was analyzed by both generation and gender. However, it is worth noting the difference in scale between this study and *Intermarriage in New York City*. This study was based on data from one parish in New York City, whereas Drachsler utilized a citywide sample of 79,704 marriage license applications filed in Manhattan and the Bronx, which captured a much larger segment of Italian marriages. His sample included 6,778 marriages for Italian men and 6,362 for women, compared to the 1,428 total weddings at OLP.⁵⁶ Another issue is how many of the US-born Italians at OLP were truly second-generation and therefore easily comparable to the 2Gs in Drachsler's study,

⁵⁴ During 1880-1889 and 1890-1899, the intermarriage rates at St. Leonard's were 6.4% and 7.9% when there were only 388 and 504 marriages in those decades. But the rates receded to 3.9% in 1900-1909 when the number of weddings tripled to 1,827 and continued falling to 2% when wedding numbers jumped to 2,472 in 1910-1920. Danubio and Pettener, "Marital Structure of the Italian Community," 260-261.

⁵⁵ James W. Oberly, "Julius Drachsler's *Intermarriage in New York City*: A Study in Historical Replication," *Historical Methods* 47, no.2 (April-June 2014): 95.

⁵⁶ Drachsler, *Intermarriage in New York City*, 119, 173.

whom he confirmed were second-generation based on their marriage licenses.⁵⁷ Given the general timing of Italian migration, however, most Italian Americans who married at OLP during the 1920s should be 2Gs; Perlmann observed that as late as 1940, 84% of US-born Italians between the ages of 16 and 30 in his census samples had two immigrant parents.⁵⁸

Drachsler's oft-cited conclusions were that nearly three-quarters of intermarriages involved people of the same generation, while intermarriage rates were roughly 10% in the first generation but about 30% in the second for both men and women. Italian 1Gs (combined genders) in his study intermarried at 5.7% while 2Gs intermarried at 18.8% between 1908-1912, which followed the general pattern he documented for most ethnic groups.⁵⁹ At OLP a similar pattern is evident, but without as large an increase in the second generation. Table 4 compares endogamous and exogamous marriages by generation and shows that immigrants in the parish had an overall in-marriage rate of 95.8% while intermarrying at 4.2%, the latter figure indicating slightly less intermarriage than Drachsler found among 1Gs 20 years earlier. In-marriage rates for Italian Americans at OLP were 88.5% with intermarriage at 11.5%, showing that exogamy did increase in the second generation, but not by as much as Drachsler observed for the earlier period.

⁵⁷ The marriage license applications that were Drachsler's primary source asked for the birthplaces of both sets of parents, making it possible to determine if a US-born person had immigrant parents and was therefore second-generation. Knowing precisely which generation the brides and grooms in his study belonged to made his central conclusions about intermarriage possible. OLP's marriage registers provide birthplaces for the bride and groom only, making it uncertain if people designated as Italian Americans in this study were truly second-generation. Oberly, "Julius Drachsler's *Intermarriage in New York City*," 100-101.

⁵⁸ Perlmann, "Demographic Outcomes of Ethnic Intermarriage," 4.

⁵⁹ Drachsler, *Intermarriage in New York City*, 31, 35, 91-92.

Table 4. Endogamous and Exogamous Marriage by Generation at Our Lady of Pompei (combined genders)

Immigrants					Italian Americans						
	Endogam No. and %		Exogam No. and %		Total No.		Endogam No. and %		Exogam No. and %		Total No.
1924	139	97.2%	4	2.8%	143	1924	67	90.5%	7	9.5%	74
1925	172	96.6%	6	3.4%	178	1925	84	88.4%	11	11.6%	95
1926	123	98.4%	2	1.6%	125	1926	72	90%	8	10%	80
1927	89	97.8%	2	2.2%	91	1927	53	82.8%	11	17.2%	64
1928	114	95.8%	5	4.2%	119	1928	102	92.7%	8	7.3%	110
1929	92	94.9%	5	5.2%	97	1929	108	90.8%	11	9.2%	119
1930	80	93%	6	7%	86	1930	94	89.5%	11	10.5%	105
1931	73	90.1%	8	9.9%	81	1931	93	86.1%	15	13.9%	108
1932	49	96.1%	2	3.9%	51	1932	67	81.7%	15	18.3%	82
1933 ^a	10	90.9%	1	9.1%	11	1933 ^a	15	93.8%	1	6.3%	16
Total	941	95.8%	41	4.2%	982		755	88.5%	98	11.5%	853

Source: Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30.

^a The last volume of Marriage Announcements ended in April 1933, so only 22 total weddings were recorded for that year.

Reflecting their higher intermarriage rates, Italian Americans at OLP had more total intermarriages (98) for the period than immigrants did (41). Looking at results by year, Table 4 reveals that immigrants maintained extremely low levels of exogamy throughout the period, especially during the first five years when immigrant weddings were at their apex. However, intermarriage rates remained quite low for them even as immigrant wedding numbers fell more drastically beginning in 1929. Endogamy rates for immigrants were above 95% in most years

and are comparable to the extreme endogamy documented in other studies of Italian communities in the earlier twentieth century.

Consistent with this extreme endogamy, the overall intermarriage rate for OLP's immigrant men was 2.6%, lower than the rates for Italian 1G men in both Drachsler's study (7.4%) and McCaa's (4%).⁶⁰ To illustrate how seldomly they intermarried, in 1925 immigrant men crossed ethnic boundaries in only four of their 163 weddings at OLP. Even in the years after 1929, their intermarriage rates increased mainly because of low wedding count; in 1931 for example they in-married 65 times and intermarried just six times.⁶¹ Although immigrant men in-married more frequently with Italian Americans after 1929, this was not accompanied by significant changes to their intermarriage patterns.

The marriage patterns for immigrant women at OLP were quite similar to those of Italian 1G women in Drachsler's study, with very low exogamy of 2.9% from 1924-1933 compared to 3.7% between 1908-1912.⁶² Like immigrant grooms, immigrant brides in the parish rarely intermarried, and never had more than five exogamous weddings in any year of this study. But unlike their 1G brethren, they did not marry Italian Americans more often as the parish's demographics changed. Immigrant brides at OLP married 519 immigrants but only 85 Italian Americans between 1924-1933, and there were no increases in weddings with the latter after 1929.⁶³

⁶⁰ Drachsler, *Intermarriage in New York City*, 94; McCaa, "Ethnic Intermarriage," 226.

⁶¹ Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30.

⁶² Drachsler, *Intermarriage in New York City*, 97.

⁶³ Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30.

Skewed sex ratios may have made it unnecessary for immigrant women to marry US-born Italians as a response to fewer available immigrants, because the recently ended mass migration from Italy had been so heavily male.⁶⁴ With these imbalances, even a shrinking pool of immigrant men could still hold enough potential spouses for them. However, the same sex ratios made immigrant men at OLP far more vulnerable to declining immigration during the interwar years, which likely led them to marry more Italian Americans.

Although immigrant men at OLP seemed to be intermarrying less frequently than 1Gs in Drachsler's study, the way he viewed certain marriages between Italians makes comparing the patterns for immigrants less straightforward. He classified marriages between Italians from different regions of Italy as intermarriages, whereas they are considered endogamous in this study. Northern Italian men (combined generations), for example, had an overall intermarriage rate of 14.8%, but their most frequent partners in intermarriages were Southern Italian women. Fifty-eight of these 63 weddings with Southern Italians were between 1Gs, while the next-highest category, marriages with Irishwomen (44), consisted mostly of marriages between 2Gs.⁶⁵ If these regional marriages were classified as endogamous, the intermarriage rates for Drachsler's 1Gs and immigrants at OLP would look much more similar.

Compared to earlier studies, intermarriage for immigrants at OLP did not change much during the interwar years, but is this also true for Italian Americans? McCaa argued that skewed sex ratios were a key driver of intermarriage for Italian 2G men during the early 1900s because the group's migration patterns created such large surpluses of single 1G men. The Italian sex

⁶⁴ As late as the mid-1920s, two-thirds of Italian immigrants were still male. Brown, *Italians of the South Village*, 3-4; McCaa, "Ethnic Intermarriage," 222, 226.

⁶⁵ Drachsler, *Intermarriage in New York City*, 93, 121.

ratio had a male majority of 43 points in 1910, and immigrants dealt with the resulting gender imbalance by marrying three-quarters of the Italian 2G women in his census sample for that year. But nearly 37% of 2G Italian men in the 1910 sample intermarried, suggesting that competition for Italian brides with 1G men made intermarriage a more viable option for them. Drachsler confirmed this pattern, demonstrating that 2G Italian men intermarried at a very high rate of 45% in 1908-1912.⁶⁶

But as Table 5 demonstrates, Italian American men at OLP intermarried far *less* during the interwar years than the 2G men in Drachsler's and McCaa's studies did earlier in the century. Overall, they in-married nearly 91% of the time and intermarried at only 8.5%. Even if their exogamy rates were actually higher taking into account marriages that occurred outside the parish, the data from OLP still indicates a dramatic reduction in intermarriage for Italian American men by the late 1920s. The rates for Italian American women in the parish, on the other hand, were very consistent with those of 2G women in Drachsler's study and indicate less change over time. Italian American women intermarried at 8.1% at OLP from 1924-1933 as seen in Table 5, compared to 9.2% for 2G women between 1908-1912.⁶⁷

In Drachsler's study, Italian American men and women were traveling on divergent paths concerning intermarriage, with exogamy for the former very high and for the latter quite low. But at OLP, Italian American men and women in-married at the nearly identical rates of 90.9% and 91.4%, respectively, with intermarriage rates nearly equal as well. In the early years of the study, however, their patterns were different. Men intermarried at rates of between 10% and

⁶⁶ Ibid., 120; McCaa, "Ethnic Intermarriage," 222, 226.

⁶⁷ Drachsler, *Intermarriage in New York City*, 98.

Table 5. Endogamous and Exogamous Marriage by Gender for Italian Americans at Our Lady of Pompei

Women						Men					
	Endogam No. and %		Exogam No. and %		Total No.		Endogam No. and %		Exogam No. and %		Total No.
1924	58	95.1%	3	4.9%	61	1924	34	89.5%	4	10.5%	38
1925	72	94.7%	4	5.3%	76	1925	40	85.1%	7	14.9%	47
1926	63	94%	4	6%	67	1926	32	88.9%	4	11.1%	36
1927	47	85.5%	8	14.6%	55	1927	25	89.3%	3	10.7%	28
1928	90	93.8%	6	6.3%	96	1928	60	96.8%	2	3.2%	62
1929	98	90.7%	10	9.3%	108	1929 ^b	61	95.3%	1	1.6%	64
1930 ^b	81	89%	7	7.7%	91	1930 ^b	58	92.1%	4	6.4%	63
1931	87	91.6%	8	8.4%	95	1931	51	87.9%	7	12.1%	58
1932 ^b	60	85.7%	9	12.9%	70	1932	45	88.2%	6	11.8%	51
1933 ^a	14	100%	0	—	14	1933 ^a	11	91.7%	1	8.3%	12
Total	670	91.4%	59	8.1%	733		417	90.9%	39	8.5%	459

Source: Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30.

^a The last volume of Marriage Announcements ended in April 1933, so only 22 total weddings were recorded for that year.

^b Total number of weddings for these years includes several for which marriage type could not be determined as endogamous or exogamous. Total number undetermined for women = 4, for men = 3.

nearly 15% in 1924-1926, while women did so much less frequently, at between 5% and 6%.

But in 1928-1929, intermarriage rates for men suddenly cratered to 1.6% and their in-marriage rate climbed above 95%. The reason for this was that the number of their marriages with Italian American women increased very rapidly, from between 19 and 28 weddings per year in 1924-1927 to 49 in 1929.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30.

As noted above, 1928 was the year when Italian American women in the parish also began to marry other Italian Americans more frequently as the number of available immigrants declined (refer to Table 2). This was a reversal of the pattern that Drachsler observed for the early twentieth century, when Italian 2G women married 650 immigrants but only 167 Italian 2G men.⁶⁹ As Perlmann described the situation, the abrupt end of mass migration during the 1920s meant that “So many second-generation Italians were choosing their spouse after immigration from Italy had slowed to a trickle. How this demographic pattern affected the marriage market remains to be worked out.”⁷⁰

By the late 1920s, one way that Italian Americans at OLP responded to this situation was to marry one another in greater numbers than before. Although the era of mass migration had ended, its end coincided with the growth of the US-born portion of the Italian population during the interwar years. With reference to McCaa’s argument about the impact of sex ratios, Italian American men in the parish may have been intermarrying less during the interwar years because there were more second-generation marriage partners of their own ethnicity to choose from.

This suggestion may seem counterintuitive given the substantial increases in intermarriage that Drachsler found in the second generation for Italians. Danubio and Pettener’s research, however, suggests that intermarriage does not always follow a linear progression of fewer earlier and more later, and in fact shows that the reverse was true for Italians in Boston between 1880-1920. Carol Lynn McKibben’s study of a Sicilian fishing community in Monterey, California identified a similar dynamic occurring there. Her analysis of marriage

⁶⁹ Drachsler, *Intermarriage in New York City*, 119.

⁷⁰ Perlmann, “Mexicans now, Italians then,” 7.

licenses indicates that intermarriages were more common in the earlier years of the community, between 1906 and 1926, but after the latter year endogamy became the norm until 1942.

McKibben contended that declining intermarriage coincided with the period of greatest community growth for the Sicilians of Monterey, similar to Danubio and Pettener's observation that decreased intermarriage for Italians in Boston resulted from the "Italianization of the North End."⁷¹

At OLP, however, "community growth" applied most accurately to the second generation at a time when the local Italian community was dwindling due to fewer new immigrants and neighborhood population drain. Although both Italian American women and men at OLP were intermarrying at low rates by the late 1920s, did intermarriage patterns change significantly for either gender after that point?

Overall, there were more intermarriages for Italian American women (59) than men (39) at OLP, but this may be partly due to the custom of weddings being held in the bride's parish. Women also did not experience the steep drops in intermarriage rates that men did when their weddings with other Italian Americans peaked in 1928-1929. As shown in Table 5, intermarriage appeared to increase for women in 1929, climbing to 9.3% in a year when their total marriage count was still very high. Although this was not much higher than their overall rate, it was a modest change from the rates of between 5% and 6% that they had in 1924-1926. By 1932, their intermarriage rate had risen to 12.9%, which may signify that intermarriage was becoming somewhat more common for them.

⁷¹ From 1923-1926, 29 out of the 50 Sicilians in McKibben's marriage license sample intermarried, usually with people of Spanish or Mexican background. Danubio and Pettener, "Marital Structure of the Italian Community," 261; Carol Lynn McKibben, *Beyond Cannery Row: Sicilian Women, Immigration, and Community in Monterey, California, 1915-99* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 57-58, ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/huntercollege-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3414050>.

For Italian American men, intermarriage rates also moved upwards after their nadir in 1928-1929. As with women, these increases were not large but may indicate a moderate transition compared to earlier years. In 1930 their rates rose from 1.6% to 6.4%, then doubled to 12% the next year, and their number of intermarriages also inched up by a few per year. The upticks happened when the total number of weddings per year for men was still relatively high, so may not be related to low wedding counts.

These incremental gains may mean that intermarriage was beginning to increase for Italian Americans at OLP by the end of the study period. But on the whole, comparisons of the data from this study with Drachsler's findings and those of other studies do not show intermarriage rising significantly in the parish during the interwar years. In fact, the intermarriage patterns for Italian women at OLP, both immigrants and US-born, changed very little during the interwar years by comparison with Italian women in Drachsler's study. The exception to this scenario is Italian American men, who intermarried at very high rates in the early twentieth century but experienced a significant drop at OLP during the 1920s.

The most important changes to marital practices in the parish between 1924 and 1933, however, were those associated with endogamous weddings rather than intermarriages. Reduced by federal policies, the declining number of immigrant weddings at OLP was the single most defining factor shaping the changes in marriage patterns evident in this study. For both immigrant men and Italian American women, fewer immigrant weddings were correlated with pronounced changes in how the two groups in-married after 1929. Immigrant weddings affected in-marriage patterns as well as intermarriage rates in the parish, showing that both kinds of marriage were connected in complex ways.

At OLP 1929 was the turning point, the dividing line between the marriage patterns of the earlier years and those of the later years. It was the year when several connected pieces of those patterns began changing: immigrant weddings fell, immigrant men married more Italian Americans, and Italian Americans married one another more frequently. But another important driver of marriage practice was population growth in the Italian second generation, which correlates with the dramatic rise in weddings between Italian Americans in the parish by the end of the 1920s. The divergent paths traveled by immigrant and Italian American marriage patterns at OLP highlight the forces of demographic change at work, whether imposed by governments or growing from within.

CHAPTER V: MAINTAINING ITALIAN ETHNICITY DURING THE 1920s

This study suggests that despite the demographic disruptions of the interwar years, most marriages at Our Lady of Pompei maintained cultural ties to the Italian world, with endogamous marriage being the overwhelming norm for both the first and second generations between 1924-1933. Despite retaining ethnicity, however, marital practices in the parish still changed in important ways.

By revealing relationships between marriage patterns and demographic changes in a single Italian parish, this study tells a different, more nuanced story of Italian marriage during the interwar years compared to larger-scale studies. In contrast to the results from OLP, Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy and B.R. Bugelski found that intermarriage was increasing substantially for Italian populations in cities during the interwar years, though to a greater degree in the latter study. Although the Drachsler study covered an earlier period, his findings of greater exogamy for Italian 2Gs in New York City accords with this scenario of marital change in cities. Unlike

those studies, the data from OLP shows actual behavior in the local community where weddings took place rather than longer-term changes in larger urban areas. Given their setting in an ethnic parish and neighborhood, the marriage patterns at OLP reflect the influences of community life more strongly than Drachsler's, Kennedy's and Bugelski's studies, which were based on citywide samples of marriage licenses.⁷² Thus, the local patterns at OLP provide an alternative perspective by showing that at the parish level, Italians in Greenwich Village were preserving ethnic ties through marriage despite the changes they encountered in other aspects of their lives in the 1920s.

This study also tells a story of marital transformation during the interwar years that differs from the other studies discussed here. Maria Enrica Danubio and Davide Pettener's study of Italian parishes in Boston from 1880-1920 documented patterns similar to those at OLP, and concluded that Italians there retained traditional marriage behaviors comparable to those of rural Italy.⁷³ Basing their study in parishes allowed them to view marital practices within local populations, which may account for the similarity of their findings with OLP's. But this study indicates that while endogamy also remained the dominant pattern at OLP during the interwar years, it did not remain the same for everyone in the parish. In fact, the data from OLP indicates that keeping marriages Italian involved several changes that broke with past patterns.

Immigration restrictions which began in the late nineteenth century and were formalized and extended with the Johnson Reed Act made it less likely that immigrant men at OLP would be able to marry another immigrant. After 1929, marrying within their ethnicity meant that

⁷² Bugelski, "Assimilation Through Inter-marriage," 150-151; Drachsler, *Inter-marriage in New York City*, 91-92; Kennedy, "Single or Triple Melting Pot," 332-333; Oberly, "Julius Drachsler's *Inter-marriage in New York City*," 100-101; Ceri Peach, "Which Triple Melting Pot? A Re-examination of Ethnic Inter-marriage in New Haven, 1900-1950," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 3, no.1 (Jan. 1980): 4.

⁷³ Danubio and Pettener, "Marital Structure of the Italian Community," 257, 266-267.

immigrant men increasingly needed to marry more Italian Americans. During the same years, Italian American women also established a different pattern by marrying more US-born Italians as immigrant numbers declined. These changes suggest that the process of maintaining Italian culture required adaptations at different times in response to forces such as reduced immigration. To paraphrase historian Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, some of the adjustments that preserved Italian marital patterns at OLP might not have been smooth, but the overall pattern proved resilient.⁷⁴

As previously discussed, the most important changes to marital practices in the parish concerned in-marriages rather than intermarriages. Marriage change for Italians has usually been assessed in terms of intermarriage, with the World War II years considered the turning point when it became more common.⁷⁵ But at OLP, changes in endogamous marriages happened well before World War II and for different reasons, which indicates that marital change for Italians was more complicated than the issue of how much intermarriage was occurring.

Questions concerning the extent to which Italians in the United States retained Old World cultural patterns have long been among the key concerns of immigration scholars. Early observers such as Caroline Ware and Oscar Handlin saw the disintegration of traditional immigrant cultures and family patterns as the price of adjustment to American urban life. Influenced by modernization theory that stressed the shattering effects of industrial society on “premodern” rural cultures like those of Southern Italy, they saw the abandonment of family

⁷⁴ Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930*, E-book, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 18-21, <https://hdl-handle-net.proxy.wexler.hunter.cuny.edu/2027/heb.00485>

⁷⁵ Simone Cinotto, *The Italian American Table: Food, Family and Community in New York City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 69, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/huntercollege-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3414313>; Miriam Cohen, *Workshop to Office: Two Generations of Italian Women in New York City, 1900-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 187; Paul Moses, *An Unlikely Union: The Love-Hate Story of New York's Irish and Italians* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 273-295.

loyalty by the immigrants' children in the name of personal autonomy as evidence of a transformation in their values. Later scholars such as Yans-McLaughlin, however, saw continuity in Italian family patterns as evidence that Old World cultural values helped shape the group's adaptations to industrial society.⁷⁶

Miriam Cohen's study of Italian women in New York City, however, argues that a focus on ethnic values obscures the changes that occurred in the lives of Italian women over two generations, including their schooling and occupational patterns. She views these changes as the products of family strategies that were driven more by pragmatic considerations than cultural values, and were revised as new opportunities such as white-collar jobs became available. Cohen contended that behavioral changes by women did not necessitate their rejection of traditional patriarchal values or an embrace of so-called modern American values such as individualism.⁷⁷

Studies of marriage have always played a part in the discussions of continuity and change in Italian as well as other immigrant cultures. Drachsler was interested in studying intermarriage for immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe because he regarded it as the most telling indicator of assimilation. He interpreted the increases in intermarriage that he saw in the second generation for most ethnicities between 1908-1912 as evidence of weaker group cohesion over time, and reasoned that people who intermarried would also be willing to shed other aspects of ethnic life such as language and affiliation with cultural organizations. Danubio and Pettener

⁷⁶ Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community*, 18.

⁷⁷ Cohen, *Workshop to Office*, 3-9.

and Carol Lynn McKibben, on the other hand, argued that increasing endogamy in specific Italian settlements indicated stronger ethnic cultures as these communities grew.⁷⁸

However, the end of mass migration had cultural ramifications for Italian communities. In 1924, the year that the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act permanently limited the number of migrants, a student of the noted Italian American educator Leonard Covello described the atmosphere in the Italian neighborhood of East Harlem. The student observed that local social groups that had been based on affiliations with different regions in Southern Italy were disappearing. Many male immigrants had not planned to settle permanently in the United States, but only intended to make enough money to return to Italy and live more prosperously in their homeland. But by the interwar years, the new immigration system, the onset of the Great Depression and the growth of their American-born children made many immigrants realize that they were not going to return after all. As Robert Orsi explained, “In the 1920s and 1930s, however, these immigrants suddenly discovered that they were becoming Americans by attrition, and one of the most disturbing ways they discovered this was by looking at their children.”⁷⁹

As Orsi relates, the interwar years were the setting for an oftentimes traumatic generational clash pitting the desires of Italian Americans for more autonomy in their lives against the efforts of parents to control them within the moral and economic authority of the family structures they developed for survival in America. Although these family structures were often described as traditional by the first generation, they were not necessarily the same kinds of

⁷⁸ Danubio and Pettener, “Marital Structure of the Italian Community,” 261; McKibben, *Beyond Cannery Row*, 57-58; Oberly, “Julius Drachsler’s *Intermarriage in New York City*,” 97.

⁷⁹ Robert A. Orsi, “The Fault of Memory: ‘Southern Italy’ in the Imagination of Immigrants and the Lives of their Children in Italian Harlem, 1920-1945,” *Journal of Family History* 15, no. 2 (1990): 140, <http://proxy.wexler.hunter.cuny.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.wexler.hunter.cuny.edu/scholarly-journals/fault-memory-southern-italy-imagination/docview/1300094617/se-2?accountid=27495>; Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, 18.

families that had existed in the mother country. As opposed to the Italian American *famiglia*, which was composed of networks of extended as well as nuclear kin, families in western Sicilian agricultural towns were decidedly nuclear-centered and relied on local friends and neighbors more than extended kin.⁸⁰

In the context of these demographic changes and generational conflicts, in what ways did OLP's parish community shift from Italian to *American* Italian during the interwar years? Marital patterns at OLP suggest that a dynamic similar to the one in East Harlem was occurring further downtown in Greenwich Village as its parishioners adapted to changing conditions. The marriage behavior of OLP's immigrant men after 1929 was a response to government policies beyond their control that made it more difficult to find immigrant brides. Although marrying more Italian Americans preserved ethnic ties, this adjustment may have forcibly reoriented them towards a more American version of Italian life. Despite common ethnicity, marriages with second-generation Italians could lack certain connections that would have been shared with an immigrant wife, such as the experience of migration or similar regional origins.

A revealing anecdote recounted in Simone Cinotto's *The Italian American Table* suggests that for some immigrants, this disruption in marriage patterns may have caused culture clash even within familiar settings. A young man from Brindisi in Southern Italy observed that girls in Italian Harlem during the interwar years dressed fashionably and disagreed with their mothers in public, but declared "And when I saw how industrious the Italian girls in the community were, how they brought reverently the weekly paycheck to the mother, how politely, but with masculine dignity, the boys treated the girls, and how well mannered the girls showed in all their dealings with men—I was willing to forgive their layers of lipstick and marry one of the

⁸⁰ Gabbacia, *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street*, 78-82.

American Italians.” This story expresses the unnamed immigrant’s resigned acceptance that second-generation women departed from an ideal of Italian female behavior in some ways, but in other ways they embodied the loyalty to domestic traditions and respect for parental authority that were at the heart of those ideals.⁸¹

During the first five years of this study, though, the immigrant weddings that predominated at OLP acted to preserve cultural links with regions in Italy. These links were especially important in the early decades of settlement because most immigrants did not see themselves according to a national Italian identity, but instead as members of the towns or villages from which they came. This sense of local identity (referred to as *campanilismo*) was common in Italian communities throughout the United States until World War I, and was reflected in the kinds of regional social groups that were common in East Harlem until 1924.⁸²

Immigrant weddings at OLP usually occurred within the broad regional groupings of Southern Italy, Northern Italy, Central Italy and Sicily, so most Southern Italians, for example, married other immigrants whose ethnicity was also determined to be Southern Italian based on birthplace. This study did not track whether immigrants married people from the same town or province, but nearly 20% of immigrant weddings were between brides and grooms from different regions, including between Northern and Southern Italians as well as the latter and Sicilians. Marriages between Northern and Southern Italians were particularly boundary-pushing, given the widespread beliefs about the racial inferiority of Southerners propagated by northern elites after Italian unification in 1861. Drachsler categorized them as intermarriages, which provides

⁸¹ Cinotto, *The Italian American Table*, 66-67.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 60; Orsi, “The Fault of Memory,” 140.

an indication of how they were viewed at the time he conducted his study.⁸³ These kinds of marriages across regional lines were part of the process by which local loyalties became transmuted into an evolving pan-Italian identity after World War I. To paraphrase Orsi, they had to become an Italian community first before they could become an Italian *American* one.⁸⁴

Although some parishioners at OLP tried to maintain regional marriage links to Italy, the timing of their weddings indicates that this may have become more difficult. Between 1924-1933, there were five weddings in the parish between grooms with addresses in Greenwich Village and brides whose residences were listed as being in Italy. Four of the five grooms were immigrants who were born in the same town or province as their bride. None of these weddings happened in 1924-1925, the peak years for immigrant weddings at OLP, probably because it was easier then to find a bride in the parish with the same local origins. All except one took place after 1929, which suggests that such brides had become harder to find locally, requiring grooms and their families to locate them abroad. This interpretation underscores how campanilismo became harder to sustain in the South Village, which may have pushed its residents towards a deeper rootedness in America, both physically and culturally.

The circumstances that confronted South Village residents in 1926 also highlight the ability of local governments to alter both the physical settings and ceremonial practices of marriage in their constituencies. The Sixth Avenue extension and the evictions that followed were an earlier example of the urban renewal projects that are usually associated with American cities after World War II, most famously with Robert Moses, the head of New York's

⁸³ Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30; Drachsler, *Intermarriage in New York City*, 93, 121; Jennifer Guglielmo, *Living the Revolution: Italian Women's Resistance and Radicalism in New York City, 1880-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 82-88.

⁸⁴ Robert A. Orsi, "The Religious Boundaries of an In-Between People: Street Feste and the Problem of the Dark-Skinned Other in Italian Harlem, 1920-1945," *American Quarterly* 44 no.3 (Sept. 1992): 318, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2712980>.

Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority. Urban scholars have studied how infrastructure projects such as bridges, expressways and parks impacted housing, social life and racial segregation in urban areas, particularly for minority and working-class communities.⁸⁵ However, this study demonstrates how such projects can also disrupt lives at the more personal level of marriage. In July 1926, OLP's pastor Father Antonio Demo told the *New York World* that "For ten years the city has been talking about the extension, but when it comes to moving thousands of poor people who have no place to go, only thirty days are allowed."⁸⁶ The evictions in Greenwich Village point to the fact that urban renewal efforts dislocated communities and remade neighborhoods well before the post-World War II period.

By the 1930s, the part of the South Village community that was most deeply rooted in America was its second generation. Drachsler interpreted his findings of greater intermarriage for 2Gs as evidence of reduced association with ethnic communal life. At OLP, however, the rising number of weddings between Italian Americans after 1928 supports the contention that their marriages were still strongly connected to their parents' cultures. The high endogamy for Italian American men in the parish suggests that ethnic ties strengthened for them during the interwar years, relative to the high intermarriage rates for 2G Italian men in Drachsler's study.⁸⁷

But the process of sustaining Italian culture was also reinforced by community mores, which can be as powerful as government policies in shaping the possibilities for relationships. Given the anxieties that Italian immigrant parents had about loss of control over their US-born children, the pressure to marry within the group was considerable during the interwar years. For

⁸⁵ See Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974); Thomas H. O'Connor, *Building a New Boston: Politics and Urban Renewal, 1950-1970* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993).

⁸⁶ Brown, *From Italian Villages*, 85.

⁸⁷ Marriage Records OLP, Vols. 26-30; Drachsler, *Intermarriage in New York City*, 18-19, 120.

2G women, marrying within their ethnicity was also connected to the continuity of the Italian family itself: its separation of gender roles, culinary traditions and moral authority. As an immigrant East Harlem father said of his daughter, “She likes Italian food and knows herself how to cook it. She is 18 years old now, and by now has made up her mind what her home should look like. And I bet, she knows it is safer to marry an Italian because she knows in advance what to expect; and she knows-she learned it from her mother-how to go around one’s husband.”⁸⁸

Despite the coercive pressure to in-marry, the immigrant father’s words identify one of the possible appeals of endogamy: a familiar ethnic culture and values. For Italian Americans, marriage to another US-born Italian also offered other commonalities such as the experience of growing up in America and knowledge of English. This study illustrates how these familiarities were reinforced by the physical and social proximities of life in a local parish where brides and grooms were baptized, grew up and married.

By the 1930’s weddings at OLP remained very Italian, with the generational adjustment that most of them involved US-born Italians rather than the immigrants who once comprised most of the parish’s brides and grooms. In 1931, an 18-year-old bride living in an apartment building at 172 Bleeker Street married a groom of 23 who was also her neighbor and lived at 190 Bleeker Street. Both were Italian Americans, born in New York City and baptized at OLP. The witnesses to the wedding also had Italian names and lived in the building next door to the groom.⁸⁹ As they became the majority in Greenwich Village’s Italian community, second-

⁸⁸ Cinotto, *The Italian American Table*, 67-69.

⁸⁹ Marriage Records OLP, Vol. 30: 1930-1933, p. 15.

generation couples like this one inherited the task of maintaining the American Italian culture that had evolved over the previous decades.

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