




The City University of New York

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Director

TO: Vice Chancellor Leo Corbie

FROM: Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa 

DATE: October 31, 1990

RE: *Summary of Institute Reports on
Italian-American Students*

The following is a summary of reports sponsored and maintained by the Institute on Italian-American students. If you require any additional information on the results contained in these reports, please let me know.

Profile of Educational Attainment Including High School Drop-Out Rate Indicators for Italian American and Other Race/Ethnic Populations: U.S.A., N.Y.S. and N.Y.C.; Scelsa, Joseph V. and Milione, Vincenzo; 23rd Annual Conference, American-Italian Historical Association; New Orleans, Nov. 2, 1990.

This report presents a statistical profile of educational attainment of Italian Americans compared to other race and ethnic populations. The study also estimates high school drop-out indicators for Italian Americans. The educational profile of the Italian American which emerges is one which indicates that outside of N.Y.C. (in the U.S. and the rest of N.Y.S.) Italian Americans have higher educational attainment levels.

With respect to the high school drop-out rate, Italian Americans are at, or below, the rest of the white population in the U.S. and N.Y.S. The one glaring exception is N.Y.C., where one out of five Italian-American students drop out of high school, giving them the third highest drop-out rate of 21%, with a substantial portion of this population dropping out of high school at a rate of one out of three.

The research indicates that the profile of the Italian-American drop-out in New York City and New York State is: one who is likely to be male, of a lower income level, and from a multi-generational family lacking educational achievement.

Ethnicity, Socialization, and Academic Achievement of Italian-American College Students at CUNY; Ph.D. Dissertation, Dept. of Political Science; Sterzi, Gabriella; CUNY Graduate Center; 1988.

This report is concerned with the academic achievement of Italian-American

college students at CUNY. The distrust of American schools which characterized the Italian group in the first half of the century has given way to a more realistic appraisal of the advantages of formal education. In fact, considering the modest occupational and educational attainment of respondents' parents, the sample of this study is characterized as upwardly mobile in educational and occupational aspirations, and reasonably motivated and prepared for academic work. It might well be that Italian Americans are still characterized by an attitude toward higher education which stresses vocational goals to a greater extent than other ethnic groups who attend CUNY.

Italian-American Studies and Italian Americans at The City University of New York; Gambino, Richard; Calandra Italian American Inst., CUNY, Office of Student Affairs and Special Programs; 1986/87 Faculty Fellow Report; Fall, 1987.

This report surveys Italian-American representation at CUNY including Italian-American Studies, Italian Studies, Italian-American faculty, Italian-American students, the Calandra Italian-American Institute and its counselors. One chapter of the report provides a summary of studies conducted on Italian American students at CUNY. The profile that emerges is consistent with other studies of Italian-Americans nationwide, and presents a picture of Italian-American students at CUNY who feel alienated from the faculty, staff, and other students at their respective colleges, are generally unenlightened and unmindful of issues in the larger community, are overstressed regarding their employment commitments outside the college (particularly males), have too irrational an anxiety about their appearance and other issues of self-worth (particularly females), and who experience severe feelings of loneliness which are aggravated by the contrast of their academic careers with their parents lack of academic achievement, and by the general difficulty Italian-American young people have in establishing personal independence from their close, and in many cases, "enmeshed" families.

Italian-American Students at CUNY: A Psychoeducational Profile; Perrone, James; CUNY Italian American Institute, Office of Student Affairs and Special Progs.; 1985/86 Faculty Fellow Report.

This report focuses on the psycho-educational profile of Italian-American students at CUNY. Although, in many ways, the psycho-educational profile of these students reflects the profile of CUNY students in general, the results provide information about some of the special needs and concerns of Italian-American students at CUNY and suggests some specific action strategies that are designed to improve and enhance counseling and student development services for them in the future.

Professor Perrone recommends a series of "focus groups" for Italian-American students, in order to raise the awareness and sensibility of the students to their own problems. He urges better and increased counseling of Italian-American students regarding their academic goals and aspirations. Lastly, Dr. Perrone recommends that Italian-American ethnic studies be made more available and attractive to Italian-American students. He calls for a greater University commitment to encouraging a better cultural understanding of our student population and making this information an integral part of the academic curriculum.

Italian-American Students at CUNY: A Socioeconomic and Educational Profile;
Blumberg, A. & Lavin, D.; Ph.D. Program, Sociology; CUNY Graduate School;
Sept., 1985.

This report summarizes a profile of Italian-American students at CUNY including their socioeconomic background, their educational histories and their attitudes and aspirations. Although in most respects they are very much like other whites, they differ in some important ways. One is that they more closely approximate the traditional demographic profile of the beginning college student: they are younger, single and more likely to be living with their parents. They are also more likely to have graduated from a private (presumably parochial) high school. The educational attainment of their parents is somewhat below the parents of other white students, especially in terms of college attendance. Possibly as a consequence, Italian-American students hold more modest educational aspirations for themselves. They also have a somewhat more vocational orientation to college and perhaps this orientation has led them more often to prefer a community, rather than a senior college.

Educational Attainment and Educational Values: Italian-American Generations;
Krase, Jerome; Dept. of Sociology, Center for Italian-American Studies, Brooklyn
College, CUNY; March 15, 1983.

This report focuses on the cultural, educational achievement and aspirations of Italian-American students at Brooklyn College. The report discusses the adjustment of Italians to American society. The report concludes that much of the problem is due to a lack of understanding of what has occurred in Italy since mass migration to America. Expert notions of Italian Americans seem to be stuck in a turn of the century scenario. In general all students are practical and pragmatic and do not view the college as a social or cultural opportunity. The students are in other words serious minded. The data show that students with American born grandparents more often plan to attend graduate school immediately after graduation, whereas the least Americanized are more likely to plan to go to work.

Italian-American High School Students and the Staten Island Forum;
Manzitti, Edward T.; Italian-American Institute to Foster Higher Education May 25, 1982.

This report summarizes the results of surveying Italian-American participants in the Staten Island Science Forum. One of the objectives was to ascertain information about family backgrounds of the Italian-American participants. The report concluded that the educational status of Italian-American participants was quite similar to the educational status of the total group. The groups were also similar in their choices of undergraduate and graduate programs. Although parental advice was sought by most participants in both high school and during college, there was some shift away from parents and towards friends and guidance counselors as the students went from high school into college. Seventy-six percent of the respondents indicated that they received parental advice during high school, compared to 56.3% during college. Guidance counseling was more popular at the college level than in high school. Friends' advice was

mentioned more often at the college level than during high school.

Demographic Profile of Italian American College Students Attending The City University of New York; Castiglione, Lawrence; Queens College, CUNY, 1982.

This report summarizes the demographic, occupational and academic data for Italian-American students at 12 of CUNY's colleges. The socioeconomic and demographic data of this investigation describes the Italian-American college student attending CUNY as coming from an economically vulnerable segment of American society; the lower middle and upper lower class. These students are achieving levels of education very significantly greater than those of their parents.

Sources of financial aid apart from their own family and earnings, do not appear to be utilized by these young people to the extent that might be expected. More extensive guidance is needed to make financing options better known and consequently, more frequently used. The lower-than-expected frequency of guidance obtained by this sample may be attributable to its unavailability or to cultural factors among Italian-American students that mitigate against going to strangers for help with personal, educational, or financial problems. The results also showed that students' grades are associated with the language used at home. In particular, a trend, is latent in the language data. It suggests that grade point average declines as frequency of the use of Italian at home increases.

Italian-American College students: A New Generation Connected to the Old; Krase, Jerome; Dept. of Sociology, Center for Italian-American studies, Brooklyn College, CUNY, 1977.

Professor Krase found that both male and female Italian-American students demonstrated pragmatic (i.e. vocational) orientations toward a college education and are relatively disinterested in such things as cultural activities, social activities, student government, sports and learning to solve social problems. The study also concluded that both Italian-American females and males are unlikely to involve themselves in school or in school extra-curricular activities [except work], continuing an Italian-American tradition of non-involvement in issues wider than the family or neighborhood. Given these characteristics, it is not surprising that Krase also found that to 92.2% of the female students and 89.1% of the males Italian is a major component of their ethnic identity.

Italian Americans and College Life: A Survey of Student Experiences at Brooklyn College; Fuccillo, Vincent J. and Krase, Jerome; School of Social Science, Brooklyn College, CUNY; 1975

This report provides a general composite demographic, occupational, and attitudinal portrait of the Italian-American student at Brooklyn College. The report offers suggestions designed to improve the quality of a number of programs, activities and services at the college, provide a more supportive environment and sharpen the responsiveness of the planning process. Fuccillo and Krase placed great emphasis on the disparity between the impersonal, bureaucratic nature of life on a CUNY campus and the conditioning of Italian-American students by their homes toward intensely personal relations, and, therefore, the students' need for personal relations on campus.