

SICILIAN RECREATION CLUBS: HAMILTON, ONTARIO, CANADA

by

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ABSTRACT`

In order to examine whether ethnic associations can help immigrants maintain their cultural identity, while adjusting to the new social environment, field work was conducted at a specific Sicilian-Canadian association. This paper suggests that the association does, directly or indirectly, fulfill both functions. Various examples are provided, and briefly discussed, to illustrate this point.

RESUME

Afin de déterminer dans quelles mesures des associations ethniques aident des immigrants à préserver leur identité culturelle, tout en s'adaptant à leur nouveau milieu social, on a réalisé une enquête sur le terrain auprès d'une association Sicilo-canadienne donnée. Cet article semble indiquer que l'association remplit, en effet, directement ou indirectement, ces deux fonctions. On trouvera ici, brièvement discutés, plusieurs exemples illustrant cette remarque.

INTRODUCTION

Due to social and economic conditions, Southern Italy has been plagued with out-migration. Hamilton, with its wealth of industries, has attracted many of these emigrants. Today there are over 8,000 Sicilians living in the Hamilton area, who are able to trace their ancestry to one specific town in Western Sicily--Racalmuto, province of Agrigento. The majority of these people came to Canada after World War II. This paper will focus its attention on recreational clubs formed and frequented by these Sicilian emigrants.

The primary purpose of the paper is to examine whether ethnic associations help immigrants maintain their cultural identity, while adjusting to the new social environment. To achieve this objective, field work was conducted at the Trinacria Sports Club, one of at least four very similar Sicilian recreational clubs, in the Hamilton area. The initial investigation raised two important questions: 1) do Sicilian recreational clubs serve as maintenance and/or adaptive mechanisms; and, 2) if they do, how do they serve as maintenance and/or adaptive mechanisms? This paper will attempt to answer both questions.

In respect to voluntary associations, Italians in general, and southern Italians in particular, have been referred to as 'non-joiners' who prefer to stay with their families (Cronin, 1970; Banfield, 1958). The findings in this paper indicate that Sicilians do form and frequent voluntary associations. This apparent contradiction will briefly be discussed, as a secondary issue at the end of the paper.

METHODOLOGY

Sicilians attend recreational clubs to relax and play cards with their friends. This atmosphere made it impractical to conduct a questionnaire survey. To conduct a useful survey, it was necessary to talk to people at their leisure when the opportunity was made available. The information to be presented was obtained through informal conversations and participant observation, at the Trinacria Sports Club, over a period of approximately 2½ months during 1977. No attempt was made to limit or restrict the conversations to any particular topic, although each informant was asked a set number of questions to provide a degree of unity for the study (see appendix). This approach was applied to conversations held with thirty informants (approximately 12% of total membership). Useful information was also obtained from informants who, due to circumstances, could not be asked set questions.

Although the sample size was relatively small, an attempt was made to acquire a representative sample. Conversations were held with: 1) two members of the administration; 2) the bartender (although not a member, he did spend a great deal of time at the club); and 3) people from different age categories -- (a) under 30, (b) 30-60, and (c) pensioners. Personal observations made while visiting the club were also very helpful in overcoming problems associated with a small sample size. The information obtained at the Trinacria Sports Club was later verified and/or substantiated by briefly examining the Hamilton Italian Recreational Club. In addition, necessary background information was provided by eight Sicilians not affiliated with the various clubs.

TRINACRIA SPORTS CLUB

The club was established in the early 1950's to sponsor a soccer team. Although financial problems forced the team to fold a few years later, the club did manage to survive. Today it is primarily a Sicilian recreational club.

People go to the club to relax and meet friends. The most popular everyday activity is playing cards with friends. Usually six or seven individuals sit around a table, four play cards, while the rest watch and wait for a turn. Italian card games are usually preferred, but poker is also popular among some members. Both Italian and English style cards are available at the bar. Hours are spent playing, watching, and talking. Conversations range from discussions concerning personal matters to world affairs. Losing players often end up buying drinks for their friends.

The tendency at the club is to form small cliques. The first thing a person does upon entering the club is look for close friends and relatives. If they are not present, several common alternatives are employed: a person can return later, stand while talking to others, have a drink at the bar, or play pinball. Although all members know each other, exchange hello's, and buy each other drinks, people prefer to be in their own small group.

Occasionally, a small group of men will prepare a light meal in the basement kitchen. These men will sit together, in the small hall by the kitchen, while they eat, drink, and talk. No attempt is made to keep the gathering private; anyone wishing to join may do so, but usually only close friends partake of the meal.

Besides the informal or everyday activities mentioned above, the club does organize certain activities. These formal activities are briefly outlined below.

Dances

The club tries to organize three or four 'dinner and dance' nights per year.

Summer picnics

Picnics are organized each summer for members and their families. Games are organized for both children and adults; these include: boche, soccer, various races, and albaro de la cucania (a pole climbing contest). All game participants are presented gifts supplied by the club. A band is hired to play in the evening while people have their supper.

Christmas party

A special Christmas party is organized each year just before Christmas. Money contributed by members for the occasion is used to purchase gifts for the children. Only children, of club members, under twelve years of age are eligible for presents. During the evening, while everyone patiently awaits Santa Claus, balloons, noise makers, and refreshments are made available. When Santa (one of the members) arrives the gifts are brought in and distributed to all the children.

Bowling

The Trinacria Sports Club participates in an organized bowling league against teams affiliated with other clubs -- i.e. the Italo-Canadian Club and the Venetian Club. Not all club members participate on the team. Teams are usually formed by the same group of young men each year.

Friday night stags

During the day, one or more members, work to prepare a traditional Sicilian meal for the membership. Recent meals have included: pigs feet; tripe; fried cod; and fried liver with potatoes and onions. In the evening a reunion is held. Although members must buy their drinks, the food is served free. After the meal, tickets (3/\$1) are sold for a raffle (40 ounce bottle of whiskey). The rest of the evening is spent playing cards with friends. These stags are organized to provide entertainment for the members, and help make money (off raffle and drinks) for the financially troubled club.

Special nights

Three special nights were organized during the past year in honour of well known Sicilians visiting Hamilton:

- (a) Special reunion at the club in honour of the archpriest of Racalmuto. After the meal and accompanying speeches, a collection was made to help support the churches in Racalmuto.

- (b) A Sicilian folk group, made up of dancers, singers, and players, provided an evening of entertainment at Mohawk College here in Hamilton. Many Trinacria Club members attended the affair. When the evenings entertainment was over, the folk group was invited to the club for further festivities.
- (c) During multicultural week here in Hamilton, Salvatore Puma a tenor singer from Racalmuto, performed at Hamilton Place. Many Sicilians, including club members, were in attendance. The members consider this to be one of their special nights.

Membership at the club is reported to be open to all Hamiltonians; anyone willing to pay the \$40 a year membership fee, \$20 for pensioners, can become a member. In actuality only adult, male Italians join the club. Of the 250 individuals presently affiliated with the club, 99% are Sicilian. The majority of these Sicilians, up to 90%, came to Canada from Racalmuto. There are no Canadian born individuals represented in the club.

Informal conversations with members revealed several interesting patterns.² All informants interviewed at the club, for example, mentioned first becoming aware of the club through friends and/or relatives. In addition, a possible correlation exists between arrival in Hamilton and membership at the club. Many individuals interviewed joined the club within two years of their arrival in Hamilton.

Conversations with members, combined with participant observation, also revealed that the Sicilian dialect was most often used at the club. Many English words were incorporated, but these words were often changed or pronounced in such a way as to give them a distinct Sicilian ring. Conversations held in English did not reveal this mispronunciation, but rather that the informants, in general, had a good working knowledge of English. English words are transformed and incorporated into the dialect only when they talk to each other.

In contrast many members preferred to speak Italian while at the club. Prestige seemed to be attached to the ability to speak Italian. According to members it was a sign that you had been educated in Italy.

It was often difficult to engage people in conversations related to their education or employment in Sicily. Estimates made by various members indicate that the majority of people did not go beyond grade five. If this could be proven true, it would provide a striking contrast to the fairly well educated administrative personnel. The

President, for example, acquired a highschool education here in Hamilton, while the Vice-President finished highschool in Italy.

Members stressed that there was no financial benefit associated with membership at the club, but moral benefits were considered important. Responses concerning moral benefits included:

- a. The club is like a second home; I can come and go as I please. My family knows where I am, if they need me they can call me.
- b. When members are confined to a hospital, other members will make visits. Visits, for minor ailments, may be made by just close friends and relatives, but more serious ailments draw a response from the entire membership. Members feel these visits are important here in Canada where the number of friends and relatives are limited.
- c. If a member dies, a collection will be made to help pay for the funeral expenses. The members will then go to the funeral and take part in the funeral procession if possible. This is important because it is a sign of respect.
- d. Many members mentioned that the club helps keep people out of trouble. If they were to go to a hotel, personality clashes and language problems could easily lead to fights. At the club, if any disagreements lead to arguments there is always someone there to stop things before they reach a serious point. Since everyone speaks the same language a fraternal atmosphere is created, this produces fewer misunderstandings. This does not mean that arguments or tempers do not flare up, but rather that they can be resolved without violence.
- e. Younger members always seem to stress their mobility. They are able to take in outside entertainments. For this reason, they feel it is the pensioners who benefit the most from the club. Many individuals feel the club adds years to the pensioners life by: making him feel wanted and respected, providing him with a place to go and meet friends, and providing a change from everyday home life. Pensioners themselves recognize these benefits; they mention becoming annoyed or tired at home because there is nothing to do, therefore they welcome the opportunity of going to the club to play cards and meet friends.

Of the 250 individuals affiliated with the club approximately one-half can be considered active participants. These members tend to associate both in and out of the club; friendships made or cultivated at the club extend into private life. The club, in fact, often serves as a meeting place or starting point for members intending to take in other entertainments. These friendships are often extended to include the entire family, rather than just the members. In this case home visits will be exchanged on a regular basis. These relationships

provide a basis for mutual aid. When individuals are preparing to make wine, for example, close friends will go to assist them.

Many members expressed a fear that the club would fall apart when they pass away. Several factors foster these fears: no Canadian born individuals have joined the club, Sicilians coming to Canada at a young age tend not to join, the only new members are newly arrived Sicilians or people drawn from other clubs.

Individuals do not restrict themselves to membership at the Trinacria Sports Club. The majority of members interviewed belong, or have belonged, to other associations -- i.e. other Sicilian recreational clubs or Italo-Canadian Social Club. Various members estimate that at least 20% of the total membership are presently enrolled with other clubs. Explanations concerning this phenomenon include: people have friends at different clubs, therefore join more than one club; people keep joining or quitting the club to be with or avoid others; and, different clubs are open at different times.

HAMILTON ITALIAN RECREATION CLUB

The Hamilton Italian Recreation Club was founded in 1932. Today it has approximately 200 members, 95% of which are Sicilians from Racalmuto. Although it is called an Italian club, it is basically a club for individuals who can trace their ancestry to Racalmuto. Only Racalmutese are true members with the right to be elected to the committee; all other individuals hold honorary memberships.

Everyday club activities are very similar to those held at the Trinacria Sports Club. People primarily go to the club to play cards and talk to friends. During the summer boche can be played in the backyard. Special meals -- pigs feet, tripe, fried cod, liver, or beef stew -- are prepared for the Friday night stags. These meals are free for members, but a raffle is held to make money for the club. After the meal, the rest of the evening is spent playing cards. Formal club activities include:

Special nights

Many members attended the Salvatore Puma concert at Hamilton Place; and, the reunion in honour of the archpriest of Racalmuto -- donations were made for churches in Racalmuto.

Dances

Two 'dinner and dance' nights are held in the club hall each year featuring a hired band.

Picnics

Several family style picnics are held each summer featuring games for adults and children, and an evening of dancing.

Boche tournament

Special tournaments have been held in past years with competing teams from southern Ontario, Canada.

Christmas party

A Christmas reunion is held at the club each year for members and their children. Gifts are provided for all young children by a costumed Santa, while a free bar is held for adults.

The majority of members were born in Sicily. There are only six Canadian born Sicilians presently enrolled in the club. For the last few years it has been these six individuals who have controlled the committee. The President stresses that the committee is proud of its Sicilian background and activities, but they feel new ideas should be introduced. They are responsible for introducing and establishing dances, picnics, and official tournaments as club activities.

OTHER ASSOCIATIONS IN HAMILTON

Besides the very similar Sicilian recreational clubs, there are many formal Italian associations. Many of these Italian clubs attract Canadian born individuals of Italian background. Since there are very few Canadian born members at the various Sicilian recreational clubs, it may be interesting, for future study, to examine the extent to which Sicilians participate at these Italian clubs.

The recreational clubs mentioned earlier are opened only to men. Many Sicilian women belong to the Christian Woman's League (Madre Cristiani) affiliated with the Roman Catholic parish of All Souls'. Membership is open to all female parishioners, but most women are from the town of Racalmuto. The organization sponsors various activities, including: a) Thursday night art and craft workshops; b) a bingo night; c) chartered trips once a year for interested members; d) a social reunion once a month; and, e) special St. Joseph's day activities. These activities are organized by an elected committee. Besides the formal activities, the organization provides two important benefits for members; these benefits are: members confined to hospital are sent flowers and visited; and, the families of deceased members

receive \$30 to help with the funeral expenses, while the members attend the funeral and take part in the funeral procession.

RACALMUTO, SICILY: Traditional pastimes and associations

Based on information provided by informants, it was possible to reconstruct a detailed picture of traditional Sicilian pastimes and associations. To avoid presenting a biased representation, both club members and non-members were interviewed. This information will be used later for comparative purposes.

Racalmuto is located in western Sicily. According to informants the present population is approximately 10,000. Many people have emigrated to Canada and the United States, while others work in Germany, Belgium, or Luxembourg.

For Sicilians the piazza is an important place to relax and meet friends. After dinner, Sicilian men usually go to the piazza while their wives remain at home. Many men spend the entire evening talking and walking with friends in the area of the piazza, while others prefer simply to meet at the piazza before moving on to other activities.

During the evening, small groups of men usually interrupt their walks to visit either the café or the wine bar. In the café individuals have drinks and offer friends drinks, while they exchange a few words. Although these visits are short in duration, they occur repeatedly. In contrast, visits to the wine bar are usually long in duration.

Occasionally several men will organize a small, private reunion. They will ask the custodian of the wine bar to prepare a special meal for a particular evening. That evening, four or five individuals meet in the backroom of the wine bar to eat, drink, and converse.

One of the most popular activities, for adult males, is playing cards with friends. Certain cafés provide tables, either in the backroom or outside in front of the café, for this purpose. According to informants, there are also various associations in Racalmuto that provide facilities where individuals can go to relax and play cards.

Several Political Circles exist in Racalmuto. These associations are sponsored by political parties to attract voters. Each Political Circle consists of an enrolled membership and an elected committee. The main duties of the committee are to keep people aware of party policies, and to inform the party of local needs. In reality, men visit the associations' facilities to play cards and meet friends. To gain votes the parties are merely providing social and recreational centres for Sicilian men. The only directed political activity occurs during the election period.

Many of Racalmuto's inhabitants are employed at the nearby salt or sulphur mines. In return for monthly contributions, the workers are represented by a union-like regional organization in all dealings with government or company officials. A local branch, called 'Grupo-Minerario', exists in Racalmuto. The elected committee represents workers in labor disputes, and provides necessary information concerning rights, benefits, pay raises, and Government laws affecting mine workers. The local group also provides recreational facilities for workers; most people take advantage of these facilities to meet and play cards.

According to informants several other associations, or groups, are also present in Racalmuto, these include: Students' Circle, Landowner's group, Hunters' club, and Agriculturalists' society. Reports concerning these groups were brief and fragmentary; it is only possible to mention their existence at this time.

In addition to the above mentioned associations frequented by men, a church affiliated society, called Madre Cristiani, did exist for women. The society was primarily oriented toward church activities, especially religious processions, although the elected committee did organize various activities to teach and entertain children as well. Besides providing women with an opportunity to assemble for various activities, the main benefit provided by the society was moral support, through their presence, on important occasions such as weddings, hospital confinements, and funerals.

The preceding discussion of Sicilian pastimes and associations has been presented to provide necessary background information for comparative purposes.

MAINTENANCE OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

The Trinacria Sports Club is a recreational club; its attention is not focused explicitly toward the maintenance of a social border. Although it does not directly attempt to maintain the social border, its existence, the atmosphere it creates, and many of its activities do help members maintain their cultural identity.

Membership at the Trinacria Sports Club consists almost entirely of Sicilian immigrants. These people came to Canada to improve their economic situation. To accomplish this, they had to undergo various habit changes; these habit changes are related to: occupation, residence, language, and adherence to new laws (Cronin, 1970:p.13). Although immigrants must conform to certain aspects of life here in Canada, there is a great deal of choice possible in their private life. According to Constance Cronin (1970:p.14) changes accepted in private life represent value changes. By examining activities at the club, it may be possible to determine whether value changes have been made. If value changes have not been made, the club can be considered a mechanism helping immigrants maintain their cultural identity.

In certain respects, Sicilian recreational clubs here in Hamilton appear to be reconstructions of traditional pastimes and atmosphere. A list of similarities will be provided to illustrate this point:

- 1 In Sicily, men would go to the piazza to meet friends, while their wives remained at home. Although there is no piazza here in Hamilton, club members go to the club to meet friends, while their wives remain at home.
- 2 Occasional private reunions, similar to the ones in Sicily, do occur at the Trinacria Sports Club. In addition, this tradition has spiraled to a higher level to produce the Friday night stags. The meals prepared for these occasions -- i.e. fried cod, liver with potatoes and onions, or tripe -- are also typically Sicilian.
- 3 One of the most popular activities, for adult males in Racalmuto, is playing cards with friends. This practice seems to continue here in Hamilton; playing Italian card games, using Italian cards, is the most common activity members engage in at the recreational clubs.

- 4 Men can belong to various associations, while women can join the church affiliated Madre Cristiani.
- 5 Although most members of the Trinacria Club have good knowledge of English, conversations are conducted either in Sicilian or Italian.

By reconstructing a familiar atmosphere for leisure activities, the club has made it less necessary for many Sicilians to make value changes -- changes in private life related to leisure activities. In this sense the club does help members maintain their cultural identity.

Several important characteristics identify the Trinacria Sports Club as a Sicilian association. These characteristics are: a) the name -- 'Trinacria' represents the three points of Sicily; b) a membership composed almost entirely of Sicilians; c) a rule in the constitution stating that only Sicilians can be elected to the committee; d) the presence of visible signs and symbols -- scenic posters of Sicily, large roadmap of Sicily, and a painting of the Trinacria emblem superimposed over a map of Sicily; and, e) the reconstruction of traditional pastimes and atmosphere. These characteristics help members maintain an awareness of their cultural identity by stressing their Sicilian background.

According to informants, it is important to belong to a Sicilian association when one is living in a foreign land. The club is considered a second home where individuals can: be themselves, meet friends, take part in traditional activities, come and go as they please, and speak their own language without drawing various reactions from non-Sicilians. In this sense belonging to the club does help members maintain their cultural identity.

By providing facilities and numerous activities, the Trinacria Sports Club allows members to develop close contacts. Participation in club activities promotes a great deal of social interaction. Certain activities -- i.e. Christmas party, picnics, and dances -- also include the families of members. These interactions often lead to the extension of friendships to include non club situations. This provides a basis for mutual aid. The tendency of relying on other Sicilians for friendship and assistance helps to maintain cultural identity. It does this by emphasizing the social border. Individuals consider themselves Sicilians and associate with other Sicilians.

The Trinacria Sports Club also helps members maintain their cultural identity by promoting cultural links with Sicily. It has done this by sponsoring, either directly or indirectly, various cultural activities during the past year. Several examples were provided earlier in the paper. According to informants these activities made them feel proud of their Sicilian background.

Although the club does help maintain cultural identity, it can only do this for Sicilian immigrants. There are no second generation Sicilians presently enrolled in the club. The Trinacria Club may have reconstructed the traditional everyday activities too well. These activities do not attract second generation Sicilians; according to informants, both club members and non-members, second generation Sicilians have their own interests, friends, and activities.

ADAPTATION TO THE NEW SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Sicilian recreational clubs do not focus their attention toward helping immigrants adjust to the new social environment. Although this may be true, an attempt will be made in this section to determine whether the club does, or does not, help immigrants adjust to the new situation in any way.

Most Sicilian immigrants arriving here in Canada do have relatives to meet them and provide initial assistance. The Roman Catholic convent near All Souls' church also provided necessary assistance -- i.e. English language classes, and a place to obtain information and assistance from an Italian speaking official -- for immigrants. In addition to this direct assistance, recreational clubs may help immigrants to adjust in the new social environment by: helping people cope in the new environment; and, introducing people to new ideas.

Sicilian immigrants come to Hamilton to improve their economic situation. To achieve this goal, they are willing to make various adjustments. By reconstructing traditional pastimes and atmosphere, the Trinacria Sports Club is providing immigrants with a familiar environment. This is important for immigrants; it means they do not have to adjust to all aspects of life here in Canada. In this sense the club does help immigrants cope in the new social environment.

In addition to providing a familiar atmosphere within a new social environment, the Trinacria Sports Club helps immigrants cope in other ways of primary importance, for the individual, are personal adaptations -- a) the club provides the basis for the development of friendships

that extend into private life; b) the club provides moral support for members; members, for example, visit individuals confined to hospital. This moral support is important in a strange land where you are limited to a small number of personal relationships c) the club provides pensioners (many of whom have arrived recently to join their children) with a place to go and meet friends, rather than having to stay home.

Through informal conversations immigrants can develop certain impressions of Canada, and an idea of what is expected in particular situations. By developing friendships an individual can also obtain assistance for translating letters and filling out forms.

In addition according to members, the club helps people stay out of trouble. Visits to local bars could lead to fights because of personality clashes and/or language problems. Since everyone speaks the same language there are less misunderstandings at the club; if arguments do develop, there is always a friend nearby to stop things before they lead to violence.

The Trinacria Sports Club represents a blending of Sicilian and Canadian customs and values. The traditional activities remain at the core, but new dimensions have been added through the years. This blending has created a new culture (in respect to leisure activities). Examples of this blending are provided below:

- 1 New activities help supplement the traditional pass times -- i.e. dances, picnics, bowling team, and Christmas party (in Sicily gifts are distributed on Jan. 6).
- 2 Sicilian men continue to frequent clubs, while their wives remain at home; wives, however, are now able to attend many of the new activities.
- 3 Although donations were made to help support churches in Racalmuto, contributions have been made to the United Appeal and the Ontario Society for Crippled Children.
- 4 In addition to the Sicilian material, visible signs and symbols present inside the club include a Canadian flag and a sticker stating 'I am a proud Canadian'.
- 5 Traditional card games, using Italian cards, are preferred, but many individuals also play poker.

These examples help to illustrate the blending of Sicilian and Canadian ideas. This blending is important because it introduces immigrants to new ideas. By introducing new ideas within a familiar setting it is easier to make adjustments to the new social environment.

Although the Trinacria Sports Club does help immigrants adjust to the new social environment, one important drawback must be mentioned. By promoting fraternal feelings and providing a reconstruction of traditional pastimes and atmosphere, the club fosters intense, social interaction among members. Members tend to associate in and out of club situations. This may be adaptive in certain respects, but it does tend to isolate members away from the rest of the community. This isolation promotes fears that visits to local bars may lead to violence with outsiders. To avoid this violence people remain isolated in their clubs.

ITALIANS AS NON JOINERS

With respect to voluntary associations, Southern Italians have been referred to as 'nonjoiners' who prefer to stay with their families (Banfield, 1958; Cronin, 1970). The presence of numerous Italian and Sicilian clubs here in Hamilton, combined with reports of various associations in Sicily, seem to contradict the statement. The dilemma cannot be resolved here, but possible explanations will be suggested.

Banfield (1958) suggests that Southern Italians (Montegrano) do not form organizations because individuals are too concerned with their own family interests to work for the benefit of all. The Sicilian recreational clubs here in Hamilton do not conflict with family interests; men primarily frequent the clubs to relax and play cards. In fact, the club is similar to a family because of the intense, social interaction among members and the fraternal feelings they share. This does not explain the discrepancy, but it may provide some insight into the problem.

According to Constance Cronin (1970:p.178) "there are not many Italian clubs in Sidney", Australia; she does not mention any Sicilian clubs. In contrast there are at least four similar Sicilian associations here in Hamilton. A possible explanation may be that there are approximately 8,000 first generation Sicilians in Hamilton from one particular town in Sicily; a town that reportedly does have associations of its own.

Although it was not possible to make concrete suggestions in this brief discussion, future research may help resolve the problem. For this discussion, it was necessary to point out the discrepancy.

CONCLUSION

An examination of the Trinacria Sports Club has revealed that the association does help immigrants maintain their cultural identity. This is accomplished by: reconstructing traditional pastimes and atmosphere; promoting cultural links with Sicily; providing an atmosphere conducive to intense, social interaction; and, promoting an awareness of a common Sicilian background. In certain respects, the association also helps immigrants to new ideas. Both functions are achieved indirectly, the association does not explicitly attempt to achieve these goals.

Although the club does help immigrants adjust in certain respects, an important drawback also exists. The intense, social interaction fostered at the club breeds an isolationist position toward outsiders. This tends to slow down the integrative process.

The material presented in this paper has dealt solely with Sicilians, and their associations; no cross-cultural analysis has been attempted. It is however important to mention that comparisons could possibly be made with the African material concerning the role of voluntary associations in urban centers (i.e. Little, 1957, 1965, 1973; Meillassoux, 1968; Schwab, 1965).

NOTES

1. Although I did not encounter any problem in obtaining permission to conduct the study, it was initially difficult to obtain information from club members. The tension and suspicion created by my presence slowly subsided as I began to interact with members. This process was facilitated by my working knowledge of the Sicilian-dialect. Once members became aware of my Sicilian background, it was possible to obtain necessary data within a relatively short period of time.

2. Several patterns are briefly outlined within the text. It is important to mention, however, that additional research is needed to examine the validity of these patterns.

APPENDIX: Core questions asked of members.

1. Does the club provide benefits for you? What are they?
Are the benefits important?
2. How long have you been a member of the club?
Have you belonged to other clubs here in Hamilton?
Did you belong to a club in Sicily?
How does this club compare to clubs in Sicily?
3. Why did you join the club?
Do your friends and/or relatives belong to the club?
How did you first become aware of the club?
4. Why is the club called a sports club?
What would you like to see the club do?
Do you think the club is a success?
5. Has the club helped you adjust to Canadian life? If yes, how?
6. Does the club help maintain an Italian cultural identity? If yes, how?
7. What would you do if the club disbanded?
Would this be a loss for you?
8. What type of work do members do?
9. How old are you?
How long have you lived in Canada? Were you born here?
10. Do you have older sons?
Do they belong to the club?
Do they belong to other Sicilian clubs?
If not, why have they not joined?
If yes, did you influence them?
11. Do you participate at most activities?
What are these activities?

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