

New Italian Migrations
to the United States,
Volume 1

Politics and History since 1945

EDITED BY LAURA E. RUBERTO
AND JOSEPH SCIORRA


Afterword by Donna Gabaccia



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6 The Kingmakers of Fresh Pond Road

Ethnic-Political Brokers in an Italian American Community

OTTORINO CAPPELLI AND RODRIGO PRAINO

In March 2008, the Italian political parties selected which candidates to the national Parliament would be voted on by Italian citizens abroad.¹ Shortly thereafter a group of Italian-born political activists in Queens, New York City, purchased advertisement space in the Italian-language newspaper *America Oggi* to publish what they called a “protest vote manifesto.” They were denouncing the fact that the nominees of Silvio Berlusconi’s Popolo della Libertà (People of Liberty, PDL) party for the North and Central America District included no candidates from New York. As a consequence, they threatened to leave the PDL and endorse a newly formed right-wing party. They even asked all readers who owned commercial establishments to post the manifesto in highly visible places in their premises. A few days later, on March 21, the same individuals published a new ad, this time declaring that the “protest vote” was over. It is not known what had happened in the interim, but the group now formally endorsed the PDL and its candidate Augusto Sorriso, who was running for the Italian Senate.² Sorriso was the former mayor of Licata (Agrigento province), Sicily, who had moved to New Jersey in 1994 after an unsuccessful bid for Italy’s Chamber of Deputies.

In those same months, the same group was actively engaged in another campaign—for the reelection of fellow Italian American Serphin (Serf) Maltese, a Conservative-Republican, to the New York State Senate. They had done so for the past several elections; in fact, they had been the backbone of Maltese’s twenty-year political career based on his firm control of the 15th District’s electorate, and especially of its Italian American voters. Cofounder and chairman of the New York Conservative Party, he had been one of the

architects of the pro-Reagan upsurge of the 1980s; by 1988 he was elected a New York state senator, and a few years later he became the powerful chairman of the Queens County Republican Party. The grandson of a Sicilian immigrant, Maltese was one of the most influential Republicans in New York State at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Ultimately, both Sorriso and Maltese were defeated in 2008, marking the end of this long-powerful group of Queens-based, dual Italian and U.S. citizens whose political influence had spanned across the Atlantic. But who are these people? What made them believe that they could control enough votes to keep their Italian American “boss”³ in the New York State Senate and, at the same time, bring a sufficient number of Italian citizens to elect their candidate to the Italian Parliament?

This work provides an analysis of the political activities of this group of people—mostly post-World War II immigrants, established in the United States between the 1950s and the 1970s. We define these individuals as *ethnic-political brokers*, for they utilized their resources as Italian American community leaders in order to influence elections within their territory. Interestingly enough, in doing so, they targeted both U.S. and Italian politics. They were, in other words, dual or binational ethnic-political brokers. Their original power rested in the web of social relationships and political influence that they controlled in the Italian American community in Queens, and especially in the area of the 15th State Senate District. Through this, they influenced state elections for decades, helping Maltese gather the 20,000 to 30,000 votes he needed, on average, to be elected to the State Senate in Albany. Then, in the mid-2000s, with the implementation of Italian law No. 459/2001 allowing Italians abroad to vote by mail, the same people thought they could gather the 12,000 to 15,000 votes or so needed to elect candidates to the Italian Parliament. In other words, they understood that their Italian American network could now be used to influence not only elections in the State of New York but also the outcome of Italy’s national elections.

We designed this project as a narrow case study of a State Senate District of Queens County—the area where these ethnic-political brokers were active for decades. In the first part, we present a brief theoretical background for the study of ethnic politics in the United States. We then proceed with a detailed account of the Italian American presence in Queens County with particular attention to the 15th senatorial district. As will be made clear from the analysis below, not only are most ethnic-political brokers post-World War II Italian immigrants, but also a large portion of the *voters* they target belong to this immigration wave. The core of this work is dedicated to the analysis of these ethnic-political brokers, both with regard to U.S. politics

and in connection to the Italian elections in the United States. We finally conclude with some observations about the decline in power of this group of people at the end of this century's first decade.

Between Ethnic Representation and Machine Politics

In the late 1960s, the academic debate on the concept of political representation had apparently been settled by the seminal work of Hanna Pitkin (1967), who drew a firm line of demarcation between descriptive or symbolic representation (or representation as "standing for") and political representation (or representation as "acting for"). In the first case, representativeness is presumed "by definition" on the basis of sociological similarity between the representative and the represented—no action is required on the part of the former in the interests of the latter.

In subsequent decades, race, gender, and ethnicity became central topics within the national political debate, gradually overshadowing the traditional class basis of political theory and practice. At the same time, "notions of 'typical' or 'mirror' or 'descriptive' representation . . . returned with renewed force" (Phillips 2000, 162–164). Much more than the sophisticated, abstract construction of class interests, basic racial, gender, and ethnic differences can be represented (actually, "reflected") by static demographic characteristics, even before any action is taken. The idea is simple enough: Women are better represented by women, while members of a racial or ethnic group are better represented by people of their own race or ethnicity. This assumption holds regardless of any action taken by such representatives. In other words, the reward at stake for individual voters is not tangible or material. It is purely symbolic (cf. Wolfinger 1966).

However, one must admit that, in order for a politician to successfully gather the "racial" or "ethnic" vote and be elected to public office, it is not enough to simply *be* a member of a racial or ethnic group. Leadership qualities, a substantial amount of money, and—above all—organization are necessary elements of successful politics in a representative democracy. The vote, in sum, even when motivated by clearly visible and symbolically salient demographic factors, is not a fact of nature. Political *action* is required to identify, mobilize, and exploit these factors to one's own political advantage. Indeed, except in deeply fragmented societies, where individuals perceive their social chances to be vitally influenced by their ethnicity, any successful politician knows he/she must *act* to make ethnicity a politically salient factor at the polls. Even more important, a successful "ethnic" politician must learn *how* to attract the vote and loyalty of individual members of his/her own

ethnic group. In other words, political representation as “acting for,” or in the interest of the represented, remains of paramount importance. But what exactly do we mean by “acting for,” and how can we empirically identify this behavior?

In the United States, especially at the local level, the one political institution that has provided great empirical examples of elected representatives “acting for” their constituents is the “political machine.” Not surprisingly, this form of political organization reached its peak in conjunction with immigration waves. Political machines owe their name to informal party organizations which, in the nineteenth century, operated “with such uniformity and with such indifference or insensibility to right or wrong, that they evoked the idea of a piece of mechanism working automatically and blindly—of a machine” (Ostrogorski 1910, 60). Their main activity was that of distributing material rewards to individuals in exchange for their vote and political loyalty (cf. McSweeney and Zvesper 1991, 108). As the Progressive Era began to erode the power of political parties and their local bosses through their democratization (DeWitt 1915; Eisenach 2006), the actual functioning of political machines changed: They lost their absolute, almost “despotic” political power while retaining their “distributive” function. As Robert Merton very famously put it, still in the second half of the twentieth century, the machine “fulfil[led] the important social function of humanizing and personalizing all manner of assistance to those in need,” providing help for the “deprived classes.” (1968, 127–129). Furthermore, while the political machines of the past were extremely hierarchical organizations, with strong internal rules and established relations and roles between their leadership and their rank and file (cf. McSweeney and Zvesper 1991, 108), the “machines” of today are based on individual and personal networks and, although they often have clear and undeniable leaders, there is no formal hierarchical relationship within their ranks. Given the remarkable difference in terms of power and hierarchical organization discussed above, we prefer to talk about *political brokers* here, instead of stretching too far the concept (cf. Sartori 1970) of political machine. The term *broker* highlights the idea of an individual political player rather than a larger system functioning for a specific perspective. It evokes the idea of an almost “freelance” individual who acts as a facilitator between two political actors. In essence, through the intervention of political brokers, politicians successfully reach large groups of voters and build a direct relationship with them. More in detail, when there already is a symbolic, ethnic element linking a politician to a group of constituents, then the politician will reach out to an ethnic-political broker in order to establish him/herself not only as someone who “stands for” the ethnic group, but also as someone

who “acts for” the members of the group (cf. Parenti 1967). In the following pages we present an in-depth analysis of some of the political activities⁴ of the ethnic-political brokers of the 15th Senatorial District in Queens.

Queens County and the 15th New York State Senatorial District

New York’s Queens County has an Italian American community of 187,540 individuals, according to the 2000 U.S. Census.⁵ Similarly to what happens to the oldest European immigrant communities, the Italian Americans in Queens are divided into two groups: a larger one made of descendants of people who arrived in the United States over a century ago, and a smaller one made of more recent first-generation immigrants and their children, people belonging to the post-World War II immigration wave of the 1950s-1970s. Since most descendants of Italian immigrants from earlier immigration waves have no fluency in Italian, the two groups can be easily identified through language: In 2000, within the broader community of Italian ancestry in Queens, there were 44,410 people who declared themselves “able to speak Italian” and, among them, 7,065 admitted they spoke English “not well” or “not at all.”

How many of these people are dual Italian and U.S. citizens and thus have the right to participate in both countries’ elections? Although, according to Italian law, the descendants of older emigrants might have Italian citizenship, due to the intricacies of citizenship and dual-citizenship regulations, Italian-born post-World War II emigrants are more likely to be Italian citizens. And, to the extent that many have become naturalized U.S. citizens, the latter represent the bulk of those who have the right to vote in both countries.

Within Queens County, the 15th Senate District covers an area where, according to the 2000 census, Italian Americans represented the most numerous ancestry group. Of the about 60,000 Italian Americans then residing in the district, around 25 percent—about 15,000 people—were fluent in Italian, while almost 15 percent—or 9,000 people—were actually born in Italy. One can thus safely assume that a large portion of the Italian American population of the 15th district is part of, or strictly connected to, post-World War II immigration waves (Figure 6.1).

It has been demonstrated elsewhere (Praino 2012b) that districts with a considerable presence of Italian Americans are more likely to elect a member of such group to public office. The 15th District of the New York State Senate makes no exception. Indeed, the district figures among the so-called Italian American “hegemonic districts” of New York, i.e., districts where the winner

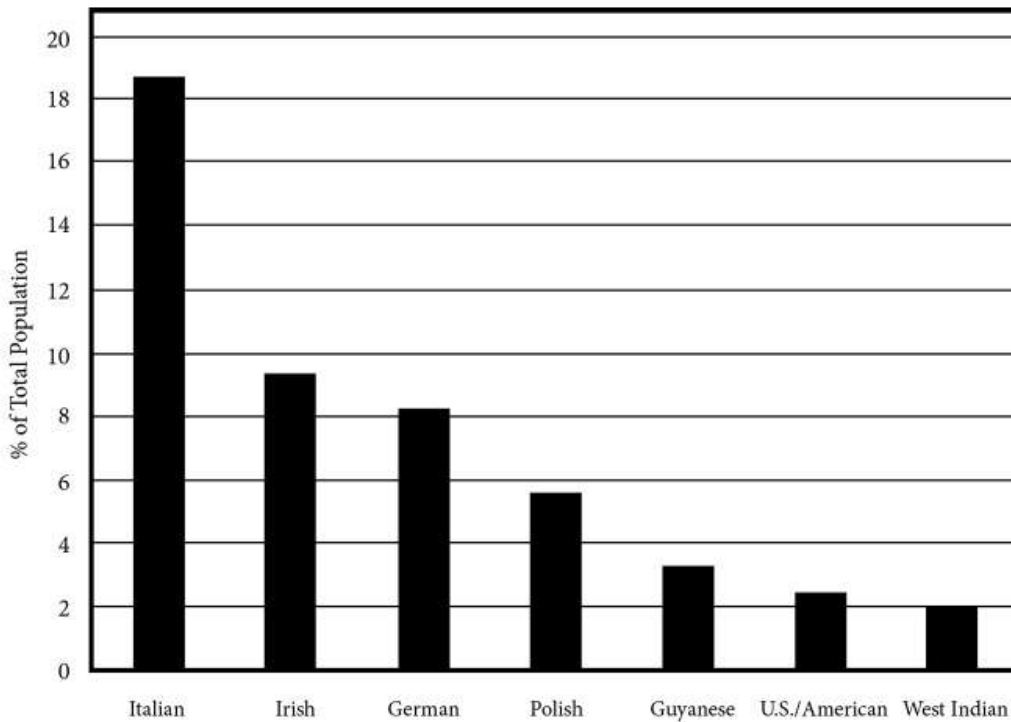


Figure 6.1. Ancestry Groups of the 15th Senatorial District, NY

is most likely an Italian American regardless of partisan affiliation (Cappelli 2012b). As Table 6.1 shows, this situation is the product of an ethnic political shift that happened in the late 1980s. Before then, for twenty years, the district had been led by a German-Irish coalition represented in the Senate by Republican Martin J. Knorr. Since Italian Americans had a definite plurality among the electorate, the Democrats had often chosen Italian candidates to challenge the incumbent, but to no avail. It was only in 1988, when Knorr retired, that an Italian American got the seat: Maltese, the cofounder and chair of the New York Conservative Party, defeated the Democratic opponent Frank Sansivieri, also an Italian American. Then Maltese began his two-decade-long senatorial career, during which he often ran unopposed. He was finally defeated in 2008—not coincidentally by another Italian American, Democrat Joseph Addabbo Jr.

But a closer look at the data reveals that Maltese, who has been elsewhere described as a quintessential Italian American ethnic politician (Cappelli 2011), has a rather peculiar electoral history. This emerges if one compares the percentage of votes and the total number of votes received by Maltese in his entire political career, from 1988 to 2008. Percentages (Figure 6.2a) suggest an extremely impressive electoral record: After his first victory in

Table 6.1. The Electoral History of the 15th Senatorial District, Queens County, NY, 1972–2010

Italian Ancestry in 2000: 61,983 residents (19.5% of the total population)						
Year	Winner	Party	Votes	Loser	Party	Votes
2010	Joseph Addabbo	D	23,272	Anthony Como	R	17,594
2008	Joseph Addabbo	D	39,978	Serphin Maltese	R	29,544
2006	Serphin Maltese	R	17,940	Albert Baldeo	D	17,046
2004*	Serphin Maltese	R	34,331	-	-	-
2002**	Serphin Maltese	R	23,588	-	-	-
2000**	Serphin Maltese	R	33,135	-	-	-
1998*	Serphin Maltese	R	23,823	-	-	-
1996*	Serphin Maltese	R	34,045	-	-	-
1994*	Serphin Maltese	R	32,572	-	-	-
1992	Serphin Maltese	R	46,347	Arthur M. Laske	D	20,008
1990	Serphin Maltese	R	25,680	Joan C. DeCamp	D	11,771
1988	Serphin Maltese	C, R	39,192	Frank Sansivieri	D	32,513
1986	Martin J. Knorr	R	32,727	Frank Sansivieri	D	17,001
1984	Martin J. Knorr	R	43,487	Thomas Santucci	D	40,779
1982	Martin J. Knorr	R	33,746	Thomas Santucci	D	31,204
1980	Martin J. Knorr	R	45,098	Patricia M. Reilly	D	21,672
1978	Martin J. Knorr	R	35,826	Thomas W. Connolly	D	21,995
1976	Martin J. Knorr	R	53,264	Albert Alloro	D	23,939
1974	Martin J. Knorr	R	43,746	Marco Giovanelli	D	23,858
1972	Martin J. Knorr	R	57,294	Frederick D. Schmidt	D	46,807

* = Unopposed

** = Unopposed by a major party

Source: Compiled by authors with data from the New York State Board of Elections

1988, Maltese was reelected nine times in a row, obtaining on average 70 percent of the total votes cast; moreover, six of these times he ran unopposed or virtually unopposed, thus obtaining 100 percent of the votes. With these percentages, Maltese tended to perceive himself as “The Senator of All the People” (Cappelli 2015, 205–244).

Raw votes, however (Figure 6.2b), tell a different story: Most of the time Maltese was elected by an average of just about 25,000–28,000 votes. While it is impossible of course to determine with certainty who cast these votes, it is theoretically possible that—with over 60,000 Italian American residents in his district—Maltese never received a single vote from a non-Italian American. We do not wish to make this extreme, speculative case here, but we do intend to emphasize that the Italian American community of District 15 may well have provided the vast majority of Senator Maltese’s votes.

Were this in fact the case, he would have been facilitated by both demographic and political conditions. Maltese indeed ran unopposed in six out of nine elections and, as is well known, in noncontested elections turnout is

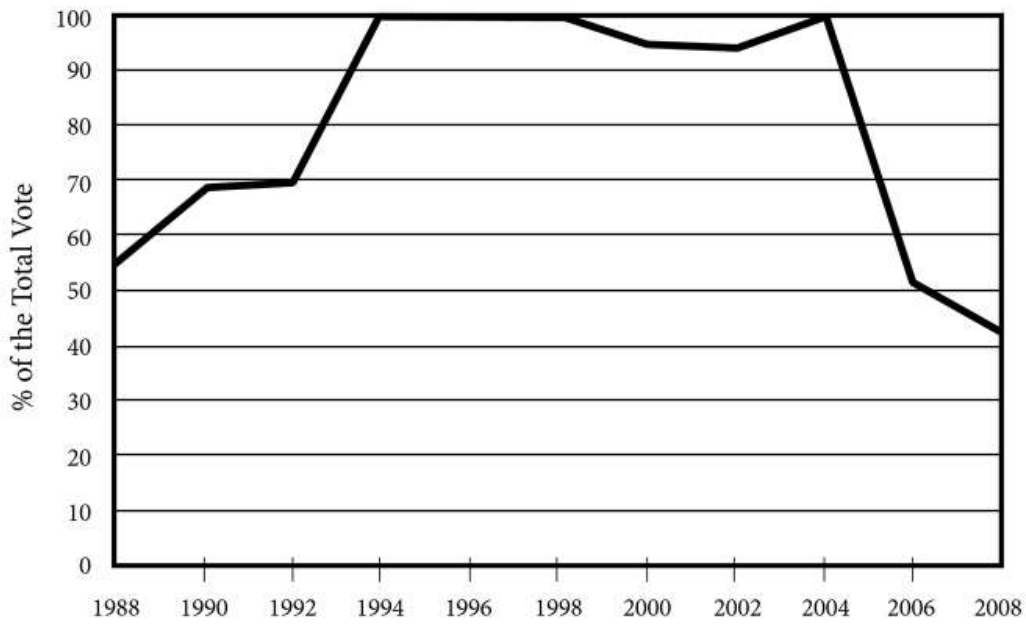


Figure 6.2a. Serphin R. Maltese's Electoral History, 1988-2008, by Percentages

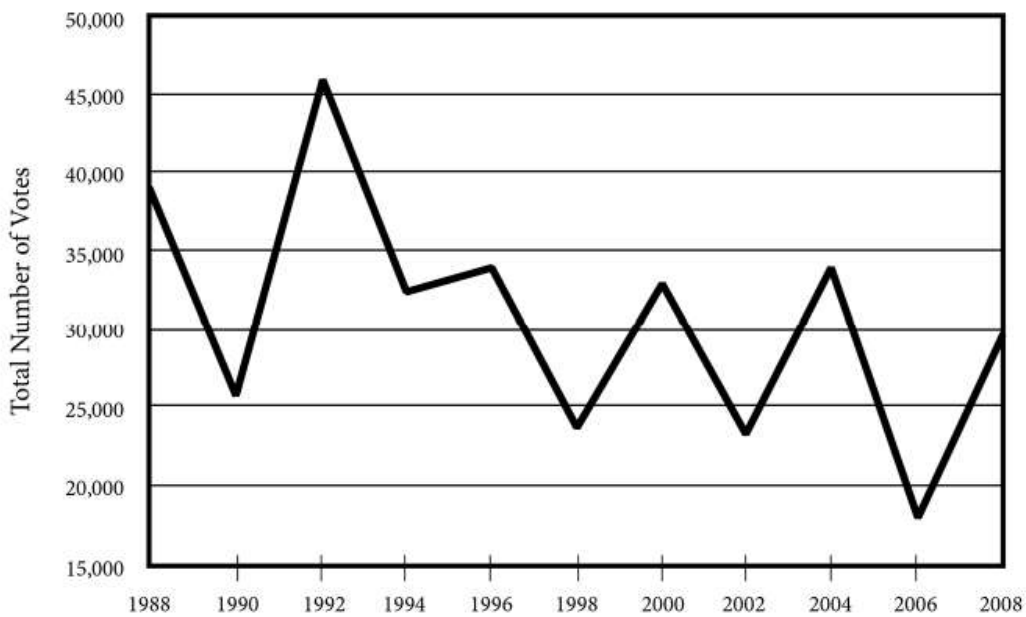


Figure 6.2b. Serphin R. Maltese's Electoral History, 1988-2008, by Raw Votes

lower than usual and the incumbent gets reelected over and over with the smallest possible number of votes (cf. Praino and Stockemer 2012a and b). What put Maltese in such a comfortable situation was that, having in the mid-1990s become the chairman of the Queens Republican Committee, he had an unwritten pact⁶ with his Democratic equivalent Thomas Manton, an

Irish American congressman and the chair of his party's Queens organization. This Italian-Irish pact—facilitated by the shared conservative orientation of Democrat Manton and Republican Maltese—created a situation in which Maltese could be kept in power just by the Italian American vote (Cappelli 2011). Once he controlled the largest ethnic group in the district, he could just forget about everything else.

That Maltese is primarily the senator of the Italian Americans of his district is also confirmed by the man who finally defeated him in 2008, fellow Italian American Addabbo: "I think he (Maltese) unfortunately stayed in a very close circuit," said Addabbo in an interview for our *Maria Federici Oral History Archive*.⁷

He stayed in a very small circle, without taking advantage of the position he was in, in helping other parts of the district. We have a growing Latino population, we have a growing Polish population, certainly we have a growing South Asian population, and I think these growing ethnic segments of the district had not been attended to.⁸

Thus, Maltese's monopolistic control of the Italian American vote was the secret of his success—but once that monopoly was broken by an Italian American challenger who proved also able to attend to other ethnic and racial groups, his fate was sealed.

But twenty years of monopolistic control of the Italian American vote did not come easily, especially in a district where the vast majority of registered voters, the Italian Americans included, were Democrats. Maltese had to challenge the traditional way Italians voted: Accustomed to a straight "party vote," mostly in favor of the Democrats, they had to be persuaded to vote for him, a Conservative-Republican, on the ground that he too was an Italian American. In other words, he bet on the ethnic-politics card, based on "symbolic representation," and he succeeded—and of this he remained proud until the end of his career (Cappelli 2015, 205–244).

Maltese accomplished this task by surrounding himself with Italian American collaborators. First of all, within the party organization, where his lieutenant was Conservative-Republican Tom Ognibene—a city councilmember who in the mid-1990s was instrumental in staging the "coup" that paved the way for Maltese to take over the chairmanship of the Queens Republican organization.⁹ But even more crucial was the network of associates Maltese had outside the party; these people included a core group of Italian American community notables and activists, among whom prominently figured the signatories of the "protest vote manifesto" and some of their closest associates. These people played the essential role of ethnic-political brokers,

mediating the relationship between Senator Maltese and the Italian American community in the district. Their role, for reasons that will become clear later, was especially important in providing a link between Maltese and the post-World War II, Italian-born immigrants of the district.

Ethnic-Political Brokerage in the 15th District: Influencing American Politics

Maltese has always understood the value of ethnic-political brokers because both his grandfather and father had been brokers on the Lower East Side. In the 1930s Serafino Maltese, a shoemaker from Marsala (Trapani province), Sicily, had turned his shoe shop into a home-brewing facility and an after-work gathering place for Italian immigrants. There the local Democratic leaders had a chance to meet with members of the Italian American community through the mediation of Serafino. His son Paolo helped out, and his grandson Serphin, then a kid, recalls:

They would come in, only men, they would play cards and drink wine and talk about the facts of the day. The local police, they were all Irish, would stop by and have some sodas. . . . The local politicians would come too, they were all Jewish, all Democrats, and they were very friendly with my grandfather and my father because there were so many Italian men there . . . as soon as you were able to become a citizen and register to vote, the Democratic leaders would come to nonno [grandfather] Serafino's shop and register you. . . . They ensured that everybody voted straight Democratic.¹⁰

Serafino, in sum, mediated between two subcultures: a Democratic subculture, which permeated the Lower East Side, and, nested within it, the ethnic subculture that developed along First Avenue, the heart of the area's Italian American community. He was a cog in the Democratic machine, his role being to ensure that other Italian Americans voted as the machine expected and in return received their share of pork.

Fifty years later, Serafino's grandson Serphin needed people like his *nonno* to keep him in power in his district in Queens. And these were to be found in the heavily Italian American area of Fresh Pond Road, where the headquarters of the ethnic-political brokers in question were based. As Maltese explained during our Oral History Archive interview:

Let's face it, since I don't speak Italian, I had a handicap. Cavalier Cardella and DiPiazza would reach out to the groups . . . 'til the day I left office I don't think there was a week that either Cav. DiPiazza or Cav. Cardella didn't call me on

behalf of somebody, in most cases an Italian American, who needed some help. And I helped them. So they were better than all the mail, all the publicity I got as Senator in reaching out to the community, primarily the Italian American community.¹¹

Thus Maltese himself names the two most important pillars of his local structure of power: Tony DiPiazza and Peter Cardella, two well-known Italian notables (*Cavalieri*)¹² and community leaders.

Antonio “Tony” Di Piazza, a real-estate agent, was born in 1952 in San Giuseppe Jato (Palermo province), Sicily; in 1960, he emigrated to Switzerland with his family, and in 1966 they moved to the United States. After obtaining a degree in accounting from Queens College, he established the real-estate company that he still owns and operates. Over the years, he has founded and headed a number of community organizations and has become a recognized local leader in the Italian American community.

Numerous locally prominent Italian American individuals from Queens and Brooklyn gravitate around Di Piazza: Antonio “Tony” Mulé, born in Partanna (Trapani), Sicily, moved to the United States in 1958 and is now the owner of a local meat market; Attilio Carbone, born in Cosoleto (Reggio Calabria province), Calabria, immigrated to the United States in 1956 and became a local radio host and journalist; and Angelo Messina, born in Castellammare Del Golfo (Trapani province), Sicily. A number of other prominent local Italian American individuals such as Joseph Meccariello, Stefano Turriciano, and John Mistretta served with Di Piazza on the boards of a variety of organizations, from cultural (Associazione Culturale Italiana Di New York) to sports-related (Inter Club Moratti USA).

As a typical example of the post-World War II immigration that does not have to sever ties with the country of origin, Di Piazza is engaged in both U.S. and Italian politics. In the late 1980s, he founded an organization called Italian American Electorate Coalition with the objective of turning Italian immigrants into a voting block that could influence elections in New York. A few years later, Di Piazza cofounded a more ambitious organization called Federazione Italo-Americana Di Brooklyn e Queens (Federazione), a coordinated group of people of Italian descent, chaired by Peter Cardella (the other leading broker cited by Maltese). The Federazione engaged in identity-building initiatives of various natures, spanning from local ethnic quarrels to foreign policy. In the mid-1990s, for instance, citing concerns about traffic, a local governing body (Queens’ Community Board 5) decided to cancel an Italian American religious *festa* (feast) in Fresh Pond Road honoring the Madonna Santa Maria di Trapani, the spiritual patron of the Trapani province

in Sicily. The Federazione sued the board for anti-Italian American bias—and it won, apparently with some help from Senator Maltese.¹³ In 2003, to cite a rather different example, members of the Federazione were in the forefront of an anti-pacifist demonstration in Queens in support of the George W. Bush administration's war in Iraq. Senator Maltese was actively involved in its organization and intended to show that Italian Americans were the first among "the people of Queens" who came out in support of the troops. "The first person I called was Tony Di Piazza," Maltese recounted to *America Oggi*: "He showed himself to be a civic leader, and the hundreds of people whom we see here show that Italian Americans are with our soldiers." The senator went on to emphasize that Italian Americans always set out first when there's a need "to defend the nation." Furthermore, the Italian government too—"contrary to the French government"—was on President Bush's side. "The Italian government supported the invasion of Iraq, and we know that many young Italian Americans are fighting and dying to defend our country."¹⁴ It is worthwhile to note that DiPiazza, interviewed by the same newspaper, showed the typical binational aspect of his activity: He was interested in the Italian as well as the American side of politics and he used the Federazione also to address his political enemies in his country of origin. "We decided to show our gratitude toward America for what it has done for Italy," he told the reporter. "I believe that the behavior of the Italian Left [opposing the war] is shameful, and we must take heed that it has not been a fair opposition, but rather, a hypocritical one."¹⁵

But the most important function of the Federazione was helping Italian immigrants with their everyday problems, with the help of Senator Maltese when needed:

The Federazione was an absolutely indispensable group because it helped with citizenship, it helped with landlord-tenant problems, it helped in some cases with minor criminal matters. And it was by virtue of people like Cav. Di Piazza and Cav. Cardella that I was able to reach into the Italian community.¹⁶

The other ethnic broker cited by Maltese was Peter Cardella who, an exception in this group, was not Italian-born. Born in Brooklyn in 1917 to a Sicilian family, Cardella was not a typical Southern-Italian immigrant either—he was an industrialist and owned a coat company, Car-Del-Mar Coat. As the owner of a factory that hired most of its employees from Italy, he was renowned for his paternalistic, familistic style of leadership. This helped him in his long experience with negotiating labor contracts as the president of the Labor Committee of the American Cloak and Suit Manufacturers Association. Together with prominent Italian Americans of New York, Cardella also

contributed to establish the Italian American Professional and Businessmen's Association, which he led for twenty-five years starting in 1946. In 1980, he founded the Italian-American Federation of Greater New York, which he chaired and which later provided the basis for the establishment of the Federazione Italo Americana Di Brooklyn & Queens (where Cardella was chairman of the board and Di Piazza the executive director).¹⁷

But by far the most important organization created by Cardella was the Ridgewood Senior Citizen Center, later renamed as the Peter Cardella Senior Citizen Center (Cardella Center), which is situated in Fresh Pond Road, just a few steps from the headquarters of the Federazione (and Di Piazza's real-estate office). Established in 1974, the center offers educational, recreational, and assistance services to the elderly. These include offering language training (teaching both English as a Second Language and Italian), "benefit and entitlement trainings, assistance in completing forms, accounting and bookkeeping group work with seniors, nutritional trainings, and various other assistance with programs."¹⁸

The political profit of such an organization was readily appreciated by Senator Maletse, who explains:

Peter Cardella came up with the original idea of senior centers; he formed the Ridgewood Senior Center that ultimately became the Cav. Cardella Senior Center. One thing he did through the senior center was organize, so that you had Italian Americans who identified themselves as Italian Americans. And the center itself ended up [being the core of this activity]. You know, ethnic groups tend to gravitate towards their own . . . and the Italian Americans would go to the Cardella Center, no matter how far they lived. And Peter would mobilize them.¹⁹

Thus the Cardella Center was a powerful electoral base among Italian immigrants. Indeed, when a journalist from the *New York Times* followed Maltese on a visit to the senior center during the 2008 election campaign, he found that the senator "strode slowly through the midmorning crowd . . . like a shepherd corralling a weary but loyal flock." In the corridors and cafeteria, Maltese "stopped repeatedly and leaned in to hear the greetings or gripes of his constituents—most of them Italian-Americans." The senator, continued the journalist in a rather poetic vein,

spoke to them softly as a stocky man with a shiny red tie and a microphone sang a song in Italian and another plucked gingerly at a piano's cream and black keys. "This group here has been absolutely essential to keeping me in office all of these years," Mr. Maltese said. "It's what this group stands for. It stands for a community."²⁰

Everything said thus far points to one major type of relation between Maltese and his ethnic-political brokers, that of voter mobilization. The Federazione and the Cardella Center worked according to a textbook-definition of the immigrant-based political machine, at least for what concerns the social function of a modern political machine: providing a gathering place for social activities, fostering shared ethnic identity, and offering help to those in need. All this would eventually translate into electoral politics, as Di Piazza and Cardella arranged the exchange between the Italian American voters and a state senator to provide all the help he could to citizens in need of assistance, especially Italian American citizens.

This observation can be empirically reinforced by looking at two other distinct instances of connection between the senator and his brokers, related to reciprocal financial support: (1) First, the brokers raised funds for Senator Maltese’s campaigns; (2) second, Senator Maltese, once in power, funded a number of ethnically based projects either directly organized or supported by his brokers, among others.

Table 6.2 shows the financial contributions made to the electoral committee “Friends of Sen. Serf Maltese” between 2004 and 2008 by the leadership of the Federazione—either directly or through members of their families, companies they own, and organizations they operate.

Table 6.2. Contributions to “Friends of Sen. Serf Maltese” from the Leadership of the Federazione Italo-Americana di Brooklyn and Queens, 2004–2008

Tony Di Piazza Executive Director	\$2,210 ^a
Tony Mulè President	\$2,885 ^b
John Mistretta Vice President	\$1,400
Hans Mansoori Treasurer	\$1,260
Gerry Genna Secretary	\$1,390 ^c
Peter Cardella Chairman of the Board	\$10,020 ^d
Total	\$19,165

^aIncludes \$80 donated by the Federazione

^bIncludes \$2,460 from the Tony Mulè Meat Market

^cIncludes \$140 from Serafina Genna

^dIncludes \$2049 from Maria Elena Cardella and \$80 from the Peter Cardella Senior Citizens Center

Source: Compiled by authors with data from the New York State Board of Elections

In total, contributions amounted to almost \$20,000. This amount is clearly just the tip of the iceberg; one may safely assume that if we checked the data for all the members of the Federazione and their families and businesses, figures would be much higher. Once in office, Maltese made sure that the patronage at his disposal was distributed among a number of Italian American organizations and projects.

Table 6.3 lists all New York State senators who have funded at least one Italian American community project²¹ through their “member items”²² in 2008. Out of the forty-one projects funded statewide, twelve were funded directly by Maltese, who also spent more than four times the average per Italian American resident in his district.

A detailed look at the data shows that, not surprisingly, these are districts where the Italian American population is rather high, although not all the senators are Italian Americans. Based on their observable “member items” spending strategy, they can be divided into two categories: those who give as little as \$2,500-\$10,000 and those who give much higher sums (over \$50,000 and even over \$100,000). In most of the low-spending cases, the reason seems to be that legislators had little to allocate: They were freshmen, and member-item availability increases with seniority. Senators who fall in the opposite category (high spending cases) can also be distinguished into two

Table 6.3. “Member Item” Money Given to Italian American Community Projects by NY State Senators, 2008

# of District and County	Senator	Projects funded	2008 \$	Italian American Residents	\$ spent per Italian American resident
15. Queens	Maltese (R)	12	166,700	56,821	2.93
1. Suffolk	LaValle (R)	1	185,000	64,984	2.85
12. Queens	Onorato (D)	1	59,000	25,010	2.36
22. Kings	Golden (R)	8	138,000	81,965	1.68
3. Suffolk	Trunzo (R)	4	70,000	74,497	0.94
11. Queens	Padavan (R)	3	25,000	43,721	0.57
5. Nassau	Marcellino (R)	1	15,000	66,886	0.22
62. Monroe	Maziarz (R)	1	10,000	45,504	0.22
34. Bronx	Klein (D)	4	15,000	73,978	0.2
8. Nassau	Fuschillo (R)	1	10,000	64,171	0.15
38. Rockland	Morahan (R)	1	5,000	47,001	0.11
35. Westchester	Stewart-Cousins (D)	1	5,000	54,287	0.09
24. Richmond	Lanza (R)	2	10,000	130,631	0.08
23. Richmond	Savino (D)	1	2,500	34,622	0.07
TOTAL		41	761,200	864,078	0.66

Source: Compiled by authors with data from the New York State Board of Elections

categories: those who concentrated all their resources on just one project, and those who distributed them among several projects. On the first pole one finds two very different funding strategies: In affluent suburban Suffolk (SD# 1), Republican Senator Kenneth LaValle funded a single large and expensive project, providing \$185,000 to fund the State University of New York Stony Brook Center for Italian Studies; in urban and lower-middle-class Astoria (SD# 12), Democratic Senator George Onorato gave \$59,000 to the local chapter of the Federation of Italian American Organizations of Queens basically for assisting Italian immigrants and other Italian Americans in need. On the opposite pole—funding several programs—we find the Irish-American senator from Brooklyn Martin Golden, who gave \$100,000 to another chapter of the Federation of Italian American Organizations to help its “community services assistance program” but who also distributed an additional \$38,000 to smaller organizations of a regional, professional, or single-issue nature, including \$2,000 to the American-Italian Cancer Foundation. The champion of this latter, more vastly distributive approach was Maltese, who funded most projects (twelve) in the period considered, which coincided with the last year of his senatorial career.

And the largest individual recipient of Maltese’s funds was, not surprisingly perhaps, the Federazione, which received two rounds of funding for \$42,000 and \$20,000.²³ The official forms indicate the persons of contact for these two appropriations (Cardella and Di Piazza, respectively) and also list the activities for which the Federazione asked for support: “To provide a continuation of a variety of services, including processing of Medicare and Medicaid applications, rent increase exemptions, nursing home placement, Social Security to the elderly, youth services and services.” Senator Maltese, however, differentiated his Italian American investments by also funding educational and identity-related projects—giving to the Order Sons of Italy for the Garibaldi-Meucci Museum in Staten Island (which of course was even outside his district); to the association Bella Italia Mia (then affiliated with the Federazione) for “promoting a positive image of Italians”; to St. John’s University “for the celebration of the Italian Heritage and Culture Month, including lectures, exhibits, and movies,” and to Queens College’s John D. Calandra Italian American Institute (City University of New York) for several initiatives including “funding for oral histories”—on which this study is in part based. Among his colleagues, Maltese funded the largest number of Italian American community projects, spending a total of \$2.93 for every Italian American resident in his district. This patronage created a strong link between the benefactor senator and his constituents.

Ethnic-Political Brokerage in the 15th District: Influencing Italian Politics

During the past two decades, while they consolidated their local power structure working for Senator Maltese, the community activists of Fresh Pond Road also reinforced their influence in relation to Italian politics. Although Italian national elections abroad were not instituted until 2006, immigrant communities throughout the world did have some form of political representation: the *Comitati per gli Italiani all'Estero* (COMITES), or Committees for the Italians Abroad, and the *Consiglio Generale degli Italiani all'Estero* (CGIE), or General Council of Italians Abroad. The individuals supporting Di Piazza, the signatories of the “protest vote manifesto” cited earlier, were members of the New York/Connecticut COMITES, and the PDL senatorial candidate they finally endorsed in 2008, Augusto Sorriso, was a member of the CGIE. Before the mid-2000s, these elected organizations were the sole channels for Italian emigrants to engage in some form of electoral politics relative to Italy. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that people elected to the COMITES and CGIE would have accumulated some social and political capital in their communities, including electoral following, institutional connections, and capacity to mediate interests and influence decisions at different levels. And all this even *before* the first national Italian election abroad even took place. It comes as no surprise that the most relevant protagonists of our story come from the ranks of these two bodies.

The Italian election reform law of the early 2000s introduced the right of Italian citizens abroad to vote for the Italian Parliament by mail. Unlike other countries, including the United States, however, the Italian electoral system does not allow electors to vote via absentee ballots as if they were in their original city or region of residence in Italy. Because they actually reside elsewhere in the world, the law divided the world into four very large electoral districts (Europe; North and Central America; South America; and Africa, Asia, and Oceania) and allocated among them a total of eighteen members of the Italian Parliament, six senators and twelve deputies. While surrounded by very harsh criticism,²⁴ undoubtedly such a system enhances the connection between the elected representatives and their constituents in the territory where they reside. It is a natural conclusion, therefore, that COMITES and CGIE members had some useful predetermined political resources—already measurable in votes—to invest in the first national elections abroad (cf. Praino 2012a). Or, to put it another way, people with an electoral base already in place obviously had considerable incentive to either

pursue their own political career in the Italian Parliament or to act as political brokers for someone else.

This is indeed what happened in 2008, when a group of leading officials of the New York/Connecticut COMITES gathered around Di Piazza (then treasurer) and published their “manifesto” threatening to abandon Berlusconi’s party to protest the absence of a candidate from their area. That was not of course an official act of the COMITES branch, but a private, personal initiative by the signatories. However, these “private” citizens had already a very public life within their community, acting as a link between citizens and the Italian consular authorities. They enjoyed an institutional aura that is all but impossible to obtain abroad and that carries a strong legitimizing power in the eyes of the citizens. Besides—one should not forget—locally they were the lieutenants of State Senator Maltese. Their challenge now was quite straightforward: They had the personal, political, and organizational capital to get Maltese elected to the New York State Senate every two years; they were also able to get themselves elected to the COMITES every three years. Why, then, should not they try to elect the Italian Members of Parliament (MP) from the North and Central America district? That may sound like a very ambitious proposition, but it actually required fewer votes than one would expect.

As Table 6.4 demonstrates, the Italian American citizens of Fresh Pond Road, or at least those of Queens, would have been more than enough to elect a national MP in 2008. In the House of Deputies, the PDL and the PD each elected one candidate. In the Senate, PDL’s Basilio Giordano was elected, even though he received fewer preference votes than PD’s incumbent senator Renato Turano because overall the PDL received more votes than the PD.²⁵ Ultimately, however, the most interesting data point is that, in order to get elected to the Italian Parliament, a candidate needs to obtain only around 10,000 to 15,000 votes.

As we explained above, it takes between 25,000 and 30,000 votes to elect a New York State senator in the 15th District. Consequently, it appears that electing an Italian MP is a much easier task. For these ethnic-political brokers, this meant that suddenly the political capital accumulated during two decades in support of Maltese in Queens County multiplied its value, and the Italian American territorial organization of Fresh Pond Road had the potential to become the powerful core of an Italian electoral district. They could have been able to elect the sole Italian senator from the North and Central America district. The same circumstance had occurred in 2006—and then again in 2013—with industrialist Renato Turano (PD), who owed his

Table 6.4. Italian National Electoral Results and Candidates' Regional Political Power Base of Major Italian Parties/Coalitions in the North and Central American Electoral District, 2008

Elections to the Italian Chamber of Deputies			
Candidate (Party)	Votes	%	Regional Power Base
Amato Berardi (PDL)*	11,166	14.74	Philadelphia, PA
Vincenzo Arcobelli (PDL)	10,000	14.08	Houston, TX
Paolo A. Ariemma (PDL)	6,000	8.49	Toronto, Canada
Cesare Sassi (PDL)	5,000	9.30	Miami, FL
Emilia Vitale (PD)	8,033	10.61	New York, NY
Graziella Bivona (PD)	7,361	9.72	New York, NY
Gino Bucchino (PD)*	14,762	19.49	Toronto, Canada
Mario Pasquale Marra (PD)	2,773	3.66	Ontario, Canada
Elections to the Italian Senate			
Candidate	Votes	%	Regional Power Base
Augusto Sorriso (PDL)	8,699	17.60	New Jersey
Basilio Giordano (PDL)*	13,083	26.47	Montreal, Canada
Renato Guerino Turano (PD)	15,223	30.80	Chicago, IL
Marina Piazzì (PD)	7,431	15.03	Mexico City, Mexico

* Elected candidates

Source: Compiled by authors with data from the Italian Ministry of the Interior

election to the Italian Senate to his fellow Italian voters in Chicago; and in 2008 with PDL Senator Basilio Giordano, whose votes mainly came from Montreal (Giordano, born in Calabria, had been a *città* councilmember in the Montreal suburb of Saint-Leonard from 1982 to 1990).

The ethnic-political brokers of the 15th District worked hard to become binational ethnic-political brokers. As we have seen, after renouncing the "protest vote manifesto," Di Piazza and his associates publicly endorsed the PDL and, in particular, Sicilian-born Augusto Sorriso. Sorriso and Di Piazza were also connected through the *Confederazione dei Siciliani del Nord America* (*Confederazione*), an umbrella association, founded in 2007, that gathers together a large number of Sicilian associations in North America. Both Sorriso and Di Piazza were among its original founders and held important positions within its ranks. When, in October 2007, it organized its first gala in Atlantic City, in addition to Di Piazza and Sorriso a number of prominent Sicilians were present, both from Italy (including Berlusconi's aide and Senator Enrico La Loggia) and the United States (including National Italian American Foundation's President Sal Zizza and New York State Senator Maltese). That was a remarkable example of the intersection between Italian and Italian American political élites facilitated by the ethnic-political brokers of Fresh Pond Road.

At this point, the question that remains unanswered is: If Di Piazza and his group were close to Sorriso, why did they come up with the “protest vote manifesto” to begin with? Although we can hardly know what happened between the brokers, the politicians, and the political parties, it is possible to elaborate an informed conjecture. As the “protest vote manifesto” denounced, and Table 6.4 reports, none of the PDL candidates had their regional power base in New York, that is to say in the area controlled by the NY/CT COMITES. Sorriso does gravitate around the New York City metropolitan area, but his personal power base is in New Jersey, and New Jersey has its own COMITES. Ethnic-political brokers understand the importance of territory, for that is the basis of their power. DiPiazza and others knew only too well that supporting someone from their own area is not the same as supporting someone from the outside. Notwithstanding their initial resistance, however, the ethnic-political brokers ended up supporting Sorriso with little or no reservation. This behavior suggests the existence of some sort of territorially based backroom deal among them. A quite different treatment was reserved, indeed, for other right-wing candidates such as Cesare Sassi, from distant Miami, whom they endorsed only formally, or Vincenzo Arcobelli, from even more distant Texas, whom they did not endorse at all. Similarly, their complete lack of support for Amato Berardi, whose regional power base is in Philadelphia, may be the result of their suspicion of another territorial organization too far to control but close enough to threaten their authority. Ultimately, Sorriso did not manage to win the seat in 2008. He received almost 9,000 votes but finished behind the senatorial candidates from Chicago (Turano) and Montreal (Giordano). Even the candidate who won the PDL’s seat in the House, Berardi from Philadelphia, received more votes than Sorriso.

Then a few months later, as we have seen, the defeat of Maltese in the New York senatorial elections signaled the organization’s demise on the U.S. side too. Having experienced a dual Italian and U.S. loss, the power of these ethnic-political brokers declined sharply, and with the exit of Maltese from the State Senate, their political organization essentially vanished.²⁶

Conclusion

We have presented here a brief analysis of the political activities of a group of *ethnic-political brokers*, showing how they mediate between constituents and politicians. They *are* the modern version of a political machine.²⁷ These individuals are situated, established, and well-regarded in the territory. They act as an access point, a direct line of communication between voters and their elected representatives.

The main focus of this essay is a group of post–World War II Italian immigrants. In fact, not only most of the ethnic-political brokers whose activities we describe are post–World War II Italian immigrants, but also the majority of the voters they target belong to that same group.

The case of the ethnic-political brokers of Fresh Pond Road—at the heart of the 15th senatorial district in Queens County—is fascinating, for it hints at the rise and fall of a true modern-day, immigrant-based political machine. While its potential to explain or predict the behavior of other ethnic groups must be handled with care, we do believe that our analysis may be generalized to other local Italian American communities in the United States. Since recent research has shown that Italian American politicians at elite levels have clearly identifiable patterns of political behavior (Praino 2014), it is reasonable to expect that this be true at the local level too, and that other grassroots Italian American groups operate in a fashion that is at least similar to what we described earlier. Besides, the Italian elections abroad provide local Italian American politicians throughout the United States with a powerful incentive to behave in such a way.

The very effort to become “dual,” or “binational” political brokers makes our case study even more interesting. For a period, at least, our ethnic-political brokers of Fresh Pond Road acted “in” two different countries at the same time. And institutionalist logic would suggest that similar experiences may also exist elsewhere in the United States and throughout the world. In fact, the present Italian system based on special districts for elections abroad is in itself an incentive for groups like these to emerge wherever established communities of dual Italian citizens are found. And it is only natural that these groups be made up of people who are already engaged in the politics of the hosting country.

Notes

Authors’ Note: For the purposes of Italian academic regulations, the authors wish to acknowledge that, for this article, Cappelli has collected all original data and conducted all interviews, while Praino has quantitatively analyzed the data. Cappelli has also led the writing of the entire manuscript, while Praino has reviewed it and revised it as appropriate.

1. The Italian law no. 459 of 2001 allows Italian citizens living abroad to vote for Italian national elections in four overseas constituencies: (1) Europe, (2) Africa, Asia, Oceania, and Antarctica, (3) North and Central America, and (4) South America (cf. Praino 2012a). On a total number of eighteen legislators elected abroad, the North and Central America district elects one person to the Senate and two to the House.

2. They also formally endorsed Cesare Sassi for the Italian House. For the two “manifestos,” see *America Oggi*, March 16 and 21, 2008.

3. In this work, we chose to remain faithful to scientific rigor and use terms such as *boss*, *machine*, *patronage*, or *backroom deals* in line with their traditional meaning within political science. In this sense, their scientific denotation does not imply any relation to the informal connotation that such terms may evoke in some readers' minds related to organized crime and various types of illegal activities (cf. Sartori 1970).

4. Since V. O. Key's (1964) seminal work describing the tripartite nature of American political parties (i.e., the party as an organization, the party in the electorate, and the party in the government), American political scientists have kept a very clear distinction between these three separate, albeit interconnected, spheres. This work deals with the party as an organization. Consequently, there will be no major reference to issues such as political platforms and ideology (i.e., to the sphere of the party in the electorate) or to specific policies (i.e., to the sphere of party in the government).

5. All our ancestry-related data comes from the 2000 Census, as this is the latest available data summary file, excluding the estimates made by the annual community surveys. As we write, the U.S. Census Bureau has not yet released the 2010 Census ancestry data to the public.

6. Interview with Senator Serphin R. Maltese, collected by Ottorino Cappelli for the *Maria Federici Oral History Archive*, now published as "Serphin R. Maltese, Quintessential Ethnic Politician," in Cappelli (2015).

7. The Oral History Archive (OHA) is a research and documentation unit devoted to the study of the Italian American "body politics," directed by Ottorino Cappelli at the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute (Queens College, CUNY). It was established in 2009 with the original aim to carry out an in-depth study of and videotaped interviews with the Italian American legislators of the State of New York. In 2013, the OHA was reorganized on the basis of an international partnership between the Calandra Institute and the Italian National Association of Emigrant Families (ANFE) under the auspices of Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On that occasion, the Archive was renamed after ANFE's founder Maria Federici (1899–1984), an eminent Italian postwar politician who fought in the anti-Fascist liberation movement and was a member of the Italian Parliament. The research interests of the Maria Federici Oral History Archive have been ambitiously expanded to include the entire political experience of Italian Americans at local, state, and national levels in the United States.

8. Interview with Senator Joseph Addabbo Jr., collected by Ottorino Cappelli for the *Maria Federici Oral History Archive*, now published as "Joseph P. Addabbo Jr. The Capacity to Adapt," in Cappelli (2015).

9. The party coup took place in October 1995, when at the end of a very tense meeting of the Queens GOP organization, Maltese's associate Tom Ognibene succeeded in installing his candidate, the Italian wine importer Joseph M. DeFronzo, as County committee chairman. A year later DeFronzo resigned and was replaced by Maltese. Under Maltese, the committee was filled with Italian Americans, and when he resigned as chair in 2006 he was succeeded by fellow ethnic Phil Ragusa. One should also recall that in 2010 former Maltese's lieutenant Ognibene was the running mate of Carl Paladino, the Republican candidate who opposed Andrew Cuomo in that "all-Italian" gubernatorial election (Cappelli 2012a).

10. Interview with Senator Serphin R. Maltese, cit.
11. Ibid.
12. *Cavaliere* is an honorary title granted by the President of the Italian Republic to individuals for very noticeable accomplishments in Italy or abroad.
13. See Bernard Stamler, "Bad Blood Once Again over Italian-American Festival," *New York Times*, August 10, 1997. The quarrel over this festival was an old one and had taken place for several years in a row; see Jane H. Lii, "Neighborhood Report: Riodgewood: Compromise Collapses for Italian Festival," *New York Times*, August 20, 1995; *ibid.*, "Neighborhood Report: Riodgewood: 3-Day Italian Festival Wins Approval," *New York Times*, September 3, 1995.
14. See Riccardo Chioni, "'Long Live the War!' 'Anti-pacifist' Demonstrations in Forest Park, Queens," *America Oggi*, April 6, 2003. English translation by Katherine Sigelman available from New York City Community Media Alliance (<https://nycma.fcny.org/nycma/voices/61/series/war2>; accessed August 17, 2016).
15. *Idem.* Tony Di Piazza, had recently published a series of paid advertisements in *America Oggi* in which he criticized the Italian Left for its position on the Iraq war, with phrases such as "Shame on you, Berlinguer, Cofferati, Bertinotti, D'Alema, and Rutelli."
16. Interview with Senator Serphin R. Maltese, cit.
17. For basic biographical information on Peter Cardella, see "K406-2011: Congratulating Mr. and Mrs. Peter Cardella upon the occasion of celebrating their 70th Wedding Anniversary," adopted May 2, 2011 (<http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/K406-2011>; accessed August 17, 2016). See also Riccardo Chioni, "Peter Cardella, 90 anni nella comunità," *America Oggi*, July 20 2007. The latter article chronicles Cardella's 90th birthday celebration, held at the Cardella Center. The author notes that the celebration had been organized by the Center director Barbara Toscano and Tony Di Piazza, executive director of the Federazione di Brooklyn e Queens.
18. Since the Senior Center does not seem to have a proper website, the quote comes from the website of St. Johns University (www.stjohns.edu/faith/visaz/learning/sites/health/elderly/queens/pcsc.stj; accessed August 17, 2016). Incidentally, Cardella sat on the board of St. John's University, where he established the Italian Cultural Center with an endowment of one million dollars.
19. "Interview with Senator Serphin R. Maltese," cit.
20. Trymaine Lee, "Republican Lawmaker in a Heavily Democratic District Is Atop Election Hit List," *New York Times*, April 25, 2008.
21. Based on the 2008-2009 Senate Initiative Form, the table lists the total number of projects funded by March 31, 2008 (cf. Cappelli and Praino 2008).
22. The "member item"—or "member initiative"—system in the State of New York allows legislative leaders to allocate considerable funds outside the executive budget to projects favored by individual members or organizations in their districts. The system became institutionalized in the mid-1980s when the sum allocated skyrocketed from \$26 million in 1984 to 0 \$80 million in 1986. The system's advocates defend it as a way of bypassing the state bureaucracy to fund needed projects in local areas, and it was attacked by its critics as wasteful, unneeded pork-barrel appropriations. See Gerald Benjamin, "Reform in New York: The Budget, the Legislature, and the Governance Process," paper presented to the Citizens Budget Commission's conference on "Fixing New York State's Fiscal Practices,"

November 13 and 14, 2003 (available through the Citizens Budget Commission's website (www.cbcny.org/content/reform-new-york-budget-legislature-and-governance-process; accessed August 17, 2016).

23. The Peter Cardella Senior Citizens Center is not funded via this kind of soft, discretionary resources as it receives official, structured funding from the federal government, the state, and the city.

24. According to critics, the Italian government opted for such an intricate system with the clear intent of nullifying the political influence of citizens living abroad. They claim that the Italian political élite feared that thousands of Italian emigrants around the world would entirely modify the balance of power and the outcome of hundreds of local elections, especially in Sicily and other regions of the *Mezzogiorno*, where most Italian emigrants originally departed from. Through the creation of electoral districts abroad, they add, the political influence of the Italians abroad was limited to the negligible number of 6 out of 315 senators and 12 out of 630 deputies. While such critics certainly have some merit, we choose to emphasize here the consequences and intricacies of the law for what concerns the concept of political representation. In fact, one could go as far as arguing that, in comparison to the electoral law currently utilized to elect the members of the Italian Parliament within the national borders—known by the disparaging name of *porcellum*, a made-up word that is supposed to sound like Latin and literally means “little pig business”—the electoral system abroad is far more representative and fosters the accountability of individual politicians toward their specific constituents.

25. The electoral formula established by the Italian law is quite complex: it takes into account both the total number of votes cast for each political party or coalition, and the total number of votes received by the individual candidates of these parties or coalitions (known as “preference votes”). Thus, the candidate with the highest number of preference votes of the political party, which, overall, received the highest number of votes among all its candidates usually gets elected.

26. The double defeat of 2008 determined a coup that overthrew the leadership of the Federazione and implemented a vast purge: the “Tony Di Piazza group” that had led the Federazione from its inception, was replaced by new people (though Peter Cardella remained as chairman). See Riccardo Chioni, “Diego Lodico accusa Federazione di Brooklyn e Queens. I dirigenti smentiscono. ‘Per quale motivo sono stato espulso?’” *America Oggi*, January 27, 2010. The Cardella Center remains sometimes useful as a meeting point between the senator who replaced Maltese (the Italian American Democrat Joseph Addabbo Jr.) and Italian American senior citizens.

27. The ethnic-political brokers and the “modern version of a political machine” we describe here are very different from traditional political brokers and the classical urban political machines that controlled American politics in the nineteenth and part of the twentieth century. Even a cursory review of some of the best-known accounts of the operations of the political machine (e.g., Ostrogorski 1910) or of social theory works dedicated to the analysis of social structures (e.g., Merton 1968), as well as more recent and contextual explanations of machine politics in the United States (e.g., McSweeney and Zvesper 1991), show that the classical political machine operates in the gray area between legal and acceptable political activism and illegal and unacceptable behavior with the intent of obtaining undue political influence. In this context, the ethnic-political

brokers and their organizations are only groups of political activists who exercise their right to actively participate in the political activities of their country.

A successful example of a precursor of our multinational ethnic-political brokers is Generoso Pope Sr.—the political power broker who went from securing the Italian vote for Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s to orchestrating a letter-writing campaign by Italian immigrants to their families in Italy to prevent the Communists from winning the Italian elections in 1948. Pope, however, operated at a very different level than our local brokers. His authority in the Italian community of New York stemmed from his control of *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, the daily newspaper he bought in 1928 and transformed into the largest Italian-language daily in the country, with a circulation of 200,000 copies. As for his political influence, it depended on his national-level connections (e.g., he was chairman of the Italian Division of the Democratic National Committee in the mid-1930s), as well as on his close association with Tammany Hall's politicians, rather than on any direct control of a machine of his own.

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