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Italian Immigrants' Political Adjustment in the Americas: The Case of the United States and Argentina

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Stefano Luconi

Introduction

- 1 Casting ballots in the elections of the adoptive country is one of the means by which members of immigrant groups enter the political community of their host society. Standing for elective offices is another way to reach the same goal. Suffrage is a key attribute of citizenship. Therefore, by exerting voting rights and running in elections, individuals of foreign decent become co-nationals of the people of native stock for a practical purpose and undertake their steps toward integration. Such a trajectory is obviously viable in countries whose legislation allows the naturalization of the newcomers and grants citizenship to their children by the *jus soli*. The United States and Argentina are among such nations (Ramakrishnan S. K., 2005; Bletz M. E., 2010 : 53-59). In these countries, therefore, the involvement in politics can be aptly regarded as a dimension of what Samuel L. Baily (1999 : 17) has defined the « adjustment » of the immigrants and their children, namely as a component of their coping with the environment of the receiving society after their arrival.
- 2 This article examines the timing and the mechanics of Italian immigrants' participation in the electoral process in the United States and Argentina before World War II. Such

countries were the two major recipients of Italian expatriates in the decades of mass emigration. From 1881 to 1920, 4,655,430 Italians entered the United States and 1,808,850 landed in Argentina. These figures accounted respectively for 31.65 percent and 12.42 percent of Italy's total exodus in that period (Audenino P. and Tirabassi M., 2008 : 65, 69).

- 3 While scholarship has paid significant attention to a comparative analysis of the Italian experiences in the United States and Argentina (Klein H. S., 1983; Balán J., Gould J. and Halperin-Donghi T., 1983), the sphere of politics has not been investigated in depth. Even Samuel L. Baily (1999 : 198-200, 209-211), who has produced the most detailed study in the field, has devoted only few pages to political life, addressing the cases of Buenos Aires and New York only no later than the outbreak of World War I. This article aims at extending the perspective beyond these two cities and at broadening the time frame up to the beginning of World War II. It also focuses on institutional politics, a rather overlooked issue in research into the so-called Italian diaspora (Gabaccia D. R., 2000). In particular, this article examines electoral participation. Specifically, it highlights similarities and differences in the stimuli of turnout and outlines the diverse dynamics of voters' mobilization.

The Setting

- 4 The massive arrival of Italians in the United States and Argentina did not imply their prompt access to politics in their new nations. The political systems the immigrants found in their adoptive lands at the turn of the 20th century had not only differences but also analogies. The United States was a fully-fledged democracy based on popular consent. Conversely, Argentina was an oligarchic regime in the hands of a coalition comprising the landowners and cattle barons in the province of Buenos Aires as well as groups of local notables in the inland regions (Richmond D. W., 1992). Argentine elections were mainly opportunities to guarantee rotation in office among the leaders of the Creole establishment rather than means to enable citizens to participate in the decision-making process. Yet both the United States and Argentina were federal presidential republics with universal manhood suffrage.
- 5 Argentine eligible voters were to register at *comisiones empadronadoras*, but the local Creole elites manipulated the electoral lists. The rolls of the eligible voters tended to include only individuals who were likely to support the notables' designated candidates. Such voters also had the chance to cast their ballots several times at different polling stations on the same election day. Their recruitment rested with the *caudillos electorales* – or the *caudillos de barrio*, as they were called in large cities – who operated as brokers between the enfranchised male population and the local leaders (Gallo E., 1986 : 379-381). They relied on personal connections, political favors, the distribution of jobs with public administrations, and other forms of patronage to lure votes for their own hand-picked candidates. They also resorted to violence, intimidation and counterfeited naturalization papers for unqualified immigrants to control the elections (Álvarez J., 1913 : 51-56). Journalist Luigi Barzini (1902 : 56) reported that the number of ballots cast was systematically higher than the number of the eligible voters : « In a village, San Nicolas, 120 people went to the polls but there were 1,200 votes. (...) In Lomas de Zamora 400 voters meant 1,200 ballots. In Patagones a person counted 22 voters in a polling station but the votes were 1,153 ». The Creole

elites also prevented unfriendly but duly elected candidates from being seated. This was the case of Italian-born businessman Giovanni Carosella. After being elected to Buenos Aires' municipal council in 1896, he was compelled to take a humiliating exam to prove that he was fluent in Spanish. Having failed the test, he was barred from the council and a Creole lawyer replaced him (Gandolfo R., 1988 : 174-175).

- 6 These methods hardly differed from the schemes by which political bosses and machines rigged the elections in the United States (Allswang J. M., 1977). The frauds in the naturalization of Italian immigrants in St. Louis in 1902 became so notorious nationwide that the scandal prompted the passing of a stricter 1906 legislation that required literacy and character qualifications from foreigners seeking citizenship (Mormino G. R., 1986 : 174-176). The resemblance between the Argentine *caudillos electorales* and the U.S. machine chieftains did not go unnoticed to coeval commentators. Former Argentine President Carlos Enrique Pellegrini (1941 : 592), for instance, warned in 1901 that the national Parliament was home to a small « Tammany Hall », as the notorious organization of the Democratic Party in New York City was called.
- 7 The major difference between the two countries as for the impact of corrupt electoral methods was that the introduction of the Australian ballot in the 1880s turned voting into a secret procedure in the United States, while the people's choice at the polls remained an open practice in Argentina until 1912 (Rusk J. G., 1970). In addition, in Argentina, wherever the ruling elite was rural and had little control over urban politics, it usually operated to keep immigrants out of the electoral process by deterring naturalization. Unlike the industrial and business leaders in the United States, the Argentine landed *Criollos* – the term for Americans of Spanish stock – could hardly influence the newcomers' vote in the cities and, therefore, had no interest in stimulating the immigrants' incorporation into the political system (Solberg C., 1970 : 81-83; Shefter M., 1986 : 29-32).

Early Apathy

- 8 Italian newcomers were usually indifferent to politics at the beginning of their stay in Argentina and in the United States. Their pre-emigration experience helped restrain political mobilization in the adoptive countries.
- 9 The legacy of the protracted fragmentation of their native land into a multiplicity of states and foreign dominions up to 1861, when Italy eventually achieved national unification, interfered with the development of a political consciousness and a sense of the state that could stimulate turnout and the longing for elective offices. As late as 1911, Vincenzo Morello, a nationalistic journalist, complained that « the [Italian] state has no membership (...). Contemporary history is all about the state's enemies, but the state itself does not exist » (as quoted in Arcari P., 1911 : 54). Most emigrants thought of the state as a hostile entity that confined itself almost exclusively to levying taxes and enlisting young men into the army. Indeed, Italian newcomers to the United States and Argentina included a number of draft dodgers and tax evaders (Gabaccia D. R., 2000 : 8-9).
- 10 In addition, in Italy, universal manhood suffrage was introduced as late as 1912 and women were disenfranchised until 1946 (Piretti M. S., 1995 : 165-182, 327). Hardly a majority of the adult population voted. Many Italians were unaccustomed to the

franchise before expatriating and, consequently, were not interested in the suffrage once they settled in America because few knew what elections really meant. As a result, for instance, on the eve of World War I, the Italian-American turnout was as low as 4 percent in New York City, while registered voters of Italian birth in Buenos Aires were about 4,000 out of the city's roughly 300,000 Italian-born residents (LaGumina S. J., 1977 : 89; Bertagna F., 2009 : 37, 113).

- 11 Moreover, besides Italy's efforts to have her own nationals retain their native citizenship (Tintori G., 2009 : 745-751), a sojourner mentality discouraged many Italian migrants from applying for the citizenship of their adoptive countries. Traveling to Argentina in winter to find agricultural jobs in the *estancias* and returning to Italy for the harvest in summer or going to the United States in spring to get work in road and railways construction and coming back home in winter were not uncommon practices to Italians, at least until the passing of the U.S. restrictive legislation on immigration in the 1920s (Nelli H. S., 1983 : 43-47). Most Italian immigrants were concerned less with naturalization and politics than with making money. They looked forward to moving back to their motherland and enjoying there their earnings of the New World. The repatriation rate was roughly 51 percent for Argentina and about 54 percent for the United States between 1880 and 1902 (Klein H. S., 1983 : 319). It remained around 50 percent for American destinations in the following decades, with a high of 63 percent for the United States in the 1910s (Cerase F. P., 2001 : 115-117). Whether birds of passage or *golombrinas*, many Italians did not qualify for the franchise for lack of naturalization. As little as 15.7 percent of the immigrants from the *Meridione* and 25.3 percent of their northern fellow countrymen acquired U.S. citizenship between 1899 and 1910 (Nelli H. S., 1983 : 101). The naturalization rate even remained below 2 percent in Argentina between 1895 and 1914, although foreigners could become citizens after only two years of residence, as opposed to five years in the United States (Baily S. L., 1999 : 74; Daniels R., 2002 : 115). In particular, in 1915, as few as 121 Italian newcomers received their naturalization papers in Argentina (Foester R. F., 1924 : 273). In 1899, the leader and founder of the Socialist Party, Juan B. Justo, complained that roughly half a million Italian immigrants insisted on retaining their alien rank and refused to get involved in Argentine political life (1933 : 206). So had done journalist Giovanni Gandolfi (1896 : 3) three years earlier. As another newspaperman, Giuseppe Parisi, pointed out, naturalization was « a sacrilegious word » to most Italian newcomers to Argentina (1907 : 432). In the 19th century they stuck to their native citizenship to such an extent that they had their children baptized at their consulate in Buenos Aires to pretend that they were Italian-born (Rock D., 1999 : 49). Several immigrants avoided naturalization to claim special legal status and place themselves beyond Argentine jurisdiction under the protection of the Reign of Italy (Bertoni L. A., 2001).
- 12 Language also played a role in the dynamics of Italians' political adjustment. The failure to master English interfered with the immigrants' turnout in the United States. Learning the language of the adoptive country was key to follow political events and to get information about parties and candidates that were likely to stimulate voter participation. Moreover, a reasonable knowledge of English was also necessary to cope with the electoral bureaucracy. As an immigrant remarked, « since I couldn't speak English, most things, especially political events, were unknown to me » (as quoted in Rabboni R., 2008 : 451).

- 13 Spanish was more friendly to Italian-speaking immigrants. But, in Argentina, a sense of ethnic superiority added to the apolitical stance of the Italian newcomers, who usually despised a political system characterized by continuous frauds and violence and, therefore, shunned from the polls (Di Tella T. S., 1983 : 427-428). At the turn of the 20th century, *La Patria degli Italiani* – the most authoritative Italian-language newspaper in the country (Bertagna F., 2009 : 25-37) – took the lead in criticizing the Argentine parliamentary institutions, electoral process, and *caudillismo* to strengthen the immigrants' attachment to their motherland and prevent their naturalization (Dore G., 1964 : 240-251). Specifically, it contended that casting ballots was ineffectual and acquiring Argentine citizenship was thereby useless (Nascimbene M. C., 1987 : 406). Indeed, Italians generally disregarded elections in Argentina so long as the *caudillos electorales* and the Creole oligarchy retained an almost absolute control over politics. As late as 1920, an Italian delegate to the national convention of the Federación Agraria Argentina – a labor organization for rural tenants and sharecroppers – lashed out at his fellow ethnics who were « committed to political padronism, which in turn controls their decisions » (as quoted in De Silberstein C. F., 2001 : 91). Diplomats and consular officers added their voices to inhibit the newcomers' participation in politics. As early as 1867, the Italian minister of foreign affairs, Emilio Visconti Venosta (1867 : 414), had Victor Emmanuel II's subjects in Argentina advised to « stay away from any political involvement and take care of their personal interests and businesses only, so as to prevent their disagreeable behaviors from causing trouble to the King's Government ». In 1874, the secretary of the Italian legation in Buenos Aires, Eugenio Martin Lanciarez (Rock D., 2002 : 73), threatened immigrants with cancellation of their citizenship and withdrawal of diplomatic protection unless they discontinued their political activities in Argentina. A few years later, the consul in Rosario, Domenico Palumbo (1886 : 723), urged Italians to devote themselves to commerce and economic enterprises while abstaining from politics. In his opinion, this strategy was most advisable to prevent forms of retaliation by the Creole leaders who were likely to resent the Italians' involvement in public affairs as a challenge to their rule. Consequently, the Italian businessmen and the Creole elite reached a sort of informal compromise by which the former let the latter monopolize politics in exchange for a free hand that enabled the immigrants to make inroads into the Argentine economic establishment (Donghi T. H., 1987 : 214; Incisa di Camerana L., 1998 : 326-331).

Entry into Politics and Alternative Means to Shape Policies

- 14 Foreign birth interfered with many newcomers' career in politics. In the United States, for instance, Edward Corsi, a native of the village of Capestrano in the province of L'Aquila and the son of a member of the Italian Parliament, served in a number of appointive positions in the federal and New York State administrations, including commissioner of immigration during the presidencies of Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt (1931-34), but he suffered a devastating defeat when he ran for the U.S. Senate on the Republican ticket in 1938, twenty-one years after landing in New York City as an eleven-year-old orphan (Marazzi M., 2004 : 271-273).
- 15 Instead, the newcomers' children managed to pursue elective offices successfully. In the United States, in 1886, Francis B. Spinola became the first member of his ethnic group to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Anthony Caminetti followed suit in 1890 before Fiorello H. LaGuardia's 1916 successful bid marked Italian

Americans' coming of age in Congressional elections. William Paca was governor of Maryland from 1782 to 1785 and Andrew Houston Longino held the same position in Mississippi between 1900 and 1904. Scores of other Italian-American politicians won seats on the City Councils in several northeastern metropolises and other urban centers before the reforms of the Progressive Era repealed representation by wards, introduced elections at large, and cut the number of councilmen (LaGumina S. J., 2000 : 480-486).

- 16 In Argentina, Pellegrini, who served as president between 1890 and 1892, was the son of an Italian exile who had fled the Reign of Sardinia after the quelling of a 1821 liberal upsurge (Incisa di Camerana L., 1998 : 309-310). Besides Pellegrini, however, few Italian Argentines held elective offices in the early decades of the mass-immigration era. The exceptions included Juan M. Cafferata, the governor of the province of Santa Fe (1890-93), and Alfredo De Marchi, a member of the Municipal Council of Buenos Aires in 1893 and a representative to the national Congress from 1894 to 1914 (Sergi J. F., 1940 : 151; Baily S. L., 1999 : 199-200). A handful of Italian councilmen also served in Cordoba, Mendoza, Río Cuarto, and Rosario in the late 19th century, as provincial regulations generally let foreigners who had not renounced their native citizenship hold seats on municipal councils (Guadagnini G., 1892 : 78).
- 17 De Marchi's political campaigns played on the assumption that election to representative bodies at the local and federal levels was pivotal to let the entrepreneurs gain benefits for their professional activities (Nascimbene M. C., 1987 : 478-479). But Italian businessmen and landowners usually did not participate in Argentine politics (Incisa di Camerana L., 1998 : 277, 280-281). An attempt at establishing a « party of the Italian colony » in the 1880s was a failure (Franzina E., 2008 : 236-237). A direct and institutional presence in this sphere of public life was unnecessary to help Italian immigrants pursue their interests and secure legislation or government decisions to that purpose. Indeed, since the mid 19th century, even without enjoying the franchise, Italians had anyhow influenced political choices in their host society by means of informal lobbying through the mobilization of their ethnic press and associations to put pressure on the national and local administrations (Sábato H. and Cibotti E., 1990). As early as 1869 roughly ten thousand immigrants took to the streets in Buenos Aires to protest against the death of an Italian inmate in the city's prison (Incisa di Camerana L., 1998 : 271-272). Furthermore, in 1883 and 1884, thousands of Italians staged marches in the capital and signed petitions to support President Julio A. Roca's policy of lay education (Rock D., 2002 : 114). They, too, exploited what Hilda Sábato (1998) has defined the « politics of the streets », in contrast with voting, as the prevailing means to shape the decision-making process in Argentina.
- 18 Resort to networks of personal relations was another other-than-electoral way that enabled Italian businessmen to influence Argentine politics regardless of their citizenship. Ferdinando Maria Perrone offered a case in point. Perrone, an Italian entrepreneur from Genoa, set up connections with Roca, Argentina's strongman in the late 19th and the early 20th century. He committed the *Bomberos voluntarios de la Boca*, Italian voluntary firemen in Buenos Aires, to Roca during a 1890 revolt, recruited troops for him in 1898 when Argentina and Chile were on the verge of war, and raised funds to finance his electoral campaigns. In turn, Perrone secured government contracts for military supplies for himself and the companies he represented (Rugafiori P., 1992 : 38-125). His involvement in the 1890 crisis, however, was only the latest

example of the Italian immigrants' long tradition of participation in the internal struggles of their adoptive country. Newcomers from Italy also contributed to the overthrow of dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas in 1852 and fought for Bartolomé Mitre, who led a temporary secession of the province of Buenos Aires from the federal Republic, in the battle of Pavón in 1861 (Di Tella T. S., 1983 : 431-436; Rock D., 1999 : 34).

- 19 Business and politics interwove for Italian immigrants in the United States, too. But, in a country that had never been the setting of a military coup, Italian-American entrepreneurs were supposed to deliver the votes of their fellow ethnics at the polls, not to mobilize them as cannon fodder at times of political turmoil and revolutionary upsurges, with the only exception of the U.S. Civil War (Alduino F. W. and Coles D. J., 2007). The case of Generoso Pope is an illuminating example. Pope was the owner of *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* and other newspapers serving the Little Italies on the east coast. In the late 1920s and 1930s, he exploited the Italian-American votes he allegedly controlled by means of his chain of periodicals to become the most influential broker between the Democratic Party and his own national minority. These political connections also enabled Pope to consolidate his business as a construction contractor (Cannistraro P. V., 1985). Other entrepreneurs of Italian ancestry played a role in the electoral mobilization of their fellow ethnics in the United States, even if they were less effective than Pope. For instance, in 1906, Charles C. A. Badi, a successful banker and undertaker, established *L'Opinione*, the only Italian-American daily in Philadelphia, to strengthen his function as the main mediator who secured the support of the members of the city's Little Italy for the candidates of Republican Congressman William S. Vare's machine (Greene V. R., 1987 : 133-135). Later on, jewelry manufacturer Vincent Sorrentino purchased Providence's Italian-language weekly *Italian Echo* in 1940 to gain a means to bring out the Italian-American vote for the Republican Party in Rhode Island (Luconi S., 2004 : 100-105).

Political Mobilization

- 20 Many Italian newcomers who entered the participating electorate cast their ballots because they bartered the franchise for a job or other favors. Placed next to the bottom of the social ladder, tens of thousands of destitute newcomers from Italy regarded their right to vote as a sort of commodity that could be sold to the highest bidder to receive benefits. Therefore, the urban bosses of party machines in the United States and the *caudillos electorales* in Argentina played a similar role in stimulating Italian turnout by distributing political patronage in exchange for votes. A few of them were of Italian ancestry themselves. For instance, an immigrant from Naples who could hardly speak Spanish, Cayetano Ganghi, boasted that he controlled between 2,500 and 3,000 votes in turn-of-the-20th-century Buenos Aires (García Sebastiani M., 2010 : 104). Likewise, circa World War I, labor bosses James March (the anglicized name of Antonio Maggio) and Antonio F. Vaccarelli molded groups of Italian newcomers in New York City into voting blocs to the benefit of the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, respectively (LaGumina S. J., 1994). Vaccarelli operated in association with the International Longshoremen Association, a union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. His role, however, was quite an exception because some U.S. unions were usually non-partisan and others even rejected electoral participation. The anarcho-syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World, for example, shunned voting (Cartosio B., 2007). Vaccarelli's experience was also atypical since the American Federation of Labor

marginalized Italian workers and discriminated against them by a policy of high membership fees that discouraged unskilled newcomers of eastern- and southern-European extractions from joining the ranks of the labor movement (Collomp C., 1998).

- 21 It was only in the mid 1930s that unions began to get out the Italian vote in the United States. They urged workers, including those of Italian ancestry, to cast their ballots for incumbent President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936 to protect the labor legislation of the New Deal (Kennedy D. M., 1999 : 321-322). Indeed, the rise in Italian Americans' union membership paralleled an increase in their turnout and vote for Roosevelt in industrial cities such as Philadelphia (Luconi S., 2002 : 131-134). A few labor officials of Italian descent also took the lead in bringing their fellow ethnics to the polls. Specifically, Luigi Antonini, the first vice president of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, was a cofounder of the American Labor Party, an organization established in 1936 to give Socialist-oriented workers an opportunity to support Roosevelt without voting for the whole ticket of the more conservative Democratic Party (Tintori G., 2003).
- 22 Conversely, Argentine trade unions contributed to mobilizing Italian immigrants much earlier. Unlike their counterparts in the United States, such labor organizations as the Union General de Trabajo usually took a partisan stand and motivated their members to go to the polls (Baily S. L., 1970 : 123). Stimuli for electoral participation resulted from radical organizations, too. For example, the Socialist-inspired Vorwärt, which political exiles from Germany had established 1882, advised workers to take a non-revolutionary and parliamentary road. It urged the naturalization of both German and Italian newcomers to turn immigrants into a voting bloc (Baily S. L., 1967 : 13-14). On the other hand, Italian Socialists generally abstained in the United States because they thought that elections under a bourgeois regime were a fraud to the detriment of the working class (Vezzosi E., 1991 : 103-105, 179-180, 183-184, 197).
- 23 The 1912 Sáenz Peña electoral reform – providing for secret and compulsory suffrage for adult male citizens in an effort to nationalize the masses – saw the completion of the political mobilization of the second generation of Italian Argentines (Baily S. L., 1999 : 200). The new measure did not affect the numerous immigrants who stuck to their Italian nationality (Devoto F. J., 2006 : 317-318). In addition, applicants for naturalization active in the labor movement were often disqualified as public officials feared that they would vote for the Socialist Party (Solberg C., 1970 : 124-125). The Argentine government distrusted especially Italian immigrants because they included many subversives (Ostuni M. R., 1985). For instance, anarchists from Italy such as Errico Malatesta, Ettore Mattei, and Pietro Gori played a key role in organizing workers in Argentina between the 1880s and the turn of the 20th century (Baer J. A., 2015 : 5, 10, 33, 42, 45-47, 189).
- 24 Frightening radicals – such as Carlo Tresca, Anthony Capraro and Luigi Galleani, let alone the notorious Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, whose 1927 electrocution on charges of double murder during a 1920 robbery became an international cause célèbre – operated in the U.S. communities, too. However, as they usually advocated the boycott of elections, their presence in the Little Italies did not encourage restrictions on the naturalized immigrants' suffrage. Federal authorities felt satisfied with incarcerating and deporting the subversives, especially in the wake of the Red Scare (1919-20), arising from fears that a Bolshevik-like revolution could storm the United States (Temkin M., 2009; Bencivenni M., 2011).

- 25 Turning the vote into a duty forced most Argentine citizens of Italian extraction to cast their ballots, contributing to an increase in turnout from 21 percent to 69 percent in the wake of the new provision (Carmagnani M., 1976 : 509). In 1912, even *La Patria degli Italiani* urged its readers to go to the polls (Dore G., 1964 : 252). The Sáenz Peña Law also strengthened the quid pro quo dynamics of machine politics and its patron-client mechanics by which especially the Radical Party of President Hipólito Yrigoyen (1916-22, 1928-30) stimulated voter participation among the lower classes. In particular, the Radical Party drew on government patronage to expand the pre-existing network of the *caudillos de barrio* so as to control the electoral process, although the introduction of the secret ballot ended the open purchase of votes (Rock D., 1972).
- 26 Conversely, most Italian Americans deserted the polls in the United States up to the late 1920s. They joined the participating electorate following the ethnic appeal of Alfred Smith's 1928 campaign for the White House on the Democratic ticket. A Catholic of Irish ancestry, Smith was the first presidential candidate of either major party who was not a Protestant of Anglo-Saxon ancestry (Slayton R. A., 2001 : 324-326). In view of his ethno-religious characteristics, many theretofore inactive Italian-American potential voters identified themselves with Smith and went to the polls for the first time to support his presidential bid. In the subsequent years, the protest vote against the Republican Party – which was held responsible for the economic crisis of the 1930s – boosted the turnout in the Little Italies, and the New Deal marked the climax of the Italians' entry into U.S. politics. For example, the Italian-American electoral participation rose by 21 percent in Philadelphia, 43.4 percent in Boston, and 54 percent in Pittsburgh between 1924 and 1928. It further increased respectively by 70 percent, 80.4 percent and 287.6 percent from 1930 to 1940 (Gamm G. H., 1989 : 82; Luconi S., 2002 : 241, 246). Their fellow ethnics' electoral mobilization also resulted in greater political accomplishments for Italian-American political leaders. For instance, mayors of Italian extraction ruled three among the largest cities in the country in the mid 1930s and early 1940s : Angelo Rossi in San Francisco (1931-44), Fiorello H. La Guardia in New York (1934-45), and Robert Maestri in New Orleans (1936-44) (Pretelli M., 2011 : 104-105).

Conclusion

- 27 Pellegrini's 1890 election to the presidency marked an early political achievement for Italian Argentines. It had no analogue for their fellow ethnics in the United States, where no candidate of Italian descent has heretofore managed to become president or vice president in the United States. This dissimilar outcome was hardly a consequence of the different dynamics of political mobilization in the two countries. Rather, it resulted from the diverse environments immigrants found at the time of their mass arrival.
- 28 Both Argentina and the United States revealed anti-Italian prejudices. However, ethnic discrimination was stronger in the latter locale than in the former (Scarzanella E., 1999; Connell W. J. and Gardaphe F., 2010). When the bulk of Italian newcomers reached the United States in the late 19th century, an Anglo-Saxon and Protestant establishment was already entrenched. Instead, Italians landed in Catholic Argentina while this society was still in the making and were able to play a leading role in the process of nation building. They not only partook in the domestic struggles of the second half of the 19th century. They also brought capital and skills that contributed to Argentina's

economic development in both agriculture and industry (Scarzanella E., 1983). Accordingly, Italians secured a fairly smooth acceptance by the host society (Audenino P. and Tirabassi M., 2008 : 63). A French traveler, François Castre, observed in 1909 that « after a generation, sometimes before, they [were] no more Italians » (as quoted in Daughton J. P., 2008 : 849) Consequently, adjustment was easier in Argentina not only in the economic and social spheres, as Samuel L. Baily (1999) has demonstrated for Buenos Aires in contrast to New York City, but also in electoral politics, at least when Italian immigrants pursued such opportunities.

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RÉSUMÉS

Cet article présente une analyse comparative de l'ajustement politique des migrants italiens aux États-Unis et en Argentine avant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, en mettant l'accent sur les temporalités et les mécanismes de leur participation au processus électoral. Il souligne que l'apathie politique caractérisa l'expérience des nouveaux arrivants au début de leur séjour dans les deux pays, mais les Italo-Argentins finalement se mobilisèrent plus tôt que leurs compatriotes aux États-Unis. Les syndicats et la loi Sáenz Peña, qui rendit le vote obligatoire en 1912, stimula la participation électorale en Argentine au début du vingtième siècle. Au contraire, aux États-Unis, les Italo-Américains suivirent cette conduite seulement à la fin des années 1920 et au début des années 1930. L'article suggère aussi que l'ajustement politique fut plus facile en Argentine qu'aux États-Unis.

This article offers a comparative analysis of Italian immigrants' political adjustment in the United States and Argentina before World War II, focusing in particular on the timing and dynamics of their participation in the electoral process. It argues that apathy shaped the newcomers' political experience at the beginning of their stay in both countries, but Italian Argentines eventually mobilized earlier than their fellow ethnics in the United States. Labor unions and the 1912 Sáenz Peña Law, providing for mandatory vote in 1912, stimulated turnout in Argentina in the early 20th century. Conversely, Italian Americans in the United States followed suit only in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The article also suggests that political adjustment was easier in Argentina than in the United States.

Este artículo presenta un análisis comparada de la adaptación política de inmigrantes italianos en los Estados Unidos y en la Argentina antes de la segunda guerra mundial, concentrándose sobre todo en el momento y la dinámica de su participación en el proceso electoral. Argumenta que la apatía política caracterizó la experiencia de los recién llegados al comienzo de su estancia en ambos países, pero al final los ítaloargentinos se movilizaron más temprano que sus compatriotas en los Estados Unidos. Los sindicatos y la ley Sáenz Peña, que estableció el voto obligatorio en 1912, estimularon la afluencia electoral en la Argentina a principios del siglo XX. Al contrario, los italoestadounidenses siguieron su ejemplo solamente a finales de los años veinte y al principio de los años treinta. El artículo sugiere también que la adaptación política fue más fácil en Argentina que en los Estados Unidos.

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Palabras claves : inmigrantes italianos, movilización electoral, experiencia política, Estados Unidos, Argentina, 1861-1940

Keywords : Italian immigrants, electoral mobilization, political experience, United States, Argentina, 1861-1940

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