The eyes of others are the mirrors in which
we learn our identities (Hegel)

This paper has three aims. The first is to examine the experiences
and the spatial distribution of migrants from the Apennine mountain
communities of northern Tuscany (Italy) to Western Australia during
the inter-war period, in order to ascertain their expectations and
objectives, and, consequently, to see whether they tended either to
cluster in a specific number of areas or not. The second objective is
to determine whether such migrants followed work patterns related
to their original skills or whether they adjusted to the job market in
Western Australia regardless of their skills. Thirdly, the paper
investigates the place of Tuscan migrants within the host community
and their relationship with the Anglo-Australian milieu, in particular
with regard to the Western Australian mining areas of the 1930s.
The aim is to verify whether forms of racism towards Tuscan and
Italian migrants were engendered by their particular work patterns.

Within migration research, many studies focus on mobile groups
and individuals and their relationships to the host economy. Research
has conceived of the migrant variously as a labourer, as an object of
economic modernization (Lowry, 1966; Zelinsky, 1971) or as a victim
of transformations within a local economy (Shreshtha, 1988).
Labouring migrants move in response to economic signals, often
becoming disenfranchised as farmers as they migrate in search of a
livelihood towards urban and/or industrial 'cash economy' (Borrie,
1954; Burawoy, 1976; Shreshtha, 1988). Little, indeed, has been written with respect
to the impact in the labour force.

The paper will first examine the geographic distribution of
migrants from Tuscany within the urban areas of Perth in relation to
the skills brought with them from Italy and the activities performed
in the host country. Subsequently, it will analyse their presence in
rural Western Australia and in the mining areas of the state. In
particular, the study will focus upon a number of aspects of the (self)
segregation of Tuscan migrants within the mining environment,
according to their patterns of 'temporary' migration, which have led
to social frictions with the Anglo-Australian community and its labour
force.

**Introduction and Methodology**

Due to the discovery of gold in the Western Australian goldfields
around the turn of the century, Western Australia became the main
destination for the relatively small Italian migration to Australia.
While in 1891 only 36 Italians were officially listed as living in W.A.,
in 1921 there were still not more than 2,000 (Borrie, 1954). These
low figures can be explained by the enormous distance between Italy
and Australia which required twice the amount of time necessary to
reach the United States and the Latin American destinations that
were more common for the Italian migratory flow. This also explains the
pioneering aspect of this early stage of Italian migration in
Australia. In 1921, however, the United States immigration policy
became stricter, establishing quota systems which limited the total
intake of Italian immigrants. As a consequence Australia became a
more favourable destination for Italian migrants no longer permitted
to enter the United States (MacDonald, 1970: 251).

The period covered by this paper is from 1921 to 1939,
that is from the first restricted immigration entry in the United
States to the outbreak of WW II. It represents the 'intermediate' period
of the Italian migratory flow to Australia, between the pioneering
stage (1860-1921) and the planned mass migration of Italians to
Australia, after WW I to the mid-1960s. This migration was based
on informal networks established by the 'pioneers' of the earlier
period (Gentilli, 1983), and it is fundamental to an understanding of
the mass settlement of Italians in Australia after WW II.

This paper has drawn upon the rich store of information in the
Australian Archives of WA, where there is extensive documentation
related to migration, such as the naturalisation files of foreign
residents from 1900 to the mid 1960s. This has made it possible to
collect information on about 300 people of Tuscan origin who arrived
in Western Australia between 1921 and 1939. These records — which
provide details such as date and place of birth, occupation in Italy,
date of entry into Australia, occupation and place of residence in
WA — have been computer data-based in order to elaborate migratory
patterns, occupational status and mobility. For this reason the sources
have proved invaluable, and may well also provide the basis for
other purposes and in relation to other ethnic groups.

**From Tuscany to Western Australia**

The geographic and temporal setting of the migratory flow of this
study originated within the most remote Central Italian Apennine
communities of Tuscany at the beginning of the nineteenth century
and continued in Western Australia, bearing testimony to a century-
long search for a living. Agricultural resources in the Tuscan
communities of origin were never entirely sufficient to support the
population. The soil was poor and agricultural holdings were
extremely fragmented (Rombai, 1988). The first type of Italian
migration flow developed in the mountain communities, both in the
Alps — which form an arc that borders the country — and in the
northern Apennine ridges, which cross the whole peninsula like a
backbone. Some migrated in winter — when agricultural work was
low — to France and also to England (Briganti, 1993), and returned
to village communities in summer to work their own fields. From the
1860s such migrants began to cross the Atlantic Ocean with South
America as their destination, where they worked mainly as
farmhands. They also worked in a number of other countries on
several continents and made intermittent trips home. This form of
temporary migration was seen as a necessary sacrifice to ensure the
survival of the family and the continued ownership of the small
agricultural properties in the country of origin. These migrants never
considered emigration as a separation from the community but rather
a means of improving the survival of the community (Dada’, 1994).

As stated earlier, the American entry restrictions began to produce
effects in the mid-1920s. Until the Australian entry restrictions of
1928, Italians experienced no difficulty entering this country:
there were no visa requirements and, with a sponsor, they could land free
of charge (O’Connor, 1996:3). This ease of entry probably
immigration patterns of contract workers. Between August 1926 and
June 1927, 2,356 Italians were registered on arrival in Western
Australia (Bosworth, 1993: 72). Many among these were Tuscan.

Due to the distance of Australia from Italy, they had to
undertake a break with their family and community. Although
the reasons for Tuscan migrants to move to Western Australia
in the inter-war period were various (Price, 1963: 125), there was one common goal: migrants wanted to achieve the level of well-being that they had perceived as possible from the experience of the first Italian migrants who came as pioneers to Australia at the turn of the century.

Analysis of the data related to the migrants from the Tuscan areas in Western Australia shows that after 1924 there is a steady increase in migration, which reaches its peak in 1927, then a marked decrease during the period 1930-33, due to economic and international factors, and a rise again between 1937 and 1939. A gender analysis of the figures shows that migrants in the 1920s were mainly men. A confirmation of these figures is reflected also in the total intake of Italian migrants recorded by other Australian scholars (Price, 1963: 111; Macdonald, 1970). In the latter years of the 1930s, on the other hand, women and minors are in the majority (Boncompagni, 1998: 398), due to the tendency of Italian and Tuscan males to bring their wives and partners out several years after their arrival, particularly after the depression years following 1930 (Borrie, 1954: 53). While the settlements and work patterns of Tuscan migrants are variable until the mid-1930s due to the prevalence of male workers continuously in search for jobs, with the arrival of women and children the community took on more permanent characteristics (Price, 1963: 113). Hence, the increase in the number of naturalizations during the late 1930s can be considered as a response to becoming more socially and culturally assimilated, as the arrival of women and children confirms.

Tuscan migrants in this period performed various jobs according to their areas of destination. They were mainly farmers or labourers, thus following the work pattern of Italians from other areas of origin (Cresciani, 1983: 312 and O’Connor, 1996: 115). In the late 1920s and 1930s, the foci of Tuscan settlements in Western Australia were the urban areas of Perth, the south-western rural corner of the state and the mining towns of the goldfields.

**Tuscan in Perth**

Tuscan migrants in the Perth metropolitan area tended to concentrate in the same northern inner-city suburbs to which Italians from other regions had moved during the same years. In addition, there was a higher concentration of Tuscan migrants in the Perth suburbs of Osborne Park and Wanneroo, as others have previously confirmed (Pascoe & Bertola, 1985: 31), and in the nearby hills of Karragullen (east of the city of Perth). In the late 1920s and 1930s, these were the areas where most of the market gardening for the urban supply of fresh fruit and vegetables was located. If we look at work patterns, we notice that the highest proportion in the range of activities performed by Tuscan is represented, even in the outer metropolitan areas, by market gardening and farming, followed by labouring, the latter category including factory workers and bricklayers (Table 1). “When some agricultural blocks, that have been subdivided for the Empire land Settlement Scheme at Balcatta (suburb next to Osborne Park) and Wanneroo, were vacated by their first British migrants occupiers, they were made available to other settlers. This was an exceptional opportunity that several Italian and Yugoslav migrants could not miss.” (Gentilli, 1983: 88).

Besides the presence of a notable number of housewives, there was also a markedly high percentage of entrepreneurs and traders. These occupations were completely absent from the skills that Tuscan migrants had brought with them from their communities (Table 2). Many of them relocated to an urban environment and started independent activities, often linked to services for the Italian community, such as running shops, delicatessens, restaurants and boarding houses.

The reason for the gravitation of migrants from the Tuscan mountain communities into this restricted range of activities in Australia is linked to the traditional peasant desire for independence, since the large majority of them had come from a peasant background. Many could count on a small amount of capital that they had accumulated over a few years from working long hours in heavy manual labour, such as in the woodcutting and mining industries in remote areas of Western Australia. Preference was therefore given to new activities which could be undertaken in urban and suburban areas (Boncompagni, 1998: 401), partly explaining the gradual increase in Perth-bound migrants in the mid-1930s. Market gardening and small family-run businesses were ideally suited to supply this sense of security. Some reasons lay also in the nature of these activities, which made it unnecessary for the migrants to participate in the Australian environment, as they generally avoided competition with organized labour (Price, 1963). This modus operandi can also be seen in the mining area and will be examined in detail later in this paper.

The spatial concentration of Tuscan farmers shows that they tended to cluster by community of origin. Their settlement in rural areas of Perth confirms that they came from a very limited range of Tuscan mountain communities. Although there were about thirty different communities of origin, Table 3 shows how in some rural suburban areas of Perth, only three villages of origin of the farmers (Bagni Lucca, Capannori and Casola Lunigiana) are represented.

For many immigrants the choice of occupational location was not a matter of great moment: they simply came to join a friend or a relative in Australia and followed the employment example of those who had preceded them (Price, 1963: 143). One of the interviewees stated that he joined his father (who he had not seen for a few years) in Western Australia in 1927, first working as farm hand in Osborne Park and later moving to the remote gold town of Wiluna to work in the mines.

In many cases, in fact, migrants served a possible preliminary period as relatively unskilled labourers such as farm-hands, fruit-pickers and cleaners. No matter where they settled after their arrival (urban, rural or remote areas of Western Australia), a consistent number remained in the industries in which they were initially employed, advancing from unskilled to skilled workers, such as farmers, builders, timber contractors and miners.

**Tuscan in rural areas of Western Australia**

Tuscan migrants in rural districts of Western Australia tended to concentrate in areas where the environment was favourable to their limited range of occupations, such as farming and timber-cutting. The farming belt and the wood-cutting district are mainly concentrated in the south west of the State. Migrants from Tuscany therefore gravitated in notable numbers to the rural districts of Harvey (farming and wood-cutting), Bunbury (services) and Manjimup (farming and wood-cutting). As others have indicated with respect to the settlement of Italians in general in Western Australia during the inter-war period (Packer, 1947: 72 and Gillgren, 1997: 74), Tuscan also moved into the south-west timber industry, where they indubitably played a valuable economic role in providing timber and wood for the mines.

Tuscans classified as farmers in the rural districts were prevalent, but this category included also woodcutters (Table 1). In addition, there is a consistent number of labourers, a category which could have also included general workers employed in the wood-line. The above factor indicates that the figures about activities performed by Tuscan in the rural areas could be slightly doubtful and may possibly hide a relevant number of workers who were employed within the mining industry.

Conversely, the absence of Italian migrants engaged in
Table 1
Professional distribution of Migrants from Tuscany to Western Australia (Perth, rural W.A. and mining areas),
1921–1939 (original Source calculated by the Author)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perth Metro Area</th>
<th>Rural W.A.</th>
<th>Mining Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmers (incl. Woodcutters)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers (incl. Bricklayers)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services (incl. Cooks, Waiters. etc.)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miners</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurs</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traders (incl. Restauranters)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewives</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>185</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Professional Distribution of Migrants from Tuscany to Western Australia, 1921–1939
(origin Source calculated by the Author).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>in Italy</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>in Australia</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmers (incl. Woodcutters)</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers (incl. Bricklayers)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services (incl. Cooks, Waiters. Etc.)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miners</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traders (incl. Restauranters)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewives/Minors</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>304</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td><strong>304</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
Spatial concentration of Farmers (>2 per Town per single Community of origin) in rural areas of Perth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Karragullen</th>
<th>Osborne Park/N. Perth</th>
<th>Upper Swan</th>
<th>Wanneroo</th>
<th>Balcatta</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bagni Lucca</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capannori</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casola Lunigiana</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

sheep and cattle grazing requires an explanation. By the time Italians began to enter Australia in any numbers, most of the good pastoral land was already occupied (Price, 1963: 147) and grazing properties required significant capital to buy and maintain. Italians, including Tuscans – who had been shepherds and grazers in the Apennine communities – realized that they were unlikely to either obtain their own properties or to quickly accumulate the money in this area that they could get otherwise through working long hours in heavy manual activities such as woodcutting and mining. In addition, station life, with its long periods of loneliness, was a far cry from the social conditions of the places of origin of Italians. Market gardening, but also any labouring activity in an urban or semi-rural environment, permitted a way of life akin to the kind of communities in which they had grown up.

It can be inferred that Tuscan and Italian migrants in general liked an active community and social life, similar to the one they had experienced in their area of origin, and, as a consequence, it could be assumed that they preferred to avoid employment in the mining towns of the remote inland of Western Australia. Figures, however, show that the presence of Italian, and in particular Tuscan migrants, was notable in the goldfields in the 1920s and 1930s, and that more than 60 per cent were in fact directly involved in the mining industry (Table 1).

As noted above, migrants were keenly motivated towards employment that provided immediate economic reward. It was not the quality (nor, in many cases, the safety) of the activity that was taken into consideration, but rather the potential to make money more quickly in this employment than in any other activity available in Australia during the inter-war period. It is vital to understand this concept in order to contextualise the attitude of
'temporary' migration held by Tuscan workers, and to understand their search for a living abroad as a resource to accumulate, in the shortest possible time, enough money to return home and settle there with more financial comfort they had before their departure.

This fact explains the relatively young age of migrants, the large majority of non-married males, their clustering among friends belonging to the same community of origin, as well as their adaptability in accepting any jobs regardless of their skills.

Tuscans in the mining areas of Western Australia

A marked concentration of Tuscan migrants is recorded in the towns of Cue, Leonora, Kalgoorlie and Wiluna, all of which had a large percentage of foreign workers who were either single or whose wives and children still lived in the country of origin (Longton, 1997: 128). In fact, if we look at the sex ratio amongst Tuscanians in mining areas and we compare it to that of Italian migrants in general in the same areas (as from Pascoe & Bertola, 1985: 30), we can observe a similar ratio for all four towns (Table 4).

The above chart validates the reliability of the records collected on Tuscan migrants and the confirmation of a goldfields' population with a large majority of male workers. Their presence, although prolonged for a few years, was always temporary and aimed at accumulating quick earnings to re-invest in either the community of origin or in other geographical, and often urban, areas of Australia. As suggested by Gentilli, they undertook the long journey from the mountain communities of Central Italy to the harsh outback of the mining towns because they did not want to expose their wives (if married) and children to the hardship and uncertainties they expected to meet (Gentilli, 1983: 77).

In addition, Table 5 shows how the mining activity performed by Tuscanians in the goldfields did not have any similar precedent in Italy. All the migrants employed as miners were farmers and labourers. Unlike the experience of those who worked in farming in Western Australia, whose professional background was, for the large majority, farming, Tuscan miners had a totally different professional background.

The above figures confirm both that these migrants chose woodcutting or mining as a way to facilitate the fast accumulation of money and also as a 'temporary' working situation with a view to the inter-war period (Pascoe & Bertola, 1985: 13).

On the whole, males would tend to defer marriage and to have children only when they were sure of their economic conditions. In addition, males tended to defer marriage due to the small size of Italian settlements worked against the creation of a middle class intellectual elite which could express the range of ideas that were needed in the working class communities. As shown by Pascoe & Bertola, 1985: 30), we can observe a marked concentration of Tuscan white collar workers employed in the mining areas of Western Australia.

In addition, Table 5 shows how the mining activity performed by Tuscanians in the goldfields did not have any similar precedent in Italy. All the migrants employed as miners were farmers and labourers. Unlike the experience of those who worked in farming in Western Australia, whose professional background was, for the large majority, farming, Tuscan miners had a totally different professional background.

In the latter years of the 1930s, the major component of arrivals in Australia from Tuscany is represented by women and children (Price, 1963). The change in the migratory pattern was probably due to external factors, such as the growing political instability of the Fascist regime in Italy and the stricter entry conditions adopted by the Australian immigration authorities (Macdonald, 1970: 272). In response to this Federal policy, many Tuscan migrants were induced to sponsor their families to join them in Australia and, if possible, to become naturalized. On the whole, males would tend to defer naturalization until they had finally established their homes in Australia (Berrie, 1954: 123). With the arrival of their families, the Tuscan group took on more permanent characteristics as did the Italian one in general, becoming the stepping stone of Italian post-war mass migration.

While these latter changes took place only in the late 1930s, this paper aims to focus also on the place of Tuscan miners within the hosting mining community and on their relationship with the wider Anglo-Australian environment.

Italians had begun to arrive in significant numbers in the Western Australian goldfields at the turn of the century, when the gold mining industry was passing into a period of consolidation and rationalisation. In order to make new large capital investments, gold companies sought to cut labour costs and to increase productivity. Italian migrants, in desperate search for highly paid labour within their pattern of 'temporary' employment, were perfectly suited to this new labour trend. The main assets that this class of immigrants brought to Western Australia were all labour related: more than specific skills, they were willing to work harder and for lower wages than the local working class, and they exhibited the requisite predisposition to flexibility to accommodate fluctuations in employers' needs (Portes & Boereez, 1996: 166).

Italian workers in the mines not only obtained employment—always through intermediaries and third men—at the expense of local labour, but were also used in the process of cutting costs and were employed to break strikes over conditions and piece rates (Bertola, 1993: 7). The Western Australian Labour Party drew attention to this situation on a number of occasions, lodging a petition—which was rejected—to the Federal government in 1906 to extend the Immigration Restriction Act, then applicable to coloured workers, also to Italians (Cresciani, 1983: 320-321).

The number of Italians and other Southern Europeans in the mines had increased throughout the 1910s, representing up to 22.65 per cent of the underground workforce by 1913 (Bertola, 1993: 8).

Although the recession hit the mining industry in the 1920s and the number of miners fell from a pre-war figure of 13,020 in 1913 to a low of 3,766 in 1928, by January 1934, on the eve of the riots in Kalgoorlie, Italians and Yugoslavs still made up 18.37 per cent of the underground workforce in Kalgoorlie and 41.33% in the associated mines (figures from Bertola, 1998: 14-15). As a consequence, rising unemployment among Anglo-Australians in the late 1920s had drawn more attention to the presence of Southern Europeans, inciting the former ones to write to the local press calling for restrictions in Southern European immigration, as happened also in the woodcutting industry (Gill gren, 1997: 75 and 76).

Italians, as well as Tuscanians, had arrived in Kalgoorlie and Boulder during the early 1920s in increased numbers, a presence reflected in the proliferation of their neighbourhood and local stores, hotels and boarding houses (Pascoe & Bertola, 1985: 22). In 1933, there were 133 Italians in Boulder and 132 in Kalgoorlie (Packer, 1947: 40-41), while in Wiluna there were about 250 (Longton, 1997: 127).

The general aim of Italian miners in the goldfields was, again, to make money as quickly as possible, and the higher wages paid in the remote mining areas were perfectly suited to this aim. The relatively small size of Italian settlements worked against the creation of political organizations with a large following. Many migrants, accustomed to staying in any one remote place only for short periods of time, had a 'temporary' attitude to the local working community. This mitigated against their taking part in social, political and union activities. The economic conditions of dire poverty of most Italians must also be borne in mind; their long working hours did not allow for much time to engage in any other activities. The effort of keeping themselves just above the "bread line" (Cresciani, 1980: 3), deterred many of them from any organized attempt to keep abreast of politics or to become active in political parties and unions.

Segregation

In addition, as is shown by the composition of occupational background in Table 5, Tuscanians were often illiterate peasants and labourers: there was no articulate middle class, no intellectual elite which could express the range of ideas that
might give raise to positive political or union action. On the whole, Italian workers preferred to congregate with people of the same community of origin, with whom they shared common heritage and culture. This tendency to form group settlements, also within the highly unionized Anglo-Australian environment of the mining town of Boulder-Kalgoorlie, worked against rapid assimilation, which tended to be negligible anyway amongst the first generation of migrants (Borrie, 1954: 63). This devotion of first-generation Italians and Tuscan migrants to the narrow circle of the home and community of origin explains their limited interest in social activities and their apathy towards political affairs. As stated earlier and confirmed by the authoritative work of Borrie (Borrie, 1954), migration chains, which operated after 1921, suggest the movement of groups, including relatives and friends, to be guided by economic and not political reasons. Although there are a few records of Fascist (Fabiano, 1983: 234) and anti-fascist sympathies (Cresciani, 1979: 151 and Missori, 1982: 319) amongst Italian and also Tuscan migrants (O’Connor, 1996: pag. 147 and 153), the large majority of them was driven by economic needs and displayed little interest in politics (Pecout, 1990: 727 and 738), the local Anglo-Australian society or labour organization. The records collected and set out in Table 6 show the presence of Tuscan migrants in the mining areas and their composition with reference to five main Apennine communities, even if their areas of origin in Tuscany cover about thirty different administrative centres. This provides us with context to explain the evident spatial segregation of Tuscan migrants within the host mining community, with particular regard to Wiluna, where the presence of Tuscan migrants was higher than average.

The spatial segregation of first-generation Tuscan migrants was not the result of any conscious withdrawal from the Australian environment, but due rather to the nature of their economic activity. Tuscan migrants in particular and Italians in general, already culturally distinct and isolated, as well as relatively powerless and dependent upon their work, became the object of growing ill-will. It is within this increasingly hostile environment that in January 1934 the Kalgoorlie riots occurred. An Italian bartender accidentally killed a local Anglo-Australian sports hero. This accident sparked the resentment of many Anglo-Australian miners against the Italians residing in Kalgoorlie, culminating in two days of riots. A raging crowd of miners devastated and burnt many shops and private dwellings belonging to Italians and other Southern Europeans in Boulder and Kalgoorlie, causing hundreds of them to find shelter in the surrounding countryside (Cresciani, 1983: 339). Notwithstanding the condemnation of this event by the media, the riots did not modify the attitude of public opinion toward Italians in general. In the 1930s the Anglo-Australian community maintained this perception of the cultural inferiority of Italians which owed much to longer-term racial conceptions. These perceptions were prejudices, which, in turn, were reinforced by the lifestyle of the migrants, and “by their apparent willingness to be used in efforts to drive down wages and conditions, and by their inability to transcend the boundaries that separated them from the host culture” (Bertola, 1993: 8-9). In addition, the social stereotype of the young Italian man in Western Australia during the inter-war era was not a salutary one: he was suspected of ‘preying upon destitute women’, while magistrates fulminated against him for carrying knives (Pascoe & Bertola, 1985: 32).

**Conclusions**

Anti-Italian feelings were not merely an aspect of the Western Australian mining environment. This image of Italians comes from a century-long “Italophobia” (Harney, 1985: 9) which encouraged stereotypes about race, culture and level of trustworthiness, and which may well have its roots in England during the Middle Ages. Hence, a general antipathy towards Italians may be noted which was partly based on racial and cultural comparisons inferring inferiority and which was inextricably bound with questions...
of Anglo-centricism and with the relations between employers and labour force in the mining community. As some have clearly indicated, racism was enmeshed with what are termed the social relations of productions (Bertola, 1998: 21).

As this paper outlines, Tuscan migrants in Western Australia tended to concentrate in a few urban and mining areas; they found employment within a restricted number of activities with the specific aim of a quick accumulation of capital to take back to their community of origin. This trend has certainly influenced their social and working role within the host community and explains the limited interaction between them and the Anglo-Celtic community, in such a way as to spark and exacerbate forms of social rejection by the host society.

### References


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