THE ANGELO Family

The Angelino family has five children and a sixth on the way. The children are aged 14 (girl), 12 (boy), 10 (girl), 7 (boy), and 6 (girl). They all attend a nearby parochial school. Mr. Angelino owns a butcher shop that had been his father's and that was begun by his grandfather, who immigrated from Italy in 1904. The butcher shop at one time had living quarters upstairs for the family, but about 10 years ago they moved into a large, Victorian-style house about a block away.

Mr. Angelino's youngest brother once came back from college with ideas about expanding the business and marketing the family's secret recipe for Italian sausage, but Mr. Angelino (the oldest son) decided against it because it would take too much time away from the family. He is fond of saying, “We ain’t rich, but we got a roof over our heads, food in our bellies, and each other. What more could we want?” This youngest brother is the only one in the family with a college education and is also the only one who scandalized the family by marrying a non-Catholic.

Mr. Angelino uses his little brother as an example of the detrimental effects of “too much education.”

Both Mr. and Mrs. Angelino come from large families; most of their brothers and sisters still live in the "little Italy" section of this large Eastern city. The grandparents are all dead with the exception of Mrs. Angelino's mother (Mama). She lives in the home with them and is very frail. One of Mrs. Angelino's brothers or sisters is sure to stop by nearly every day bringing children, flowers, and/or food, for a "visit with Mama." They often take Mama for drives or to their homes for short visits—depending on her health—and help with her basic care.

Life with the Angelinos can be described as a kind of happy chaos. Kids are always running in and out of the butcher shop, where the older brothers and male cousins are often assigned small tasks in return for a piece of salami or some other treat. The old house is always full of children—siblings and cousins—from teenagers to toddlers. Children are pretty much indulged until they reach age 9 or 10, at which time they are expected to begin taking responsibility, which is divided strictly along traditional sex-role lines. Childcare, cooking, and cleaning are accomplished by the women: older sisters or cousins, aunts or mothers. Evening meals are a social event. There is virtually always at least one extended family member or friend at the table, and everyone talks about the events of the day—sometimes all at once—except when Mr. Angelino has something to say, whereupon everyone stops to listen. Mr. Angelino is obviously a very affectionate father, but he expects his word to be obeyed. Bedtimes, rules about talking at the table, curfews, and other rules are strictly enforced. This situation is beginning to cause conflict with the oldest daughter, who wants to date and spend more time with her friends from school. Mrs. Angelino is often sympathetic to her children's requests, but her husband has the final say.

All in all, life in the Angelino home is warm, close, and harmonious. Mrs. Angelino, as she approaches her eighth month of pregnancy with this last "surprise" child, shares her contentment with her priest: "I don't know what I have done to deserve so many blessings from the Good Lord."

THE TAYLOR FAMILY

Mr. and Mrs. Taylor have been married for two years; she is expecting their first child. Mr. Taylor is the youngest partner in a prestigious law firm in this Midwestern city. Everybody considers him upwardly mobile and thinks it is phenomenal that he should achieve a partnership only three years out of law school. Mrs. Taylor has a degree in interior design and worked full-time for a while for a decorating firm in another city. After her marriage, the Taylors moved to this city, and she has a part-time, "on call" job with an exclusive architectural firm. She has ambitions of opening her own shop.

Mr. Taylor is an only child. His parents live on the East Coast. They are both successful in business—he is a banker; she a real estate broker. They have always demanded perfection from their son, and he seems to have lived up to their expectations. Mrs. Taylor has one younger sister; her parents live on the West Coast. They are both professional persons—he is a college professor, and she is a social worker. Mrs. Taylor's family has always been very close. She calls her parents about once a week, and the family occasionally has joint conference calls with parents and the two siblings to decide some important issue or to relay some big news. Mrs. Taylor's parents place no demands on her except that she be true to herself. They often tell her how proud they are of her accomplishments.
Both sets of parents are experiencing grandparenthood for the first time with Mrs. Taylor's pregnancy. They are thrilled. It sometimes seems to the Taylors that their parents vie with each other in the gifts they give them. The Taylors refuse the more extravagant gifts in order to make the point that they are, indeed, making it on their own. They have discussed some strategies for disentangling themselves from so much contact with their parents.

The Taylors' avant-garde apartment is the scene of much entertaining: his law firm associates, her artistic friends and decorating clients. Although their social spheres overlap somewhat, each has separate groups of friends and pursues their unique interests. They call this "giving each other space," and consider it an important strength in their marriage. The Taylors believe strongly in supporting each other's careers and in sharing family responsibilities--they divide cooking and cleaning in a flexible way, according to whoever has the time. They are attending Lamaze classes together and are looking forward to sharing childbirth.