

Giving Birth: Italian-Canadian Migration and Motherhood



Image 1 Italian-Canadian Children in the Snow, Guelph, 1950s. Kindly reproduced with the permission of Iole Cazzola

Sharon Findlay

Dedication

Just as it "takes a village" to raise a child, it has taken a "village" of friends and supporters to bring about the reality of this project. This paper would not exist without the practical assistance, moral support, inspiration and even physical space provided by friends and family.

First and foremost, I dedicate this project to six wonderful women: Bruna Santi, Lorena Pellizzari, Iole Cazzola, Lidia Marcato, Amabile Lovadina and Livia Tonin. Their personal stories provide the underpinning and wellspring of inspiration from which this project sprang into being. Thank you for trusting me with your precious memories.

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Of course, I thank my parents, William and Laura Findlay, for the incredible opportunity of cultural immersion in Canna, Calabria; that is really where this all began twenty-three years ago!

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INTRODUCTION

As a nation of immigrants, migration to Canada is a fundamental feature of the tapestry that constitutes our society and cultural identity. A variety of forces have impelled people from all corners of the globe to transition to this country, and then bravely face and surmount the cultural and linguistic barriers that confronted them. Italians are among the earliest Europeans to settle in Canada, dating back to John Cabot (AKA Giovanni Caboto) in 1497. Missionaries and mercenaries began settling in the centuries that followed. Two subsequent waves of emigration occurred the first beginning the 1880's to the 1920s, during Fascism, emigration paused until the decades following the World War Two (WWII).¹ Italians emigrated in massive numbers from their homeland by the millions to countries around the world as well as to other European nations, Great Britain, Australia, Latin America and North America. The main reason for this exodus was to escape poverty primarily in the southern and north-eastern regions of the county.

In rural farming communities, there were few prospects for work and advancement. Immigration meant the possibility of work and homeownership, and many leapt at the opportunity. Some immigrated intending to put down roots in their new community while many others, sojourners, came temporarily. In fact, between 1870 and 1970, Italy exported approximately

¹ <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/italian-canadians>

twenty million people, which nearly equalled the number who stayed behind (Gabaccia, *Italian History* 45) Around half of them would return after seeking their fortunes abroad. At the same time, the rest would form communities in the diaspora, "Little Italy's" around the globe in which Italian immigrants sought to maintain the continuity of precious cultural traditions, community and kinship ties. Canada represented a major destination for Italian migrants and sojourners. Italian communities and neighbourhoods sprang up in nearly every city from coast to coast. Italians, from 1889 to present have migrated in waves. Many Italians immigrated to the town of Guelph Ontario, just West of Toronto and settled in an area commonly referred to as "The Ward" (and also called St. Patrick's Ward), which has become well known for its Italian population (Crowley).

“[The Ward] has served for a century and a half as one of the City's foremost meeting places: between humanity and geography; between people and business; and between peoples of diverse cultural backgrounds and religions. Ward One was called East Ward and St. Patrick's Ward at various times, though the middle of the 20th century it became known as "The Ward" largely as a result of its Italian population” (Crowley).

According to Dr. Terry Crowley of the Guelph Historical Society, Guelph's Italian community immigrated primarily, though not exclusively, from two main regions, Veneto (Treviso) region in the north and also from southern Calabria, (San Giorgio Morgeto). This is an essential context as Italy is regionally distinctive, and cultural customs vary significantly from one area to the next. Immigrants from both regions typically came from rural backgrounds with a strong agricultural ethos. The contribution of Italians to Guelph as a whole was expressed in 2011 in the *Guelph Mercury*: “I think Guelph is wonderful microcosm because of the large Italian population,” said

Adriano Gabriel Niccoli, the honorary vice-consul of Italy. He said that with Italian people's value system and hard work "they really have rewritten the history of Guelph" (Seto)

Although the community is comparatively smaller than other "Little Italys" in Toronto, Ottawa or Montreal, for example, today, the Guelph Italian community stands out as an exemplary success story of immigration, community building and prosperity. Not only in their own right, as successful entrepreneurs, philanthropists and political leaders, but because of their distinctive approach to integration. From the origins of their migratory movement, Guelph Italians had an unspoken mandate to collaborate with, include, and assist migrants from many other cultural backgrounds and communities. Guelph's Italian population is well recognized as having contributed significantly to the formation of the city, helping newcomers and developing festivals and team activities that reached beyond their ethnic and cultural divisions to unite the whole city. The Guelph Italians created soccer teams, events, public statues and drove various initiatives that are prized today and furthermore, many immigrants and their descendants became pillars of the community such as Frank Valeriote, who served as a Liberal M.P. for several terms. It may be that the relatively small size of the Guelph Italian community contributed to the integration and achievements of this specific population of Italians in the diaspora.

The oral narratives of Italian-Canadians, have been collected by the university of Guelph since 2015, and offer a study in memory and migration in Guelph-Wellington. Early results of this exploration indicate that the process of outlining this group's account also uncovers how individual relationships to memory and cultural heritage play a crucial role in defining one's place in the present and support a positive approach to cultural integration. It is increasingly evident that the implications of this unique narrative extend far beyond the preservation of the particular history of

Guelph-Italians but extends to the whole multi-ethnic and multicultural community of Guelph, and across multiple generations.

While ethnographic studies and historical accounts of Italian-Canadian exist, such as Nicholas De Maria Harney, and Franca Iacovetta's seminal scholarly contributions, there is not much available that provides insight into the domestic sphere of Italian immigrant homes and still less about the perspectives of women and mothers.

The perspective of Italian immigrant women and mothers is a complex and yet shared experience that remains largely unexplored in sufficient depth. As Franca Iacovetta says:

For thousands of female newcomers, resettlement in Canada meant being relegated to the lowest-paid sectors of the female job 'ghetto' domestic service and low-skilled factory positions and thus taking on the 'dirty' jobs that Canadian women shunned. In addition, most of the recollections of immigrant women contain painful stories of prejudice. The fierce taunts of intolerant neighbours and passersby, or the harsh, even cruel, criticisms of an angry employer, harried doctor, or frustrated government worker surface in many such recollections. It would nevertheless be misleading to think of immigrant women exclusively as passive victims, to assume that they led completely isolated lives or that their presence never made any difference to the people they encountered or the places they inhabited. (Iacovetta, "Remaking Their Lives" 137)

This Major Research Paper (MRP) does not attempt to provide a comprehensive response to this deficiency; however, it seeks to gain insight from a selection of six Italian immigrant women's personal narratives that explores how they remember immigration, which was often immediately followed by first-time motherhood. The challenges presented by significant life

transitions, such as immigrating, can be compounded when added to the equation of entering motherhood without the network of support upon which they relied back in Italy as well as culture shock and language barriers that inhibited communication. One woman, Bruna Santi, interviewed for this project, relates the experience of giving birth in a hospital where she could not communicate with doctors or nurses in her native language. She remembers this experience as stressful and frightening; this study will discuss – among other things – how she passed that memory on to her daughter in vivid detail, and how the daughter incorporated her mother’s experience as a postmemory.

In 2015, the Guelph Italian Heritage Project (IHP)² was established,³ to collect and preserve the oral history narratives of Italian immigrants to the Guelph-Wellington area (and beyond). Through the ongoing IHP project, it became evident that the domestic sphere of women, and childbirth, had not been previously explored and that the views and memories held by women migrants were vastly different from their male counterparts. This emerging distinction between the reported life experiences of men and women led to the conception of this MRP.

Ontario has long been the most popular provincial destination for newcomers entering Canada, and, certainly, the pattern continued during the post-1945 era. Between 1946 and 1965, more than half of Canada's two million immigrant arrivals chose Ontario. Among the adults, probably close to half of the Ontario-bound newcomers were women. Most entered the country in what for women was the usual way, through the family classification scheme - that is, they were sponsored by fathers or husbands. Others came as contract workers destined for

² <https://italianheritage.lib.uoguelph.ca>

³ I was a member or the original cohort of students for Italian Heritage Project

placements in domestic service, the needle trades, and other industries where Canadian employers and officials had deemed there were acute labour shortages. Only a minority came as independent immigrants approved for admission on the grounds that they possessed skills or a professional expertise highly desired by Canada. (Iacovetta 138)

The *Giving Birth* project seeks to illuminate some of these stories and to achieve a deeper understanding of what it was like to begin a family as a new Italian immigrant in Guelph. The next section will outline the methodological approaches adopted to discuss and analyze the individual interviews. The interviews themselves are described and quoted in detail and examined using the frameworks of oral history and memory studies. The description of each interview endeavours as much as possible to follow the original structure without altering its sequence and thereby the importance placed on various aspects of the narrative by the subjects themselves. The selection of photographs included both illustrate this study and demonstrate how these women's memories interact with the images that portray various stages of their journeys.⁴

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Literature on American-Italian women can prove instructive as well as provide a basis for exploring some experiences and cultural interactions of Italians moving into a primarily anglophone English-speaking country. Donna Gabaccia explains how, surveys and studies of Italian-American literature– from scholarly reviews to more popular accounts – have often failed to incorporate women's experiences extensively. (Gabaccia, “Italian American Women” 38) The

⁴ Due to the COVID19 pandemic, I could not pursue follow-up meetings with participants to collect additional images of artifacts, documents, and photographs to illustrate and contextualise this project further. This is one of several ways in which the pandemic has compromised this project.

Giving Birth project relies primarily on the methodologies of oral history and memory studies to explore Guelph's Italian immigrant mothers' experiences. Through the collection and interpretation of firsthand testimonies, the *Giving Birth* project asks how these individuals remember the experiences of motherhood. Additionally, it inquires into how giving birth in Canada impacts, if at all, each participant's sense of cultural identity and home.

Immigration, integration and assimilation can look quite different in the United States and Canada due to many factors, including historical and cultural aspects, and government regulations. A comparative study would further illuminate these differences; however, in this instance, such examples serve solely as models and reference points when similar scenarios are described in the interviews. As Donna Gabaccia so eloquently states:

Women helped make ethnicity an important part of each family's private "little tradition" and, thus, ultimately, a component of individual identity into the second and third generations. Italian women's kinship work, and their influence over their daughters, became increasingly important in the creation and maintenance of ethnicity as the (predominantly male) ethnic institutions of the immigrant generation waned in the twentieth century. Perhaps that is why, today, women of the third and subsequent generations are more likely than men to believe that ethnicity is a major influence on people's lives (Gabaccia 46).

In Canada, as in other countries, such as the United States, Ireland or Australia, Italian populations established unique cultural identities. Women played a crucial and determining role in how the kinship networks developed to support and maintain the Italian culture in all of these communities spread far and wide across the globe. Therefore, it is puzzling that more studies on domesticity and motherhood in Italian migration do not exist. A survey of related studies, such as

De Tona, Miller, Gabbaccia and Iacovetta, can illuminate similarities and differences of the Italian diasporic experience around the world to the Italian women in Guelph who participated in this project; Bruna Santi, Lorena Pellizzari, Iole Cazzola, Lidia Marcato, Amabile Lovadina, and Livia Tonin.

This MRP focuses mainly on the post-war period of the 1950s and '60s when so many Italians made the tough decision to move to a foreign land to begin a new and unimaginable life. Extreme poverty and lack of economic opportunities motivated millions of Italian men and women to make this journey. Chain migration occurred when immigrants moved to locations where relatives had already immigrated and established themselves to some extent. In many cases, young men would immigrate to seek their fortunes before returning to Italy to get married or by sending their girlfriends to come over and marry immediately. Women rarely immigrated alone and unattached to a male relative or fiancé. *Giving Birth* explores how this transition and the raising of a family in Canada is remembered and how it has shaped the personal and social identity of the women interviewed. A cursory glance at archives of Italian immigrants dating back to 1889 reveals that men and their professions and addresses were recorded in the immigration forms while women were often listed as wedded to a particular man or not identified at all.⁵

Memory is the key to identity; how we remember, why we remember, and the story we tell about our experiences is how we contextualize and generate meaning out of the events of our lives. memory studies research has laid a map of how memory, mutable and fallible, interacts with the present and the future. Oral history provides the mechanism for investigating nuanced layers of individual experience while offering researchers a grounded methodological framework to reveal the intricacies of how we remember. In combination, memory studies and oral history can validate,

⁵ See Appendix 1 for a sample of images taken from the Wellington Archive that demonstrate how Italian immigrants were recorded historically.

preserve and include previously unheard perspectives, such as the marginalized, into the historical record to broaden our understanding of what it was like to live through specific stages of human history such as the post-war period which was so instrumental in mobilizing a mass exodus of Italians around the world. This research seeks to preserve and illuminate the collective perspectives of life for Italian-Canadian mothers and how giving birth in Canada may have impacted their personal sense of identity. The *Giving Birth* project represents a tiny sample of participants; however, in general, oral history projects endeavour to collect and record the voices of as many people as possible before it is too late.

ORAL HISTORY

Oral history is the work of collecting historical information through personal interviews. It is a method of research, the act of recording, the record produced, and the researcher's analysis of the record. It has been described as a theory, a method, a process, a technique, a tool, and a genre. Knowledge gathered in this way is unique as it relies on the personal experience of the subject expressed in an interview. Oral history is fluid, reflexive, evolving; it is simultaneously a deliberate strategic process that is spontaneously generated in the moment of the interview and a concrete artifact. Oral history is rooted in facts and dates but allows for creative interpretation and meaningful consideration in dialogue with the interviewee, and the his/her past, with the contextual elements that frame a person's memory of places and events. Oral history is a research methodology but also, according to Alessandro Portelli, an art form. It is the collection of narratives but also the recording and transcript – the crystallized form of the interview that is captured and subject to ongoing analysis. Oral History is a work of intricate communication and relationships across time and space.

The term “oral history” encompasses many aspects of an approach to the past that is human-centred and able to incorporate multiple layers and perspectives by focussing on the perceptions of individuals. The *Giving Birth* project which touches upon highly sensitive and even culturally taboo subjects, and an oral history approach seemed the best way to access information and gain insight into a relatively unknown territory. Its methods allow the researcher to enter the world of the interviewee and to glimpse into the reality of people whose voices would otherwise have been lost. It facilitates the reflexive exploration in dialogue, of specific events and their meaning in the narrative of the subject’s life.

As a practice, oral history has become increasingly sophisticated in its approach as an interpretative framework and theoretical discipline. A well-established field of inquiry, oral history is cross-disciplinary, adaptable, and frequently used in community enterprises, social, historical, heritage, legal, healthcare and psychology studies, which sometimes rely on oral history methods as investigative tool of inquiry. It thus benefits from the expertise of practitioners from a wide variety of backgrounds. Collecting narratives and recording them is a methodology used in many social science disciplines. However, what distinguishes it from other types of participant-involved research is that oral history must engage with the past. Different methodologies, such as participant observation, often incorporate interviews or first-person testimony into research, but these do not necessarily engage with the past. Oral history refers specifically to remembered events in the interviewee's life and not, for instance, to oral tradition or information over a generation old that predates the narrator's life.

There is a well-defined scope that distinguishes this approach from other forms of testimony and specific elements that constitute oral history; however, the interview itself is often open-ended, can go off-script even when it conforms to a framework established by the researcher.

Oral history work is complex, nuanced and demands rigorous reflexivity and attention to detail by the researcher employing this method. Precise definitions of the distinct aspects of oral history are necessary for accuracy in a field that can touch upon intimate details of a person's life. Well established experts in oral history such as Lynn Abrams, Alessandro Portelli, and Luisa Del Giudice provide the foundational theory to aid in the use and application of oral history as an interpretive framework. Broadly, oral history refers to two main aspects – the practice of conducting the interview and the resulting record of the interview. Abrams further expands this to include four separate elements: the original interview, the recorded version of the interview, the written transcript and the interpretation. (Abrams 9) These four aspects form a chain of integral components that are distinct and yet dependent upon one another.

The oral history interview is conversational and different from other historical sources because its nature is dialogic, relational, discursive and even creative. The audio or audiovisual recording and transcript are tangible manifestations of a conversation captured and concretized. Also, as people describe their past, they reveal information about their present self. The interview is the space in which the subject constructs and reconstructs him/herself through narrative. The personal experience of the individual is necessarily embedded in a broader social and cultural context.

Portelli describes his approach as he attempts to “Convey the sense of fluidity, of unfinishedness, of an inexhaustible work in progress, which is inherent to the fascination and frustration of oral history – floating as it does in time between the present and an ever-changing past, oscillating in the dialogue between the narrator and the interviewer, and melting and coalescing in the no-mans-land from orality to writing and back.” (Portelli, *Luigi Trastulli* vii) ⁶

⁶ Also cited in Abrams' book *Oral History Theory*

For Portelli, oral history is not just a research methodology but a poetic art form, a dance of relationships that flow across time and culture, and through communities. Practice and theory are entwined in the interpretation which strives for comprehension, not only of what was said but how and why (Abrams 1).

While oral history relies on an individual's recollection of fragments of experience that are woven into a cohesive story, memory is multidimensional and exists within concentric spheres of experience, family, community and public representations and retellings that affect one's perspective. The mutability of memory does not detract from its value in oral history research; instead, memory reveals the process of both the internal and external influences on its construction. Oral history exposes the relationships between what, how, and why we remember experiences as well as how factors such as age, sex, trauma can inform reconstruction and understanding of events: "Oral sources tell us not just what people did but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did." (Portelli 50)

Oral history recognizes memory as an active ongoing process through the event of the interview. The memory is told and created in the moment that it is spoken. It is mediated by the present, by the questions, by the relationship with the interviewer and the context of cues, photographs, and family memorabilia.

Memory is fallible and fluid, revealing more about where a person is than where she/he has been. It is continuously updated as it is retold and develops in the context of relations to individuals in the narrative, to the past, to those present, to the cultural context and importantly, to the researcher asking the questions. Oral history is fundamental to understanding the content of what is being shared. This approach, when combined with memory studies, forms a combination of strategies that work in tandem to address, collect and interpret the interviews.

A CAUTIONARY TALE AND THE POTENTIAL PITFALLS OF CONDUCTING ORAL HISTORY

Oral history plays a critical role in women's history, creating a space for voices that have long been silent in a history largely written by men. (Coppola 56)

Participants in the Giving Birth project were given a waiver to sign in print, in English and Italian, which contained information about the project. They were also not obligated to answer any question and were absolutely free to share whatever they wished and no more. The Giving Birth project has Research Ethics Board (REB) clearance, and every participant was informed of her right to withdraw at any time or retract any statement. This procedure is critical as oral historians with the best intentions have, at times, encountered unexpected misunderstandings because these details were not explicitly explained to the subject of research or had been – at times – misunderstood. Marie Saccomondo Coppola provides just such an example that serves as a cautionary tale. In fact, this project is indebted to her insight as her candid essay informed and demonstrated potential perils and pitfalls of oral history research.

Coppola details the oral history project she did with her 83-year-old aunt Rosina in Sicily for her Ph.D. dissertation. She tape-recorded the interview, transcribed and analyzed the narrative, which formed the substance of her thesis in 1998. Upon completion, she presented the finished product to the aunt proudly, assuming that having given her aunt a voice and agency by immortalizing her lived experience, her work represented an invaluable gift to her venerated relative. However, when presented with the final work, instead of feeling validated, her aunt responded with anger and accused her niece of betrayal and humiliation. This was not a passing storm, and she ultimately died without ever forgiving her niece. Coppola's intention, in addition to applying theory to her personal life, was to ennoble her aunt's personal narrative, but instead, she

inadvertently left her feeling exposed and violated. Even though Rosina knew she was being recorded, she had misunderstood or simply not realized what was going to be in print.

In the original interview with Rosina, Coppola felt secure in the knowledge that she was giving her aunt a validating opportunity to express what she had experienced and accomplished. In their conversation, they covered several key moments such as the deaths of family members and her aunt's early married life, which she described as "Una Vita Sacrificata" (A Life Sacrificed) This phrase was also featured as a chapter heading in the final manuscript. Her aunt had not realized that those words would be published.

Coppola's aunt could not read English, and neither could the other family members who were equally upset but did not have difficulty understanding the chapter heading "Una Vita Sacrificata;" it was probably that phrase that fueled their outrage and indignation. Coppola's male cousin later revealed that all of her aunt's five sons had been angry at their mother for sharing personal details about the family. The expression would be particularly triggering as it seems to imply that their mother had sacrificed her life, or led a miserable existence, suffered or struggled and presumably was not provided for by her male family members. They were not comfortable with intimate details of their life or their mother's life revealed publicly. In her brave unpacking of how this unfortunate experience unfolded, Coppola identifies cultural sensitivities and taboos, reflexively exploring subsequent interactions with her cousins in the years afterwards. Many of the themes identified by Coppola are touchy subjects that correspond with Miller and De Tona's studies in similar family contexts. Coppola's fieldwork in Sicily revealed deep distrust and fear of outsiders, easily identifiable through their language and lack of dialect or native accent. Within that milieu, women would commiserate or share with other "safe women" – how her aunt had considered her niece until the publication of the thesis, after which she disowned her completely.

Coppola explains that the men care little for "women's talk" taking place between family members and close friends but had a huge problem with having those words committed to paper. A proper Italian or Sicilian bears her burdens stoically and does not complain to the men and especially not to outsiders. Coppola observes that "In painting my aunt's picture of poverty, I gave away family secrets in detail, that is, what went on behind closed doors." (Coppola 62)

Coppola compares the lives of her mother (who immigrated to the USA) and her aunt Rosina (who remained in Italy). Her mother worked outside the home while her aunt, a Sicilian woman, never did. While her mother's life is a compelling rags-to-riches scenario in which she triumphs, her aunt was clearly ashamed of her early poverty. Even though Rosina received more formal education than her mother, she looked down upon women or families with children who were forced to work outside the home. In retrospect, Coppola realized that her aunt and cousins did not understand that they were recorded, and their words would be committed to paper. She could have possibly provided them with a draft prior to publication or asked them to sign consent forms, an act which may have alienated them in the first place. This essay is a cautionary tale as well as a sample of how oral history projects have evolved to avoid such pitfalls. Oral history studies provide a means of gaining insight and preserving knowledge. However, it must be applied carefully, with sensitivity to the participant's rights and the researcher; a clearly articulated waiver that explicitly explains the scope of the project and the rights of the interviewee to withdraw is crucial to avoiding future complications and reducing the risk of misunderstandings. Unfortunately, in some cases, the bureaucracy and officiality of signing consent forms can feel daunting and scary to potential participants, especially if they are elderly. This likely contributed to the decision of one woman who declined participation in the *Giving Birth* project at the last minute.

MEMORY

Giving Birth, which focuses on Italian-Canadian women in Guelph and their experiences of motherhood as immigrant women through oral history interviews, necessarily explores intimate memories, postmemories and possibly reconstructed memories, as in the case of some participants who downplayed the extent of some of the hardships they encountered. While oral history is fundamental, to understand fully the content of what was being shared, this approach is supported by significant research in memory studies to form a combination of theoretical approaches that work in tandem to collect and interpret the narratives gleaned from the interviews. Abrahams observes how "Memory with all its imperfection, mutability and transience is at the heart of our practice and analysis. We want to know why people remember or forget things, the warping and mistakes they make, and ask 'why'" (23). Memory is imperfect, but its imperfections are useful in revealing layers of complexity. Individual memories are reconstructed to align with each respondent's worldview, articulating the past through the lens of the present.

KEY TERMS

Before addressing the interviews, it is essential to discuss a few key terms and concepts. Several foundational thinkers have established this theoretical approach over the twentieth century, and their work is the edifice upon which subsequent theories of memory studies have been built.

COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND COMMUNICATIVE MEMORY

“In each epoch memory reconstructs an image of the past that is in accord with the predominant thoughts of the society.” (Halbwachs)

Maurice Halbwachs, a sociologist, first articulates the concept of Collective Memory, the shared memories of a particular society or group which he distinguishes from what he called Communicative/Everyday Memory, which denotes the memories of an individual. Halbwachs' Communicative Memory is socially mediated and relates to a group, sharing a temporality of only a few generations or 80-100 years. In other words, Communicative Memory has proximity to the everyday while Cultural Memory has a distance from the everyday and encompasses memory (past), culture and group (society).

CULTURAL MEMORY

Cultural memory is a form of collective memory, in the sense that it is shared by a number of people and that it conveys to these people a collective, that is, cultural identity. Halbwachs, however, the inventor of the term “collective memory,” was careful to keep his concept of collective memory apart from the realm of traditions, transmissions, and transferences which we propose to subsume under the term “cultural memory.” We preserve Halbwachs distinction by breaking his concept of collective memory into “communicative” and “cultural memory,” but we insist on including the cultural sphere, which he excluded in the study of memory. We are, therefore, not arguing for replacing his idea of “collective memory” with “cultural memory”; rather, we distinguish between both forms as two different *modi memorandi*, ways of remembering. (Assmann, Jan)

Building on the groundwork laid by Halbwachs, Jan Assmann, a classical archeologist and major contributor to memory studies, elaborates on the theory of shared memory by asserting that Cultural Memory, is a means of maintaining the nature and shared unity of a group consistently through generations. However, Assmann distinguishes Cultural Memory from Halbwachs

definition of both Communicative/Everyday Memory and Collective Memory. Assmann's thesis contradicts Halbwach's assertions that Collective Memory disappears after its crystallization into texts, rites, monuments, cities, etc. rather Cultural Memory is something from which groups derive formative and normative impulses and a consciousness of unity which creates a "concretion of identity," therefore objectivized culture has the structure of memory. To further elucidate the components of Cultural Memory, Assmann describes six aspects; 1) The concretion of identity, 2) its Capacity to Reconstruct, 3) Formation, 4) Organization, 5) Obligation, 6) Reflectivity. This theory provides the necessary language to articulate how memories and the memorialization of events and narratives shape cultures and individuals. This foundational theoretical work proves very useful to analyze oral history narratives of migrant women in *Giving Birth*. Additionally, it provides a framework for identifying the potential intersection between inherited cultural memories/identities coming into contact and relationship with those of their new countries. The concept of Cultural Memory is helpful in understanding the cultural mechanisms and perceptions at work to construct both the past and the present as participants remember and describe their personal memories and update them through various societal lenses.

Like oral history, memory studies is multidisciplinary and draws upon various fields, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and history. Oral historians are concerned with the subjective meaning of memories. Memory is key to identity and social existence, providing a roadmap of where we have been and where we are headed. Without memory, we are unable to construct and maintain a sense of self-identity with which to interpret our lives.

POSTMEMORY

Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. This is not to say that memory

itself is unmediated, but that it is more directly connected to the past. (Hirsch, *Family Frames* 22)

Marianne Hirsch, identifies further crucial facets of the workings of memory in society and individuals by conceptualising and coining the term “postmemory.” Her articulation of this theory is particularly useful in analyzing individuals' experiences and memories across multiple generations. A postmemory is bequeathed from one generation to the next, characterized by a distance from lived experience. Postmemory is an experience that is transmitted both directly and indirectly, it is distinguished from Individual Memory by its generational distance and characterized by a personal connection to the memory. Postmemory indicates a personal connection or investment and generally conveys traumatic events such as war or genocide. These are experienced and lived indirectly through the children of survivors. Postmemories are constructed, mediated and transmitted in the retelling of events that become postmemories in the recipient heirs. Postmemories cannot be directly recalled but are recreated and inadequately re-imagined. They exist as indirect and fragmentary imaginings but nevertheless can feel as real to the inheritor as if he or she had experienced them directly. Postmemories are particularly evident with the descendants of Holocaust survivors.

FALSE MEMORY

False memories arise from an ideological construct that is "sustained by imagined politics of the time...Mythic imagination cannot be influenced by information." (Portelli 26) Alessandro Portelli, an oral history expert, describes the concept of False Memory as a counter-narrative that is repeated so many times that it is not questioned or criticized so that despite facts to the contrary, it is believed and perpetuated. False memories arise from an ideological construct that is "sustained by imagined politics of the time [...] Mythic imagination cannot be influenced by information" (26).

This MRP does not delve into sufficient depth to determine whether or not the interviewees construct or maintain false memories. However, this concept is included because, at certain points in the interviews, there is an indication that some of the women may sanitize or clean up painful memories. There is an aversion by some to dwell on what was obviously quite a difficult period. The concept of false memory asks whether their averted gaze is conscious or unconscious.⁷ Memory is subjective, although Portelli talks about False Memory in a political context, false memories as a concept can be applied to psychological and emotional states as well and will be discussed in this framework later on.

THE PHOTOGRAPH AS A PROSTHETIC MEMORY

“Photography’s relation to loss and death is not to mediate the process of individual and collective memory but to bring the past back in the form of a ghostly revenant, emphasizing, at the same time, its immutable and irreversible pastness and irretrievability.”
(Hirsch 20)

Participants in the Giving Birth project were encouraged to share images of themselves, their children, and other people, places or artifacts that they felt were relevant to their journey. Many appeared puzzled by the request to display artifacts, as they usually brought very little with them from Italy. Images and photographs hold a prominent position in oral history and memory studies because they represent the relevant life episodes in the narrative, serving as touchstones and portals into another life, interacting simultaneously with the interviewee, the live retelling of memories, as well with the researcher. Photographs act as prosthetic and interactive tools whose meaning

⁷ Two of the first-generation immigrant mothers in this study were interviewed previously for the IHP, and the *Giving Birth* project benefits from the ability to compare interviews from several years ago to the ones collected for this project. In fact, when Livia, who was interviewed in 2016 about her journey to Canada, was presented with an article that had been published in the SURG journal she exclaimed: “If I had known [your project] was this serious, I would have told you the real story!”

continually evolves and relates in different ways with the present. The entire process is one of relating on multiple levels and across time for the memories to re-emerge and coalesce at the moment of the interview.

Hirsch again provides critical conceptual scaffolding from a memory studies context to grasp the role of Photographs. Photographs are "multidirectional instruments of remembrance" (Hirsch) between memory and postmemory, between remembering and forgetting. Photographs depict life and death simultaneously and are melancholic objects by nature that represent that which is no longer. They become an "index" that measures the passage of time weighing what was against what is. Although it captures a static moment, the photograph is, in a sense, still interactive as it emanates through time connecting the material presence of the subject both to death and impending doom, and to the life of the observer. This multidirectional connection applies especially to relatives who, in studying the image, seek recognition of themselves in the picture of another, for example, in photos of parents or grandparents from a bygone era. For the viewer, the photograph connects life, past-tense and death, linking and layering realities on top of one another non-linearly. It should be stressed that while the photograph documents a moment, it is not itself a memory. In fact, once taken, the photograph interacts with memories, alters it and becomes a version of memory. Therefore, Hirsch considers the photograph to be a counter-memory that actually can have the effect of replacing memories and promoting forgetting.

The photograph by its nature emphasizes "past-ness" (Hirsch 20); for example, pre-war Holocaust photographs hover somewhere between life and death, existence and non-existence. Pre-war photographs both document and generate memories of survivors as fragmentary postmemories in their children. Fragments of trauma and recollection form a narrative chain that combines testimony, photograph and postmemory.

Hirsch's critical perspective informs the aspects of this project that deal with cultural and familial structures and unspoken rules within the Italian-Canadian community. It offers a means of analyzing and inquiring into the relationships between the interviewees and their most precious photographs and insight into how the family presented itself to the world. Role and hierarchies are indicated in poses, in what is included, or excluded. The family photograph reinforces conventions and identity, belonging and not belonging demonstrated in positioning and body language.

The context of the family album creates a relationship with distant or deceased relatives and, in the context of migration, can serve as validation or confirmation of the life decision to emigrate. Hirsch describes the viewer's unfulfillable desire to be "seen" by the subjects portrayed in photos, to be recognized, known, related to and to bridge time and space, to transcend death and override all that separates. She points to the "Familial looking: individualization, naturalization, decontextualization, differentiation within the identification and the universalization of one hegemonic familial organization" Here Hirsch describes the "reading" of photographs, how one can detect and speculate upon nuances of relationships within the image through the presentation, posture and pose of the individuals that can denote, for instance, hierarchical relationships within the family structure and in the image they attempt to project. In attempting to decode a photograph, distant relative viewers are seeking recognition. Photographs are fragments that never reveal the whole story and are characterized by incompleteness. Reality is concealed behind the image, and all attempts to read relationships within the photograph reveal it to be a veil that frustrates and heightens the fundamental characteristic inscrutability of the medium. In a photograph, the subject's presence is frozen in time and connected to the present but remains unknowable, unassimilable, and cannot be integrated into the present.

THE ORIGIN OF THE GIVING BIRTH PROJECT



Image 2 Bruna Santi with her daughter Mirella, 1960s

The analyses of the interviews collected for the *Giving Birth* project begin with Bruna Santi. She was interviewed in 2017 for the IHP and her contribution then significantly inspired this project for which she was re-interviewed and explicitly questioned about her memories of giving birth and motherhood as a recent Italian immigrant in 1959.⁸ Without dwelling too much on an interview conducted for a different project, this material is included to provide a background into the

⁸ During a major wave of immigration from Italy during the decades post WWII when there was a large exodus from Italy and an influx of Italians to Canada.

conception and realization of the current project. Bruna was interviewed with her husband, Elio, about their immigration from Italy to Guelph in the postwar period.

Elio responded to the interview questions in English sharing several heartening and comical anecdotes. In fact, his eloquence and charm gave the impression of high adventure, a thrilling and overwhelmingly positive experience. Bruna, in contrast, seated next to her husband of sixty years, painted an entirely different picture of what it was like for her to emigrate to Canada. She responded in her native tongue and softly conveyed some of the challenges she had faced as a new immigrant and mother. Bruna's original testimony revealed a marked contrast between narratives of husband and wife and merited further study. That interview was one of the inspirations for the project, which inquires specifically into the types of experiences lived through by Bruna and her contemporaries. Becoming a parent can be a complex life transition, Bruna's experience (like the other women interviewed for this project) was magnified by her recent departure from Italy, the loss of her networks of support, her alien surroundings and especially the language barrier. She came from a large and supportive family in Treviso and bravely chose to leave that world behind. Her testimony in 2017 highlighted how her memory of immigration, childbirth, and raising her young children bore minimal resemblance to her husband's recollection of the same events. This revelation contributed to the research questions that have propelled this inquiry namely, why has the experience of women and mothers not been a significant focus of research until now and what can their memories and the postmemories they generated and shared with second and third generations, tell us about the immigration experience of that era.⁹

⁹ The analysis of the specific demographic features, beliefs, cultural norms, taboos and mores, are derived mainly from the framework provided by Pavla Miller, Carla De Tona, Donna Garbaccia, and Franca Iacovetta. They discuss Italian culture in various locations and contexts. A project with a broader scope would present a more comprehensive picture of the many cultural aspects of Italian society both within Italy in the post-war period and abroad in diasporic communities in Canada and in other countries where Italian migrated in large numbers. Also, many Italian cultural features are region-specific, and it is essential to distinguish them from one another, as the

Bruna and the other women participants share not only their own stories of giving birth, and early motherhood experiences, but also their reflections on how such events and circumstances contributed to a sense of cultural identity, how giving birth in Canada added to or reinforced a sense of Italian or Canadian cultural belonging. Initially, the *Giving Birth* project encountered some difficulty finding individuals prepared to reveal intimate details of their lives. Some declined to participate because they did not want to relive traumatic experiences, while one woman initially agreed, but withdrew at the last minute because she felt uncomfortable signing the required waiver and consent form.

Bruna agreed to be interviewed again, this time for the Giving Birth project. Her daughter Lorena Pellizzari was present. Discussions around the kitchen table as waivers were filled in immediately prior to the interview made it clear that Lorena's perspective would add invaluable depth and context to the project, and she readily agreed to be interviewed as well. The contrast of first- and second-generation participants was immensely helpful, Lorena's experiences shed light on what it was like to grow up in the tight-knit community of The Ward.¹⁰

Following Bruna, Lorena was also interviewed and asked for her perspective on growing up as a second-generation Italian-Canadian child in The Ward. The content of her interview revealed layers of complexity and a new context; it also expanded Bruna's recollection and retelling of her own experience. After this first interview, Lorena invited the Giving Birth researcher to her home for a follow-up interview two weeks later, during which she shared

traditions of North, South, and Central Italy vary greatly and should not be mischaracterized as merely "Italian" in essence. The Giving Birth project seeks to understand the Italian-Canadians in Guelph, with the requisite sensitivity to regional differences. However, it does not attempt an in-depth comparison of regions as this project has a specific, limited, yet organic scope focused on motherhood specifically.

¹⁰ Due to COVID19 the Giving Birth project was prevented from interviewing additional second generation Italian-Canadian's in the Guelph area

additional details as well as family photos. This second interview is insufficiently covered in this MRP, which – due to the scope of this work, time constraint, and COVID-19 limitations – could not locate a large enough sample of second-generation participants to create a proper study of inter-generational relationship and motherhood.¹¹ However, her contribution will be curated and added to the IHP online repository, where it will be presented and preserved. Lorena’s contribution, despite being a single sample, has been tremendously relevant to this study in relation to postmemory, oral history, and memory studies research into the Italian-Canadian motherhood experience.

¹¹ This is not a limitation of the MRP, which was born as a study of first-generation women immigrants. A larger project could have included more voices and I was contemplating adding a small set of second generations interviews, but for the reasons mentioned above was unable to procure additional participants.

BRUNA SANTI

San Martino di Lupari, Treviso¹²

May 1959



Image 3 Bruna Santi, January 2020

"Avevamo creato quasi una famiglia tra di noi, qui in Canada."

[We had almost created a family among us, here in Canada]

Bruna Santi immigrated from San Martino di Lupari, a town in the north of Italy, in the province of Treviso, in 1959, to join her fiancé Elio who was already in Canada. He had migrated to Guelph to establish himself five years before her arrival. Over that interval, they corresponded by letter. Bruna embarked on this journey to begin a new life in a new world without any way of predicting

¹² Each interview heading contains the name, city and region of birth, and date of immigration of each participant.

what awaited her on the other side. They married one month after her arrival and went on to have four children.

When asked about her journey, Bruna begins this interview by describing her painful departure from the ship's port in Genoa and saying farewell to her brother who accompanied her to the ship and stayed until after it left. It would be many years before she saw any of her immediate family again. It was a difficult step on many levels, leaving the world of familiarity for a foreign land to marry a man she did not know well by today's standards but with whom she had corresponded by letter. The route by ship from Genoa to Halifax was an arduous two week long voyage. From Halifax, she rode an uncomfortable train that took days to arrive in Toronto. Her trepidation was not alleviated by what she observed out the windows of the dusty and uncomfortable train. Her first impressions of Canada were depressing, having just left Italy in May when all was in bloom, only to find her destination vast, desolate and barren she recalls snow-covered fields and tiny houses. "What have I done? Why did I leave Italy full of flowers?" She asked herself.¹³

Lì [alla stazione del treno a Toronto] ho trovato il mio fidanzato che è venuto a prendermi con un altro amico perché lui non aveva la macchina e allora siamo arrivati a Guelph. Tutto bene, ci hanno accolto bene ma per me era tutto nuovo, mi trovavo persa.

[There [at the train station in Toronto] I found my fiancée who came to pick me up with another friend because he didn't have a car and then we arrived in Guelph.

¹³ This initial negative impression of Canada was commonly experienced by many Italian immigrants who left Italy in springtime and arrived in Canada while everything was still covered in snow and looked bleak. Several accounts can be found at The Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 <https://pier21.ca?>

All was well, they welcomed us well, but for me, it was all new, I felt completely lost.]

Bruna was married one month after her arrival and says that little by little, she became accustomed to Guelph and her new life. She repeats several times that she felt alone, lost and deeply missed her six sisters in Italy and the rest of her family. She describes a feeling of melancholy over the distance between herself and her family of origin while becoming increasingly at home in Guelph and creating a surrogate family of neighbours and cousins (one of her cousins had also immigrated previously).

In giving an overview of her life, Bruna recounts her difficulty with learning English and how her children helped her by translating. After sixty years of marriage, she and Elio have raised four children and now have ten grandchildren. She expresses satisfaction that all are doing well, and profound grief over one grandson (son of Luigi) who tragically passed away at age sixteen from a brain tumour. His picture is prominently portrayed in her home, and everyone, Bruna, Elio and Lorena, mention and include him in every description of the family in its entirety. His presence is strongly felt despite – and through – his conspicuous absence. Lorena also makes a point of always mentioning her nephew and pointing him out in all of the family photos she shares. They maintain a strong connection to him and the treasured photographs from which he smiles and laughs unperturbed.

After talking about her grandson, Bruna returns to the main focus of the project. She is asked about her pregnancy, giving birth and raising young children without the support which she would have received back home. She says nurses and doctors tried to help her before, during and after the birth of her first child, Lorena, when they provided home visits to new mothers. They

were kind, but she could not understand them, nor could they understand her, and she felt terribly alone and afraid.

[Speaking about the birth of her first child Lorena]

All'ospedale là cercavano di aiutarmi, voglio dire in qualunque modo cercavano di aiutarmi ma era difficile perché non capivo e mi sentivo sola.

[At the hospital they tried to help me, I mean in any way they tried to help me, but it was difficult because I didn't understand, and I felt alone.]

It was a difficult experience, and she longed for her mother and sisters back home, but she was content to be with her husband. She remembers the early days with her first baby as quite lonely, and when Lorena grew up, she was able to help with her younger siblings. Having her children in Canada helped Bruna feel more grounded and accepting; she expresses an acceptance of life in Canada but does not give the impression of being deeply integrated into Canadian culture beyond the Italian community. This point is strongly reinforced by Lorena, who quite plainly expresses the reality that her parents did not integrate as deeply into other communities as other Italian immigrants did. This may be because Elio and Bruna were both the only ones from their families of origin who came to Guelph or because they doubted their English language skills. Unlike other interviewees, Bruna does not seem to identify as very Canadian, but she accepts Canadian culture and life here, and Canada has become home for her.

An interesting moment occurred toward the end of the interview when Bruna was asked if she would go back and change anything about her experience.

No, sono stata contenta di come [le cose sono successe], è stato un po' duro ma dopo tutto sono contenta di come sono andate, crescendo i miei figli con mio

marito, tanto sacrificio, perché pensavo alle volte, "Se avevo tutte le sorelle...", ho altre sei sorelle, se avevo le sorelle qui vicine potevamo aiutarci una per l'altra, però, come dicevo prima, ci si aiutava fra amiche. Se una volta dovevo andar fuori casa per qualche motivo, chiedevo a qualche cugina, venivano, oppure portavo i miei figli da loro e mi aiutavano..., avevamo creato quasi una famiglia fra noi, qui in Canada. Lo stesso io facevo per loro, e avanti.

[No, I was happy with how [things happened], it was a bit hard, but after all, I'm happy with how things went, raising my children with my husband, was a lot of sacrifices, because I thought sometimes, "If only I had all my sisters..." I have six other sisters, if I had my sisters here, we could have helped each other, but, as I said before, we helped each other among friends. If I had to go out for some reason, I asked a cousin, they came, or I took my children to them, and they helped me... we had almost created a family among us, here in Canada. I did the same for them, and so on.]

Bruna began to depict an increasingly positive picture of her life, family and community. At this point, her daughter Lorena interjected and questioned this version of events, which she remembers as being particularly hard, and more to the point, which *she remembers her mother remembering* (italics mine) as acutely difficult. Lorena disagreed that her mother would not go back and change certain things if that were an option. In her opinion, there were several things her mother would have changed to make life more comfortable. Lorena challenged her mother's sanitized version of the story and directed attention to the reality of the difficulties faced and surmounted by her mother. Lorena's definition of success and resilience are different from Bruna's and reveal the generational divide. Pavla Miller comes to our aid in explaining this divide and its

dynamics. Miller describes the mother figure in traditional Italian society as a nurturer, self-sacrificer, with a sense of "compulsory altruism" (96) and devotion to family welfare that supersedes independent pursuits. Younger, second- and especially third-generation individuals are increasingly independent and less connected in this respect, while second-generation children of immigrants must often straddle two worlds. Miller describes an emotional economy of expected repayment or recognition of the older first-generation from the second-generation. She has highlighted an undercurrent of tension between traditional expectations and modern individualism and personal freedom, as younger individuals seek careers, make time for themselves, prioritizing self-expression and a life balance despite how they may conflict with what some today consider "outdated" notions of motherhood, womanhood and compulsory sacrifice.

Miller's ethnography illuminates generational differences and tensions expressed in the Italian diaspora¹⁴ and the challenges faced by those seeking to bridge these divides. She highlights an area of conflict, emotional debt, between some immigrants and their children, and the evolving definitions of what it means to be a mother. In her commentary about the falling birthrates of Italians around the world, but most notably in their adoptive countries in the post-war period, Miller notes that in the pre-WWII era, families with more children back in Italy were not necessarily emotionally closer to one another. Pre- and during the WWII years, in Italy, all family members were often expected to work, pull their weight, and contribute materially to the household.

Survival in Canada depended on strong relationships between family members because of the enormous distance between their immediate family and the network of support that they left

¹⁴ Her work specifically addresses the Italian-Australian community. However, because Italians of that era were also creating new communities in relation to Anglo and English-speaking communities, some aspects are relevant to the Canadian context. This inter-generational dynamic was still very much present in Italy and it may even have been exacerbated by migration.

behind. Relationships potentially relied more heavily on each other within the same household. Elio and Bruna Santi did not have immediate family members to support them in their new community and felt initially quite isolated; they describe how their relationships with neighbours on their residential street became profound and lifelong. Over the years, they shared childcare, helped one another through both difficulties and successes, and referred to these enduring relationships as "like family."

Bruna's testimony in 2017 was candid, and yet when re-interviewed, she began, towards the end, to clean up the past and edit out some of the difficulties. Was it because her daughter was present? Did the presence of a male videographer (who understands no Italian whatsoever) impact the lens through which she viewed, recollected and shared her experiences? Bruna is a remarkably brave woman who undertook an enormously challenging journey overcoming many obstacles in her own way, which she openly discussed. She, however, also shied away from emphasizing negative or painful aspects in favour of a more neutral tone.

Additionally, Lorena gave an interview on the same day as her mother and then she followed up a couple of weeks later with a second interview, so each has given two interviews of similar material which can be compared with one another across time in a multidimensional way. In the second interview, Lorena put even more emphasis on the fact that she felt her mother had understated her experiences and challenges as a new immigrant.

Lorena grew up and internalized the memories her mother shared with her as postmemories and gave the impression of knowing them at least as well as her mother. Hirsch explains that a distance from the original events characterizes postmemories and that they are transmitted both directly, in terms of storytelling, and indirectly through actions and, in this case, presumably the fear that Bruna continued to carry around childbirth at the impending arrival of her granddaughter.

An oral history standpoint considers how Bruna's memory may have been adapted and changed in the interval 2017-2020. Was it the setting, the people present? Why has her perspective shifted? Or at least her presentation of the narrative? Such questions guide this research and continue to emerge in the analysis of the other interviews, making how one remembers the past and the internal and external influences upon its construction, one of the focal points of this MRP inquiry.

Lynn Abrams, one of the foremost oral historians upon whose foundational work oral history advanced its methods, practice and theory, always asks "why?" She asks why people remember or forget things, why they distort or make mistakes? (23) Memories are ultimately always reconstructed to align with the participant's worldview:

Although we do still rely on our respondents to mine their memories for facts about past events and experiences, particularly in instances where the information is unavailable elsewhere, where oral history really departs from other memory sources – the memoir or autobiography for example – is in the recognition that memory is an active process. The oral history interview is an event whereby, through the relationship between the interviewer and the respondent, a memory narrative is actively created in the moment in response to a whole series of external references that are brought to bear in the interview: the interviewer's questions, the respondent's familiarity with media representations of the past, personal prompts and cues such as photographs and family memorabilia (23).

While Bruna's account would not be considered "false memories" in a political context, as described in Portelli's example, her memory may have been adapted, altered and "falsified" in a psychological and emotional sense the sanitizing of the reality, *La Bella Figura* (a concept this paper will address). In this way, in her daughter Lorena's opinion, Bruna was presenting an easier

and smoother narrative of cultural acclimatization while, in fact, she found it extremely challenging and lonely at the time.

Around Bruna and Elio's home are photos of them and their family at various stages of their lives. They present a visual narrative independent of and yet supported by the interview given by Bruna.¹⁵ Family pictures in preserving images and memory fragments are not static; they are dynamic objects that interact with the present. Images of Bruna and Elio as newlyweds at anniversaries, children's graduation, and, above all, their nephew, tells a story of love and loss, resilience and strength, success and productivity, and a life lived in full colour.

Postmemory shares the layering of these other “posts,” and their belatedness, aligning itself with the practice of citation and mediation that characterize them, marking a particular end-of-century/turn-of-century moment of looking backward rather than ahead, and of defining the present in relation to a troubled past, rather than initiating new paradigms. Like them, it reflects an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture. And yet postmemory is not a movement, method, or idea; I see it, rather, as a structure of inter- and transgenerational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience. It is a consequence of traumatic recall but (unlike posttraumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove. (Hirsch, “Generation of Postmemory” 206)

¹⁵ Hirsch considers photographs to be a counter-memory that can go as far as replacing memories and promoting a kind of forgetting when the image becomes the specific underpinning or tack that anchors an otherwise more subjective or nebulous and fallible memory.



Image 4 Bruna Santi, livingroom, January 2020

LORENA PELLIZZARI

Guelph, Ontario



Image 5 Lorena Pellizzari, January 2020

“Strings of Love”

Lorena sits down immediately after Bruna's interview and gives a detailed and eloquent account of the neighbourhood where she grew up, how her parents first rented and then built the dream house in which they still reside. She explains what it was like as a child, the eldest of four children, on a street that was home to several Italian families who were primarily from the northern region of Italy. In her self-introduction, Lorena explains that when selecting her university and career options, she had hoped to pursue her love of languages at which she excelled in high school. However, her father disagreed with this choice and encouraged her in another direction. Lorena expresses some regret at following another path, instead of her heart, but concludes that it was

ultimately for the best that she received a medical secretary degree that has served her well. This disagreement with her parents, mainly her father, seems to reinforce some of the descriptions of generational tensions outlined by studies of second-generation experiences of migration and integration.¹⁶ Her father Elio was focussed on practicality and income, while Lorena wishes she could have followed her own interests:

I would have liked to have taken a different path for school, but it didn't quite work out that way. My father was very... Well, he had his own ideas of where, at the time, where his eldest daughter should end up and how she would end up in life. So, needless to say, we had some discussions over that. And I ended up taking a medical secretarial course, for which I received a diploma. I'm very proud of that because they don't really offer diplomas [in that area] any longer. In high school, I excelled in languages, and my teachers called the house here and spoke to my parents copious times. But because of the language barrier, I always had to intervene, and it was a difficult position for me to be in because it was like a rock and a hard place, trying to explain to them what teachers were saying, "you should continue with your education you should go on you should live up to your aspirations." So, I thought that this would have been an easier way taking the medical route at first. I thought [of] travel and tourism and that I could use and expand my languages skills, but the medical route, I thought, was more pertinent probably. And so that's where I went.

¹⁶ such as Pavla Miller and Carla De Tona.

In this quote, she describes a situation in which she acts as an interpreter between her parents and the teachers who were trying to advocate for her educational advancement. Iacovetta reminds us how “Many immigrant children, newly conversant in English, found themselves interpreting for parents and other adults. It placed them in awkward predicaments as prepubescent girls and boys explained the intricacies of a mother's pregnancy symptoms to a doctor or a family's finances to a welfare worker (Iacovetta, “Remaking Their Lives” 151). Lorena provides yet another example of how second-generation immigrant children found themselves caught between two worlds, two languages, two sets of principles, and the need to navigate between them. Her memory of those circumstances is very candid and uninhibited, even with her parents present.

Moving on from there, Lorena concludes her description of her career path moves on to her experience of motherhood by briefly stating that for her, things were easier than they had been for Bruna. Lorena reiterates the struggles her mother had with stepping into the "land of the unknown" and the fears she had, which were exacerbated by her inability to communicate in English. Lorena's postmemory of Bruna's experience is "Not good,"

SF: Tell me your memory of the story of your mother's birth experience.

Lorena: Not good. From what she told me, it was not good because she was by herself, because she was going into the land of the unknown again... She came here by herself, not knowing the language and only having known my dad through letters for five years.... So, [there she was] not really knowing anything, she came into the land of the unknown then with a lot of insecurities, and then to become pregnant and start a family so quickly thereafter... she [my mother] said, “Oh, no, it was very different for me, and I was in pain.” While my doctor suggested that I walk. The more you walk, the better it is for you. And so, I did.

I walked. I was moving, getting up and down and walking around, up and down the corridors, and she would tell me, “Lorena sit down, Lorena go back to the bed. Oh, please don't do that I can't stay here anymore.” And I said, “but Mamma, I feel fine, I feel fine.” I was gathering more energy for myself. Then they come in and measure you and check your blood pressure and all that. They said everything is going along just as it should be and getting very close to the time when the baby's going to be born. “So, would you like to walk over to the birthing room?” And I said, “yes.” Well, that was it! My mother said, “no, I cannot do this.” She watched me get up and go to the room. She went out and met with my in-laws who were waiting and told them. “She's crazy. I don't know what she's doing. If it was me, I wouldn't have done that.” And the next thing you know, the doctor came out and told them Stephanie was born. [...] And I know everyone experiences it differently. I was fortunate because I did have some issues early on in the pregnancy, and I overcame them. I enjoyed my experience.

Lorena grew up absorbing Bruna's past experiences directly and indirectly - through repeated retellings and expressed references - she related to these postmemories as if they were implicitly her own. Lorena's recollection of what her mother had shared filled her with fear when she prepared to give birth to her own daughter Stephanie. Lorena shared a perspective that may be one of the most profound and poignant moments of this entire project. Her story is a case study on how the workings of memory, postmemory and trauma can be transmitted and healed through the conscious intentions of future generations.

During Lorena's pregnancy, Bruna accompanied her to some of her prenatal appointments¹⁷ and was present in the hospital's labour room. Throughout this time, Bruna expressed fears and apprehensions based on her own negative experiences. She was uncomfortable with her daughter's relaxed approach and, for example, her determination to follow medical advice and go for a walk between contractions and move as she laboured. Lorena was carrying a child and the intense postmemories of Bruna's distressing birth experience and wanted to choose a different path for herself. Bruna has described giving birth in quite traumatic terms because she could not understand the nurses and doctors, she felt afraid, lost, and cut off from her network of support that she had left behind in Italy. Lorena describes that while labouring, her mother's experience was – in a sense – superimposed upon her own. During labour and the experience of giving birth, however, rather than becoming tense and afraid, Lorena transcended both her personal and her mother's fears, generating calm and tranquil labour and delivery and thereby “healing” her mother's inherited generational fear and trauma.¹⁸ The greatest challenge for Bruna appears to have been due to facing the birth of her first child alone, cut off from supports, and her fear and confusion that medical personnel could not alleviate as the communication barrier prohibited her from understanding what was happening.

Her mother Bruna, sitting nearby interjects, saying that Lorena handled things far better than she had and was less afraid of saying, for example, that Bruna remembers being unable to leave her baby for a moment in the carriage, as other mothers frequently did while they worked while Lorena took a more relaxed approach.

¹⁷ A note on the organization of this material: the description of this interview follows the sequence as unfolded by Lorena and adheres to this order above chronology.

¹⁸ This was shared in the initial interview with Bruna and Elio both present and was elaborated in the subsequent follow-up interview.

Lorena shifts the conversation to her memories of early motherhood when her first child was an infant and to the advice and criticism, she received for doing things her way. Italian families in the Ward neighbourhood would report everything they saw back to her parents, and this may have contributed to the decision she made with her husband to live and raise their family in another neighbourhood. Although Lorena is very close with her parents and siblings, one senses that unlike Bruna, who felt alone and isolated, Lorena may have felt slightly suffocated by the intense attention she received in her family and community.¹⁹ The dialogue returns to a phrase Lorena used in the conversation prior to her mother's interview.

SF: Lorena, you spoke of "strings of love" connecting this neighbourhood, concerning your parents' place in the community, and your own.

Lorena: Well, about my parents, I think, because my parents are the only two from their [immediate] family, [compared to other] families here, they needed their [Italian speaking] neighbours back then... It was a fibre that was just weaving through them to keep them all together, to keep them going day by day, giving them the support. And myself and my siblings. As we grew up, we saw the evidence of that. So, yes, it [Italian culture] is just in you, and it gives you more reason to look after one another. It speaks to the bond, and to taking it even a little bit further. That's not to say that my siblings and I don't- that we always get along... There are always areas where we have differences of opinion, but

¹⁹ Miller's had identified generational challenges and the discordant views held by first- and second-generation Italian immigrants, which clashed and could create an oppressive atmosphere for the second and third generations. Miller and De Tona reference an economy of emotional debt and sacrifice that play out beneath the surface of the flow of family and community interactions.

we do try our best to overlook those. And when we get together, we try and enjoy each other's company. So even to this day, just last weekend, we got together, and we reminisced, we don't [always] include our parents... So, I think it's all part of the fabric. It's all woven in together. I think it's [there] from when you were young, [through] every stage of your life, and now into adulthood. It's proven to be an essential part of our lives.

Lorena describes her family values of family connections, volunteerism, and active engagement with the Italian community and the broader community. Values that she's instilled in her children and hopes that they will carry on in their future families. However, she notes, some cultural values she hopes will be transmitted and others "modernized or tweaked a bit." When pressed, she simply says that it is difficult to choose, and she can't pick which respects to leave out. Lorena maintains her family's connections to aunts and other relatives in Italy. She veers into a story about a vacation she took to meet her two grandmothers before going to university. Lorena yearned for a deeper connection with the relatives that had remained in Italy. Over the years, she has fostered that connection for herself and her children who have developed relationships with the cousins in Italy, with whom they communicate frequently.

Several times Lorena uses the word "connecting," and that seems to be the best way she approaches family and culture, connecting communities, connecting family members and connecting generations through strings of love that are woven into a cohesive tapestry that encircles and holds her family and community together. She concludes the interview by expanding on the question of where her cultural home is. Lorena's lyrical response is included here:

My cultural home is in Italy. That's not to say that I'm not proud of being Canadian - It's just because that's where I feel everything started. That's where [my parents] came from, so it started there. Canada offers us so much, and when we go back, we see the differences. We're proud to be Canadian and to have what we have here. We talk to our relatives and find out how they live life there, and it's completely different! There are aspects that you want and parts of what we have here... And we'd like to combine it all if only we would be that fortunate! There is beauty in Canada... and there is beauty and history in Italy... when we go to Italy, there's something about it, you just feel like you're at home... Yeah, because that's where it started, I think it's the fabric that's being woven and continues on. Who knows where we're all gonna end up next...?

While similar testimony and a larger sample of second-generation immigrants would further elaborate on this topic of inquiry, Lorena's contribution unites many of the streams of theory and methodology that have informed this paper and regrettably cannot be adequately pursued at this time.

IOLÉ CAZZOLA

Torreselle, Padua

1961



Image 6 Iole Cazzola, January 2020

"Love Brought Me to Canada"

Iole Cazzola, although new to oral history projects in Guelph, graciously agreed to participate in the *Giving Birth* project in support of the preservation of women immigrants' experiences. Having worked for decades at the Guelph's Vice-Consuls General office, she has numerous community connections. The principal investigator of the *Giving Birth* project had previously paid her a brief visit to discuss the aims of the project and to ask Iole for assistance with the procurement of other participants. Iole invited her sister-in-law Lidia and her friend Amabile to be interviewed with her on the same day. All three women were interviewed at the same time and asked similar questions

to those posed to Bruna (as per the interview template). Upon arrival, Iole's husband Olivo was genial and welcoming, demonstrating many photos and artifacts for the researcher and making all feel welcome. Olivo gave the impression of having some good stories to share and would be an excellent candidate for a future interview for the IHP in Guelph.

Throughout the interview, Iole appeared slightly uncomfortable with the personal questions and afterwards said that the process had been harder than she thought. The questions were simple, and the probing as gentle as possible. As the interview progressed, she gradually revealed more about her upbringing in Italy and the immense difficulties she had encountered as a very young child. This description of her conversation will attempt to follow the structure of her revelations to maintain the emphasis placed by Iole on specific aspects of her life.

Iole immigrated from Italy in 1961 and has been an active member of the community working and volunteering in Guelph with Italians and non-Italians for several decades; she held a position as assistant to the Vice-Consul General of Italy since the early 1980s and is now retired. ("End of Era") She has lived in the same house in the Ward for 57 years and has raised three children with her husband, Olivo.

Iole is an elegant, tidy woman and speaks softly in sophisticated English. She opens the interview by saying that love brought her to Canada to marry Olivo who had come to Guelph seven years prior. They were raised in the same northern town of Italy, Torresselle, and were well known to one another. Like Bruna and Elio, they corresponded for years by letter before she made the journey to Canada to marry her fiancé. Instead of traveling by ship from Italy, like so many others, Iole flew to Toronto and describes being filled with excitement and happy anticipation of learning the customs and language of Canada. Unlike most other participants for the *Giving Birth* project, Iole's first impressions of Canada were positive: "It was a good impression. Of course, everything

was different, and everything was new, but I'm the type of person to accept different things. So... except at first, it was very hard not knowing the language..."

However, rather than beginning a new life in Canada, Iole and Olivo always planned to return to Italy after a few years and she planned to use her knowledge of English there, presumably to teach. Once she established herself and had her children, the idea of returning to Italy became increasingly remote until she and Olivo decided to remain and build their lives in Guelph.

At the time of her departure from Italy, Iole, an expert seamstress and artisan, packed her sewing materials and several embroidery pieces, which she still has.²⁰ Iole has shared her passion for handwork and embroidery with her granddaughter who has an interest in her grandmother's work. In this way, Iole has maintained Italian cultural handwork traditions and transmitted them to future generations.

Iole describes her immigration experience and pregnancy in Guelph as not particularly difficult or traumatic because she had a doctor who spoke Italian. However, when giving birth at the hospital that doctor wasn't present, and communication was a challenge. "One thing that helped on that was having a doctor speaking Italian, so through the pregnancy, it was fairly easy for me. But then at the hospital, it was totally different because there was nobody that spoke Italian. So, it was a little hard." She briefly alludes to difficulty with the birth of her first child but declines to go into further detail. The Italian speaking doctor came to the hospital to congratulate her afterwards, and this gesture meant a lot at the time, given the difficulty she experienced.

As a new mother, Iole found a strong support system in the local Italian community and with her sister-in-law Lidia who had immigrated a few years earlier: "It was pretty good, we stayed mostly within our Italian community, you know, and... so it was pretty good. We had a sister-in-

²⁰ a follow-up meeting to photograph some of her pieces was discussed but not pursued due to the onslaught of COVID19

law that had been here already for a few years. Oliver's brother and his wife, and she gave me some points somehow.”

One year later, she and Olivo welcomed their second child, so they had two small children close in age. Iole says that having children made her feel more Canadian and more settled here. She and Olivo shared photographs of their early years in Guelph. One in particular of her small children playing in the snow resonated as a particularly Italian-Canadian image.

A year after I had another child and so when the second one was six months old, and the other was a year and a half, I went to night school to learn English because [merely learning] a word here and there was not the right way for me to learn. So, I went to night school, and that gave me the basis of a proper way to express myself... Olivo would stay home with the two babies.

Other examples in the Guelph community of husbands being involved with and assisting in the domestic sphere abound. In Valeriotte's book for instance, he describes his father in the 1930s, giving his mother a break every Sunday by taking over meal preparation and clean up to the delight of the children who adored being involved in the domestic tasks with their father. (15) The *Giving Birth* project is not extensive, but the background and interviews indicate a diversion from certain stereotypes about the Italian family and warrant further study beyond the scope of this current undertaking. Perhaps migration itself impacted the relationships of spouses and children to each other. It is possible that male Italian immigrants to Guelph may have been more actively involved in the domestic sphere than one might assume.

In her essay Carla De Tona describes motherhood and womanhood as often conflated and as disempowering, especially to Italian immigrant women. Iole departs from this characterization of female Italian immigrants when she gives her husband Olivo credit for supporting her interest

in going to school and learning English. He took care of their two very young babies so she could attend classes and ultimately Iole went on to have a professional career. The *Giving Birth* project is by no means a comprehensive study, but it notes that Iole's experience departs from this stereotype in obvious ways as do several other participants.²¹

Jennifer Scuro, in her essay "Exploring Personal History," describes the Italian female immigration experience as particularly tedious, mainly because women and girls were exclusively responsible for all domestic tasks. This perspective is borne out by many other Italian cultural scholars who describe motherhood in the Italian diasporic context in quite negative terms because of the gender roles and domestic tasks that fell solely to women and mothers. Miller and De Tona also remark on the overbearing duties of motherhood and homemaking being carried exclusively by women in the Italian immigrant communities studied. Through her study, based on the testimony of twenty-nine interviewees Italian-Irish women ages 14-75, De Tona believes that Italian motherhood is a role often marginalized and taken for granted. "A lack of self-confidence was common among the women from the earliest migrant waves; this can be linked to the disempowering roles of women and mothers." (De Tona 107) De Tona also examines intergenerational conflicts that arise as a result of migrations and identifies a cultural myth of motherhood in Italy, a striving for maternal perfection based on the image of the Virgin Mary - a heroic, self-sacrificing ideal. Motherhood, she says, becomes conflated with womanhood, and the primary duty to be a mother comes at the cost of personal development, education and career. There are precious few studies concerning Italian immigrant mothers, so De Tona's work is an

²¹ Iacovetta notes that her study "remains inconclusive on whether gender relations were truly changed because of immigration, but it does indicate that immigrant women had a say in how their households were furnished, what food their family ate, and what their husbands chose to do in work and leisure." (151) Iole's narrative differs from these other forms of agency reserved to immigrant women as she was able to receive an education and obtain a career outside the home.

essential contribution to a survey of existent studies and gives context to certain aspects of this project. However, the Guelph Italian mothers interviewed for the *Giving Birth* project would likely take exception to this characterization. Iole, for instance, broke this mould, as did Lidia and several of the women interviewed.

Without extended family networks to support them in the same way as in Italy, it is possible that increased isolation and mutual dependence had the effect, in some cases, of strengthening cooperation, involvement and blurring some of the sharply articulated boundaries within the domestic sphere, allowing fathers more freedom to engage directly and supportively in raising children. Additionally, since Guelph was not a mass migration destination, and the Italian community was significantly smaller than other "Little Italy's" in the Italian diaspora, specific gender roles imported from the country of origin were perhaps not maintained as stringently as in larger communities.

It's been so many years ago. Some things I don't remember very well, but I know I participated in some classes at the school,²² and that got me involved a little bit in the community and the community in general, not just the Italian community. I don't know what else to add. Then I got involved with the church quite a bit, I did take some courses because I was interested in working with small children. So, I did some volunteer work with the ESL program English as a second language, and so then I took also a course at the University of Waterloo and then after that, I got a job in a daycare and that I really liked. I like to work with small children, so my life was pretty full even though I only worked part-time at a

²² Iole was here referring to English classes at night school, she went on also to attend university.

daycare, and [in in the Vice-Consul's office since 1980s]. it was pretty satisfying for me.

Although Iole does not dwell upon her career in the Vice-Consulate, she had a prominent position in the community that demonstrated self-confidence and empowerment in her abilities to manage simultaneously that position, part-time childcare, and the demands of motherhood. Iole is grateful for her life in Canada and that she shares with her husband, children and grandchildren. When asked how it compares to her siblings' lives back home, she shared a bit about the world she left behind. She describes a tough upbringing, being orphaned at a young age and responsible for her younger siblings. In her teens, Iole went to a sewing school to support the family, and when two of her sisters emigrated to Australia, she vowed not to leave Italy and then had planned to return. Now Iole's daughter lives and works in Italy, and she visits regularly and maintains contact with her sisters in Australia whom she has visited with Olivo and has hosted in Guelph. Once she and her sisters were featured in the magazine of the Association of Padovani nel Mondo under the caption "Quattro Sorrelle in Gamba!" [Four Stand-up Sisters]

Our parents, we lost our parents when we were really young. I was raised by an uncle and aunt, and they also passed away before I had the children. So, I don't think it would have been done much better... Yeah, I was only 16 when my adoptive parents passed away. Well, my uncle actually, but my aunt, she could never get over the loss of him, and she passed away the year after I was married. So, I kind of was the head of the family in those years between 16 and 21. Yes, it was, I had it rough before the marriage, but everything was better afterwards between the two of us and the health of the children.

Iole may not have planned in advance to share her parents' tragic deaths and adoptive parents who also passed away when she was still so young. Possibly the situation of having her two friends in the same room added to her discomfort in sharing her early struggles. Interviews are unpredictable and grow organically in unexpected directions. Portelli says, "an [oral history] interview is not a question-and-answer; rather it is the opening of a narrative space, which the interviewer's presence and questions or comments encourage the interviewee to explore and navigate." In other words, there are many reasons and relationships at play in the interview itself that shape its course even when the questions are standardized and if the participant has no prior intention of taking her responses in a certain direction. How she reevaluates and reconstructs her memories in the moment; the process of remembering is a dynamic and creative process that can lead to unexpected revelations.

Iole closes the interview by saying, "Oh, sorry, I thought it [the interview] was easier than this to do." It is not clear what was the most difficult. Presumably, it was harder than anticipated to discuss her early life. Throughout the interview, Iole maintains her soft, dignified composure. One hopes that she realizes that sharing this story has added increased depth and perspective to the narrative by adding valuable insights into her life and capacity to juggle competing demands. She has demonstrated remarkable resilience and commitment to thriving under the most trying circumstances and maintaining connections with her family and sisters who span the globe and yet are very close. Her work in the community has also impacted many people. Iole managed to go to night-school, master the English language and generate a career and an exemplary life for her family. Hers is a story of resilience, integration, and the dedicated preservation of cultural and familial ties and the *Giving Birth* project is grateful for Iole's contribution.

LIDIA MARCATO

Pescara, Abruzzo

May 1967



Image 7 Lidia Marcato, January 2020

"[Then] you don't think any more about Italy all the time, you've got family there, but you start to get Canadian, more Canadian. Si, because you got a child [who] is Canadian."

Lidia Marcato was introduced to this project by her sister-in-law Iole. She immigrated in 1966 as a young nineteen year old girl. Unlike other participants in this study, Lidia courageously decided to come over on her own, unattached to a fiancé or male relative - a rare move for a woman of her generation and background. Packing little more than a few clothes and the crocheted shawls and keepsakes made by her mother, Lidia set out by herself for Canada, leaving all that was familiar and every support upon which she had relied, gambling on a new life and an unimaginable future.

Iacovetta warns us not to judge Italian immigrant women as helpless because they were identified as dependants. Far from being passive, Italian immigrant women demonstrated incredible agency, determination and strength such as Lidia when she decided to begin a new life independently and immigrate to Canada by herself. Iacovetta explains:

Because of the gender bias that historically has characterized Canadian immigration policy, most women, as noted earlier, have gained entry into Canada as the dependants of men. Even more than that, their legal status as dependants has profoundly influenced the ways in which Canadians and others have viewed them (Iacovetta "Remaking Their Lives" 147).

Most of the participant women interviewed immigrated in the 50s and 60s a time when male and female spheres of work and family roles and duties were clearly defined and sharply articulated. With some exceptions, many women describe large families of origin where children were expected to work and produce to support the household. In fact, Lidia begins the interview by affirming that this was the norm in her own family "I come from Abruzzo, Pescara. I came here just to change, I say, I was tired [of] Italy. My family, we are nine kids - five girls, four brothers, I say, I better go there and see what is happening [in Canada]."

In Italy, there was strict regulation of interactions between the sexes in the post-World War II era. As Iacovetta noted, generally speaking, women did not emigrate on their own unless they were attached to a man, either as a wife, engaged to be married or otherwise related. Several of the women interviewed here immigrated as fiancées and married immediately upon arrival. Some researchers (Rieker) view marrying and emigration as the principal means by which women could escape antiquated social norms. Lidia broke this stereotype by immigrating as a single woman and securing a job before she met and married her husband (Iole's brother).

Lidia arrived in Toronto by airplane and, like Bruna, in the month of May. She too was struck by how cold and “dead” her surroundings were. Immediately she missed her mother and questioned her decision to relocate to Canada and told herself that she might have to return to Italy. In the meantime, she had cousins in Guelph and went to stay with them. Her is a typical example of chain migration wherein relatives immigrate to locations where family members have already established themselves, to form communities:

Hundreds of thousands of Italians chose to make Canada their new home, in an effort to improve their economic welfare. Restrictive immigration policies classifying them as undesirable immigrants did not deter Italians from seeking out opportunities in Canada, relying on family networks and Canada’s need for labourers as means to emigrate (Pier 21).²³

Lidia was undeterred by the challenges she faced and readily found work in Guelph. She quickly developed friendships with other Italian immigrants and found that language was not a significant barrier as they all spoke Italian. Following Lidia's move to Canada, her brother and his wife made the same journey but returned home after two years, having decided Canada was not for them. Lidia reports that when she contacted her parents, her mother chastised her for remaining in Canada and called her crazy while her father fully supported her decision and bid for a better life. Many years later, this difference of opinion between her parents was still clear when they came to Guelph for a visit and it was quite apparent that her mother was unimpressed with Canada, while her father thoroughly enjoyed himself.

²³ <https://pier21.ca/culture-trunks/italy/history>

Initially, nineteen-year-old Lidia was uncomfortable with her lack of English skills and the strangeness of Canada. After she found herself a job in a textile company, things became more comfortable. Lidia met Iole's brother, Tony, at an English course offered by the government for new immigrants. They were married two years later when she was twenty-one and have two children, Angelo and Stephanie.

After her first child, Lidia says she continued to work, but affording a reliable babysitter proved difficult. Tony helped a lot with childcare, dropping and picking up Angelo from a nursery, but after their second child, Stephanie, came along three years later, Lidia decided to stay at home. As mentioned earlier, several of the women interviewed for the *Giving Birth* project report that their husbands and other male relatives were active participants in daily domestic life, assisting with childcare and other duties.

Like Iole, Lidia had an Italian speaking doctor when she delivered Angelo, which put her at ease. She was several days overdue, and the baby was very large and not in the correct position. When Angelo finally arrived healthy and whole, everyone was greatly relieved. Lidia laughs and, with a twinkle and a nod to Iole, begins telling the following anecdote. After the safe arrival of her son, Lidia's brother suggested that now everyone was healthy and well, he and Tony should play a game of soccer at the Italian Canadian Club. After some encouragement from Lidia, Tony relented and decided to go, however, he was so delirious with excitement over the birth of his baby son that he crashed the car in the parking lot. He returned to the hospital room and appeared as if nothing happened and waited for the police to arrive and assess the damage. Lidia's brother, in jest, said the accident was her fault. She and Iole chuckle as she recounts this family anecdote.

Lidia says she appreciates that Tony could be with her, whereas in Italy, he most likely would not have been present at the birth. Additionally, she speculates that with more family

around, in Italy, she would have had more support in raising her children than in Guelph. They relied on babysitters and themselves to make ends meet and juggle work and children. While her brother was in Guelph, before returning to Italy, he was also helpful in looking after her baby when she went to work.

After having an Italian-Canadian child, Lidia says she no longer contemplated returning to Italy, and Canada became her home. She says that after his birth, she felt more Canadian. This contrasts with De Tona's research, which centres around the Italian-Irish population, a group which, although it may have certain similarities to immigrants in Canada, also has marked differences. In her article, De Tona notes that Italian-Irish mothers who had children in Ireland became "invested" with the power to transmit family tradition and culture, thus increasing these mothers' sense of Italian identity whereas, in Guelph, several of the women interviewed for this project report feeling a stronger sense of Canadian-ness after giving birth here. Perhaps the proximity of Ireland to Italy, which facilitates more trips back home to attend to family affairs and staying in closer direct contact with immediate and extended family, played a role in contributing to the continuance of a distinctly Italian cultural identity - rather than a composite, hyphenated identity such as "Italian-Canadian." The Italian-Irish women, because they are geographically closer to Italy, are enmeshed in a transnational network of care that spans Ireland and Italy and can require caring for both children and aged relatives back home. This duty generally falls to women and does not typically include men. The sense of shared motherhood between counties like Ireland and Italy contrasts with the experiences of Italians in Australia or Canada.

De Tona links a lack of self-confidence in the Italian migrant women in Ireland to the disempowering, involuntary role of women as mothers. In this vein, she describes the meaning and role of motherhood and the contradictory forces contained therein that both constrain and nurture,

empower and disempower women. In Italy, when Lidia filled out the application to emigrate, she chose Canada because it felt closer than Australia (where some of her cousins had moved around the same period.) She submitted her immigration application without believing that it would be accepted and is now, in retrospect, very glad that it was.

One regret Lidia has is that because she had to work so much, she felt she was not present with her children as much as she wished. This gap is remedied now, however, by the grandchildren upon whom she dotes; together, they bake, garden, sew and crochet. The hardest thing about beginning her new life and new family in Guelph was missing her mom and other relatives back home. She envied how her sister could pick up the phone and ask mom to come over or bring something over while she was so alone. Lidia maintains contact with her many siblings and has visited quite a bit over the years. Gabaccia notes that female immigrants from various ethnic groups tend to maintain social networks that, in turn, provide a sense of welcome and security for the whole community.

Comparative studies also established that female power in family and community characterized many ethnic groups; it was not unique to Italians... Like other immigrant women, Italian women created and maintained many of the family, kin and social networks that provided social security and a sense of ethnic community for immigrants and their children (Gabaccia "Italian American Women" 42).

Lidia was able to provide her own daughter with the community and closeness that she longed for so badly as a new mother. She is, in fact, very close to her children and grandchildren. Lidia says the spoken Italian language that welcomed and was such a comfort upon her arrival in the Ward is fading from her children's families. They rarely speak and understand very little Italian, preferring to communicate in English. Lidia tries unsuccessfully to instill small amounts of Italian

language into her grandchildren but finds this effort is not supported by her daughter and has come to accept that.

As she reflects on the course of her life, Lidia comments that on her return trips to Italy, she has lately found it too crowded, too busy, and hectic. She now prefers her Canadian lifestyle and says Canadians are kind and respectful. Lidia will always be Italian, and so will her kids, but she says life is better for her in Canada, "more quiet, and relaxed."²⁴

²⁴ The *Giving Birth* project was prevented from following up with Lidia to procure family photographs and images of the crochet work to which she referred, because of the COVID crisis.

AMABILE LOVADINA

Casacorba, Treviso

February 1960



Image 8 Amabile Lovadina, January 2020

“Or I get married or I go back in Italy. At that time, you can’t stay, so I got married!”

Amabile, having just listened to both Iole and Lidia's interviews, seems eager to share her own experiences. She presents as a jolly and cheerful woman and speaks in accented English that is sometimes difficult to decipher. Her enthusiasm is contagious; she laughs frequently and states that her life, and especially the life of her deceased husband, is book-worthy material. Indeed, her narrative is compelling and unusual.

In the previous interviews, the order of information shared, and the narrative arc was preserved as carefully as possible. However, because the dialogue jumped back and forth, the

descriptive information gleaned from Amabile's interview is arranged and presented by the researcher as chronologically as possible.

Amabile's husband, Benny, had recently passed away at the time of the interview, but his presence was quite tangible as he plays a central role in Amabile's narrative. Her anecdotes also provide some insight into adoption procedures during the Second World War, during which mothers, or families, would give up children for whom they were unable to care.

Amabile grew up in a family of thirteen people under the same roof, including her parents, her six siblings, aunt and uncle, and their natural daughter and adopted son, who would eventually become Amabile's husband. During the war, Amabile's adoptive cousin - later to be her husband - was given up by his birth mother at the age of two and adopted by Amabile's aunt and uncle after her aunt had had a series of miscarriages. Because the mother had the idea of reconnecting with her child later, it was stipulated that he not change his last name, which caused some confusion when he immigrated to Canada as his adoptive fathers' son. When he was fourteen, twelve years after his adoption, his mother made contact and wanted her son back. According to Amabile, he and her aunt and uncle refused, but later, when he began work and moved out, he lived close to his birth mother in Venice, they had a relationship and saw each other. Presumably, that ended when he later immigrated to Canada with his adoptive family.

In this instance, Amabile prioritizes the postmemory that she inherited from her husband, aunt and uncle, who, although extended family, living under the same roof when she was growing up. Amabile indirectly absorbed the details of her husband's early life and wanted them established "on record." Hirsch asks, "Is postmemory limited to the intimate embodied space of the family, or can it extend to more distant, adoptive witnesses?" (Hirsch, "Generation Postmemory" 208) Amabile, expresses the postmemories she witnesses and received through her lifelong relationship

to Benny Memory is adaptive and creative, as Portelli has said, it is a performance and a generative act that happens in the moment, in the particular constellation of circumstances established by the interview itself. Amabile transmits her husband's early memories and life history before her own. She is still grieving Benny's loss and, in the context of an oral history interview, may seek to highlight his experiences in an effort to forestall or prevent his memory from fading. Hirsch has explored similar fundamental questions about the workings of postmemory and poses the following questions for our contemplation:

I have argued that postmemory is not an identity position but a generational structure of transmission deeply embedded in such forms of mediation. Family life, even in its most intimate moments, is entrenched in a collective imagination shaped by public, generational structures of fantasy and projection and by a shared archive of stories and images that inflect the transmission of individual and familial remembrance. (213)

Upon his arrival in Halifax, Amabile reports that her husband spent time in jail because there was an issue with the last name on his passport not matching her uncles. Apparently, it took some paperwork and a friend in Ottawa to sort out his documents properly and allow him entry into Canada. Amabile's husband worked for four years in Guelph before he brought Amabile over. Three years after his arrival in Canada, he went back to Italy for a visit, he and Amabile were both engaged to other people but fell in love and decided to build a life together in Canada. She followed him over within six months and married him ten days after her arrival. Unlike other women who may have barely known their prospective husbands, Amabile knew hers like a brother.

Amabile's first impressions of Canada were quite typical of Italian immigrant women - it was February and "freddissimo" although she had packed what she thought were warm clothes. In

her suitcase, Amabile brought only few important items, toiletries, confetti and party favours in anticipation of her wedding day. In her article “Making Space for Domesticity,” Maddalena Tirabassi, reports that Italian-American immigrants to New York often packed dowry items such as cooking utensils, linens, crochet lace, photographs music sheets, religious items, porcelain, to name a few. (62) The image of a young girl, setting off into the unknown carrying little else but party favours and confetti for an impending wedding that she could barely envision, is quite striking.

Amabile became pregnant the same year she was married. Although it was tough because, like others, she desperately missed her mother, she took comfort in the family and community. Amabile, despite the language barriers, describes how wonderful the hospital in Guelph was during those days. She stayed for nine days and received regular back massages from the nurses that were followed up by home visits after discharge. At this point in the interview, Iole interjects that she had been in the hospital for ten days herself and felt she was also treated very well. Lidia agrees too but cannot remember the duration of her stay. The consensus is that they received much better hospital care than their children did, and today, new mothers are routinely sent home the following day after birth.

For Amabile, the difficulties began after she left the hospital with her infant daughter. Initially, she was quite alone because her husband had to travel for two months, during which time a cousin was able to get Amabile to her appointments and errands. Additionally, upon Benny's return, he was suffering from an attack of rheumatism in his hands. Her daughter cried continuously and would not eat. Amabile believes that her stress and nerves led to her milk drying up, and she was unable to feed her. Mother and infant were both in acute distress when the doctor was called on a Sunday:

[speaking of her two-day-old infant] Anyways, so, I cry, she cries, and so I phone the doctor crying. This was a Sunday, and I forgot, so I said well that I got a really crying [baby] crying for a long time. He [the doctor] comes over to my place, and he says, "well, she's hungry!" I say "hungry?" but there is nothing [no milk]. I think the nervous[ness] a bit yeah... the nervous [the state that I was in impacted my milk production] So, my husband, and he goes to buy milk, the powder, you know? That kind of formula and then my God, she eats a whole bottle! All of the bottle!

Things improved from there, and Amabile says that after that initial hurdle, life settled down, and she received a lot of practical help from her husband and aunt and uncle, who assisted with making up bottles, and household chores. In the example, she describes being very isolated and insecure about caring for and feeding her child without any maternal guidance and very little support. As she recounts this period, she laughs merrily at the difficulties she faced and how her big hungry baby cried all the time. Her memory of the early days of motherhood has taken on a comical tinge, but clearly, it was no joke as she was living through it age twenty-five.

When asked directly about how the birth of her children impacted her sense of cultural identity, she doesn't address the question but reiterates her satisfaction at being in Guelph and how things have turned out. In the beginning, she missed home and wished to return to Italy as some other immigrants did; they packed up and went back, deciding Canada was not for them. Amabile is content with her choice to stay and raise her family in Canada. She maintains close contact with her family in Italy and, over the years, has travelled back regularly to visit.

LIVIA TONIN

Casacorba, Treviso

September 1953



Image 9 Livia Tonin, January 2020

“I do whatever I feel like doing, nobody is my boss anymore. So, this is it, Sharon, the life sometimes is nice, but the life can't be good all the time as long as you live, you know? Everyone have a cross to carry”

This series of interviews concludes with Livia Tonin. Like Bruna, she was previously featured in the Italian Heritage Project (IHP) in 2016 and interviewed about immigration but about not the experience of motherhood specifically. She gave several memorable and charming anecdotes about her journey to Canada and her life over the past six decades. An article about Livia was

published by Sharon Findlay in *SURG Journal*²⁵ outlining her journey; however, when presented with the printed article she exclaimed: "If I had known you were serious, I would've told you the real story!"

Livia exemplifies grace and good humour, and she is well-spoken and quick-witted. At 89, she is active and independent; Livia welcomes the researcher for the *Giving Birth* project into her home and jokes about her haircut, dying her hair for thirty years and not sharing her cough.

Like many Italian immigrants during the post-war period, Livia comes from humble beginnings, more specifically from a family of farmers in Casacorba, near Venice. She describes her family of eighteen people living under the same roof of a rented two-room apartment. WWII ended when Livia was fifteen, she recalls buying necessities like bread and salt on the black market, food vouchers that were never sufficient and the sound of bombs dropping on Milan, Venice and Padua. Livia counts her family of origin as lucky because her brothers were still too young to have been drafted into the army and because the family owned a milking cow. Still, she says that there was never enough to eat, and she enjoyed working out of the home, shopping or running errands, or as a babysitter in Milan after the war had ended because her house was too crowded. Livia seems to embody the description by Debra Nash-Chambers, of the article "Creating a Global Guelph: Contextualizing The Last Fifty Years of Population Growth" published in the Guelph Historical Society as she defines as the typical Italian immigrant to Guelph:

The largest early groups of Guelph's Italians came from Treviso (near Venice) in northern Italy and Calabria in the south especially San Giorgio (St. George) Morgeto in Italy's "toe." Poor people, primarily from rural backgrounds, they left

²⁵ Findlay, Sharon. "The Italian Heritage Project." *SURG Journal*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2017, <https://journal-lib-uoguelph-ca.subzero.lib.uoguelph.ca/index.php/surg/article/view/4082>.

a country where the hand of government was weak and the will of landlords strong, Most were former rural labourers, who had perhaps only secured seasonal work as "giornalieu" - day labourers, or they had been "contadini" - peasants who owned or leased small plots of land. (Crowley)

Like many Italian immigrant women, Livia left Italy as a bride, to immigrate and marry her fiancé upon arrival. She says she was not afraid of the future because she knew what she was leaving behind, and Italy, in the postwar period, was chaotic. A vast number of Italians emigrated across the globe on mass in what is referred to as the second wave of Italian migration to Canada. Livia embarked on the nine-day ship voyage with a small suitcase, an alarm clock and very little else but her dreams for a brighter future. From Halifax, she boarded the train that would take two days to arrive in Guelph. She recalls how she was not nauseous or sick as some of the other passengers; in fact, she rather enjoyed herself with a friend who was also making the same journey.

It [the ship's journey] was okay for me never never bothered me, you know, never bothered my stomach. But some were really sick too at that time you know, in the boat. Yeah, but I was okay. I enjoyed it because with a friend you know we go all over the place [laughter] we enjoyed. And from Halifax, we take two days from Halifax to Guelph. The train was like a train for animals, you'd put animals in there. It was not soft where you sit, only boards, but two days we took it to reach here... Ahh! Close your eyes and forget about sleep.

We closed our eyes ... and it stopped a lot of the times, there were a lot of stations where they stopped, not only one or two because if they'd go fast, we would reach before then two days, for sure. This is what it was. Stop. Stop. Stop. I say. We

hope someday to reach there... It's true. I see [saw that it was] much different than where I had come from, in those days it was not very nice to live in Italy, you know, especially as a farmer. I come from a farmer's house. There was not even enough to eat sometime. We was eighteen in the family, too. So, it was not very nice and Canada I saw that it was a different country, and for sure it was better than there, in those days... It was September when I arrived; it was no snow at that time. You can't see much on the train, you know ... I see a lot of, I remember, I saw a lot of wood in the river, they put the wood, logs, yes, I think they after they used that to do houses or whatever they needed.

Livia married one month after her arrival. She knew her future husband Gino quite well because they had grown up as neighbours in Casacorba, and he had come over to Canada two years prior. Gino already had quite a lot of relatives living in Guelph and in The Ward specifically. Livia felt quite at home in the Italian community, and at first, she didn't perceive her lack of proficiency in English as a barrier and mainly interacted with other Italian speaking immigrants. However, when she went outside of the community, she did encounter difficulties. Initially, she felt insecure and "bad", "[The first] five years, it was bad, you know, if you don't know how to speak, you close your mouth and be good." In a job interview, no one could understand the spelling of her name and she was finally advised by a cousin to simply go by "Lydia" as it was more readily understood:

Well, even when I came, I go for the job interview. And I say Livia Tonin. They don't understand me, "Livia," and they say "spell your name." And I said "Livia," you know "Livia", and I have to write Livia for them. But my cousin, she says "just say, Lydia." So, they understand how to do it, but Livia they just can't put it

down, isn't that awful? And they've gone to school you know; I don't have much school but Livia they just [wouldn't] put it down.

When she gave birth to Diane, her first child, Livia had a some friends and in-laws in Guelph, as well as an aunt to help her. While she deeply missed her mother and sisters, she felt a growing sense of community, that she says felt like family, and other women who taught her whatever she needed to know as a first-time mother:

Well, I would have liked to be there in Italy, [with] my mother, all my sisters, everybody, to see my baby. I remember my aunt come there, the first time she came, my aunt and I remember I cry because the first baby you have you know far away for everybody, and it is an incredible joy, you know, and I cried then with my aunt yes, because the joy to have the baby. Yeah, but only the first, and then you know it was a different story.

In reflecting on what it was like for mothers back in Italy, Livia recalls her own mother. She had eight children at home with a midwife as no one went to doctors or received medical care throughout their pregnancies. On the one hand, she says, her mother was lucky not to have had any birth complications like others. An aunt, she remembers, for example, ran into serious trouble, and her baby died unnecessarily "they killed it" due to a lack of available medical care. On the other hand, her mother was unlucky because she was trapped in a problematic marriage. Livia's father, a cow salesman, would sometimes drink too much at the hotel on his way home and "wasn't nice." Today her mother would have gotten a divorce, but in those days, it was not an option. Livia had a great marriage and expresses gratitude for Gino, who was gentle and kind. She had no complications giving birth to her first child, Diane. Five years later, she had Robert, and fourteen years after that she had Michael, when Diane was already eighteen. Giving birth to Canadian

children did not impact Livia's sense of cultural identity one way or the other as she was surrounded by a community of Italian friends and extended family. Today the Ward, the formerly Italian neighbourhood, has changed, however, and Livia feels little attachment to her current neighbours who rarely spend time outside. Although they wave and are generally polite, they keep to themselves and never come over for coffee or a visit. She doesn't depend on her neighbours because if she needs anything, she prefers to call her sons, whereas before she would feel no hesitation in knocking on a door or calling to a neighbour for something or to mind a child.

Some of Livia's stories were shared previously for the IHP; such as, for example, the story of how she lost her engagement ring on the ship from Genoa to Halifax. In comparing her earlier 2016 narrative to the most recent one, her memories have remained stable without any noticeable alterations. In the interview for the IHP, however, Livia did not discuss her birth experience of her first child Diane, nor the subsequent death of her daughter at age 23, which she instead wanted to share with the *Giving Birth* project.

She speaks briefly of Diane's passing; it was an extremely painful time in her life. Diane was married at age 21. The picture in her wedding dress with her youngest little brother Michael is the one Livia has in her hands (in the photograph included on page 68). One year and a half later, in the wintertime, in the deep snow, Diane's car went off the road into a river, and she was killed instantly. Livia will not dwell on her grief, but it is palpable. She holds her daughter's photograph tenderly. There is a poignant moment of silence. "Everyone has their cross to bear," she says, and the atmosphere is filled with tremendous loss.

At nearly ninety years of age, Livia still plays Bocce ball once a week as she has done for the past 35 or 40 years and gardens. She is filled with gratitude every day for the impeccable home she has lived for the past 66 years and looks back with satisfaction over her life in Canada. When

asked where home is, Livia laughs and declares home is here, where she is happy because she is free to do what she likes, and no one is her boss, "Ah, [home is] here because I do whatever I feel like doing nobody is my boss any more. So, this is it, Sharon, the life sometimes is nice, [but] sometimes the life can't be good all the time, as long as you live, you know."

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

DISCUSSION

The oral history approach I have employed in this research project, combined with the insights acquired through studies in memory provides a means of collecting and understanding individuals' lived experiences whose voices would otherwise have faded into the recesses of history. Further, the inquiry into the domestic sphere, the private space of childbirth and nursing and caring of infants, has been conceived and supported through this unique tandem approach of memory studies and oral history. This combined methodology facilitates the collection, preservation of women's narratives, in their own words, as an invaluable contribution to our understanding of the female Italian-Canadian experience in Guelph in the post-war era. Bruna, Lorena, Iole, Lidia, Amabile and Livia, have shared their perspectives on immigration and integration in the predominantly Anglo-Canadian community. Several describe an initial negative impression of Canada and their contemplated return home to Italy, as many did at that time. All of the women interviewed felt more grounded and at home in Canada after giving birth to their first child; however, not all felt an increased sense of Canadian identity. Each participant revealed her memories of what she left behind and how she established her new life.

As Luisa Del Giudice says eloquently, "oral history, not only supplements the historic record but may also create a historic record where none previously existed. And not infrequently, oral history research leads to advocacy, as a scholar attempts to come to terms with the question, why has this story been excluded from the historic record?"

The six interviews collected for *Giving Birth: Italian-Canadian Migration and Motherhood* in no way constitute a representative survey of the Italian-Canadian experience of life and motherhood in Guelph; however, this project endeavours a sensitive portrayal of the unique set of circumstances remembered by a select sample of women from similar backgrounds. These

narratives, conveyed in poignant detail, do not conform to common stereotypes around gender roles and female agency, and deviations are noticed and recorded. As Iacovetta says, it is folly to overgeneralize the experiences of immigrant women and in so doing render them helpless when in fact they employed agency in many ways: “We make such generalizations at the risk of rendering immigrant women faceless and entirely passive and of ignoring the complexity of their lives.” Iacovetta asks us to:

move beyond stereotypes of immigrant women as exclusively passive victims, whether of sexist immigration policies, segmented labour markets, or domineering husbands. [...] [and] view them as historical actors who, with varying degrees of success, pursued adjustment strategies amid serious material and other constraints. They did so, too, in the face of external pressures from social experts and other enthusiastic Ontarians determined to transform them into Canadians - all the while meeting daily obligations to husbands, children, compatriots, and employers. (159)

This MRP likewise rejects stereotypes and seeks simply to understand more about the individual realities faced by each woman included in this small survey and to give voice to perspectives that may have been previously overlooked. The domestic sphere of immigrant Italian women’s lives has not yet received much attention from Canadian scholars, and as Coppola reminds us, “Allowing women to speak for themselves provides an opportunity to tell their life stories, define their personal identity and interpret the meaning of their own lives in their own words.” (57) In her studies of American-Italian women, Luisa Del Giudice has made significant progress in uncovering and preserving the female experience by concentrating on folklore, songs, traditional food recipes, and religious and cultural festivals. In the past immigrant women, as well

as male researchers, may have been prevented by a mutual discomfort from exploring intimate and vulnerable life experiences, namely labouring, giving birth and nursing infants, and then asking that participants to vividly recall those periods, leading to the neglect of certain aspects of the human experience. (Del Negro 16)

A cultural theme briefly touched upon in the introduction of this paper is the Italian aesthetic value of *la bella figura*. According to Coppola, this concept, which includes tangible presentation such as fashion and personal grooming, also encompasses behavioural codes of conduct that strive to present a positive self-image to society. Coppola believes that in publishing her aunt's real-life story, which ended their relationship, she had inadvertently violated this cultural tenant through the revelation of challenges her aunt had faced. Tirabassi in her work on the Italian American community and domesticity corroborates this position:

The Italian cultural construct of *la bella figura* (making a “good showing,” as a way to accumulate social capital, preserve honor, and avoid shame), so deeply embedded in Italian American identity, best typifies the experience of migration and ethnicization. Ethnographer Gloria Nardini defined this construct as the key to “Italian American social interaction.” The centrality of *la bella figura* complex made first- and second-generation immigrant *salotti* (living rooms/parlors) utterly unutilized, waiting for special guests to show up, and introduced the distinctive model of the two kitchens the best one on the main floor meant to be used only on special occasions, and the other, in the basement, for everyday use. (Tirabassi 70)

When interviewing Italian-Canadian women in Guelph, the concept of *la bella figura* may indicate why in some cases, while recalling a particular experience, there appears to be a need to

re-prioritize or re-evaluate the impact of the challenges they faced as in the example of Bruna. As we have seen, Lorena, her daughter, contested her mother's version of her experience. This redirection of the gaze or averting focus to recontextualize an experience may not precisely fit Portelli's definition of false memory in the broad political, ideological or sociological sense. However, on an individual level, the removal of certain aspects of an experience, the editing and sanitizing of challenging moments, or maintaining a posture of *la bella figura* could denote a false positivity, denial of certain hardships and the falsification of memory. The inclusion of this concept, *la bella figura*, is meant to raise possible readings of individual experiences but never give a definitive answer. Theoretical material is useful in providing some framework but is not geared toward creating generalizations and stereotypes to encapsulate distinct individuals. This exemplifies the precarious edge of interpretation that must be handled carefully and respectfully in oral history work so that narratives offered by these women stand independently and within a clear context without the latter overshadowing the former. Coppola maintains that oral history is a crucial means of preserving women's voices, which until relatively recently have been excluded from the historic record partially because of their posture of silence;

Oral history plays a critical role in women's history, creating a space for voices that have long been silent in a history largely written by men. However, an internal culture of silence has even further delayed this opportunity for Italian American women (56)

Bruna remembers the trauma of giving birth alone in a situation where she was unable to communicate with the nurses or doctors. She transferred this experience in a postmemory, both directly and indirectly, to her daughter. Lorena vehemently contradicted her mother's reframing of what happened, in the interview, as though her mother's story, inherited as postmemories, were

her own. In a sense, they had become hers as she grew up in an atmosphere infused with the realities her parents lives conveyed directly and indirectly. Memory studies does not offer a clear answer, and oral history studies does not offer a clinical diagnosis; instead, these two approaches allow us to contemplate possibilities and anomalies without presuming to have answers.

Lorena offers the *Giving Birth* project extraordinary insight into the second-generation perspective, born and raised a “Guelphite”; even though she describes the street in which she and her brothers grew up as united by “strings of love,” she maintains that her cultural home is in Italy. Lorena yearns even more for the land “where it all began” and has maintained connections with extended family in Italy. She is quite candid, as is Bruna, about the predicaments she faced as her parents’ only translator as a child, as well as her lack of agency in choosing her major in university.

When asked about their cultural identity, Iole, Lidia and Amabile felt a deeper sense of Canadian-ness after the births of their first children, but also a responsibility to pass on Italian culture and values to the next generation. Lidia shares how little her own children concern themselves about Italian-ness and how they have, in fact, abandoned the language. Bruna and Livia, although at home in Guelph, denied feeling any changes to their cultural identity or Italian-ness.

Livia shares her experience giving birth to Diane and then to her daughter's tragic passing twenty-three years later. There was a moment in the interview where she and the researcher contemplated Diane's image and the silence, and all that could not be stated was palpable. Diane dressed in her wedding dress, gazes down at her youngest brother Michael, his little right hand curled around the stem of a flower, with her hand encompassing his. Their now-elderly mother cradles this photo over thirty-five years later, a world of tragedy in her eyes. Livia has photos and numerous albums of extended and immediate family that she displays with pride. She is matter-

of-fact and moves the conversation to other things. In Bruna's home as well, family members who have passed, such as her young grandson are featured prominently.

Due to COVID19, the *Giving Birth* project was unable to follow up with Lidia and Amabile for photographs and artifacts that could add more breadth to the study of photographs, their relevance and their relationship to memory and postmemories experienced by these individuals. The procurement and interpretation of photographs would have been pursued in greater depth. Hopefully, this will be a possibility later on once restrictions ease. In retrospect, had there been a way to foresee what March 2020 brought and the limits that lockdown imposed, the *Giving Birth* project would have returned to pursue additional images and follow-up interviews and would have endeavoured to interview an additional three or four second-generation Italian-Canadian women. Since the onslaught of COVID19, the existing audio and video recordings of the six Italian-Canadian women telling their personal life histories are even more precious and poignant as it has become impossible to interact with people in the same manner - especially the elderly. While it is appropriate to feel gratitude that these interview discussion were recorded in January and February, this relief is tainted with grief over the unknowable number of personal narratives that have already been lost forever in Guelph and elsewhere.

A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON "ITALIAN-NESS"

In her article *Exploring Personal History*, Jennifer Scuro asserts that she is uniquely positioned to conduct an exploratory oral history research project into her grandmother's life and times because of her Italian heritage. She states that indigenous ethnographers are better able to study their own "culture from the inside:" (44)

There is a subtle context for the conditions of immigrant women's experience; this interpretation is descriptive and compensatory of that context and should not be simply understood as a contribution to oral history. This study is a work of interpretation offered *with care*, sensitive to the contexts that can allow for the experience of my grandmother to be seen as unique, and more importantly, as an opportunity to reconsider standardizes approaches to immigrant and women's history. (44)

While I do not dispute her insider's perspective, I feel it prudent, especially in the current political atmosphere, to respond to this statement and outline why, as principal investigator, I believe I am qualified to conduct research into the Italian community despite my lack of direct Italian heritage through blood or ancestry.

Since the age of twelve, I began travelling to southern Italy to work in a classical chamber music festival that was conceptualized and run by my parents and my older brother, who are all professional musicians. The festival *Incontri di Canna* [Meeting in Canna] developed into a cultural exchange with Canna, a tiny village in the mountains of Calabria with a population of only one thousand residents (the population doubles or triples in the summer months) and that did not appear on most local maps. Every summer, professional musicians were invited to come and play chamber music for three weeks – they came from over twenty different countries. Several regular

attendees came from prominent orchestras such as the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, The London Philharmonic, The Camerata in Austria and many more. Musicians were encouraged to bring their family members and willingly paid their own travel expenses. Upon arrival, the Comune [Town Hall] of Canna covered the accommodation cost, either in rented flats, villas or palazzi, and two meals per day. No money changed hands between the musicians and the municipality. Rehearsals took place daily, and concerts were organized every Friday and Saturday evening and were free for all residents of Canna to attend. Additionally, the musicians offered free lessons to local children and music students and organized "run out" concerts in other towns with the fee going directly to the Comune. For the musicians and their families, it amounted to both an inexpensive family vacation complete with mountains, spectacular beaches, cultural events and immersion in the southern agricultural area and all the charm contained therein.

I provide this description to explain why since 1997, I had a reason to spend my summers in Calabria. Our family purchased small flats in the oldest historic part of town. We would arrive in Canna well in advance of the festival to prepare and stay long after it ended. We began to integrate into the community, played at weddings, funerals and various celebrations, developing deep relationships with individuals and families. I picked up both the Italian language and a fair amount of dialect as well. I spent as much time as I could on a local goat farm, assisted with harvesting fruit and chickpeas (separating the chaff with a shovel involved flinging them in the air and letting the wind carry off the husks), spent days making tomato sauce and became deeply connected on a personal level to the culture and customs of this region. We were always outsiders, referred to as "the Americans" or "the Canadians," but although we would never become Italian by blood, we developed a love and respect for Italy's people and values. Last year my father received honorary citizenship in Canna in a ceremony following the final concert of the season.

I have played music at the weddings of couples whose children are now young adults. I have distinct memories of grandparents and others who have long since died. I believe that because I mainly travelled to Canna in the summers (with a few exceptions), to what still feels like another, alternate world, my memories of people and friends from Canna remain quite sharp - it is certainly different than the perspective of someone who grew up in Canna or lives there year-round. From this vantage point, I developed lasting friendships and have also lost close friends from Canna, who passed away. Several years ago, due to life circumstances, I missed a couple of summer visits to Canna. Upon my return, I looked around at the population of Canna that summer and marvelled at the detailed knowledge I held within of so many kinship ties, relationships, memorable anecdotes, names and faces. At that moment, I recognized within myself a profoundly heartfelt and lifelong, enduring connection to Canna and the people who live there. My young daughter has now developed her own friendships and connection to Canna; she participates enthusiastically in all of the religious festivals, processions, traditional holiday events, folk music, dancing, folktales, fables, lore and even local magic shows.

I am an outsider, I was not raised inside the Italian home traditions, but I have watched from outside with admiration and attention. As one who celebrates Italian culture, over the past several years as I dedicated myself to preserving the oral history narratives of Italian immigrants to Guelph – all of whom both marvelled at my "mangiacake" origins and appreciated my interest – I question what “Italian-ness” actually means, and who has a right to claim it. One student I worked with was actually born and raised for sixteen years of his life in Rome, but as his parents are Egyptian and not Italian citizens so he cannot claim to be Italian although that is the culture in which he feels at home and that shaped his identity the most. How about the children of Italian immigrants, second or third generation, who are familiar with the cultural values and norms that

were imported when their families immigrated, but cannot relate to present-day Italy? Can third-generation individuals who count one-quarter Italian by blood claim Italian-ness? And could such an indefinable, ethereal concept ever be evaluated tangibly? What are the deciding factors, heritage, blood, language? As someone who cannot claim biological Italian-ness, I propose that biographically, over twenty-three years of personal engagement, I have developed an undeniable and unbreakable link to Italy. I find this aspect of insider/outside identity politics troubling. I disagree that a researcher must be biologically connected to a specific culture in order to treat it with respect and sensitivity when a genuine interest and care are, in my opinion, what really makes a difference.

Furthermore, I believe that my perspective on Italian culture is far from being "imperialist" and provides an additional level of respectful critical engagement with the source material. Not being Italian, I do not possess any preconceived attitude towards the Guelph Italian population. While many cultural aspects may be self-evident to someone from within the community, I do not take anything for granted.

On a personal level, I can relate to feeling out of place in a foreign culture. I have experienced Italian hospitals on several occasions over the years. I empathize with accounts shared in the *Giving Birth* project of grappling with language barriers to grasp what is happening in critical situations. More recently, I accompanied my parents to a Calabrian hospital and acted as their interpreter. Although my glimpses of these issues are minute when compared to the immigrant experience, they at least provide some insight - a visceral comprehension and compassion for the women in this project, as mothers, as foreigners, and even some hint of what Lorena experienced as the primary translator for her parents. I do not claim firsthand knowledge but rather an affinity to the participants, care, and sense of shared understanding.

My biographical connection to Italy, and particularly to the southern region, is a lifelong association that will forever be part of my own complex cultural identity. I may not be an "indigenous ethnographer" as Scuro claims to be, (44) but I hope that my ancestry - sixth generation Scottish-Irish-Canadian - does not discredit my perspective in the eyes of actual Italians and their descendants.

I am eternally grateful for the faith with which these remarkable women entrusted their life stories and birth experiences to me. I hope that my humble contribution and effort to preserve their invaluable life experiences in my MRP reflects the high esteem with which I regard each of these women as an act of care and service to each individual and to the Guelph Italian community.

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APPENDIX

1. Selected images (4) of pages in the documents Italians Listed in the Guelph City Directory, compiled by Savina (Valeriotte) Scannell, and housed in the Wellington Archives.

ITALIANS LISTED IN THE GUELPH CITY DIRECTORY			1915		
Compiled by Savina (Valeriotte) Scannell					
1889					
JOSEPH IANDEO	POLISHER	37 ALICE STREET	MICHELE IMBRO		16 1/2 WILSON STREET
FELIX D'ANDREO	LABOURER	37 ALICE STREET	GIOVANNI FILONI	LABOURER	191 FERGUSON STREET
JOHN MARA	GENTLEMEN		JOHN ROSINI	LABOURER	69 METCALFE STREET
ANTHONY MARCHESI	TAILOR		MIKE RUSIO	SHOEMAKER	150 QUEBEC STREET
JOHN VERNEY	CARPENTER		JOHN TANTARDINI	GROCER	28 WILSON STREET
ALBERT BUSSELLA	CLERK/BOND & CO.		WILLIAM TORRIONI	LABOURER	113 YORK ROAD
GEORGE BUSSELLA	CLERK/BOND & CO.		JOSEPH VALERIOTE	LABOURER	176 ALICE STREET
GEORGE CHARBONO	PIANO KEY MAKER		MICHELE VALERIOTE	GROCER	134 ALICE STREET
JAMES CHARBONO	PIANO KEY MAKER		ANGELO VALERIOTE	LABOURER	168 ALICE STREET
			JOSEPH VERONI	GROCER	126 ALICE STREET
			AUGUSTINO VENTRY	LABOURER	101 ALICE STREET
			VINCENZO NASSO	STOVE WORKS	18 SURREY STREET
			FRANK VISINTIN	LABOURER	53 SACKVILLE STREET
1892					
M.S. SCHARIO	MACHINIST	FAISLEY ROAD			
WM. SCHARIO	DAIRYMAN	FAISLEY ROAD SOUTH			
1894					
FELIX D'ANDERIO	LABOURER	LANE STREET			
JOSEPH D'ANDERIO	BELL PIANO POLISHER	CORK STREET			
1905					
WM. COLOMBO	BUTCHER	562 WOOLWICH STREET			

1915			1922		
MASSIMO BALCOI	MASON	170 FERGUSON STREET	GIROLEMO BARBARO	MALLEABLE IRON	205 FERGUSON
CARLO BORDIGNON	LABOURER	51 WEBSTER STREET	FORUM BELIE	LABOURER	46 BEDFORD ROAD
GIUSEPPE BORDIGNO	LABOURER	185 FERGUSON STREET	JOHN BELLETTI		114 MORRIS STREET
PASQUALE BORIN (WIDOW)		142 ALICE STREET	GIUSEPPE BERNARDI	LIGHT & HEAT	78 THOMAS
JOHN BRUNATTO	LABOURER	18 INKEMAN STREET	FORTUNATO BERNARDO	TIRE BLDR	78 THOMAS
GIACOMO CAREE	LABOURER	164 ALICE STREET	JOSEPH BERNARDO	LABOURER	78 THOMAS
GIACOMO CAREE	LABOURER	160 ALICE STREET	MANNY BORIN	O.A.C.	142 ALICE STREET
TONY CARLO	LABOURER	81 KENT STREET	KATHLEEN BORIN	NORTHERN RUBBER	142 ALICE STREET
PIETRO CICCONE	LABOURER	18 INKEMAN STREET	PASQUA BORIN	WED JACKMORE	142 ALICE STREET
MASSIMO CREMNA	BRICKLAYER	146 ELIZABETH STREET	SADIE BORIN	NORTHERN RUBBER	142 ALICE STREET
ANDREO DAMAREN	LABOURER	51 WEBSTER STREET	TONY BOSELLI		95 ALICE STREET
GIOVANNI DAMENATO	CITY GAS WORKS	74 THOMAS STREET	JOSEPH BASSO	MALLEABLE IRON	172 ALICE STREET
DOMINIC DAMAREN	LABOURER	51 WEBSTER STREET	CHAS BOTT	LABOURER	170 ELIZABETH STREET
JOSEPH D'ANGELO	TRACKMAN G.T. RY	69 INKEMAN STREET	MAGDELEN BOTT	WIDOW GEO	43 SHORT
MIKE D'ANGELO	TRACKMAN G.T. RY	69 INKEMAN STREET	MATILDA BOTT	WED MEDFORTH	43 ONTARIO STREET
ROCCO FANTINI	LABOURER	21 CARMEN STREET	EMIL BRAZOLOT	PAGE HERSEY	128 YORK ROAD
ANTONIO FERRARO	LABOURER	51 WEBSTER STREET	JULIA BENATO	MALLEABLE IRON	172 ALICE STREET
DOMINIC FIDON	LABOURER	95 MORRIS STREET	ANGELINA BRUNATO	WED PIETRO	49 SACKVILLE
LOUIS FERRARO	TAYLOR FORBES	156 ALICE STREET	CARLO CAMPAGNARO	FRUITS	34-36 WILSON
SALVATORE FRANCESCHINI	MOLDER TAYLOR FORBES	55 WEBSTER STREET	GIOVANNI CAMPAGNOLO	LABOURER	21 GORDON STREET
JOHN FRASSON	LABOURER	BRIDGE STREET	E. CARDOW	PARTRIDGE RUBBER	174 WATER STREET
PASQUALE GIOVANNARO	LABOURER	28 WILSON STREET	GIACOMO CAREE		160 ALICE STREET
ALPHONSO IMBRO	LABOURER	144 QUEBEC STREET	WILLIAM CAREE		160 ALICE STREET
COLEGERO IMBRO	LABOURER	144 QUEBEC STREET	JOSEPH CARRERA	PARTRIDGE RUBBER	183 ALICE STREET
			ANGELO CATANIO	MECHANIC	114 MORRIS STREET
			X CATENEO	LABOURER	114 MORRIS STREET

2. Interview Questions & Transcripts (selections of) all took place in January 2020

REB approved Interview Questions

1.
 - 1.a What first brought you to Canada?
 - 1.b Were you already acquainted with anyone in Canada before you arrived? Family?
 - 1.c Where did you first arrive and when?
 - 1.d How? (means of transit)
 - 1.e Who did you come with?
2. How old were you when you immigrated? From which part of Italy?
3. What was the journey to Canada like?
4. What do you remember of your first impression of Canada?"
5.
 - 5.a Did you encounter any obstacles/barriers as a new immigrant to Canada?
 - 5.b Might be followed by questions on experience of motherhood (if the participant is a mother who gave birth after immigrating to Canada)
 - 5.c Did you encounter any obstacles/barriers/difficulties giving birth in Canada?
 - 5.d Describe your experience as a new mother and a recent immigrant to Canada.
6. Did you bring any items of importance with you when you came to Canada? (i.e. photographs, family heirlooms, mementos).
7. Would you be willing to share some of them with us? Photographed?
8.
 - 8.a "Where is "home" for you and why?"
 - 8.b "Did the experience of motherhood/giving birth in Canada provide you with an increased sense of Canadian identity? In other words, did this experience make you feel more Canadian?"

TRANSCRIPTS

Bruna Santi

SF: Some of these questions we've already covered two years ago, where you come from in Italy, what brought you to Canada. Could you just briefly talk about what brought you to Canada and your trip from Halifax? Could you just briefly retell your voyage from Italy to Canada?

Bruna: I left Italy in May, May the 25th. Yes, from Genova. But before from Pianzano il mio paese dove sono cresciuta. Sono andata a Genova. Lì sono andata con mia mamma in viaggio fino a Genova. A Genova ho trovato mio fratello che veniva dalla Svizzera che è venuto a salutarmi e mi ha accompagnata al porto di Genova e ha aspettato finché la nave è partita. Yeah. È stato un duro momento. Poi da quella volta sono passati un bel po' di anni prima di rivederlo ancora mio fratello. Il viaggio tra Genova e Halifax è andato non direi neanche male ma neanche bene. Un po' il corpo rovesciato, un po' lo stomaco ma insomma. Quando poi siamo arrivati a Genova aspettando il treno che ci portava a Toronto allora là è stato anche quello un po' (traumatico?) drammatico perché ci hanno detto di andare a comperarci un po' di pane, qualche cosa da mangiare. Il pane per noi, io e un'altra amica che siamo partite assieme, il pane ci sembrava una sventola ... (incomprensibile word) ma insomma, ci siamo comperate, abbiamo fatto quella notte e giorno di treno e siamo arrivate a Toronto due giorni dopo. Lì ho trovato il mio fidanzato che è venuto a prendermi con un altro amico perché lui non aveva la macchina e allora siamo arrivati a Guelph. Tutto bene, ci hanno accolto bene ma per me era tutto nuovo, mi trovavo persa.

Solo avevo il mio fidanzato che mi faceva compagnia però avevo anche altri cugini qui, poi piano piano li ho incontrati. Insomma, un po' alla volta mi sono ambientata, ma ce n'è voluto del tempo perché poi un anno dopo ho avuto la nostra prima figlia in ospedale. Anche lì è stato un po' (traumatico?) drammatico perché per la lingua che non potevo spiegarmi bene o capire però la gente, le persone erano brave, hanno fatto il meglio per aiutarmi a quello che mi faceva bisogno. Poi avanti, sai, la famiglia è cresciuta. Piano piano ho imparato qualche cosa di inglese però non proprio da aiutarmi. Volevo qualcuno, dipende dove dovevo andare, in qualche ufficio, dal dottore con i bambini volevo qualcuno, non è stato facile per un po' di tempo. Adesso siamo qui, finora siamo arrivati a 60 anni di matrimonio passati. In tutto ciò siamo anche contenti perché la famiglia è cresciuta bene, non possiamo lamentarci. Tutti hanno fatto la propria famiglia, 10 nipoti abbiamo e tutti vanno avanti abbastanza bene insomma. Beh, un nipote ci è mancato. Ne abbiamo 10 ma per noi continua a essere sempre 10 perché lo ricordiamo sempre.

Sì, era il figlio secondo di Luigi. Il suo secondo figlio. Aveva 16 anni, ha avuto un tumore al cervello. Era inoperabile, non potevano operarlo e dopo sei mesi ci ha lasciato. Però del resto tutto va bene. Un po' di sacrifici, sono stati diversi ma non possiamo lamentarci al giorno d'oggi.

SF: Che esperienza, puoi descrivere la gravidanza, e la nascita della tua prima figlia?

Bruna: Quella è stata un po' d'ureta perché non capivo tutto quello che mi spiegavano cercando di aiutarmi ma è stato un po' critico.... Sì, non avevo nessuno da domandare ... Sorelle oppure-- avevo cugini ma a quel momento non era possibile che fossero state vicino a me a aiutarmi.

SF: Allora eri sola?

Bruna: Ero sola, sì. Ero sola.

SF: E la lingua?

Bruna: La lingua era proprio, non parlavo l'inglese. Qualche parola poi però anche parlando nella lingua un po' alla volta mi sono fatta però non sono chiara.

SF: Allora all'ospedale che è successo?

Bruna: All'ospedale la cercavano di aiutarmi, voglio dire in qualunque modo cercavano di aiutarmi ma era difficile perché non capivo e mi sentivo sola. Poi, un po' alla volta, come ho detto, qualcosa ho imparato e anche con i figli che son cresciuti, mi aiutavano a imparare, sono stata anche a scuola, era una scuola che il governo ha offerto per gli emigranti, sono stata un po' a scuola, anche quello ha aiutato un po', ma insomma, così non posso.

SF: E queste esperienze di nascita erano comuni, simili alle altre donne?

Bruna: Altre donne, sì, credo che era come tutte le altre donne.

SF: Di non avere più supporto.

Bruna: Certo, forse le altre donne avevano il supporto della mamma, della sorella, non so, ma avevo mio marito.

SF: La tua famiglia?

Bruna: La mia famiglia, tutti erano, ero qua sola, non avevo nessun altro, no.

SF: When your children were growing up, childcare and support, community, did you find that? Here in The Ward? How was it?

Bruna: Sono cresciuti sempre in questa zona, sono andati a scuola qui vicino, credo che loro erano contenti, perché erano vicini, avevano gli amici, l'ambiente, le compagnie, trovavano da passar del tempo, anzi i ragazzi facevano qualche sport, le ragazze anche loro, anche Lorena, la più grande, aiutava anche un po' la maestra a scuola, così non facevate così. Tante volte la più grande, Lorena, mi guardava i bambini, sì, tante volte, si facevano tanta compagnia uno per l'altro.

SF: I would like to follow up if there is anything, if the experience of having Lorena made you feel more Canadian to have a Canadian child, nel senso dell'identità.

Bruna: Yes, mi trovavo nella situazione che mi sentivo di essere qua in Canada, non ero più in Italia, mi sentivo un po' presa dal Canada e anche ricordo che c'erano le infermiere che venivano in casa a visitarmi, visitare anche i bambini appena nati e aiutavano, mi davano consigli, un po' alla volta cercavo di aiutare me stessa a capire come volevano spiegarmi e dirmi per questi bambini, magari se piangevano per un motivo o per l'altro, come potevo fare per aiutarli in meglio. Mi sentivo, ho accettato di essere qui in Canada e accettare tutti i consigli e la vita come va avanti in Canada.

SF: If you could, would you change anything about the experience?

Bruna: No, sono stata contenta di come, è stato un po' duro ma dopo tutto sono contenta di come sono andate-, crescendo i miei figli con mio marito, tanto sacrificio, perché pensavo alle volte, "Se avevo tutte le sorelle", ho altre sei sorelle, se avevo le sorelle qui vicine potevamo aiutarci una per l'altra, però, come dicevo prima, ci si aiutava fra amiche. Se una volta dovevo andar fuori casa per qualche motivo, chiedevo a qualche cugina, venivano, oppure portavo i miei figli da loro e mi aiutavano.

SF: Avevi creato una famiglia.

Bruna: Ecco, avevamo creato quasi una famiglia fra noi, qui in Canada. Lo stesso io facevo per loro, e avanti.

SF: Grazie Bruna.

Bruna: Prego.

SF: È un onore ascoltare queste storie.

Bruna: Questo è quello che posso dire.

SF: Okay, grazie mille. Adesso tocca a te. (to Lorena)

Bruna: Ti do il posto?

Lorena: Ma forse, il mio parere, forse tu non sei tanto d'accordo?

Bruna: Di cosa?

Elio: Abbiamo una testa ciascuno. Tutti pensiamo al nostro modo e pensiamo che sia il migliore.

Lorena: Come quando mi dicevi sempre, "Se avessi qualcuno qua (incomprehensibe word) da sola" non era proprio-.

Bruna: Sola?

Lorena: Come hai detto che eri contenta, perché mi pare che non eri contenta, da essere, la differenza.

Bruna: È un po' di malinconia che ti viene alle volte, essendo lontana da tutti, la tua famiglia principale, credo che questo succedeva, ma dopo tutto. Ricordo, per esempio, che Lorena, i miei figli, a qualche compleanno avevano amici qua italiani e canadesi, qua vicini, mi hanno preparato qualche festiciola di qualche ora alla sera di compleanno e Lorena mi ha detto, "Guarda mamma che viene miss Adry, due, tre signore canadesi, parlano l'inglese. Io dicevo, "Cosa vuoi che io possa parlare con loro? Parlo solo l'italiano".

Lorena: Avevo fatto delle feste per festeggiare il suo compleanno e dato che già ci avevamo conosciuto con queste signore, che erano tutte avvicinate e conoscevano la famiglia, come la famiglia era giovane e che cresceva, volevano essere parte anche loro, in qualche modo, suo modo, e capivano che mia mamma non parlava l'inglese, era certa con lingua, allora per questo gli avevo notato alla mamma prima di avere la gente qui in casa, avevo preparato la torta, avevo fatto, poi avevo preparato il caffè, solo così qualcosa semplice. Però la mamma si sentiva naturalmente sempre più confortevole con i vicini che erano italiani, di origine italiano e pian piano quelle che erano canadese, erano molto consapevoli e aiutavano, molto contente di essere state scelte per partecipare, sì.

Bruna: È così, cosa volete.

Lorena Pellizzari

SF: So I've interviewed your parents before, and I'm very interested in their experiences Italian Canadian immigrants. Also, what it was like for them to integrate into Guelph. And today, in particular, what your mother went through giving birth and becoming a mother here in Guelph, how that impacted her own sense of identity. And a lot of the questions I have here, don't apply to you, a second generation Italian-Canadian. So, I think we need to have this conversation are kind of organically. What I'm interested in is your own experience, and also your mother's memories that you that you carry within you. So why don't you begin by telling a little bit and about your own childhood growing up

Lorena: Okay, well, my childhood growing up consists of being born and raised here in Guelph. In the ward and the house that my parents built, basically always in the ward, as you probably already heard, we were as a young family, my parents and I, first on Hayes Avenue and then renting there and then from Hayes avenue to Harris street renting with friends, friends of my parents, until then, my parents had enough funds that they purchased a house next door to the house that they were renting on Harris Street. And from there, my parents were fortunate enough to have enough funds to purchase the adjacent lot where my dad built his dream home, and he thought it was his dream home but for various reasons. But the most important close to church, which was important to them close to school, easy access. Walking distance. Yeah, close to my dad's work. At the time my dad had a vehicle, but my mom never drove. So, I guess they took that into consideration as well and close to the downtown core where they would have to go to the doctor's and grocery shopping all the more easily accessible areas that they needed to get to. And I'm the oldest of four children. And I think I look the youngest, but others may not think so. But I've gone to school. I would have liked to have taken a different path for school, but it didn't quite work out that way. My father was very....um How can you say? Well, he had his own ideas of where, at the time where his eldest daughter should end up and how she would end up in life. So, needless to say, we had some discussions over that. And I ended up taking a medical secretarial course, which I received a diploma from. And at the time, I'm very proud of that, because they don't really offer diplomas any longer. And I was very in high school was I excelled in languages. And my teachers called the house here and spoke to my parents' copious times. But because of the language barrier, you know, I always had to intervene and it was a difficult position for me to be in because it was like a rock and a hard place, trying to explain to them what teachers were saying, you should continue with your education you should go on you should, you know, live up to your aspirations. So, I thought that this would have been an easier way taking the medical route at first, I thought travel and tourism and I can use my languages and expand on my languages but medical I thought more pertinent probably. And so that's where I went. And it has helped me I can say because I have taken other courses on my own after I was married and I like it and I can say I'm, I'm I've been satisfied and here we are. We have two children of our own. And I can say that speaking from mother's viewpoint, that's... I like that. Yeah, that's what makes me happiest, I think. And needless to say, I was afraid as I think we all are, and my mother would have had different experience because she was here by herself. I was here, I had my sister, I had my two brothers, I had my friends. But being a bit of a private person that I am, I don't like to, you know, talk about a lot of things with a lot of other people. So, I don't let a lot of people in my inner circle, and my mother is quite a bit that way. She would never want to rely on her friends as much as she really could have. And so, I understand her difficulties at times. And needless to say, her missing

everyone, especially at times like this, when she was having a child when she was giving birth. When she was sick herself, she's been sick many times throughout her, the course of her life with serious issues and not so serious issues, but it's difficult to have to deal with them on your own. on your own, I mean, not having a mother not having your sister's here. You know it that's, it's hard on you. So, while I was pregnant with our first child, Stephanie, I, you know, was bombarded by some opinions of my friends. And my mom would always say, Oh, you have to be careful for this. You have to be careful for that. Oh, when I went through that it was difficult

SF: tell me your memory of the story of your mother's birth experience.

Lorena: Not good. From what she told me it was not good because of these issues because she was by herself because she was going into the land of the unknown again. You know, first She came here by herself not knowing the language and only having known my dad through letters for five years. Yes. So, I mean, I guess some people could put that into perspective with long distance relationships or internet relationships. But I think back then this was, this was a big thing. So you know, not really knowing anything, she came into the land of the unknown then with a lot of insecurities, and then to become pregnant and have family start a family. So quickly thereafter. She was she had a lot of concerns, which I understand. And so, I understand when she was telling me that but still, I thought it can't be all that bad. It's gotta be it's gotta be better. And I was trying to be, I was trying to be excited and at the same time, I'm being very cautious, you know, so I thought I spoke to her and I said, would you like to be part of it? Because now you can I asked her. Was my dad present when I was born, No, they wouldn't allow that, you know? So, yeah. She came to doctor's appointments with me. Not all of them but some. And she was in the birthing room. What a labor room not in the birthing room sorry, with me, and she was not she was surprised, but she was not comfortable with that because she said, Oh, no, me I it was very different for me and I was in pain. My doctor had suggested, you know, walk, the more you walk, the better it is for you. And so, I did. I walked and I was moving up and getting up and going down and walking around the up and down the corridors and she would tell me Lorena sit down, Lorena go back to the bed. Oh, please don't do that I can't stay here anymore. And I said but Mama I feel fine, I feel fine. I am so I was gathering more energy for myself, shall we say? And then they come in and measure you and they check your blood pressure and all that they said everything is going along just as it should be. And now you're getting very close to the time when the baby's going to be born. So, would you like to walk over to the birthing room? And I said yes. Well, no, that was it. My mother said no, I cannot do this. She watched me get up and go to the room. She went out and met with my in-laws who were waiting. And she told my in-laws. She's crazy. I don't know what she's doing. If it was me, I wouldn't have done that. And next thing you know is the doctor came out and told them Stephanie was born. And it was I ...I told my dentist; I'd rather give birth than go to the dentist. And it was a wonderful experience for me. And it wasn't anything like what some of my friends had told me. And I know everyone experiences it differently. And I was I was fortunate because I did have some issues early on in the pregnancy. And I overcame them. And I, yeah, I enjoyed my experience.

SF: That's so wonderful, especially when your mother's traumatic experience is juxtaposed on to your own in the moment that you're giving birth, and you seem to transcend both of your fears – your and hers.

Lorena: It wasn't, it was like I remember it was painful, but I don't know. I was good.

SF: So, carrying your mothers' memories and your own memories of birth. What's that like? afterwards as a new mother in the same neighborhood that you grew up in? Were you still around here? In the ward?

No. Oh, no, no, we were living in our own house. My husband and I bought a house on Sheridan street in Guelph, and so we were there. So, I have to say, there were quite a few Italians in that area, too. And they were all looking out for me because we were the young couple that moved in and just had a baby. So, they were friends with my parents or they knew of my parents and when they would meet at the Italian Canadian Club they would tell stories as we saw her walking the baby. Oh, she's doing just great. We saw her. Oh, she's doing my mother was sick. Yeah, not me. Not yet. I wouldn't take the baby out. Things like this. So no, we were in our own in a different part of the city. Not very far from here but yeah, but I would always you know, ask my parents to come over so that they could see the baby. Have interaction you know, obviously, yeah.

Bruna: Better than me, when I put my baby asleep outside on the buggy, I was really not too comfortable because I was in worry. I had to go in and out many times to check if she still there.

Elio: I told you, you know the neighborhood.

Lorena: And we had, where we were living, we had nice neighbors, all different nationalities. But as I say, the ones of Italian background would always report back to my parents. And then they talk to talk with us and come over and see the baby. But, you know, there wasn't like, I didn't have that fear of um if I left our children outside in the backyard, I didn't have that fear back then, of you know, I wonder what would happen I think, with my mother too, all everything was still new. And she was wasn't familiar with the neighborhood just yet. And some of the people until she moved here on Harris Street, I think they were much more comfortable on Harris street. Yeah.

SF: Lorena you spoke of Strings of Love connecting this neighborhood, in relation to your parents' place in the community, but also your own.

Lorena: Well, in relation to my parents, I think, because my parents are the only two from their family, respect to families here. They needed that, they needed the neighbors back then that were all Italian they needed. That was their connection that was there. It was a fiber that was just weaving through them to keep them all together, to keep them going day by day, gave them the support. And myself and my siblings. As we grew up, we saw that we evidence that we live in. So, yes, it just is in you, and it gives you more reason to look after one another. It speaks to the bond, taking it even a little bit further, like, you know, it's not to say that my siblings and I don't, that we always get along, there's always areas where, you know, we have differences of opinion. But we do try our best to overlook those. And when we get together, we try and, you know, enjoy each other's company. And, you know, so even to this day, just last weekend, we got together, and we reminisce, we don't include our parents. So, some of them come over and so we're going over there and some choose not to say anything and have a good time. You know how A good time. Yeah. And then they want to hear when we come back and report to them. Oh, yeah, we had a good time, you know, or whatever. So, I think it's, it's all part of the fabric. It's all woven in together. I think

it's from when you were young to every stage of your life and now into, into adulthood. It's proven to be an essential part of our lives.

SF: In the broader community, these strings and attachments to other members, that's what served your parents so well when they came here and the only ones from their respective families. How does that play out in your own life and that of your children?

Lorena: Well, I can speak for my own family with my husband and our children. I hope I'm not offending anyone. But I think it's our family who has a greater connection with all of the other friends of my parents. My, our children have gotten to know them are the friends, they can have real conversations with them. They can relate to them about my parents. So that too has shown, taught our children different things to value in life. They connected with the multiple with the different generations, yes, and with my parents' friends, but also with their family members. Because my husband and I have introduced them and explained to them and recounted to them, oh, this is what we did when you know, and, yes, in different facets of their life. they've run into them, and they can spark up conversations with them. And they value that. So, I think it has come full circle. And then also to give, shall we say, how the friends and my mom's cousins who she had here helped with our family. It's almost like you can almost look at it as a volunteering in the broader sense of the word in the community and both our children have been involved in volunteering with the community, through their schools through the city through the township, so to this day, they do that and they're active. And, you know, I did that with the schools while they were in school. While I was working part time and then I helped with hospice volunteers with hospice, it's just something that it is in you and you understand that you have to give in order to receive.

SF: Italian Motherhood, how does it compare from your mother's day? To your daughters? Your daughter's reality, and sense of community?

Lorena: I think it's very different. Yes. My daughter would like to instill in a family of hers if she's ever at that stage, Italian culture and Italian values, the values that we had here growing up That in our own family that my husband and I have tried to instill in our children I think it's very important but by the same token, modernize it a little bit tweak it a bit.

SF: Yeah. which respects come to mind in particular?

Lorena: (laughter) Let's see, which to choose, its difficult to choose. Off the top of my head, I can't really pick one right now.

SF: Yeah, I guess I can't really ask you the same questions I have about how you relate to or remember Italy since you were never raised in Italy and having your children wouldn't have wouldn't have impacted that [national identity] much. Well, I can ask about your sense of Italian-Canadian identity, can you speak to that a bit?

Lorena: I can speak to that. I think again, I think our, my family, my husband and my two children, Stephanie and Nicholas, of our entire family are the most related to our family in Italy. I've often asked my parents, why did you come here? And I am proud to be a Canadian. But why did you...

because I long for that connection I long for that connection actually today on my phone there were some messages I just responded my cousin's birthday. It's Linda's birthday. And so, through WhatsApp, all my cousins we have...

Bruna: They are close the group, even my family and your family through the phone.

Lorena: Yes, technology today has made it much easier for us to be in contact. But also, my husband and I and our children. We have traveled to Italy and we've more so than travel to places we've traveled to spend time with the family. When I was my first trip after I graduated school, I told my parents, I would like to go to Italy, because I was envious of all my friends having their family here, their relatives, their aunts and uncles, their cousins, their grandparents. We didn't have that I was so envious of that. So, I said, I'd like to go before I go on with the next stage of my life so that I might be able to spend some time with my grandparents, my two grandmothers were still alive. And so that's what I did. And yeah, I had time to spend with both grandmothers and obviously my aunts and uncles, my cousins are all younger. There's one on both sides. On one side, I'm the oldest and on the other side, I'm the third oldest. So, you know, my cousin's they had a different life back then they were all working. Not very many of them went to school, you know. So that even then, that was a real eye opener for me to see. I'd heard of it, because I would write to them. My father, as he told you, he didn't know how to read or write very well. And so even though he wrote five years to my mother, he lost that all of a sudden. So, it was incumbent upon myself to write to my grandmother. So, I would write to my grandmother and I self-taught myself how to write dialect basically, so that I could write to her and then after I was in school in high school, I took Italian right and then proceeded with Italian further on afterwards. And that's, that was very helpful and beneficial because I was able to communicate with the rest of the family. And as I say, throughout the years, to this day, we're in contact. an aunt called me yesterday to check up on my parents, because, you know, she calls over here, but she's not sure she gets all the exact truth. And so, she called me yesterday, and I had to tell you, yes. All your worries put them at ease. Everything is fine. You know, she just needs to hear that every once in a while. And, and with my cousin's Yes, I, we host them when they come over here. My children love to go back to Italy, and they are more friends with my cousin's children. Then some of their own friends here. And they value... my son has just been talking to his grandfather about continuing the salami making culture continuing you know, things like that, things that and I think also because they participate in a multicultural languages program that you know, helped to keep keep that inside them. And then just to see, my husband's family is Italian as well about Italian background and to see the rapport that he has, with his relatives with his aunts and uncles and his cousins, although they have a large family. Our children were able to see that and they, they, they enjoy it. And they see the value in it. And so yes, I'm happy to talk about keeping up the connection. We value it and it's important to us, yeah.

SF: It's like this hunger of your children for their roots that you share. I'm visualizing the strings from both sides, Connecting...

Lorena: Connecting everything. Yeah. Yeah, it's, it really is amazing because even last night, our son had he's been dating this girl for a little while. And she's, as they say, "mangiacake". And he's wanting her to, you know, understand how we value these things so much. And you can see that she's intrigued by it and she's understanding a little bit. And so, we were reminiscing about how

when they've gone to Italy, and he was already talking about, oh, if someone so gets married, I'm going to go to that wedding. And as well, we'll see, we'll see, you know, but just to hear them say things like that, that they it's still important to them. Yeah.

SF: Where is your cultural home?

Lorena: Oh, Italy. My cultural home is Italy. Yes. That's not to say that I'm not proud of being Canadian. It's just because that's where I feel. Everything started there. Like that's where they came from. So, it started there. You know, Canada offers us so much more. And when we go back, we see the differences. And we know the differences. And we're proud to be Canadian and to have what we have here. When we're here we talk with our relatives, and we find out how they live life there, it's completely different. There're parts of that that you want. And there's parts of what we have here. And we'd like to combine it all. If only we would be that fortunate. You know. There's beauty in Canada, although we haven't traveled very much of Canada, my family and my husband and I, but there's beauty in Canada. And there's beauty in history in Italy, but it's just that, you know, when we go to Italy, I don't know there's something about it. You just feel like you're at home. It's just like when you're here. You're you're covered. You know, and our daughter studied in Italy for a year. So, there's another facet that just keeps us more grounded. And, you know, there was a period when we thought, Oh, she's gonna go there, she's gonna stay there. But then, you know, we were fortunate enough to have her back. And, and she even says, now she says, you know, you know, back then I was thinking, Oh, I'd probably stay there but she was younger. She made lots of friends there. She saw the differences of how you know how they work there and her line of work where it would have taken her there and her studies and yeah...

SF: thank you so much.

Lorena: Oh, you're welcome. Wasn't expecting this, but...

SF: I wasn't either, but you've painted such a beautiful picture of the generational story that's so fascinating. Yeah, strings of love, right...and connections to community

Lorena: yeah because it started, you know, that's where it started, I think so, it's just the fabric that's just being woven and continues on. Who knows where we're all gonna end up next.

Iole Cazzola

SF: Okay, so could you tell us your name?

Iole: okay, my name is Iole. And um... I came to Canada very early in my life, I was 21 years old and just married and uh, love brought me to Canada.

SF: and were you already married when you came?

Iole: Yes. Just Married, yeah...just about a month and a half after we got married we made the trip over together.

SF: Had your husband been in Canada before?

Iole: Yes. Yes. He been here seven years before. We are from the same small town. So, we met then when he came back and uh then he, after five years, we met, and then we correspond with each other and um two years later, he came, and we got married and moved here.

SF: What's the name of your town?

Iole: It was a small town. Torreselle.

SF: and here did you arrive when you first came from Italy the first time?

Iole: We arrived in Toronto airport and hear in Guelph.

SF: Okay, straight from Italy to Toronto. And what was the journey like for you? When you think back How do you remember that moment?

Iole: Oh, I was excited to to see another country and you know, in love uh, but the idea was to learn as much as possible about the country but also the language mostly. And then the idea was to go back and use the knowledge of the English over there, but it didn't happen that way.

SF: Ah, so you planned to return to Italy?

Iole: Mm hmm. Yes.

SF: You came here you thought I'll stay here for a few years and...

Iole: but then we had our children and we established here and the idea of going back never became a reality because we decided to stay here.

SF: Okay, what were your first impressions of Canada?

Iole: It was a good impression. Of course, everything was different, and everything was new but I'm the type of person to accept different things. So ...um ... except at first it was very hard not knowing the language...

SF: Do you remember what you packed for your journey when you left Italy?

Iole: Oh, I packed a lot of things.

SF: Anything of special importance that you remember?

Iole: um ...then the things I did, because I learned to do a lot of things, I went to school where I learned how to do embroidery and a lot of other sewing and that so I had little things that remind me of that and they came with me. And I still have them.

SF: Would you be willing to show us after the interviews? Could we see some of them?

Iole: oh Okay,

SF: I'd love to see some embroidery, some of you tools, attrezzi...

Iole: I've been sharing lately all that with especially one granddaughter that is interested in that kind of things.

SF: So that's very interesting. Um, did you encounter any obstacles or difficulties immigrating to Canada?

Iole: Not particularly no, no, people were always kind and even if you couldn't express yourself good, they they understood what we were trying to say and no, I had a good experience with, with people and especially the way offices around here, much easier than in Italy.

SF: Okay, so you mentioned that when you came over to Canada with Olivo that your plan had been to stay for a little while and then returned to Italy. And then and then you said but we had children and that changed everything. So that brings me to the heart of this interview. I would love to hear the story of what it was like for you to give birth to your first child. What was that experience? What are your memories of that experience?

Iole: One thing that really helped on that was having a doctor speaking Italian so through the pregnancy, it was fairly easy for me. But then at the hospital it was it was totally different because there was nobody that was speak Italian. So, it was a little hard. Yeah.

SF: Did you have people around you who could translate?

Iole: Not really, no, there wasn't.

SF: So, you went into labour you went to the hospital and obviously they know what's going on but they can't...

Iole: Yeah, but as I said, the doctor that came spoke Italian and so yeah...and uh actually he congratulated me after the first child because I had a little hard time giving birth. And he said he were really good. That made me feel good too.

SF: So, it helped to have the doctor spoke Italian. But again, when you went there in labour, no one spoke your language.

Iole: Right.

SF: Can you describe your experience as a new mother with a little infant and as a recent immigrant, those two combined?

Iole: it wasn't uh, it was pretty good because we also had a lot of... We stayed mostly within our Italian community, you know and uh... so it was pretty good. We had a sister-in-law that had been here already for a few years. Oliver's brother and his wife, and um she gave me some points somehow.

SF: So, did the experience of giving birth in Canada give you an increased sense of Canadian identity, having a Canadian child did this experience, in other words make you feel more Canadian?

Iole: Yes, Yes, it did. But then, a year after I had another child and so with the two when the second one was six months old and the other was a year and a half I went to night school to learn English because I can I can learn anything a word here and there was not the right way for me to learn. So, I went to night school and that gave me the basis of a proper way to express myself.

SF: Did you have much support for childcare when you're when your children were that small and you're going to night school?

Iole: No no, the two of us, so Olivo would stay home with the with the two babies and um... I had to miss some classes because if one of them wasn't feeling good he would say you know you better stay home

SF: and in the neighborhood did your family members did you child share? Did you look after their children? Or they look after your children?

Iole: Not much, no.

SF: How would you compare looking after children and having community support back then and today, like what you see of your grandchildren for example?

Iole: Oh, it's it's totally different. Yeah, there is a lot more communication a lot more. I don't know how to say.

SF: looking back, is there anything you would have done differently?

Iole: No, I'm pretty satisfied with the way we did things and the decision to stay in Canada I think was, was the right one.

SF: Where's home for you?

Iole: Here. Especially after living in the same house for 57 years.

SF: How many children did you have?

Iole: Three, a girl and two boys.

SF: And at what point did you decide not to return to Italy?

Iole: After we had all three children? Yeah, we decide to make a permanent life here.

SF: Is there anything further you would like to add to this story, particularly around your experience?

Iole: It's been so many years ago. Some things don't remember very well, but I know I participated some classes at the school and that got me involved a little bit in the community and the community in general, not just the Italian community. I don't know what else to add. Then I got involved with the church quite a bit and uh I did took some courses because I was interested in working with small children. So, I did some volunteer work with the ESL program English as a second language and so then I took also course at the University of Waterloo on that and then after that I got a job in a daycare and that I really liked that. I like to work with small children, so my life was pretty full even though I didn't I only worked part time at a daycare not full time. But um it was pretty satisfying for me.

SF: How do you transmit these memories of coming to Canada and giving birth and raising your small children. How do you pass them on to future generations? Have you told these stories to your children, your grandchildren?

Iole: Oh, yes, yes, we do. I did, especially some knowledge of things that I did in school. As I said, I attended a special school for girls to learn to do things. So now I'm sharing especially with the granddaughters we have five of them, five girls, and one grandson.

SF: And I think I can finish with this last question; How would you compare the experience of giving birth and motherhood if you'd been in Italy to being in Canada, is there a big difference?

Iole: I didn't have the experience over there. So, it is it must be different, but I can really say anything because not having had that experience.

SF: Do you imagine you would have had more support from your mother, your sisters, your extended family? Because you were quite alone...

Iole: I didn't have...I don't think I'm gonna have more support because they are my other siblings, they're all scattered around too. Our parents, we lost our parents when we was really young. I was raised by an uncle and aunt and they also passed away before I had the children. So, I don't think it would have been done much better.

SF: You're used to being self-sufficient.

Iole: Yeah.

SF: Very strong.

Iole: Yeah, I was only 16 when my adoptive parents passed away. Well, my uncle actually, but my aunt, she could never get over the loss of him and she passed away the year after I was married. So, I kind of was the head of the family in those year between 16 and 21. Yes it was, I had it rough before the marriage, but everything was better afterwards between the two of us and the health of the children.

SF: Thank you so much for sharing your story with us. It's remarkable how life unfolds, unpredictable.

Iole: Right, yup

SF: When you were 16 and living in...what's the name of the town again?

Iole: Torreselle

SF: When you were 16 you couldn't have imagined all the things that have happened up until now.

Iole: Especially because I have two sisters that emigrated to Australia. And I was saying, Oh, I never go away from here and then I did ... a different way than they did.

SF: Are you in touch with those sisters?

Iole: Oh, yes.

SF: In the 1960s you immigrated?

Iole: Yeah, '61.

SF: you corresponded my letter

Iole: Right, yeah.

SF: So, here's a funny question. How long did it take for a letter to get from Guelph all the way to Australia?

Iole: Oh, not very long. I think

[Amabile] maybe one day,

Iole: or no, no, no, no. A letter. Oh, no. Maybe two weeks at most, I think less than two weeks. Yeah. And then we use the phone a lot. Nowadays more of the phone than letters.

SF: Did you save those letters from the 60s?

Iole: Ah, some of them. Yes.

SF: Beautiful memories. Bei ricordi...Have you been to visit?

Iole: Yes, we've been visiting Italy quite often well first, you know when there was the five of us, we went a few times but since our daughter moved there, we been visiting almost every year. And we also went to Australia once and they came over here. Once all my four sisters, three and four with me. The one from Italy and the two from Australia. Oh, that was wonderful to have them here.

SF: Do you have a photo of the four of you?

Iole: Oh, yes.

SF: I would love to see it if you would share with us.

Iole: Yes, I can show it to you.

SF: Thank you.

Iole: And then all four of us also met in Australia. And we have one picture taken in front of the Sydney Opera House and we send it to the Association of Padovani nel Mondo and they put it in the little paper, little magazine and they said, it says quattro sorelle in gamba! Oh that was so wonderful to be able to spend some times of four of us together. In the time we were here, they came here, we went...uh that was '91 I think, we went to New York and Washington or was it Washington? I think it was. Washington. We have good memories, even though we were so far apart, but there are different ways to keep in touch and we always did that.

SF: Grazie mille

Iole: ...Oh, sorry, I thought it [the interview] was easier than this to do.

Lidia Marcato

SF: Just make sure that is recording tonight, okay.

Lidia: Okay.

SF: All right. So please tell me your name.

Lidia: My name is Lidia Marcato

SF: When did you emigrate?

Lidia: I came in here in sixty-six, was a 19 year old.
and what brought you to Canada?

Lidia: Just to change anyway and see what happening after I decided to stay work here and say I better go back in Italy and after I met my husband I never went back in Italy.

SF: So, you met your husband?

Lidia: Yeah. His bother [indicates Iole]

SF: Do you come from the same town?

Lidia: No, I come from Abruzzo, Pesara. I came in here just to change I say I was tired to in Italy. My family we are nine kids - five girls, four (brothers) I say I better go there and see what happening.

SF: Lidia, did you travel by yourself?

Lidia: Yes.

SF: How did you come? by ship?

Lidia: No plane. Yeah, I came up by myself but I got a some relative in here.

SF: In Guelph

Lidia: Yeah, it was hard. I came in here, when I said, eh in Toronto I say my god, what's happening (laughter)

SF: Was it in winter?

Lidia: May. I say who phew I started to go with the step down down down, I say all this building all that...eh ma the day after I was a really was thinking a lot of stuff anyway. I said before I was with my mom and now, I'm here.

SF: Describe your first impressions of Canada when you got off the plane you take the train to Guelph and what's were your first impressions of Canada?

Lidia: Was just damp and nothing was in [bloom?] You know was just to think the day after was more um... I started to think... Yeah, was really hard. After I say maybe I go back in Italy. Day after day started anyway to get better and uh...

SF: You had some cousins in Guelph?

Lidia: Yeah, I live with them until I married. After my brother came in here for the wedding. He came for the wedding and stayed a couple years, but he went back because his wife say "I don't come in Canada"

SF: You married at 21

Lidia: and yeah, I married in '69 I think. Yeah.

SF: Did you did you encounter any barriers or obstacles as a new immigrant? What did you find the hardest about immigrating to Canada?

Lidia: Because the language, but then when I start the work, I found a lot of friend, mostly Italian people who came with this same... and that's a lot and when when you find the people who are so almost all my age, younger people... they have anyway, we start to get better every day is better. Because whenever I tell my family in Italy that I go back a there I was a stupid because my mom would say, ma you're crazy say to go there. My father say you better go maybe you got a better life in there. Because in Italy anyway is a really, 'specially 50 years ago, that's really really bad. And my father said go back. Don't come back to me. And my mom and my father came in here for one year, came up because after my sister came in here. In the photo of my sister wearing [when?] my mom and my father came. And my father was really happy, he liking here, my mama no. And now I'm happy anyway so no, I don't comp... I go so often in Italy when I went Italy, when? In June? Yeah, in Giugno, we went to back. When my mom was alive almost every two years I went there. But now the last time, I say better go and see all my sisters for the last time we're all together.

SF: When you were nineteen and getting ready to come all the way to Guelph, do you remember what you packed?

Lidia: Not much, just something [from] my mom because my mama like to do a lot of things in there -what do you call it, yeah uncinetto, e I brought (the things) she did the for me, a suit, dress, everything and now I gave it to my granddaughter. I said I said your grandma(s), great-grandma(s) thing. A nice shawl. Yeah, I bring something still...uh but anyway, was really hard. to come by yourself. Yeah, but yeah, at least in here I find the people anyway I gotta a lotta..

SF: So, you found community specifically in Guelph? In the ward here.

Lidia: Yeah.

SF: What a big adventure for a 19-year-old Italian girl from Abruzzo, knowing no English to come all by yourself.

Lidia: No, it was it was really hard for the couple of months anyway because you got getting use in here. Was everything different the no language nothing, was a lot Italian people. See because I start to work. It was all Italian people and a lot of friends. I was a worker, well, tech-style? Yeah, someplace and was almost all Italian. You know, was the Maria de Ciqui, you know? Yeah, was a lot..uh e still friend now, everybody's married but we still we keep uh...

SF: So, you met your husband? Iole's brother...?

Lidia: Yeah, we met uh because uh they send me school. But I was, went there for couple of weeks because after I find work I went. Because when I came in here to the government pay for school, see special programs if you don't find the job right away. I went to date I met his brother [Iole's brother].

SF: English school?

Lidia: Yeah. No was a GC area ther but now I don't think it's doing it anymore. No, now it's changed everything. Yeah, I met the Tony there after about one year I think we married, came with the children.

SF: Yeah, so about the children...

Lidia: Well I got two children Angelo e Stefanie. And after anyway when I got the kids and with Angelo I went back to work for a while. Yes, the babysit or you call it. I take it to the babysit and watch and a couple of weeks to watch for a couple. After it get sick, I don't know something... and because I was supposed to go to work anyway with one person at that time was no money lots. And my husband helped me lots anyway, because I started so early, he prepared Angelo, feed do everything, take it to the babysit, in the night he finished work early for get forget Angelo take him home. Yeah, it was a lot of help for me. And I work maybe half [incomprehensible] the other one after three years. I quit the work was no work to go to work anymore.

SF: What was it like when you gave birth the first time in Canada and your mother was still in Italy? Did she come?

Lidia: Yeah. I was afraid to go to the hospital because I said maybe I'm going there maybe [they would] send me home but the baby was overdue was supposed to because I get lots a time in the hospital was late because the baby never came out. But after anyway, I said to my husband go home anyway, I say why you stay in here I said. It was around the midnight that the doctor phone said "look the baby came" ma was a bigger baby. What is the same the doctor the Italian doctor but that time it was the specialist for me because the baby was not really a normal position.

SF: You went into the hospital with Angelo. Yeah. All the nurses and the doctors they didn't speak Italian. No. They knew what was going on but you couldn't understand what they were telling you?

Lidia: Yeah, my my husband was a more um...he knew most of the things [incomprehensible] But what's really nice the nurse. They was really nice, they was no every minute was coming there a say how're you feeling this and this because I say no I want the normal or the one that that thing is in the back. It was okay. I don't want the needle for the pain. Yeah, but one I see the baby anyway [laughter] I don't remember anything else. Anyway, when I say the baby, the baby everything was gone. Yeah. After he came on my bro in the morning came and my brother, my husband there. They feed the baby everything and yeah was my brother in here but after he went in Italy? The nice thing happened, my husband, he play soccer, he was play soccer, It was the final game. It was the last game and my brother came with both there, he say "Okay, the baby's okay Lidia's okay, why you don't go play soccer?" [laughter] and I think Tony and my brother was shhhh I say okay you going, you better go, I'm fine. And I went to the window, you see, for the rushing, they got an accident the car went. And after he came up, he say no its nothing happened everything is fine but he missed the game because the police was supposed to come. [laughter] and my brother says si e all your fault!

SF: What was the hardest thing about giving birth in Canada?

Lidia: In Italy you got more people around, maybe the perche most of the people had board [born at home] in there, have a child in the house. He doesn't go to the hospital and you got family all around. In here you don't have a people around. This day yes your husband he stay with you if you want But in Italy just the nurse and the doctor. I don't remember with Stephanie said Tony was with me that I don't remember.

SF: With childcare did you have community support? I imagine in Italy since you have many siblings...

Lidia: No nobody near just to me and my husband. It was my brother a little while with me. When I was doing something, he take the baby anyway too. But just me e Tony. But anyway, you learn when you gotta do something you will learn no matter what you get. One time you make a mistake, another time its okay. Still do it.

SF: So, you came over at 19 by yourself and you met your husband and at age 20-21 you're married, then Angelo comes along. How did the experience of giving birth to a Canadian child affect your sense of identity? Did you feel more Canadian?

Lidia: Yeah more because after you you gotta your own family, your kids, you don't think any more in Italy okay all the time you got a family there but you start to get Canadian, more Canadian. Si because you gotta a child [who] is Canadian. Now it's my family in here always no more there. But my son go a few times went in Italy. He's Canadian, Italian-Canadian. He's got two whats it called because the work he's doing anyway he go lots in Europa. But I feel fine now anyway.

SF: So, home for you is?

Lidia: Here, I go often in Italy when my mom was alive I went a lot of time. But now is dead. The last time I went and now I don't think if I'm going anymore.

SF: Looking back on this experience is there anything you would have done differently?

Lidia: Not really, no. Because anyway, the things as the wife in Italy was really hard. You don't find a job you don't find nothing. My father was working by was too much work too much work in the factory after go work in the land. Do too much was working. And just a one morning I decide, okay I going. Just for fun I did the application everything, I said maybe, [laughter] maybe nobody call. He say everything was fine. And uh I was one cousin, one relative, go in Australia. E he said why don't you come with me there? I say oh no, that's too far. [laughter] Yeah, I say no, no that's too far if I go there too Maybe I never go back in Italy! I decided to come in here and everything ...and now I don't regret anyway. Now anyway I got two nice grandkids. And after I quit the work, anyway, finish work, I watch after my grandkids. Both.

SF: How do you think the experience of being a mother in the Italian-Canadian community is different for your daughter than it was for you? How would you compare?

Lidia: Because when I got my own kids, I was so busy, si, to spend a lot of time with mine. And with my daughter kids, I spent a lot of time like I was my own. That's my daughter say a lot of time. Mom, I think ... see my granddaughter was with me never say "Mommy, mommy" my daughter was phone. You say that's okay. tell mommy I'm okay. See, because I spend either my husband was retired. You spend lots of time with the, you know, with the grandkids. Oh, I did the so thing if and only one time we went in the farm pick up some tomato because I do my own tomato sauce everything. It was a Nell with me was four-five years anyway it was came with me say Okay Nona she's sit in the land the knife e eat something. E after anyway would finish, I say Nell we go home? Nona, what about some tomato for mommy? we don't buy no basket tomato for Mommy? [laughter] No I got a lot of things, have a nice good memory with things even with my grandson anyway or we spend a lot of things playing this note thing with my own kids I never did because we are busy. Work, a do things, because after I quit the work, because must pay too much for the babysitter. Yes, I start to work home, I was sewing home, it was so busy. My husband came home from work helped me and we counted the gloves everything. It was really really busy. Now anyway after with the grandkids, you you got time and more time to do stuff. That's my daughter say mom and now you, you spoil the kid. Yeah.

Is there anything you'd like to add to this story? particularly about motherhood and being a new mother and a recent immigrant to Guelph? What it was like? what it's like now?

Well, I think for me was a little bit hard because nobody was around me. Most people gotta... si you've gotta some family maybe so it's different, you know. Was Iole anyway, at least one person but uh...[laughter] ma some people anyway, the first is if you don't have a family around is really bad hard because you gotta learn because nobody do it for you. In Italy anyway a lot my sister phoning my mom "Mom I need this" [laughter] everybody, go around.

SF: Now you give that to your daughter.

Lidia: Yeah, if I can't I gave it to my daughter.

SF: Give her the community and support that you didn't have...

Lidia: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. But I can't complain anyways, both...If I do something, inuta [inutile?] doesn't...But now anyway the grandkids is growing its got his own life. Yeah.

SF: Thank you. Thank you for sharing your story. What a journey...

Lidia: Yeah, but the now and we went in Italy in June we did the some cruise and we stopped in Italy because I said the last time I want all brothers, sisters all together. That was really, really nice. All the five and four boys all together was that's the really really nice.

SF: Do you have a picture?

Lidia: Not with me I gotta...

SF: Maybe we could exchange phone numbers and we could take some pictures, also of the shawl and the dress your mother made. I would love to see them.

Lidia: Well maybe I could do the picture maybe I could give it to Iole or somebody. I got all the pictures.

SF: Anytime thats convenient for you I can drop by and take a picture of your photos

Lidia: Oh sure yeah oh yeah I got a lot of stuff because my mama like do uncinetto a lot oh yeah no I got a some things you was make a lotta bed things, thing for the bed, bed-spread. She made one for me but I give already to my grand, my daughter because my mam say that's a nice, I give it to Stephanie to stay in the family. Yeah yeah

[Iole] People from that region they're even more into those things. They're more traditional. Then we are in the North.

Lidia: Oh yeah, no I got a lot of stuff from my mom made the faith, some tovaglie for table to organize. But I never use because I don't have a patience to wash it. [laughter] I say I gave it to my daughter later on. And Stephanie say no mama gave it to Meely. Just to remind them, not to use. You know, my sister, Luciana [to Iole]. She's really good at that.

SF: Do your grandchildren feel Italian (culturally)?

Lidia: We, when I used to babysit, to watch after we talk in Italian, but understand something to think but after my son who usually understand the more Italian, he speaks, he try anyway. Because a lot of time was for my mom, I think we try but my daughter nothing 'e say I'm am Canadian I don't care. [laughter] but my son went two times that he went to school a too in Peruggia for couple months anyway.

SF: The grandchildren?

Lidia: Yeah, sometime I talked to speak in Italian but they answer me in Inglese. Just when 'e was small he wanna something, he say Nona I want ice-cream. I say what? Nona, I want ice-cream, I say Joshua vuoi gelato? Ice cream Nona! [laughter] go in the fridge e just to get the gelato.

SF: From your first impression of Canada in May 1968 and until now, what's changed?

Lidia: now I'm more relaxed! More... see everybody is fine in the family. Okay, I think because now I know more people. When you start to know people and everything anyway. Its lotsa better for in here, no [than] in Italy. E more quiet e more relaxed more uh. not that too much noise like uh lotsa confusione in Italia. The last time we went in Italy in Giugno, my God! The people push you one time si, when you go around, push there, push that, is too much uh too crowded crowd. No it's in here its people is more, ow do you call, more respect. More respect. One hundred percent! you go there in the in the store in the tenga thing in here you respect more the people in Italy stay more um... In my place I don't know in other, in other city or what. But I'm Italian and always will be Italian too. Canadian ma Italian too, that's my son say, I'm a Canadian, but 'e's Italian too when 'e talk with the, with the people. A lot of time my son used to with his friend, everybody around, he say No Mama don't worry that's just a manga cake! [laughter] Sometime he say come over e say Mom Why don't you make some pizza for somebody? Say me don't worry justa manga cake! [laughter]

SF: Thank you so much, it's a beautiful and valuable story.

Lidia: Okay you are... sorry maybe I don't talk a lot in English. My husband when he came, he went to work with Olivo, he did a lots different work.

(Olivo had just entered the room to ask us if the temperature was comfortable)

Amabile Lovadina

Amabile: My name is Amabile Lovadina. I came in Canada 1960 and I got marry in Canada. I come in February the 10. And I got marry the twenty, February the 20 in Canada. But my husband. I live con my husband all my life in Italy because my uncle, he adopted, he no adopted but he go in the hospital and he bring home a two years old boy... So I got married exactly, you know, almost brother because I live altogether con my husband. So we come in Canada, my uncle and the four years after they bring the son. Very hard that time because my husband diga [he got?] not the same name.

So, my husband had a very hard to immigrate in Canada because my uncle and my husband well, that time, you know, my boyfriend, he got not the same name.

The mother, she got the boy, se say (s)he dint wan it somebody give the name. So, there's a long long storia of my husband che I don't know why they no make a book. Yeah so um, he come over because my uncle in [inaudible] where was he living my uncle he meet a guy he got this little store that time and di meet the the guy the, whattaya call him...uh he the work for the government in Ottawa. So my husband and my uncle did give ya a picture with my boyfriend and then be send it to Ottawa. And from there, my husband immigrated Canada, from this picture because of this guy. he's working for the government In Ottawa? So uh...

SF: He was adopted...?

Amabile: No, no, no legally No. No. That's why...

SF: You grew up together with your husband?

Amabile: In Italy? Yeah. Yeah. Same kitchen. Yes.

SF: Because you lived also with your-

Amabile: My father and my uncle see at that time they live together.

SF: How many siblings? how many siblings; brothers and sisters?

Amabile: Me? six, nine but six in life anyway,

SF: So how many? How many under the same roof?

Amabile: 13 people

SF: Your father, your uncle?

Amabile: Yeah. Now the uncle he never got married. And two brother and four sisters Yeah, so my husband could he come in Canada? in Halifax he put in jail. One night in jail yeah, because of the name the my father. I mean, I call my father - my uncle, was Tagliapietra. Well, my boyfriend [his last name was] Lovadina! So, in Ottawa this is not legal because my uncle was Tagliapietra, and [husband was] Lovadina, so at that time there are a lot of immigration. A lot of people they

come in Guelph and uh...after they put him in jail overnight. They take the passport. That's it. So be from Ottawa, the immigration from Ottawa and they find out that its illegal [because] it does not have the same name and is illegal. Yeah. And the day after, I mean, the night, the day after we got the train it come the day again, because he takes all night, a day and night to come over. I don't know because I come con the aeroplane. So, I yeah, I don't know. But I think Yeah, I don't know. 20 hour 24 I don't know. I mean, he hours to come over on the train. But my husband made did go in jail. My husband...so many people they tell to make a book.... All the storia we go through. So I come in, in Canada, 1960. I got married in February 20.

SF: So, you were in Canada for 10 days before you got married?

Amabile: Yep. Or I get married or I go back in Italy at that time. You can't stay. No, so I got married!

SF: How many years earlier did your husband come to Canada?

Amabile: Four years, four years.

SF: So, you waited for four years?

Amabile: No, no, because my husband, three years after he come in Italy for a trip. And from there...I'm engaged to that time, he come over and hes engaged too. So Oh, yeah, this story [laughter] big storia. And then so I left my boyfriend he left girlfriend. Oh, yeah. And then I got married.

SF: So, he said why don't you come make a life with me in Canada? So then you waited one more year. And you came in February?

Amabile: Six months exactly. Yeah. After he come over. He make the paper, I come over

SF: How old were you?

Amabile: 25

SF: Yeah. Did you come by yourself? Yeah. Yeah. And you knew you were coming to meet your fiancée. Yeah. Did you have a lot of family here already?

Amabile: My uncle, my aunt, and they got a daughter, the daughter got married. And three months after coming here [she] go back to living in Italy. My sister-in-law, the daughter the my uncle, they got just one and she marry an Italian guy and they go back in Italy three months after coming here,

SF: Where's your hometown?

Amabile: Casacorba. Then I come over and so happy to come over. And I missed, on my wedding, I missed my mother...Yeah, that's... you can [have] no idea of what I feel ...very very very bad.

Yeah. And then after I'm so happy, we got everything got not the most in Italy and you know, another family and I enjoy. Yeah. I got two daughters

Yes after you got approved Che I got married and happy. Che got the daughter the first anyway, oh my god. I love kids... so much, you've got no idea. Still now. the [incomprehensible] is a big now. Yeah.

SF: We could just slow it down a little bit. You came over from Casacorba. You immigrated you got married 10 days after you arrived. I'm just wondering when you arrived in February with snow up to here, and it is freddissimo, what was your impression? Did you say maybe I should just go back?

Amabile: [laughter] Very bad! got the snow like that! And COLD, So cold I say Oh my God, Why'd I come here?

Iole: You didnt have the proper clothes!

Amabile: Oh no no no Iole, but you need to be at that time there's no lady that had got the pants, nobody! I buy the pants, buy my little boots, white boots, oh no no I prepared for the winter because Benny tell me. Before I came over...But still cold oh my god and they used to seal you know like anyway for ...

SF: How was it to walk on the snow?

Amabile: oh my god, you have no idea! Oh boy, still now [I'm] scared, I never walked anyway that much, still now...yeah..that's life

SF: What did you bring with you?

Amabile: I got just the one suitcase - small I got a confetti when you called [incomprehensible] bombinieri che I buy in Venice, small you known... almost nothing. because my husband say no bring nothing because in here the bath is small and this was so big. So I brought some pyjamas, you know, but this person[al] Yeah, suitcase. a little, that's it.

SF: e confetti?

Amabile: E confetti oh yeah yeah yeah hey I buy in Venice all the little.yeah yeah not to pour it to pour the confetti inside the bombonieri. The party favours

The mother [of her husband] work in Venice, is [from] another town but they move[when he was] young in so my husband he lives the most in Venice anyway yeah. And he meet the mother when he was fourteen years old. For the first world war [WW2], finished the mother she want to meet the poor boy in Treviso. She had left him in an orphanage in Treviso. And my uncle by that time I think he go on the city I don't know where because he got started but he die all the time, [this is referring to miscarriages?] so my uncle he go in the [orphanage] and he bring home the boy, two years old at that time. But the mother after the Second World War, she wanted to meet the boy and they met in the same hospital [orphanage] where she left the boy at 14 years old.

SF: The mother she gave the baby for adoption. In the orphanage your uncle your took the child because his own children had passed... How did your husband [the boy in question] reconnect with his birth mother?

Amabile: Because the mother, if you adopted, at that time, you can meet the boy, you can, but she put [him] there, she say to somebody she wanted you know the boy, the boy but now they mean not she know she know she gotta see the boy! You [she] know the town [in which he was living] because they're a small town Casacorba.

SF: she didn't want to change the last name so that they could find each other afterwards.

Amabile: No. That's why -

SF: So she couldn't look after the child but she wanted to find him.

Amabile: Yeah, yeah. And when he was 14 years old...14 years old, and then when he goes, she wanted to take him back. My father, I mean my uncle anyway and my aunt they say "no" and the boy [her husband] say no no no you're not my mother. And then after, you know, he go almost in Venice to living anyways. Yeah, he go close the mother. Yeah, very close. Yeah. Yeah. Very close. Yeah. We want to make a book that this is a lot of story and they wanted to go to work and they bought a cruise boat, my husband, they got these stories...

Iole: He passes away...how many years ago now?

Amabile: December [20]19 Too bad because to me [he was] a wonderful man and traveled so much. So many places. Yeah. Australia, California , San Francisco, go to so many places... Yeah. Florida the first place. Yeah. That's life.

SF: so you came with your confetti, you got married on the 20th of February 1960. And when did your first daughter come?

Amabile: One year after in December '61 and the second, two years after.

SF: what was the experience like for you motherhood in 1960, you didn't speak English

Amabile: Not one world

SF: You went also to St. Joseph Hospital?

Amabile: yeah, I got the second cousin, he's a wonderful famiglia. I [took me to] go to the doctor, go where I needed, you know, doing tests, thats [incomprehensible]
Yeah, I go in the hospital, and I got a daughter and I go there and you get your own room and thats it you see no body and no one speak Italian. It was very very hard.
Did your mother come?

No because my mother, when I had my daughter [she] was in Italy so I'm home with Benny, my husband, and my uncle. And he go for two months that time when he got changed, he can't go by

yourself, so the guy changed by the sister-in-law to go together. So I said “go go go” but this is no easy for me. I know, 25 years old but you know it's not easy. I come home the doctor say you can't. Just you watch the baby, no do the dishes, you no wash the clothes, some my husband and my uncle, he do everything, needles, everything because he got the rheumatism in Italy very bad. So the doctor say no water, not for you, yeah, not put the hands in water for a month and then after you do it, life....yep...By yourself and I feed the baby three day after, no two day after....oh my god the baby the baby cry Doris. Oh my god you're a big baby too. Anyways so I cry she cries, so I phone to the doctor crying. I, this is a Sunday, and I forget, so I say well you know I got a really crying [baby for a] long time and he come over to my place and he say well she's hungry! I say hungry [incomprehensible] but there is nothing. I think the nervous[ness] a bit yeah, the nervous [incomprehensible - state that I was in impacted] everything the milk, everything. So, my husband he go buy the milk, the powder, you know? that kind, the formula and then my god [s]he eat a bottle all, all the bottle. before I got that, [s]he cried, cried, so I'm add a piece of the paper I put some sugar oh my god look at the wanna eat? no? Just, you know? I don't know, she cry and I cry. Why is she cry? Not easy because my mother was not there.

I staid nine days in the hospital

Iole: I stayed ten

Livia: I dont remember

Amabile: they were real good. every night in came the nurse and she gave me a cream on the back.

Iole: Oh yes we were treated very well

Amabile: yeah. Oh no, no, no, no. Not like today, today. I think [my milk dried up] because of too nervous, you know and then it was just gone but with the second one I never tried. I said forget it, I give the bottle right away. But in the hospital the people were so wonderful all the way...

SF: how did giving birth change your sense of identity in Canada, having a Canadian child?

Amabile: I don't know, I'm happy anyway. Can't complain. Oh, no. I'm a happy that I got a child. Yeah, because if not, I [would] wanna adopt for sure.

SF: did you have support for childcare in your community?

Amabile: No, because I did not have my mother. I call mother anyway. Yeah, yeah, I thought them both mother and father, but yeah, [in reality they are my] my uncle and my aunt anyway. Who I've got a call 'mother.' Yeah, that's about to be one and then I got father Yeah. Yeah. But I'm happy here anyway today now all my life here now

SF: so as a new immigrant mother you had maybe more support because you had your in-laws, your husband's parents-

Amabile: yeah I go to work in two place and you're gonna worry because you know that the child has a he can look after you know better me I must not be bad I know so i to me another family I

know find very hard to be here now because saga now the family and the guy everything compare what are they here neatly? Oh my god

Livia Tonin

Livia: When I fixed my hair, I cut it short, but now it's a while because I wasn't feel good to do nothing. I got a hairdresser to come here. Colour me, and...and then I do by myself because I'm not straight, eh? I got a little bit of curly, but she cut me [hair] and colour, you know, I started 30 years ago. 30 years that I have been colouring my hair—still colour.

SF: Well, it looks perfect

Livia: Well, this is this where Livia is!

SF: Livia, I remember when we had our first interview, you told me this wonderful story about your boat trip. coming over from Casacorba, through Genoa and the anello...

Livia: and the anello! Well, I can say now? I was on the boat, and then I go to the toilet and then took off my ring because I'm scared to ruin it. Gino, my husband - boyfriend [gave it to me] and I go to the bagno, to the toilet and I leave at the top of the sink because I'm scared to put soap or something, you know? And then I go to my room to, you know, get ready, and I see, I got no more ring! I go back, and I say, "Oh my God. no more ring!" But there was nobody in there. Only one, one girl outside the door. And I don't say nothing to her because I don't know I go back and I say to the girl you to my friend, I say you know, they take away my ring, I say so I go to the boat... What do you call boat...? Comandante? Yeah, Comandante of the .boat. He says he'll make a transmission, an announcement if somebody finds the ring in this room, this toilet, they gotta bring it back to him, but I don't see no more my ring. So this is the story of the ring. I lost in the boat. But when I come back, I said to my boyfriend, "I lost it, I'm here, but I lost your ring," I say, "doesn't matter, he says, as long as you're here that's what is important for me."

SF: Were you worried that he would be angry?

Livia: Yes, because you know, it was something he gave it to me. We w were engaged, and when I come here to get married, I tell him, but he no say nothing about it., as long as you're here is the more important for me.

SF: Did he replace your engagement ring?

Livia: Well, it cost too much money here at that time.

SF: So, you came because you were engaged and your husband was?

Livia: Yeah, he was here two years before me. And we marry after a month. I was 21

SF: were you afraid?

Livia No, not afraid of nothing because I knew him very well before you know we was living very close., neighbours. Everything was okay also my marriage.

SF: Can you describe the voyage by ship to Halifax?

Livia: Well, what to say? It was okay for me never never bothered me, you know, never bothered my stomach. But some were really sick too at that time you know, in the boat. Yeah, but I was okay. I enjoyed it because with a friend you know we go all over the place [laughter] we enjoyed.

SF: And then from Halifax?

Livia: and from Halifax, we take two days from Halifax to Guelph. The train was like a train for animals, you'd put animals in there. It was not soft where you sit, only boards, but two days we took it to reach here...

SF: Could you sleep?

Livia: Ahh! Close your eyes and forget about sleep. We close our eyes ... and it stopped a lot of the times, there were a lot of stations where they stopped, not only one or two because they'd go fast we would reach before then two days, for sure. This is what it was. Stop it. Stop it Stop. I say. We hope someday to reach there...It's true.

SF: Can you describe for me your first impression of Canada?

Livia: Oh, oh, I see. I see [saw that it was] much differently than where I was, in those days it was not very nice to live in Italy, you know, especially a farmer. I come from a farmer's house. There was not even enough to eat some of the time. You know? We was eighteen in the family, too. So, it was not very nice and Canada I see that it was a different country, and for sure it was better those [circumstances] there, those days...

SF: In Halifax, when you got on the train and looked out the window, what was your impression?

Livia: It was September when I arrived, it was no snow at that time. You can't see much on the train you know I see a lot of, I remember, I saw a lot of wood in the river, the put the wood, the logs, yes, I think they after they used that to do houses or whatever they needed. ...okay this is my story

SF: Do you remember what you bought with you from Casacorba? What did you pack in your bagaglio?

Livia: Oh really little, not much stuff because he told me don't bring a lot of stuff because here is a different style and when you arrive, you buy whatever you need to here, and he says if they want to give it to you, the family you know, take the money and bring it over here. This is what I do. Only a suitcase, that's all I have. Oh well, my orologio to you see it the other time. You don't want to see this time? You want to see it? This memory, somebody gave me this for a gift because I was leaving and I, when it was working it, did stuff, that's all I had, that, my ring I lost it and not much in my suitcase either.

SF: So you came to Canada in 1953, in September

Livia: October the 10 I marry married Gino

SF: Where were you living?

Livia: Alice street here and after two years we came here and I'm still here... sixty-three or sixty-four years...since 1956 we came here in this house. 1953 in Alice street and then here.

SF: So, the next question I'm going to ask is what it was like, as a recent immigrant - you didn't speak any English to go through your pregnancy and give birth

Livia: Birth to Diane? Then Yeah, well, I go to the hospital, and I got, I can't speak nothing. And in a way she born in a for me, you know, I don't I don't have much to say. Only when my husband came there, my aunt came there to see the baby. I understand them, but the rest I understand nothing. Five years, it was bad, you know, if you don't know how to speak, you close your mouth and be good you good. I have three or four aunts, a cousin, a lotta relations here you know on my husband's side.

Well, even when I came, I go for the job interview. And I say Livia Tonin. They don't understand me, "Livia," and they say "spell your name. And I said Livia, you know Livia, and I have to write Livia for them. But my cousin, she says just say, Lidia. So, they understand how to do it, but Livia they just can't put it down, isn't that awful? And they've gone to school you know; I don't have much school but Livia they just [wouldn't] put it down. So, I went to two years in a language school here. I have a Diane after five years of being married. Then from then, I never go to work. Until Michael was born, I was pregnant. I was working at the university for five years, and I got pregnant in there no, not there! home! [laughs] here who brimming but yeah, I was pregnant, and I worked only five years there, and then I stay home all the rest of the time with the three kids that I have, I have Diane, Robert and Michael.

SF: Did you find as a recent immigrant with your parents in Italy, you did you find you had enough support?

Livia: Yeah. Oh, yes. Here when you know I never, you know, I have everything I want when I when my children here.

SF: What was it like in the community with other moms?

Livia: Oh, a lot of friends, Yeah, we was a lot of Italian friends here then, there was a lot of immigration at that time all you see three there, and I have some [friends] they already die, a lot of Italia, you don't have to speak [English] at home we speak Italia, outside you speak Italia, in our relations, we speak Italia, not now there's not really many who speak Italia no more because they're gone. If I am old, the others are old too, you know because they came, most of them, in the same years, you know.

SF: What are the biggest differences do you think in this community raising your children than when you arrived and now or the next generation?

Livia: Well, I don't know much about it—No. When they're born in there [Italy] and here [Canada]. But here you got much more than there for sure to raise it the children you know, raise the baby. I was happy all the time for my life.

SF: Do what do you remember most about your mother's experience?

Livia: Oh, my mother poor lady, she had eight kids, eight children and my father was a salesman, they sell cow you know and when they sell cow after you know, to celebrate like he goes to the hotel, and he drinks a lot. A lot of you know he comes home; he was not nice with my mother, especially, but they stayed together. These days they [would've] divorced at that time they could not divorce. They have to stay where they are. So this is what it was...

SF: The whole process of pregnancy and giving birth in Italy for your mother. How does that compare with your own? Oh,

Livia: My mother, all the kids, she was lucky too, you know, no problem. But my aunt she has a kid the first die because they killed it. They don't go to the hospital. They don't they don't go to the doctors. They got only a home lady. A lady delivers the baby. It was not very nice to those who didn't have good luck. But my mother all eight, no problem. She was really, really lucky. Yeah.

SF: Did that make it easier for you?

Livia: For me? Well, that I don't have a problem either, you know.

SF: I asked because I yesterday I was speaking with Lorena I don't know when she went to the hospital she was thinking about her mother's experience and her mother's memory the memory of her mother's memory is imprinted on her own experience when she

Livia: when she have the baby. Yeah, yeah,

SF: I'm curious about how we think about our mothers when we become Yeah, and how their experiences imprinted on our own experience good or bad.

Livia: Yeah. But they were here both, you know, my mother was the other side. I was young, you know, I remember she would say all the time I was lucky to have a kid, like this. At home [Italy] no doctor, they get pregnant they never go to the doctor or checkup nothing all nine months like this.

SF: The next question I have is about how you identify yourself. Did your perception of yourself change when you give birth to a Canadian child did? Did you feel any different?

Livia: Well, I would have liked to be there in Italy, [with] my mother, all my sister everybody, to see my baby. I remember my aunt come there, the first time she came, my aunt and I remember I cry because the first baby you have you know far away for everybody, and it is an incredible joy,

you know, and I cried then with my aunt yes, because the joy to have the baby. Yeah, but only the first, and then you know it was a different story.

SF: Did giving birth in Canada give you more of a sense of Canadian identity.

Livia: Nah, not really. More Italia like I told you before we was a lot of Italians.

SF: Was there anything you would have done differently?

Livia: No, no, no. Because they tell me when I had the baby, they was my family like my aunt, my people, I know them, you know? They teach me the way it's supposed to teach, you know when you got a baby. So, this is my story. Oh, yeah, I have Diane in then after five years, I have Robert, and then after 14 years, I have a Michael. But Diane, she was was already 18 years old. Anyway. And I got nothing to complain now, my husband died, Diane died and the two boys, they love me. Anytime I need something, they're here, so I can't complain about it. And I got four granddaughters there's my life here there, and all this is the story of my life. So then, I can't complain about nothing.

SF: Yesterday as well. When I was speaking with the Santi's, they described their connection in the community as so deep because most of their families were still in Italy. Deep connections with their neighbours and community that they described as "strings of love" What do you think about that?

Livia: Well, I have neighbours here, and they don't come here and have a cup of coffee with me, never. They are Canadian, but for me, you know for me they're strangers because they are now they're not like family for me. They everyone they stay in their own house, in Italia you know we are more close with family, even friends, but here it is so different. I find it much different here. What do you think?

SF: I wonder if it's different in this community now because the community is shifted? Well, so many people living.

Livia: Yeah, no. I think if we see outside, we say hello, nothing else. If I need something, I can phone because I got the phone and everybody, by the way, kid first and then the, you know, figure something to say, and then the neighbour, my first family like my son, my two sons. Yeah. The neighbourhood for me isn't nothing.

SF: Yeah, you still play Bocce ball?

Livia: I play Bocce, I play maybe 35 or 40 years, and I love it because you do some exercise there. You go out one night every week isn't much for me, only to move from the house because all the time here is no very good. You know?... all my story.

Yeah, the girl was here. The first album I got is full- I made an album once because we went to Australia for two months. I make an alum there go there because the picture picture picture picture.

SF: Do you have anything else to add to your motherhood and your experience

Livia: For me, the life is, feels it'd be nice all the time. You know, it was a bad time when my daughter died at 23 years old, That was two or three years, you know, it was not really, nice. But the rest I can't complain, you know, I thank God every day because my husband died 18 years ago, no 19 years ago, January the 14 and he left me, not without a house, money in the side, and everything you know, and my living I can live like a queen and now you know, I don't suffer like for nothing, and I'm happy Yeah, especially with the family I got, that's all, there's my life. I say thank God every morning for what he gave to me. So this is it.

SF: How different things would be if you stayed in Italy?

Livia: Oh, who knows these days it different in Italy too, it changed a lot too. There's no more farmers like there used to be if they are farmers, they got the machine. But those times everything was by hand when I was there. You've been in Italy, where you been?

SF: In Calabria...

Livia: Yeah, we are. We're in the North north. More different...I never been in the south of Italy, the say it's beautiful down there too.

SF: I think so.

Livia: My niece here, she married one from the south. And she goes there for her honeymoon, and she says beautiful there but I never been down there in the south. I've been Venice, Milano Roma all Firenzw see all this side but not down in the south.

SF: And where's home for you?

Livia: Ah, here because I do whatever I feel like doing nobody is my boss any more. So this is it Sharon the life sometimes is nice, sometimes the life can't be good all the time, as long as you live you know. I got nothing else to tell you, this is the second time I tell you.

SF: I remembered it was one of the only things you brought [the clock]

Livia: It was a doctor, relation [relative] of mine there. He gave me, he says here Livia this is a memory of me. That's why I keep it. I don't use it, never use it, leave it there for a memory. So, Sharon, my life is pretty good. Thank God. You know I'm still here and enjoy the life, my family and everything. I can't complain.

SF: What are you planting in the garden this year?

Livia: Well very little, you know, some beans, some squash zucchini, carrot, not much. Not much, because it's too big for me, you know, is too big and I don't wanna work too much.

SF: I remember it was a paradise a couple of years ago. Yeah, Sammy and Isabel were running around in there, yeah. Oh yeah. Grapes.

Livia: Yeah, I got grapes down there. Yeah, yeah. Too much for one lady, you know? I don't like to say old lady yet. I never say I say old ladies is not nice, but I am

SF: you're young at heart forever.

Livia: Still, Yeah. Because I still feel pretty good. You know? Some others have to walk with a walker, or whatever Wherever some people they got a lot of worse [health issues] than me. Okay, Sharon, you finish? Now I make a cup of coffee for you too, huh?

Livia: [pointing at pictures] Yeh, this is I; this is me. Look, look at my hair there. It's curly. Long. Can we put this away, and then make a bit of coffee...A lot of stuff.

I want to show you this one, you've seen this. Diane. [wedding picture] she's married here, but she died at 23 years old my first daughter, yeah. It was a car accident. There was snow like this. Oh, oh, this is Diane and she died in 1981 at 23 years old. It was high snow, and the car slipped, they go on the river there, and she died instantly. Yeah. So...A bad memory this...

SF: How old is she in this picture?

Livia: 21, she was married at 21 years old.

SF: So, two years before...

Livia: Yeah. Two years.... one and a half anyway, yeah...Everyone we have a have a cross to carry.