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**ME AND SCHOOL
THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EXPERIENCES
OF FIRST-GENERATION CANADIAN MALES OF ITALIAN HERITAGE**

Anna Maria DiGiammarino

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in
partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Education**

**Graduate Programme in Education
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by **ANNA MARIA DI GIAMMARINO**

a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of York
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MASTER OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Upon graduation from university I found employment with the York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB), previously known as the York Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board. When informed that I had some choice in the location of my teaching post I opted for one of a number of elementary schools in Woodbridge. Woodbridge is a predominantly Italian Canadian community in the city of Vaughan, in York Region, Ontario. A salient reason for my decision was my renewed interest in my own ethnic culture.

During my ten year teaching career, I have taught in three different schools, all located in Woodbridge. As an educator, I often wonder how my white, Italian, female, identity determines my relationships with students in general, and those of Italian ethnic heritage in particular (Norquay, 1993). I question whether I, as their teacher, make any necessary difference in their construction and positioning of 'self' and 'other;' in their perceptions of identities; and in their educational experiences, achievements and aspirations.

This study explores the phenomena of ethnic identities and ethnic relationships among individuals [teachers and students in controlled environments, elementary and

secondary schools], who perceive themselves to be the 'same' or 'different' because of their ethnic roots; and how such perceptions of 'sameness' or 'difference' shape ethnic self-identities and perceptions of others.

The research material in this study is limited to qualitative data. Four male candidates were initially selected. Three participated in the study. Each participant completed a one-to-one interview session using a standardized, open-ended questionnaire. The data is a current day retrospective based on each participant's memories and stories of their elementary and secondary school experiences.

The findings clearly indicate that the participants' school environments and experiences shaped and influenced their construction of identities and determined their perceptions of 'self' and 'others.'

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To my supervisor Professor Carl James and committee member Professor Naomi Norquay for their commitment to my work, for their generosity of time, knowledge, insight and wisdom, I thank-you.

DEDICATION:

To my first teachers, my parents Iole and Tomasso DiGiammarino. A tribute, in honor of their accomplishments, achievements and commitment to their children.

With love and admiration,

Anna Maria.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Upon graduation from university I found employment with the York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB), previously known as the York Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board (YRRCSSB). When informed that I had some choice in the location of my teaching post I opted for one of a number of elementary schools in Woodbridge. Woodbridge is a predominantly Italian Canadian community in the city of Vaughan, in York Region, Ontario. A salient reason for my decision was my renewed interest in my own ethnic culture. Indeed, my rather idealistic intention was to "make a difference within my ethnic community." In retrospect, I realize that my decision was in response to my own educational experiences at both the elementary and secondary school levels.

My father emigrated to Canada in 1950 and my mother followed in 1954. They were married by proxy in Italy and upon my mother's arrival renewed their wedding vows in a Roman Catholic Church. My parents knew each other as children. They were from the same hometown, located in the central region of Italy, Abruzzi. I am the youngest child and only daughter, born on October 22, 1963. My brother, four years older was born on February 13, 1959. As I was

growing up, my parents purchased homes in various parts of the greater Toronto area (e.g., Toronto, Downsview, Woodbridge), all of which were in communities predominantly populated by people of Italian origin. By the time I was of school age, that is, about four, we were already in our second home, on Hullmar Drive, in Downsview, off Jane Street between Finch and Steeles Avenues.

Unlike my brother, who attended the public school system throughout his elementary and high school years, I started with the public board but changed to the Catholic system in grade six. There was no particular reason why I changed schools, I just wanted a change. Years later, in high school, I asked my mother why she allowed my brother and me to make our own decisions, different as they were. This was her response. When my older brother was beginning school, at the age of four, my parents did not think to ask about the reputation of the neighbourhood school, nor did they think to compare one school to the next. They were simply grateful that there was a school within walking distance from our home and that my brother would have an opportunity to learn, to be educated. An opportunity that was not possible for them. My parents valued education because they understood that it was necessary in order to

compete in a capitalist society. To my parents, education meant personal dignity, economic opportunity and social recognition. And yet, they were not actively involved or visible in our elementary and secondary schools aside from what they considered to be their duty. Today, if my parents were asked to comment on the education system in general, and the schools of their children in particular, they would voice issues and concerns related to their cultural and socioeconomic identity and the experiences of their children but would reason that overall, education proved to be an effective source of social mobility for their children; as their son, continues to work part-time on his dissertation (Ph.D) while working full-time as a programme analyst; and their daughter, a first year vice-principal, continues on in her studies.

At the age of four, I attended Blacksmith Public School, the only school in my neighbourhood. In this school, the majority of students were first generation, Canadian-born children of Italian immigrant parents. The principal, a male, was of non-Italian heritage as were most female teachers, with one exception. The exception was the one teacher I remember with fondness. Perhaps my feelings were rooted in the fact that this teacher was born in Italy and emigrated to Canada with her family at a young age. Being

unmarried, she lived with her parents, who owned a home in the school community. It was typical for me to see her outside of school, with her family, in the context of community events and church socials. I believe my fondness evolved because we shared a cultural legacy. In school, I identified with this teacher.

In grade 6, I attended St. Augustine of Canterbury Catholic School, the only Catholic elementary school in my neighbourhood and the one at which I completed my elementary education. During my three years there, the principal was a female of English heritage, while most of the teachers, mainly women, were of Italian background. The students were typically first generation Canadian with Italian roots. Unlike the previous school, I recall in this school environment a perception of comradeship among students who emphatically identified themselves as "Italians." The comradeship seemed to be a natural outcome, given our age, our perceptions of our teachers, our homelife experiences, and our religion. In this context, being "Italian" and being "Catholic" were synonymous and appeared to mean being accepted without having to earn approval.

By choice, I attended an all-girl, Catholic secondary school, Madonna High School, located near the intersection

of Keele Street and Wilson Avenue, in Downsview. The principal, a nun, was of Irish heritage. The teachers, predominantly females, were of various ethnic backgrounds and the student body was primarily first generation Canadian. Among the students, there was some degree of racial and ethnic heterogeneity; being white and of Italian heritage was the norm.

After attending these three schools, I gradually came to realize that the essential similarity between them was not their philosophies, curricula, programmes or extra-curricular activities. Rather, it was a similarity in their cultures which, in turn, shaped and determined the patterns of student-teacher and parent-teacher interactions. I now wonder whether the non-immigrant and non-Italian teachers were able to understand the fundamental fears, insecurities, and aspirations of Italian immigrant parents and their children. And I am curious to know how the teachers of Italian background viewed their roles in managing the educational development of these students as Canadians? I ask myself how did we children fare, given the varying ethnic backgrounds of our parents and teachers? To what extent, if any, was our academic performance influenced by these circumstances?

Throughout elementary and secondary school, my ability and willingness to express my ethnicity was to a large extent determined by the degree to which such consciousness was generally approved of in the school, and in the classroom in particular. And I believe it is accurate to say that, in all three of the schools I attended, the expression of Italian ethnicity was frowned upon. The fact that the majority of students were first generation Canadian offspring of Italian immigrant parents, like myself, did not alter the situation. Indeed, in this connection, my experience was at variance with Colalillo's (1981:43) view that the Ontario separate school system was another means through which Italian immigrants and their children could intensify their ethnic solidarity. Nor, I believe, would it have been much different had the teachers and school administrators identified with the ethnic identity of their student bodies.

With the exception of one elementary teacher, the one I favoured, the few others (six in total, who were of Italian descent) appeared to me to be more committed agents of enculturation (the process of assimilation) than their non-Italian, non-immigrant colleagues. Perhaps the attitudes and behaviours adopted and the environments created by these six educators reflected their mission (whether conscious or

unconscious) to teach us the norms and expectations of a hierarchically-structured education system governed by those of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant ethnic identity. It may have been their belief that cultural assimilation at this point in our lives, within this context, would allow education to be the means through which our generation achieved upward social mobility. In hindsight, this may have been their way of helping "their own kind," or they too may have been subjected to the constant scrutiny of--or need for approval from--their non-immigrant, non-Italian colleagues and administrators. Could it be that the teacher I favoured also employed these same tactics, but given our contact outside of the school environment, I perceived her in a different light?

During my ten year teaching career, I have taught in three different schools, all located in Woodbridge. As an educator, I often wonder how my white, Italian, female, identity determines my relationships with students in general, and those of Italian ethnic heritage in particular (Norquay,1993). I question whether I, as their teacher, make any necessary difference in their construction and positioning of 'self' and 'other;' in their perceptions of identities; and in their educational experiences, achievements and aspirations.

Based on my experiences as a student and educator, this study explores the phenomena of ethnic identities and ethnic relationships among individuals, [teachers and students in controlled environments, elementary and secondary schools], who perceive themselves to be the 'same' or 'different' because of their ethnic roots; and how such perceptions of 'sameness' or 'difference' shape ethnic self-identities and perceptions of others. In view of this focus, *this study poses two questions: (1) What were the experiences of first generation Canadians, of Italian heritage, who attended elementary and secondary school where most teachers and students were of Italian heritage? And (2) How did going to school in environments where most teachers and students were of Italian heritage help these individuals construct their perceptions of ethnic identities, a process which shaped and facilitated their own identities as Italians?*

Chapter two, A Discussion of Literature, addresses issues that are relevant to the study of ethnic identities and experiences as it pertains to the three participants in my study, "Sam," "Jack" and "Angelo," and to the questions I wish to answer. Chapter Three, Methodology, outlines and explains the process through which the data for this study was obtained. Chapter Four, examines the question: *What were the experiences of Sam, Jack and Angelo, as first generation*

Italian Canadian males, between the ages of 23 and 25, who attended elementary and secondary schools where most students and teachers were of Italian heritage? Here I explore the data that concerns their understandings and perceptions of their identities. Chapter Five, explores the question: How did going to school in environments where most students and teachers were of Italian heritage help Sam, Jack and Angelo construct their perceptions of ethnic identities, a process which shaped and facilitated their own identities as Italians? Here I explore student-teacher and parent-teacher relationships and the role they play in identity formation.

Chapter Six, Conclusion, is a synthesis of Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's, ethnic experiences, perceptions and identities. In this chapter, I seek to resolve, if possible, two personal issues. The first, assuming that every teacher is viewed--either consciously or unconsciously as a role model, does my Italian-Canadian ethnicity constitute a positive factor in the future lives of my students, a net enhancer of their chances of success in an increasingly pluralistic society, one less and less dominated by a white Anglo-Saxon elite? The second, making the same assumption, does the ethnicity I share with my students amount to an encumbrance upon their chances of future

success in that wider society, by suggesting, perhaps, that their ethnic community is of sufficient size and maturity that enculturation of its young can be carried out by "their own kind," thereby increasing the chances of their developing an ethnically-determined "world view," at best of marginal benefit to them in making their way in that wider society?

CHAPTER TWO: DISCUSSION OF LITERATURE

This literature review attempts to explore and synthesize a wide ranging set of issues that provide a context for the research and inform the analysis. The issues addressed in this chapter are: (1) Italian Immigrants in Canada; (2) Culture, Ethnicity and Race; (3) The Formation and Preservation of Italian Ethnic Communities; (4) The Italian Ethnic Factor in Education; (5) Canadian Schools and First Generation Italian Canadian Students; (6) Gender Issues in Education: The Case of Italian Males; and (7) Identity, Ethnicity and Entitlement.

ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA

During the 1890's, Sifton, Minister of the Interior, believed in and supported the framework of the British Empire (Harney & Troper, 1975). This of course influenced his perceptions as he initiated an aggressive search to populate Canada with immigrants. It was during this period that the so-called "perfect immigration policy" and the definition of "ideal immigrant" for Canada were developed (Harney & Troper, 1975:V).

During this period, according to the Canadian government, the ideal immigrant was a person of American or British heritage who was prepared to work as an independent farmer once settled in the West (Harney & Troper, 1975).

Indeed, the government viewed immigrants from the United States and the British Isles as other than 'foreigners' (Harney & Troper, 1975).

Faced with the difficulties of recruiting what Sifton and the government perceived to be 'ideal settlers,' a hierarchy was constructed which served to categorize and label other immigrant groups. This hierarchical structure sequentially ranked immigrant groups, from a status of inferior to superior, based on Sifton's and the government's perception of potential group assimilation. Within the context of this hierarchy, the more desirable groups were identified as the Scandinavians, Germans, and Ukrainians and the least favoured people were Jews, Italians, South Slavs, Greeks, Syrians and Chinese (Harney & Troper, 1975). By 1931, with the completion of the "new" immigration policy, there had occurred a change in the ethnic and racial composition of the Canadian population (Harney & Troper, 1975).

During the era of mass immigration, 1880-1929, millions of Italians emigrated to Canada and/or the United States, in search of temporary or permanent employment (Iacovetta, 1992). In Canada, as in other countries, the flow of Italian immigrants was abruptly ended by the onset of the

Great Depression which caused national governments around the world to close their doors to immigrants (Iacovetta, 1992). The Depression, Fascist Italy's anti-emigration policies and the Second World War, prevented Italians from emigrating for almost two decades (Iacovetta, 1992).

In Canada, the overwhelming presence of Italian immigrants is a post-World War Two phenomenon (Harney, 1986). The need for an unskilled labour force and economic growth helped to overcome residual prejudice and hostility against Italian immigrants (Sturino, 1986). From 1947 to 1951 the "enemy alien" label against Italians was rescinded and a policy of active recruitment of "bulk labour" was initiated (Harney, 1986:5). During this time, most immigrants were Southern Italian peasants with little or no formal education (Femminella, 1989:37).

Since 1970, there has been a drastic decrease in immigration from Italy and during the early 1980's, there were more people going to Italy from Canada than the reverse (Jansen, 1986). The implication is that the Italians in Canada today are one of the "established" groups, that is, "a group which has experienced a strong immigration in the past, but on the whole immigration has now ceased and is not likely to pick up again" (Jansen, 1986:128).

As new immigrants infiltrate society, they assume the inferior position of previous ones. But despite the turnover, certain patterns of behaviour and prejudice continue to exist. Historians of Canadian immigration coined the term "ethnic preference ladder," to describe the process by which immigrants are accepted into Canadian society (Iacovetta, 1992:104). The mode of acceptance operates along a continuum of preferred and non-preferred status. This process reflects current-day ideology pertaining to the superior civilization of northwestern Europe and its white colonial people. The Canadian response to immigrants was determined by racial, cultural, gender and class identity. The popular stereotype portrays foreign-born males as potentially violent and sexual threats to Canadian-born women; and immigrant women as the suffering wives of their domineering husbands (Iacovetta, 1992).

Italian immigration to Canada after World War II was coupled with an anti-Italian and, in particular, anti-Southern Italian sentiment. Fascism and the war added the term "enemy alien" to the list of strikes against Italians (Iacovetta, 1992:105). The influx of Italian immigrants continued to be perceived as a threat to Canada's, especially, Toronto's, racial and social composition (Iacovetta, 1992). The perpetuation of negative

stereotypes served to ensure that the Italians operated under the control of the city's Anglo-Celtic and Protestant character (Iacovetta,1992).

CULTURE, ETHNICITY AND RACE:

Despite the popular ideology that Canada is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society, there exists a shared set of assumptions about race and ethnicity, assumptions that distort how people perceive Canadian society in general and ethnic and racial groups in particular (Li,1990).

It is generally accepted that biological and cultural characteristics provide a scientific rationale for classifying individuals into racial and ethnic groups (Li,1990). Superficial physical features, skin colour in particular, are perceived to be legitimate grounds for the classification of individuals into racial groups. The combination of cultural and physical qualities creates an even greater rift and heightens discrimination between ethnic groups. Throughout Canadian history, cultural and physical traits, whether presumed or real, have been used to justify the segregation and discrimination of groups such as the Indians, Ukrainians, Jews, Chinese and Italians (Li,1990;Iacovetta,1992).

In Canada, dating back to the onset of emigration from Italy, Italians have been the victims of racial, cultural and intellectual stereotypes which were generated by Canada's English society and already established Italian Canadian citizens (Harney,1989). Stereotypes ensured that Italian immigrants understood their 'place' within the framework of Canada's social class structure (Harney,1989).

The southern Italian peasant/farmer was usually the subject of most ethnic stereotypes. Depicted as dark-skinned, stocky, suffering from malnutrition and having limited schooling, these immigrants were considered to be among the least likely to adjust to North American's industrial economic order (Iacovetta,1992). Purportedly, born in deep-rooted fatalism, nurtured in poverty-stricken environments and burdened with large families, conventional wisdom had it that these people lacked both the resourcefulness and means to make the transition to urban life (Iacovetta,1992).

The image of southern Italian immigrants was that they lacked self-discipline, were emotionally volatile and temperamental (Iacovetta,1992). Many of these images emerged from Italy. It was the north-south Italian dichotomy that resulted in Italy's uneven development and fostered the

traditional prejudices of northern Italian politicians, intellectuals and others towards the southern peasants which provided North Americans with a pat logic for their own dislike of Italian immigrants (Iacovetta,1992).

Iacovetta (1992) writes, that in 1964, author Robert Allen attempted to capture Torontonians' contradictory perceptions of Italian immigrants by describing College Street's 'Little Italy.' Allen writes,

Here one finds people from Naples and Palermo looking at snails in grocery stores, listening to Italian records, and enjoying the novel life of a community of Italian movies, espresso bars, pizza parlours, pointed shoes, short jackets, Sicilian shawls and such vitality that decadent suburb. Many welcome this exotic tidal wave that has given texture to the city and suddenly made Toronto as self-consciously cosmopolitan as a teenager who has just discovered beer. Others look on these changes dourly, still call Italians 'Eyetalians' and misuse the word 'ethnic' to mean exactly what they used to mean when they said 'foreigner.' A few think vaguely of Little Italy as a cluster of grocery stores in an old part of town but many think of it as a tough neighbourhood of ward heelers, underground societies, and Tammy Hall politics, where Italian youths pinch girls' behinds, and more mature citizens, when they aren't eating spaghetti, are stealing jobs from Canadians (cited in Iacovetta,1992:103).

Similarly, Perin (1989) notes, that in his novel *Foreigner*, Connor depicts the perception Canada's mainstream society held of Italian emigrants. Connor explains,

The title itself speaks volumes, depicts the boarding-house as the locus of social and sexual deviance, of filth, poverty, illiteracy, and general human degradation. Only when the immigrant comes in contact with select Canadians, those all-purpose Mr. Cleans who obligingly scrub away every trace of Old World culture, is his redemption secured. In the process, he discards his festivities and celebrations, his religious beliefs and practices, his dress, his sometimes frivolous, sometimes aberrant behaviour in favour of sober, earnest, and purposeful living and manly religion (which is the one where the Pope is not master of his mind!) The bedlam to abandon his Old World ways, blossoms into Anglo-Canadian Eden of tranquillity, order and productivity" (cited in Perin,1989:14).

The response Italian immigrants received from Torontonians and other groups, during the peak of post-war immigration, was seldom positive (Iacovetta,1992). And even when it was, the tone was usually patronizing. More often than not, this group emerged as the subject of scorn and ridicule. Despite the racist and discriminatory acts committed against them, the immigrants saw Canada and its' cities as an economic opportunity and most were determined to endure its hardships (Harney,989).

A more extreme position is that the biological and genetic characteristics which are believed to have produced racial and ethnic groups also determine social, cultural and intellectual abilities (Li,1990). Consequently, racial and ethnic groups construct a hierarchy, based on alleged potentials and actual abilities, and ranked along a continuum

of inferiority and superiority status positions. This ranking process is the essence of racism, more precisely, "institutional racism" which, according to Li (1990:37), may be expressed as prejudicial beliefs and discriminatory practices experienced by individual people in the course of daily living (Li,1998). Li (1988:37) writes that,

Institutional racism involves social institutions that give a sustained meaning to superficial features of 'race' and use 'race' as the justification for disqualifying subordinate members of society from equal participation. In such cases racism is articulated as both a racist theory and a discriminatory practice, and its continuing manifestation in social institutions lends a false legitimacy to the use of 'race' as a socially acceptable criterion for differentiating between individuals and groups.

Italian immigrants rarely experienced the degree of institutional racism allotted to racial minority groups, but were all too familiar with the indifference and bigotry of North Americans (Iacovetta,1992). The growing presence of Italians in Canada from the 1880's to 1930's resulted in a nativist backlash (Iacovetta,1992). Iacovetta (1992:105) writes,

Drawing on long-standing stereotypes regarding the inferiority of the Italian race and the alleged inability of Italians to practise the rules of democratic government or conform to middle-class standards of conduct, North Americans made their prejudices clear by depicting Italians as 'hot blooded' and 'culturally backward' peasants.

Typical of most stereotypes, the popular perceptions of Italian immigrants always possessed contradictory images. Iacovetta (1992:105) explains,

Patronizing portraits of Italian peanut vendors and barbers as child-like innocents happily performing their jobs contrasted sharply, for instance, with the hot-tempered, stiletto-wielding punk.

Another common misconception is the perception that ethnic and cultural groups are one and the same and that culture is the underlying cause of differences in people's values, behaviours and achievements (Li,1990). Culture is perceived to be a salient feature which mechanically exerts its influence on the livelihoods of individuals. This mode of reasoning puts groups deemed inferior at a further disadvantage, identifying culture as the cause of their adversity. Li (1990) suggests, that the purpose of equating culture with ethnicity is to cast blame on individuals for their misfortunes by attributing their circumstances to cultural deficiencies of their group rather than wider social forces.

This mechanical perspective of culture and ethnicity also distorts how ethnic relations are interpreted (Li,1990). Since culture is perceived to be the primary force behind human behaviour, ethnic survival and adaptation

becomes a question of the group's ability to retain its own identity and resist the evolutionary process of assimilation. This understanding of ethnic relations became such an authoritative intellectual argument in the post-war era that every aspect of human existence concerned with ethnicity is evaluated within the ideology of assimilation (Li, 1990).

Ethnic groups are looked upon as extensions of Old World cultures established in the New World, which provide immigrant groups with a sense of identity, comradeship and understanding as they reconstruct their lives. Oddly enough, in the New World it is never external forces but internal culture that determines ethnic survival (Li, 1990). If external forces are considered, it is to the extent they allow or prevent the assimilation of an ethnic group (Li, 1990).

THE FORMATION AND PRESERVATION OF ITALIAN ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

The formation of Italian Canadian ethnic communities is a direct result of Canadian immigration policies, the entrance status of Italian immigrants, education and economic factors, ethnic stereotyping and discrimination (Iacovetta, 1992). The preservation of such communities serve as cultural reminders to society in general and Italian

immigrants in particular of their survival, success and understanding of the politics and livelihood in English Canada's class-based society (Harney,1998).

In the suburbs, Italian ethnic communities offer limited opportunities for expression (Harney,1998). Their attraction, in part, is the convenient access to a nearby workplaces, larger parcels of land, bigger homes, and so forth as well as the fact that they segregate the Italians from other cultural and racial groups (Harney,1998). In the city, the charm of Mediterranean exotica in 'Little Italies' are opportunities for Italian Canadians to prosper by marketing their 'Italian' authenticity, their 'cultural vitality' and their 'practical knowledge' to the Canadian public, at the same time however, limiting and restricting individuals who wish to break free and pursue a different course (Harney,1998).

The issue of where the Italian immigrants lived, whether in the suburbs or city, had a direct impact on the ethnic composition of the student population in schools. If the communities was primarily populated by Italian immigrants, than logic would have it that their children attended the neighbourhood elementary and secondary schools. Thus, having adequate if not overwhelming representation

within the schools. This in turn, influenced and shaped their perceptions of themselves as an ethnic group 'in' and 'out' of school. These perceptions determined their educational experiences.

THE EDUCATION OF ITALIANS

Perlmann (1988) examines the relationship between first generation Italian-Americans and the education system. He writes that from 1880-1920 the Italians constituted the largest single group of immigrants, with approximately four million entering the United States (Perlmann,1988). Although almost half returned to Italy, the Italians that remained in the United States continued to outnumber all other groups of arriving immigrants (Perlmann,1988). By 1915, compared to other minority groups, children of Italian immigrants were the dominant ethnic group in schools and by 1925, they outnumbered children of Irish heritage (Perlmann,1998). Along with the Irish, children of Italian immigrants were less likely to remain in school than any other group (Perlmann,1998). In fact, Perlmann (1988) found that in 1915, less than one-tenth of children of Italian immigrants were enrolled in high school, compared to two-fifths of children from other groups. Similarly, compared to other ethnic groups, children of Italian immigrant parents on

average, were less likely to receive good grades from teachers; a pattern that continued until 1925 (Perlmann, 1988).

Perlmann (1988) comments that many observers suggest that there is a direct correlation between the cultural heritage of Italian immigrants and the value they placed on education. Covello (1967) examines the relationships between southern Italian immigrants, their children and the education system in America. In order to understand these relationships and their complexities Covello explores the immigrants school patterns in the context of the economic and social structure and culture of southern Italy (cited in Perlmann, 1988).

In Italy, there was a significant difference in the literacy rates between the North and the South with the rate of illiteracy far greater in the South than the North. This reality was the result of a number of factors: first, government officials in Rome came from the northern and central regions exclusively, with minimal representation of the south, resulting in a lack of government support and funding for educational facilities in the South (Covello, 1967). The little education that was enforced in the South was considered foreign by the peasants/farmers.

Second, the cultural diversity of the North and the South prevented the South from establishing an effective centralization of the administrative control of education (Covello,1967). Third, the predominantly agricultural economy of the South required children to work at an early age, to help support their families. The Compulsory education laws were therefore not upheld by the peasants/farmers or enforced by the upper class or clergy (Covello,1967). Indeed, members of the upper class and the clergy opposed formal education in the South, perceiving it to be a threat to the existing social order. Finally, and most importantly, were the traditions of the southern Italian peasants/farmers with respect to schooling. For the peasants/farmers, true education consisted of kinfolk using folklore to teach the young the socio-cultural value system peasants/farmers could control how the young were educated to ensure compliance with and conformity to their way of life.

In the United States, the social mores of southern Italian peasants/farmers had a direct impact on their process of adjustment or accommodation to American schools as a social institution (Covello,1967). Covello (1967) writes, that the perception of Italian immigrant children as 'problems' in the New York City school system was far

superior to that of non-Italian children. It appeared, however, that this situation was the result of the conflict between the immigrants and the school which, in turn, had a direct impact on the schooling of their children (Covello, 1967). Covello (1967) explains that the source of conflict derived from four factors. First was the southern Italian immigrants slow acculturation to "Americanism." In America, in order to protect themselves from the strange and often blatant hostility of their new environment, the immigrants isolated themselves and created socio-cultural refuges commonly known as "Little Italys" (Covello, 1967:279). This form of adjustment, although a natural phenomenon, served to retard their process of accommodation to American society and often lead to public displays of hostility towards American behaviours, attitudes and lifestyles (Covello, 1967). Second, in America, the enforcement of compulsory school laws created conflict between the immigrants and school officials (Covello, 1967). Third, in America, immigrant children were no longer an economic asset but a liability. The enforcement of compulsory school laws meant that they could not leave school at an early age--to work and thereby help support the family. Indeed, a prolonged childhood meant that they had to be supported by their parents. Similarly, attending school

conflicted with family "schooling." The home, as a learning institution, ensured that the immigrants children remained submissive to parental authority and obeyed cultural norms. In America, schools posed a threat to the social harmony and tranquility of the family. Finally, the immigrants rejected the notion of higher education (i.e., high school), perceiving it to be a form of idleness or play (Covello,1967).

Femminella (1988) writes that from the onset of their arrival in America, there were always a few Italians who participated in the education system that was available to them. And there were some, the early colonial Italians, who made education available to others. However, Femminella (1988) points out that the majority of Italians who immigrated to America were from the southern regions of Italy with little or no formal education. For this group of immigrants, participating in the American education system presented itself as a double edged sword (Femminella,1988). For southern Italians education was a privileged endeavour, one that was not offered to peasants/farmers except in the case of priesthood (Femminella,1988). From this perspective, an educated person was perceived in one of two ways: either as good morally, and therefore accorded the highest regard, or as a member of the upper class, and therefore an enemy

(Femminella,1988). In America, education was not viewed as the primary road to success (i.e., the acquisition of material wealth) among first and second generation Italian immigrants (Femminella,1988). This was not the case for third, fourth and other generations of Italian Americans.

Belief in the intrinsic value of education can only develop over a number of generations, as each experiences both the economic and social benefits which education confers. For immigrants struggling to better their material existence, economic success without benefit of education retards the growth of belief in the extrinsic value of education, while at the same time delaying, perhaps for generations, the belief--and indeed, the understanding--that education has any intrinsic value!

Steinberg identifies social class standing as the determining factor in the educational value system subscribed to by first generation Italian-American immigrants indicating that cultural norms and traditions play a secondary role (cited in Perlmann,1988). Allegiance to a particular social class value system is indicative of social class identity. In America, the bulk of the Italian immigrants were working class (Bonutti,1989). The value

system shared by members of this ethnic group is therefore reflective of a working class ideology.

In a 1986 analysis of the work of conflict theorists Bowles and Gintis, Anisef and colleagues advocate that there is a correlation between social-class status and schooling. As a social institution, the education system inherits a value system. This value system is reflective of the Anglo-Saxon ethnic identity. Similarly to the system, individuals inherit a value system which is, in turn, indicative of their social class position. Upon entering schools, students who reflect middle class norms and values are at an advantage because their culture has been institutionalized by the system. And students who represent diverse racial, ethnic and cultural identities are at a disadvantage. Their disadvantage is rooted in their inability to compete within a class-based system. Anisef (1986) and colleagues argue that the function of the education system is to provide equal opportunity within class boundaries in order to reproduce the existing class structure. Individuals therefore receive an education that is congruent with their class position. This theory explores the notion of social democracy as the guise in which social inequalities are rationalized and reproduced. A criticism of this theory is the assumption that individuals are willing participants in

this form of oppression.

In Canada, Italian immigration was most pronounced during the twenty year period between 1951-1971 (Jansen,1991). In 1951, this immigrant population was approximately 152,245 and rose to 730,820 by 1971, an increase of 22,080 immigrants per year (Jansen,1988; Jansen,1991:160). Most of these immigrants, three-quarters to be exact, "were destined for the lowest status jobs" (Jansen,1991:160). Of these immigrants, more than 70 percent had less than a grade nine education (Jansen,1991). The barriers faced by their children were the results of cultural diversity and linguistic differences, in addition to their originating from families with low levels of education and socioeconomic status (Jansen,1991).

In Canada, government legislation vis-a-vis mandatory school age ensured that these children attended school (Jansen,1991). This experience increased the gap between their school levels and those of their parents. "It was believed that for the most part these children did not aspire to, or continue into, post-secondary education at the same rate" as Canadian-born or children from other immigrant groups (Jansen,1991:160). In 1981, Jansen (1991:160) conducted a study using the hypothesis that ". . large

proportions of (Italians) would remain in the lower socio-economic levels of Canadian society for one or two generations." The results of his study did not support the theory (Jansen,1991). The findings therefore suggest that while the Italian immigrants may not have attended school themselves or perceived a formal education to necessary to their livelihood they understood its value and perceived school to be a source of upward social mobility for their children.

The 1980 United States census reported that the educational attainment of Italians was repressed and stagnant compared to some other European ethnic groups (i.e., English, German, Irish)(Femminella,1989). This statement fails to consider the mobility changes that have occurred within generations of this particular ethnic group. Italian immigrants did not value formal education as it was traditionally valued by the American culture. Formal schooling was not possible and/or relevant to their lifestyle in the old country and thus, did not have a place in their life in America (Covello,1967). Femminella (1989) writes, that third generation Italians and onward established greater affiliations with the system. This factor is evidence of a change in trend among members of this ethnic group. This is to some extent an indicator of

upward mobility within the group.

A common complaint among minority group members is that their children are deliberately oriented towards vocational rather than professional careers (Jansen, 1988). Some parents believe that the English-Canadian education system is not sufficiently equipped to address the needs of students from non-English and non-French ethno-cultural backgrounds and that the culture and class-based curriculum renders many minority students inferior to their English or French classmates (James, 1995).

The education system mirrors the power structure of capitalism by means of a culturally racist and class-based curriculum (James, 1995). James (1995) writes that students from immigrant and low-income families who are outside of the dominant class culture, are kept inferior within the structure of class relations and provided with an education that is congruent with their social class identity. The paradox of education is that it is made available to all, but its accessibility is controlled and manipulated so that the existing class structure is cyclically reproduced and thereby legitimized.

CANADIAN SCHOOLS AND FIRST GENERATION ITALIAN CANADIAN STUDENTS

In an article entitled "The Armani Generation," reporter Joanne Chianello (*eyetalian*, Winter, 1995:15-17) posed the question "Has a society that champions the pursuit of possessions lost sight of the original goal of education?" as she investigated rumours of an elevated high school drop-out rate among Italian Canadian students in Woodbridge, a predominantly Italian community in the City of Vaughan. Chianello's (1995) investigation targeted two of the three high schools in the Woodbridge community, both of which are Catholic and operated by the same board. In both high schools approximately 95% of the student population is of Italian heritage.

Upon investigation, Chianello (1995) found that in both high schools, teachers and students perceived students of Italian background to have a dismissive attitude towards education, and that parental support for learning was quite superficial. Although these parents claimed to prize education and to desire academic success and attendant social mobility for their children, schooling was not a priority in the home and, therefore, without what Porter (1995) refers to as genuine extrinsic and intrinsic value.

In her final comments, Chianello (1995) stipulates that such an attitude to education is not exclusive to a particular geographic location and/or ethnic group but rather, is common to students across Canada. Her admonition to the Italian community of Woodbridge was that it was their responsibility to become politically active in their children's schooling.

As a journalist, Chianello (1995) raises relevant and critical issues (i.e., ethnic relations, ethnocentrism, educational apathy, materialism and sexism) prevalent in the education system and in particular, the educational experiences of first-generation Italian-Canadian students. As a female offspring of Italian immigrant parents, I would have found it of interest if Chianello (1995) positioned her ethnic identity within the article and shared with readers her educational experiences, the purpose of which would have been to explore the similarities and differences. Perhaps the comparison would have revealed that while much has changed for this ethnic group as a whole, a great number of things remain the same, regardless of time and circumstances.

Another female reporter addressed related issues in Canada's largest circulation daily newspaper. In the Toronto

Star of June 18,1997 (1,8) city columnist Rosie DiManno shared with readers her experiences growing up on Grace Street in downtown Toronto's west end. DiManno's (1997) opening remarks are perhaps shared by many children of immigrant parents. She recalls, "I grew up not in a country, but on a street" and recollects "a childhood that was in Canada but not of Canada" (DiManno,1997:1).

In her narrative, DiManno (1997), the child of Italian immigrants, reports she was born in Canada but did not learn to speak English until she began her formal education. She attended Clinton Street Public School where the most visible national icon was the Union Jack, not the Canadian flag. There was a photograph of the Queen at the front of the classroom, and the national anthem was 'God Save the Queen.' In a desperate attempt to be less Italian and more English, DiManno (1997) abbreviated and anglicized her given name, Rosalba, to Rosie. This was only one of the many measures she took to hide her ethnic identity from her English friends, as her Italianness was a constant source of humiliation. In short, at a young age, she found herself trapped in her perceptions of identities. On the one hand, DiManno (1997) loathed and despised her Italian heritage. On the other hand, while she wanted to claim her English status she idolized and aspired to an American identity.

Covello (1967) writes, that it was common for the offspring of Italian immigrants to find themselves co-existing in two diverse and contradictory worlds. The new world versus the world of their forefathers. The traditions and value system of the old country refuted new and unfamiliar traditions. Allegiance to one culture required the abandonment of the other or so it appeared. School was a microcosm of the new world. The home reflected the traditions and values of the old country. Unlike their forefathers, this generation was expected to deal with two opposing and often contradictory cultures. It was not uncommon, however, for members of this generation to experience a sense of betrayal of their forefathers. The education system personified Protestant values and norms. To the Italian community, success within this institution signified a deterioration of cultural values and norms. Although there was an appreciation of the scholastic achievements of their people, there was also a perceived sense of loss.

In her article, DiManno (1997) makes the statement that in her family, as in most Italian immigrant families, education was not highly valued. DiManno (1997:6) writes,

Education was feared by these Italians - a fear nurtured and encouraged by the Catholic church.

Education would take children away from their parents, the priests said, would make them question authority, would draw them into the outside world, which was a forbidden place.

DiManno (1997) does, however, confess that in her particular household, the attitudes her parents expressed towards learning were completely different. While her father never attended a parents' night, her mother, who could barely read Italian, accompanied her every week to the public library, then a 20-block walk, in hopes that she would gain knowledge from books. Given that she was a female, her parents considered a post-secondary education to be useless, but were more accepting of the idea if she pursued a feminine profession, such as teaching. DiManno (1997) played along, but planned her escape into journalism.

Research suggests, that the educational achievements of children is determined by the division of power in the family (Wilkinson,1981). Danziger writes, that children in father-dominated households are more ambitious; fathers were perceived to have the most control in English families, the second highest was in Italian families and much less often in Finnish families (cited in Wilkinson,1981). And the greater the control of mothers, the more likely their children are to complete high school (cited in Wilkinson,1981). Contrary to Danziger, Strodbeck argues,

that participation in family decisions is more likely to be the source of achievement (cited in Wilkinson,1981). Covello (1967) writes, that the assumption that southern Italian women have minimal or no authority and/or control in their household is without validity. The wife's subordination to her husband's authority was not out of a sense of unquestionable submission but instead, was the result of traditional patterns of behaviour (Covello,1967). In southern Italy, the gender of the child determined the type of education he or she would be entitled to (Covello,1967). Females did not receive any formal schooling; their 'education' consisted of preparing for marriage and motherhood (Covello,1967). Whereas the 'education' of males entailed much more freedom outside the family unit, more responsibilities, rights and privileges (Covello,1967). In America, education continued to be an economic, cultural and gender issue for southern Italian immigrants. The southern Italian immigrants reactions to the educational careers of daughters were more acute than of sons (Covello,1967). Jansen (unpublished manuscript) writes, that in education there are slight differences between males and females and that the differences favour the males.

DiManno's (1997) mother and father were both employed outside the home and both exercised control in family

decisions. Her experiences challenge the theory that children of working mothers are less likely to complete high school (Wilkinson,1981). DiManno's (1997) narrative reveals that the educational aspirations and career choices her parents envisioned and voiced for her, reflect their Italian heritage (Covello,1967). In her article, DiManno (1997) explains, that her father did not take an active role in her schooling. I question whether his lack of commitment or involvement may not have been the result of cultural and gender issues (i.e., DiManno's Italian heritage; the fact that her female gender status determined the degree to which she "needed" an education), coupled with the patriarchal structure of the household rather than an expression of his perception of the value of an education in general and DiManno's learning in particular. Her mother, it appears, instilled in her a respect for knowledge. Perhaps this was because her mother had limited schooling, as did most Italian immigrant women, and found herself to be illiterate in both her native tongue and English. It's probable that the circumstances of her mother's life and her experiences led her to better understand what it would mean for her children to be educated and literate. In DiManno's (1997) case there appears to be a strong correlation between the educational plans her mother had for

her and her own plans. Perhaps, in working class families, maternal influence may be far more important than paternal influence in the educational aspirations and achievements of children.

Similar to DiManno's (1997) experience, I recall that in my particular household, my father did not attend any parent-teacher meetings or school events during my elementary and secondary school years. This was my mother's role and/or responsibility. It was not that it was more convenient for my mother to attend school functions, as she too was employed outside the family home. It was that as my mother, she perceived it to be her duty. In the privacy of our home however, it was common for my father to take an interest in my grades and to ensure that I be promoted each year. Unlike DiManno's (1997) household, both my parents, on occasion, would accompany me by car to the local public library, then a fair distance from our home.

DiManno (1997) writes that given her female gender status and being born to Italian immigrant parents, her parents believed in the value of a post-secondary education as long as it did not conflict with her role as a wife and mother (Covello, 1967). To a certain extent, I too can identify with this experience. As a child, my only sibling,

a brother, always expressed an interest in becoming a lawyer. My parents both approved of and supported his educational aspirations. As a child, I had never really given much thought to my future. I do however remember one particular evening, when my family and I were sitting around the dinner table. My father announced that he had found the perfect job for me-a legal secretary. He had been at his lawyer's office earlier that day and explained how he thought that position was ideal. It would mean that I would work in a "clean" environment, something that he and my mother were unaccustomed to as they both worked on assembly lines in factories (i.e., Ford Motor Company and General Motors of Canada); and the hours of employment (i.e., Monday to Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) would not interfere with my role of wife and mother (Covello, 1967). For my father, this occupation was considered noble in that it signified a higher status than he or my mother had or would experience (Jansen,1991). While my mother acknowledged the idea, she always believed that like my brother, I too would attend university and pursue a career of my choice (Jansen,unpublished manuscript). As it turns out, in comparison, my mother was the parent who took greater interest and expressed concern and ambition in the educational achievements of my brother and me (Wilkinson,

1981).

In response to DiManno's (1997) statement, that education was not highly valued by Italian immigrant parents, perhaps their lack of voice or public presence was the result of a number of issues (i.e., limited schooling, language barriers, cultural differences, economic backgrounds) coupled with fear and anxiety (Jansen, 1991). Fear that their children would lose their cultural identity; fear that their children would experience the same prejudice and discrimination they endured; anxiety that their children would not be able to compete and succeed (Covello, 1975; Iacovetta, 1992). Like DiManno's (1997) parents, my mother and father had limited schooling in Italy. And in the eyes of my educators they too were probably just another set of Italian immigrant parents. But that did not mean that education was not highly valued by them or that this value system was not instilled in their children. On the contrary, my parents, as many other Italian immigrant parents, perceived education to be the mode by which their children would experience upward social mobility, attain a privileged status and ultimately benefit from parental hardships and sacrifices (Bonutti, 1988).

The selected content of DiManno's (1997) editorial must

be understood within the context of her identity, which in this case is three-fold; her occupational status, ethnicity and gender. Each of her identities comes into play in her narrative. At the end of her article, I found myself asking a simple question: What was her purpose in writing the article? Was it merely a cathartic experience? Was she looking to trigger memories of similar experiences among other first-generation Italian-Canadian students, females in particular? What kind of statement was she looking to make with her story?

In 1985, high school teachers Salvatore Ritacca and Domenic Tassielli founded the Leonardo Da Vinci Academy of Arts and Sciences, in Toronto (Chianello, 1995). Their dream had been to operate a school which afforded its students all the privileges of a private institution while preserving their sense of Italian culture. By 1989, the academy had a population of 80 students, ranging from grades 6 to 12, the majority of whom were in the higher grades. Most of these students were from the Woodbridge area.

In 1991, a number of problems (e.g., a lack of commitment to studies) among older students resulted in the closing of the senior division of the school. It is Ritacca's belief that for some families, attendance at the

school was merely a status symbol unsupported by a genuine commitment on the part of parents to education per se for their children. Parents, in turn, blamed the school, claiming that having paid the tuition, it was the school's responsibility to educate their children. Is this not the general attitude of most parents, especially those in the private school system?

Another complaint made by Ritacca and other teachers in the Woodbridge area is that mothers generally attend parent-teacher meetings (Chianello, 1995). On occasion, when fathers do attend they appear as if they have been forced or coerced. Ritacca's final comment, is that the common attitude among the student population is rooted in a distinct sense of materialism, for which parents are the culprits. Given that Ritacca does not reveal his overall or other teaching experiences, it would appear that his criticism is exclusive to the Italian community in general and children of Italian immigrant parents in particular and do not apply to other ethnic groups.

GENDER ISSUES IN EDUCATION: THE CASE OF ITALIAN MALES

In Southern Italy, the typical family unit consisted of a mother and father and many children (Covello, 1967). The mentality of the southern Italian peasant/farmer reflected

the notion that a large family would be an economic asset. Regardless of their financial position at the time of marriage, it was common practice for the peasants/farmers to create families of six or more children. It should be noted however, that a lack of knowledge about birth control and/or the use of birth control contributed to the existence of large families (Covello,1967).

Covello (1967) writes, that in the peasant/farmer household, it was common practice for the father to desire the birth of many sons. The birth of many sons was of 'greater economic significance.' At an early age, 10, his sons worked the land. In time, with the help of his sons, the peasant/farmer would be able to purchase and work his own land. Daughters were not appreciated as they were an economic liability. Although they worked within the home by age six, they did not work the land. In addition, the marriage of the daughter required a dowry. Unlike her husband, a wife was less likely to show preference among her children. For her, the birth of many children, regardless of whether they were males or females, gained status and prestige within the community. In the eyes of her husband however, it was the birth of sons that gained recognition.

In the Italian household, in particular those of the

southern region, children were perceived to be commodities in the eyes of their fathers (Covello,1967). The preference for males signifies that the relationship between Italian fathers and their children is within the perimeters of a gender-based value system. Contrary to their spouses, the women did not express difference between their sons and daughters (Covello,1967). Perhaps this is because they too were victims of a patriarchal structure which deemed their female gender status inferior to their male counterparts. This value system defines to some extent the relationship they and their children have vis-a-vis with other institutions, like education.

IDENTITY, ETHNICITY AND ENTITLEMENT

"Where are you from?
What is your nationality?
But, I never think of you as...
I didn't know you were...
You're different.
I'm not racist, but...
It's just a joke.
What does a white person know about racism?
Some of my best friends are..."
(James & Shadd,1994:1).

Authors Carl James and Adrienne Shadd (1994) propose that in the course of everyday living questions and comments such as these infiltrate and become second nature to the thinking patterns and identity perceptions of individuals.

On the surface, such questions and comments may appear innocent, but they are in fact dangerous because they are declarations of the speaker's insensitivity and ignorance. They mirror interpretations of belonging (i.e., entitlement, the right to belong) in the construction of unequal power identities (James & Shadd, 1994; Norquay, 2000). D'Antonio (1975) writes, that ethnocentrism--the mentality 'that my way is better than yours' is and perhaps will always be one of the greatest problems of ethnicity. In America, the assimilation-success model of the white Protestant dominant group ranks them the most ethnocentric of all groups.

In her article, "Where is Here?" Norquay (2000) examines the process by which twenty first year education students use their family's immigration history as they construct their own identity. Norquay (2000:1) poses the questions: "How do students use their family stories about 'country of origin' to shape identity formation? What are the limits and possibilities for being/becoming a Canadian? How do family immigration (hi)stories support or disrupt the construction of a Canadian identity?" In her analysis, Norquay (2000) discovered that for these students being 'Canadian' did not include the immigrant status or experience of their families. This in turn, challenges the official, legal definitions of Canada and the Canadian

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in Norquay,2000). And yet, how these identities are perceived and interpreted vary from person to person. Research found that pre-service teachers in Saskatchewan perceived it necessary to their profession to secure an identity (Norquay,2000). The process involved in securing an identity means that the identity in question is consistent with existing assumptions of who is and who is not Canadian and that these assumptions are not in conflict with issues of race and ethnicity (Norquay,2000).

In his article, "Being German, Being Canadian" sociologist Gottfried Paasche (1994) discusses the reality of ethnic identities. Paasche (1994) identifies himself as either Canadian or German but does not consider himself to be German-Canadian. Each of these three identities are separate and distinct from one another. Paasche's (1994) choice of ethnicity is clearly his and his alone to make, depending upon his need and/or the situation. From his discussion, it is obvious, that Paasche (1994) believes ethnic identities to be both flexible and negotiable. Interestingly, he points out that regardless of the identity assumed, Canadian or German, his experience and/or existence within either ethnicity is that of an "outsider-insider." The term "outsider-insider" is coined to explain the perspective from which Paasche (1994:115) embodies his

ethnicity. For example, as a German, experiencing his German-ness, Paasche (1994) does so from the frame of reference of an outsider looking in, but he reveals that his outside perspective is different because of his dual ethnicity, German and Canadian. When Paasche (1994) chooses to be German or Canadian he does so with a passion to understand his identity within and outside of the culture. This process allows him to be conscious of internal (within the culture) and external (societal) factors which, in turn, influence and affect his perception of the group and of himself as a group member. Paasche (1994:116) writes,

My German identity has served as a constant in my life. It has been the thread tying together past and present. So what does it all mean for my routine life in Canada now? Most of the time it is probably irrelevant. There are other things which impact more heavily on my life, issues such as profession, income, gender, age and so on. However, issues around my German identity crop up unexpectedly even in very small ways.

He continues,

Being German is for me an open-ended identity. By this I mean that I am continuously learning about, and feeling through, my encounter with the German in me. That German in me impels me to learn more of German history, as well as to confront the contemporary face of Germany. It is a living thing. I have a love for language, and being familiar with more than one feels like a blessing.

I am also not a German. I am a Canadian, and even sometimes again an American. Canada has grown on me. When I travel elsewhere, I take the Canadian in me along. I have learned something of its history, and its struggles. I know my way around in this Canada (1994:117).

If Paasche (1994) sees himself as both fluid and flexible within and outside of his German, Canadian or American ethnic identities, Katalin Szepesi (1994) is quite his opposite. In her article "I Want to Call Myself Canadian," Szepesi (1994) writes that in her case her ethnic identity is fixed and determined by the Hungarian heritage reflected in her first and last names. Szepesi (1994:29) writes,

I want to call myself Canadian, but I'm not allowed. My name is Hungarian by origin so therefore I am Hungarian. It doesn't matter that on my mother's side I'm seventh-generation Canadian and before that our family came from Great Britain. It doesn't matter that I can't speak Hungarian and have only a marginal understanding of the culture. It doesn't matter that I was born and raised in Canada. It doesn't even matter that I'm white. Katalin Szepesi is not a Canadian name, so Katalin Szepesi will never be a Canadian.

Unlike her siblings (Stan and Esther) who have English first names, Szepesi (1994) theorizes that she can only exercise her claim to being a Canadian by Anglicizing her first name to Cathy (though she acknowledges that once her last name is discovered her efforts will have been in vain) or by marrying someone with an "Anglo" last name. Szepesi (1994) admits, however, that it is her perception of her names and her perception of how others will react to her because of her names that have forced her, unlike her siblings, into identifying with her Hungarian heritage. And these factors

have made her who she is today.

As a result of her experience, Szepesi's (1994) believes that white adult immigrants with accents other than British or Australian will never be seen as Canadian. Similarly, white immigrant parents must Anglicize their names if their children are to inherit a Canadian identity. Blacks and Asians will never be considered Canadian and native people do not want the identity. True Canadians, in Szepesi's (1994) perception, are both British and bigoted and this group of individuals is becoming a minority in Canada's multicultural society.

The discussion has provided a context in which to explore, understand and question the role and implications of Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's schooling experiences in identity formation.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The research material in this study is limited to qualitative data. Four male candidates were initially selected. Three participated in the study. Each participant completed a one-to-one interview session using a standardized, open-ended, questionnaire (Appendix #1). The interview sessions were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy, to encourage the participants to speak freely and spontaneously at a comfortable rate of speed, and to permit the interviewer to focus on and respond to their verbal and facial expressions and body language.

In an attempt to avoid prepared responses, the participants did not view the questionnaire prior to their interviews. The interviews were scheduled (location, date and time) according to the work and/or school commitments of the participants. The interview session was followed by a reading of the transcript. Transcripts were mailed out approximately three weeks after the interviews. This provided the participants an opportunity to review their responses and make any changes and/or additions to the material.

The participants signed a letter of consent once their involvement in the study (i.e., screening process, interview

session and reading of the interview transcript) was completed. To ensure confidentiality, the participants are referred to by a pseudonymous first name. For their time, each participant received a gift certificate (from a neighbourhood pizzeria or Chapter's bookstore or HMV).

The data is a current day retrospective based on each participant's memories and stories of their elementary and secondary school experiences. Their experiences provide insight into how these years have positioned, shaped and influenced their perceptions of ethnic identities in general, and their Italian ethnic identity in particular.

RECRUITING THE PARTICIPANTS

The criteria (i.e., first generation Canadian, born to Italian immigrant parents) used to select the participants was specific and non-negotiable. The first task was to find a successful and safe method of recruitment. After careful consideration, I decided to place an advertisement in the Italian-language newspaper *Corriere Canadese*, given the paper's current circulation (32,000) and geographical area of distribution (e.g., City of Toronto, City of Vaughan, etc.). As the editor was unavailable on several occasions, I was referred to and communicated with an employee. I was asked to fax the editor a copy of the advertisement and wait

for a reply. One week later, I was contacted by telephone and was informed that the advertisement was approved. The advertisement would appear in the paper three times a week, for one month. On the first day it was scheduled to appear, the advertisement was not printed. Later that same day, I contacted the paper and spoke with my contact. It was then that I discovered the editor had reconsidered and decided that the paper would not print the advertisement. Upon hearing the news, I asked for an explanation, but was unable to speak with the editor. I was told that the editor did not think it wise to participate in any way in my study. I found this experience interesting. First, I could not comprehend why they would turn away business. Second, given my Italian ethnic status and the nature of the study, the paper was in a position to reach out to their own community and help one of their own. Finally, my questions as to why the paper initially approved and then cancelled my advertisement were never addressed to my satisfaction.

In view of this experience, I attempted a second approach to recruit participants, word-of-mouth communication. Given my ethnic identity (i.e., first generation Canadian born to Italian immigrant parents) and female gender status, I thought it more effective to discuss and publicize the study among acquaintances, friends and

colleagues. This method proved to be successful. Initially, four individuals were recruited. The recruitment process for each participant was easy, informal, and non-threatening. The first two participants provided the names of two more individuals, both of whom were selected. The participants are all males. The reason being is that males responded to the recruitment process.

RECRUITMENT

The first participant is a colleague and was recruited at our mutual workplace, an elementary school. It was through this person that a second name was obtained. As it turned out, the second candidate was familiar to me, also in the context of the workplace. The first two participants, both 25, share a friendship that dates back to childhood. They lived in the same Italian ethnic neighbourhood for approximately 18 years, in the former City of North York, and attended and graduated from the same Catholic elementary and all-boys Catholic high school. Both attended the same university, in Toronto, and graduated with degrees in education. The third participant, 23, is the younger brother of a long time friend and it was he who provided the name of the final participant, also 23 years of age. Both males lived in a predominantly Italian ethnic community, in

North York, while attending and graduating from a Catholic elementary school and the same Catholic all-boys high school as the first two. The third participant attends the same university as the first two but studies law, and the final participant attends university in Toronto and studies medicine.

Due to school commitments, the fourth participant withdrew from the study two days before his interview. Perhaps, he was not comfortable meeting and discussing personal stories about his elementary and secondary school years with a complete stranger. Or maybe, he was not comfortable with the fact that his involvement in the study was known to a friend, who in turn could learn of his stories, stories he was not ready or willing to share. Given that this participant was a third year medical student, perhaps he reconsidered because of the time constraints of his schedule.

THE INTERVIEWS

As I taught in one of the two elementary schools in Sam's neighbourhood and he often supplied in the school, it was both the most logical and convenient site for the interview. Due to Sam's unpredictable work schedule (i.e.,

supply teaching), it was mutually agreed that the interview be scheduled in the month of June (1998) when Sam was in the school.

Sam's interview was held on Tuesday, June 24th, 1998 at 4:00 p.m., and was approximately 45 minutes in length. The session occurred in the classroom where Sam had been the supply teacher that day. The interview was carried out without any distractions or interruptions. During the interview, Sam appeared to be at ease, confident and somewhat curious about the types of questions that would be asked of him. Sam's interview transcript was mailed to him during the last week of September, and was returned three weeks later. No changes were made.

Jack and I are colleagues and teach in the same Catholic elementary school. Thus, the school was again the most convenient and accommodating site for the interview session. The interview took place in Jack's classroom, on a Thursday, June 25th, 1998 at 4:00 p.m. The interview was one hour and twenty minutes long. Jack's classroom provided privacy and gave him a sense of security and familiarity. During the interview, Jack appeared to be comfortable with the dialogue. His verbal responses seemed to be spontaneous and genuine, confirmed by his facial expressions and body

language. The session was completed without interruptions. Jack's interview was 35 minutes longer than Sam's. Perhaps the reason rests with the interviewer. With practice, I found myself more at ease with the questionnaire and the interview process. Jack received a copy of the transcript in the third week of September, and returned it three weeks later. No changes were made.

To accommodate Angelo's school and work commitments his interview was conducted in a mutually agreed upon restaurant, on a Friday July 11th, 1998 at 11:00 a.m. and was approximately two hours in length. In comparison to Sam's and Jack's interviews, Angelo's was the longest, further supporting my theory that by the third interview I was completely at ease with the questions, the dialogue and the interview process. At the time of the interview, Angelo appeared to be relaxed in the environment and comfortable with the situation. During the interview, Angelo was receptive to the study; he was interested in the questions and tried to be as accurate and as honest as possible in his responses. Angelo received a copy of the transcript during the last week of September, and returned it during the third week in November. No changes were made.

Based on my experiences, I believe word-of-mouth

communication to acquaintances, friends and colleagues, is an effective form of recruitment. This process makes it easier to establish a sense of trust and a feeling of comfort between the researcher and participants throughout the course of the study, and in particular, in the interview sessions. Also, given the bond of familiarity, it is less likely that the participants will withdraw from the study, making it in the long run more time efficient. With respect to the actual interview sessions, I found that, with practice, I developed confidence, as an interviewer/researcher and that I was less hesitant about asking questions and more in tune with the quality of the answers and the subsequent questions that needed to be asked. Finally, I believe it is important to allow the interviewees to schedule the interview date and time and to select the location. This provides them with a sense of control and ownership of the process, which is especially important given the format (i.e., interviews) of the study. Furthermore, it is necessary for the interviewees to review their transcripts in order to ensure accuracy and also, as a sign of good faith, in that they have access to their data.

THE THREE PARTICIPANTS

The three participants are all first-generation Canadians, children of Italian immigrant parents. Their ethnic status provides a consistent historical context in which to compare and contrast their elementary and secondary school experiences. The second variable, maleness, provides both a gender and cultural context in which to explore the relationship between Canadian schools, Italian immigrant parents and their sons. Finally, their ages, 23-25, identifies the era of their schooling experiences.

PARTICIPANT #1: SAM

Born on August 16, 1972, to southern Italian immigrant parents, Sam is a middle child, having an older brother, aged 32, and a younger sister, 24. Sam describes his neighbourhood, when growing up in North York, as a predominantly middle to upper middle class Italian ethnic community. In 1977, at age four, he attended a neighbourhood Catholic elementary school. Over a period of ten years, from junior kindergarten to grade eight, Sam recalls that the student body was typically of Italian background, unlike the teachers who were an ethnically diverse group. The administration in elementary school did for a brief period reflect the ethnic heritage of its student

population.

In 1987, Sam attended an all-boys Catholic high school. The school was within walking distance of his home and former elementary school. In fact, his former elementary school was a "feeder" school to the secondary institution. Thus, similar to his elementary school, the high school student population was typically first-generation Canadian of Italian heritage. This ethnicity was not mirrored to the same degree in the teaching staff and was non-existent in the administration. Sam graduated five years later, in June of 1992. At the time of the interview, Sam was 25 years of age. References to Sam's transcripts are recorded by the day, month and year (i.e., June 23, 1998) of his interview.

PARTICIPANT #2: JACK

Born on July 20, 1972, also to southern Italian immigrant parents, Jack is the eldest of three siblings, having a younger brother, aged 23, and a sister, 21. Jack grew up in the same North York neighbourhood as Sam. In fact, the two families were neighbours for almost 18 years. Like Sam, Jack characterizes his old neighbourhood as a predominantly middle to upper middle class Italian ethnic community. In 1977, at age four, Jack attended the same neighbourhood Catholic elementary school as Sam. John's

perception of the ethnic culture of the student population and school administrators is consistent with Sam's. Contrary to Sam, Jack remembers most of the teachers being of Italian heritage.

In 1987, Jack attended the same all-boys Catholic high school as Sam. Consistent with Sam's recollection, Jack remembers that most of his peers in high school were first generation Canadian offspring of Italian immigrant parents. Some teachers shared their Italian ethnic identity, but the school administrators (principals and vice-principals) were of non-Italian ethnic backgrounds.

During his last year in high school, 1991-1992, his parents sold their home in North York and moved to York Region. Jack tells how his neighbourhood in North York underwent change at this time, becoming racially, ethnically and economically diverse. Many Italian families that could afford to move out of the neighbourhood did so. In turn, changes in the community altered the ethnic, racial and socio-economic homogeneity of the student populations in neighbourhood schools. The location of the family home, in York Region, was to a large extent determined by the fact that a vast majority of residents in the new area, and their new neighbourhood in particular, were of Italian

heritage.

Similar to his previous neighbourhood, this community is typically perceived to be a unicultural Italian ethnic district. Jack points out, however, that in comparison to his neighbours in North York those in York Region appear to have experienced upward socio-economic mobility. The market value of their homes is greater and the size of the homes larger, and therefore they are more costly to maintain. During his final year, Jack commuted to and from his North York high school. His decision to do so was primarily because transportation was provided and he wanted to graduate with his friends, which he did, in June, 1992. At the time of his interview Jack was 25 years old. References to Jack's transcript are recorded by the day, month and year (i.e., June 25th, 1998) of his interview.

PARTICIPANT #3: ANGELO

Born on November 24, 1975, to northern Italian immigrant parents, Angelo is the youngest of four children, having two older sisters, aged 38 and 30, and an older brother, 37. Growing up in the North York district from 1975 to 1992, Angelo describes his neighbourhood as a predominantly working class Italian ethnic community until the 1990's, when its ethnic, racial and socioeconomic

composition changed. Italians no longer represented the norm. As these changes occurred, the more prosperous Italians moved out of the neighbourhood to more "prestigious" communities. Their ethnicity did, however, continue to be a determining factor in their choice of residence.

Unlike his siblings, Angelo was enrolled in school at age 5. Since he was the youngest, his mother wanted him to spend an additional year at home with her. Angelo attended a neighbourhood Catholic elementary school for nine years, from senior kindergarten to grade eight. The school was within walking distance of his home and had been attended by his siblings. In elementary school, Angelo recalls that most children were born to Italian immigrant parents. The school administrators, principals and vice-principals, were not of Italian background, but about half the teaching staff was.

In 1989, Angelo attended the same all-boys Catholic high school as Sam and Jack, (he was two years their junior), and was expected to do so by his parents. His brother is a graduate of the same school. Angelo recalls that the students were typically first generation Canadians from Italian working class families, similar to those at his elementary school. Compared to the students, there was some

racial and ethnic diversity among the teaching staff. The school administrators, principals and vice-principals, were of non-Italian ethnic backgrounds. Unlike Sam and Jack, Angelo noticed subtle changes in the ethnic, racial and socio-economic composition of the student body during his last two years. These changes were reflective of and consistent with the changes occurring in the community, and in his neighbourhood in particular. Angelo graduated in June, 1994. At the time of the interview Angelo was 23. References to Angelo's transcript are recorded by the day, month and year (i.e., Friday, July 10th, 1998) of his interview.

THE VERIFICATION OF DATA

In an attempt to determine the accuracy of the participants' recollection of the ethnic composition and socio-economic status of their respective North York neighbourhoods, the Planning and Economic Development Office at the City of Toronto, Community of York, was contacted by telephone. A representative of that office reported that after the recent amalgamation of the City of Toronto, the former City of York was divided into two wards, 27 and 28. Ward 27 is that portion of the former City of York lying west of Caledonia Road and ward 28 is that east of

Caledonia Road. The only statistical information available is a language poll, which is updated prior to each municipal election period. The language poll divides residents into two categories, English and non-English speaking peoples. The non-English speaking category is not further subdivided. There are no other records kept for specific geographical districts. Therefore, it is impossible to objectively verify by way of empirical statistical data the ethnic and socio-economic descriptions of these neighbourhoods as provided by the participants.

An employee in the Public Relations Department of the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TDSB), previously known as the Metropolitan Separate School Board (MSSB), was contacted, by telephone, for the purpose of accessing elementary and secondary school records. These records would be used to verify the participants answers to questions about the racial and ethnic composition of the student body, teachers and administrators. After speaking with a Board representative, it was discovered that information was available and accessible in a document entitled *Distribution of Students by Country and Language*. Upon further investigation, it was discovered that this particular document was only produced in the mid-1990's, shortly after all three participants graduated

from high school, and was therefore, of no use to this study.

The next step was to contact the board's Archives Department, a division of its Corporate Office Services Branch. In a search for appropriate information, archivist Katherine MacLean made some telephone calls and did some investigative work. A report was published in 1988 by the Heritage Languages Department, but only included data on elementary schools. Unfortunately, there is no information available at the elementary school level prior to 1988. Given this situation, MacLean recommended that the administration of the elementary and secondary schools in question be contacted directly and a request made to examine school registers. Alternatively, she suggested the high school's yearbooks might be examined, as they are public documents.

The administration of both elementary schools reported that school registers for that time period were no longer in the school, and not otherwise available. The all-boys Catholic high school was contacted, by telephone, but the principal was unavailable. His secretary informed me that the only documents available to me would be the school's yearbooks, which were on file in the school library. Given

this information, coupled with the fact that the principal failed to return my messages, I decided not to pursue the matter.

I have found the data verification process to be both a source of insight and frustration. I was not surprised to learn that The Planning and Economic Development Office at the City of Toronto did not have updated statistical data pertaining to the ethnic and socio-economic composition of the two neighbourhoods at that time, given the recent amalgamation of the City of Toronto. Yet, I found it of interest that this information was neither on file nor accessible. My source of frustration stemmed from the lack of response and any sense of partnership from the school board and school administrators in particular. Initially, I thought that my status as a teacher coupled with the fact that as an educator, I was familiar with and understood the politics and protocol of the system, both at the board and school level, would be of assistance to me in trying to access information. I was wrong. Whether the documents exist or not is not the issue. The lack of assistance is. On the one hand, I had no choice but to accept the explanation that was given. On the other hand, however, I find it interesting and perhaps odd that a large, established board such as this does not perceive this type of information to

be necessary and/or important. As an educator, with an Italian ethnic identity, I would think this type of information is mandatory in order to understand education from a multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural perspective (Norquay, 1998). To me, this lack of information bespeaks a lack of commitment and interest in understanding the identities of individuals who come together in schools to learn.

DATA ANALYSIS

This study addresses two questions: (1) What were the experiences of Sam, Jack and Angelo, as first generation Italian Canadian males, between the ages of 23-25, who attended elementary and secondary schools where most students and teachers were of Italian heritage? And (2) How did going to school in environments where most students and teachers were of Italian heritage help Sam, Jack and Angelo, construct their perceptions of ethnic identities, a process which shaped and facilitated their own identities as Italians.

During the interviews, as I listened to the responses and stories of Sam, Jack and Angelo, I was immediately drawn to my own elementary and secondary years and found myself comparing my experiences to theirs. Initially, I thought

that the similarities in our experiences were because we shared a common ethnic identity status (i.e., Canadian born, child of Italian immigrant parents), attended Catholic elementary and secondary schools where the students were typically of Italian heritage, and lived in predominantly Italian ethnic communities. The differences, I thought, were in part due to our respective ages and gender, male-female identities. At the time of the interviews, I was 34, nine years older than Sam and Jack and eleven years older than Angelo. Because of our respective age differences, I started school in 1967 and graduated from high school in June, 1981.

In analyzing the data generated from Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's interviews, I have decided to begin each chapter with a story from my schooling experiences, not as further data nor as a source of comparison between our pasts, but rather as a form of personal-introspection, which Norquay (1993) refers to as "memory work." Norquay (1993:245) writes that "memory work" may serve as a tool to locate and investigate human experiences in the construction of differences "in which we are implicated on the other side of difference." The premise of memory-work is that "liberation is dependent on the liberation of the self" (Haug cited in Norquay, 1993:245). My stories are the beginning of my

understanding of who I was as a student and who I am as an educator. Although not the focus of the research, they serve as starting points for my engagement with the data from the three interviews and help me reflect on the important issues of identity as they relate to schooling.

CHAPTER FOUR

ETHNIC IDENTITIES--ASCRIBED OR NEGOTIATED? FIXED OR FLUID?

I remember well sitting around the dinner table when I was a child. My father, mother, brother and I all had designated places. I would sit across from my father and my brother would sit across from my mother. I remember one evening in particular. I was about seven or eight years old at the time. We were in the middle of dinner and I was having a one-sided English conversation with my father. My father, displeased by my choice of language, reprimanded me. To this day I remember his words clearly: "*In this house we speak Italian. If you want to speak to me, you speak Italian.*" Being so young, I did not think much of his reaction. I simply shrugged it off and switched back to speaking Italian. Years later, in retrospect, I realized what my father was really saying. For my father, English was more than a language I was speaking, it was a culture I was embracing--a culture he perceived as the enemy. For my father, the English culture was the enemy because it encroached on his territory, his family, and challenged his authority over his children. My father's greatest fear was that my brother and I would choose to be "Canadian," and in doing so, choose not to be "Italian."

In her analysis, Norquay (1998) concluded that, for her students, being 'Canadian' did not include the immigrant status or experiences of their families. This, in turn, challenges the official legal definitions of Canada and the Canadian identity, definitions which proclaim that "the story of the development of this country is a story of immigration" (Fanning & Goh, cited in Norquay, 1998:187). Contrary to Norquay's (1998) findings, are the experiences and ethnic identities of Sam, Jack and Angelo. Sam, Jack and Angelo appear to construct, negotiate and situate their identities--whether Italian or Anglo-Canadian or Italian-Canadian--in relation to the immigration histories of their parents and their own status as Canadian-born males. It is through their discussion of identities that the issue of entitlement versus privilege is explored.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section of this chapter examines the issue of identity entitlement versus privilege in understanding how Sam, Jack and Angelo perceive, construct, shape and maintain their Italian or Anglo-Canadian or Italian-Canadian identity. The second section explores the complexities and contradictions in ethnic perceptions and identities in general and in the case of Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's, ethnicity in particular. The question addressed in the first section is: *What does it*

mean to you to be Italian and have an Italian ethnic identity? The question posed in the second section is: What does it mean to cross an ethnic barrier?

WHO AM I?

SAM:

"I was one of those kids who was fiercely proud to be Italian. ... Like we're Italian; therefore, there was an aura of invincibility about our culture. ... What is Canadian?

"...Maybe I became a soccer player because my school was Italian and that's the general sport that we play...But I like hockey too and that's a Canadian sport...No, I would say I am my own person, but I know too many people who walk around fiercely proud to be of Italian background before they are proud to be of Canadian background.

"...My family lived in a predominately Italian ethnic community, the Keele and Lawrence area...My elementary school was in my neighbourhood...My friends in elementary school were Italian. They lived in the neighbourhood. And in high school it was pretty much the same thing. The kids that went to my elementary school went to my high school...In high school, most of my friends were Calabrese and there were some from other regions in Italy. I did have two non-Italian friends though, and I am still close to them today."

As I listened to Sam, I thought, why was he so "fiercely proud to be Italian?" Perhaps, for Sam, this was a natural choice of words. But, I wondered, does language like "fiercely proud" and "aura of invincibility" denote a gendered understanding of ethnic identity? Interestingly, Sam equates sports (i.e., soccer and hockey) with his

identity, both of which are male-dominated. Perhaps Sam's choice of words were his way of explaining to me how he came to perceive himself as Italian and how the context of his experiences--as a male child, adolescent and adult--shape his perceptions of superior and inferior ethnic relations (James,1995)?

Throughout the interview, there was a sense that Sam's perception of ethnic identities, and his Italian ethnic identity in particular, evolved from various context: his homelife, neighbourhood, church community, elementary and secondary school experiences and friends and/or peers. Although each of these agents are contributing factors in the process of ethnic-identification, it was evident from his comments that Sam "negotiates" his identity, depending upon the situation, circumstance and/or audience (Paasche,1994). Sam is "Italian" when being Italian is the norm or is expected of him or is in his best interest. He is a critic--or perhaps even a hypocrite in terms of his Italian legacy--when being Italian is suddenly inconvenient or the subject of ridicule or stereotyping. Ultimately, Sam perceives himself and relates to others on the basis of his perception of empowerment, whether accurate or false, rooted in his acceptance and understanding of the power structure of ethnic identity status (Iacovetta,1992).

Sam defines himself in the context of his Italian or Anglo-Canadian identities, but does not perceive himself to be Italian-Canadian (both at the same time). Interestingly, Sam perceives his identities to be both ascribed and negotiated, fixed and fluid. Sam declares that his identities are ascribed because he is entitled to them. His birth status renders him Anglo-Canadian and the ethnic heritage of his parents, Italian. Sam admits that he negotiates his position in each identity. Over the years, Sam has learned which privileges in each are ascertainable and which are not within reach. When Sam is unable to attain some favourable thing or is uncomfortable, he re-negotiates his position and assumes his other identity, perhaps as an escape mechanism. Sam explains, however, that even though he assumes his identities intermittently, others perceive his identity to be fixed, and that the perceptions of others at times cause him to feel trapped.

JACK:

"My identity is entrenched by virtue of my being a Canadian with a deep-seated sense of my cultural background, Italian.

..."Who I am today is in some way, shape, or form, based on my Italian heritage.

..."I love the food. I love the culture. I love the language. I love the country. In fact, I'm even an Italian citizen. I don't want my heritage to ever go. I think I want

to be, maybe, even more Italian than what I am, than any other culture.

"...I'm very proud of my Canadian culture. I'm very proud to be Canadian. In fact, I wouldn't live in any other country other than Canada. But, I'd still want to retain my Italian culture."

Jack's testimony suggests that his Italian identity is fixed. He believes however, that it is possible for an individual like himself to possess a dual ethnic identity status, both Italian and Anglo-Canadian, without compromise or conflict. After listening to Jack, I realized the allegiance he expressed towards his Italian ethnic roots was both genuine and honourable. The truth of the matter is that Jack's commitment to his Italian-ness is in reality his tribute to his Italian immigrant parents. Like most Italian immigrants, Jack's parents envisioned Canada to be a land of opportunity (Iacovetta,1992). But, as newcomers, Jack's parents were viewed by most Anglo-Canadians as undesirable foreigners (Iacovetta,1992). Despite the many social, cultural, racial and economic obstacles and pressures that faced them, Jack's parents, like so many others, struggled and made sacrifices (Li,1998). They had no other choice but to endure the realities of their Italian immigrant ethnic status (Harney,1989). Returning to their homeland, Italy, was not a possibility. There was nothing to return to. Besides, their growing family obligations were greater in

Canada. Emigrating to Canada meant that Jack's parents, like so many other Italian immigrants, were now responsible for their children as well as their parents.

Jack explained, that like so many Italian immigrants, his parents envisioned for their three children opportunities for a life they never experienced. They saw themselves in their children and shared with them the dreams they once had for themselves. Their children became their life. The irony of the situation is that while Jack's parents wanted all three of their children to be accepted by the Anglo-Canadian culture, to be seen as Anglo-Canadians, and to reap the privileges and benefits of the Anglo-Canadian ethnic identity, this was also their fear. They were afraid that by being Anglo-Canadian their children would be less Italian. Their ultimate fear was to one day be ridiculed and scorned by their children.

Sam and Jack both identify themselves as Italian or Anglo-Canadian but unlike Sam, Jack also sees himself as Italian-Canadian. Their choices of identity is in response to their personal and social comfort levels in the course of everyday living. Interestingly, however, I found that neither Sam nor Jack saw this connection. What I observed was that, at times, when they spoke of themselves as either

Italian or Anglo-Canadian or Italian-Canadian, with each identification they devalued their other ethnic identities. Perhaps this is a natural process in coming to terms with and accepting differences within a set of ethnic identities, a process which is at times difficult, uncomfortable, and perhaps embarrassing. Embarrassing in the sense that as much as Sam and Jack may want to be Italian, there are traits, traditions, behaviours and attitudes, within and outside their Italian culture, that shape the context within which they negotiate their identity (Passche,1994).

ANGELO:

"You want to distinguish yourself because you see being Italian--being Italian means having a certain set of values about family, about the church, the Roman Catholic Church, about how to live your life.

"...It's about distinguishing yourself from other people...It's about trying to keep something alive.

"...Maybe I've been bitter towards other people, but I really believe that it's almost my duty to keep what my parents started going."

From his discussion, it appears that Angelo equates being Italian with a specific set of cultural norms and a value system (i.e., patriarchal family structure, gender defined roles and religion) that derive from the customs and traditions of his parents. The cultural norms and value system that Angelo is accustomed to and accepting of was and

is a matter of cultural preservation and personal survival for his parents. As Italian immigrants, Angelo's parents were despised by members of the Canadian culture--White Anglo-Saxon Protestants--and frowned upon by a small but established group of Italians (Harney, 1989). The Protestants perceived the Italian immigrants to be of an inferior "race" (Perin, 1989). And their own people, the established Italians, perceived the immigrants, their fellow countrymen, to be *cafoni* (peasants), the worst of their race (Harney, 1989). The term race is used interchangeably with culture because the southern Italian immigrants were generally darker skinned than their northern co-nationals and in many cases, were not considered to be white (Iacovetta, 1992). Enemies of their ethnic and racial identity were both within and outside of their culture, the established Italians and the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants respectively (Harney & Troper, 1975; Perin, 1989).

Their response, whether out of desperation or preference, showed itself in a need to unite. Their unity was a symbol of ethnic solidarity, the result of which was the establishment of Italian ethnic communities--ethnic enclaves (Perin, 1989). Today, Italian ethnic communities exist because their members choose to 'live' among their own people and segregate themselves from other ethnic and racial

groups (Harney,1989). The Italians understand all too well their place in Anglo-Canadian society's class structure (Iacovetta,1992).

My parents--whether out of pride, circumstance and/or need--made a conscious decision to retain their Italian ethnic identity. Equally important to them was that my brother and myself would come to understand, appreciate and identify with their cultural heritage. My parents' *Italianita*-Italianness provides them with a sense of identity and symbolizes their experiences, both the hardships and the successes, in a country that was at best unwelcoming, and indeed often considered them to be undesirable (Iacovetta,1992). It was natural for my parents--and in their eyes, essential to their children's survival--to instill in us what they considered to be Italian norms and traditions. My parents' value system was their connection to their homeland, Italy, and it spoke of their way of life. Their expectation was that my brother and I would accept and uphold their ethnic legacy without question or deviation. In my family, ethnic retention meant respect for, and pride in, the people who had the courage to retain their ethnicity, an identity which spoke of difference.

In conversation, it became clear that Angelo uses his Italian-ness to make statements about himself through which he appears to experience a sense of personal and public vindication. He seems to say, "Look at me world. I am the son of Italian immigrants and look at what I have achieved. I am in law school. I will graduate and practice law." Angelo identifies himself as Italian and does so in a manner which suggests that although his parents experienced shame and dishonor because of their ethnic identity status, he believes himself to be stronger and better as a person because of his Italian heritage (Li,1990). Thus, it appeared to me that Angelo's success within the dominant culture, as a lawyer, provides him with the power to assert and claim an Italian identity for himself and his parents.

Angelo acknowledges the fact that his Italian ethnic identity is characterized by both positive and negative traits. He chooses, however, to accept and tolerate rather than to challenge or reject what he knows he cannot change or will not change. His form of self-rationalization or public declaration is that it is part and parcel of his chosen identity. Perhaps his acceptance is, in fact, the result of his ethnic-socialization experience, of which his parents were and are primary agents. If Angelo chooses to "accept" the experience, it is to some extent because he has

been culturally conditioned to "accept" it. The phenomenon of "acceptance" is known to the Italian immigrant and is symbolic of the group's unequal power relationship with Canada's white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant ethnic identity (Iacovetta, 1992). In order for Angelo to feel in control, to feel empowered, he chooses to see what he wants to see because it is in his best interest to do so, both as a member of and independent from his ethnic group (Paasche, 1994). For example, if there are traits within the culture that Angelo disapproves of he is able to step back and rationalize that the characteristics are of the culture and not his personally. This process of rationalization allows Angelo the freedom to choose his identity, depending on his situation and/or need (Paasche, 1994). Prevalent in Angelo's discussion is the issue of ethnocentrism. The reality that Angelo appears to avoid, whether intentionally or unintentionally, is that in choosing to identify himself as an Italian, he is subject to and indeed the victim of the same exclusionary criteria by which he measures and values other ethnic groups. His need for ethnic acceptance both marginalizes and magnifies his own perceptions of ethnic reality.

Angelo, like Jack and Sam, chooses to identify himself as Italian. The degree of their Italian-ness is influenced

by age, gender, profession, income, family dynamics, life experiences, and so forth (Paasche,1994). How each of them perceive themselves within their Italian ethnic culture and Anglo-Canadian culture is from the perspective of an outsider looking inward and that of an insider looking out (Paasche,1994). These three males do not see themselves as Italians in the same light as they see their fathers, the immigrants. And yet, their fathers may perceive their sons identities to be the same as their own, in spite of their different life experiences and struggles. What this speaks of is that identities are not fixed, but negotiated according to individual needs and situations. When Sam, Jack and Angelo say that they are Italian, what their words really speak of is the cultural legacy of their immigrant parents, a connection to their past, to their ancestry, and an identity that is not fixed but fluid and unified (Paasche,1994).

In conclusion, for Sam, Jack and Angelo, the process of constructing individual ethnic identities, whether it be Italian, Anglo-Canadian or Italian-Canadian, is an on-going, lifelong experience which is subject to change and negotiations and characterized by bouts of ambivalence, reservation, guilt, betrayal and solidarity. As much as these three males may have wanted to fit in and be accepted

by the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture, whether consciously or not, it would have been much more difficult for them to walk away from their Italian heritage. For them, Italian culture represents the identity of their immigrant parents and to choose not to be Italian would be to reject their parents, their ancestors and ultimately themselves.

CROSSING THE ETHNIC BARRIER

As early as grade one I recall having a best friend, Cathy. Cathy and I were the same age. We were in the same class for grades one, two and three. In grade four, she moved out of the neighbourhood. Cathy was born in the Caribbean, in Jamaica. I don't recall how Cathy and I became friends, we just were. It was my friendship with Cathy that served as the basis of my first cross-racial and cross-cultural experience. Cathy and I were in grade three. It was her birthday, and for the first time she was going to have a party. Cathy invited all the students in the class, both boys and girls. I remember standing in line one day, after the bell had rung, waiting for the teacher to let us in. One of the girls in my class asked me if I was going to Cathy's party. I answered and asked the same question. That same evening, I remember asking my brother, for the first time, what the meaning of the words 'Black' and 'Negro'

meant in terms of Cathy. I was the only classmate to attend the birthday party. Cathy and I never spoke of the fact that none of our classmates attended her party. However, I now wonder whether my classmates' refusal to attend had to do with their perceptions of ethnic and racial barriers that were intended to keep Cathy apart from the group.

Sam, Jack and Angelo, all lived in Italian ethnic communities. In elementary school, their classmates, for the most part, shared their Italian heritage. For Sam and Jack, this was also the case in high school. Angelo on the other hand, had the same experience for the first three years of high school. In his last two years, his high school experienced some changes in its racial and ethnic composition. Outside of school, Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's friends were usually classmates. All three males are Catholic and the church served as their second source of cultural socialization or indoctrination, their home being the first. Given this context, and the construction, shaping and positioning of their identities, I sought to explore how Sam, Jack and Angelo perceive themselves as ethnic entities in relation to how they perceive others. During their interviews, Sam, Jack and Angelo, all spoke of crossing the ethnic barrier, so I asked: *What do you mean when you crossed the ethnic barrier there was a problem?*

SAM:

"There is a subtle wall that exists between cultures, [so] that in order to cross it you either have to have an outgoing personality or you have to know how to fit in. You don't just get accepted right away.

"...You just didn't feel as comfortable. And some days, you just didn't feel like having to break that barrier down to make an association with them. You were just too lazy that day or just didn't feel like making the effort.

"...They [referring to non-Italian peers] probably tried once or twice and again if they were successful at being proactive socially, then they'd be able to break into the group. If they weren't, they'd be rejected by it.

"...I did make two non-Italian friends that I have remained close with. But for the most part, anybody new added to the group was Italian."

Sam's testimony, coupled with remarks made throughout his interview, suggest that he too practices, whether consciously or unconsciously, racial and ethnic discrimination. The irony in this particular situation is that Sam's parents, along with many other Italian immigrants, were for a long time (and perhaps still are) victims of racial, cultural and intellectual prejudices, stereotypes and intolerances generated by Canada's white Anglo-Saxon Protestants and a small group of established Italian-Canadian citizens (Iacovetta, 1992). The motives behind such prejudices and stereotypes--aside from blatant bigotry, racism and fear--were to ensure that the Italian immigrants understood and accepted their rightful and

inferior place in Canada's social class system (Iacovetta,1992).

Why is Sam ethnocentric? Why does he practice racial and cultural discrimination? Is it because he has always lived in Italian ethnic communities?; or is it because the student population in his elementary school was typically first generation Canadian children of Italian immigrants?; or is it because he attended an all-boys Catholic high school, where again his classmates were mirror ethnic images of himself; or is it because Sam, like so many children of Italian immigrants, witnessed and lived through the hardships, fears and anxieties of his parents, that life taught him both the roles of the oppressed and the oppressor (Li,1990). Sam is an advocate for Italians when he believes he, because of his Italian ethnic identity is the victim of ethnic oppression; and he is the oppressor when he perceives his ethnicity to be superior to the identity of others (Li,1990). In essence, Sam's perceptions, attitudes and behaviours are evidence of an "ethnic preference ladder" (Iacovetta,1992).

Sam has internalized racial and ethnic biases and stereotypes and behaves in a manner which is cognizant of the social realities of competing identities (Iacovetta,

1992). Sam understands and accepts the notion that society operates along a continuum of preferred and non-preferred identities and that one's life experiences are to a large extent determined by one's place within this construct (Iacovetta, 1992). His remarks therefore support Iacovetta's (1992) theory, that as new immigrants infiltrate society, they assume the inferior position of previous infiltrators. And despite the turnover, there continues to exist an "ethnic preference ladder," which dictates patterns of behaviour, perceptions, and the process by which immigrant groups are accepted into Anglo-Canadian society (Iacovetta, 1992).

The question remains, why does Sam appear to prefer his Italian ethnic identity above all others? When does such ethnocentrism become self and culturally destructive? At times, Sam may consider himself to be ethnocentric and at other times he may perceive himself as a person having several identities. Perhaps, the answer lies not only in how Sam perceives himself as a person of ethnicity but also in how he is perceived by others. A final question, Is Sam the norm?

JACK:

"Yes, I had one [referring to his first and only non-Italian

friend in elementary school]. His name was 'H'. He was Armenian. It was the second day of school. His dad brought him. He didn't know English. I sat beside him and so he was my friend. We did things together. We hung out together at school, not outside of school but at school. We were friends. Most of my other friends were Italian.

"[Referring to high school]...I stayed with Italians because I was more comfortable, I guess, with them, because that's who I knew, that's who I was and that's who I was going to associate with because of the comfort level. And that's not to say that I probably wouldn't have done as good a job associating with others but I wasn't comfortable. I didn't know much about them and so that's probably why I stayed away.

"I remember one time [in high school] we [referring to himself and his friends, all of whom were Italian] were walking through the front corridor of the school and there was a group of guys [African-Canadians] playing a game called Salad [the game involves kicking the ball in between another person's legs]. As I was walking the ball came to me and I kicked it back gently. Then one of their guys turned to me and said if your going to kick the ball then you'd better play. I took exception to that and so we got into a fight. Then my friends and his friends got involved and then it became a big fight, a brawl. Then it became cultural, it became racial."

As I listened to Jack, several questions came to mind. What would it have meant for Jack to pursue friendships outside of the Italian community? Why was Jack more "comfortable" associating and interacting with individuals he perceived to be his ethnic and racial equals? How and why does Jack negotiate different "comfort" levels? What is the significance of his negotiation process? What needs does Jack's comfort level satisfy?

During the interview, I came to understand what Jack meant when he said he felt more 'comfortable' interacting or associating with people he perceived to be the same as himself. Jack understands the politics of competition and that identities are ranked according to race, culture, gender and/or class (Elliott, Fleras, 1990; Iacovetta, 1992). In this context, Jack understands and accepts the ranking of his Italian ethnic identity (Li, 1990). Jack is not too sure how he would be perceived by individuals outside his ethnic identity and in the process is also not too sure how he would come to perceive himself. He lets his guard down when he is around individuals who share his ethnic identity status because he believes he does not have to be on the defensive (Paasche, 1994). Jack does not have to apologize, defend or excuse cultural issues, norms, values, behaviour or attitudes (Paasche, 1994). It is precisely this sense of security that gives Jack comfort. Jack is most comfortable around his own kind because in his eyes he starts out on the same footing as his Italian male counterparts, and it is within this context that Jack chooses to compete for status, for recognition, for honour (Li, 1990). What Jack fails to realize is that even in this constructed social life, he negotiates his comfort level just as he negotiates the degree to which he chooses

to be Italian (Li,1990;Paasche,1994). He is most comfortable when he feels in control of his identity rather than being controlled by his ethnicity.

Contrary to Colalillo's (1981) position, and in response to the school experiences of Sam and Jack, I argue that it is a myth that homogeneity equals solidarity. Homogeneity creates a false perception of reality. Most of the time, it is not so much the outsider that holds this perception as it is those from within. Sam and Jack both saw what they wanted to see because their perceptions provided them with a sense of self-worth, self-importance and ethnic empowerment, which is what they needed in order to cope with their perceptions of reality in the context of day to day school life.

ANGELO:

"When I was in elementary school, I didn't fit in with the Italians. The same thing happened in high school. I just didn't fit in with the people who were from other Italian backgrounds. Either because they wouldn't accept me or they were just foreign to me. Basically, everyone around me were all Friulano [people of Friuli-a region in northern Italy]. I never realized this. I guess you seek comfort and the comfort of people that are like you. I gravitated towards the people that had the same background as me because it was more comfortable.

"...When I got to university, I started to hang out with people that were of different ethnic background. I tried to fit in. I didn't fit in with people who were English-WASP, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant. I noticed that no matter what

I did I just didn't fit in. I didn't have anything in common with them in terms of values, in terms of upbringing. I just got sick of it, you know. I didn't want to fit in. I ran into a few Italian people and I noticed that they were more generous with me. I understand where they were coming from. It was a much more comfortable fit then with any other ethnic group. I just didn't want to be part of something that I didn't fit into anymore. It gets to a point where even you look down on them. I hate to say this. You look down on them because you don't like their values. You don't want to associate with their values at all. It's like you're turning your back on them and won't be part of that. You want to distinguish yourself as being an Italian. Because you become aware of what it really means, your background."

During his interview, Angelo explains how in elementary and secondary school and university he made distinctions between himself and his fellow classmates; and how his perceptions of himself and others dictated their inter-relationship. At the same time, however, Angelo fails to reveal what his relationships were like. It is evident from his discussion that Angelo did not see himself as Italian but as Fruilano and therefore classified his peers as either Fruiliani, Italian or non-Italian. For Angelo, his Italian and non-Italian classmates were one and the same, a group of people he did not identify with, nor feel 'comfortable' around. He chose to restrict himself to those he viewed as his peers--Fruilani, those most like himself. Angelo's identity as a Fruilano is both a cultural and class issue (Covello, 1967)

Angelo claims that with age his ethnic identity became more of an issue for him, but it appears that it was always an issue. The difference was in the context in which Angelo found himself and in which he experienced and reacted to issues of ethnicity (e.g., ethnic identities, solidarity, differences). In elementary and secondary school, Angelo's ethnic status, Italian, was the norm and as a result, he assumed a 'master status' and in doing so exercised privilege, power and authority. In university, Angelo's Italian ethnic status was no longer the norm. In this context, it appeared that Angelo felt threatened and searched for an identity that provided him with the acceptance and security he required. In this process, Angelo had choice. He could have chosen to identify himself by profession (law student) or by race (white), or gender (male); but instead he gravitated to his ethnic origin, Italian. Why? Perhaps Angelo's decision was the result of a number of interconnected factors. First, Angelo comes from a very close-knit family. It was very important to both his parents that Angelo (along with his three older siblings) learn to read, write and speak Italian, as well as uphold Italian customs, traditions and rituals. The Roman Catholic Church played a pivotal role in their family life. Angelo's mother chose to stay home and raise her children. She made

this decision so that she could spend more time with her children and exercise closer control over the events of their daily lives (e.g., friends, extra-curricular activities, school athletics, etc.). Angelo first attended school at the age of five, instead of four (unlike his siblings). Given that he was the baby of the family, his mother chose to keep him at home for another year. Second, Angelo lived in a predominantly Italian working class ethnic community while attending a neighbourhood Catholic elementary school and a Catholic all-boys high school. Throughout elementary and secondary school, Angelo's classmates were typically first generation Canadian children of Italian immigrants. Third, it appears from Angelo's comments that his siblings have shaped and influenced his way of thinking, especially his older brother.

Throughout their interviews, Sam, Jack and Angelo, each in his own way, discusses the sense of security and comfort level their Italian ethnic identity offers and provides. The difference between the three males is that Angelo is the only one who defines the term 'comfortable' as acceptance and explains that the alternative is fear of solitude, fear of rejection, fear of failure.

The experiences of Sam, Jack and Angelo in

establishing, nurturing and maintaining an Italian ethnic identity is at variance with the experiences of Toronto Star news reporter Rosie DiManno (1997). In her narrative, DiManno (1997) explains how her Italian-ness was a constant source of humiliation. She found herself trapped within the Italian culture of her parents while idolizing and aspiring to be part of and accepted by the Anglo-Canadian culture (DiManno, 1997). It was common for the offspring of Italian immigrants to find themselves co-existing in two diverse and contradictory worlds (Covello, 1967). The traditions, value system and identity of their homeland were challenged by the unfamiliar identity of their new society (Covello, 1967). Allegiance to one culture required the abandonment of the other, or so it appeared (Covello, 1967). And in fact, in their experiences--whether it be that of Sam, Jack, Angelo or DiManno (1997)--the process of constructing individual ethnic identities--whether Italian or Fruilano or Anglo-Canadian or Italian-Canadian--held a degree of ambivalence, reservation, guilt and betrayal.

In conclusion, as much as Sam, Jack and Angelo may have wanted to fit in and be accepted by the Anglo-Canadian culture, whether consciously or not, it would have been much more difficult for them to walk away from their Italian heritage. To them, their Italian heritage is the identity

and experiences of their immigrant parents (Norquay, 1998). To choose not to be Italian would be to reject their parents, their ancestors and ultimately themselves. Sam, Jack and Angelo, each in their own way negotiate their ethnicity and move in and out of identities--a process which is indicative of their circumstances, professions, gender and socioeconomic backgrounds. Contrary to DiManno's (1997) experience, I maintain that before an individual is able to renounce an identity they must first embrace it. How do you give up or walk away from something if at first you do not experience it or assume ownership over it? And in this process rests the experience of negotiated versus ascribed, fluid versus fixed identities.

CHAPTER FIVE: STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

I was in grade three. My family and I, and some of our relatives attended our parish's annual dinner dance. The dance was held in the church hall. There I stood, in the red velvet hot-pants suit that my mother had made for the occasion, only a few feet away from my teacher. As I started to point my teacher out to my parents, I realized my father had already spotted her. After dinner, the band played a selection of Italian songs. I sat and watched my parents dance and from time to time danced with my father, who patiently tried to teach me the waltz. As the band resumed playing after their break, my father announced that he was going to ask my teacher for a dance. I was stunned. I sat motionless and watched my father make his way to her table. I was panic stricken. What would my teacher think? How would she react? Within minutes, my father escorted my teacher to the dance floor. They danced to a waltz. My father accompanied my teacher back to her seat and returned to our table. He had a smile on his face.

The following Monday morning, my teacher was on yard duty. I decided to face her before class. There was a small crowd of students, my classmates, around her. As I approached her, I decided to take my cue from her. "Good

morning," she said. I replied. She continued. To my surprise my teacher had shared the events of our church social with my classmates. She commented on how beautiful she thought I looked and what a good dancer she thought I was and how much fun she had dancing with my father. My teacher approved. Her comments validated my identity. She made me feel good about myself, perhaps, even proud of who I was and where I came from.

There is a perception that students are more likely to perform better in school and relate to and connect with teachers who share their identity. I explored this phenomena in the context of Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's relationships with their elementary and secondary school teachers. I asked: *Tell me about your relationships with teachers in elementary and secondary school.*

SAM:

"...My grades one and three teacher. She was a very good teacher. She wasn't Italian. ...I confided in my grade six teacher. She was not Italian. She inspired me and just seemed to touch on all the recesses of my mind that were hidden. She brought them out. Encouraged me to do a lot of things that I never even considered, a lot of reading, a lot of books that I would never have read at that age. She inspired me to think on a different level. ...My grade eight teacher. He was a very kind teacher. He was Italian.

"...I found that certain teachers, teachers who had the same [ethnic] background accepted you easier. You were able to talk without having to win over their ear.

"...I think that ethnicity played a role in whether or not I associated with certain teachers. Coming from the same culture breaks the ice. You can still break the ice if you are not the same, it's harder.

"...In high school, teachers could not have the accent of a visible minority. It had to be an Italian accent for them not to be ridiculed. We didn't ridicule teachers with an Italian accent because we had parents who were like that. It was fun. They were the authoritative figures. We were their subjects. If we could get them to break down it was like we had accomplished something."

Sam's discussion of his perceptions of his relationships with his teachers at the elementary school level, led me to infer two interesting issues. First, at an early age Sam realized the psychological, social, emotional and intellectual importance of being accepted, recognized and encouraged by his teachers. And yet, in retrospect, Sam explains that as a child, as much as he may have wanted to establish a rapport with his teachers outside the classroom, he was intimidated by the situation and to some extent, succumbed to his own fears. Rather than expose himself to the possibility of being rejected by his teachers, Sam rationalizes that his reluctance or shyness was typical of any child of his age. Perhaps these emotions are common to most children, but in Sam's case, when he was given the opportunity to interact, he willingly accepted and appeared to flourish from the experience.

Today, Sam regards with particular fondness the

teachers who reached out to him. In the retelling of his experiences, Sam fails to acknowledge the fact that his relationships with his teachers, whether inside or outside the classroom, were rooted in his ethnic perceptions of himself and them. His perceptions, in turn, determined the types of relationships he would have with his teachers. Second, Sam speaks as though the context of his rapport with his teachers was in his control. In other words, he determined which teacher he would associate with or which teacher he would interact with inside and outside of the classroom.

When discussing his relationships with his teachers at the secondary level, Sam makes the statement that he connected with teachers who were not of Italian background. He later contradicts himself and says that he believed he was more readily accepted and listened to by teachers who shared his Italian ethnic identity. In some situations, Sam used his Italian ethnic identity to gain acceptance and approval from his teachers. In other cases, where he perceived his teachers to be culturally or racially inferior, he used his Italian-ness to create conflict so that he might, in turn, experience a sense of empowerment. However, Sam's sense of empowerment is false because it is contrived and exists solely within his own perception of

himself as an authoritative figure in the situation. Sam's interaction with his teachers--his perceptions, attitudes and behaviours--speak of an individual who accepts the popular ideology that Canada is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society, but one which exists along a continuum of preferred and non-preferred identities, the roots of which are distorted assumptions about ethnic and racial groups (Li, 1990).

JACK:

"I remember my [elementary] teachers very well. Most of them were Italian. I remember them being like mom or dad. ...They were like mom or dad because they were Italian and they were expecting such and such a behaviour and so that's what mom and dad expected.

"...I remember Mrs. 'V'. She was mean, she was a drill sergeant. ...And there was Mr. 'L.' He was a true disciplinarian. They were Italian.

"...My O.A.C. history teacher, a black gentleman. He was great. He knew his stuff. He made things interesting. He was very quiet but had control over the class and yet he looked timid. ...He was such a great educator because he knew his stuff so well and he could convey it in a way we could understand. ...I'll never forget the time I had an 82 average in his class. I needed to be bumped up a percentage point so I could get a scholarship to York University. I went to see him. I said, well, Mr. 'A', I'm very close to a scholarship and all I need is one percentage point. I was wondering if, perhaps, you could modify my final grade for me. And he said, without a doubt, I don't want to hold the balance of your future in my hands and he gave me that one percentage point."

Jack's recollection of his relationships with his

elementary school teachers reveals he perceived them to be both mother and father figures. He explains that he had no favourite among them but reveals that there were two in particular, a female and a male teacher who, because of their meanness, stand out from the rest. And yet, in his final analysis, Jack comes to accept their tactics and rationalizes that the teachers were merely acting in the best interest of the class and in his learning in particular. To some extent Jack's characterization of his teachers is naive. It is naive in the sense that Jack's perception of them as mother and father figures is predicated on the fact that, like his parents, they were role models because they shared his Italian ethnic identity, role models whom he came to respect out of fear of authority rather than on the basis of merit.

In retrospect, Jack rationalizes that Mrs. 'V', although stern, got results. Her students excelled. Mr. 'L' was authoritative because his student required discipline and control. The irony of these experiences is that Jack claimed that in each situation his teachers 'valued' education in general and the learning of their students in particular (Porter, 1965). Based on my conversation with Jack, it would be accurate to conclude that in his mind these two teachers instilled in their students a

discipline which they both perceived to be necessary to compete in a system that mirrors the power structure of capitalism by means of a culturally racist and class-based curriculum (James,1995). Students from immigrant and low-income families do not and are not meant to be participants in the dominant class culture (James,1995). To that end, they are kept inferior within the structure of class relations and provided with an education that is congruent with their social class identity (James,1995). The paradox is that education is made available to all, but its accessibility reflects the existing class structure (James,1995). Thus, it is cyclically reproduced and thereby legitimized.

Having worked through the system, perhaps Mrs. 'V' and Mr. 'L' were in fact surrogate parents for Jack and his classmates. As educators with an Italian ethnic identity, they knew from experience the road that lay before their students if they were to obtain an education that was not consistent with their social class status (James,1995). Perhaps Mrs. 'V's and Mr. 'L's authoritative measures were in fact characteristic of their roles as agents of enculturation (the process of assimilation) and they were in fact attempting to favour their own people in the face of a system that was beyond their control.

Jack spoke of one of his high school teachers, Mr. 'A' with great respect and distinction. At the time and even now, Jack marvels at the thought of Mr. 'A.' For Jack, this was a teacher who was knowledgeable, talented, compassionate and kind. As a student, Jack considered himself privileged to have been in Mr. 'A's' class. As an educator, Jack revealed that if given the opportunity to emulate a former teacher he would choose Mr. 'A.' Interestingly, Jack did not make these same statements of Mr. 'L' or Mrs. 'V' or the many teachers 'like' them who Jack apparently perceived as mother and father figures.

ANGELO:

"...To be honest with you, for me, it didn't matter whether they [his teachers] were Italian or not. ...Perhaps you'd expect more of a relationship with teacher that have a common background with you.

"...I always felt that teachers [referring to elementary school] didn't know where I was coming from, you know. They may have been Italian or whatever but I didn't feel like they understood where I was coming from. They either treated me like a kid or, I know it sounds stupid, but they didn't realize that I was capable of doing better work.

"... When I was in high school I was able to learn things at a different pace than everyone else. I used to get bored. And the teachers didn't realize that I could do more. And they used to treat me like I was just a troublemaker. So I grew into the role.

"...There was one teacher, Mr. 'M,' [not Italian] who kept an eye on me and gave me stuff to do after school in chemistry class and encouraged me. After that course I just started to do well again. I started off getting C's and B's

and I ended up with a 94 average in my final year."

In reflecting on his relationships with his elementary school teachers, Angelo reveals that somewhere in the back of his mind, he thought that a common ethnic identity between a teacher and a student meant that there was a connection between the two. But this was not his experience. For the most part, Angelo's experience was that his teachers, most of whom were of Italian background, never saw him in the same light as he saw himself. His teachers never realized his potential nor did they take a constructive interest in channelling his energy. In fact, in grades seven and eight, Angelo missed a number of school days. While school officials, including his teachers, thought that he was at home tending to a sick father, Angelo occupied his time in pool halls. When Angelo's grades started to slip, his teacher contacted his parents. The situation resolved itself without his teachers or family learning the truth. The obvious concern here is the lack of communication between Angelo's teacher, his school administrators, his parents and his older brother.

Angelo's experience in elementary school is at variance with Ritacca's (Chianello,1995) perspective. Ritacca (Chianello,1995) argues that his students' lack of

discipline and commitment to their studies stems from their parents who, in turn, are not interested in the 'education' of their children. In Angelo's case, it was his educators that did not value his education because they taught according to their perceptions of him and others. Ritacca (Chianello,1995), an educator and administrator and Angelo, a student, are both stakeholders in the system and yet Ritacca looks outside the system to legitimate and rationalize his problems from within, whereas Angelo must remain silent because of the unequal balance of power and authority.

In high school, Angelo recalls that it was one teacher in particular who made a difference in his academic career. In grades nine and ten, Angelo admits that his marks ranged between B and C. At the time, Angelo was frustrated with his teachers, his classes and himself. As a result, he became a 'problem' in class and was pegged a troublemaker by his teachers. And yet, Mr. 'M' expected something completely different from Angelo. He expected Angelo to be himself, whoever that was. Mr. 'M' offered Angelo an opportunity to prove himself and regain his self-confidence. And it was because of Mr. 'M' that other teachers gave Angelo a second chance. Perhaps, if Mr. 'M' had not stepped in, Angelo would have been recommended by his teachers for vocational

training instead of a university education, if he remained in school (Jansen,1988).

Perlmann (1988) writes that American students of Italian background are less likely to remain in school and do well academically because of cultural differences between themselves, their teachers and the American education system. Angelo's experience in both elementary and secondary school is at variance with Perlmann's (1988) findings. Angelo's academic performance was at risk in elementary and secondary school. And his teachers, most of whom were of Italian background, did not intervene.

Like Chianello (1995), Angelo asks himself why his own classmates, males who are typically of Italian heritage, did not do well in high school? Interestingly, Angelo's perceptions of his classmates experiences and achievements are at odds with Chianello's (1995) findings. Angelo, similar to Chianello (1995), is baffled by their lack of success and limited options in school because he perceived his peers to come from families that were financially stable and interpreted this to mean they had the opportunity to study. Unlike Chianello (1995), Angelo hypothesizes that there are many factors (i.e., the students commitment to learning, their perception of school, discipline,

etc.) that contributed to their outcomes. Equally important, Angelo believes was the direction, guidance and mentoring, his classmates received from their teachers. For some reason, these students, demonstrated the potential to pursue a post-secondary education at the university level but were short-changed in high school, and as a result they became disinterested. Although these students did not drop-out of school, their attendance did not mean they were goal-oriented or disciplined. The irony of this situation, is that most of the teachers identified with the Italian heritage of their students.

Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's elementary and secondary school experiences clearly indicate these three males did not develop meaningful relationships or a sense of connectedness or solidarity with teachers who shared their Italian ethnic identity. Their experiences would serve to undermine Colalillo's (1981) view that the Ontario separate school system was another means through which Italian immigrants and their children could intensify their ethnic solidarity.

In the context of their school environments, the academic experiences of Sam, Jack and Angelo, although different from one another, suggest some common themes.

First, all three males did well in school. Jack is the only one, however, whose marks were consistent throughout, regardless of his grade or his fondness for his teachers. Sam had difficulty in grade five, which he attributes to a personality conflict with his teacher. Angelo, on the other hand, explains that in the intermediate grades he would skip class as he found school uninteresting. Both Sam and Angelo redeemed themselves under the watchful eyes of their parents, and in Angelo's case of his older brother as well.

Secondly, all three boys skipped school from time to time. For Sam and Jack it was a one time occurrence--to watch Italy's soccer team play for the World Cup. Even though Sam and Jack were together and engaged in the same 'inappropriate' behaviour, it was Sam who was punished by his principal and his mother. Unlike Sam, Jack's parents were aware of his plans and, as a result, he was not dealt with by school authorities. In Angelo's case, his teachers were aware of his absenteeism, but remained indifferent until it affected his grades. And even then, his principal did not intervene, nor did his teachers ever discuss his absenteeism. The focus of the parent-teacher meeting, which Angelo's older brother attended, were his grades. What is interesting about Sam's and Angelo's experiences is how the boys were dealt with by school administrators and teachers

(all of whom were of Italian heritage) and their families. In Sam's case, there was communication between his principal and his mother. And there was consensus about his behaviour. However, given the circumstances, it appears that Sam and some of his classmates were disciplined, to set an example. On the other hand, Angelo's behaviour, which was of a more serious nature, went unpunished. Unlike Sam, and given his family's reputation (i.e., as straight-laced people), Angelo was able to manipulate the situation and the stakeholders (i.e., his teachers, older brother and parents) to his advantage. The truth was never discovered.

Thirdly, from their testimonies it is apparent that Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's parents expected them to do well in school and not get into trouble. If this was not the case, Sam, Jack and Angelo knew that there would be 'trouble' at home as well as in school. Finally, Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's parents and in particular their mothers influenced and shaped their educational achievements and occupational aspirations. From their testimonies, it is apparent that the 'value' their Italian immigrant parents placed on education was not gender oriented (Covello, 1967). Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's schooling surpassed that of their parents (Jansen, 1985). The most pronounced difference is between Angelo and his parents. Similarly, while all three

sets of parents are employed in blue collar jobs their sons work in professions that are deemed white collar occupations (Jansen,1985). Sam and Jack are both teachers and Angelo is a lawyer.

Contrary to Chianello (1995), Sam, Jack and Angelo demonstrate that materialism did not alter their perceptions of the importance of school and/or the value of an education. In high school, Sam, Jack and Angelo had part-time jobs. Jack worked during the summers, as a camp counsellor, so his employment did not interfere with his studies. Angelo chose to work part-time (i.e., in a pharmacy) because of his poor grades and sense of detachment from school. In grades nine and ten, for many reasons, Angelo's marks were not up to his usual standard. As a result, he found himself working more than usual. In addition to its economic value, Angelo's job fulfilled psychological and emotional needs. Angelo needed to see himself in a positive light. And through his job he was able to regain his self-respect. In grade eleven, Angelo's marks improved dramatically and as a result he re-evaluated his perception of the 'value' of his part-time job (Porter,1965). It was at that point that Angelo sought new employment and worked in his parish rectory, as a receptionist. Angelo's work environment was such

that he was encouraged to bring school work to the rectory as his hours were flexible.

Angelo clearly admits that it was the change in his grades that caused him to understand both the short term benefits (i.e., more money) and longer term ramifications (i.e., poorer grades) of working while going to school. Although Angelo continued to work throughout high school, his first priority was school. In Angelo's introspective analysis, he determines that it is work that deterred many of his fellow classmates from their studies. The analogy that Angelo makes is that the reality of earning money is a form of seduction (i.e., the more money you earn the more money you spend, the more money you spend the more hours you work, and so on) which is cyclical and ultimately deters students from their studies because of time constraints. Sam, on the other hand, quit his part-time job (i.e., stock boy in a grocery store) because it interefered with his studies and started to affect his grades. Although all three sets of parents allowed their sons to work part-time, working was not a priority over school. In fact the opposite was true (Covello, 1967).

PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

My grade two teacher, a female, was not of Italian

descent. Just before my mother was to meet her for the first time, in a parent-teacher report card meeting, I nervously watched my mother get ready for her meeting and commented on her appearance, the dress she was going to wear, her hair, her lipstick, etc. I then proceeded to coach my mother on how to behave, what to say and what not to say. I was worried about the impression she would make on my teacher. I was scared. My mother patiently listened without question or comment. She left for school and I anxiously awaited her return. My concern was not about what my teacher had to say about me, but rather the value judgement she would make about my mother and how this in turn would affect my life in her class. The next day, I watched and waited in hopes that my teacher would say a kind word about having met my mother. She said nothing and yet her silence spoke volumes. I took it to mean that my mother did not live up to her standards or perhaps, personified her image of an Italian immigrant parent.

In order to understand parent-teacher relationships it is necessary to consider the context of such relationships (i.e., parental level of schooling, occupations, community environment, and ethnic identities). Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's parents have different levels of schooling. Sam's and Jack's parents, unlike Angelo's mother and father,

arrived in Canada with high school educations. In comparison, Angelo's parents did not complete elementary school. In Canada, Jack's father attended school and enrolled in English language classes (ESL). Jack's mother, years later, returned to school and obtained a college diploma in Early Childhood Education. Angelo's mother took classes in hairdressing and graduated. Given their educational backgrounds, all three fathers attained jobs that were considered to be blue collar employment (Bonutti,1998;Jansen,1985). Similar to their spouses, all three women as members of the working class occupied jobs that were gender-oriented: hairdresser, educational assistant, bank teller, secretary, factory worker (Covello,1967).

Sam, Jack and Angelo attended elementary and secondary school where most teachers and students were of Italian heritage. The underlying assumption is this: given the school and community environment, their identity as Italian immigrants and the identity of their children's teachers, all three sets of parents would be less hesitant to establish parent-teacher relationships than if they lived in a heterogeneous ethnic community and their children attended schools where teachers and students were not predominantly of Italian heritage. I therefore explore the nature

and quality of the relationships between their parents and their educators in an attempt to understand the role ethnicity played vis-a-vis the Italian immigrant identity. I asked: *Tell me about the rapport your parents had with your teachers in both elementary and high school.*

SAM:

"My mom used to come in, not just for my report card. My mom was on top of me. My dad, he couldn't care less because he knew my mom was on top of me and that was good enough for him. My mom was on top of the whole ship, captaining the ship. My father was somewhere in the background. If she needed him with the whip he'd be there.

"...My mom would also come to help out. She did a lot more in elementary school. She was on the PTA, the Parent Teacher Association. Parental involvement was there, but only in a limited fashion.

"...[Sam's father] Parents' night, graduation night, nights of significant interest. But he was more reserved too. Mom was more pro-active of the two, by far. I think my father first saw my high school when I was in grade 12, when I graduated or maybe it was grade 9 during a parent night; he may have come then, maybe."

JACK:

"Oh, my mom was the president of the PTA, the Parent Teacher Association in elementary school. She was always there because she was home. ...Later [when his sister started school] she volunteered her time. ...She was always around us.

"...More my mom than my dad. My dad would come to sport events. And my mom would come for academic events and plays and things like that. And they would both come for graduation.

"...In high school, my mom did not get involved anymore because she started working and so she had very little time on her hands. And my dad only came to sport events. He still came around because he had that flexibility. He was in real estate."

ANGELO:

"Oh, my mom always went to the parent-teacher interviews or my brother depending, depending on how well I was doing in school. If I was doing bad she would send my brother. If I was doing well she would go. My brother could handle the situation better. He could understand English, trying to remedy the situation whereas my mother could not.

"[Referring to Parent Teacher Association meetings]...No, that was always foreign to our family. My parents didn't have much experience in this sort of stuff nor do I think they would have been interested in participating in that sort of stuff. I think they were hesitant about it. The language. They were fearful. They were uncomfortable in that sort of situation. They just didn't know anything about it."

The roles, responsibilities and levels of involvement which Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's parents demonstrated throughout their elementary and secondary school years indicated a patriarchal family structure. In all three households the mothers typically stayed at home for periods of time, assumed the role of homemaker, and raised their children while the fathers went out to work. The fathers were the family breadwinners. The significance of this type of division of labour--working 'inside' versus 'outside' the family home--is that it established familial roles and responsibilities, which in turn, reinforced a male and

female gender-based value system, gender biases and stereotypes, the essence of which is patriarchy.

The patriarchal family structure is exemplified in Sam's household in his description of parental responsibilities, roles, and authority in the context of his elementary and secondary school years. Sam depicts himself as a ship; his mother, the captain and his father, her whip. The implications of this scenario are that Sam's father is the ultimate family disciplinarian and that he and his siblings are always under the threat of physical punishment if the 'wrong' choice is made. However, Sam's father's reign over his family is to some extent determined by the degree to which his wife and children keep him apprised of issues. The maintenance of patriarchy depends on the degree to which cultural and gender socialization roles are inculcated and accepted (Covello, 1967).

In elementary and secondary schools, the visibility of Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's fathers and mothers, although different, were primarily determined by their cultural value system and their interpretations of their 'place,' roles and responsibilities, as parents. It was not determined by the ethnic heritage of their sons teachers or school administrators (Covello, 1967).

During elementary school, Sam's and Jack's mothers were the visible parents. They were the ones who attended meetings, parent-teacher interviews, who volunteered their time, interacted and conversed with administrators and teachers. Their mothers were responsible for their schooling as long as there were no real problems or decisions to be made. In the event that this was not the case, Sam ["...My father was somewhere in the background. If she (Sam's mother) needed him with the whip he'd be there"] and Jack [...Mom stayed home for me and she cooked, she cleaned... she made sure we did our homework...And so she was always there because she was home."] both believe that their fathers would have probably stepped in and taken charge of the situation, from a parental standpoint, for they had the ultimate control and authority as the family patriarch. Angelo's experience was different. In Angelo's case, even though his mother was at home for periods of time, her involvement in school activities was limited to parent-teacher interviews. And even then, her attendance was not always consistent. It was common practice for Angelo's mother to send her eldest male child to interviews or meetings. This was the case if she did not feel comfortable with the situation, either because the teacher or administrator was not of Italian background or because

Angelo was experiencing difficulties in school or because she perceived there to be a problem. In Angelo's household, unlike Sam's or Jack's, it was his older brother who assumed the role of family patriarch vis-a-vis his school (Covello, 1967).

In high school, the level of attendance, participation and visibility of Sam's and Jack's mother decreased dramatically. Their involvement was limited to parent-teacher interviews and meetings. This was to a large extent the result of time constraints, due to their work schedules. By this time, both mothers were employed. In addition, at that time, neither Sam nor Jack were too keen on the idea of having their mothers come to school and become acquainted with the staff or student body. Sam's father's role remained the same. It was Jack's father who became more visible at this time. His attendance was as a spectator at school games. Sam and Jack were both very athletic and often made school teams. Even though both fathers had flexible work schedules, it was Jack's father who attended his son's games. Angelo's experiences differed once again.

At this stage of his schooling, it was Angelo's older brother who attended all parent-teacher interviews and school meetings. His parents thought this best. Angelo's

brother was an alumni of the school and was therefore familiar with the staff and more knowledgeable about school protocol. Equally important, he was fluent in English. Unlike Sam and Jack, Angelo did not play any sports nor was he involved in any other extra-curricular activities such as student council, the yearbook committee, graduation committee, etc. This was not encouraged by his parents or by his older siblings. His studies were his family's main focus and concern.

As I listened to Sam, Jack and Angelo describe the roles and participation levels of their parents during their elementary and secondary school years, I found that their experiences were the results of several factors. These include the Italian immigrant identity of their parents and their own individual struggles to establish themselves as entities within an ethnic frame of reference. How did Sam, Jack and Angelo want their parents to be perceived within the context of their schools, among their teachers? How did they themselves want to be perceived? Were they going to establish themselves as Italian, Anglo-Canadian or Italian-Canadian? How did their schools control the shaping of their ethnic identities? Were Sam, Jack and Angelo also expected to be the end products of the cultural heritage and the social, political and economic circumstances of their

parents; would they choose to emulate their parents, under different circumstances; or would they choose to be different from their parents, not fully understanding the realities of their choices (Iacovetta,1992;Li,1990)? The Italian immigration experiences of their parents established their comfort levels which, in turn, determined their involvement and visibility in their children's schools. In time, Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's comfort levels around the prospect of having their parents 'in' and 'visible' in their schools were in response to their own identities.

In conclusion, based on their own educational backgrounds, occupations and Italian immigrant identities, all three mothers established rapports with their childrens' teachers (Covello,1967). This in itself is somewhat remarkable given the fact that they had no previous experience to help them nor were they familiar with the rules, regulations and norms of the Canadian education system or its teachers. Under the circumstances, they did the best they could and believed that were acting in the best interest of their children.

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CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This study posed two questions: (1) What were the experiences of Sam, Jack and Angelo as first generation Canadian males of Italian heritage, between the ages of 23 and 25, who attended elementary and secondary schools where most students and teachers were of Italian heritage? And (2) How did attending a school where most of the students and teachers were of Italian heritage help these three males construct their perceptions of ethnic identities, a process which shaped and facilitated their own identities as Italians?

In response to the first question, Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's elementary and secondary school experiences clearly indicate that these three males did not develop meaningful relationships with teachers who shared their Italian heritage. Instead, they connected with teachers who were culturally and/or racially different (Colalillo, 1981). The teachers who shared Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's Italian heritage were more prone to be agents of enculturation and therefore appeared 'different' and 'remote.' Perhaps this was the best way, this group of educators thought, to serve and help their own kind succeed in the system and in society as a whole? Or it may have been that they were absorbed with

their own issues, and neither conscious nor concerned with the problems experienced by Sam, Jack and Angelo and others like them. Sam, Jack and Angelo connected with teachers who were culturally and/or racially different because this group of teachers provided them with the autonomy they needed in order to construct their own sense of self. Both groups of teachers (i.e., those of Italian and non-Italian heritage) experienced the same disconnection as newcomers to a system that practiced cultural, racial, gender and economic discrimination through its curriculum, teaching styles and school policies and practices and yet, Sam, Jack and Angelo identified and connected with teachers who did not share their Italian heritage.

In elementary and in high school, Sam, Jack and Angelo established and maintained friendships with students they perceived to be the 'same.' For Sam and Jack the definition of 'sameness' applied to anyone who shared their Italian heritage. Angelo, on the other hand, was even more selective. He only identified and connected with students whose parents were from the same region in Italy as his own--Friuli. Perhaps, the differences in Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's perceptions of who is and who is not Italian is rooted in their parents' interpretations of Italy's north-south cultural dichotomy (Covello, 1967). Interestingly, each

of these three males had opportunities to establish friendships with non-Italian peers, but each refused. Their choice of friends was determined by their circumstances, their psychological and emotional needs, their fears of rejection and/or alienation. The irony of Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's experiences is that these three males perceived themselves to be privileged, and when they interacted with non-white, non-Italian peers they practiced--whether consciously or unconsciously--the same discriminatory tactics and prejudicial behaviours that plagued their Italian immigrant parents (Iacovetta, 1992). The immigrant experiences of their parents did not make these three males sensitive to the identities and experiences of their non-Italian classmates, nor did it make them cognizant of the privileges they had accrued as second generation Italian. In interacting with their non-Italian classmates, Sam, Jack and Angelo engaged in unequal power relationships and inflicted whether intentionally or unintentionally, the same prejudicial experiences their Italian immigrant parents endured (Iacovetta, 1992).

In answer to the second question, in school, Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's teachers, whether of Italian heritage or not, were assigned the roles of significant others, whether consciously or unconsciously, and in different ways

influenced and shaped each of the three's construction of a self-identity and their positioning of 'self' and 'other.' From their testimonies it is apparent that Sam, Jack and Angelo did not fear their teachers, nor did they wish to emulate them. What they wanted was to be their own persons. Their classmates shaped and maintained their identities. The context of Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's school environments allowed them to be Italian. But ingrained in their Italian-ness were periods in which they indulged in ethnocentrism (D'Antonio, 1975).

In conclusion, Sam's, Jack's and Angelo's elementary and secondary school environments and experiences shaped and influenced their construction of identities, whether Italian, Anglo-Canadian or Italian-Canadian and determined their perceptions of 'self' and 'others.' Perceptions which have, over the years, remained essentially the same. Interestingly, in the construction of their identities, is the issue of gender and religion. Their Italian ethnic identity is intertwined with their male gender identity and Roman Catholic religion.

In response to my own "personal" issues: first, assuming that every teacher is viewed either consciously or unconsciously as a role model, does my Italian Canadian

ethnicity constitute a positive factor in the future lives of my students, making me a net enhancer in their chances of success in an increasingly pluralistic society, one less and less dominated by a white Anglo-Saxon elite? Or second, making the same assumption, does the ethnicity I share with my students amount to an encumbrance upon their chances of future success in that wider society by suggesting perhaps that their ethnic community is of sufficient size and maturity that enculturation of its young can be carried out by "their own kind," thereby increasing the chances of their developing an ethnically-determined "world view," at best of only marginal benefit to them in making their way in that wider society?

I have come to the realization that as a teacher I am whether consciously or unconsciously cast as a role model by all my students. The context (i.e., my female gender status, my Italian heritage, my educational background, my profession, my economic status, etc.) in which I am perceived or measured will ultimately be determined by my students' psychological, intellectual, social and emotional needs, coupled with my perceptions of them as people with identities. To some students, I may be a source of refuge, to others an ally. And yet, I am sure there are those who deem me inconsequential or perceive me to be an opponent.

After listening to the testimonies of Sam, Jack and Angelo, I question whether I as an educator made any significant difference in my own ethnic community and whether the difference I made, if any, would be any different than if I taught in schools where students were culturally and racially diverse.

As an educator, I chose to teach in order to connect. As an newly appointed administrator, I plan to question school policies and practices; the curriculum and its hidden agenda; the motives and actions of teachers; the perceptions, attitudes and achievements of students; and the attendance and involvement of parents. It is not my intent to blame but to raise a consciousness, among all stakeholders, of the political realities of ethnic, racial, gender and economic identities in the context of school and school experiences. Perhaps, I chose to be a school administrator so that I might empower others to make connections.

In the role of school administrator, I begin to ask myself how will I constructively address issues of identities within the context of a school and its community? How do I avoid replicating the experiences, the perceptions of Sam, Jack and Angelo? How do I ensure that I see things

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for what they are rather than what I would like them to be? How do I address opponents, confront obstacles?

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INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix 1

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Age: _____

1. Tell me about your family.
2. What is your father's level of education?
What is your father's occupational status?
3. What is your mother's level of education?
What is your mother's occupational status?
4. Where did your family live when you attended elementary school?

Describe the ethnic background of your neighbourhood(s) (i.e., exclusively Italian, mostly Italian, mixed, mostly non-Italian, almost completely non-Italian).

Describe the socioeconomic status of your neighbourhood(s) (i.e., upper-class, middle-class, lower-middle class, working class).
5. At what age did you start school? What grade were you in? What elementary school(s) did you attend? Location.
6. What was the ethnic background of the school principal, vice-principal, teachers and students?
7. What do you remember the most about your elementary school?
8. Is there anything that comes to mind when you think back to your elementary school years?
9. Tell me about your friends. Did they attend the same high school? Do you still keep in touch?
10. If you could what would you change, if anything, about your elementary school years?
11. What were your grades like in elementary school?
12. Did you connect with a particular teacher or staff member? Discuss.
13. Where did you live when you attended high school? If different from elementary school, describe the ethnic background and socioeconomic status of your

neighbourhood.

14. What high school(s) did you attend?

What was the ethnic make-up of your high school (i.e., school administrators, teachers, fellow students)?

15. Into what programme (i.e., enriched, advanced, general, basic) were you placed in high school? Who influenced your programme selection? How?

16. What was your grade point average in high school?

17. Did you have a part-time job during high school? Discuss why or why not.

18. What ambitions did you have for yourself while you were in high school? Did anyone influence you or play a role in your choices? Discuss.

19. Thinking back to both elementary and secondary school, describe your relationship with teachers. Discuss parent involvement in your schools in general and the involvement of your own parents in particular. Discuss the rapport your parents had with teachers, principals and vice-principals.

20. Are there any particular experiences or memories that come to mind when you think back to your elementary or high school days.

21. Did the fact that you were Italian in any way affect the friends you made, the way you behaved, your attitude about school during elementary and high school? Discuss.

22. Do you think your Italian ethnic identity influenced or affected your school experiences or the choices you made while in school?

23. Was your ethnic identity an issue for you at school, among classmates, teachers, school administrators?

Was your ethnic identity an issue for you at home with your parents, family members, neighbours?

24. What is your highest level of education? What factors

do you think contributed to this attainment? Discuss.

25. What is your occupational status?
What is the occupational status of your siblings?
26. Are you currently in school? Do you have plans to
return to school on a part-time or full-time basis?
Discuss.
27. What is your opinion of the education system and the
way schools operate? Discuss.
28. Final comments.