A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO UNDERSTANDING
THE DRAMA OF ENCOUNTER AT THE BORDERS OF IDENTITY:
SIX SECOND GENERATION ITALIAN CANADIAN WOMEN
TEACHERS SPEAK

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

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A Narrative Inquiry into Understanding the Drama of Encounter at the Borders of Identity: Six Second Generation Italian Canadian Women Teachers Speak

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ABSTRACT
This is a narrative inquiry into the experience of six second generation Italian Canadian women teachers. An examination of these women’s pluridimensional experiences will yield understanding of the dilemma faced by them in creating a sense of self amidst different sociocultural expectations and in nurturing a sense of belonging in their personal and professional knowledge landscapes (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995). To my knowledge these women will provide a voice that has never been heard in empirical research. As Canadian daughters of immigrants, we were socialized by our parents’ regional hometown milieu which includes a dialect, a family-oriented, male-dominated, mother-centred Italian culture of the 30s and 40s; by the Anglo-Saxon mainstream school culture with its infusion of an individualistic, male-oriented dominant culture and the English language; by the ‘distant and mythic’ concept of mainstream Italy (Spezzano, 1995) and its standard language; and by the Italo-Canadian “community” and its koiné (italiese). The negotiation of identity amidst these forces of socialization is the fulcrum from which we give meaning to our lives. This negotiation addresses the quintessential question: Who am I? It also begs the epistemological question: How do I come to
know myself? In this study, identity is understood as ‘stories to live by’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Consequently, this study is also of methodological interest because it engages in the systematic evoking of personal experience which serves to validate one’s ‘stories to live by’. This shift in knowledge base, according to Cummins (1996), is multiculturalism in action. Concepts of the personal and professional knowledge landscapes are suited to this study because they embrace the multi-layered experience of these women. The concepts help capture the life threads of the Italo-Canadian experience and help profile the intergenerational life experiences and identity formation of these six individuals. Narrative inquiry is used as a means to understand the ways these women have experienced and interpreted their educational lives. Gaining a better understanding of one of the largest ethnic groups in Canada will provide increased understanding of the implications of immigration on Canadian ethnicity generally and on multicultural teacher and student populations in the Ontario educational system specifically.
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Per Donna Elena ...
My mother's story ended, October 22, 1997.
I dedicate this poem, written by Patriarca, to her ...

Italian Women
these are the women who were born to give birth

they breathe only leftover air
and speak only when deeper voices have fallen asleep

I have seen them bleed in the dark hiding the stains inside them like sins apologizing

I have seen them wrap their souls around their children and serve their own hearts in a meal they never share.

(Patriarca, 1994)
Preface

Who am I as researcher?

This thesis is the story of how I came to understand ‘a sense of self,’ and the journey I undertook with five other women (all teachers, and daughters of Italian immigrants), to learn about the idea of identity formation. The underlying premise of my thesis is that the negotiation of identity is the fulcrum from which we give meaning to our lives. This negotiation addresses the quintessential ontological question, “Who am I?” (What is the nature of the reality of who I am?) This question begs the epistemological question, “How do I come to know who I am?” These questions have pedagogical implications, “Why do I teach what I teach?”, and “Why do I teach the way that I teach?” My quest to unravel these puzzles of identity led me to ground my work theoretically in Connelly and Clandinin’s understanding of identity as ‘stories to live by’ (1999).

Through Connelly and Clandinin’s work, I have learned that stories represent experience, and to study the storied lives of individuals and/or communities is to understand the experiences of those individuals and communities. I came to realize that as part of a community, the individual is also shaped by the community. By sharing the stories of experiences particular to his/her community with other members of the community, the individual creates bonds of language, order, and tradition. These form the foundation for the progress and evolution of both the community and the individual. Because the individual is part of the whole picture, his/her individuality may be either magnified or annihilated by the relationship (Wing, 1979). Self-awareness then, and understanding of the experience, are crucial.

The late Robert Harney suggests that it is important to discover ways to read the significance of ethnicity in the lives of individuals and ethnic groups. One way of reading the significance of ethnicity in my life and the life of my participants has been narrative inquiry. Indeed, in order to understand human
nature, it is necessary to understand the mundane vicissitudes of ordinary people’s lives. Narrative inquiry has helped me understand my interactions, my history, and my community. “To call for an interior history of immigrant and ethnic communities in Toronto ... requires that we find ways to understand all the actors in the city’s history, to understand the trauma of encounter at the boundaries of identity in the classroom, the corner restaurant, the factory or at leisure on street corners” (Harney, 1985, pp. 6-7). Harney calls on Mr. Dooley, Finley Peter Dunne’s fictitious Irish American bartender, whose remarks on academic history to his friend help state his point.

I know history isn’t true Hinnissy cause it ain’t like what I see evry day in Halsted Street. If anyone comes along with a histhry iv Greece and Rome that will show me the people fightin’, gettin’ drunk, makin’ love, gettin’ married, owin’ the grocery man, and bein’ without hard coal, I’ll believe there was a Greece and Rome, but not before. (Dunne, 1963, p. 207, in Harney, 1985, pp. 6-7).

Harney’s words, which I adapted in my title, and Mr. Dooley’s remarks, helped me conjure images of my historical self. Yet, along with a historical self come “historical obstacles, inherited ways of looking at things” (Jackson, 1998, p. 3). Initially I imagined the Italian Canadian ‘community,’ of which I was a part, as an organism. In order to understand myself, I felt it was important to describe its features, recount its evolutionary history, trace its development, and describe its growth pains. I saw it as an organism that, at a ‘pubescent’ stage, at the time of my parents’ emigration, had left the natal group. I understood it to have experienced the growing pains of adolescence only after the initial growing pains of acculturation in a new country. I interpreted the surfacing tensions that I experienced during my years of high school teaching in a predominantly Italian suburb as having been exacerbated by the community’s bitter-sweet entrance into adulthood. My efforts to understand the process of my community’s acculturation were affirmed by Conle: “Lived ‘tensions with a history’ provide a compelling learning dynamic in that they seek resolution. Situations of acculturation contain
the tensions or embryos for such inquiry and stories of acculturation are the medium that allows the inquiry to progress” (Conle, 1993, p. ii).

I then realized that to speak of an Italian community at all, as a single definable entity, detachable somehow from the city, was already a distortion.

With a history here stretching back more than a century and with numbers that account for as many as one in six of Toronto’s residents, we are not dealing with some quaint appendage to what we think of as Toronto but with a presence inextricable now from the city’s fabric, as much part of its history, as interwoven with it, as the United Empire Loyalists who first settled here in the eighteenth century. (Ricci, 1992, p. 1)

I decided that I must first come to terms with myself and understand who I am and what has shaped me. My and my family’s story are microcosmic stories that help tell part of a larger tale of the Italian Canadian ‘community.’ They form only ‘a part’ given the diversity of origins and experience that population represents.

Intuition and tacit knowledge guided me through the initial stages of my inquiry. This beginning is evidenced in the poem with which I open the first chapter. Paradoxically, through these subjective ‘understandings’ I was eventually able to ‘make better meaning,’ better intellectual sense, of my lived experiences.

It was at the border of that dialectic between tacit forms of knowing and intellectual ‘understandings’ that I was able to identify the pedagogy and code of ethics for my teaching and my research specifically, and for my life more generally. While I understood that research has a heuristic quality to it, in terms of the understanding it illuminates, it was clear that in defining ourselves as researchers, the process we choose, and how we locate ourselves in the process, are what make us unique.

I had understood that identity was a puzzle, that literature, which had always played an important role in my life, was important, and that ethnic diversity was important. I started to realize that pedagogically to learn people’s geography or history was important, but that to inquire into ordinary experience would give me a point of connection with my participants specifically (and perhaps with Italian
Canadians more generally). This realization also helped me understand that making personal connections through stories that we tell in the diverse classroom helps us make connections. The stories we tell of ourselves reinforces our identity within the home, and the broader society. Sharing stories to live by in the diverse classroom helps us feel valued therefore making school a safe place to make connections. We also begin to see that we are more alike, as humans, than not. We also begin to realize that if we are all connected we are all complicit in each other’s stories'. We see that, as a human race, we all share common points of interest. “Personal experience research is a form of public inquiry. It connects with the fundamentally human qualities of human experience. Personal experience methods are human methods. This helps the research text find a place in public discourse” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, p.425).

What has guided my work? During my life I have felt a devaluation of my identity. I have, at times, attributed this to being: a female in an Italian Canadian home, a student of ethnic origin in the Canadian educational system, a southern Italian when I was in northern Italy, a high school teacher in an area predominantly inhabited by Italian Canadians, and so on, depending on the situation. I have had great difficulty defining myself and consciously crafting a story of self. Therefore, I chose a method designed to help me and my participants consciously inquire into and craft our own story.

The desire to make a declarative statement about who I was created tensions. While growing up in an immigrant household, I thought I was Italian. At other times I felt I was Canadian. I eventually realized that I was a southern Italian of a particular region, and of a particular hometown. Yet, at other times I thought I was Italian Canadian, or was that Canadian of Italian origin? The narrative inquiry into my participants’ ‘stories to live by’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) helped me realize that identity formation, like learning, is a life-long process.

Negotiation is a process defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “a course of treaty with another (or others) to obtain or bring about some result; the action
of making terms with others; the action of getting over or round some obstacle by skilful manoeuvring.” In the negotiation of identity, Cummins (1996) argues that how we define ourselves depends on others. ‘Other’ became a key term for me in my efforts to understand the nature of the reality of who I am. This argument confirmed my earlier understanding that we are all connected by virtue of our human experience. Indeed, science has come to confirm that connection: “Among physicists, the atom is no longer seen as an independent and isolated entity, but, in the words of Henry Strapp, as ‘a set of relationships reaching out to other things’” (Palmer, 1983/1993, p. xiv).

The ways we define and are defined by our social and cultural contexts involve our relations with other persons in a context. These contexts include the collective norms, mores, values, prejudices, and preconceptions that have evolved over time and are sustained with minimal consciousness on our part (Witherell, in Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 85). In order to become more conscious, or awakened, we need to look at those ‘inherited ways of looking at things’ more closely. Furthermore, in his book, Negotiating Identities, Cummins (1996) adds to this argument by stating that the creation of educative classroom interactions necessitates the critical reflection on one’s own experience and identity, and also challenges explicitly the devaluation of identity experienced by culturally diverse students (p. iii).

In a multiethnic country such as Canada, teachers prepare themselves to teach students who are very different from themselves. It is important that they learn to seek out ways to “read” the experience of these children. By reading others’ stories, teachers begin to relate to their own experiences. The text (that is, their stories) also serves to advance the teachers’ self study as well as their ability to relate to difference (Conle, 1999).

When, as researchers or teachers, we engage in critical reflection on our experiences by telling, retelling and reconstructing our stories of experience, we become authors of our own stories. The personal experience methods work I did
with myself and with my participants revealed that “our pronouncements about the nature of experience must be provisional, [we] must remain open to revision in the light of subsequent experience” (Jackson, 1998, p.2). This observation led me to understand that identity too is ever changing. We are always experiencing ourselves differently depending on the context.

My purpose in this thesis is to show that we are all complicit in the stories we tell as we negotiate our identity formation. If, as educators, we are “constantly sketching an image of our identities,” or in Connelly and Clandinin’s words we ‘live, tell, relive and retell our stories...’ (1999), the hope is to allow students to envisage their own story of identity but also their own story “of the society we hope our students will form” (Cummins, 1996, p. iv). Narrative inquiry, as methodological research, parallels or informs this pedagogy. I chose a research methodology that I believed was educative, that is, more liberating than the pedagogy I experienced as both student and teacher. There was never an issue as to whether narrative would be the appropriate form of inquiry. I knew, ‘intuitively’, at first, that this ‘inside-out’ type of relational methodology was the way I was going to conduct my research into understanding the experience of other Italian Canadian women teachers.

My participants and I have storied our years in teaching, especially the early years, as a time of “mystification, confusion, and conflict” (Cummins, 1996, p. 21). These feelings gave rise to another dilemma. How do I present my data in a non-authoritarian way? This relates to the methodological choices that I made during field text collection, for example: asking for participant feedback, asking each woman to contribute stories, poetry, letters, or reflections she felt especially connected to, or that represented her philosophy of life, or her lived experience. I also asked the women to choose their own pseudonym given that most of them had had their Italian names changed by teachers in the Canadian educational system.

Connelly and Clandinin’s personal experience methods have, therefore, been
most suited to exploring the issues of identity formation. Personal experience methods were tools that facilitated the ‘skilful manoeuvring’ involved in negotiating my identity and helping my participants negotiate theirs or at least understand how they have negotiated their identity. The tension I have experienced and bring to this research is my current understanding that I have not been conscious of the tensions at work in my life. I was simply governed by a continuous, unnamed malaise. A feminist epistemology, a ‘woman’s way of knowing’ (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule 1986), allowed for the integration of the inner voice and the voice of reason, that is, narrative inquiry allowed the telling of and listening to stories where

Not only are voices set free to speak to others and among others in live classrooms ...; they resonate with the sense of seeking, struggling to name, striving to find language for what was repressed and suppressed over the years. Also, they are marvellously multiple. [S]tories ... give shape and expression to what would otherwise be untold about “our lives”.... They will be marked by what Mikhail Bakhtin called “heteroglossia” (1981): the sound of many discourses, many voices; and the consciousness of a listener or reader affecting what is thought and what is said. ...there is the likelihood of inclusion, the inclusion of those of us who read. (Greene, in Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. x)

The multiple levels of experience, the internal and external dimensions of the multiple layers of stories, are examples of how this study is a ‘heteroglossia.’ For example, the reader could focus attention on: the stories, their telling, the life experience of the characters, my research experience of the storyteller’s experience, the reader’s experience of the situation, and so on.

Decisions as to which stories will be told and which suppressed not only give definition to a life but serve as a form for permitting the author her own story of identity. The teacher, like the writer, knows of this power through the oral and written texts of classroom life. The stories I allowed to be told were the stories that the participants allowed to be told, especially after a discussion with them over the social significance of those stories. (Examples of this will be found in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven).
To understand the pluridimensionality of an individual’s experiences and the complexity of factors that help shape us would be to make sense of our existence generally and our niche in the educational system specifically. Chameleon-like, the question, “who am I?”, has changed depending on my situation. Not only have I asked myself, “who am I?”, on an existential level - “who am I in this world?”, but more specifically, I have asked “who am I?”, in terms of my ethnic cultural identity. When I started teaching, my question became, “who am I as teacher?” More recently, I have been struggling with the notion of who I am as researcher. These questions are all evidence of the multiple levels of “experiencing the experience” in educational narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, p. 414).

The questions, “who am I as researcher?” and “how do I act it out in my research?”, are a testimony to Dewey’s philosophy that because life is education, inquiry and life come together. Indeed, the research methods we choose say something about our views on what qualifies as valuable knowledge and our perspective on the nature of reality (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 5). The spirit of one’s inquiry lies in the examination of one’s assumptions. Narrative inquiry assisted me in examining my assumptions about identity formation, qualitative research, and cultural identity. It helped me shift my perspective and hence my pedagogy so that I can act differently now if I so choose.

This thesis contains eight chapters, structured as follows. The first three chapters outline the theoretical framework of the thesis. Chapter One looks at the theoretical rationale. I introduce the idea of identity formation by describing the struggle I underwent to understand the idea of identity, and my actual identity formation. The aesthetic lens through which I explore the concept of identity formation is narrative inquiry.

In Chapter Two, Autobiographical Rationale, I map out a personal setting which I start with the personal context in which the ideas of Chapter One unfolded. I start from my story and subsequently move on to the stories of others.
In Chapter Three, *Puzzling out a Puzzle*, I enter into a personal practical conversation with Connelly and Clandinin’s 1994 article on personal experience methods. I show how I experienced the application of their ideas - a merging of research stories as it were.

The next four chapters outline the experiential context of the thesis. In Chapter Four, *The Pluridimensionality of ‘Being’ on a Personal Knowledge Landscape*, I introduce the idea that being daughters of immigrants is indeed more complex an issue than terms such as biculturalism would suggest. I focus on hometown and how values are embedded in the physicality of space. This chapter is presented in the form of a reconstructed conversation that highlights the experiential context of the stories that are told in Chapters 5 to 7.

After exploring thoughts on the nature of identity, I elaborate on the ‘pluridimensionality of ‘being’’ outlined above by presenting three biographical profiles, namely the narratives of Beatrice, Francesca, and Marina, in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven respectively. These profiles are based on my reconstruction of the field texts gathered individually with each participant. Finally, in the Appendix, *Working With My Participants*, I provide a more detailed description of the meetings that took place and the field texts collected.
Chapter One

Introduction

I am narrating the life of a dreamer, a wounded soul trying to heal wearing a man’s jacket with tattered lining wanting to smoke a pipe while packaging a woman’s feelings in a book bound by the rules and principles of a patriarchy my mother’s warmth healed and stitched my tattered lining “just buy a new one” she said I did, in Iowa, the field of dreams, a ‘black stocking’ feminine funky one, the empress’ new coat, yet, I cannot wear it and tell my story at the same time - just yet - all of a sudden my old innocuous earth tone loose weave is still mine, I hear an old friend’s voice: “fix the lining and wear the jacket ‘til you’re done”, all of a sudden the jacket feels worn in like a fine leather glove and to have tattered lining feels alright for after all what I feel is what I am the essential interpreter of dreams like Joseph who wore his dreamcoat, Jacob his father had a coat with long sleeves made for him a mantle of protection to help prepare him for his presentation to the world a coat which reflected and gave power to his prophetic nature essential interpreter of dreams the difference is I bought my own jacket and deep within the liminality of my dream coat lies the answer to who I am I
Narrating the Struggle to Understand What Lies at the ‘Coeur’

This poem is an expression of my movement from head to heart. It is an example of the movement, within the last decade, in the field of educational research, from a scientific to a more arts-based approach to inquiry. Art (poetry, story, and so on) helps capture the distillation of a common experience in an aesthetic ‘moment’ (or a liminal moment). The distillation of common experience is ‘separated out’ as a class of experience and expressed via art, education, religion, and so forth. The qualities of ordinary experience are, in turn, extracted and transformed into art (Jackson, 1998). Sometimes we chance upon those moments. At other times, like in narrative inquiry, we engage in the purposeful act of capturing those moments of experience between divides (borders, liminal moments, or in-between moments) - those spaces in time and understanding, in other words, where we can see our own taken-for-granted beliefs about issues that concern us, or to explore what we know, and who we are. Narratives cross the borders of both: then and now, head and heart, fiction and empiricism, logic and affect, researcher and participant, subject and object, knower and known, personal and professional, domestic and academic.

Narrative inquiry, and other such movements, help “to call forth imaginative faculties, inviting the reader to fill gaps in the text with personal meaning” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p.75). Participation with an arts-based inquiry text is important because it opens a conversation between the work and you as an audience. Conversation with art is an educational experience because learning becomes grounded in a relational experiential context. In this way we participate in the world, we participate in life. As Connelly and Clandinin state “one learns about education from thinking about life, and one learns about life from thinking about education” (1994, p. 415). Responding to a work of art requires imagination, participation, individualized response, critical perspective, and development of a language for articulating our responses.
The arts-based educational inquiry texts which I examine in this thesis are primarily story, and poetry. These art centred experiences (Jackson, 1998) (poem, story) are discontinuous temporally, meaning that there are temporal gaps between encounters with the art form. In narrative inquiry it is the singular encounter which is the unit of analysis. However, there is a continuity of experience because there are recurrent encounters with the experience lived in the telling, retelling, restorying, and reconstruction of that experience. Research becomes a recursive, reiterative practice which allows us to raise questions about the world and our place in it, and perhaps “help each of us to live life differently” (Jackson, 1998, p. xiii). My work, as narrative inquirer, is to encounter and exchange with the audience the meaning-making of lived experience and the creation of a better understanding of that lived experience. The lessons learned from art are usually about how to live our lives. By examining our own responses to that art (poems, stories, my own thesis as a whole) we are provided with the possibility of transformation.

The poem with which I opened this chapter came about as a spontaneous out-pouring of internalized tensions seeking some kind of resolution, and represents experience as an imaginative construct (Crites, 1971) that neither direct argument nor theory could convey. During the early stages of this inquiry I kept asking myself if art (or fiction) is empirically sound as a form of research. My dilemma was that I saw fiction and empiricism as mutually exclusive terms. I saw fiction as tapping into affect, intuitions, and imagination; and empiricism as tapping into logic. Intuitively I realized that narrative inquiry helped bridge the gap between fiction and non-fiction. Narrative inquiry facilitated a dialectical relation between head and heart, personal and professional, and so on - each milieu influencing the character of the other. Dewey notes that:

A statement sets forth the conditions under which the experience of an object or situation may be had. It is a good, that is, effective, statement in the degree in which these conditions are stated in such a way that they can be used as directions by which one may arrive
at an experience. The poetic as distinct from the prosaic, aesthetic art as distinct from scientific, expression as distinct from statement, does something different from leading to an experience. It constitutes one. (Dewey, 1934, p. 84)

The poem constitutes an experience that provided me with the opportunity to externalize my feelings and regain mastery over them by shaping them into an aesthetic form. It is a reflection of how I have perceived my world and internalized my response to it. It, indeed, verifies my story at the time of writing it. The poem embodies my knowing and my response to the world, while your response to my work embodies your knowing. It embodies your story. By making our feelings explicit and by looking at our responses we can look at ourselves and the assumptions that lay hidden underneath. This recursive practice allows us to see how we construct our world; it also allows us to see that curriculum could be a responsive exercise and responsive conversation whereby one discourse does not dominate.

In this inquiry, story becomes both phenomenon and method (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994). It is method since I am presenting and interpreting the stories that my participants have told me or written about their lived experience. At the same time, stories become the educational phenomenon since the focus of the thesis is, as indicated in the poem, identity - specifically understood as ‘stories to live by’ which is grounded in Connelly and Clandinin’s (1999) theoretical conceptualization of identity. The question driving this research has been, “Who am I?”; it has also become, “Who am I as teacher?”, and more recently, “Who am I as researcher?” as I undertook this doctoral journey.

Although I frame this work as a study of six women teachers, my interests range beyond the specifics of these women’s lives. My interpretation and analysis raises questions of the crafting of ‘self’, and why people feel a ‘loss of self’ both personally and professionally. Central to this study is a concern with the cultural representations of the woman school teacher. Valerie Walkerdine (1990) suggests that being a woman teacher is an impossible fiction. To be a woman is to lack
authority, knowledge and power. To be a teacher is to have authority, knowledge and power. Thus, to be a woman teacher is to take on what Maxine Greene (1992, p. 17) calls a ‘fictitious self’ (in Munro, 1998). The mystery I seek to unravel in this thesis is, “Who authors whose story at what moment?” Through their own narrations, these teachers present their own stories and their own framing of the meaning of their lives. As stories unravel of ‘selves’ that are crafted, we see a process that is constantly shifting in time and space. The six life stories of my participants represented in this thesis are an attempt to understand how women negotiate a sense of self within and against cultural norms and expectations in which ‘women are either absent or represented as objects of knowledge, rarely its subjects’ (Pagano, 1990, p. xvi).

The six women educators whose accounts I present are all of Italian origin. Their stories show the ways that each of us is implicated in each other’s story and the ways that our practices as educators are motivated by our stories (Grumet, 1988). Narrative inquiry into those stories of lived experience has helped me examine those liminal moments - those spaces in time and understanding where we can see our own taken-for-granted beliefs about issues that concern us (namely, as teachers, how to interpret the curriculum). The issue of concern (or the purpose) for this inquiry is to look at identity formation through an aesthetic lens. Narrative inquiry has facilitated an educational investigation into why we view identity formation (both personal and professional) the way we do, and where that view comes from sociohistorically. I apply these findings to the everyday experience of my six participants (including myself) - all teachers and daughters of Italian immigrants - in an effort to understand how the broader societal narratives and our familial narratives have influenced the shaping of our personal and professional identities. I also ask the question, “What implications does studying teachers’ ‘stories to live by’ as educational research texts have for teachers’ professional development and for teacher-student relations in the classroom?”
In exploring how social or familial narratives (what Banks [1996] calls personal/cultural knowledge) influence the shaping of a teacher’s identity, it follows that a teacher has, in turn, the power to influence and ‘shape’ the interactions that occur between teachers and students in the classroom and to influence students’ identity formation. I have chosen to investigate this educational phenomenon because, as both a student and a teacher in the Canadian educational system, I experienced inexplicable moments of feeling like I did not ‘fit’, feelings of separation between personal and professional life, feelings of fragmentation. In feeling like I did not belong, I felt as though I had no authority or “authorship” of my own story to live by. I felt caught in between many worlds (for a discussion of these ‘many worlds’ see Chapters Two and Four). It is necessary to involve both teachers and students in critical reflection of their own experience and identities in order to “interrogate the nature of the dominant curricular stories we tell and how these shape our understanding of self ... as well as how teacher and student stories ... can reshape our understanding of the lived experience of schools and teaching” (Munro, 1998, p. 6). “It also challenges explicitly the devaluation of identity that many culturally diverse students and communities still experience in the society as a whole” (Cummins, 1996, p. iii). The key, for me, however, is to temper my understanding not only from an explicit view point, but also from an internal, tacit, implicit view point. In this way we not only point outward at others, but we also consider how we contribute to our identity formation.

Identities develop in a social context. In terms of everyday experience, identity emerges in situations with others. We are actually in constant flux between individual self and social milieu. However,

Our experiential sense of identity differs from cognitive, psychological, social or analytical theories, in that these theories tend to sacrifice the immediate, visceral knowledge of self for the sake of an intellectual concept. Our human corporeality implicates in a primordial way our sense of self-identity. (van Manen & Levering, 1996, p. 94)
Narrative forms of inquiry that acknowledge our “visceral knowledge of self” (that is, those feelings, ‘gut responses’, and intuitions that confirm the epistemological status of how we know what we know) include stories of lived experience which are told, retold, constructed and reconstructed (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). These stories provide useful and important texts for improving education (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 82).

By the end of a story - or other kind of arts-based educational inquiry text - its format and contents will serve to create a new vision of certain educational phenomena. When readers re-create that vision, they may find that new meanings are constructed, and old values and outlooks are challenged, even negated. When that occurs, the purposes of art have been served. (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 78)

Stories, like art in general, show us how the storyteller, or artist constructs his or her world. When we see how worlds are constructed, we see how we construct our worlds. Indeed, narrative inquiry provides an opportunity to explore not only the effects of social narratives on people but to describe the ways in which people themselves are complicit in creating those social narratives, hence providing the opportunity to challenge taken-for-granted beliefs.

My poem is a metaphor for the thesis; indeed it contains the themes in the thesis and is a metaphor for my questions and challenges to ‘old values and outlooks’ - both personally and professionally. It is a place where liminal spaces are numerous, and lines (or borders) are blurred. The dreamer (participant) and dream narrator or essential interpreter (researcher) of dreams (field text) are one. “A book bound by the rules and principles of a patriarchy” (hence the ‘old values and outlooks’) addresses the taken-for-granted notions of the patriarchal traditions, that is, authoritarian pedagogy (outside-in imposition), modernist technical rationality and “the quest for certainty”. The deep sociohistorical “tears” into those liminal moments can, however, be “healed” by a feminist epistemology (by looking from the inside-out) which argues that modernizing tendencies separate us from being in a state of relation with others, and that the quest for certainty causes separation between and among humans (Noddings, 1998).
The narrator in the poem and the researcher of the thesis are one. As narrative researcher I engage in educational storytelling, using stories that represent the structured quality of the lived experience of my participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995, 1999), in order to promote a better understanding of the personal lives of these particular six educational practitioners and how their personal stories have informed their professional stories. My work is grounded in Connelly and Clandinin’s understanding that “people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of them, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, [and] write narratives of experience” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Story format is best suited to my work not only because it allows us (participants, researcher, and audience) to critically reflect on our experiences and identities by allowing us to construct and reconstruct our stories of experience, but it is best suited to promoting “epiphanic moments” (Denzin, 1989) for researcher, participants and readers. The possibility of experiencing “epiphanic moments” is important for educational research, specifically within curriculum in teacher development, because it is a means by which teachers can make explicit their taken-for-granted assumptions about education (Connelly, 1994).

[Epiphanic moments] are major transactional moments that disrupt the ordinary flow of life by questioning the usual definitions of important facets of one’s world. This power of story derives from its capacity to entice the reader into a powerful vicarious experience. ... [T]he story occurs in a space where vividly drawn, imaginary problematic life-situations can spotlight the readers’ own. The results can be alterations to the meanings given to the reader’s life projects, changes in the life story being plotted outside of the illusion of the text. (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 84)

Giving up personal self to professional training in a faculty of education is one such “problematic life-situation” which presented itself for all of my participants. Realizing that when we are ‘processed’ (through training) social control is maintained and personal self is lost, ‘altering the meanings we give to our life project [of becoming a teacher]’. When we become conscious of the
meanings we give to our lives we story ourselves differently hence shattering the "illusion of the text", that is, restorying our lives, only this time we consciously author our own story.

My poem, like self, is a "kind of aesthetic construct" (Crites, 1971). The plurality of changing intuitions, emotions, images, memories, thoughts, metaphors and dreams, essentially the "private dreams of self" (Edel, 1959, p. 29) expressed in the poem, resulted in the externalization of what lay at the coeur of my thesis. These "private dreams of self", thoughts of 'who I am', lie at the heart of my story. They are themes to which I have gained access via narrative self-inquiry, a form of inquiry which gave me access to my embodied knowledge (Johnson, 1979) and allowed me to break away from the notions that I was in some way separate from the world and my experiences or that I possessed a separate and unique identity with a stable 'inner self' at the centre.

My central inquiry has been to seek a better understanding of my identity formation, my lived experience, and the identities and experience of my participants, whose narrative histories had elements similar to mine. I have investigated, via narrative methodology, how one might begin to acquire an understanding of one's personal and professional identity. In the process, my researcher identity has shifted. Both dreamer (participant) and essential interpreter of dreams (researcher) are one. Both Italian Canadian hometown girl and professional Canadian woman teacher are one. The borders of identity, from all perspectives of the landscape, have become blurred. Narrative inquiry has helped to break the barriers masking the layers of stories we carry within us.

**Searching for a Method and My Quest for Identity**

Just as the artist uses imaginative resources to experience an 'aesthetic coherence', so too, we construct our self-identities through the narrative we create to live by, either through art, poetry, or stories. My initial inquiry into 'finding self' seemed to fall into the popular category of the 'cult of honesty', or 'Oprahtization',
that has arisen in recent years - I seemed to be tied and committed to finding a self that I thought I had lost. Crites (1979), in his article “The Aesthetics of Self Deception”, would suggest that this is simply another forum for the inevitability of deception. To use the metaphor in my poem, ‘it is another coat we wear’. The prevalent notions that identity formation is a linear, unidirectional process, and that dualisms (such as Descartes’ mind/body split) drive our being, are manifestations of what has come to be known as tendencies to fit people and experiences into the mode of technical rationality. Our modernizing tendencies have framed our understandings of what identity formation and education can and should be. The positivistic narrative shaping my story was evidenced in my search for an ‘inner self’ that I thought I had, somewhere along the continuity of my life, lost.

Paradoxical to the rational confirmation of Descartes’ assertion “I think, therefore, I am”, I was ‘stuck’ in my feelings - “I feel, therefore, I am ...”. It was not until my thesis advisor challenged my notions, and I found myself at a loss when asked to describe this inner self, that I began to reflect on my understanding of identity formation. What I have discovered through this thesis journey is that my identity is continually being constructed. Also being constructed is my ‘idea’ of what an identity is. The search left me, many times, in a world of doubt and ambiguity - I was living in a world of emotional angst. What I felt initially was a familiar sense of loss - something I have encountered periodically, during my lifetime, in my journey to find self. The very ‘thing’ I wanted to find was not to be found. It reminded me of the English’s futile search for the Scarlet Pimpernel:

They seek him here, they seek him there,
They cannot find him anywhere,
That damned, elusive Pimpernel!

What I am left with now is a lighter sense of wonder, closer to the Pimpernel’s own sense of mischief, a somewhat more peaceful sense of resolution. Herein lies the possibility of transformation.
Discovering Many Directions

In *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor (1989), in grand narrative style, narrates broadly the history of human thought on the concept of identity. In contrast, what I hope to achieve through this work is to present a focussed, contextualized, autobiographical/biographical study of how my understanding evolved through the narrative process, and of how six second generation Italian Canadian women teachers have experienced their personal and professional identity formation. I experienced a great deal of tension around the idea of interpreting my participant’s stories and at the same time trying to understand the notion of what an identity is. The literature led me as follows.

For Nietzsche (one thread of the history of human thought on the idea of identity), belief in the existence of a stable self-identity was nothing more than an illusion. Indeed, from situation to situation we may experience a plurality of ‘selves’, depending on the people we interact with. The view of the self as constantly changing under pressure of social and biographical influences seems incompatible with today’s view of the self as marked by an individual inner core (van Manen & Levering, 1996, p. 98). Similarly, Charles Taylor (1992) argues that the independent ideal of the self - he calls this the “monological ideal” - undermines the communal nature of our identity. Identity, he maintains, evolves “dialogically”; that is, we do not simply create ourselves to be whoever we choose to be alone, but we engage ourselves in dialogue with others and through these dialogues draw our understanding of who we are.

Paul Ricoeur (1984) has suggested that there is no way out of the conflicting choice between Descartes’ determination of an inner self-identity and Nietzsche’s denial of the existence of any such identity. In order to unify both senses of self-identity, Ricoeur introduces the notion of narration. The identity of a person lies in the story that self narrates (Kerby, 1991). Indeed, in this dissertation I am
narrating the story of my quest (or struggle) to understand my own idea, experience, and understanding of identity.

Assuming that the formal quality of experience is inherently narrative (Bruner, 1990; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Crites, 1971; Kerby, 1991; MacIntyre, 1981; Polkinghorne, 1988; Ricoeur, 1984; van Manen & Levering, 1997), it follows that the role of story is not an artificial structure imposed by researchers on human experience for the sake of researcher convenience. It is inherent in human experience itself. The tension I experienced of how to proceed with the analytical part of my investigation into identity formation helped raise many philosophical questions around the notion of personal identity - how that informs our professional identity as teachers and how we take for granted our positivistic views of schooling and society - and the philosophical orientation to my inquiry. My theoretical knowledge (applied linguistics and literary theory) of identity remained detached from my everyday reality. Although my academic interest in identity formation stemmed from my personal life (as often happens in academic pursuits), years of schooling had socialized me into thinking that I had to leave the personal behind in the area of academic studies. The tools I used to investigate and interpret my own story helped me ‘unlearn’ that lesson and therefore I decided to investigate and interpret my participants’ data using Connelly and Clandinin’s (1994) understanding of personal experience methods.

**An Understanding of Identity in Transition**

I understand ‘identity’ to mean the stories we live by and the stories we construct to sustain either our secret stories, sacred stories or cover stories. Sacred stories, according to Crites (1971), reflect the consciousness of a culture. Indeed, they are embodied in the members of a particular culture. People live in these stories, even though they may not be able to articulate them or even be aware of them. We may, however, be awakened to them. Crites refers to them as sacred stories “not so much because gods are commonly celebrated in them, but because
men's sense of self and world is created through them ... [and] may carry the authority of scripture for the people who understand their own stories in relation to them” (Crites, 1971, p. 295).

Identity is constructed socioculturally over time. Our adoption of these cultural social narratives constitutes the acquisition of a set of taken-for-granted beliefs (inherent in the sacred stories). One of the sacred stories in faculties of education is teacher education as training. Conformity to this ‘training’ does not offer opportunity to challenge the system by stepping back and critically looking at the system. It perpetuates the function, by existing school systems, to process knowledge and process people as a means of social control (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995).

The stories we live by are biographically unique, dependent on the sum total of the person’s experiences and understanding. “Training” people quashes this individuality. Everyone carries different assumptions about how the world operates. ‘Educating’ teachers is about bringing out those assumptions we do carry about the world. The stories that people tell are set in a place, that is, ‘within a world’ - mundus - and hence are named mundane stories. These stories are told as an effort, ‘never fully successful’ Crites (1971) cautions, to articulate an awakening to the sacred story. The story of feeling a sense of loss of personal self when at the interface of meeting professional teacher self would be such a mundane story. It is a story that is ‘never fully successful’ however, because the feelings of loss speak to a positivistic understanding that somehow our personal self is separate from our professional self.

Between sacred and mundane stories there is distinction without separation. From the sublime to the ridiculous, all a people’s mundane stories are implicit in its sacred story, and every mundane story takes soundings in the sacred story. But some mundane stories sound out greater depths than others. ... In these, [no matter how epic or little] the sacred stories resonate. (Crites, 1971, p. 296)

Socialization to cultural beliefs is accomplished through the mundane stories we tell. Meanings that are historically inscribed are transmitted by stories
people tell such that through our exposure to stories told in different settings and by different people we learn the “recipe knowledge” that constitutes the lens through which we approach such people and situations. As ‘hometown’ Italian women, traditionally, we have been storied as being wives and mothers. Teaching fits into this story because it is a ‘mothering’ role and it is a respectable, safe profession. As Canadian women, we have been storied as independent, career women. Trying to ‘fit’ into the ‘stories people tell’ created tensions for my participants in the negotiation of their identity. What sacred stories resonate within these mundane stories? What story have we, as second generation, Italian Canadian women teachers wanted to write (Heilbrun, 1988)? What self do we want to become? What is the self that we have tried crafting? What are the stories that we now live by, as ‘current selves’, that we may want to alter?

Besides being situated in place, mundus, stories of experience are also temporal. The recollection of past, via memory, seems to become an ‘artful reordering’ of experience. Past and future are always at play in the present. Our identities ‘depend on the continuity of experience through time, a continuity bridging the cleft between remembered past and projected future. Past and future do not simply meet in the present but they are the tension of every moment of experience. In this present, action and experience meet. Memory is its depth, the depth of its experience in particular; anticipation is its trajectory, the trajectory of its action in particular’ (Crites, 1986). The stories we hear, the dramas we see, as well as the sacred stories we absorb ‘shape in the most profound way, the inner story of experience’. We imbibe a sense of meaning of our own baffling dramas from these stories, and this sense of its meaning in turn affects the form of our experience and the style of our action ... the way we remember, anticipate and even directly perceive, is largely social (Crites, 1986).

The inner drama of experience and the stories through which it achieves coherence can be said to form a sense of one’s own personal and professional identity. ‘[Our] moral struggles are enacted in the narrative form which contains
the ‘tensions, surprises, disappointments and reversals and achievements of recognizable human experience’ (Crites, 1971). The art of drama imitates the life of experience, which is the true drama. It is the drama of encounter, at the various borders of identity, on which I wish to focus my attention in this study. The borders are those in-between spaces where identity is formed, where the research process takes place (especially the data gathering), and where the analysis occurs.

Furthermore, the certainty of my existence relies upon the continuity of my memory and my relation to others. ‘The sense of self, rooted in a personal past, arises out of manifold interactions with things. Narrative is one primary means by which we construct such a continuous life of experience ... the whole story remains vague and merely implicit’ (Crites, 1971, 1986).

A Journey into Understanding Identity, Experience, and Education
A Journey to ‘The Field of Dreams’

The poem, I Am, was written during one of those moments of reflection while on a journey, in November of 1997, which involved a border crossing. It was written while en route from Iowa to Toronto after attending a conference on research on women and education. I felt the conference would be important given that the focus of my study is the identity formation of six Italian Canadian women: Beatrice, Sofia, Francesca, Marina, Rosanna, and me - specifically how personal identity formation makes itself manifest in the professional identity of these women, and the social significance of this undertaking. The question has been not only: What does teaching mean to women? It has also been: What does teaching mean to these women in particular?. What larger story does the focussed story of my participants tell? What is the link between identity, theoretically understood as ‘stories to live by’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) and curriculum? How have their identities been composed, sustained and transformed? What are the links between borders of space, time and negotiating identity? That has been part of the puzzle.
The trip was particularly significant for me because that year had been marked by a period of discontinuity with my work - or so I thought - at least from a cognitive standpoint. I thought that attending the conference would give me a boost into re-entering my work. With Dewey’s words in mind, that education is a lifelong process, I now realize that I had never left my work. My life force, for now, is to finish this thesis work. Crossing the U.S./Canada border was metaphorically a propos, given the crossings I have been making in this study between various complementary antagonistic forces in my life, that is, my private world and public world, cognitive and affective, and so forth. Grumet affirms that by

...withholding information about that relation, [specifically, the tensions arising out of the relationship between the various dialectics at work in one’s life] from the public discourse of educational theory we deny our own experience and our own knowledge. Our silence certifies the “system,” and we become complicit with theorists and teachers who repudiate the intimacy of nurture in their own histories and in their work in education. (1988, p. xvi)

For these very reasons I too, ‘have chosen [to] let my own experience surface in this text’. My focal interest is in human awakening. Human awakening cannot happen unless one engages in bringing these personal experiences to the surface and scrutinizing them without negating them.

One of the most productive parts of the trip was the processing that took place during the fourteen hours spent together with four other colleagues from O.I.S.E. Deep within me lay my grief around my mother’s death and thoughts around the legacy that had been passed on to me - oh, the blessings, the terror and sometimes the horror of continuity! I was also musing on the themes that resided in me, which I had given expression to in the poem, and had resonated with me during the conference. Some of the major themes I reflected on were: personal paradigms in professional places and the educational significance of emotive spaces of untold stories (Carmen Shields and Jackie Eldridge, O.I.S.E.); meditations on the Erotic (an interpretation of this concept by Audre Lorde [1984]) as a force
in teaching to one’s development as a ‘warrior teacher’; this would entail the
dynamic fusion of our emotional, intellectual, spiritual, physical, and imaginative
capacities. Wedded in her description are the dimensions that this knowledge and
feeling are an ineluctable connection that exists between feeling and scrutinizing
feeling (Judith Dorney, SUNY). This particular topic also recalled Schwab and his
work on “Eros and Education” (in Westbury & Wilcoff [Eds.], 1978).

I was reminded specifically about my participants and multicultural context
when a Chinese/Korean professor from Iowa State University, Kueier Chung, spoke
of her struggle with self identity both ‘within one’s one culture’ and ‘with ‘out’;
another presentation was on critiquing without negating - the women of this group
introduced themselves as: Anne Powell (a white woman from a middle class
background), Claudia Ramirez Wiedeman (a Chicana from immigrant, lower
socio-economic background), Dolores Delgado Bernal (a Chicana from an upper-
working class background), and Ramona Maile Barreto Cutri (a woman of mixed
ethnicities - Korean, Puerto Rican, and White, from a lower socio-economic
background); and Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis (an African American woman) who
engaged in a discussion of unconventional forms of knowledge, and a feminist
reconstruction of knowledge as ‘people centred’.

The over all sense I came back with was that the deeper sources of
knowledge found in our daily experiences and not solely in books had been
acknowledged and affirmed. This feminist epistemology gave me a tremendous
feeling of strength. It gave me the ‘permission’ to write poetry again after so many
years. It gave me the sense of being a woman, among women, in the recovery of
our power which lay in the traditional understanding that the power of women
had been superficial and trivialized. By traditionally having emphasized sensation
without feeling, women’s power had been severed. These were all issues that
touched me to the core. These issues helped me rediscover that I was on the right
path with respect to the purpose and method of my study.
What had the educational experience of the conference been? If education is experience (Dewey, 1938) and education is relational, what was the relationship between this women’s conference, my being with female colleagues, and the outpouring of the poem? Why had this conference and time spent with these women allowed me to get in touch with this overwhelming feeling of loss? I had felt a similar feeling of void and loss and emptiness both when I was fourteen years old when we had moved out of the ‘ethnic’ neighbourhood I had grown up in and moved into an Anglo-Saxon neighbourhood, and then many years later when I started at the faculty of education to become a high school teacher. What was the connection? What had this meant in terms of understanding my relationship to my mother, especially now that she was gone? What had my mother’s death meant in terms of re-defining myself? What sense was I making of this raw pain and what is the significance of its disclosure? What was the social significance of my participants’ telling of their sense of personal self or teacher self?

“... packaging a woman’s feelings in a book bound by the rules and principles of a patriarchy ...”

Carol Christ (1986, p. 16) reminds us that “the simple act of telling a woman’s story from a woman’s point of view is a revolutionary act”. In “naming the gap between men’s stories about women and women’s own perception of self and world” (Christ, 1986, p. 23), women’s narratives become a generative space for understanding not only the complexity of women’s lives but how women construct a gendered self through narrative. This means including aspects of life stories that have traditionally been dismissed: how women’s private and public lives intersect; the impact of the mother-daughter relationship; and the familial and female friendship support networks that sustained women’s public activities (Alpern et al., 1992). And, of course, their discourse; how they talk about their lives (Munro, 1998, p. 5).
A Personal World Defined

On Saturday, June 28, 1997 (Section C) of The Toronto Star newspaper, an article appeared written by Rosie Di Manno (city columnist for the paper), a second generation, Italian Canadian woman. She wrote an article entitled "Growing up on Grace" (p. 1), describing, for the most part, her lived experience as a daughter of immigrants growing up in Toronto in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. In this article, Di Manno talks about how she was mortified by her Italian-ness (she recalls images of "the tangled vegetable garden, the funny sandwiches, and that my parents expected me to become a teacher"), and how she rebelled against it. At the same time, however, she did not feel at home with the Anglo world ("I would go grocery shopping with my mother in order to persuade her to buy Campbell’s soup, and Kraft macaroni and cheese ... even though it all tasted foul, and made me gag"). Di Manno describes how when she sets foot in Italy she feels as though she belongs ("I looked like everyone else, my name did not sound foreign, and I felt a thousand years of history rushing through my blood"). But, she continues, she could never live in Italy and every time she comes through Canada Customs she "breathes a sigh of relief".

Interestingly, this article elicited many letters to the editor, also, a number of letters to the editor appeared in the Corriere Canadese and Lo Specchio (two Italian Canadian newspapers), a two hour, phone-in radio talk show on CHIN radio was dedicated to a discussion of this article and a follow up article was written by Di Manno, which appeared in the Star one month later (Monday, July 26, 1997: "Growing up in T.O. a Catholic Italian was not a blessing" (The Toronto Star, section A), as a response to this deluge of responses to her first article from both the Anglo-Saxon and the Italian public and media. Given that Rosie Di Manno had publicly disclosed her story about her personal experiences as a second generation Italian Canadian, I was interested in hearing what my participants’ feelings and thoughts were about the articles written by Di Manno and the responses these articles received. Given that our stories are being
made public through this thesis I wanted to, along with my participants, enter the public discourse on matters such as personal memoir being made public and ethnic identity (how we were treated as daughters, why it was expected that if we go to school we become teachers). I wanted to consider notions such as personal responsibility and complicity in the social stories that are told. To what degree are we aware of this social responsibility? The articles written by Di Manno addressed both issues. The following are my participants’ responses to Di Manno’s article, to narrative, and to ethnic identity. I have reconstructed their views in the form of a fictional conversation.

A Conversation

Carmen:
Rosie says that, “this article is supposed to be a narrative about “My Canada”, but she says, “I grew up not in a country but on a street”. That reminded me right away of the insular hometown and how people recreated it in those old neighbourhoods when they first arrived from Italy. There was only one way in and one way out of those small towns. People were born, lived, and died in the same town all their lives. They did not venture out beyond that, except maybe to go to America as she says. Once they came to Canada her parents did not venture out either, beyond the neighbourhood. She says that going downtown to Eaton’s with her mother was “the most ambitious foray” she can remember.

Rosanna:
She (Di Manno) talks about not even knowing she’s Canadian until she’s six years old. These things all resonated with my experience. Whenever we go to Italy, they still refer to us as Americane. That really bugs me. I’ve stopped making a point of telling them that we are Canadian. When I went to Italy the first time, I felt a sense of
belonging and not belonging at the same time. This is a feeling that prevails to this day. I remember going to Rome and etched in my memory is the majesty of the Eternal City. The white marble of the sculptures, monuments, and columns predominated in my memory of Rome for a long time. I must have found a piece of myself the day I wandered around those ruins. Apart from the obvious fascination with Rome, I think issues of ‘identity’ and ‘place’ are highlighted when I think of my cultural history. I don’t think I will ever be able to feel completely ‘at home’ either here or there. I think this is the fate of every second generation offspring.

Carmen:

I know I have definitely felt that way. As a second generation Canadian of immigrant origin I have felt at different times like I was oscillating back and forth in time and space. I know that we’ve discussed the shift from speaking our hometown dialects to eventually studying the standard Italian in University (Rosanna in Florence, and me in Siena) and what that meant in terms of our identity formation. I also remember you telling me a story that captures one of the major shifts that occurred in your family, that is, your parents’ emigration to Canada. For me, the story helps capture the impact of the storied landscape of old (since we carry it with us as a second generation) on our present landscape. In a sense reaching into the remote past helps us story our present experiences, or at least helps us story our present feelings. I’ll read the story that you wrote Rosanna ...

The act of migration by my parents represents, for me, a severing of my cultural history, among other things. Perhaps this trip to Florence was not just to sharpen my language skills but to see for myself “if I fit in.” My parents were economic ‘exiles’ from southern Italy after
the second world war. Their prolonged absence from their native land made them quite sentimental about the ‘homeland.’ My father, in particular, would listen to Verdi’s “Nabucco” for hours on end. One chorus specifically captured, for him, some of the sentiments I am sure many displaced people feel. The opera takes place in Egypt. It tells the story of the biblical king of Babylon. The Israelites have been taken into captivity and are in chains on the banks of the Euphrates where they long for their homeland which they can only escape to, in their minds. The chorus sings “Va’ pensiero” - one of Verdi’s great masterpieces that many expatriate Italians around the world have embraced as their anthem. A physical and metaphorical sense of ‘place’, or ‘home’ continues to occupy my thoughts lately. (Reflection, July, 1996)

Rosanna’s reference to her parents as ‘economic exiles’ is a recurrent theme in our stories. Noddings (1998) explains that “the agony of the exile sometimes persists even when return is possible. The home-place has changed or, worse, It has not changed but the exile has” (p.4). A first generation in exile (like our parents, and grandparents, for example) longs for that particular place untouched - “the fruit trees where they were, the porch - even its sagging spots - as it was, the view as remembered, the neighbours as they were. This ... is an impossible dream, and yet it is a longing for place not for ideological satisfaction” (p. 5). I’d like for us to think about how we, as the second generation have translated these feelings of our parents and grandparents into our present day personal and professional lives. How have we transformed their “mourning” over something that can never be re-placed? How has their ‘pathologic nostalgia’, evidenced in our parents’ frequent trips back to the hometown, or the re-creation of the hometown land, transposed
here in Toronto via the ubiquitous Italian Canadian vegetable garden, shaped our landscape? How is this played out in multiculturalism as understood in the Canadian context where immigrants and later generations co-exist in a different environment from ‘home’?

**Rosanna:**

I believe my own history has made me a little more empathetic toward the children I teach, many of whom have been uprooted from places of turmoil in the world. Just because they have arrived here does not mean they (or their families) have adjusted to life here. That takes a long time. It is important to honour their history as part of their identity and use this diversity to enrich classroom life. It is important to honour their name (letter, July, 1996, p. 5). Anyway, going back to Di Manno’s article what I don’t understand about this article is the response (#7, p.1). It’s interesting to me how people interact with this text. People bring their own story to the text, and they interpret it the way they want. She has received a lot of criticism. I mean, the woman is struggling with some serious issues around her identity. These people are not getting it. Their responses are incredible.

**Carmen:**

I cannot understand either why people have responded in the heated way that they have. I feel that her vacillation between dispelling the “funny sandwiches” and the “tangled vegetable garden”, and buying into Campbell’s soup - yet she gags on that food, to feeling the rush of thousands of years of history run through her blood when she’s in Italy, to feeling at home when she comes back through Canada customs - tells me that she too has been struggling in this search for an identity. It took me a very long time to realize that I had been
struggling, but I didn’t even know what I was struggling with. It has been transformational for me just to come to that discovery.

**Beatrice:**

*I feel that these articles have elicited two extremist reactions, two polarities. On the one hand, the Anglo response has been one of patronizing condescension, and the other extremist reaction, the other polarity is the Italian response - mainly by the Italian media (dominated mainly by men) which is one of extreme defensiveness. In a discussion with my brother about this I said to him, “I think the truth lies somewhere in between. If only we can stop being patronizing towards this person and stop being defensive about what this person wrote, we might be able to hear her out and be able to accept the fact that this was her experience. We may not like it, we may not like the fact that it evokes things in us. We may not like the fact that she portrays her family and upbringing in this way. We may not like her insecurity, we may not like her raw pain, but it is still her experience”* (#5, p. 1).

**Rosanna:**

*Not everything was good about growing up Italo-Canadian. I don’t think she’s rejecting her ethnicity, at all. She’s trying to make sense of it and she’s probably nearing mid-life, like the rest of us, and reflecting on it* (#7, p. 2).

**Beatrice:**

*Rosie says that her mother believed that they should never enter the home of anyone outside the extended family and had forbidden her to have lunch at a friend’s house. She goes on to say that when she got home from school that afternoon, her mother met her half way up the street and hit her with her shoe. Now, that’s something my mother would never have done. But, she’s not saying all Italian*
mothers in the Grace Street neighbourhood used to hit their kids with their shoes if they went into the home of a kid named Barbara. According to my brother she’s implying that is the truth (#5, p. 2).

**Marina:**

And what is the ‘truth’? I was moved when I was reading certain parts of her experience. You know, if there’s a really important element in narrative, which has basically been taken out of fiction, you see, - and that’s an interesting thing to consider - is that it makes connections for people. The identification factor comes in. This has been criticized by post modernism. I think that’s problematic. When you read a narrative like Rosie’s, which is based on ‘truth’, but could serve just as well as a piece of fiction - it makes connections for people and their experience. I have suffered this pain. I remember these little bits of information. She’s a good writer, she writes vividly and strongly. I think that the problem is that people don’t want to see it as ‘truth’. They’d rather have it in this kind of fictionalized form that you can say, “well, no, it wasn’t that bad because she could be making this up. But, when somebody says, “this is my experience, this is my truth”, and then you say what part of that is the Church, your parents, whatever, “what part did I have in this, in creating this reality for this child?”, then, you have to share some responsibility (#6, p. 5).

**Francesca:**

The way you go about making claims of truth is going to pitch you right up against institutionalized claims, definitions of knowledge. Don’t forget we’re using the feminine as a source of knowledge. These are essential, ultimate questions. What is the source of knowledge that determines truth? What claims of knowledge can we make about ourselves and about the reality of our place in the
world? What clashes will that inevitably lead us to? I think that the strongest words that are tied to thinking and to the inquiry that you’re doing Carmen, goes back to those multiple realities you’ve talked about. In conversation I go back to what was the reality of growing up in a hometown, for my parents; the reality of living as an Italian Canadian, and of work and home. When I tie those things together and try to look at them from different perspectives then I begin to get a clearer picture otherwise I’m floating up here somewhere. So, the narrative has got to be historical, it’s got to be the history of my life - its contents. If you want to talk about that theory/praxis, that’s the praxis (#6, pp. 7 - 13).

Beatrice:

Going back to the truth and tying it into praxis - well, that part about not trusting outsiders is true. I was inculcated with fear. “Bada a quella, stai attenta, non ti fidare. Be careful, just remember that they’re different from us, and they do things differently and we don’t allow that”. When people are on the defensive, “hanno la coda di paglia”, like something’s going on here. I asked my brother, “Why does it bother you so much? It doesn’t bother me that she wrote this article, why does it bother you?” He said, “because she’s portraying Italians in this way and why does she have to write these things? I didn’t have a problem with my identity” (#5, p. 3). I said, “why does she have to be you? She’s not you”. My mother said, “why don’t we change the subject!”

I’ve never been a big Rosie fan but I think it’s really unfair to crucify her and exalt someone like Nino Ricci. As far as I’m concerned he’s done nothing to portray Italian Canadians in a positive light, and there are other writers who have and they haven’t gotten the recognition.
**Rosanna:**

Ricci is writing in the *Eyetalian* magazine trying to do satire. He’s got a certain stature in the community now, it’s almost as if he can say anything. He has license to say anything because he won the Governor General’s Award.

**Beatrice:**

You know what? I think we have to start valuing ourselves a little more. That conversation with my family, about Rosie, convinced me that anything I write - I don’t want my family to read it because they’re trying to censor me before I even begin to publish anything. You should have seen the angry faces (#5, p. 10).

Now, there are a few places where she makes generalizations.

**Marina:**

You have to be careful not to make generalizations in a public forum. She happens to share my experiences, she also happens to share my opinions on the Roman Catholic Church. So, I didn’t get all ticked off about it, but, people who have a vested interest in their own fixed identity, in believing something else, and therefore, having to defend it because it rocks their universe. Well, I get heated up about something that rocks my universe (#7, p. 23).

**Beatrice:**

But I also feel that she is not a brilliant writer. That’s my sense of her. I think that, at times, she’s a good writer. I’ll give you an example of what I mean. In the second article she’s talking specifically about the Church and says, “when the men carried the statue of the Madonna through the streets on religious festivals, on her robes were pinned dollar bills, sometimes fives and tens and twenties, for what? These were poor ruffian people barely eking out an existence.” That’s not true of my family. We didn’t just barely eke out an existence.
She also writes, ‘but they gave money to their church and they considered it a folly to buy books for their children’. Also not true. So, she shouldn’t say, “they” because she doesn’t know. If her parents gave money to the church instead of buying her books, that’s what she should say, which would be consistent with the personal memoir aspect of the rest of this story (#5, p.11).

My parents rarely gave money to the church. My father was very anti-clerical and very anti-Church. At times he made donations but he was not one of these people who went to church every Sunday. He was not one of these people who carried around the Madonna. He was not one of these people who put in five or ten dollars every week, and they bought me all the books I wanted, that they could afford. They never discouraged me from going to the library. God knows I couldn’t go to 99% of the other places in Toronto, but I was walking to the library by myself when I was 7 and 8 years old. Any time I wanted a book, a new Trixie Belden for my collection, I could always wheedle it out of my father. I knew that. So, I think it is wrong to write it in this way because it sounds like a generalization (#5, pp. 12-13).

For the most part it is definitely her own personal story about her experience of the Catholic Church and even here she does make another generalization. In her second article she says that the correspondent from the Catholic Civil Rights League (Greg Todd), in response to her first article (The Toronto Star, Saturday, July 5, 1997; Section C, p. 3) says that the Church encouraged immigrant children to go on with their education. The correspondent noted that historically Catholic institutions, the nuns, Christian fellows, and Jesuits had devoted themselves to promoting education among immigrants. This is undoubtedly true - ‘if you wanted your education
served with a good dollop of dogma.’ Well, That’s a naive statement in my opinion, because all education is served with a good dollop of dogma. If she thinks that she went through the public system without being served dogma then she’s very stupid and I’m sorry to say that to her, but she is very stupid because even in the public system, we had to recite the Lord’s prayer at the beginning of the day. We had to sing “God Save the Queen”. It was predominantly Protestant religion that was being shoved down our throats or the Protestant ethic, so there’s lots of dogma and even if there isn’t religious dogma, as you and I very well know, there is pedagogical dogma (#5, p. 13).

Marina:

Well, I went to a public school and we had a bible reading, we said the Lord’s Prayer, and sang God Save the Queen every morning. This is in the 50s. She’s talking about the 60s, she’s a bit younger than I am (#6, p. 3). As far as stereo-typing is concerned, we don’t want to corroborate the stereo-type of the Italian; I can understand that as a quandary for people who are looking at things. But, this criticism of Rosie’s is unauthentic because it really comes from a very personal agenda. The Catholic schools or the Catholic Archdiocese, for example, are so interested in protecting themselves from any kind of criticism. It is really such a fascist enclave in my opinion. It makes me angry to even think about any kind of criticism they’re so powerful. Another example, you know Michael Enright? He’s taking over Peter Gzowsky’s morning program, on the CBC - host of “As It Happens”. He was raised as a Catholic and I’m not sure, but I think he went to a Catholic boys’ school. One night, I think, he made a scathing comment about his own personal experience and his present attitude towards the Catholic Church and
do you know that the Archdiocese has called the CBC. I read this in the Globe and Mail newspaper last week. They’ve called for a meeting with Enright and the CBC. They’re going to go over this comment. I mean, they just protect themselves against any kind of criticism and they still have this incredibly authoritarian, “You have said something bad about us. Come, now, and answer for it, we’re calling you to the inquisition and you’re going to tell us how you think you can get away with criticizing the Catholic Church”. I mean, the mentality is incredibly archaic and the kind of arrogance they have! I am not at all surprised that they care calling Rosie to task over what, in the large scope of the Catholic Church, is really an inconsequential comment.

It is extremely angering that this woman cannot tell her human story without being jumped on by this male dominated establishment telling her that, “You’ve made us look bad” (#6, pp. 6-7).

Beatrice:

So, this is pretty raw stuff, but, I think she’s got the blinders on. She also says, ‘if you were among the privileged few attending Loretto Abby or St. Michael’s College’. Again, she doesn’t know what she’s talking about because - a), she never went to a Catholic school, and b), I know for a fact that St. Michael’s College, at least, offered scholarships to kids. I know guys who went to St. Mike’s on scholarship. She’s saying things there that she doesn’t know anything about. So, it’s wrong in two respects: it’s wrong because she’s misleading people and it’s wrong from the point of view of writing because it’s inconsistent with the narrative point of view of the whole thing. If you’re talking about yourself, talk about yourself. If you’re writing a researched article then do your research properly. That’s what I say. Even noticing that, doesn’t upset me as much as
it seems to upset all of these people. I just look at it as a flawed article. They look at it and say it’s a disgrace (#5, p. 14).
Can’t we just be human beings (#5, p. 20). Part of being a human being, for me, is letting somebody else talk about their experience without crucifying them (#5, p. 21).

Marina:

It’s interesting that you should say that. Before reading this article I told Carmen that I didn’t really like Rosie Di Manno and I told her why. After reading that article, Rosie has become a human being to me, she’s not that column and she’s not that kind of bombastic voice. She has become a full human being (#6, p. 4).

Beatrice:

I don’t demand that Rosie Di Manno be me and do the exact same thing as me. I could not write these kinds of generalizations about Catholic education, having never experienced Catholic high school education myself, if I did I would make damn sure I did my research properly. I am not the editor, or one of the many editors at the Toronto Star and I am not responsible for the accuracy of her research. So why should I take this upon myself as a problem (#5, p. 22)? In the second article she says, “our parents feared education”. Don’t say our parents. Say, “my parents”, if that’s the case. Let’s face it, in terms of education, you and I belong to a generation of Italian Canadian kids who are very well educated and obviously she must be too, to have gotten a job at the Star (#5, p. 23). Mind you, Italians, from Italy don’t think too highly of those who emigrated, in terms of their ‘cultura’. This attitude is typical also of the Italian clergy who have spent a lot of time in Italy and just come here for a little while on their missionary jaunts. I’ve heard the comments and I’m really not interested. It doesn’t bother them to come over here and accept
our money, and our food doesn't choke going down their throats but “avete poca cultura, non siamo come voi nell'Italia” (you have little culture, we are not like you in Italy). Rosie basically tells us that her father was a shepherd, she says nothing of her mother. She’s obviously ashamed of that. Well, for me to accept that statement is like an attitude of defeat. I refuse to accept that statement. I refuse to look at my parents, and their generation, and my grandparents generation as people of “poca cultura”. They may not have a lot of formal education (grade one for my grandmother, for example) but they were still ‘educati’ (polite) much more so than a lot of people I’ve met in academia. So, it really depends on what you mean by ‘cultura’ you know (#5, pp. 16 - 17).

Carmen:
This whole ‘education’ thing is another issue. It brings me to the point I’ve been trying to make all along about the multiplicity of identities. Who is an Italian? What is an identity? What does this have to do with education? As Nachmanovitch (1990) would say, education aims at evoking self and being. “To educe means to draw out or evoke that which is latent; education then means drawing out the person’s latent capacities for understanding and living” (in Buttignol, 1999, CI review, p. 6). We need to become students of our own thinking, of our own thoughts about who we are in life generally, and what we practice as teachers specifically (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995) if we are going to say that we are educated. Historically inscribed stories (either ethnic cultural stories [i.e. people from Italy telling us that we have ‘poca cultura’ (little culture)], or institutional stories of teacher education as training) are stories that ‘process’ the individual. We’re not cattle, our stories are all biographically unique, and so is our interpretation of the world.
Although we do have common stories, and shared interpretations, they are necessary for empathy, communication and understanding. I suppose that people who are not fully conscious of this ‘social’ processing that takes place, take umbrage when someone does speak out and tell her human story and says that she does not like being told who she is and what she should do. Education, I think, serves its purpose when it draws out a person’s latent capacities for understanding and living and not stuffing, as Nachmanovitch says a (passive) person full of preconceived knowledge (1990, p. 118).

In this reconstructed conversation with my participants you have just heard one example of what people say when they hear someone’s life story, especially when that life story is evocative. Just like the work of art, story invites us to participate in a conversation. As Marina said, “it makes connections for people.” How is this conversation? What does it evoke in the audience? Why is it significant for educational research? Story as a human activity and inquiry as a foundational educational experience aids us in participating in the world, naming the world and noticing the world. The ability to notice and attend to detail helps us see how we, like the artist who constructs the world through art, construct our experiences through telling stories of those experiences. Our responses to those constructions helps us see that we too are involved in the crafting of our own narratives, and of the social narratives at work in the world. Furthermore, critiquing (without negating) our responses brings to the fore our taken-for-granted assumptions about ourselves, and the world around us. By facilitating these moments of “awakening” during those in-between moments of experience we are propelled into a dialogic encounter whereby the individual ‘self’ is transformed by the encounter with ‘other’. The process then begins again with each new encounter at the borders of identity hence providing an educative experience.
Chapter Two
Autobiographical Rationale

Crafting a Story of Self

As I begin to story my experience of how I came to this study I find myself storying my life from a new perspective, mapping my way toward self-definition. This process has involved a continuous negotiation of the lived contradictions, tensions, conflicts, and dilemmas that resulted from the rules that gender, ethnicity, and class presented. Intrinsic to these rules was the prohibition against challenging the mainstream or ethnic patriarchal cultures where norms of male agency and female passivity are firmly entrenched (Lerner, 1986). Because identities are amorphous, ever changing in relationship to the contexts that individuals find themselves participating in, I found myself facing uncertain encounters at the borders of different contexts. In recalling my life story “I cannot exclude the contexts of my gender, sibling and maternal relationships, political and professional phenomena, ... I am not so ‘individual’ that I can claim to be free from the shaping influence of contexts” (Greene, 1995, p.74). The purpose of this chapter is to narrate stories of the different contexts in my life experiences, and to show how those stories (of patriarchal cultures, male agency, and so on) have shaped my story to live by (my identity, in other words).

It was after a closer look at the encounter at various borders - those spaces (between contexts), which Anzaldua (1987) describes as “vague and undetermined places” where one “is in a constant state of transition” (p. 3) - that the narratives of encounter were revealed. In this chapter I present, autobiographically, the various tensions, conflicts, and dilemmas or puzzles that arose out of the experience of negotiating a sense of personal identity at those moments of encounter. I narrate the shaping influence of my personal ‘stories to
live by', and the shaping influence of the research context, in the hope of coming to terms with the malaise I felt as a teacher.

By reading my stories of growing up in this pluridimensional sense of place and time, you as reader will hopefully come to understand something of how that time and place shaped my life and the stories I tell now of those experiences. I have been labouring to understand the relationship between my memories of my life and the landscape on which my life has played itself out. I travel back to a place where my stories first unfolded, and hope that my narrative inquiry will carry you as audience back with me.

I begin by looking backward in time to the way I storied myself as I was growing up. As I recall and recount old memories, I hope to show the intersection of the personal and social narratives at work in my life. Throughout this narrative inquiry I have remained in my Canadian place while travelling back in time and place, in memory, to converging places and times that no longer exist. As I compose this research text, I see new possibilities for restorying my search for self (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 11). As narrative inquirer, I can only begin to allude to the complexity of space, time, and people that, kaleidoscopically, produces numerous possible reflections of these memories. The complexity of time, space, and people is a continual concern for the narrative researcher because time, space and people change depending on the perspective that is chosen during the course of the research in viewing the moment.

The characters in the stories that follow (Fran, Mary Ellen, and so on - all pseudonyms) help me to connect to certain pivotal educational moments. The importance of their contribution to a moment is the importance of the kind of moment that is being presented. From a narrative perspective each character follows a different thread - these threads are the storylines or narrative threads that reside in each of us. This chapter shows how my narrative threads are woven together. No one can say for certain how these threads came together, or why the
continuity of hometown life was not the path I chose (for example). Ultimately, I can only narrate them.

**Distance, Dissonance and Despair (1300 Narrative)**

A personal knowledge narrative retold yet again ...

I felt dismembered on the day I told my story in class. I had told it a hundred times before, always in a very matter-of-fact, detached manner. What had led me to cry on that day? Over the course of the semester everyone in Dr. Connelly’s 1300 Foundations of Curriculum course had to tell their story; we each had one hour to speak. On that particular day Mary Ellen told her ‘confidently thrusting’ story first. She was blond, tall, slim, and Irish Catholic. Her family had been in Canada for a few generations. She sat tall and straight, secure and sure of herself. She told of how athletic she was and how successful she had been in sports at her Catholic high school. She remembered how, as a child, each night before going to bed, her parents read her stories.

Spin, spin, spin a tale ....

Fran was next. She was a professional storyteller; before starting her story she set the mood and scene. We were all sitting at tables and she asked us to move them aside so that we could sit in a circle in our chairs, without the tables obstructing us. She turned off the lights and because the day was gray there was no need to draw the curtains. She lit candles and had soft ‘tinkling’ music in the background. Then she unravelled a ball of yarn. As the yarn was passed along, cris-crossing the circle haphazardly, from person to person, each one of us was to hold on to that point in the yarn that reached us before passing the ball along to another person. Fran then asked us to let go of the yarn and place it gently on the floor. The yarn was now woven throughout the whole group. We were all captive now, caught in the web of stories we had begun to weave from the onset of the course.

I was next ....
I started by saying that perhaps Mary Ellen ought to have sat beside me. We were so different. Our stories were so different. She was tall and blond, I was short and dark. Her family had established roots in this country for centuries, mine had not. She had the confidence of an accomplished athlete, I did not. She was Irish Catholic, I was Catholic of the Italian ilk. “Great juxtaposition”, I ‘ad-libbed’, “had Mary Ellen sat beside me and told her story just before mine”. I proceeded ....

The Penultimate, I started. I enjoy thinking of titles to my short stories, they serve as didionesque prompts (Didion, 1990) to propel me into my story. Words allow me the ‘acrobatie ease’ that balance beams do not. They help me capture the essence of an experience by creating an image in just a few words. I was born fourth of five children - hence not the ‘ultimate’ but simply - the penultimate. Something Sinister was my next prompt. I recounted the fact that I am left handed (in Italian ‘sinistra’ means ‘left’ hand) and that the Carmelite nuns in the all-girls Catholic elementary school I attended had forced me to write with my right hand. I felt as though I was somehow aberrant and that I was to conform to the way others did things. I have had difficulty with conformity ever since. I went on to tell that I was a daughter of immigrant parents. The first language I learned to speak was the Apriglianese dialect. However, I also learned English from my older siblings, for they had already been in the Canadian educational system three years by the time I was born.

My Sister’s Story
(A Story Within the 1300 Story)

I remember Jillian telling this story in our 1300 class, in September. She was one of the very first presenters in the semester. Jillian retold the story of how she had grown up in an ethnic neighbourhood. She recalled being in grade 2. Jillian told us how the teacher had arranged the seats so that the brighter students sat in the front rows and the ‘slower’ students sat at the back, including those who had
just arrived from Italy. It was close to Easter and the teacher had assigned a sewing project. Jillian was very proud of the little pot holder she had made. She said, however, that she could never forget the entire outfit the 15 year old Italian girl in the class had sewn for herself. The group laughed when they heard this story. I could barely crack a smile. I wanted to cry hysterically, for I saw my eldest sister - five feet and eight inches tall at age 13 - in that classroom. It wasn’t really my sister but I could only imagine the hurt and humiliation that young woman must have felt, at age 15, to have been placed in a grade 2 class.

My eldest sister left school after grade 8, like so many people of her generation. She became a hairdresser. She got married at 17 years of age, had her first child at age 18, another child a year and a half later, and a third child a year and a half after that. She also had a father-in-law and three brothers-in-law living with them when she got married. She had to wash, cook, and clean for all of them. My second sister in line went to an all-girls Catholic vocational school and became a secretary. She helped pay the mortgage. My brother was expected to become a lawyer, or a doctor. No one expected me to go on to university. My youngest sister was born the same year that my eldest sister got married....

Anna Maria Castrilli, in a television documentary, Mirrors and Windows (1993), says that in the 1950s and 60s there was a heavy emphasis by the Ministry of Education in Ontario to stream immigrant children into vocational schools. This explains in part the concentration of immigrant women in particular sectors. There was a concerted effort on the part of the Canadian educational system to make sure that immigrants were “somewhere else” (in factories perhaps?). “This is where these people belong” was the perception.
The immigrant children of the 50s and 60s are the parents of today's adolescents and university students. As a teacher in a high school situated in a predominantly Italian community, I taught these adolescents. Giovanni Picchione (a professor at York University), has storied the second generation Italian Canadian as follows: any improvement in education among Italians in Canada was motivated by practical concerns. He states:

A characteristic attitude of Italo-Canadians in the area of university studies is one of an extremely utilitarian concept of culture: they are not seeking intellectual development as much as specialization which will permit the delivery of a 'piece of paper' which could allow entry into a certain type of work. Culture for culture's sake is inconceivable ... and esteem is reserved mainly for the economic advantages that a profession may afford. (in Jansen, 1993, p. 92)

How did the immigration and educational experiences of these parents (that is, people of my older sibling's generation - first generation Canadians) shape their own view and the view their adolescent and university age children have of education? The tension between traditional family values and the attitudes of both Canadian and Italian mainstream cultures has been a force to contend with. Who is complicit in the image-making Picchione describes? How have we, the government (Canadian, and Italian), academics, politics of the time, and so on, contributed to the image-making?

I then sent a black and white photograph of my mother and three older siblings around the room - a picture taken in Italy and sent to my father while he was here in Canada. I had also brought a black and white photo of my maternal grandfather. I read a passage from Hoffman's Lost in Translation while the photos went around. My objective was to create an atmosphere of immigrant mourning and nostalgia. This is what I read ...
“What is the Shape of My Story?” (Reflection)

And what is the shape of my story, the story my time tells me to tell? Perhaps it is the avoidance of a single shape that tells the tale. ... I have come to America, and instead of [a] central ethos, I have been given the blessings and terrors of multiplicity. Once I step off the [ship] in [Halifax], I step into a culture that splinters, fragments, and re-forms itself as if it were a jigsaw puzzle dancing in a quantum space. If I want to assimilate into my generation, my time, I have to assimilate the multiple perspectives and their constant shifting. We slip between definitions with such acrobatic ease that straight narrative becomes impossible. I cannot conceive of my story as one of simple progress, or simple woe. Any confidently thrusting story line would be a sentimentality, an excess, an exaggeration, an untruth. Perhaps it is my intolerance of those, my cherishing of uncertainty as the only truth that is, after all, the best measure of my assimilation; perhaps it is in my misfittings that I fit. Perhaps a successful immigrant is an exaggerated version of the native. From now on, I’ll be made, like a mosaic, of fragments - and my consciousness of them. It is only in that observing consciousness that I remain, after all, an immigrant. (Hoffman, 1989, p. 164)

I hear echoes of my history in Hoffman’s words of a fractured landscape. I see the long shadow cast behind us by a history of the different generations that have felt the effects of immigration. My older siblings are of Hoffman’s generation and her tale has triggered my memories of the past, that is, of growing up with two older sisters and an older brother who were born in Italy and emigrated to a place of splinters and fragmentation. Although my story is not the same as theirs, they are a part of my story, and I of theirs. MacIntyre (1981) develops the notion of the ‘narrative unity of a human life’ in the context of a narrative quest that is itself situated in ‘an interlocking set of narratives ...I am part of their story, as they are part of mine’ (in Witherell & Noddings [Eds.], 1991, p. 203).

My participants, like me, are second generation Canadians, firmly embedded, for all intents and purposes, in the Canadian landscape; however, we are only a few years removed from having been born in our respective hometowns. Indeed, we are all fluent in our dialects - and linguists are quick to remind us that language is an important factor which contributes to identity formation. When I read Hoffman’s words, how does my experience
compare to hers? Does this landscape, described by Hoffman, whether it be real or imagined, ‘fit’ for people of my generation?

Eva Hoffman’s quote conveys a clear sense of immigrant consciousness through images of multiplicity, jigsaw puzzles, mosaics, misfittings, fragments, splinters, and multiple perspectives. I see an old, black and white, 8 mm. film reeling through my head as I read this passage from Hoffman. Her words conjure up images and metaphors of a ship - 1955, Il Conte Bianca Mano, entering Pier 21 in Halifax, and of a train ride across the eastern provinces of Canada, of immigrant mourning and nostalgia. I see a small sun-drenched mountain town in the Mediterranean - surrounded by fig trees, the same now as it was seventy years ago; I see little Canadian homes capped in snow. I see my seventeen-year-old maternal grandfather riding on a train and his moustache freezing in the desolate, January, cold of Canada. I hear my family crying in the dark the day my sister left for Italy with her family - feelings of desolation wrapping the small, 10 foot wide, semi-detached home on MacKay, in the old neighbourhood. I hear Maestro Lepore’s jazz music on the accordion. I hear the ancient sounds of our dialect improvising an old tune on a new stage. I hear the ‘grand narrative’ told by the sons of Italy, I hear Apriglianese - I see A Chiazza e Guarnu and the statue of an ancestor - Leonardo Gallucci - signpost of a once patrician family. I see the squalor of 1920s, '30s, '40s America -I see my maternal grandfather standing on a bridge crying and wanting to throw himself off at the thought of losing three daughters to the America he had experienced. I see my mother in a photograph - the face of a young Raphaelite Madonna gazing down in modesty - a woman who spoke only “after deeper voices had gone to bed” (Patriarca, 1994) - a face ultimately consumed by a malignant brain tumour -glossoblastoma- “tentacular, protuberant, excrent, hypertelic: this is the fate of inertia in a saturated world … The revenge of growth in excrecence” (Baudrillard, 1990, p. 13). These images tell stories which are all part of my landscape, a landscape which it would appear has been largely shaped by others’ stories. Part of the transformative work of this thesis has been this awakening to the idea that my identity has been shaped by others.
I explained that both of my grandfathers were sojourners who came to America at the turn of the century - one worked on the railroads in Canada. This family story marks the first major shift in my landscape. In fact, my maternal great grandfather had travelled to one of the Americas before his son - his separation from the domestic scene and initiation into the world of men (Bateson, 1989) had led him to South America. My grandfathers, just like the other first Italians to arrive, were a transient group who came to work in the mines or on the railways in North America. On cold winter days my mother often recounted how her father used to tell her stories of how cold it was in Canada.

The objective for most of these sojourners - until the early 1900s - was to make money in order to return to Italy to buy land. People who emigrated to Toronto from many villages and towns in Italy left their country not as Italian nationals but as people of their hometowns. “Local loyalty was a real phenomenon among Italians ... furthermore the family ties of the southern Italian [were and still] are deep and tenacious” (Zucchi, 1988, p. 34).

I also went on to explain that although my father had emigrated to Canada, he had never felt at home here. In his mind, he too was a sojourner of sorts. In body he was here but in spirit he was longing for home.

Post Prandial Pleasures (Reflection)

My parents always enjoyed talking about the hometown they left in Italy. Whenever we would get together with my uncle and aunt’s family, over a glass of wine and roasted chestnuts, we always heard about the hometown. Gianna Patriarca (1994), poet/teacher/Italian Canadian woman, wrote a poem entitled, Life is a Glass of Wine, in which she shares similar experiences:
we sit together each night
our bellies full
our legs heavy
and a glass of red wine
my uncle’s best
poured into the same glasses
she had saved in the trunk
that crossed the Atlantic ...

so, we drink the wine
in Autumn we roast the chestnuts
I listen to her delicate lips
speaking of the Roman sky
how it warmed her.

The immigrants who arrived in Canada in the 1950s with the dream of a better future remained attached to a country, or a hometown, they dearly loved. Many had dreams of becoming teachers, engineers, and so on, but they were unable to complete elementary school because the war had rudely interrupted their schooling. Even during the period of reconstruction there were no schools in operation in the southern part of Italy and by then it was too late. For many, the dream of pursuing their studies became impossible and so the legacy of unfulfilled dreams was passed onto their children.

My father’s emigration to this country in the early 1950s marked the second major shift in my life. Although he left Italy to come to Canada he remained morbidly attached to his hometown. He never really made the conscious connection between this morbid attachment to this place from the past (the hometown) and his present state of consciousness, that is, a consciousness made up of pathologic nostalgia. I story it as a loss he never properly mourned. I, too move within a psychic space of unfinished mourning and pathologic nostalgia. I have felt like an anomaly - frozen in time. I have felt like a museum piece locked into the culture, traditions, values, and language of the 1930s, 40s hometown my parents came from, yet I was born and live in Canada.
My father insisted that we speak the dialect, a language variety “attested” as far back as 1,500 years ago. My English voice became muted. He kept telling us that he did not want us to forget. What was I not to forget? Some collective memory? After all, I was born in Canada. I was Canadian, or was I? He did not want us to forget where we came from. What I hear now is my father saying, “don’t forget my story, remember my story”.

There was another reason for his insistence that we speak the dialect, as opposed to English, at home. Richard Rodriguez recounts what took place in his home as he acquired more proficiency in English.

The family’s quiet was partly due to the fact that, as we children learned more and more English, we shared fewer and fewer words with our parents. Sentences needed to be spoken slowly when a child addressed his mother or father. (Often the parent wouldn’t understand.) The child would need to repeat himself. (Still the parent misunderstood.) The young voice, frustrated, would end up saying, ‘Never mind’ - the subject was closed. (Rodriguez, 1982, p. 23)

Rodriguez describes precisely what my parents did not want to happen. They had observed a breakdown in communication between parents and children among families of “paesani” (compatriots) and they did not want to see the same thing happen in their home. From this evolved the awareness of private identity and public identity. Our dialect was spoken among family members only. Whenever we spoke to anyone from another Italian region we spoke Italian, while at school we spoke English.

My father often spoke of the piazza (town square) where he and his friends used to gather to talk about politics or the latest movie or theatrical play they had gone to see. My mother often spoke of the communal lifestyle, “Everyone knew who you were, you knew who everyone was”, she would say. The pictures and images that were created by my parents were so vivid that when I finally went to visit for the first time I felt as though I had lived there for a million years. Very little had changed in the small town since my parents had left and so the images I had in my mind rang true when I finally saw it all for myself. I spoke the dialect fluently, the food was the same as home, the faces were the same. I saw the little train station that had been described to me a thousand times. I could smell the
fragrant pine trees lining the hills close to my uncle’s home. I felt as though I were breathing in the clean mountain air vicariously for my parents. I knew who I was. In retrospect it was one of the few times I remember feeling that way. I would not have that feeling ever again. I story it now as a time of naïveté, of knowing exactly who I was.

But there were differences. My trance broke when I finally saw the famous piazza I had heard about so many times. I had heard so much talk about it that I had envisioned a very large square, perhaps even something bigger than life itself, with a huge monument. What I did see was a very tiny square - relative, proportionately to the town it had been built in. The huge monument I had imagined turned out to be an equestrian statue of a distant relative - Leonardo Gallucci. This was to be one of the first punctures in the grand story that I had created in my mind of what Italy and its people were all about. The piazza confirmed the “we” mentality. It was not just an architectural construct.

The difficulty in crafting my story has been in becoming aware of the construction of my identity. Theory and reality collide because I have been largely unconscious of my own crafting of self - I have only been aware of my ‘free-flowing impressionistic meanderings.’

**Journey Inward to the Source (Reflection)**

The following is one of my narrative constructions whereby I narrate another ‘earlier self’. It marks a point in time when I was ‘stuck’, whirling in existential ‘whys’.

Why have I been pushing myself? What does this stem from? Why did I choose to go into teaching like so many other Italian Canadian women that I know? Who am I really? What does the Italian ‘community’, its attitudes, values, mores, and mentalities have to do with me? If I am part of the history, if I am like the little drop of water that has splashed outside of the course of a rushing river - temporarily - to see the rush of the river which flows rapidly and naturally but which has constructed itself along the way - starting
as a small source and slowly carving its way through the land just like our lives have been formulated or constructed over the course of history then I must finally see that I am part of that river, temporarily suspended during this work to view the whole picture.

Where does the story begin? In order to engage in a journey inward, in order to ‘dig’ to find the self, one must do so with a strong will, constancy, and patience. Human consciousness is like the river that travels downward to the plain with ease. However, our journey must be outward also. Just like the stream that gouged a valley out of the land, so too must we be constant and relentless to gouge through to find our true self. We are like the drop that falls into the river to become one with the river, to then travel to the ocean to become an even greater one. It would appear that life and the thesis journey are one.

Where does my story begin? Like all the stories of Italian Canadians it begins with the hometown. My particular family myth begins in the small mountain town of Aprigliano, Cosenza at the base of the river Crati that runs through the mountains of La Sila (Reflection, April 15, 1995).

Where did this strong attachment to a place I had never seen before I was fourteen years old come from? What effect did this attachment have on my identity formation? What effect does it still have? Our identity is based on the stories we live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) and on our responses to the stories we have been told to live by. Maxine Greene tells us that

... a good narrative, a real authentic narrative, is really an effort to dig down and shape what you find in your life, in your history. Not just babble it or write it down for catharsis, but give it a shape so it will be understood by somebody else. What’s important is what in each of us is seeking expression, and what’s different about us is what we have at hand to give it expression. I think what we try to do with kids [as teachers] is to help them with that expression. (in Ayers & Miller [Eds.], 1998, p. 22)

Within a few minutes I was retelling the story of my eldest sister’s permanent departure from Canada. I did not simply retell the story for the
hundredth time, I actually relived it. I remembered the day my sister and her family left for Italy. It was quite a dismal day, the lights were all out in our little semi-detached house, I was standing in the middle of the hall - in the dark - and I could hear everyone in their bedroom crying. I cried too that day in class, for I had been caught in Fran’s web. I felt the spirit in me die. The lights in the classroom at O.I.S.E. had been turned off by Fran’s departure, just as the lights had been turned off in the house that day. As I told my story to my O.I.S.E. colleagues, the weather outside was as bleak as on the day my sister left. The desks in the classroom had been removed and I felt vulnerable, as though I was naked in the centre of the room - just like I was in the centre of the house that day - thirty years earlier. I linked that story with the one my mother often told of my grandfather and how he must have felt when three of his daughters (my mother among them) left to come to America - an America he remembered as a teenager ... cold, desolate and lonely. My mother had been told that he stood on the bridge, crying in despair, the day his daughters left - he wanted to throw himself off the bridge. I was making connections. I finally understood what my mother and grandfather must have felt to lose a child to an unclear future. I also felt the longing of a child. Who was the child? Perhaps the child was my father who longed for his father who died too young, or longed for his hometown. Perhaps it was my mother - longing for her childhood, or longing for her daughter who had left to face an uncertain future. Was it my sister longing for the family she had left behind? Was it my grandfather longing at age seventeen for his mother-land? Was it me and the feelings of loss that I have felt at different times in my life - like when we moved out of the old neighbourhood and moved into Anglo-Saxon suburbia where I felt like a fish completely out of water? Was it me when I went to study in northern Italy, excited and longing to visit what I thought were my roots, only to be rejected by northerners who told me to go back down to the south where I belonged (terrone, go home!!)? Or perhaps when I entered the faculty of education and felt my personal ‘self’ lost to a monolithic, oppressive school of teacher training where
there is no room for the individual or the personal self? Could it be me now, mourning the loss of my mother? This was a meta-experience.

**The Continuity of Experience**
*(Continuation of 1300, New Pivotal Educational Experiences ...)*

**A New Understanding**

The important thing to remember, Greene (1998) advises, is “to keep identifying myself, choosing what it is to be a woman, [a mother, a wife], a teacher ... a mourner after a lost [mother]” (p. 74). The key is to take charge of the shaping. Somewhere along the continuity of my experience I realized that I was trying to walk in my mother’s shoes - shoes that were not mine - they were tight, restricting, and uncomfortable, outdated, and inappropriate for the ‘occasion’. Yet, “for all my trying to be ‘wonderful’ on my own, whatever identity I was forging as wife-mother-student-[daughter] was contingent on patriarchy, and I did not, could not recognize it” (in Ayers & Miller [Eds.], 1998, p. 72).

In response to an invitation to articulate a feminist theory for research in education Grumet (1988) recalls Virginia Woolf’s advice, from *A Room of One’s Own*, for us to “think back through our mothers, if we are women”. This is very important for my inquiry for a number of reasons. Firstly, on a very practical, contextual level, ‘mother’ is a central figure in the Italian home. Three of my participants chose their mother’s name as their pseudonym for this study (the fact that Francesca, Rosanna, and Lina chose their mother’s name, without giving it much thought, is evidence of the surfacing of their personal practical knowledge). Secondly, a mother is a bridge to the hometown and she directly passed on the legacy of how we as daughters are to be women. The relationship between mother and daughter signals the continuity (or not) of our experience as Italian Canadian women. Thirdly, from the theoretical standpoint of narrative inquiry my mother’s death marked a break in the narrative continuity of my story to live by. What is the
educational significance of her death? What has been the role of loss (or the sense of loss) in my development of self and in my development as teacher? Was this an issue of relevance to my participants?

Grumet reminds us that by looking back through our mothers we look back to what male identity and male science (second nature) have repressed (1988, p. 184). If I were to employ quantitative methods of research to generate information about the constitution of ‘second nature’ by using an epistemology and mode of inquiry that is an expression of second nature itself my research would fail. “We attempt to generate knowledge about difference using the ways of knowing that, in themselves, create, express, and perpetuate difference” (p. 184), that is, separation of subject and object, knower and known, person and world. And so, we look back through our mothers, not in hopes of being like them nor to repudiate them; we look back in order to discover (or rediscover) ourselves. I believe that recognition of what one desires or repudiates is the beginning of consciousness and thus we re-collect our past. We construct our sense of self “in a process of differentiation that recognizes what it negates” (p. 184).

What is being heralded in, by way of this thesis, for me, is an awakening, a ‘letting go’ of old ways of thinking. This thesis marks a break in a continuity represented by my mother, it marks a break in the rush of my history. It is about “losing” an old way of looking at things.

My Mother’s Death

My mother was diagnosed in March of 1997 with a malignant brain tumour - glioblastoma. This diagnosis coincided with a doctoral student pre-conference at AERA in Chicago. Nine months later, I was in Iowa at another conference, my mother having passed away two weeks earlier (October 22, 1997). It felt very much like I had gone through some kind of gestation period. This gestation period
reminded me of one of the hexagram readings in the 《I Ching》 - a Chinese book of divination. It is called the hexagram of continuing (enduring) (Wing, 1979).

The notion of continuity (or legacy) reminded me of Dewey’s assertion that all genuine education stems from experience. These are not simply words. I had experienced a profound loss, something I know I will carry with me for many years to come. Experience consists of two fundamental principles: continuity and interaction. Continuity of experience embodies growth. Interaction refers to the mixing that occurs between objective (environmental) and internal (to a person) conditions of experience. All experiences, for Dewey, are an interplay of these two sets of conditions. Taken together, or in their interaction, they form a situation. What I found interesting was the description the I Ching offered of a flowering plant. It confirmed the embodiment of growth in the continuity of experience.

**Continuity Defined**

The I Ching asks one to consider the plant’s leaves stretching open, reaching for the life-giving sun; its roots anchoring deep into the earth, drawing sustenance into itself. As if prompted by an invisible imperative, it forms its blossom and develops its fruit. In time its flower magically unfolds, inviting response to its sensual delights of colour and scent. Nature, in turn, participates in pollinating and thereby furthering the development of the wondrous seed hidden within the fruit - the seed is reminiscent of the image people have seen in the shape of my poem at the beginning of this preface. Soon, after this co-operative celebration of life, the seed detaches and falls to the earth, continuing the perpetuating mystery of existence. The Chinese say of this hexagram (Continuing) that when we examine the continuity of things, the natural tendencies of heaven and earth can be seen. **Herein lies the secret of eternity (Wing, 1979, No.32).**
What are the character traits that are self-perpetuating and self-renewing in my story? What cultural knowledge retards the growth of women? Have our social customs, as Italo-Canadians, supported the growth of sound and smooth-working systems in our life? Have our traditions created a superstructure for flowering relationships? Or have they become rigid limitations? Has our experience been educative or miseducative? How does our personal narrative compare to the social narrative of Italian culture which is grounded in enduring continuity, a continuity symbolically represented for me by my mother? This leads me to consider what Caroline Heilbrun said during one of her presentations here in Toronto (1997). She said that mothers evoke what Aristotle thought was the ideal response to tragedy - pity for her lot and terror of repeating her pattern. Oh, the terror of continuity! Bateson concurs by stating that;

We hold on to the continuity we have, however profoundly it is flawed. If change were less frightening, if risks did not seem so great, far more could be lived. One of the striking facts of most lives is the recurrence of threads of continuity, the re-echoing of earlier themes, even across deep rifts of change, but when you watch people damaged by their dependence on continuity, you wonder about the nature of commitment, about the need for a new and more fluid way to imagine the future. (Bateson, 1989, p. 8)

The trick is to perceive the narrative in those “threads of continuity” and their supports, and to improvise and re-invent oneself. Narrative inquiry has been instrumental in allowing a more ‘fluid’ crossing between ‘borders’ or polarities of time, space, and thought.

The Continuity of Experience Unfolding

What am I carrying deep within me that I need to connect with in order to help me understand the continuity of my experience? I am carrying many different feelings: pity, fear, anger, grief, love, loss. These feelings are the ‘babble’ Maxine Greene refers to (see Chapter One of this thesis) - an adaptation of Dewey’s ‘babble’ theory. These are the very feelings I experienced around my mother’s
death. These are also the very feelings I had as I was growing up, in terms of my identity, an identity I thought I had lost. Feeling is a form of knowledge we are not wont to give credence to. Yet it is this knowledge, Eros combined with scrutiny (Lorde, 1984), that helps us fuse head and heart. The invisible mastery of both cognitive and affective parts of ourselves will inevitably lead to more conscious, humanistic practice - allowing us to see, then act, more clearly. Thus, I acknowledge what I feel.

First and foremost, I am mourning the loss of, what I perceived to be, a graceful woman, Elena De Miglio in Gallucci - my mother, the quintessential mother. I saw her as a selfless, giving human being, a self-motivated and industrious human being. Although my mother has passed away I still feel the warmth of her spirit like the gentle flame of a candle in my heart. Aside from the essential eulogizing I feel I must engage in at this moment - because this is what I am experiencing as I am writing - I must keep asking, ‘why am I focussing on my mother?’ It is quite evident that her presence is in my work but so is the presence of my daughter, my son, my husband, my father, my sisters, and my brother. This thesis is about studying our own experiences because “not only are we searching for evidence of the external forces that have diminished us; we are also recovering our own possibilities. We work to remember, imagine, and realize ways of knowing and being that can span the chasm presently separating our public and private worlds” (Grumet, 1988, p. xv). And so I continue with my mother...

My mother was, like me, the fourth of five children, also from a family of four daughters and one son. She left her father’s house at age nineteen to go to the home of her husband, another nineteen year old. Only recently have I come to realize that she was strong. I did not fully perceive her strength in my younger years. I remember feeling very angry with her because I felt she had been weak. She had been afraid to answer back. I now realize the powerful strength she had which allowed her to hold the ‘untold stories’, the ‘secrets’ of the patriarchy and how it wielded its pathetically hardened power. In her wisdom, she developed
the adaptive capacity to carry “the grief of ages” for our benefit, so that we could live. She knew that the stress of fully realizing those secrets would have destroyed us completely. And so she held the stories in her breast and they were buried with her. Nevertheless, the burden still lingers, and it is manifested in my search to unearth the stories, and perhaps face the cover stories and sacred stories I have lived by, in order to seek some peaceful resolution to the tensions these very stories created.

In her chapter “Multiple Lives” from Composing a Life, Mary Catherine Bateson (1989) discusses the multifaceted life of women and juxtaposes this ‘pluridimensionality’ to the model of strength to achieve drawn from singleness of purpose. She reminds us of the metaphor of a journey used to describe life and of man’s separation from the domestic scene and his initiation into the world of men. This metaphor could be applied to the socio/historical story of Italian immigration generally and my family history in particular. My father, like the other tens of thousands who emigrated to Canada during the three decades after WWII, left Italy - alone - in February of 1954, on his journey to Canada. My mother stayed behind with my three older siblings waiting for him to return. My mother’s role as matriarch was to serve many masters: her husband, her three children, her mother-in-law. In December of 1955 my mother decided she would come to America with her three children - she did not want to come but she had heard that many men who had left for America had never returned.

**Toronto the Good**

My mother told me the story of when she arrived to Canada with my two older sisters and brother. She had not seen my father in two years. After having spent eight days on the ship, *Il Conte Bianca Mano*, and three days on the train from pier 21 in Halifax to Toronto, she was quite excited to see him. She told me how on the car ride over to their new house she was speaking excitedly to him and gesticulating with her hands - it was a natural expression of her happiness
and excitement. My father asked her not to use her hands when speaking, this was not done here. My mother told me that at that moment her heart sank. She thought to herself, “Is this where I have come?” This is both an assertion and a question. Her hands had been tied in more ways than one, her freedom of expression had been quashed by both the immediate and the remote patriarch. What had this shift in my mother’s landscape entailed?

Canada, the Land of Opportunity

Shortly after arriving from Italy, my mother began to work. My mother had never had to work outside of the home in Italy. Financially, the family had been quite secure.

While Canadian-born women dominated white collar professional jobs, immigrant women had low-paid, unskilled, or semi-skilled jobs in industry working in the garment industry, in factories, or in the domestic service. Many Italian women who arrived during those years still dismiss the ruling class rhetoric of the time that portrayed Canada as the land of limitless opportunity. (Lacovetta, in Mirrors & Windows, 1993)

My father had been hired as a token Italian by a large Canadian manufacturer of metal goods. Here he learned how to speak, read, and write English quite fluently. My mother, on the other hand, as was the case with many other women at the time who were more isolated from the Anglo-Saxon world, sacrificed her English so that we could learn how to speak the dialect. My father insisted. In order to earn extra money for a family of five children (my younger sister and I were born by then) she worked in the home sewing doll’s dresses.

This is only one of the many examples of how familial priorities helped shape the timing and rhythm of Italian women’s participation in the work force. Large numbers of women moved in and out of the work force based on family obligations. These women were indispensable. With their arrival they helped consolidate immigration and were secondary wage earners while maintaining harmony at home and insuring the psychic well being of their families. After a full day’s work they would cook, clean the house, and do the laundry. (Lacovetta, in Mirrors & Windows, 1993)
How had the story changed from the story in the hometown? Had the work empowered these women or had it exploited them? What values were being instilled in the children, especially the daughters? Three college teachers, in an interview, confirmed to me, during telephone conversations (Sept., 1995) that Italian girls at that time tended to choose either child care, which re-enacted the mothering role, or travel and tourism, which was escapist and romantic, as their field of study.

How had my mother formulated her identity and nurtured a sense of belonging? My mother often told me the story of how when she was in elementary school she had played the part of a Roman citizen in a school play, dressed in toga and leather sandals. She still remembered all of her lines. That was the end of her public self. It indicated to me that there was a social self - among many other things - that had been suppressed. I recall her telling me that her father was a fine fellow but prone to fits of violence. He loved his children but resented the fact that the onus was on him to provide dowries for four daughters. He preferred to spend his money at the theatre and drinking with his friends. Behind the apparently simple story she conveyed lay the complexity and multiplicity of ages. This seemingly adaptive capacity to handle complexity and multiplicity wore her out. She was depressed and this had manifested itself, I know, in the pluriform of a malignant cancer that consumed her. Cancer, a fatal disease characterized by abnormal cellular growth - growing out like the claws of a crab.

I feel a great mix of emotion around my mother’s death. I have been angry at her for not taking better care of herself. Three years ago she had a malignant breast cancer diagnosed. In the last few years, because of an acute form of osteoporosis, she had broken a rib, her toe, and twice, her arm. Now, after eight months of physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual agony, it is still difficult to believe that my mother is gone. I hate using the past tense when I speak about her. I still expect to be able to call her on the phone either to ask for advice
or for clarification on a recipe or just to hear her voice. I still expect to be able to pick up and drive over for an espresso in the afternoon - the way others would with a friend. The truth is she was my friend. She was my ally. She was, in fact, the greatest ally anyone could imagine. Even though at times I felt abandoned I realize circumstances dictated so. She was my protector, my guardian, and it was all offered unconditionally. I overheard my father telling his friend that she had spoiled us. She did. She loved us and hung on to us for dear life. We were her life. We had a relationship of attachment which took me eight months to come to terms with. I cannot help but feel that she let go when the last of us had finally begun to let go of her.

She held on to her dignity and her strength and sense of humour until the end. She did that in order to provide a source of strength for us. She kept it all in for us, until the end. In this overwhelming sadness that I feel there seems to be a sense of release. What has been released is the pressure to adhere to a legacy that said, “you cannot have a life of your own”.

“Don’t Talk About My Mother, She’s Holy!”

Gambino (1974) reminds us that next to the Virgin Mary, Italians call upon their mother, mamma mia, not God, when they are in need (in Barolini, 1985, p. 10) because a mother’s whole life revolved around the family.

Yet I feel I no longer have this privilege. Who was my mother and what influence did she have on me? At times I made her out to be a martyr, in more recent years I placed her on a pedestal. I don’t like either image. I remember a collage I made in high school of what being a woman meant to me. This collage contained images ranging from mater dolorosa to Amazon warrior to soft and gentle nurturer; the teacher gave me an A+. For years I felt I had to live up to this image of ‘superwoman’. I realize now, that I am not my mother. I have almost destroyed myself in trying to be my mother (cooking and cleaning, raising the
children) and going out into the world at the same time. I realize, and she realized too, that she lived by one story (not however, the one she had written necessarily) and that I live by another. She was a human being living out a drama - a very real, unglamourized drama. A drama that at this moment seems surreal. A drama that has left indelible marks on us. My mother, like so many women of her place and generation, lived the story that they had been told to live. Living in a small, southern Italian, hometown of the 1920s and 30s - what were her choices? She too lost her sense of self. Her identity changed. What used to be a matriarchal role at home in the hometown turned out to become a task-oriented, hard-working individual's role here in Canada. What repercussions has this had on my generation?

You see, I am not simply mourning my mother's death. I am happy she has finished suffering and I am confident that she is at peace. What I feel I am mourning is her life and perhaps mine too. I am mourning the drama of a life and death placed within a historical perspective. I am overwhelmed with great sadness at the thought of a life of unfulfilled dreams and denial. She protected herself and her children by keeping silent. In the past, I perceived this as weakness in the face of the grand patriarchal narrative.

In the struggle of women to write their own story does the recording of women's lived experiences entail the rewriting of a patriarchal story? Yes, it does. I have laboured, during complex and contradictory moments of meaning-making, to puzzle out who I was becoming or who I have become. So did my mother. In response to Gambino's chapter on women and his espousal of "The Ideal of Womanliness", Helen Barolini argues that Gambino has idealized the Italian woman's place:

True, she was the centre of life of the whole ethnic group; true, it was she who expressed the emotions for the men; true, she must be useful to her family, for her value is based on practical usefulness;
but it is less true to women than to men like Gambino that this ideal was the be-all and end-all of a woman’s life. (1985, p. 10)

A few weeks before passing away my mother told my youngest sister that if she were to come back, she would come back as a North American, Anglo-Saxon, single, career woman. In so doing she would be free and independent - she would enjoy an autonomy she never enjoyed in this life.

The fear of failure loomed heavily in the minds of our mothers. There is also, however, the fear of success. How has this fear mediated itself through language and culture? What effects has this fear had on our education? In a way, our mothers do not want us to be different from them. Our similarity to them is what binds us to them. Once we lose that, what else is there? What we (mothers and daughters) need to learn is that we can be bound by our differences as well as by our similarities.

How was my mother’s identity composed, sustained and changed? I remember when I first told my mother I had been accepted into the doctoral program at O.I.S.E. The only thing she could offer was “as long as Joe’s shirts are ironed and you cook for the kids, I guess it’s OK”. Before dying she would tell me not to visit, a phone call was enough. She insisted I finish my work. She said we should have a big party when I was done. I told her that I did not want a big deal made about this work that I was doing - I was engaging in the usual self-nullifying antics I have often engaged in. I wonder who I learned that from? She said to me, “it’s not your fault that others did not take the opportunities in life that you have taken. The world is out there for everyone. Be proud of yourself and make sure you finish.”

My mother serves as a bridge to my narrative continuity. The end of her story has forced me to re-vision mine. She has helped me look back into my
history, to her life in the town and to her shift to life here in Canada. She helps me look forward to my role as mother, woman, and teacher - how have our roles been shaped and influenced and where do we go from here?

At the Borders of Encounter Between Private World and Public World

Women who teach make this passage between the so-called public and private worlds daily. ... that is also what we teach children to do. [Women who teach] go back and forth between the experience of domesticity and the experience of teaching, between being with one's own children and being with the children of others, between being the child of one's own mother and the teacher of another mother's child, between feeling and form, family and colleagues. (Grumet, 1988, p. xv)

The Most Recent Pivotal Educational Experience: The Thesis

It all started quite deliberately when I applied to O.I.S.E. in an attempt to define myself by earning a doctoral degree and then having an institution validate and acknowledge my existence and contribution to society. I was simply repeating the pattern of continuity I had well established, that is, defining myself by way of others' stories. This attempt at self-definition (via the doctoral journey) - which I realize now was not self-definition at all - I thought, would enable me to find something I thought I had once lost - my identity. Inherent in this statement is the assumption that, during the course of my life I had not felt validated and affirmed, and did not have a strong enough sense of self to stand on my own - hence needing external validation to boost my self-esteem.

Narrative inquiry has helped me break the barriers to unearthing the stories that have not always been mine in my personal knowledge landscape. I realize now that that is where the tension has been. Perhaps I have carried my mother's story, or my sister's, my father's, or my grandfather's and have used them as cover stories. In studying my own personal experiences and my participants' what was revealed was that those experiences may be lodged in issues that we are unhappy
about in society, in our families, and in our teaching. The thesis journey has allowed me to make meaning of those experiences. The research process has given me a way to think about my experiences.

One of the tensions I have experienced during this thesis process, in looking for a 'lost self', has been in the manifestation of a fragmented view I had of my experiences. I have felt real drama and at times trauma at the borders of identity, in other words at the borders of different experiences (or contexts), both with respect to cultural identity and teacher identity. At times I have felt as though I were a hometown girl, at others I thought I was Canadian (I had always understood that as meaning Anglo-Saxon - it took me a long time to realize that it is simply another variety of Canadian), yet at other times I was Italian. Overriding the whole experience was my experience as a woman. So, who was I? Another tension experienced during the thesis journey has been the realization that although some people see themselves as crafting a self, I have never seen myself or experienced myself consciously crafting myself as anything. The tensions intensified when I started teaching. As I crossed over into the professional world I felt a sense of loss of personal self.

These tensions were a real dilemma for me. Nothing is smooth - except the story that sustains it. I did not understand how to negotiate the theoretical narrative construct of 'crafting a life' and the lived reality of what I have felt during my life, that is, the strong sense that I have lived by others' stories.

During a conversation with my daughter one evening (she was 12 years old at the time of this conversation), Vanessa reminded that we are our memories. To illustrate her point she used the example of two clones, one rich one and one poor one. At the end, she said the two people are different because of their experiences. This conversation made me think more deeply about memories. What are they? Are they real? Are they things you search and find? Memory, as Crites (1986) and Leguin (1972) remind us, is crafted. It is fictionalized and constructed. The 'self'
is the same. Built into the notion of crafting is the potential for autonomy and authorship. It is about people taking control and trying to take charge of the stories they live by. This line of thinking reminded me more of living life like an artist who constructs her/his world.

The search for self is inextricably tied to an understanding of our social narratives of gender, class, and identity (ethnic, and professional). The late Professor Harney states that, “the broad categories of social history, like the broad categories of prejudice, are conveniences for those too lazy to comprehend the complicated nature of man ...” (1985, p. 7). Finding ways of understanding the characters in our social and historical story leads us to understanding the drama of encounter at the borders of identity in the classroom, in our homes, at work or in society at large. Who are these six second generation Italian Canadian women teachers? Do we fit the patterns, the stereotypes of the Canadian cultural story, the mainstream Italian cultural story, or the hometown cultural story? Who are the “Italians”? The “Italians” become a ‘thing’ in our society. How do they live out their lives? Who is contributing to the narrative of the “Italians”? Who is a person? How do we craft who we are?

I begin with myself (Hunt, 1992) in this chapter, by tracing my lifelong search for self, in the classroom both as teacher and student, as a daughter in an immigrant household, at work in the Italian Canadian community, and now as a mother. In Chapter Three I narrate the exploratory journey I undertook with five other participants in naming our experience at the interface of this private upbringing with the education we received in the public school system and ultimately how this has played itself out in our teaching profession. It was a journey that took us back through socio-historical time, forward to what might be, inward to the realm of the invisible (the tacit, the uncertain) and outward to a look
at our present situation. The stories told are a testimony of how experience begets experience, in other words a testimony of continuity.

The tensions that had arisen out of my everyday immigrant experience were reflected in the words ‘drama’ of encounter at the ‘borders’ of identity, borders, I realize now, I had helped create, borders which were both real and imagined. These tensions crystallized into deeper tensions when I taught in a predominantly Italian high school. My high school students, also children of immigrants had faced the same difficulties when they were cut off from their own experience and language. I did not understand this when I was teaching.

Relationships between educators and students are at the heart of student learning. The interactions between educators and students always entail a process of negotiating identities. The concept of negotiating identities recognizes the agency of culturally diverse students and communities in resisting devaluation and in affirming their basic human rights, but it also focuses on the fact that identities develop in a social context. (Cummins, 1996, p. iv)

Bowers considers that the primary goal of public education is to nurture an “individual’s ability to negotiate meaning and purposes instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others” (1984, p. 2). Our responsibility as teachers is to teach children how to participate in the construction of their own stories to live by. This process would be facilitated if the teacher engaged in this form of professional development first. Personal experience methods have helped me raise my awareness of old beliefs. Furthermore, if overpowering contexts are left unexamined and unchecked, the personal self will certainly be extracted from teaching, resulting in feelings of loss of self, and in education being reduced to training (Buttignol, 1999). By understanding education as “educere” (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995) and understanding “educere” as evoking personal self, we come to an understanding that to detach the personal from the professional renders teaching meaningless.
Chapter Three
Methodology
Puzzling Out a Puzzle

Introduction

In the last chapter I wrote autobiographically of my lived experience as a second generation Italian Canadian woman and presented the various tensions, conflicts and dilemmas - puzzles, in other words - that arose out of that experience in negotiating a sense of identity. This was done in an attempt to create a better understanding of how my personal landscape has informed my teacher’s professional knowledge landscape. In this inquiry there has been a merging of stories: my story, my search for identity, the study of five other second generation Italian Canadian women teachers who are searching for identity and their respective stories, and the story of my education, that is, my learning about myself as I am learning about others.

From the beginning of an inquiry in personal experience methods Connelly and Clandinin (1994) acknowledge the centrality of the researchers’ own experience: “their own tellings, livings, reliving and retellings ... therefore, one of the starting points is the researchers’ own narratives of experience” (p. 418). The acknowledgement of my own experiences establishes who I am as a researcher in the field and who I am in the text I write on my experience of the field experience. What becomes apparent to Connelly and Clandinin, at this point, “is that many of the ways we come in touch with our own experience, come to know what we know of our experience, is through stories” (p. 418).

In this chapter I tell the story of the process I undertook to puzzle out those puzzles that I negotiated in developing a sense of my identity. In other words, how I experienced the experience of puzzling out a puzzle, and what links were made between experiential inquiry and more general life experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994). In this chapter I begin with my story as a high school teacher.
The epistemological point I would like to highlight and establish, as the basis for how I understand this period of time as a teacher, is in how I story, now as a researcher, my experiences of then when I taught. I describe the field texts (data) collected with my participants (story is central to each method described) and the role both my participants and the collected field text played in helping me puzzle out this puzzle. Essentially, narrative inquiry and the personal experience methods I used to collect field texts (data) provided a new way of thinking about the issues I have been grappling with all of my life, such as culture, identity (both personal and professional), notions of self (defined by whom?), gender, and class.

The personal experience methods used in this study particularly fit the quest to understand these issues (of identity, gender, and class) because these methods allowed me to go beyond linear, sequential time and place. Personal experience methods opened a path through which my participants and I could travel back and forth through space and time, recollecting memories, organizing them, then storying, restorying, and reconstructing them. This facilitated the emergence of the 'meaning-making' of my own lived experience as a second generation Italian Canadian. These methods also allowed for links to be made between my personal landscape and how it informed my teaching practice and influenced why I had gone into teaching in the first place.

In this chapter I outline the narrative approach I took to understanding my and my participants' identity formation. It is both an autobiographical and a biographical curricular approach to education. This approach links life issues and takes seriously the stories of personal experience that individuals live by and use to tell about their lives. This approach is based on a dynamic, multidimensional view of the narrativization of lived experience. My understanding of stories is grounded in Connelly and Clandinin's theoretical framework whereby stories are understood as being both personal and social: people tell of their individual experiences and also of their interaction with society and their milieu. These 'stories to live by' demonstrate a continuity of experience, that is, they are set in
linear time: past, present, and future, and in cyclical time (daily routines, rhythms, patterns, and so on). People and time are situated in place (for a discussion of place see Chapter Four), (Clandinin & Connelly, in press; Dewey, 1938). The dynamic interplay of inward and outward, backward and forward, social and individual, and so forth, illustrates the multifaceted nature of narrative. This approach has been most suited to my work because it has allowed me and my participants the opportunity to name our experience the way we have lived it and perceived it, that is, pluridimensionally.

In adopting Dewey's notion of interaction, Connelly and Clandinin (1994) focus on what they call

four directions in any inquiry: inward and outward, backward and forward. By inward we meant towards the internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions and so on. By outward we meant towards the existential conditions, that is, the environment. (p. 417)

Backward and forward represent past, present, and future. Connelly and Clandinin go on to say "that to experience an experience, that is to do research into an experience, is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way" (Clandinin & Connelly, in press, p. 87). The personal experience methods I used to ask questions "in these four ways" will be explained later in the chapter.

Tappan and Brown (1991) extend the notion of the inward and outward (they refer to it as internal and external) dimensions of narrative and moral experience (taken to mean lived experience) of an individual faced with a situation, conflict, or dilemma that requires a moral decision and a moral action (p. 175). In their view, people, namely students, tell stories that represent cognitive (thinking), affective (feeling), and conative (action) dimensions of experience, and also express the gradual emergence of authorship and authority which are both keys to transformation. For this study on six women teachers I extend the notion
to include the idea that the emergence of authorship is a key to transformation for the goal of personal and professional development.

Transformation of my perspective with respect to identity formation, and a discussion of it in this study, has been crucial to my development during the course of this thesis journey. It has been an active process of constructing understandings and meanings relating to our ‘stories to live by’, and then realizing, slowly over the course of the process, that by authoring those stories, as opposed to letting others write them, one has control of crafting one’s own story. Coming to this awareness has been transformational. Furthermore, authorship initiates a relationship, and conversation between author and reader (audience) which emphasizes the relationship in identity formation between self and other. I came to recognize that our experiences with others help shape who we are.

Experience is the ‘field’ or the starting point of this specific inquiry, but also the key term for all social science inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994). Connelly and Clandinin have found that in studying experience the formalistic and reductionistic frames of reference reflect a current disposition toward studying texts rather than people and their experience. These dispositions are based on the argument that experience cannot speak for itself and the focus needs to be on the meaning contained in texts and in the forms by which they are constructed. In yet another epistemological frame of reference, the technical rationalists argue that experience is too comprehensive, too holistic, and therefore, an insufficiently analytic term to permit useful inquiry.

The problem of studying experience is to lay claim to the integrity of experience itself and to fend off either its formalistic denial through abstraction and the hegemonies of social organization and structure or its reduction into skills, techniques, and tactics.... (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, p. 415)

Connelly and Clandinin agree that “raw sensory experience” is meaningless, likewise, however, the “extremes of formalism” remove the particulars of experience. Connelly and Clandinin have, therefore, come to the
study of narrative and storytelling by making the assumption that experience is both temporal and storied. Indeed, in this view, experience is the stories people live by. "Stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experience" (p. 416).

My aim is to tell what my experience was as I undertook this study: what was my early understanding of curriculum and how did that shift? I then discuss what kinds of experiences I created for myself to study the experience of creating stories. In other words, what kind of field texts were used and what was their place relative to the experience studied? Furthermore, what was their place relative to the experience of the experience studied? Throughout this chapter I describe how my experience of engaging in personal experience methods became my methodology for this study. I also include a discussion of my relationship to/with my participants. Lastly my story is also about the transformation that occurred as a result of my experience with narrative inquiry into identity formation. The shift in purpose of this study, which originally was going to be a study of language and cultural identity became more of a making-meaning-of-life-issues purpose. I cannot tell of one particular time or incident when the shift occurred. I can only narrate how it occurred gradually during the course of the process.

I argue that a crucial aspect of my own development is, in fact, expressed in the stories I have told and reconstructed, and in the stories that I continue to tell. The study itself was indeed contributory to identity formation yet I did not do anything deliberate to bring this forth. Personal transformation (either mine or my participants’) was not my goal. Because I have spent the better part of my life confused about how to identify myself, my goal was to seek a better understanding of the lived experience of this particular group of second generation Italian Canadian women teachers. By sharing stories with other women, who shared a similar cultural background to mine, I hoped to answer some of the questions I had about my own identity. What actually happened methodologically to bring that about? What was in the nature of the event that did that? These are some of
the questions I address in this section. Finally, I use a meta-level interpretation of my research experience in a section called “The Essential Interpreter.”

An Early Understanding of Curriculum: Lived and Told Stories of Cultivation

A teaching story ...

In my experience as a classroom teacher I had the opportunity of being involved in a great number of professional development days, yet to this day I cannot recall one. There was an ‘outside-in’ type of imposition that I did not find educative. Furthermore, as a novice teacher, I understood my role as teacher as simply one of transmitter (Miller and Seller, 1990), thus conjuring up a Tylerian (1949) image of teacher as implementor of curriculum.

I taught English, and Italian as a second language, to students living in a predominantly Italian Canadian community. These students were second and third generation Canadians and came primarily from homes where at least one dialect, if not two (depending on whether both parents spoke the same dialect or each a different dialect) was spoken. The standard Italian was a superficial reality for most of these students, and it was a reality being imposed on them by their parents and the school system. I proceeded to teach the way I had been taught, hence any curriculum discourse I engaged in was limited to teacher ‘centredness’. My mission was to ‘save’ these adolescents from the same fate that I had, that is, being confused about my identity. [It was not until later, after reconstructing past experiences, that I made connections between my teaching and my lived personal experiences.]

As an adolescent, during my first trip to Italy, I had great emotional difficulty learning that the dialect I spoke at home, in which I was so fluent, was considered socially inferior to the standard Italian, as judged by those who were educated. [I realize now that this is a social construct. Nothing is socially inferior to anything else, it is only made that way by the stories that people live and tell.] This
precipitated my tenacious drive to learn the standard Italian so that I would no longer be faced with any embarrassment over not being able to communicate in a socially acceptable manner. I had not had the opportunity to learn Italian in high school because it was not offered. My family had moved into a predominantly Anglo-Saxon neighbourhood in which there was no demand for Italian classes.

My story now of my experience when I started teaching is that I thought that this would be my chance to relive history vicariously through my students and provide them with the opportunity that I had missed out on to learn Italian. At first I was very happy to teach in a predominantly Italian area, in a school with mostly students of Italian origin. I soon discovered, however, that although I shared a common ethnic background with these students, they were very different from me. Although I too was second generation Canadian, I had been raised by immigrant parents who had lived through the war, while these students were being raised by ‘post-war’ parents. Many of these parents had come to Canada in their early teens and had gone to a vocational school here in Canada and their values were different from mine. I also remember, at the time, that English teachers were complaining about how poor the students’ linguistic abilities were. Teachers were placing less onus on students’ linguistic competence because it was being made up for, by the students, in the art and music departments. According to one of the guidance councillor’s interpretations of the general consensus in the school’s English department (at the time), teachers were to remain tied to the curriculum in order to maintain standards at all costs - regardless of students’ needs (taped interview with the school’s guidance councillor, Feb. 1995). If the teachers were complaining about how poor the students’ linguistic abilities were, why then were they placing less onus on their linguistic competence? What was the significance of this phenomenon to my own development and teaching?

My attitude in the Italian department was no better - my pedagogy was authoritarian - this is what I knew best at the time. I could not decide what mother tongue these students spoke and this presented pedagogical difficulties for me.
These students had a rich yet complex linguistic patrimony. They spoke a pastiche of the following: dialect (the particular language of the hometown spoken by their grandparents and in many cases their parents); italiese (the koiné spoken in the Italian Canadian ‘community’, that is a mixture of dialect or Italian and English); italiano popolare - as opposed to standard Italian or academic Italian; and English. (For more contextual reference to the languages mentioned see Chapter Four.) No consideration had been given in the curriculum (by either me or the other teachers in the department) to a discussion of language (namely dialects in this case) and its direct tie to cultural identity and second language acquisition. The “sfumature” (shadings) of adolescence, language, and identity had been missed.

In an effort to teach tenses, verbs, and adjectives in the standard Italian, the meaning of the students’ language spoken at home had been lost. I noticed that the students thought that their dialect was Italian. Furthermore, the textbook was from Italy and did not have any contextual references to either hometowns or Italians who live outside of Italy and are exposed to different speech varieties. I felt the disconnection ... I was angry at the students’ ignorance and ambivalence with respect to their dialect. But now, after reflection, I realize that this experience had struck a primal chord that allowed the dissonant anger, ambivalence, and arrogance in me to cry out. About what, I did not know exactly at the time.

I started questioning myself and why I had gone into teaching in the first place. The result of this was my quest to find answers to the many questions I had about both my teaching and my identity. Years later, after the birth of my son, I decided I would both fulfill a lifelong dream to complete a doctoral degree and seek some answers to the questions I had about teaching and my dilemma surrounding identity.

As a requirement for entrance into the doctoral program at O.I.S.E., I wrote a qualifying research paper (QRP) entitled, “The role of speech varieties for Canadian adolescents of Italian origin learning standard Italian” (Gallucci-Maggisano, 1993). This study gave me the opportunity to revisit my high school
teaching experience and look for answers that explained my unhappiness during those years. At the time I left teaching, I had decided to blame the whole "school system" for my unhappiness. I had also decided that students in that school had linguistic problems. I remember many other colleagues thinking the same thing at the time. The study also helped me become aware of the linguistic plight of the second generation Italian Canadian because I myself had lived this experience in the Canadian educational system. No one had ever taken notice of how much I had suffered in high school. The fact that I was an invisible minority hid the tension I had experienced with language and cultural identity, that is, trying to decide where I 'fit' between my home town culture, the Canadian mainstream culture, and the Italian mainstream culture. By the time I finished writing the comprehensive exams and had undergone my course work I felt certain that these issues had touched my students as well.

I remember discussing the topic I was going to choose for the QRP with my faculty advisor who suggested that I consider a topic that I knew something about. I knew something about linguistics and I had experience teaching Italian as a second language to Italian Canadian high school students, therefore, I decided to start with that. Starting with my lived experience as an autobiographical method was not even considered as a possibility by either myself or my faculty advisor at the time, given that he was coming from a quantitative perspective. I used the applied linguistic skills I had, in the QRP, to seek a better understanding of the dilemmas I had encountered when I was teaching Italian Canadian high school students. The work revealed the tensions experienced by teachers and students of immigrant background caught between conflicting values. This, however, was not properly captured by a psycho/sociolinguistic approach where language teaching is decontextualized and the complexity of the Italian Canadian experience overlooked. This approach had provided me with some understanding of my teaching dilemma but it still left me with only a partial understanding of the tensions at work in my understanding of teaching. Still, not aware of a personal
methods approach I resolved to continue my inquiry into language and identity by way of a sociolinguistic approach.

An Understanding of Curriculum in Transition:
An Awakening Retold and Relived

During my course of study at O.I.S.E. I met students who described the foundations of curriculum course taught by F.M. Connelly. I understood immediately that education was somehow being linked to life experience. This appealed to me and piqued my interest. It was the beginning of my methodological choice. Although this did not happen immediately, it was not until the 1300 Foundations of Curriculum course (taught by F.M. Connelly) that I started reflecting upon and studying my personal experience. I awoke to an understanding of how I conceptualized the notion of identity formation generally, and my personal and professional identity formation specifically. After a history of encountering difficulties because of having been cut off from my own experience and language, I experienced the most personal and professional growth after having engaged narrative studies both as phenomenon and methodology. Contextual reference became crucially important.

The 'inside-out' approach (Elbaz, 1991) of telling and retelling my lived story allowed me to discover who I was and what I knew. This was important for me because my lived experiences had never before been lent any credence in the educational system. As a "professional" I was expected to keep a distance from my emotions and my personal life. My previous educational experiences had taught me that in order to maintain a professional identity, an 'outside-in' type of approach to professional development was preferable. What the personal experience methods and learning from the 'inside-out' helped me realize, that other approaches had not, was that 'healing' takes place when we come to terms with our personal stories. This approach to personal experience methods went against the authoritarian ('outside-in') pedagogy I was practising when I was
teaching. I felt more at ease and relaxed knowing that I could trust the learning process which was unfolding.

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) refer to knowing “who I was and what I knew” as our “personal practical knowledge” ...

It is in the person’s past experiences, in the person’s mind and body, and in the person’s future plans and actions. Knowledge is not only found “in the mind”. It is “in the body” and it is seen and found “in our practices”. When we watch a classroom, we watch a set of minds and bodies at work. (p. 25)

Connelly’s particular interpretation of the Foundations course was informed by the Deweyian notion of life experience and education coming together. What it means to study education, in other words, is to study experience. It made sense. It felt right. I made this methodological choice because it allowed me to name my experience, own it, and act upon it by changing my previously held authoritarian perspective. Making this methodological choice allowed me to define my identity on my own terms. I was giving myself permission to author my own story. The quest to find answers to understand the meaning of my life and education had finally come together for me. For Dewey, to study experience was to study life, for example, the study of epiphanies, rituals, routines, metaphors, and everyday action. One learns about education from thinking about life and one learns about life from thinking about education...

In practice, one cannot separate one’s life from one’s practice.... Keeping this sense of the experiential whole is part of the study of narrative. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, p. 415)

The purpose of the course in educational foundations, generally, was to have students reflect on their education and what it meant to be educated. It offered us (graduate students) a narrative perspective and self-reflective tools from which and with which we could attempt to feel, think, and act. Furthermore, by delving into our personal and professional educational experiences we were to pull out narrative threads or narrative unities that ran through our lives. All this was an attempt to draw on the implicit images and philosophies of teaching that
we held, and make them explicit for the purpose of becoming more conscious and more in control of our pedagogical choices. Furthermore, Connelly and Clandinin make the case that,

when persons note something of their experience, either to themselves or to others, they do so not by the mere recording of experience over time, but in storied form. Story, is therefore, neither raw sensation nor cultural form; it is both and neither. ... Stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experience. A story has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history. (1994, p. 415)

We all have a story, “one that is embedded in [our] culture, language, gender, beliefs, and life history. This embeddedness lies at the core of the teaching-learning experience” (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 3). It is in this epistemological approach to the educational significance of our lives that this thesis is grounded. In the next section I narrate the story of my continuing journey of my experience as I undertook this study.

**Experiencing the Experience**

What was my experience as I undertook this study? I, as the researcher, ask this question because I am experiencing what I am studying and this too becomes part of the issue of the inquiry. I, as the narrator of this research story, “provide further meaning - and even further text - to the story being told,” for I too have a story, “one that is embedded in [my] culture, language, gender, beliefs, and life history.” Furthermore, I experienced all of the methodology I asked my participants to experience. As a result, the narrative reconstruction I present to you serves as a double story, it has a dual role. On the one hand, the personal experience methods that I describe in the following section were a research text for the 1300 Foundations of Curriculum course. On the other hand, from the point of view of this dissertation, looking back on the experience now, they are a field
text. The 1300 course was a pivotal educational experience in my decision to use these methods as my research methods in working with my participants.

Annals

The first exercise was to write an annal - for Connelly and Clandinin (1994) this entails the line schematic of an individual’s life - specifically outlining pivotal personal and professional educational experiences - divided into moments or segments by events, years, places, or significant memories. The annal allowed for the visual representation of the landscape or topography of my life experiences (p. 420). This exercise triggered what was the beginning of a deeply insightful process. Recalling significant educational experiences in both my personal and professional life contributed to my understanding of the meaningfulness of everyday life. Whether it was recalling ordinary experiences such as being told, as a left handed person, to write with my right hand in a Catholic elementary school or momentous events such as the birth of my children - helped me start constructing a visual landscape of my experience.

Chronicles

The next step was to construct chronicles around the pivotal points marked on the annal of learning experiences. “Annals and chronicles are a way of involving the participant in the creation of the scaffolding of their oral histories” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, p. 420). In other words, it was the beginning of a process of systematically evoking or re-collecting my experiences. The chronicle revealed fractures or cracks in the scaffolding. When, for example, a teacher lacks background information or knowledge in areas such as the relationship between first and second language and the ‘situation’ is kept decontextualized - cracks in the structural foundation of a landscape such as multiculturalism begin to show. I started to see parallels emerging between the fractures on my personal and
professional knowledge landscape and the structural inequities lying underneath the issue of multiculturalism (Cummins, 1996).

Fractures occur when we, as teachers, do not have background knowledge of students, their language, and their culture. My point is that if teachers engage in the generation of a knowledge base within the students, that is, tapping into their intuitive knowledge and assisting them in making it explicit, the students' identity is affirmed. This, Cummins (1996) would argue, is multiculturalism in action since the systematic evoking of their personal experience validates and challenges their identity. Furthermore, my argument is that in order for teachers to be more effective with their students, they themselves should first engage in this 'inside-out' type of professional development.

The following insights arose from the repeated revisiting of the chronicle when I had to tell, retell, and reconstruct the stories of my personal and professional experiences. What was highlighted, when I started teaching, was the knowledge base that I brought from the faculty of education. If teachers activate their own personal knowledge base and make connections between life and education, they can then proceed by eliciting students' prior knowledge. In this way, both teachers and students can respond to the community reality and the home reality that is reflected in the schools. Had I taken the time to reflect on these issues and evoke students' personal experiences, perhaps my teaching years would have been more productive.

Danesi, for example, has observed that the "area of Italian pedagogy (that is, dialects) has been neglected because of the puristic attitude which is frequently adopted in respect to dialectal speech" (1976, p. 195). Indeed dialectal speech is equated to sociolinguistic deprivation. The teacher must illustrate to the students that his/her speech variety is not the consequence of being sociolinguistically deprived but instead the result of the mechanisms of both language change and how society and people in power story what is standard or valued. Furthermore, no consideration had been given in the "curriculum" to a discussion of language
and its direct tie to cultural identity. In an effort to focus on the particulars of tenses, verbs, and adjectives the meaning of the language spoken at home had been lost (Fillmore, 1992).

The prescribed text I was using was inadequate because it was not contextualized for second and third generation Italian students. Furthermore, there was no continuity between the grade 10, 11, and 12 curriculum. The maintenance of home language, that is, the dialect, should have been recognized and discussed more fully and openly with the students. A contrastive analysis approach, that is, contrasting dialect, italiese, and the standard Italian (Danesi, 1976) would most likely have made the complex linguistic background of these students clearer to them.

I eventually realized that teaching reduced to technique loses its purpose (Jackson, 1988). Pedagogical content knowledge is not enough (Shulman, 1986). Reflection upon one’s personal practical knowledge is also necessary (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Furthermore, “pedagogy, which attends to the authentic concepts of teachers and students sharing their lives together forces an articulation of identity as well as of problems which are inherent in that articulation of the personal and the public” (Miller, 1982, p. 10).

As I started writing my chronicle I started realizing how my personal life had gone hand in hand with my professional growth and how my cultural identity and language were intertwined. Learning and teaching are functions of a critical awareness of the immigrant experience. More recently, I started to see my QRP in a different light. I realized that in addition to learning the psycho/socio linguistic factors of how language evolves over time and space in relation to internal factors and to external factors of language contact, I have also come to the realization that identity formation evolves over time and space in relation to internal conditions and external conditions of experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994). Life and curriculum meet at this juncture.
Family Stories

Once the chronicle was prepared, we were asked to write family stories, teaching stories (an example of my teaching experience was given in this chapter), and to collect photographs (in Chapter One I give two examples of important pictures: one of my maternal grandfather and one of my mother with my three older siblings), memory boxes, and other personal or family artifacts in order to recollect the “little fragments,” of experience around which we tell and retell stories. We were also encouraged to keep journals to help capture the small fragments of experience in an attempt to make sense of those experiences. By piecing together the “little fragments” I started getting a clearer picture of my experience situated within a frame of community, history, place, and time (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997).

Family stories create the frame for the individual stories we tell. I dedicated the better part of Chapter Two to telling family stories of my grandparents, my parents’ arrival to a new country, and so forth. I told those family stories in an effort to show that “central to our individual identity” we are part of a “particular human chain,” that is, our family (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, p. 420). In tracing my roots I gained a feeling that I belonged because I share a background and have similarities with others in my family (and with my participants when they shared family stories). I also awoke to an understanding that I am not in charge of my story. Part of belonging to a group entails the strength of the individual, but it can also mean the annihilation of the individual.

In Chapter Two I discussed the continuity of my family’s experience, and how it has contributed to the continuity of my experience. I also discussed how in my search for self I realized that I had not really lost a self I thought I once had. Perhaps in naïveté, in innocence, in ‘pre-awakening’, I lost a sense of freedom, a sense of “I am what I am”. In telling family stories I have awakened to the notion that I am what people make of me. There is, if anything, perhaps a sense of loss
of freedom that comes from an awakening not instead from someone taking something away from me, namely, my identity.

**Oral Histories**

We were asked to tell our story to the rest of the class. (I have provided a detailed description of how I recounted my oral history in Chapter Two.) We told stories of experience in order to understand our own educational histories and the curricular settings that helped shape us. In voicing our previously silenced experiences we began to reshape the curricular demands and expectations for teacher development and learning. Telling our stories in a class with colleagues who listened created a shared story and gave us a sense of valuing both ourselves and others in this search for understanding.

**A Narrative Reconstruction, the Final Course Paper**

Finally, we were to submit a final paper. In this narrative reconstruction I brought together all of the following: the QRP, the chronicle, the family stories and teaching stories, the reflective journal entries I had written, the literature, and the connections I had made during the oral retelling in class. (See My Sister's Story and Fran's Story in Chapter Two.)

In re-collecting my own personal experiences and recounting particular experiences in my life and then telling a story about them, I constructed a narrative to represent them. The autobiographical account of my experiences helped me further order my experiences and brought to light the conflicts, tensions, and dilemmas in my life. These stories were engaging for me because they were stories of dilemmas around identity. This story is also about the transformation that occurred as a result of my experience with narrative inquiry and personal experience methods. I would argue that a crucial aspect of my own development is, in fact, expressed in the stories that I have told and now reconstruct in 'puzzling out the puzzle' of identity.
The string of events recounted in the chronicle, the stories told, and the connections I made are all part of my legacy - my continuity of experience. It is the course of the ‘rushing river,’ a whole rush of history, in fact, that tells me who I am. Being told by others that my experience as a second generation, Italian Canadian, female teacher is based either on being a housewife who makes tomato sauce, or that I am “extremely utilitarian” in my educational choices is not enough. Through the methodology I have chosen to investigate my lived experience, I have made better meaning of the various ‘stories’ that different people have suggested I ‘live by.’ With this knowledge there has been a transformation of perspective and I have made connections between my personal experiences and my teaching experiences. I can now act differently, if I choose. The very fact that I chose a methodology that shifted the power over to me as participant in my own study shows that a transformation has been effected.

**Tensions Between Literature and Lived Experience: the Connection to Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry provided a research lens that opened up the possibilities for me to challenge approaches that, in the past, have slotted us (as women of ethnic background) into particular categories and helped me gain insights into identity that I had not previously imagined. The story written by researchers that our experience as Italian Canadians was bicultural or bilingual started to appear deceiving to me.

When I asked my participants which language they spoke as children, at first they said Italian. After questioning them a little more they told me that it was really a dialect that they spoke. I was reminded of my high school students who said they spoke Italian when they indeed spoke a dialect. This, in turn, reminded me of when I was 14 years old. Although I had a passive knowledge of the Italian language, I was not fluent in the spoken language. I was, however, fluent in my dialect. It was on my first trip to Italy that I realized that I did not speak the
standard Italian as well as I thought. An investigation into my lived experience through the use of personal experience methods as a tool of inquiry allowed possibilities to emerge that permitted me to make meaning of those dilemmas or puzzles at work in my lived experience and actually name the experience the way I perceived it or lived it. My experience with cultural identity had not been bicultural or bilingual, nor had my participants’. Our experience was, what I would call, pluridimensional. Narrative inquiry, therefore, became an intellectual frame that helped me to start thinking about these puzzles. It provided another way - the ‘inside-out’ way of puzzling over, or thinking about, issues of identity, other than linguistically.

Similarly, studying literature had helped shed some light on the Italian experience generally but it did not provide answers to the puzzle I was facing with respect to my identity as a second generation Italian Canadian woman (except for Patriarca and Di Michele, who, in contemporary literature begin to approach this description in poetic form). As I proceeded through my narrative inquiry I was reminded, by way of the chronicle, of a professor in Italy, at the University of Siena, whose language course I had taken one summer during my undergraduate years. When asked which Italian literature I was studying I told him I was reading the contemporary Italian writers. He was quick to dismiss the writing as nothing more than journalism. I recalled that incident in my annal and chronicle because although it had been a run-of-the-mill experience it had obviously impressed something upon me. I had felt dismissed and my opinion had been diminished.

That incident also helped me recall my realization, while I was in Siena, of how much contempt the northern Italians felt towards southern Italians. I was devastated. Although I had read the neo-realist Italian literature which alluded to issues of south/north dichotomy the words had not quite connected until I actually experienced it myself. How could a civilization that had produced such magnificent works of art, such edifying music, and such insightful, illuminating literature foster such a provincial attitude of intra-racial prejudice? I had been
oblivious to a part of the social atmosphere that existed among Italians. Literature had taught me something but experience, the retelling and re-ordering of that experience, and then reflecting upon it had started making it mean something else.

The tension I experienced between literature and lived experience is connected to the narrative methodology that I chose. The use of story as a method of inquiry helped me realize that the contemporary Italian writers, whose works I had been reading, wrote in such a way that the narrator was on the same level as the characters. It was no longer the omniscient narrator of old. The hegemony of power of old had also crumbled as a result. Perhaps the Italian academic who dismissed contemporary literature as journalism also saw this shift in power. I began to see the connection between narrative inquiry and the new researcher who relinquishes power and control and the illusion of certainty. The lines became blurred between myself as teacher, learner, researcher, and participant.

Narrative inquiry allowed for a more open, relational type of research approach. Furthermore, narrative inquiry allowed me to start writing my own story. It also allowed me to listen to other women’s stories and it allowed them the forum to be heard. Narrative inquiry lent credence to people’s experience. It is for these fundamental reasons that I chose this form of inquiry for my doctoral work.

My understanding of curriculum was in transition, an awakening had occurred. An awakening is defined by Connelly and Clandinin (1994) as “a felt moment of awareness, (which) may not be a moment in time but more of an ongoing sense of unease ... which leads to dissatisfaction and then to ongoing inquiry ... that leads to reconstruction” (p. 2). Reflecting more deeply on my teaching experience, my personal life experience, and the writing of the QRP helped me connect to the linguistic plight of the second generation Italian Canadian because I myself had lived this experience - to a degree, both in the Canadian and Italian educational systems. The fact that I was an invisible minority
hid the tensions I had experienced with language and cultural identity. I was trying to decide where I ‘fit’ between my hometown culture, the Italian Canadian culture in Toronto, the Canadian mainstream culture, and the Italian mainstream culture. I was somehow certain that these issues touched my students as well.

**A Current Understanding of Curriculum:**
*Retold, Relived, and Released - a Transformation*

In the repeated telling, ordering, retelling and reconstructing of my stories of experience, and then engaging in the same process, with my participants (see Appendix A, *Working with my Participants*) I came to an even deeper understanding of my inquiry into understanding the notion of identity formation generally and the identity formation of these second generation Italian Canadian women teachers specifically. How we “author” our lives through articulating who we are influences what we think, how we feel, and what we do (Tappan & Brown, 1991, p. 181). Clark and Holquist (1984) add that, “the architectonic activity of authorship, which is the building of a text, parallels the activity of human existence, which is the building of a self” (p. 64).

When we author our lives, or build a self, it is done in relationship to another. When we articulate who we are it is done best in a relational, non-authoritarian way. Therefore, the use of unstructured interviews which always led to conversation was a way to establish rapport and a friendly relationship between my participants and myself. This led to the equal sharing of ideas, dialogue in other words, over important issues in our lives.

Through the thesis writing process I have come to realize that gender, ethnicity, and notions of community are categories imposed by politicians, people with a cause, or researchers. (Nowhere, for example, in the field text is there mention made, by the participants, of the phrase ‘Italian Canadian community’.) Also, the ‘search for self’ that I had embarked on was leading me into a ‘tail spin.’ In looking back on the following: my journal entry “Journey inward to the source”;
the feelings of ‘release’ from the legacy of “you shall not live a life of your own” after my mother’s death - and the significance of that event in my life and thesis; and a series of discussions I had with my thesis advisor around my theoretical understanding of identity formation - I have come to the following realization. Once you remove the layers of what others have crafted, what is left is the ‘babbling’ (Dewey), that is, that wellspring of feelings, intuition, and so on or as Connelly and Clandinin (1988) would call it, a person’s “personal practical knowledge”. The thesis journey has been a process of becoming aware that my identity is continually being constructed and my idea of what an identity is - is being constructed. The notion of identity is ambiguous, amorphous and ever-changing but also my lived experience has been one of living in a world of doubt and ambiguity. The knowledge or the understanding that I have gained has garnered a certain wisdom. There has also been a sense of loss which I have connected to my feelings around the loss of my mother. That is, the thing I wanted to find - my ‘self’ - could not be found. There is a sense of loss in that. On the other hand, there is also certain sense of resolution that comes with that. The fluidity of the methodology chosen embraced and contoured itself around these pluridimensional, multifaceted experiences of my life as I had lived them.

What is the lesson inherent in this story that I tell? Narrative inquiry has helped topple over many pre-conceived notions that I held: first, the notion of a fixed identity - versus an ever-changing, relational type of identity construction; second, notions of ethnicity and gender - as opposed to looking at people as simply people; third, the notion that the hierarchies of power topple over when seeking to understand people’s experiences as the knowledge base. No longer was I looking to external authorities to name other people’s experiences; and fourth, many of my notions of certainty have been shattered. The issue of interpretation of the field texts is also addressed here. Just as everything else has been ambiguous, stories that we listen for are also ambiguous. If any story can be read in any number of ways by different readers then how do I, as a researcher,
interpret and understand someone else’s story? (This will be addressed in the last section of this chapter, The Essential Interpreter.)

What do I, as a teacher, know about myself, my work, and my students? The use of reflective content helped me, as a teacher/learner contextualize, understand, and interpret my experiences. Indeed this process helped me transform my intuitive behaviour into an awakening and understanding of my beliefs and future expectations. As a consequence of such work, I feel that I have brought a changed self to my teaching outlook and my learning as a doctoral student. There were no answers or explanations offered for the dilemmas that arose out of this self-reflective work; however, questions, puzzlement and problematizing my role as a human being, graduate student, and teacher in schools helped me gain deeper insights into my experience. It was during those moments of insight that an awakening and immediate transformation occurred (for example, those instances already cited when a shift in my perspective occurred). “Narrative writing serves the educational function of transformation of perspective. The ambiguities and tensions in trying to balance and integrate experience produces gains in practice and in theorizing about it” (Diamond, 1993, p. 516).

The study itself was contributory to identity formation and provided a deeper intellectual understanding of a personal notion of identity. Because of the work-in-progress nature of the inquiry I continued to reflect on both the experience of writing the thesis and my life. My mother’s death, for instance, was yet another significant experience in my life that I turned into an educative experience thanks to the process. What happened methodologically to bring that about? What was in the nature of the event that did that? Being able to share my stories with my participants and listening to their stories helped me to learn more about my own experiences.
The Participants

Like myself, the participants in this study are daughters of post WWII immigrants - all of them are of southern Italian origin. By looking at the intergenerational effects of immigration in the lives of these Italian Canadian women teachers (see Chapter Four), my work will give expression to individual identity via personal life history and to a familial communal and historical heritage. An examination of this group of people and the effects history has had on its descendants, particularly these women, will yield an understanding of the dilemma faced by these teachers in creating a sense of self amidst different socio/cultural expectations.

I chose participants who fell within the age band of thirty to forty years given that this early pre-mid-life age would be an age where people had already started reflecting back on their teaching practice. To state her point, Rosanna one of my participants, quotes Dante,

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
Che la dritta via era smarrita.
(La divina commedia, Inferno, Canto I, vv. 1-3)

Midway in the journey of our life
I found myself in a dark wood,
For the straight way was lost (Trans.)
(Divine Comedy, Inferno, Canto I, vv. 1-3).

She explains,

Never more than at this point in my life am I able to identify with the opening lines of Dante’s Divine Comedy. They speak to Dante’s state of confusion and anxiety about mid life. He is ‘in transition’. The Poet finds himself somewhere between his thirtieth and fortieth year of life. [He is experiencing a crisis.] Etymologically the word ‘crisis’ is derived from the same root as the word ‘critical’. It was at this critical period of his life that Dante puts pen to paper. It is with
All of the participants have taught either elementary or high school in a separate school board. One participant chose to switch over to a public board of education. Since we started our work together, another participant left teaching. Together my participants cover a teaching experience span of three to twenty-two years. The methodological significance of this is that they reflect a broader spectrum of teaching experience. Collectively they reflect a broader range of experience as women since they came to this research project with a wide range of issues that have impacted on and shaped their daily lives. Some of the issues these women have been dealing with include: coming out stories as lesbians, feminism, incest survival, domestic violence, isolation on being disowned, moving out of the family home without being 'married', northern/southern dichotomy within Italy and how it affected their sense of self, role of religion in their lives, the impact their families had on them as Italian women, post graduate education, language and its tie to lack of self-confidence, the stifling of internal creative resources for the sake of convention, and so on. Self-awareness and understanding of the experience have been crucial not only for self-development but also for enacting change.

There is no specific reason for having chosen six participants. This is simply the way it unfolded. I knew that I did want 'several' women in the study, in order to reflect a wider range of both personal and professional experience, as opposed to writing a thesis as a personal memoir. The six other women who joined me on this journey into understanding our identity formation as second generation Italian Canadian female teachers are: Beatrice, who is a friend and colleague; Marina had heard about my study, as a writer herself, she was interested in the narrative methodology I was undertaking and asked me if she could be a participant in my study; Rosanna and Francesca were people I had taken classes with at O.I.S.E.;
Sofia and Lina met through a mutual friend. Lina stayed on this project for only six months and cannot be considered a full participant in the study since we were unable to engage in all of the personal experience methods. Because she is so insightful of her own lived experience I have decided to use some of the field text collected because it would add to and provide a richer understanding of our lived experience.

**How I Worked With My Participants**

Essentially my experience in the 1300 Foundations of Curriculum course became my methodology. The conversations and interviews opened up a dialogue so that both my participants' voice and mine were heard. It also allowed me, during our conversations, to be 'interviewed' by my participants - they were interested in my thoughts and often asked me what I thought about particular issues. This allowed me to speak more about my lived experience and my interpretation of those experiences and to make even more connections between events that had occurred in my life and their relevance to my identity as a teacher. (See Appendix A for more detail on field text collected.)

**Conversation**

Although this was not a heading that came out of 1300 it was another method used that was instrumental in the collection of field text. The research interviews with my participants were set up more as conversations than as formal, structured interviews. Connelly and Clandinin (1994) point out that conversation is marked by equality among participants and by flexibility to allow for the establishment of form and topic important to the inquiry. The centrality of relationship among researcher and participant is visible in this instance because there is a situation created of mutual trust, listening, and caring for the experience described by the other. When I started working with my participants I collected all of the same field text using the personal experience methods I described earlier
in this chapter. I asked each participant to start by preparing an annal and chronicle, under the focus of cultural identity and teaching. When I first started I asked the participants to prepare the data in chronological order. I learned quickly that dialogue was necessary to understand different people’s styles. I did not keep to a strict schedule and allowed each individual participant to prepare the data as they saw fit. The following is an example of Marina’s response to me during a conversation about the chronology she was to prepare for our work together:

_I remember we were driving in the car and I said, “what do you need in order to facilitate what you are trying to do?”, and you said you needed stories. So I thought, when I got home, that I would try to come up with stories that are related to my personal life as well as to my identity as a teacher, and as an immigrant, and as a woman. The way I went at it was, I sat down and I wrote. I thought of myself as a teacher first. I decided I would write Teacher Story Number 1, which was how I got into teaching....Then I thought, I also have stories about teachers who taught me. So, I have teachers who have influenced me and therefore given me my identity as a student and all of the influences that teachers have. Then I have these immigrant stories as well. I enjoy writing this way, because it is kind of prosing, and poetic at the same time, so I can give a flourish. I hate dry chronology.

After I did that I thought, well, the other thing that I might need is, I might need a chronology say under the three categories... Teacher Stories, Teaching Stories, my own personal teaching stories, then I have immigrant stories..._

I learned quickly that Marina was not a linear thinker, and that needed to be respected if we were to work together. Conversation allowed for freedom of expression. This was very important to me methodologically because it reinforced,
for me, a non-authoritarian way of relating to my participants. Connelly and Clandinin tell us that, "in the process of beginning to live the shared story of narrative inquiry, the researcher needs to be aware of constructing a relationship in which both voices are heard" (1991, p. 127). I felt a sense of beginning to value myself and others in this search for ‘truth’ or understanding.

The narrative inquiry process started in January 1996. I asked each participant to choose a pseudonym. I did this deliberately, given that a number of these women had been ‘renamed’ with English names as children when they were in the Canadian Educational system. Also, I felt that our experience has so often been named by others, namely, the media, northern Italian academics, our mothers, and so on I would let these women choose their own pseudonym in order to allow them to name their own experience. Essentially I had my participants undertake the same personal experience methods I had undertaken because I had found the whole narrative inquiry process to be so transformational.

I telephoned each participant individually and told them to prepare an annal. I also explained that the focus of my research would be on the shaping influences of language (understood metaphorically) and ethnicity on their personal and professional identity. I gave this focus to each woman because this was the focus that had emerged for me when I undertook the personal experience methods. I started working with my participants with what I knew. I did, however, keep a very fluid, non-authoritarian relationship - a friendship - with my participants allowing for other possible foci to emerge whenever they could. I did this by having unstructured, conversational type interviews. Given the long gaps in time (sometimes up to four months) between meetings, (because these women were teaching and taking courses) I called them occasionally to see how they were doing. One of the methodological flaws of this study, is that I did not keep an ongoing chart of telephone calls placed to each participant, with the date, and topic of discussion. This marks one of the tensions of being both participant and observer in one’s own study. It is another example of the lines becoming blurred
between researcher and friend. (I do not keep ‘logs’ of telephone calls I place to my friends.) I do not feel, however, that this ‘flaw’ detracted from the depth or richness of the field text collected.

I then told the participants to construct chronicles around the pivotal points marked on the annal of learning experiences and to either write and/or tell stories around those pivotal points. This was the beginning of what I hoped would be my contribution to these women’s validation of their own identity. The chronicle was followed by our first meeting which I recorded on audiotape. This, I thought, would insure accuracy and permit the ‘voices’ to speak freely without constraint. By using the chronicle as a prompter, the participants started an oral history - a narrative reconstruction, that is a telling of their story in much the same way as I told mine in the 1300 class. All of the interactions were conducted with each individual participant, there was only one group discussion on the topic of hometown. I did present this as a possibility because what I was hoping to gain through conversation was a “shared group story”; one of the participants did not want to participate in the group discussion. She chose instead to write a reflective piece on the topic of hometown.

Connelly and Clandinin contend that, from the beginning of the inquiry in personal experience methods, central to the creation of field texts is the relationship of the researcher to the participant. This is a point that I took very seriously in the research process; therefore I did not want people to engage in anything that would make them feel uncomfortable. I have not, as a researcher, maintained a neutral observer role, quite the contrary, the participants became my friends. As a researcher, the qualities I tried to live were those of a collaborative friendship which include the following: listening, caring, and mutual respect. The methodological significance of this is that “a relationship embed(s) meaning in the text and imposes form on the research texts ultimately developed ... what is told, as well as the meaning of what is told, is shaped by the relationship” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, p. 416).
The purpose of the oral presentation of the chronicle was to start a journey back in time in order to look for the themes or threads running through the participants’ lives that could be linked to their educational and professional career choices. Before the next conversation I gave an outline to each participant of what the focus was going to be for the next meeting. This was done as a way of maintaining focus on the “why” of the work. We would be trying to develop an understanding of our cultural identity, and how our personal experiences have informed our teaching identity and philosophy. Furthermore, the identification of the major shifts in my participants’ personal and professional landscapes related to the notion of borders of identity and the notion of the pluridimensionality of our experience that I was trying to test through the field text collection.

I suggested to my participants that they go back to the chronicle and identify where the major shifts had occurred in their lives. They were to focus both on affect - what they felt during these shifts, and cognition- what they were thinking as they recalled the lived experience. This, I thought, would provide a fuller picture of the experience. Furthermore, as Tappan and Brown (1991) suggest, feeling and thought lead to action. I concur with Connelly and Clandinin (1994) when they add that the more difficult but important task in narrative is the retelling of stories that allow for growth and change - this to varying degrees includes action. I also encouraged the participants to keep reflective journals and to write either family stories - through which, Connelly and Clandinin state, “people learn self-identity” (1994, p. 420), short stories or poetry, or to provide pictures that would help elicit memory. (The reasons for these methodological choices have already been outlined.)

*Experiencing the Experience at the Meta-Level*

*The Essential Interpreter*

*My personal practical knowledge surfaces yet again ...*
The last several months have been spent agonizing over how I am going to interpret the data - the field text. It occurred to me, not too long ago, after contemplating/pondering the phrase “interpret the data” that I have been ‘interpreting data’, as it were, for the last seven years. A job I feel I have outgrown, but a job I have thoroughly enjoyed doing. I’ve moved to another plain of interpretation - via this research work - yet I somehow have not grasped the understanding with which I am to start this new job of ‘interpreting’. I feel like I’m about to start a brand new assignment - and indeed that is what I’m doing. I can remember the first hearing I attended 7 years ago. I came to that work with the self-assuredness of someone who felt very confident speaking dialect, Italian and English and who understood italiese and the pastiche of all of the above coming together at once (Journal entry August 8, 1997).

For seven and a half years I interpreted verbatim viva voce testimony from claimants who suffered personal injury (either at work, in a motor vehicle accident, or in some other type of accident), in judicial and various quasi-judicial administrative tribunals. I both took and interpreted an oath administered by an officer, “To tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. To break that promise to tell the truth would be an offense under the law”. After writing a paper entitled: Language, culture, interpretation, and the role of symbolic domination in quasi-judicial proceedings (Gallucci-Maggisano, 1994) where I looked at the role of interpreters in official settings, I realized that this becomes multi-layered.

Perhaps the narrative tension that I have felt in likening my work as court interpreter to being an interpreter of field text connects back to why I went into this line of interpreting work. It was a lucrative job but it minimized my imagination. What led me there? Was it connected with the identity issues that I
had been grappling with? Perhaps the interpreting work was a refuge of sorts. It was a place, especially after a disappointing teaching experience, where I could lose myself in other people's words. How does this relate to my study? In narrative inquiry, there is no illusion created about seeking "the truth". Field text oscillates between fact and fiction. Knowing that, the aim becomes seeking a better understanding, making-meaning of an experience. The "quest for certainty," as Dewey (1930) suggests, is simply an illusion of objectivity.

As I story my role as an interpreter in simultaneous interpreted interaction I recall the feeling of being simply a *vox*. I was to interpret verbatim, to the best of my ability, and I was not to add or subtract a syllable more. This would appear to be simple. In essence the 'officials' wanted to hear the claimant's story and I was there only to interpret. But the story, as usual, was not that simple. Having had the privilege of being in a pivotal role as being both a participant and an observer to the proceedings, I noticed that the interactional processes between officials, claimants, and the interpreter in these settings lay at the heart of how institutions constructed legitimate knowledge and how officials attempted to impose their version of it. After all, the process has a direct effect on the outcome of the claimants' interests. The particular role of the interpreter is distinguished by the fact that she or he is an objective witness to the proceedings without an actual stake (other than to be seen as playing her or his role well) in the situation. The structure of the bureaucracy is based on objectivity, and therefore, the questions put to the witness (claimant) are controlled. Time and time again I observed how problematic this could be.

This relates to the methodology of my study in that, for example, I have a stake in this process, a doctoral degree, for one thing.
It became obvious who the stakeholders were once elicitation commenced. Every participant in the procedure, except for the interpreter, spoke in the first person whereas the interpreter was seen merely as a decoding mechanism for all concerned. *That is what I have wanted to avoid being as a researcher.* This neutralized the role of the interpreter and presumed objectivity during the hearings in order to keep the process as objective as possible. As an interpreter, I was bound to interpret verbatim, knowing - in most cases - that the claimant would not understand the terminology and acronyms being utilized and would often question me by asking what something meant while I was in the process of interpreting.

*I cannot be objective as a narrative inquiry researcher with respect to who I am in my relation to the participants, the field text of their experiences, and who I am as I interpret these texts in my research account. Autobiographical presence and the significance of this presence for the text and for the field are for Geertz (1988) matters of signature and voice and are of great importance.*

The elicitation process, during the inquiry, was controlled by the members of the tribunal, officers, and counsel - all of whom used elicitation to control what happened. They reinforced this control by using a language claimants did not understand. Officials controlled the focus and direction of the questioning. The claimant only responded or provided information relevant to the questions posed. I saw claimants try to elaborate their answers knowing that the answer they had just provided to the question did not suffice to clarify the issue. They were not allowed the opportunity to expand their answers as they were interrupted by either counsel or members of the tribunal. Sometimes they were reminded to, “answer the question directly.” In many non-Western cultures the discursive style is more elaborative by its very nature; therefore, the almost abrupt style of Western questioning was foreign to many of the claimants. Claimants perceived this line of questioning as limiting their freedom of expression.
The line of questioning reminded me of how I started interviewing Marina. She wanted to tell stories and I tried to keep her on a linear chronology (this example was provided earlier in the chapter). This is also why I chose unstructured interviews with my participants which lead to conversations. It was a way of listening for stories and ensuring the emergence of stories that lay hidden but needed to be told.

Sometimes, as an interpreter, I could not find an equivalent expression in English and therefore found myself interpreting literally, thus losing the essence of the meaning of the phrase or utterance. Cicourel (1988) would suggest that most of our knowledge is stored in an unconscious memory where organization is not clear. Often those posing questions are motivated by their own theoretical conceptions, not realizing that the respondents’ experiences may have been organized in a different fashion within their own framework of memory. In the case of birth dates for example, elderly Italians remember their saint’s name day more readily than their birth dates because the name day is celebrated in Italy whereas the birthday is not.

I am reminded continuously, during the recounting of my interpretation experiences, of the researcher/participant relationship with these examples. I am also reminded of symbolic domination, that is, the ability of a group (any group: researchers, academics, family, religion, and so on) to impose its view of reality on others. It is with this in mind that I have struggled to interpret my participants’ data.

I would suggest that the interpreter (also taken to mean the researcher) does have a stake in the proceedings - in being seen as acting professionally (objectively, neutrally, and linguistically competent). I puzzled over why everyone was invested in seeing interpreters as neutral. Why is that so important to the bureaucratic functionality of the tribunal? What we have here is a
bureaucratic procedure (quantitative research) based on notions of objectivity, fact, truth, and transparency which deals only in issues of subjectivity, socially-constructed reality, opinion, and interpretation. Hence the multiple contradictions as manifested in the ambiguous status of the interpreter. I am also reminded of the ambiguity of identity generally. I have tried to match the methodology to my research objective and I have come to the realization that in the quest for “truth” the best we can do is aim for credibility.

The issue of the importance of having bureaucratic knowledge (theoretical knowledge, in other words), hence being able to contextualize utterances (experiences, in my case presently as a researcher) in order to interpret them, and real-world outside knowledge versus the construct of interpretive transparency, which assumes that such a knowledge base for contextualization and/or interpretation does not exist or is not necessary, is an issue that needs to be worked through by anyone as a narrative researcher throughout the process of the research.

My capabilities as an interpreter have been an impediment for me because in narrative and social sciences we look for the creation of meaning by creatively interpreting field text. I, on the other hand, in my work as a court interpreter have been asked not to do that. In thinking of Adler and Van Doren (1972) I realize now, after my personal reflection, that I am indeed dealing with two different terms. The word ‘interpretation’ is a different ‘term’ in judicial or quasi-judicial proceedings than it is in social sciences. Without distinguishing that these are different terms, or that they are at opposite ends of the pole in terms of their function - my reflective piece signals that I had been having difficulty in knowing what to do with my field text because, in a sense, I have been trained (as a court interpreter) not to do anything but say what the stories are. For social science work the ‘saying’ does not necessarily construct the meaning.
The Move from Field Text to Research Text

The struggle with interpretation of field text is, in a sense, the struggle over writing the thesis. Inherent in the writing of the thesis is the interpretive process of moving from field text to creating research text. Connelly and Clandinin (1994) argue that what drives the transition from field text to research text is the asking of questions of meaning and social significance. Furthermore, the search for patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes that constitute the inquiry that shapes field texts into research texts is created by the writer’s experience.

Just as experience generally shapes identity, similarly, the researcher’s experience shapes the research text. I have argued, thus far, that in order to provide an educative form of teachers’ professional development, it is crucial to engage teachers in the “drawing out” of their personal experiences. It follows that teachers can then help students “draw out” their experiential knowledge base. It is, therefore, also important that the researchers’ internal conditions of experience be recognized as playing an important role in the shaping of the research text. Connelly and Clandinin refer to these internal conditions as researcher voice and signature.

The external conditions of experience, in the movement from field text to research text include the inquiry purpose. Our responsibility, as researchers, Connelly and Clandinin, exhort, is to go beyond ourselves and our participants to a larger field and research community. “Serving the self serves the community, and serving the community, serves the self” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, p. 425). These authors see personal experience research as a form of public inquiry that transcends the specialties of research in particular fields. I, for example, started my inquiry, with the purpose of understanding the identity formation of six second generation Italian Canadian women teachers. The study then became more of an inquiry into understanding identity formation and life issues more generally.

Connelly and Clandinin (1994) remind us that this happens because “personal experience methods connect with fundamentally human qualities of
human experience. Personal experience methods are human methods, therefore, the narrative form of the research text finds a place in public discourse” (p. 425).

In Chapter One I argued that arts-based research text “draws in” the audience and engages the audience in a conversation whereby the audience’s own personal experiences and interpretations of life are “drawn out” and interact with the text. Similarly, in a text “used in the service of others, researchers need to imagine themselves in conversation with [the participants and] an audience. [Indeed], personal experience methods offer us the opportunity to create a middle ground where there is a conversation among people with different life experiences” (p. 425). This conversation, in turn, permits researchers to enter into and participate with the social world in ways that allow the possibility of transformation and growth.
Chapter Four
The Pluridimensionality of ‘Being’ on a Personal Knowledge Landscape

Introduction
I have, thus far, argued that identity is inseparable from the life story it constructs for itself or otherwise inherits (Kerby, 1991). It is from these ‘stories to live by’ (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999) that a sense of self is generated. The thesis process has been instrumental in allowing me to awaken to the idea that much of our self-narrating is a matter of becoming conscious of the narratives that we already live with and in - for example, our roles in the family, and in the broader sociopolitical arena. Kerby tells us that we have already been narrated from a third-person perspective prior to our even gaining the competence for self-narration. Such external narratives will understandably set up expectations and constraints on our personal self-descriptions, and they significantly contribute to the material from which our own narratives are derived (Kerby, 1991, p. 6). In this chapter I focus on the external narratives which have impacted on my participants’ self descriptions, specifically the Italian hometown.

Self-understanding and self-identity are dependent upon the continuity of one’s personal narrative. Identity, therefore, implies a certain continuity over time and place. As a result, one’s identity may be or become fragmented into many different and discontinuous narratives. We are different characters at different times and places. Intuitively, when I undertook this narrative inquiry, I asked my participants to isolate the major shifts that occurred in their lives (after they completed their annal and chronicle) and to reflect upon them. Together we investigated what happened at the major shifts, or borders of different encounters of time and space in our lives. I understand now that questions of identity and awareness arise in crisis situations, and at certain turning points in our routine behaviour - in other words, when there is a break, or major shift in the continuity of our experience.
Reestablishing the Threads of Continuity Through Place

In the last chapter I outlined how narrative inquiry, and the 'recollective act' of engaging in personal experience methods, used to understand the experience of my participants, revealed the temporal and spatial structure of our lives. The methodology revealed the 'cumulative process of sedimented meanings' (Kerby, p. 11) in our lives. "This sedimented history serves as the horizon within which our present acts take on meaning" (Kerby, 1991 p. 12). Similarly, teacher knowledge is seen by Connelly and Clandinin (1999) as such a storied life composition. It is, however, more than just a sedimented history for these authors. These stories, these narratives of experience are both personal - reflecting a person's life history, and social - reflecting the milieu, the contexts in which teachers live. Stories are not simply layered, they are also 'interwoven' and multidimensional.

One of the goals of using the personal experience methods outlined in Chapter Three, and one of the goals of this inquiry has been to seek better understanding of my participants' identity formation, and heighten awareness of self, and others. From a research perspective I have not engaged in a quest for certainty. The goal of seeking a better understanding of lived experience has served the purpose of showing how narrative as inquiry allows for the study of self-knowledge. Postmodern theorists point out that knowledge, like self, is socially constructed and reflects human interests, values, and action. This approach has also helped me consider narrative as professional practice (Clandinin and Connelly, in press.) (Stories of professional practice and their connection to personal practical knowledge will be narrated in the next chapter.) How have we, as second generation Italian Canadian women teachers interpreted our personal and professional reality? How do we explain who we are? How do we story ourselves?

Noddings has observed that in contemporary schooling, the matters central to a fully human life are neglected. Those matters include: meaning-of-life issues,
personal commitment, homemaking, child rearing, the health of the soul (or whether it exists), gardening, hospitality, and love of place (Noddings, 1998, p. 1). In this chapter I focus on one of those areas of neglect - place. In particular I focus on that place where my participants' stories first started unfolding, that is, the hometown.

By examining place, specifically the hometown in this chapter, and how we shape it, and it shapes us, I have come to imagine a metaphor for life. We humans construct ways (sometimes rigid ways) of living outside of any relationship with the rest of nature and the rest of the world. We as educators tend to transcend place and prepare students to live in the world at large (Noddings, 1996) without considering that schools are not bounded systems. Schools are not simply an institutional shell, a container of classroom processes and curricular texts, waiting to be filled by teachers', students', and administrators' stories. Schools, like people, are defined by place. They are connected to a neighbourhood, a community, a city, businesses, and politics (Nespor, 1997, p. xi.) Looking at place challenges our view of ourselves as somehow being separate and different from the rest of life. Engaging in a discussion about place we engage in dialogue and community.

In the following research text I reconstruct an actual conversation I engaged in with my participants - Marina, Francesca, Sofia, and Rosanna - on the topic of hometown life, since it plays a prominent role in our identity formation. Part of the issue has been to "dig" into something that might have had a fairly significant imaginary role to play in our identity formation. We considered what were the effects of the norms and values of the hometown upbringing we received. This is important to consider since we were born in Canada only a few years after our parents emigrated to Canada. Our parents' emigration marks the first shift in the continuity of the hometown experience. We also considered how those values, our felt experience of that hometown world, and our emotions (Johnson, 1987)
were embedded in the actual physicality of the hometown landscape. How does this link to personal narrative?

In the area of professional development, as teachers, we want to know what we know. What do we enact? What do we not want to enact? This kind of conscious choice making is important. The aim of my conversation with my participants is to allow us to collect “data” on ourselves so that we may recognize what our knowledge is. Once we know something about ourselves then perhaps we can begin to change. A patient awareness of patterns helps us engage in attitudinal changes towards other people (Soto, 1994), for example. What sources helped shape our imagination and our values as second generation, Italian Canadian women teachers? Place, for instance, shapes us, and we, in turn shape place.

In the *Physics*, Aristotle says that place is prior to all things; everything that exists exists in a place, and “the power of place will be a remarkable one.” For some of the World’s people, place is almost synonymous with identity. ... For the Navajo, place is alive; it is a Great Self, and “to move away means to disappear and never be seen again.” ... They reside in a place that ... shapes them. (in Noddings, 1998, p. 2)

An identity is constructed in much the same way as a landscape. (Although this construction too, is not self evident - an urban landscape, for example, is constructed differently than a natural woodland.) We make sense of our world by integrating new ways or old ideas (from the old country for example) into an already existing mental or physical schemata by modifying or reconstructing present understandings. As I have already stated in the introduction to this chapter, the connection between place and identity formation lies in the understanding that place (or the external narrative of place) has impacted on our self-description. The places which have impacted on, and have had an effect on our identity formation are hometown, the Italian Canadian landscape, Italy, and Canada. Each participant responded differently to each context I asked them to consider. In this
chapter I focus primarily on the hometown landscape. (The other contexts are dealt with in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven.)

The purpose is to show how place has shaped our identity. In the area of professional development, knowing who you are provides a strong sense of self. van Manen and Levering (1996, p. 74) feel that it is necessary to have principles of “independence, personal power, and positive autonomy in order to have identity formation.” By crafting our own stories, throughout this research -either by way of the stories told during conversation, written stories, or poetry - my participants have become aware of taking control of their own identity formation.

My participants’ stories are about a shifting landscape. As the physical space (rural to urban) changed so did our ‘mindscape’, and so did our sense of identity. In terms of the life of an immigrant, we are only one generation removed from a small rural town in southern Italy of the 1920s and 30s. Although we grew up in large urban Toronto in the 1960s and 70s, we carried the hometown landscape within us (that is, within our ‘mindscape’) all the time through language, customs, and the private world of our home and families. Superimposed on this was the fact that while we were “over here” (in Canada), Italy and its hometowns were changing “over there” - another landscape but a foreign one. We became adept, very early on in life, in shifting, chameleon-like, between one landscape and another. That is, there was a ‘mixing’ of the mental landscape of the imagined hometown (as told through our parents and grandparents stories, or storied as we remembered it through our eyes as children) and the physical reality of our life in Toronto. Through this research I have begun to see the connection with my professional practice in that my teaching identity has always been and continues to be in flux. My teaching identity is always shaped by my personal stories, the images conjured up by our parents’ memories, and the stories of other teachers, students, administrators, parents, the community, and so on.

The stories in this chapter are told by real people living real lives. Representationally, I have chosen the structure of story and conversation to portray
the landscapes. Throughout this chapter I contextualize my discussion with selected stories told by my participants during a conversation. Paradoxically, the power of the specific ordinary stories told by my participants lies in the fact they are “recognizable, common, and continuous with everyday experiences that we all may have had and still have” (van Manan & Levering, 1996, p. 9). By situating ourselves in the place of the personal (that place that is familiar and intimate) and making it manifest by telling stories of that place I hope to be able to merge the inner world with the outer professional world, and in turn the world of school within the world at large - especially within the context of education and multiculturalism.

The pedagogical significance of telling stories of the personal landscape is to be able to uncover the multiple layers of self that contribute to personal and professional identity formation. By crossing borders within the personal world, I hope to show how difficult it is to separate the personal and the professional landscapes. This is a matter that would be ‘central to a fully human life’. Banks (1996) tells us that the construction of accurate knowledge (which he defines as reflecting the reality observed and the subjectivity of the knower as experienced by the knower) would help to undercut stereotypes and misconceptions that support stereotype, racism and discrimination. Scholars, Banks believes, have an obligation to participate in action that would help to make society more democratic and just. Giving credence to stories of personal experience, and becoming aware of what we enact and how we enact it (attitudinally) as a result of storying our experiences is the beginning of such action.

Beatrice chose not to participate in the conversation. Instead, she wrote a detailed, reflective piece on her memories of her parents’ hometown. I have woven Beatrice’s reflections into the conversation both as a way of including her voice, and as a way of encouraging further responses from the other participants. The elicitation of response by way of a conversation (see Chapter Three, Methodology) allowed us to know more about ourselves because it allowed us to
compare our stories. It was a way of uncovering our taken-for-granted beliefs. It
gave us an opportunity to discover what values lie behind the images of
hometown we carry in our ‘mindscape’ because these are the images that have
shaped us and are still shaping us whether we have been aware of it or not. I
weave in my voice both as participant, and researcher by integrating field text,
literature, and my interpretation (I sometimes include interpretive comments
through the voice of my participants). By incorporating these three elements
throughout this chapter I hope “to create a seamless link between the theory and
the practice embodied in the inquiry” (Clandinin & Connelly, in press, p. 74.) The
conversation I reconstruct also serves as metaphorical conversation “between
theory and the stories of life contained in the inquiry” (p. 75).

During our conversation about our life experiences and our interpretations
of those experiences we ‘test[ed] life possibilities’. The significance of this is that
the conversation will permit you as reader “the vicarious testing of life
possibilities. This use of narrative inquiry extends the educative linking of life,
literature, and [as I show in the following three chapters] teaching” (p. 75). The
creation of this research text on ‘place’, I hope, will “offer readers a place to
imagine their own uses and applications” (p. 76), thus opening up the text for you,
the reader, to converse with.

Borders of time and place are constantly being crossed during this
conversation. The conversation takes place in December, 1998, with my
participants and I seated at my kitchen table having coffee and cake. We go back
in time and place to our hometowns as we story that hometown at times through
our eyes as children, at other times as adolescents, teenagers, or adults. The
conversation takes us back not only to the hometown but it carries us forward to
urban Toronto and the schools in which we teach. I have inserted the interjections
of laughter and general consensus among the group as I reconstructed the
conversation in order to occasionally transport the reader back to the present time.
Imagining the Hometown

In this research text, I reconstruct my participants’ tales of the past that have been made believable by constructing webs of relationships between the facts of the real historical situation (i.e. that their grandparents came from a hometown originally and were sojourners in North America at the turn of the century, that their parents emigrated to Canada, and so on), and the perceptions, interpretations, and effects those historical situations and that hometown place had on my participants’ identity formation. We did this through “reason and invention, by exercising a ‘historical imagination’” (Makler, 1991, p. 29), furthermore, “[b]y combining a tale with a well-formed argument, [we make] plausible claims about how [we] behaved, thought, and felt about particular events and issues, based upon [our] ‘knowledge’ of ... the historical record. These narratives instantiated the projection of historical imagination” (p. 29).

Carmen:

In our last conversation where we talked about Rosie Di Manno’s article (see Chapter One) I remember noting that Rosie’s oscillation - between dispelling the Italian Canadian culture to not entirely buying into the Anglo-Saxon Canadian culture, to feeling the rush of thousands of years of history run through her blood when she’s in Italy, to feeling at home when she comes back through Canada customs after a trip - is an indication that she has been struggling to define herself and her values. She’s wondering about who she is, and where she belongs - just like we have. But, before we talk about the actual physicality of the hometown landscape maybe we can first brainstorm and talk about what our values are.

Sofia:

As a cultural group or individual?
Carmen:

It doesn’t matter, either way.

Sofia:

Hard work. You earn what you get.

Francesca:

Rootedness. You stay in a place.

Carmen:

Conversely, the sense of loss you feel when you are uprooted. Place and people were our parents’ reference point, when they moved to a different place they had no more reference points. The move (from hometown to Canada) was a break in the continuity of their lives. The loss is in the discontinuity of things, to a certain degree. I’ve started understanding that the dilemma I’ve experienced in terms of my own identity and feeling a sense of loss of self, which I was desperately seeking to re-find, was largely attributable to the sense of loss my parents were feeling, (which I picked up on), about having left their hometown. Basically, my puzzling over my identity has led me to ‘place’. A large part of identity formation, for me, has had to do with connection to place - both real (meaning Canada) and imagined (meaning the hometown). That imagined hometown place, and the values embedded in it, has helped shape who I am - what’s been missing is the actual physical concrete place. I guess that’s where I have felt the sense of loss. At some point, in my identity formation, a sense of loss of self became coterminous with a sense of loss of place. Not until now have I been able to untangle the two stories. What I hope to do in our conversation this evening is start unravelling the puzzle over place and what is embedded in this place we call our hometown. The point about the hometown is that it was the concrete expression of where everything was - it was
in the town and in the family at home. These were the two places where life was most fully expressed. (General consensus in the group.) So, let's continue brainstorming about values.

Sofia:
Marriage.

Carmen:
The “s” word - la sistemazione. [Everyone agrees and laughs.]

Sofia:
Family, family loyalty.

Francesca:
Duty and obligation to family members.

Sofia:
“È dovere.” (It is duty.) [Everyone says, “uh hum”.

Francesca:
Education. [Everyone pauses on this value - unlike the unanimous agreement among everyone for the other values mentioned thus far.]

Carmen:
Do you think education for women? I know that for me, Lina, and Beatrice, graduate school would not have been encouraged in the sense that we may have been supported in our decisions to continue with our education but our parents would not have understood why we would want to do it.

Francesca:
For me it was encouraged.

Sofia:
For me it was too.

Rosanna:
But, not too much to put you out of the marriage market. You don’t want to be smarter than your husband.
Sofia:
I disagree with that. My father is not your stereotypical Italian.

Marina:
Both of my parents pushed me towards education.

Carmen:
I do remember you saying, however, that your brother was encouraged to go on to university.

Marina:
Yes, but, for me it was just important to have a profession, which, I connect to the notion of the family making it more than me individually. [Everyone agrees.] In the town it was a sign of prestige to have children who were professionals. A teacher was called a professore. For immigrants especially, if you were going to get one stop past the hometown, in southern Italian society, then of course, having your children not be workers of the land was prestige motivated. It was a sign of status.

Rosanna:
For my folks I’m not certain it was prestige motivated. The motive was to empower you to chose how you wanted to live your life. You weren’t under anybody’s thumb. I think that was the motivating force for them.

Sofia:
Having your child go beyond the secondary level also legitimized, for them, to who was left behind in the small town, why they came here. [General agreement among the group.] Not too many people from our hometown emigrated to Canada.

Carmen:
Sounds like a question of pride.
**Sofia:**

My parents were supposed to be transients. They spent a few years going back and forth from the hometown to Canada. Everyone in the town kept asking my mother why they were going back. “Isn’t Italy good enough for you?”, they would ask. No one ever really gives a damn about what’s going on in those four walls in your house, it’s “la figura della famiglia nella piazza” (it’s the image of the family in the piazza) that is being jeopardized. It was a big thing. [Everyone agrees.] I remember my aunt saying to me, “it looks so nice now, in mezzo alla piazza” (in the middle of the piazza), with all of the brothers walking together”. I said, “One of the brothers goes home and cries at night.” That didn’t matter. So, when we came back here and I got my Master’s, my father said, “Ph.D now?” This legitimized the leaving of the family, which some people saw as going against the family, almost a disloyalty in coming here.

**Marina:**

It’s a vindication. But, again, it’s different from the town I came from. Practically the whole town dislocated to Toronto. It was a very poor place.

**Carmen:**

It sounds like how things look from the outside is very important. By the same token, the way things look from the outside is not necessarily a reflection of reality. In terms of identity generally, and I have said this before, people are people. What is an Italian? We tend to stereotype people but every time we speak we are proving that people are people. One of us may tell a story which will resonate far more readily with someone from a different cultural background than with someone from our own cultural background. By storying our experiences in our own terms we are engaging in the
construction of accurate knowledge (Banks, 1996) - by accurate I mean, we are telling the story the way we, who have experienced it, see it. It isn’t a story being told by someone simply observing us and interpreting what they think we may have experienced growing up in an Italian Canadian family. Banks reminds us that the construction of accurate knowledge helps to “undercut stereotypes and misconceptions that support racism and discrimination” (Banks, 1996, p. viii). Banks also suggests that as researchers there is an obligation to participate in action that would help to make society more democratic and just. I think that the action we’re taking in storying our experiences and telling those stories of experience is the kind of participation he is talking about.

Marina:

In that same vein I would have to say that yes, we’ve been stereotyped as Italians, but, we also stereotype others. I’ve noticed with my mother that there’s always this comparison between Canadians and Italians, it’s a value she feels we Italians have for the things we own; to take care of them, and to keep them pristine, and very clean.

Carmen:

It sounds to me like stereotyping and pointing a finger at others, while we keep our things clean and pristine, is just a cover story to hide what’s really underneath the surface. How does any of this relate to the physicality of the hometown?

Beatrice:

I remember the houses in the town and its outskirts, both old and new, were built with a sensitivity for aesthetics. There was always this concern for what looked good. In the new section of my grandfather’s houses (added on by my uncle) there are large
windows that let in natural light and that face the huge mountains up
the slope beyond the town. Some days, I would simply stare at the
mountains and, like the sense of rootedness that we talked about
before, this made me feel reassured. In looking at those mountains,
I had a sense of “Yes, God does exist. He must. Who else could have
created this beauty?” I also remember my mother’s oldest sister, she
would have been 64 years old when I was last there. She still lived
in the tiny house given to her by her mother when she got married
in 1938. I loved the way she had modernized it (by adding on an
indoor washroom) and, at the same time, had kept its original design
and structure. It was a neat and tidy two room home - the kitchen
and the bedroom. It reminded me of the log cabin in “Little House
on the Prairie”. To reach the small added-on washroom, you had to
exit the house. I liked that detail too. It signalled to me that my aunt
had not let a given structure stand in the way of making life a bit
easier for herself. I was proud of her, proud of the way she took care
of her home and the way she took care of herself. The interior
smelled woodsy and spicy, the same way I remembered it as a child.
To open her door, she had to use a large medieval looking key. I
loved that too - it gave the house character.

Carmen:

‘She took care of herself’ - doing it yourself. I was at York University
speaking to some students there and this issue came up. They were
comparing Woodbridge, Forest Hill, Rosedale and I remember one
student saying, “Yeah, well, we do the work ourselves in
Woodbridge. In Forest Hill, and Rosedale they pay others to do the
work for them”.


Marina:
I have a cleaning lady and I didn’t tell anybody in the family. I kept her a secret. [Everyone laughs.] In my case too we were not the stereotypical Italian family. My mother was the hard working ambitious one. My father preferred to take an easy light job at my mother’s expense.

Carmen:
The value of hard work. Knowing what I do know of all of you, you’ve held down up to 4 jobs at once during different periods in your lives. So there’s a sense of keeping up appearances, but with hard work. Remember also, that as Roman Catholics we specialize in martyrdom! (Everyone laughs.)

Marina:
That’s right, we haven’t mentioned religion yet.

Rosanna:
My father attended the seminary in his youth and said that he had had enough masses to last him a lifetime. My mother tended to go out of habit, pardon the pun! [Laughter in the group.] Actually I think she goes to church because she is superstitious. She prays for her children who don’t go to church.

Carmen:
Based on the field texts I’ve collected, based on our work together, I’ve observed that we (meaning the participants) are divided among the secular (Marina, and Rosanna), the middle road (Sofia, and Carmen), and those who had religion, or spirituality play a larger part in their lives (Beatrice, and Francesca). Again, I would have to add, “What is an Italian?”. We all come from Roman Catholic backgrounds but we practice the religion in varying degrees.
Sofia:

*My mother would always go to church, it was the only place in town that she was allowed to go unless somebody accompanied her somewhere else. She has passed it down to me. Religion is definitely a value; to what degree for different people is debateable.*

Marina:

*In terms of landscape, and the physicality of the religion in our town, we had two churches. When they used to have processions, they competed to see who could collect the most money. They carried on that tradition here. The hometown clubs still have that competition when they bring their banners to the Good Friday Procession at St. Francis of Assisi church on College St. and Grace St. The church back home collected money here in Toronto to send back home for ...*

Carmen:

*bells, restorations, church organs. Even statues of saints have made transatlantic migrations back and forth. [laughter]*

Marina:

*The other physicality of it, is that my mother has a shrine in her house. There’s the tacky religious art that permeates my childhood home in my mother’s home to this day. I also believe in shrine building.*

Sofia:

*I do that in my office at school. It helps me make a connection to the things I like, and it’s just between you and those things and no one else knows about it.*

Francesca:

*I just want to bring out one point, I don’t think it’s a value but I think that values are around it. The notion of “il destino” (destiny). This*
idea that there is some element of non-control. My mother explains everything away as being “il destino”.

Carmen:

The stoic resignation to “il destino”. [Everyone is in agreement.] It may partly have to do with the belief in God’s will. I also wonder about the many physical disasters Italy has dealt with, for example landslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and so on.

Sofia:

Sacrifice is a value we haven’t yet talked about.

Carmen:

I would have to agree with that because along with all of these natural disasters Italians have had to deal with, they’ve had to deal with harsh climatic conditions, working with the mountainous landscape; they have had to work hard at shaping their environment. The physicality of the land has determined their ‘destiny’ if you will, and they have had to learn how to cope with it, and work with it, and shape it. Place shaped their ‘attitude’ to attend to immediate needs. Maybe this is where that notion that Picchione talks about that utilitarianism drives our intentions comes from. (See Chapter Two.)

Beatrice:

These notions of sacrifice and destiny are very important. I’ve been to my parents’ hometown in Italy only two times - in 1967 when I was 8 years old, and in 1983 when I was 24. The first time, I went with my mother and my brother. We stayed for two months. The second time I went on my own. I stayed for about five weeks - but not consecutively. These details, in a way, shaped my perspective of the physicality of the landscape.
Carmen:
What do you mean?

Beatrice:
I’ll explain how this relates to Sofia’s point about sacrifice. When I went with my mother, first of all, I was seeing the landscape with the eyes of a child. Keep in mind that both the life experience and the cognitive processing of an eight-year-old child are limited. I remember feeling like, in some ways, I was living in Pioneer Village or on the inside of a movie depicting 19th Century life in North America. Most of the women of my grandmother’s generation still wore the traditional long skirts, thick stockings, and headscarves. Although my grandparents’ house was equipped with all the modern conveniences, my grandmother refused to use the stove - she cooked in the fireplace like in the old days; she refused to use the automatic washing machine - she went down to the river to wash clothes, like in the old days. My grandfather preferred the outhouse to the indoor washroom. All of this seemed ‘normal’ to me, even if it was a culture that I wasn’t used to. Of course, my grandfather preferred the outhouse - why wouldn’t he? He worked outside most of the day - why would anyone in their right mind want to walk all the way to the house from the fields, remove their shoes (so as not to bring cow manure in) and walk all the way across the big ancestral home, just to relieve themselves? Did that make sense? No. Similarly, my grandmother’s attitude seemed normal to me, brought up as I had been to respect if not revere my elders. The older the person, the more respect you showed. One did not question the judgment of an elderly woman. It just was. [General consensus in the group.]
Marina:
There’s the story in our hometown of the old wise woman who always said that one should always find something to do. It was inbred in them that idleness was something that was morally wrong. If a woman was idle she was probably trashy, there was a negative sexual connotation to it - all sexual connotations were negative! (Everyone laughs.)

Sofia:
I have a story that ties into that. When I was in the hometown in the ‘80s I remember that after a meal the men would go to the piazza for coffee, or a walk, or a game of cards. I was expected by my grandfather to sit in the house and do some cross-stitching. I preferred going to my cousin’s house. My grandfather got wind of what I was doing and got on my mother’s case about this. I was to be kept busy doing women’s work, and not going out roaming the town. In order to keep my grandfather happy my mother pleaded with me to just sit for a couple of days and do this embroidery. I sat at the front door, where everyone could see me, and did the embroidery. My friends laughed at me, but my grandfather was very happy and proud that I was doing a woman’s work. Again, there was pride in working very hard.

Beatrice:
I am amazed when I think about the amount of work these women had to do. As an adult visitor to my parents’ hometown, the details of the old world living that I had noticed on my first visit took on a different meaning for me. My grandmother was no longer living, but the fireplace where she had cooked her food was still there; the river where she had washed her clothes was still running. When I thought of those things as an adult, I marvelled in respect and admiration at
this woman's strength and perseverance. She had had eight babies, six of whom survived. The washing of diapers alone would have been a heroic feat, in my eyes.

Carmen:

It seems to me that the physicality of the hometown imposed certain demands on the lifestyle and conduct of life by those people living there, and in consequence is responsible for traits, and characteristics, and values - sacrifice being one of them, that are related to the physicality of the landscape. In some cases, and I remember someone in the family saying that, they had to walk one to one and one half hours to the land where they had their vegetable garden in order to water it. Furthermore, because there was a shortage of water they had to wait their turn for the water. There was no space in the hometown, it was all stone, there was no greenery, so, they had to walk these distances to get to their land. These parcels of land were even given their own name. My husband remembers his mother walking home with wood on her head at 8 am just when he was going to school. She had left at 4 am to get wood for the oven because she had to make the bread. This seems to be synonymous with our living the sacrifices that our parents and grandparents lived on our behalf. We seem to have taken this hard work ethic to heart. I don’t know whether we story it as guilt, or continuity, but we have engaged in similar behaviour, for example, going to school, and holding down two or three jobs at the same time, or not telling people in the family that you have a cleaning lady. It has certainly shaped our behaviour.
Sofia:
You can’t be selfish! How dare you want time for yourself!

Marina:
They definitely brought this hard work ethic with them when they came to Canada. Watching my mother go to work in a factory when she arrived here was a terrible experience for me. I was seven when she started working in the factories, imbibing chemicals, trucking all the way out to Scarborough from mid-town. Her life was really hard. She was ill a lot and tired all of the time. As a child I was constantly feeling guilty and wondering what I could do to help my mother and make it better for her. The point is that I certainly absorbed how hard her life was and I think even to this day - no matter how tough things get, I have a good life.

Carmen:
Maybe we can backtrack just a little and relate all of this to the geography of the hometown. Where, for example, were those parcels of land where they grew their vegetables, in relation to the town? Does anyone have any observations they’d like to share?

Beatrice:
Again, as an adult visitor, I noticed more of the details of the physicality of the hometown landscape. I noticed, for example, that the town is situated at the foothills of a mountain. Naturally, I had been aware of the mountain the first time I went, but I had had no language to express this nuance. Also, the second time I visited, I roamed around a bit more on my own. Almost everyday, I would walk from my grandfather’s house to the town square. The town social structure is dictated by its geography. I already had a sense of this from my parents’ stories. The people who live in the centre of town are the people from the “paese” (town). The people who live
further down the slope are already in the “campagna” (country side), but not as far out as the people who live on the plain - definitely, “la campagna”. My grandfather’s house was on the plain.

**Sofia:**

My town is on the highest point on the hill, then it slopes down, and all you have are wheat fields. My favourite thing to do, when I’m there, is to go for a bike ride at 6 in the morning - all you see are wheat fields.

**Beatrice:**

In our town the road that led to the town square passed right in front of my grandfather’s house. The closer and closer I got to the town square, the steeper and steeper this road became. About ten metres or so from the church door, right at the boundaries of the town square, it would feel like I was walking straight up, on a right angle to the mountain. And the road did not end there. It continued on, behind the church, winding its way upward to the mountain. There were people who lived along this upward road and even on the mountain - not many, but some. So, you see, the “town” was not just one place, but really was like a big tree with long extended roots. This fact helped me to see that the life of my parents, the experiences of my past, were not in any way simple. Oftentimes, I think that cultural historians stereotype what it means to live in a small town or stereotype the characters of a small town when, in fact, the life of the town was a complex tapestry, evidenced by its outstretching neighbourhoods and their varied characteristics. It was an eclectic place.

Each neighbourhood (called “una borgada” in our dialect) in the town had a name of its own. The central neighbourhood (downtown) was “il paese”, but even this was subdivided into “la piazza” (the
town square), “il castello” ('the castle', or the ruins, remnants of a medieval castle), and “la fontana” (the fountain, where people would get their mountain water for drinking). On the outskirts of “la campagna”, where my father’s old house stood, the neighbourhood was called “Cazzotti”. Other places were called “Il Muro di Sofia”, “Le Tre Fontane”, and so on, I can’t remember them all. Some of the names had to do with family names, I’m sure. ... I loved all of these rich historical and linguistic details even before I went to Italy because they had been part of the stories my parents had told me of their hometown, over and over again. It made me feel proud to know that I was part of a long line of people who had imagination and humour.

Rosanna:

I’ve been back to the hometown about a dozen times since my first visit at age 7. I’ve made interesting discoveries, observations about hometown life and I’m not sure I can articulate all of them but I will try to broach the subject anyway ... The warmth I feel when I am there visiting my grandmother has much to do with her. I’m afraid that link will disappear any time now and it feels like I’ll be cut loose in space tethered only to Canada. I’m intrigued by customs and rituals around death (they lay their loved ones out in the home), and marriage (they follow the bride in a processional to the church, and the December slaughter of the hogs (much like the scene in “L’Albero degli Zoccoli”). My time spent there was an education. I liked their uninhibitedness - “spregiudicati”! And their stories!! They were often based on fact. What the village idiot did, who the doctor was sleeping with, who went to Rome to have an abortion, who was the illegitimate child of the mayor, and so on. Who needed television? The truth is stranger than fiction. We don’t have time to
go into detail but I am fond of the characters that inhabit my parents’ hometown. They flaunt their foibles. Basically, they’re not afraid of their humanity (reflection, July, 1997).

Carmen:

What comes to mind as you’re talking about all of these stories is that everybody knew everybody else’s business. Everyone lived so close to each other. There was no privacy.

Beatrice:

I can give you an example of that. On my first visit when I was 8 years old my grandparents lived with their youngest son, his wife and daughter in the “casa paterna” (paternal home) - what seemed to me a huge house with great thick walls. As a child I had a limited notion of history - I knew that the house was old and that duly impressed me, but I just took it for granted. Of course, it was old, everything about Italy was older than everything about Canada. I suppose you could say that the oldness of the place, gave me a sense of being rooted in a past which was very reassuring. I must have unconsciously valued this rootedness because, when I came back to Canada, I remember feeling rather sorry for my English Canadian classmates. I felt like I had a past and they didn’t. In a sense, I felt superior to them.

By the time I went back in 1983 I had the beginnings of a realization that I would never fit in completely in Canadian society. The houses in my parents’ hometown were constructed in such a way that it was easy for two, three, maybe even four generations to live in them. This was considered normal. Even when new houses were built it was not uncommon for adult children to live with their parents. I’m thinking of one man in particular who built a new house way up on the mountain. He built it as a triplex, so both of his two married
children could have a home with him. New houses were built or old ones were modernized, but the pattern of living together, for the most part, remained intact. In Canadian society, this is considered "abnormal".

Carmen:

This has spilled over into Toronto. My father is living with us for the time being. Since my mother passed away he found that he could not live on his own. He says that he wants to help me out until I finish writing my thesis. Also, not uncommon in the family is to live at home until you either get married, or die, whichever comes first. (Everyone laughs, and is in agreement.)

Beatrice:

In Italy, the living together of two or more generations gives a sense of community and continuity to the inhabitants of the hometown. This sense extends beyond the walls of one's home to the whole town. When someone needed help, help was readily available, if not at home, then at a neighbouring house. The remnants of my immediate family (another aunt, her son, their children) all lived across the road from my grandfather's house. I saw them everyday. There was no sense of separation within the family. Even outside of the immediate family, because of the smallness of the town, life events were celebrated or experienced as an entire community. For example, a wedding ceremony would be attended by the entire town because it was held during regularly scheduled Sunday Mass. A sense of community and shared living were the upside of the smallness of the hometown. The down side remained the same as it had been in my parents' day - there was no such thing as privacy. But this too, had its humorous side. For example, as Rosanna has already noted, news of my arrival spread like wildfire even before I
had set foot in town. People I didn’t know personally, but who had known my parents would come up to me and introduce themselves. I found this very touching. It added to my sense of rootedness. And yet, I knew that I didn’t fully belong in my parents’ hometown anymore than I fully belonged in Toronto. As much as the people made me feel welcome, I stood out as an “americana” (American).

Marina:

I see our life in Canada as an extension of the town - in terms of the kind of hold the family has extended over its offspring, in terms of generating the same values in them. Growing up in Canada, and living in my house with my family there was no freedom. Once I finished school, I left. I had a lot of anger about the kind of upbringing I’d had. I didn’t live in an Italo-Canadian community, I felt very marginalized and so I moved out and did my own thing. My idea of the kind of extension of the hometown values is that, in my extended family, which is very large, I’m constantly surprised at how everything is continued and regenerated. The rite of passage is still marriage and buying a house (which, by the way, has no library because they don’t read). There are only maybe two non-conformists in this very huge family. Somehow or other the families are able to recreate the values. They may certainly modify those values, Canadianize them, warp them a bit, but, they’re still there. I see the 20 and 30 year old people in my family who are basically creating what their parents had, only on a grander scale - more showy. Very few people in my extended family went to university. My big hopes for my nieces and nephews, and second cousins was that they would value education more. They’re not factory workers, they’re in small business, they run construction companies, they are secretaries, or receptionists, or they go to community college after
they finish high school. Then they buy the houses, the property, they have children, the family, they live close to the parents. I'm constantly astounded at the kind of grip that the displaced Italo-Canadese society has. We're expected to carry on this legacy of the old way of living.

**Carmen:**

I'm reminded of the insularity of those towns, the folding inward, the parochialism (symbolically represented by the various number of churches in these small towns), the protection of the values, the fear of contamination if you get exposed to urban values, the fear of loss of control of your kids. Even with respect to school, in order to continue on after elementary school one usually had to leave the town and go to the next one to continue one's education. Most people did not allow their children, especially the daughters to travel to the next town. There's protection in that and self preservation. At the same time, it's also a prison where your choices are limited and you cannot wander.

Has anyone else imagined how our values today are embedded in the physicality of the hometown?

**Beatrice:**

The road that I took into town every day really opened up my own imagination. It was only on my second visit that I pondered the fact that my mother would often have taken the upward main road, not just to the church, as I did, but all the way up to the mountain, an upward climb of several kilometres and a fairly high altitude. Many women would have done this. My paternal grandmother and others like her who had no land to speak of, would have had to make the daily trek up the mountain in search of firewood. My mother and other children would be sent up the mountain to help out men in the
family who herded sheep or to bring food to them. (My great-grandfather was a shepherd and my mother was his favourite grandchild so she would have spent a lot of time with him I imagine.) These details made me feel both proud and a bit ashamed. I marvelled at the strength, courage, and perseverance of these women who had preceded me. I wondered how I was expected to carry on their legacy. I still wonder about that. I don’t mean to discount the value of the work of the men, but I didn’t wonder too much about them. I couldn’t identify with them.

I visited “La Cappella” - a small church at the top of a smaller mountain beyond the “campagna” part of the town - with my two maternal aunts. The paved road leading to this church was a gentle slope compared to the main road leading to the “chiesa madre” in the town. I loved travelling this road with my two aunts, listening to them bicker as my middle aunt tried to give my older aunt unsolicited advice. I imagined that they and my mother would have travelled this road, and others, in the old days, and bickered, talked, laughed, and lived life together. I wished that my mother had been there to make it complete.

Rosanna:

My experience has been different because my father is the one who identified more with the hometown. One time when we were there as children, my father got everyone up at 6:00 am to march the five kilometres up the mountain to visit this abandoned house. In retrospect, it was a religious procession, of sorts, to my father’s house - the temple on the mountaintop. The town sits in the Apennines approximately sixty miles southeast of Rome. It’s down the mountain from my mother’s town which is down the mountain from the group of houses they call [home]. The stone farmhouse
where my father grew up sits perched overlooking the valley. It is an isolated spot but my father boasts about the location - having the most panoramic view of the valley below. My father’s family had long since emigrated to Canada and the house in the village was an empty cavern inhabited by bats and other creatures when I first visited. There is a long balcony that gives out to the front yard which is full of fig trees - we must have pictures of us picking that fruit for each year we visited it became kind of a ritual.

_Carmen:_

The reference that you make to ritual (both picking figs and returning often back to the hometown), and the ‘religious procession’ is both a literal and figurative comment. It alludes to both a physical landscape but also to an inner landscape situated in time and place. It sounds like your father, just like mine (see Chapter Two) didn’t want his children to forget his story. In fact, the ‘trek’ up the mountain to the ‘temple’ indicates to me that this stone house has reached mythic proportions in your imagination based on your father’s stories. You’ve now storied it as something bigger than life. The hometown has become a ‘sacred story’ to live by, in a sense.

The way we connect these images and experiences is to organize them through what Carola Conle (1996) would call resonance and metaphor. We’re experiencing our identity formation in terms of our parents’ experiences and their stories of what was, for them, the concrete hometown and the values embedded in it. In other words, our personal practical knowledge is indirectly shaped by our parent’s experiential narratives, and our interpretations of those narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994).
Beatrice:

You see, the physical structure of the town [including the surrounding plains, hills, and mountains], for me, was like one huge metaphor - life is an upward journey. Those who are strong, courageous, and persevering, stay on the road day after day. I often thought to myself that my grandmothers could not have had time for the luxury of easy despair - they were too busy with the details of living. Ironically, it was because life was so hard, that they did not despair. The choice between life and death was stark and they consistently chose life for themselves and for their children. I guess you could say that the physicality of the landscape of my parents' hometown holds the keys to many different doors of an interior home which I call my identity. I keep opening and re-opening those doors and, over and over again, as I'm travelling my own roads in 1998 Toronto, Canada, I keep finding the strength, courage, perseverance, humour, imagination, sensitivity, and “ricchezza interiore” (interior wealth) of my ancestors. These are my treasures - no one can ever take them from me.

Carmen:

“It is our very thinking process that moves metaphorically” (Conle, 1996, p. 310).

Francesca:

I'll give you another example of that. In my mother's rendition of the importance of place and its significance she lived on a street called “La Via di Bari”. That tells you where the road led, and definitely people who lived along “La Via di Bari” had a more prestigious status than people who lived within the town closer to each other. Because this road was closer to the piazza, it was the road leading out that gave people prestige. In the old part of town, like the
wonderful metaphor Beatrice uses of the complexity of the town, I remember stairs leading down, stairs going up, the closeness of everything, the density.

Marina:
Geographically, my recollection of the town is quite confused actually. I see the town as a very confusing maze. It winds, it is narrow, it has all of those arches, and those steps. When I see Toronto, I see grids, and I can get a sense of direction. I can’t make out those little streets and alleys in the village.

Carmen:
As we’re talking about the physicality of the town, the stairs and steps going up and going down, I remember that quite clearly in our hometown, and in Joe’s hometown when we’ve been there. There is also the walk up the mountain, down the mountain, all of those winding roads shaped to the contour of the mountains - I’m reminded of Nel Noddings’s lecture at AERA this last April (1998). She talked about place and how place functions as a shelter for the imagination. In restorying this place we call our hometown, I think we’re learning to understand ourselves. Noddings asks whether “we ever mention such possibilities to school children? ... Even if we dare not teach children directly how better to understand themselves, we might do so indirectly by helping them to understand others” (p. 7). I guess my point is that before we ask students to do this, we, as teachers may want to consider doing this first. I think that that’s what we’re doing here. The physicality of those stairs in the towns, leading up and leading down, the complexity of the layout of the town, the maze, is reminding me of what Noddings says in recalling “cellars and attics as metaphors for our deepest fears and airiest hopes”. It seems to me that what we’re doing here this evening,
together, by restorying the hometown as ‘a shelter for the imagination’, that hometown “can be a place where we ascend to warm memories and daydreams and descend with support and courage to face our fears and shortcomings” (p. 7) - revisited, that is, by reflecting on the effects our values have had on our identity formation. That hometown place helped shape who we are today - both personally and professionally.

Marina:
Well, I have trouble with this idea. While I believe in building a shelter for the imagination and have done so. I constructed it myself from elements that I chose. I hardly see my hometown as a shelter. While it was beautiful and ancient, and some strong relationships formed, and the people were courageous, wise, and gentle, at times, it was also brutal and harsh, especially for disempowered women and their children. There was family violence, poverty, and real despair. To promote this idea of hometown as shelter is engaging in fantasy, for me as I did before my therapy.

Carmen:
The point Noddings (1998) is making is that we, as teachers, may ‘hear lots of noises downstairs, but we rush upstairs (which is filled with trunks of algebra and SAT’s) to reassure ourselves that all is well’. We may want to think more about how and what we should teach so that more places in the future will be shelters for the imagination. What home means to us, what place means to us seems to stem primarily from the various stories of hometown we all have. The details we are sharing are “important parts of cultural literacy” (p. 9). It’s also partly about celebrating the ordinary things around us. This helps feed the imagination which needs shelter today from a chaotic public realm. Paying attention to “the world’s
last, purely humane corner ... nourishes the spirits that will move out into the public world with some direction” (p. 11).

Francesca:

As you’re talking about imagination I must say that I was 6 years old when I first went to my hometown, then I was 17, and then 22. It’s been over 15 years since I’ve been there. My recollections of the hometown are diffused and impressionistic. I don’t have a lot of detail. What I do have is filtered through the stories that my parents told. It’s more like I’m looking at a snapshot picture of something and am not able to distinguish whether this is a memory based on lived experience or is this a memory of a snapshot. So, I’m once or twice removed but I remember certain things about it. I remember the sun in the afternoon, I remember the white walls, I remember the thickness of the stone, the coolness of the house. I remember one or two rooms where the one room was bedroom/dining room/parlour - whatever you want to call it. But, the overall sense of the town was the war. The importance of the war and how the war had its effect on the buildings, the occupied places in the town.

Carmen:

It sounds to me like you are carrying this memory you have of the hometown in that in-between place, or what I’ve been calling that liminal space, which resides in the imagination. Do you mind reading that reflective piece you wrote on the old neighbourhood? It’s obviously tied in with your sense of the hometown and the images you hold of it.

Francesca:

Carmen and I had a conversation about the old neighbourhood which led me to write a story recalling the old neighbourhood in the
Danforth. I was making connections to my mother’s memories of the hometown. The story wrote itself...

Francesca’s Story

“There are places I remember
all my life,
though some have gone ... “
(adaptation of a Beatles’ song)

I grew up in a working class neighbourhood in the east end of Toronto. Nowadays if you walk further west of the old neighbourhood you’ll be greeted by the smells of roasted lamb and pizza prepared in wood-burning ovens. Greek town’s restaurants have raised the status of the Danforth, but back when my parents first arrived, it was a long strip of hamburger joints, hardware stores and sleazy looking taverns like the Linsmore which still stands, a rehabilitated ruin as preserved in its dark brick as its patrons by beer and smoke. My mother who was twenty when the war came to an end and thirty-five when she first walked past the taverns of the Danforth, warned us to stay clear of the drunken women and men (she referred to them as “gli inglesi”, the English) who teetered along. My parents were one of the first Italian immigrants to move into the area, and I can well imagine what the rupture in geography must have been like for them, especially for my mother whose many tasks as a new wife sent her into the butcher shops and clothing stores of these “inglesi” who drank beer, ate tinned food and vast quantities of ground beef.

Geography is destiny they say, and strangely, this cliché allows me to see what the now familiar stretch of the Danforth must have been like for my parents. For my father, a welder who did shift work at Massey Ferguson’s Ossington and King plant, the Danforth provided
an opportunity to gather with the “compari” and walk back and forth, back and forth, stopping occasionally when a word required emphasis. But what was the Danforth like for my mother? An echo of an earlier time perhaps. A dim recollection of her own mother admonishing her and my aunts, all youthful and expectant, to lock the doors when the soldiers - first the English, then the Germans - careened down their roads, drunk and loud. The women whispering behind the thick walls, resigned to their fates (July 28, 1998).

Carmen:

There are a number of themes that come to mind as I hear this piece being read. I see the transposition of the physical geography of war occupied hometown to the Danforth. Francesca, your mother has storied the Anglo-Saxon Canadians in much the same way as she storied the English soldiers during WWII. Storying this experience this way shows the tensions between social encounter and fear which becomes one of your mother’s landscapes - which is part of her destiny, another prominent theme that arose out of living in the hometown. You mention the ‘women whispering behind the thick walls, resigned to their fates’. For your mother, the Danforth, just like the hometown during the war, was a place to be feared. I also see the hometown ‘piazza’ story - where ‘men only’ socialized in the piazza - being rewritten in another context, that of the Danforth, when we see your father ‘walk back and forth and back and forth’. (For a discussion on the topic of what impact these stories had on our identity formation when we went to school and finally encountered ‘English’ friends see Chapter One, the conversation between my participants regarding Rosie Di Manno.)
Marina:
In terms of the physicality of the hometown I’d have to say that the piazza was the public life and was largely the domain of the men, except maybe when they were out walking in the evening with their family.

Sofia:
Women were kept at home doing women’s work. I, for example, was not allowed to go to my uncle’s bar/caffé even though my aunt was working there. My father told me that men would think that I was there looking for their attention. I would say, “couldn’t we say that all of those men were seeking my attention?” He would say that that’s just the way it is. Also, you’ll recall the “ricamo” (embroidery) story I told earlier.

Rosanna:
I agree with that, but I think that it’s even more than that. Women weren’t allowed to tap their intellect. That public space was a way of exchanging political ideas, more worldly ideas. In the private space, you’re isolated, you’ve only got “you” to talk to. You’ve got your own thoughts, your mother. Women’s intellect, I think is still considered, to a certain extent, to be dangerous.

Carmen:
Do you think that this is the reason why we have never been encouraged to continue on to do post-graduate work, or pursue another career besides teaching - which is considered a safe, family-oriented profession?

Marina:
Considering women’s intellect to be dangerous is true in any patriarchy. Public life in those villages is the piazza, and is the place of activity, and it’s also the place were political presentations are
made. You had prominent individuals who were known for their rhetoric who stood up in the piazza, they had a little stage. They had a little audience. It was all male. But, I see it as being no different from an urban capitalistic place in the sense (and now it's changing, of course) that the public activities of the economies, academe, the power structures were basically the activity of men. The women were doing the secretarial work, they were in the home, they were doing the stuff that's invisible.

**Sofia:**

Just one more thing about the piazza, that is, the male version, and the female version of the piazza. For a woman it was the showcase for potential matrimony. It was your debut. (Everyone is in agreement.) You had to dress up and you'd be 'checked out' by future mothers-in-law. The other thing I remember is at age 12 or 13 standing there and people would talk about me, in front of me. Nobody used to talk to me directly.

**Marina:**

I call that the objectification of women. My mother still does that. She'll say, "Well, look at her", while I'm standing there.

**Carmen:**

I've had family members do that, meaning, referring to me as "her" while in their presence. Now remember, we're talking about older people who were born and lived most of their lives in a hometown. However, the more things change, the more things stay the same. In 1990, we have Pagano saying that in educational research "women are either absent or represented as objects of knowledge, rarely its subjects" (p. xvi) [see p. 6, Chapter One of this thesis.]
Marina:

If we say that the piazza is the male public space, then the balcony is the public space for women. It’s in the home, yet it’s outside. In a poem I wrote called “The Immigrant”, the female character in the poem says, “Never have I grown accustomed to being viewed but not seen”. A woman is put on display, she is looked at, but not really seen. It’s like being talked about when you’re standing right there.

Francesca:

In my hometown what defined women’s space was not so much the balcony but the front stoop, or the place just in front of the door. I was reminded of that when Sofia told her embroidery story and was made to sit by the front door, doing embroidery so that everyone could see her. So, the door was the place or the space where women defined an area around which they could meet and talk. The balcony, in my family, existed in relation to an apartment that overlooked the piazza. The apartment was prestigious because of its proximity to the piazza. So, once again, the piazza gave it its importance. But, women’s space was around the home and around the door. That was the place where women talked and exchanged ideas.

Carmen:

I’ve been talking about liminal spaces throughout the thesis so far, and it seems that balconies, windows, and front door stoops are the in-between spaces that we as women dwell in. These spaces are somewhere between the hidden interior (that secret place where secret stories are set) and the entirely open space of the street (where cover stories and sacred stories are set). It’s again, that dichotomy of the private and public worlds. Also, it has something to do with what Noddings (1998) calls moving beyond the physical boundaries of
place to understanding the spirit of place, in this case it’s space. Casey remarks on the spirit of place as: “Moving out, entering not just the area lying before and around me but entering myself and others as its witnesses or occupants, this genial spirit [of place, or space] sweeps the binarism of self and other (yet another of the great modernist dichotomies) into the embracing folds, the literal implications, of implacement. Such a spirit, like the souls and feelings with which it naturally allies itself, submerges all the established metaphysical limits and many of the physical borders as well” (1993, p. 314). Certainly, with respect to women teachers identity formation (I’m speaking specifically about my participants) the ‘spirit’ of keeping women under control is a spirit which lives on, to a degree, here in Toronto. Space that is close to home (be it going to a nearby university as opposed to going ‘out of town’ or a teaching job) is still the space that we have been allotted.

Rosanna:
This is one of the very reasons why my mother hates going to Italy. If you ask my father, “What is the hometown?”, he’ll tell you that it’s one big moveable feast. It’s getting in his car, it’s “la piazza”, it’s the bar, it’s knowing every second person you meet. If you ask my mother, it’s not having a car, it’s staying home and cooking for your husband because he’ll be back at 12 noon precisely expecting his meal, it’s not having the conveniences of having Loblaws - you have to be careful which shop you go into because you could fall prey to maliciousness, and gossipping, depending on which shop you go to. So, they are very different experiences for my parents. The irony is that they go back to visit my maternal grandmother, and my mother’s only sister. Yet, my mother feels like a slave when she goes back. Her own mother is the one who treats my father like a king
and reminds my mother she should be catering to him. When they are here the dynamics are different, she can skip making lunch for him one day, there she has to play a role. Going back to the hometown is a prison for my mother, while for my father it's the social event of the year.

Marina:
He gets his status restored there. Men have lost their status here. He’s been successful, so he can go back and save face. He’s got things to be proud of.

Rosanna:
He’s reliving his adolescence, but, so is my mother. There is this whole notion of obedience and oppression. I know that there are strong women in our families, I see elements of a matriarchy but within certain parameters. (Everyone agrees.)

Carmen:
When you mention obedience and oppression an image of the hands of the men comes to mind. They had to literally shape those towns around the mountains. They had to carve out the roads, and blast through mountains. They shaped vegetable gardens literally on hillsides. I’m reminded of my uncle’s garden. They shaped their women too. I’d like to read a poem that Marina wrote that speaks to this issue of male dominance.

Fingerprints
A rough work-worn wind
beat the air when my grandfather
spoke, his sturdy fingers
shaped his women, stroked
my grandmother into a paralysed,
hand-carved chair.

Those calloused hands fell
on my mother - a child
trying out her legs. Each time
she stepped beyond the wheat fields,
each time her sinuous voice
curved above the village limits,
his hands on her skin, brought her back:

familiar whorls, fatherly ellipses.

My mother says it’s all
forgotten, then recalls
how she wanted to sing,
to have beautiful handwriting.
Her fingers wander over her face
and light on the red place
where he once flattened a loose
piece of childhood laughter.

Carmen:

The imagery in this poem is very powerful. “Sturdy fingers”,
“calloused hands”, the hands on his daughter’s “skin, bringing her
back”, he’s “flattening a loose piece of laughter” with his hand, he’s
“stroking his wife into a paralysed state”. This image of the male
hand is very strong - it’s controlling, forming, shaping. Those male
hands shaped the roads and land around those hills and mountains,
they also shaped their women’s lives. Going back to our discussion
of education for women and wondering why people of our age
group and slightly older did not go to graduate school in droves we
can trace back the “stronghold” to family and male control. The
tendency, generally, has been for our parents (fathers especially) to
hold us back. Paradoxically, we’ve also witnessed great tenacity and
courage in our parents and relatives, and we too have been
tenacious and driven to accomplish what we have wanted to do. On
the one hand, yes, we did ‘buy’ the story and we became teachers,
on the other hand we have all either considered doing post-graduate
degrees, or we have pursued those degrees (to our parents incredulity).

Rosanna:
I see all of this as being embedded in patriarchy, restricting women’s space, it’s the piazza for men only, it’s embedded in the church patriarchy and in society. It’s a double whammy is what I’m saying. Isn’t it interesting that the prominent buildings in North American cities are its banks whereas in Italy the prominent buildings in the cities and towns are the churches. That tells us something about the values, it tells you a number of things. One is that the Church has a lot of money, they were maybe the banks of that time. But, there’s a certain aesthetic about them, they shaped the power and control, they had a place in the community.

Marina:
The Church is a political institution primarily. The political structure of the Church is to expand its power, expand the word. The significance of the physicality of the churches in the centre of the hometowns stands for a patriarchal culture which excludes women from power.

Rosanna:
It infantilises them to boot. They clean the churches.

Marina:
They can’t go on the altar, and they have to clean it with a really long handled duster. (Everyone starts to laugh.)

Francesca:
And not while they’re menstruating.

Carmen:
And virgins are preferable.
Marina:
Actually, a virgin who was born by immaculate conception is the best. (By now everyone is laughing hysterically.) I think that what I want to say about the Church is that my sense of their power and prominence in the landscape - the towers, the dominance of the cupolas as you’re looking at Italy - really harkens to the Church, and to the power, and the history of the Church. A lot of that power is historical. The dominance of the male gender, the patriarchy, is in every town. You see it in the towers, the cupolas, the churches.

Carmen:
I remember being struck also by the number of churches in the cities and small towns in Italy. I remember there being something like 35 churches in Siena. You have all told me that there are at least two churches in your hometowns, some have even more. To my knowledge the “chiesa madre” or “chiesa matrice” is the one that was built by the Church. The others had different functions and were built by the wealthy families who had them erected either ex-voto, or to have their names immortalized, or for whatever reason. The cupolas, or bell towers that were being built higher and higher in various towns were built competitively for prestige. Italy is known for the natural disasters such as landslides, earthquakes, and other forms of devastation, but the church cupola is still visible and stands above the rubble. I know that the priests from both my hometown church and my husband’s hometown church have written to the respective committee members of the hometown social clubs here in Toronto for money in order to restore their bell towers or cupolas, or whatever. My understanding is that the new church that is being built in a large predominantly Italian community outside of Toronto
is vying to build a higher cupola than the other existing churches in the area. It's the same thing being continued here.

**Francesca:**

Although, it's important to see the Roman Catholic religion and its relationship to women as being part of the public/private sphere too. What I'm talking about is that in the home, the conveyor of the word of God, in my family anyway, is my mother. I remember going to church practically everyday. There were women in those pews, you could count the men on half a hand, and I know how shocked I was when, and this is the linguistic disability of sexism, Father E. would say, "fratelli" (brothers) [said in a thunderous voice], and all of the "sorelle" (sisters) would get up. (Everyone laughs.) "Fratelli" were the ones called forth. The priest, if you want to use the priest as the bridge between the divine and the human, was my mother not my father. The link to any institutional sacramentality was the woman. Who laid the table? The women. Who buried the dead? The women. Who were the midwives and led to baptism? The women. Every single institutional sign of the divine has a counterpart in the lived experience of women, and yet men have taken it over on the institutional level. So, for me, it's a real wrenching thing, that is, the patriarchy and the role of women with regards to power, with regards to the divine - the spiritual aspects of our lives, right?

**Marina:**

As you're speaking I'm wondering how much of that is that the women are responsible for rearing the children, and part of that responsibility is the religious one. I think you're right. That's what I would call the secular piety. Women are involved in the very practical. Could this be attributable to the role of Mary, the mother of God?
Carmen:

These are all marvellous examples of the construction of personal practical knowledge. Images and values stay in our consciousness. Shared stories, or shared experiential narratives have helped shape our practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994). As you’ve been talking about secular piety (which is what is practised by the women) versus the male dictates I’m also wondering about the old paradigm, that is, the traditional world which separates theory from practice.

Rosanna:

There’s an element of absurdity about the whole business of the women in Italy who are in church, and the men who are at the bar. I wonder about people’s ability to think critically. It’s an educational issue. It’s about an ability to question what’s being shoved down our throats. I think there’s a literal interpretation of the birth of Christ and the immaculate conception that people buy into. Some people need it.

Marina:

Faith doesn’t entail critical thinking.

Rosanna:

That’s what the Church is counting on, I think.

Marina:

But, that’s what religion is. It’s not based on proof. Kirkegaard writes about that. If you have proof, then you don’t need faith. It becomes scientific, then you have knowledge. I’m not disputing the critical thinking, but, that’s not what religion is. Well, except that Thomas Aquinas would say that you can arrive at the proof of God only through reason.
Rosanna:

I have to separate the institution from the faith. I can’t question people’s embracing the faith. I’m just questioning where it’s embedded - in the structure called the Church.

Marina:

I don’t think that it’s embedded in critical thought. It’s doctrine; dogma.

Rosanna:

Being a teacher is not the same as working in a school. Being a doctor is not the same as working in a hospital. Being a Catholic, or embracing Christianity is not necessarily the same thing as belonging to the Church hierarchy. That’s the way I have to distinguish it for myself.

Carmen:

I think that what I’m doing in this research is the same as what we’re talking about right now. We’ve been talking about the institution of the church which is very controlling yet we have this secular piety run by the women. It reminds me of the theory/practice split that we often hear about in academic work. One of the questions that looms ahead for me is, “Show me evidence that this qualitative research, your narrative inquiry is going to improve the quality of education, and improve teachers’ professional development.” Teacher development, I think, is heightened in the awareness that inherent in both teachers’ lives and students’ lives lies a personal practical knowledge which should be valued. Valuing each other as human beings with frailties at that level becomes a humanistic educational endeavour. Philosophically, or theoretically, the goal behind inquiring into teachers’ lives (in this instance the lives lived in the
hometowns) is to seek a better understanding of people’s actions. Our
prior experiences are connected to what we now do in classrooms.
Teachers are people who live in society, and teach people who will
enter society. “[P]hilosophy is not a theoretical key that
unlocks practice. Theory must be fundamentally rooted in
practical experience if it is to be of value. [Furthermore], [t]he task
of theory is to help teachers understand better the nature of their
problems. This way practice becomes a necessary means for the
success of theory” (Beck, 1993, p. 3.)

Francesca:
Would a quantitative paper, simply by it’s nature, improve the
quality of education? I find it interesting that you would have to
defend the qualitative aspect. Maybe that’s not it at all.

Carmen:
What it boils down to, for me, is how do I prove the transformational
value of this work. If I quantify something, I will have empirical
evidence that 5 out of 10 teachers’ practice improved as a result of
my work. These women became better teachers as a result of
engaging in these personal experience methods.

Rosanna:
Think of Sofia’s story.

Carmen:
It has certainly been transformational for me, and I know that at
different times, you have all told me that this work that we have
done together has made a difference in your lives. I guess what I’m
saying is that I don’t think that things are very different in 1998,
O.I.S.E., academia than they would have been in the small
hometown for our parents or grandparents in terms of what people
valued quantitatively or qualitatively. In fact, I remember Beatrice
saying once that the only thing missing at O.I.S.E. is “la fontana” (the fountain). I find it ironic that I have to work so hard at making a case to present what we have to say as some form of legitimate knowledge. It is a leap of faith you have all had in me in presenting your words.

Francesca:

I think it was Neil Postman who talked about myths, creating myths in education. His criticism of this age is that there are no viable myths. Children do not receive cohesive world views. If anything, religion gave people cohesive world views. What he’s saying is that what teachers have to do is provide world views - maybe eclectic world views, or syncretic world views - you pick and choose and you bring them together and you give them to the kids. If you talk about the myth of your planet being a spaceship travelling through the universe meeting all kinds of other aliens, other creatures, if we provide the kids with that myth, it gives a sense of our planetary unity. I don’t think quantitative research is the tool used to provide evidence for the benefit of your work or its transformational aspect. You don’t apply statistics to literature. You’re dealing with narratives. You’re looking at the transformational value of myth. I think what you’re gathering here are the myths which form a particular people here, that is, these six second generation Italian Canadian women teachers. You’re asking us to be critical of those myths. You’re asking us to step back and give a narrative of what those myths are. I don’t think the end result is any different than what any good story does. It gives us back our world; it recreates it.

Carmen:

The construction, creation, or recreation of our world reminds me very much of why I’m doing this arts-based research. The researcher
and participants are like the artists who create worlds through their art. In creating stories and engaging in conversation we elicit response to those stories, in the response is where I learn more about myself. My response, when I reflect upon it, tells me about myself. Therein lies the transformation and educational value. I would defend storytelling and narrative inquiry in many ways. I think that naming our experiences enables us to see what the motivations are for our actions. By telling our story, reconstructing it, and giving it meaning and making connections we become awakened. It goes back to the horror of continuity I’ve talked about earlier. You choose your actions when you become an awakened human being. This is what marks the broader social implication and educative value or transformational aspect of this work. You become conscious of your motivations, why you do the things you do, why you teach the things you teach, why you teach the way you teach. When you make connections through storytelling, you’re able to change things, if you choose. You can change your future, which might otherwise have been determined by the ‘unreflected-upon’ continuity of experience. Existentially, as Sartre, has said, all life is narrative. Experience happens simultaneously but, if I’m going to tell it, I have to tell it sequentially. To a certain degree I have to give it order, sense, and meaning. Story orders the past for us. It orders our experiences, it makes them meaningful, rather than chaotic. Also, sharing those stories in conversation with others who have a similar background, or who share a certain level of resonance with the story told because they can relate to your story helps you own your story, tell it, take responsibility for it. For me, the image in my poem of wearing a man’s jacket with tattered lining and the healing or stitching by my mother of that interior lining represents to me that
whole patriarchy thing we’ve been talking about. Mother, of course representing the feminist epistemology of legitimizing our internal conditions as being knowledge - that is, storying our experiences, our feelings, our intuitions, and so on.

Rosanna:

Educationally, it’s not just the knowledge of subject matter as much as self knowledge. The self is the tool. We teach ourselves in a sense.

Carmen:

It certainly makes for a less fragmented human being when you’re standing in front of 30 or 40 human beings in a classroom when you have gained a bit of self awareness.

Marina:

Again, you own things when you can name them. That’s authorship of one’s own story. Sartre talks about that in his autobiography called The Words. You can appropriate things once you can name them, talk about them, and think about them. Narrative helps us become more aware, so that we can act in a healthier way.

Rosanna:

There’s a rippling effect to that too. Habermas refers to the social changes that occur with awareness. A teacher who comes to class with a certain awareness changes the dynamics. It changes staff relations. It doesn’t happen overnight, but by sharing a story at the lunchroom table, somebody goes away thinking about how they might approach a certain student, or staff member. I believe in that ripple effect. You’re not going to change the system overnight. But, people in the system can start seeing things differently. I think that with this kind of study, acknowledging, what you call the
pluridimensionality of our being, the voices that haven’t been heard, that, to me, is filling a gap.

Carmen:

I like what Harriet Cuffaro says in *Experimenting with the world: John Dewey and the early childhood classroom*. She says that, “a philosophy of education represents the choices, values, knowledge, and beliefs of teachers as well as their aspirations, intentions, and aims. It serves to guide and inspire, and contributes to determining the detail of the everyday life” (Cuffaro, 1995, p.1). The trick, for me, during this inquiry, has been to ‘determine the detail of the everyday life’, and for us a major part of that has been determined by the values which are embedded in the hometown our grandparents and parents came from, and the transposition of those values onto the Canadian landscape. The images of hometown have struck us in a particular way, we have responded in our own individual ways, and through our response we have at times changed those images to ‘fit’ into the Canadian scheme of things and at other times, in not being able to negotiate our hometown, family terms with Canadian ones, we have felt as though we do not ‘belong’, we do not ‘fit’. As Hoffman (1989) says, “It is only in that observing consciousness that [we] remain, after all, an immigrant” (p. 164).

Elliot Eisner, in the *Journal of Critical Inquiry into Curriculum and Instruction*, (1998, 1[1], p. 1) says,

Research is an act undertaken to discover the features and relationships in our environment or to explore the terrain of our interior landscapes. In either case, research is a reflective act, an act of inquiry. Inquiry is not restricted to scientific forms; it includes the arts as well. Teachers who inquire reflectively into their own teaching, who explore new pedagogical possibilities, are engaged
in research. Such research, though personal in character and focus, has broad social implications. Teachers advance their own artistry as their own pedagogical work becomes increasingly imaginative and reflective. When this occurs, teaching itself becomes what it is when done best - an art form.

Carmen:

In keeping with this last note on art form, I would like to leave you with the following stories and reflections written by Lina. The first story expresses yet another narrative of experience which reflects both her life history and the social milieu, the context in which her grandmother, after whom she is named, lived. This is an imagined place - the landscape of the hometown which Lina carries with her. It is part of her personal practical knowledge. In this family story, which was inspired by an old black and white photograph of her maternal grandmother, Lina brings together the threads of her personal practical knowledge, context (that is, the landscape of her hometown), and identity. These threads are linked and conveyed narratively to illustrate a glimpse into the history of her continuity of experience, and how her identity was composed. Lina, like the rest of us, has crossed borders of space, time and identity to connect to the origins of the way the women were, and still are controlled in their families through the generations.

(Lina)

Lilla and Her Grandmother

This is what I know about her. Her name was Calogera, she was called Lilla by her family. I am her namesake. She lived in a house carved out of lava in the shadow of Mount Etna, in Sicily. On her wedding day, they called her in from the emerald and gold and blood coloured fields where she played. She was thirteen when she
married my grandfather. This was between the first and second [world] war.

They said, “Lilla, today is your wedding day, be a good girl and change your clothes.” And she did. She changed her clothes and went to the church and married in a long white dress which was slightly too large. Her bony elbows protruded out of her dress. All the lace and satin that her groom had bought for her couldn’t conceal their sharpness. In her wedding photo she appears bewildered. One hand is raised as if to shelter her eyes, eyes that are indistinct in the photograph. I imagine her asking her mother if she may go back to play in the fields after the ceremony.

These widely spaced eyes were a strange grayish colour, while the rest of the family had richly brown, bitter eyes. The eyes of continuous captivity, a heritage of semi-slavery. Lilla had a wide, tender face. Her secrets slipped out of those light coloured eyes and rolled off her cheeks. They disappeared into the darkness of the brown acrid earth and were swallowed up. Unseen and unheard.

My grandfather Turiddu would see her pass through the fields as he worked with his father and brothers. He would be tilling the earth or gathering the crops. His family grew opulent tomatoes and cucumbers, fichi d’india (prickly pears) [from the cactus], smooth skinned green and purplish black olives, and bone white almonds. They kept a herd of sheep, goats, and horses. They were considered prosperous by fellow villagers. Lilla was always with her mother or father or sisters. A nice woman was never left alone, even to go to the market or visit family in the village. Others said Lilla was sweet but he saw something more, he saw the weakness of her will, an indefinite quality in her eyes. He found that alluring. That’s why he married, and they’s why he married her.
She was an anomaly in a land of strong women. Here in the land cultivated, ravaged and abandoned centuries ago by the Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Saracens, and Normans, she gave birth to nine children, six girls and three boys. [I hear Arabic chants disguised as Sicilian lullabies.] In the land called Trinacria by the Greeks, each girl grew stronger than she. On the small Mediterranean island with three tips, each child born stole what little will she had. (1996)

Carmen:

Lina, in yet another story, describes how place, namely Sicily, and it’s physical proximity to Africa helped shape her family’s attitudes toward people of colour. How does this translate into present day terms? Besides revealing the complicity we all share in images that are projected of people, what is also revealed in this example is that hidden behind the appearance of being a homogenous country, Italy is also a multicultural and multilingual country. (Lina alludes to the invasions by the Greeks, Normans, Carthaginians, and so forth.)

(Lina):

Ever since entering grade school and mixing with a predominantly non-Italian element I have been repeatedly mistaken for being of biracial ancestry (Black and White). My reaction was conflicted. My immediate and extended family has always been very bigoted towards Black people. My conflicted feelings lay in the reasoning that if Black people were “ugly, dangerous, and worthless” (as my family implicitly contended) and I shared some of the same physical characteristics (curly hair, olive skin, and full lips) then why should I be exempt from these negative characterizations? I felt a sense of shame about my looks and inferiority for many years.
At the time I knew nothing about Sicilian history, the influence of North African (Carthaginian) colonization of the island and the proximity of Africa to Sicily which has been described as being geographically “closer to Africa than to Rome.” Even though I looked very much like my father and paternal grandmother I felt as if I were racial “aberration” of some sort.

I feel much differently today. I accept myself and am relatively pleased with my appearance and that “racial ambiguity.” I now see it as a measure of attractiveness and am still drawn to persons that have that quality. (Reflections, August 6, 1996)

Carmen:

Lina’s family story helps illustrate both the internal and external tensions around issues of inter- and intra-group relations. At the time of the first sojourn experience by our grandfathers, which would have been at the turn of the century, leading up to WWI, the teaching of German as a foreign language was being curtailed in the United States. My own paternal grandfather was in Pennsylvania at that time. He then went back to Italy, married my grandmother and went back to the United States. In fact, my uncle (the eldest), and aunt (the second born) were born in the United States. At that time the first major arguments in favour of multiculturalism in American education were set forth in response to the attacks on “hyphenated Americanism” by Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt (Glazer, 1997, p. 85).

“Cultural pluralism” was the term Horace Kallen, a follower of John Dewey, used to describe a new kind of polity and a new kind of public education, in which a variety of cultures besides that of England and English-influenced America would receive a significant place in American public education. (Glazer, 1997, pp. 85-86)
Dewey who, in 1916, spoke to the National Education Association about cultural pluralism criticized the attacks on “hyphenated Americanism” that had been directed primarily against German Americans and Irish Americans for their resistance to supporting England in the war against Germany:

The fact is, the genuine American, the typical American, is himself a hyphenated character. ... [H]e is international and interracial in his make-up. ... [T]he American is himself Pole-German-English-French-Spanish-Italian-Greek-Irish-Scandinavian-Bohemian-Jew - and so on. The point is to see to it that the hyphen connects instead of separates. (in Glazer, 1997, p. 86)

In a place, such as Canada, which is characterized by cultural and ethnic pluralism, citizens have been struggling with the issue of reconciling diversity into national identity (Majhanovich, 1998). As a Canadian of Italian origin (a place of origin which is also multicultural and multilingual) I see the hyphen as being in an ‘in between space’, a liminal space. It is within that ‘in between space’ where the possibility of transformation can occur, that is, within that liminal space where ‘Italian Canadian gardens’ and ‘fig trees’ flourish when transposed with hard work, determination, creativity, ingenuity, and imagination (see Chapter Six for a more elaborate discussion on this topic). It is also within these ‘in between’ spaces that connections between people can occur. The kind of conversation we have had this evening, in fact, this thesis process is about going into those ‘in between’ spaces. I feel that narrative inquiry, through an aesthetic lens, has helped me capture some of those moments of ‘in betweenness.’
Interlude
Connecting the Personal and Professional Knowledge Landscapes

Blood Oranges and Bookmarks
A very old friend gave me a blood orange on the Ides of March. It was presented like a gift in crisp red and white wax paper as it had been wrapped by the orchard owners in Sicily. “Some far away thought (made her) pick an orange, I rip( ped) away thick skin, my hands sticky with the blood aroma of orchards where women harden to a petrified beauty” (Riccio, unpublished poem, “Elegy With Oranges”). “A Sicilian blood orange”, she said, “a token of our sisterhood”. My very old friend also gave me an elegant bookmark - indigo blue with a black velvet and gold grape and leaf embossed pattern, finished with a black silk tassel. “This book mark I give you to help you remember that you are not alone in your endeavours, and to help keep your place in your own story”, said my very old friend. (March 15, 1999)

The image of the blood oranges, and bookmarks metaphorically represents the range of personal and professional contexts we inhabit. Reflected in the bookmark which ‘helps me keep my place in my story’ is the aroma and ‘stickiness’ on my hands of the blood oranges - of my past, of who I am ‘historically’. During the inquiry into my personal and professional experiences I sought out individuals who shared a similar cultural story to mine. In them I saw reflected my own story. These distinctly different images help remind me of the boundaries “we habitually draw around the self in order to keep ourselves separate and distinct from the other” (Heshusius, 1995, p. 121). The images, however, are also a reminder that there exists the possibility of “dissolving those boundaries, so that we may come
to know the other, and paradoxically also the self, more fully” (p. 121). The result of this simultaneous reflection is evidenced in the following three chapters.

In Chapters Five, Six and Seven, my voice mixes with that of the participants because they are part of my story and I am part of theirs (MacIntyre, 1981). Blood oranges and bookmarks are a reminder, to me, that this whole thesis process has been a process that has straddled different realms at different times. (For a more detailed description of these realms see Chapter One.) The blood oranges are a tie to the personal, cultural roots, and the bookmark is a reminder of the educational research endeavour. The personal collaborative experience of working together with my participants has resulted in the research text which I present in these chapters. The boundaries between self and other have blurred because the self and other are not, by definition, separate and distinct. Intuitively leaving myself open to possibilities, by adopting a non-authoritarian style of working with my participants, helped me arrive at this understanding through the thesis process.

This thesis has been structured on the themes of reflection, inquiry, and practice - specifically on the personal and professional development of a particular group of individuals. This interlude serves as a bridge connecting the personal world with the professional world of teaching and research. The bookmark will “help keep my place in my own story”, yet what is significant is that I have not been alone. This process, as described in Chapter Three has been a collaborative process. In my ‘search for self’ I sought out others to help me understand my puzzles. Indeed, Chapters Five, Six, and Seven are the experiential narratives of my three participants Beatrice, Francesca, and Marina.

I have, thus far, been narrating a research story of teacher education, and teacher development. As an educational researcher, methodologically I have consciously endeavoured to collaboratively construct ‘the story’ (‘I have not been alone in my endeavours’) with my participants. I have done this not only because ethically it was a more desirable way - because educational research, I think, is
better done ‘with’ others rather than ‘on’ even ‘for’ them (Griffiths, 1998), - but also because by dissolving the boundaries of the self, I opened up access to the possibilities of learning and understanding the many questions I had about identity formation. This research has been conducted with, and by teachers, including teachers, like myself and my participants. As a result of becoming aware, during the thesis process, of the shared stories that we tell, and of the complicity we share in the shaping of stories, I have deliberately mixed my voice with that of my participants as a way of signifying that as we worked collaboratively, the research text itself serves as a bookmark for the story of the commonality of our experiences as human beings.

In the following three chapters I present the biographical profiles of three of my participants: Beatrice, Francesca, and Marina respectively. These profiles are based on verbatim transcription, and my reconstruction of the field texts gathered individually with each participant. These include: semi-structured interviews, conversations, journal entries, reflections, poems, or stories. I asked my participants to reflect upon the themes and topics discussed in the thesis thus far. Themes considered have been: identity (self), the physicality of place and values embedded in it, voice, (and language - understood metaphorically), authority (patriarchal, being the expert of one’s own experience, and teaching, authoring one’s own story). Although these themes were discussed (from the onset of our work together, and starting with the chronicles) within the framework of cultural experience (personal knowledge landscape) and teaching (professional knowledge landscape), many times I listened without a purpose. Fully attending to what might occur, or what might be said in this new self-other, participant-researcher space resulted in my understanding that we usually do not conduct our lives in such a way. Rather, we shape our stories as though we were separate and distinct, with clear boundaries separating us (Heshusius, 1995).

In these chapters (agreed upon by mutual consent with my participants) my voice as researcher ‘mixes’ with the voice of my participants as I both reconstruct
their story (their profile), and insert my interpretive voice through theirs. I do this by way of making connections, at times, between the physicality of the hometown and the values embedded in that place and the impact on the personal cultural experience (and the shifts that occurred during those experiences) and the teaching experience. In other words, I begin to answer the questions, “How did these women negotiate their identity formation?”, “What helped shape their personal and professional identities?” This ‘mixing’ of voice represents the struggle through which my participants and I have tried to make sense of our experiences, and learn from the stories we have shared. In this way I present myself as a ‘learner’. In this research text I engage in a dialectic with my participants to open up a conversation as opposed to making definitive claims about who we are and what we know.

The structural form of my argument, thus far, has been conversational. At times the conversation, as in Chapter One is fictional, in the sense that an actual conversation among my participants did not occur, however I did engage in a conversation with each participant individually. The construction of a conversation helped me present information and my participants’ point of view, mine included in as ‘smooth’ a way as possible to show that although we are unique individuals we speak with a common voice. The voices are, at times, mine, spoken through the participants. In Chapter Two there are several voices presented when indeed the voice (presented in polytones) is only mine. You hear me as researcher (in regular Optima font), me as participant (in italicized Optima font), and me as reflective participant/researcher (italicized, script-like font indicating the more ephemeral quality of that liminal reflective space).

The form of presentation, that is, the ‘mixing’ of the voices is a way of understanding the idea that the self, the individual, is not an indivisible unit. The fragmentary style of shifting in and out of poetry, prose, reflection, and research text also attests to the multiplicity of layering and intermingling of the abstract and the personal in arguments. “This is a claim for ‘both/and’, not for ‘either/or’. The
use of these alternative forms to advance an academic argument is a way of resisting dominant, often oppressive, politics of knowledge” (Griffiths, 1998, pp. 5-6). For this reason I came to imagine my conversations with my participants, not from within the parameters established by my ‘authority’ as researcher, but within a space which helped me reconsider the nature of the self by lessening the self-other separation (Heshusius, 1995).
Chapter Five
Beatrice

*Storying the Teaching Experience: How did my cultural background shape who I am as an educator?*

Before I was three years old my parents, and my brother and I lived in a small two bedroom house in one of the Little Italies in Toronto. My grandparents were living there, but so were two of my maternal uncles, and one of my maternal aunts. I have no recollection of the place. Most people, I think, in the late 50s and 60s preferred to stay in the hometown settings of Little Italies, where they could walk everywhere. Italian grocery stores, the church, the Catholic school, and so on, were all within walking distance. Also, they had access to streetcars which ran frequently for those who had to travel to work and did not have a car.

We moved in 1961 when I was three years old. I have been living in the same house ever since. My parents were one of the first to move out of Little Italy. I’m only guessing now but I think they wanted a larger home. Even then there were only three bedrooms. My grandparents came to live with us, but by then my aunt got married and went to live with her husband. My uncles made other living arrangements. Up until the age of five I shared a room with my brother. We then each got a bedroom, and a basement bedroom was made for my grandparents. There was no question about the living arrangements.

The houses in the hometown were (and still are in many cases) built for this kind of life. People lived together as a family - two, three, sometimes four generations. I have been living in the same house as my parents since I was born. I live in this house with my parents. To me that feels right. It feels like a normal way to live. My life is normal for me. I am normal to me. In the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, in their small town in Italy nobody would ever have questioned that. Nobody would ever have called that living at home. Nobody would ever have called it anything. It was a given. Their *paesani* (compatriots) thought that my parents were
crazy for moving out of Little Italy into a suburb. They couldn’t understand why we were going to go live in ‘a forest’. There was nobody up there.

What I remember about this area is that not all of the houses on this street were built yet. My parents did the grocery shopping at an Italian grocers about three to four miles away. There were a lot of wide open spaces in the suburb. Our house was a brand new house. We were the first occupants. I remember the neighbourhood being a mix of Germans, Anglo-Saxons, Jews, and Italians. The earliest memory I have of learning something at home was when I was about three-and-a-half. The situation was that I didn’t want to play with other kids. I remember standing at the foot of the driveway with my grandfather, and my grandfather saying to me, in Italian dialect, “Why don’t you go play with the other kids?” And I said to him, “I can’t because I don’t understand what they’re saying.”

Gradually over the first three years of school (kindergarten, grades 1, and 2) I remember having conscious determination to master English so well that I would never again not understand what someone was saying to me.

Between the ages of three and seven, the other houses on our street were constructed. The street was built up but, just north of us there was still a lot of forest. As the area became more built up, more Italians started to come into the area. By the mid 60s everything was considerably built up. Then the area started to become predominantly Italian. When we first moved into the neighbourhood it was very new, so the church was about three miles away. Technically we belonged to that parish but we were living on the outskirts of that parish. I had my first communion ceremony there, but, because my parents were not practising Catholics we didn’t go there on a regular basis. My parents have recently told me that they used to go to church every Sunday when they lived in their hometown. Here their life was so different. I have a hunch that they worked on Saturdays, and therefore, Sunday was the only day they may have had to catch up on things.

When I was ten years old we got an Italian parish. The parish started in the usual way - in the gym of a local Catholic elementary school. I started attending
mass, from the time it started in the school, with my friends. A group of us girls used to take our twenty minute walk there every Sunday. They had an Italian mass, and an English mass. The church was eventually built right next door to the Catholic elementary school. It was a very modern structure, not square shaped, but it had a lot of angles. It wasn’t like the downtown churches. It’s very simple, very plain. Actually, it was kind of cheap looking, I thought. I was fourteen years old when it was completed. It looked like it had been put together in a hurry.

In the 60s and 70s it really was predominantly an Italian neighbourhood. That parish, right now, still has an Italian mass, but the ethnic population is now shifting. We now have a large Vietnamese population in the parish. The church has been renovated. I think that the pastor who was responsible for the renovations had a much better aesthetic sense than the original pastor. Stained glass windows have been added. I don’t particularly like the stained glass they put in, but at least more light comes into the church now. Originally the windows were this awful, yellowish glass. They really did not let a lot of light come in. The carpets were taken out of the sanctuary and marble has been installed. It looks more elegant. The baptismal font was changed, and the same marble was used for the sanctuary floor, as for the baptismal font, and the altar. Another Italian priest had a couple of other pieces of art work commissioned for the church. My favourite art piece in the whole church, that is not original to the church, is a beautiful icon of the Madonna of Perpetual Help. These things were primarily donated by Italian families. I know this because the names of the people who donated these things are written on plaques underneath the objects.

Although the church was built right next to a Catholic elementary school I never attended Catholic schools. My father was against that. First of all, the Catholic elementary school was a further walking distance than the public elementary school. It was an extra ten minute walk, but it would have meant me crossing a major intersection - that was an influencing factor for my parents. Secondly, my father believed that Catholic schools provided an inferior education
because they were not well funded. In comparison to a lot of the parents of my peers, my father was more politically aware, and informed. I found that a lot of my peers went to the Catholic schools because they were influenced by clerical injunctions, “You should have your children educated in Catholic schools because you are Catholic.” My father, in a sense, was anti-clerical. He didn’t want any priest to tell him how to raise his kids. He genuinely believed that we were getting a superior education in the public school system. I have a feeling he may have been right to some extent.

So, by age five, I walked to school by myself. The elementary school I went to was made of reddish brown brick, and it was kind of square shaped. It was a modern school. I realized that much later, on a school trip to the museum. We were studying architecture and I remember one of the curators saying, “if your school is square shaped, it’s probably a very modern school.” I also didn’t realize, until much later, that the school had just recently been built and actually opened the year I started kindergarten. So, it was a new school.

I remember the kindergarten classroom was in a separate wing from the rest of the school. We had our own entrance, and our own play area. When you’re a child you don’t understand the purposes for that - obviously it was to protect us from the older kids. I had two teachers, which was the norm in those days for kindergarten. I don’t remember there being that many kids in the classroom. I remember that there was a big circle painted on the floor of the room so that we could learn how to sit in a circle properly. I remember the little tables and chairs where you could do art work. There were toys and we had our own washroom in the classroom, and our little ‘cubby’ area. It was a self contained space, at least, that’s the way it seemed to me.

I probably became aware of ethnic distinctions in grade one when a great deal of fuss was made that year over a little girl whose grandmother used to send her things from England. I guess the teacher was very pro English. Whenever this little girl received a sweater, a piece of clothing, or anything, it was, “all the way
from England!" I was very quiet, and raised not to question an adult's authority, but inside of myself I always used to think, "so, like, what's the big deal about England. I get stuff from Italy!"

When I was seven, I read my first full-length novel. It was Heidi. My mother bought it for me. I really think that was a turning-point because I remember feeling very independent, and thinking, "If I can read this book, and it's a full-length book, then I can read anything, and if I can read anything, I can learn anything." It was also the capacity to enter into an imaginative world.

I enjoyed "playing teacher" when I was a kid. And I enjoyed explicating things. I think that explication is the key concept. As a child, adolescent, and young adult I was frequently called upon to be interpreter for my grandparents. In early childhood, this role was sometimes too much for me. I could not translate adult words and concepts. This left me with a feeling of inadequacy. I was determined to be able to understand what people were saying.

When I was little, the dialect was the language I had to speak with my grandparents, and my grandparents living with us was problematic for my family. It wreaked havoc in my family life. I felt that it ruined my childhood, my adolescence, and to a certain extent my young adulthood. I was a quiet, docile child, and my only way of rebelling was not to speak dialect. A mythology grew up in the family that my brother could speak the dialect and I could not. But, of course, I could speak it, and I understood it perfectly. I just spoke it as little as possible because that was the only language that my grandparents understood. My mother would say it in dialect, "Beatrice na parlava l'italiana" (Beatrice did not speak Italian.)

It wasn't until I went to Italy, and stayed in my parents' hometown, that there was a different motivation for speaking the dialect. Everybody spoke dialect, and my maternal grandparents, who were very different than my grandparents in Toronto, spoke the dialect. It was a pleasure to speak. It was also a necessity
because everybody was speaking it. In Toronto it was the language that was associated with painful memories, anger, and hostility.

When I came back to Canada, my father, my grandparents, my aunts, and uncles were struck by how fluent I had become. They thought I learned how to speak the dialect in Italy. It was all quite silly because I knew how to speak it, but I didn’t really want to. It remained the language I spoke with my grandparents, and my aunts, and uncles who didn’t speak English. As a child, and adolescent I spoke primarily English with my parents.

I was rarely interpreter for my parents, only a writer. While my parents’ spoken English was very fluent, they never felt completely at ease with their written English. I took on this task with a sense of tremendous responsibility. It had to be perfect, or pretty damn close to perfect. Now, as an older adult, probably in the years after my paternal grandparents died - which caused a tremendous shift in our family dynamics - I am speaking more dialect than ever with my parents. It’s my choice.

The dialect, for me, is a fun language. It’s rich in metaphor. It’s ironical. It’s the language of all of their stories, whereas in my childhood, it was a language of pain and suffering. I feel that it’s helped me to have a greater appreciation for poetry, for metaphor, for irony, for imagery. I tend to feel that knowing four languages (English, dialect, Italian, and French) has helped me have a greater quickness of mind. I can make the linguistic and cognitive leaps pretty quickly and jump from one world to another and see the parallels. (Tape #3, pp. 1-4.) This psychological and linguistic flexibility reminds me of Eva Hoffman (1989), where she talks about not being an ideologue, and how her view of the universe is such that she can see so many different view points. That’s how I feel I live my life, and it’s rooted in that small town my parents come from. That is my point of reference.

Because I have learned the relativity of cultural meanings on my skin, I can never take any one set of meanings as final. I doubt that I’ll ever become an ideologue of any stripe; I doubt that I’ll become an avid acolyte of any school of thought. I know that I’ve been
written in a variety of languages; I know to what extent I’m a script.
In my public, group life, I’ll probably always find myself in the
chinks between cultures and subcultures, between the scenarios of
political beliefs and aesthetic credos. It’s not the worst place to live;
it gives you an Archimedean leverage from which to see the world
(p. 275).

Very early on in life, when I was six or seven, I was given the responsibility
of looking after other children. It seemed “small” enough. I was responsible for
escorting two other little girls to school. Back and forth every day, in the morning,
and at lunch time. They were Italian girls who lived down the street. Between the
ages of seven, and nine, I learned simple cooking tasks, like making espresso
coffee, making sandwiches, heating up Campbell’s soup for lunch, and preparing
salad. When I was ten I was entrusted with “babysitting” an eight-year-old at lunch
time. He also came from an Italian family that lived on our street. I would make
both my lunch and his. His mother paid me three dollars a week.

My mother worked shifts, from 9 am to 4 pm on one day, and from 1 pm
to 9 pm the next day. When she was working the 1 to 9 shift, it was my
responsibility to start dinner. When she came home on her dinner break (she was
within walking distance from the drug store where she worked) she would finish
off the dinner preparations. She started me off gradually. At first she would leave
a pot filled with water on the stove and then all I had to do was turn on the stove
so that the water would be boiling when she got home. Then gradually I got to put
the pasta in, and she would just drain it. Then it got to the point where I would
derain it and dress it myself, and I would have a salad fixed. I was doing that by the
time I was nine.

I think that, in my parents’ hometown, in the 1920s and 30s, it was very
common for children to begin “working” as soon as they were capable of doing
anything, any small task, whether that was bringing lunch to people working in the
fields, helping to herd the sheep, feeding the animals, milking the cows, cooking,
washing, fetching water, whatever. I was brought up in the same way. It was a
given that responsibility would be given to me at an early age.

This certainly shaped my decision to become a teacher because, as I got
older, the responsibility shifted to intellectual tasks as well. I had the ability,
especially in language, so I would be called on by younger students in the
neighbourhood to help them with their schoolwork. My classmates at school also
asked for my help. My brother was also the recipient of my editing services for all
of his university papers. I don’t think I ever turned anybody down. I took pride in
being able to help.

I think that that too is part of my culture - giving help is a natural and
spontaneous action, not a premeditated, prenegotiated, contractual agreement.
When I was a kid, I can’t remember my family doing major tasks alone - for
example, making sausages, making wine, preserving tomatoes, refinishing the
basement. My parents always had a vegetable garden. They had the basics:
tomatoes, lettuce, peppers, cucumbers, onions, carrots, and whatever else caught
their imagination. Originally the backyard was quite large, and I’d say about one
third was dedicated to the vegetable garden. As they kept building, the patio, the
garage, and so on, the vegetable garden kept shrinking. It’s still there. I always
helped with the preserves. It was an unspoken rule, unless you were menstruating,
then you didn’t help. They believed that whatever you were making would go bad
if a menstruating woman put her hands on things. Basically, I remember my family
(meaning my parents, and my aunts, and uncles) always doing these things
together.

Whatever one had to do, relatives and “paesani” helped - for free. It was a
given. My father was a licenced electrician. He did all of the electrical work for
countless relatives and “paesani” who refinshed their basements and never
charged anything for his labour. For one friend, he wired the whole house. And
then there were the countless repair jobs - stoves, irons, etc. This attitude toward
helping certainly had a profound influence on me. I think that it steered me in the direction of giving service based on one's natural abilities.

Both of my parents taught me to take pride in my work, whatever that work was. My mother's baking, cooking, sewing, knitting, crocheting, embroidery, - everything she touched with her hands was beautifully done. The garden was meticulously organized and cared for. I never had anything to do with the garden, or any of these other things (besides helping). I'm very proud that my parents know how to do these things, it just never really occurred to me to be a part of it. I was busy doing other things. However, out of the experience of watching my family I learned to prize excellence. Teaching seemed to be a place where that value "fit".

I saw myself as a teacher at a very early age. I think part of the reason for this was admiration for some of my own teachers, starting in junior high school. And part of it was disappointment in my own teachers, also starting in junior high school. I was conscious of "wanting to be a good teacher", conscious of the feeling that "the world needs good teachers". I was also in love with language and literature and I figured that becoming a language teacher I could study the subjects I loved the most.

By the time I finished high school, I was aware of an organization called "Centro Scuola" and of a program called "Heritage Language". I was going through a very "Italian" phase in my life. I had started studying standard Italian in grade ten and I loved it. I loved the sound of the language. I loved speaking it. I loved being able to write in Italian to my grandparents in Italy. I took pride in that. When I was a little girl, the air mail letters that arrived from Italy held a mysterious fascination for me. They came from so far away and I couldn’t understand what they said. I longed to communicate with my relatives in this far off world. The way my mother talked about them, I felt that they were a part of me. But it was a part of me that was far away and I needed a "bridge". When I was about seven or eight, I tried writing a letter to my grandmother, but all I could manage was to try
to sound out, phonetically, the words I knew in Italian dialect. My parents had never taught me how to read and write in standard Italian. I proudly showed my letter to my parents. My mother was delighted that I had tried. My father dismissed my efforts by saying that I couldn’t send such a letter to Italy because it was full of mistakes. I remember feeling devastated. This incident, and two others, one at school, and one with a friend of my grandmother’s, both of which happened around the same time, made clear to me that I did not know Italian after all.

Once again, the firm resolve. When could I start to learn Italian? In high school? I couldn’t wait! During this period, I was 15, and I was in a public high school, that was 1973. I believe that Canada, at the time, was at the height of its multicultural phase. Pierre Trudeau was still the Prime Minister, and multiculturalism was a fairly new buzz word. There was a lot in the political climate, and in the schools about multiculturalism and taking pride in your culture of origin. These were the kinds of things that prompted me to want to dig deep into my Italianness.

I was surrounded by Italianess because there were a lot of Italians in the neighbourhood, and in the school. If there was anything physical that prompted me, or encouraged me to study Italian it would have been the presence of the Italian teachers in my high school. They were dynamic, they were young, they spoke Italian beautifully, they had been to Italy, they were cultured, they were my ideal. I looked up to them. They inspired me to want to learn more. Furthermore, the political climate which was very strongly in favour of multiculturalism, and taking pride in one’s heritage also encouraged me to want to learn Italian. And so, I thought that, like myself, other children of Italian background would also jump at the chance to learn Italian. I was so grateful for the chance to learn in Italian in high school, how much more grateful should they be to have a chance to learn it in elementary school! How naive I was! (Well, I was only nineteen after all. Nineteen chronologically, but maybe twelve emotionally.)
I don’t remember the study of standard Italian either being encouraged or discouraged by my parents. Maybe my memory is warped; to a certain extent all memory is! I remember my parents very much staying out of my school life from the time I was seven. I was a very independent learner. I made the decisions. I think that they were proud that I was studying Italian but it was within the wider context of being proud of my academic achievements. I was just as enthusiastic about learning French as I was about learning Italian. As I have said, I loved language, and still do. My parents never posed the standard Italian as being better than dialect. In fact, in their world (like people from the hometown) people who spoke the standard Italian to their kids were considered snobby and were made fun of. In fact there is an expression in my parents’ dialect whereby when you are a dialect speaker but you are speaking the standard Italian they say, “sta parlanna a pieri da puerche” (literally: they’re speaking in pig’s feet; figuratively: they’re awkward). It’s not very flattering. To me the standard Italian seemed more elegant and I was curious.

As I have said there were some teachers in high school who I particularly admired and I guess I wanted to be like them. That was a very important factor in my deciding to become a teacher. I suppose that isn’t a cultural factor, but maybe it is. I was raised in a culture which predisposed children to respect and admire their teachers. Teachers were educated. Teachers knew more than you do. Teachers had authority. Teachers had a secure job. Teachers were looked up to. These were all positive things in my culture.

In my parents’ world, anyone who was a teacher was talked about with respect. And there was definitely a hierarchy. An elementary school teacher was a “maestra” and had less education than a secondary school teacher who was a “professoressa”. I was very conscious of these things and I think that they influenced my choices.

I’ve said many times that I just drifted into teaching after completing my M.A. in English because I didn’t know what else to do with myself at that point in
my life. However, in writing all of this down, I can see that that is not entirely true. It is also true, on the other hand, that I was not encouraged to pursue an earlier ambition - that of becoming a doctor, an obstetrician to be exact. I was never encouraged to take risks in my social and personal life. I was sheltered and cloistered and I think that teaching was seen as something “safe” for a girl to do. Certainly I saw it as “safe”. Did I ever learn otherwise!

Because I loved languages, another ambition that I toyed with was becoming a translator or interpreter. To do this, I would have had to have gone out of town to university. My father refused to let me go. He was also unsupportive of the idea of my working out of the country or outside of Toronto. In my fantasy, I saw myself working in Ottawa as a translator for Parliament, or overseas in the Foreign Service, in a Canadian embassy. Both ideas were strongly discouraged. Having been brought up in the sheltered way that I was, obedient and docile as I was, it never occurred to me to just pick up and leave. That would have been tantamount to cutting myself off from my family forever. In my culture, this is the equivalent of death.

I was brought up in a culture where the collective is more important than the individual and yet I was living in a culture where the individual is more important than the collective. This certainly shaped my decision to become a teacher. Teaching was almost like the bridge between those two cultures. It was a profession, therefore foreign to my private culture of the contadina (farmer) and yet it was considered safe, secure, and family-oriented, and therefore in contrast to my public culture of “the importance of the individual doing her own thing”.

When I first started teaching I was unaware of how much I had internalized my private culture. On the outside, I was a product of my public culture. On the inside, I was in Italy in the 1920s and 30s. I expected children and adolescents to be respectful and obedient. I expected kids to want to learn. I expected parents to respect my authority.
What a rude awakening I got! What I gradually came to understand was that my teacher persona was layer upon layer of cultural conditioning that needed stripping away in order to find the real me. This is something that I am still working on, but I feel that I'm getting closer to a more authentic way of teaching. I suppose that what I mean by that is that I came from a culture which highly valued authority and, in my beginning years as a teacher, I saw myself as an authority figure. That put a lot of pressure on me. Not only did I have to be authoritarian, I also had to be an authority, period! Now, I am much more likely to speak and act in ways that are authoritative (not always!) And to qualify my authority act with much more humility.

This was a cultural shift for me. My own culture had prepared me for a high place on the hierarchical social/professional ladder. I needed to go down the ladder to find who I really was.

Ironically, this has brought me closer to my cultural roots than ever. More than ever in my life, I love and appreciate the contadina (farmer) culture of my parents of their small town in the Italy of the 1920s and 1930s. I find myself swinging much less between the two polarities of either fiercely defending or fiercely denigrating this culture. It is simply a given. Part of who I am. Knit into my bones. Flowing through my veins. It helps keep me real, both as a teacher and as a person (Reflection, February, 1996).

I would have to say that for much of my life, schooling has defined my existence. Major shifts in my landscape have taken place because of major shifts in school settings. In school, I had to interact with people outside of my family. All of a sudden, I was held up to the scrutiny of outside rules and standards and I think that I was found lacking. I was too fat for games, I couldn't move quickly, gracefully, or for very long. I was too shy for creativity. School was very much a public world for me. I was expected to go public and be public and nothing in my private world had prepared me for that. In my private world, my quietness, and docility were taken as good things. I kept encountering a lot of cruelty in the
public world of school and I never knew how to deal with it. I rarely reported it to my parents. The couple of times that I did, it made things worse. I separated the two worlds. My parents couldn’t help me with the public world of school and school people couldn’t help me with the private world of family.

What I think happened at the borders of these shifts was a shifting sense of self that resulted in changes in how I related to people and the world around me. In some instances, I kept on making the same mistakes over and over again. The landscape was different, but I was not. The players were different, but the script was the same.

Very often I felt like my world was crumbling, like the earth was opening up underneath me and there was no place left for me to stand. Other times, I felt like there were rumblings inside of me, like the small tremors that keep on happening long after the first violent seizures of an earthquake are over.

One of the most dramatic shifts was when I started teaching full-time after graduating from the Faculty of Education. My first teaching job was in a predominantly Italian suburb. As I was growing up I always looked down my nose at the people who lived in that area. There had been a mass exodus of Italians, from the neighbourhood where I live, in the late 70s, to the area where I started teaching. It was seen as the nouveau riche thing to do. I was heavily influenced by my parents’ attitude which was, “these Italians who think they’re better than everyone else moving to that area”. I guess I always had that prejudice in my mind. It’s ironic that that’s where I got my first job.

In the early 80s, when I first started working there, it was, quite literally, ‘in the sticks’. The main road going into there was still a two lane road. They did not have public transit. There were very few community services. The school was very isolated. All of the kids got bussed in. The school was new and very modern in its architecture. In the vicinity of the school there was a strip plaza, some housing, houses that contractors had started to build, and huge tracts of land. The whole area felt isolated. It was in the middle of nowhere. It was, basically, out in the
country. Over the years it's been built up. They now have all the amenities. Originally, it was a 'raw' community. It was like that culturally too.

Thanks to an individual who worked in the school several years ago, there are some really beautiful original works of art made by a relatively well known artist. There are also a couple of other original pieces by another, well-known, Canadian artist - also, really beautiful pieces. I don't know if the students or staff are even aware of either the aesthetic or monetary value of these works of art. The chapel in the school is also quite lovely. The art in the chapel was also commissioned by an individual. The stations of the cross are extraordinary. But, I don't know if the stuff is appreciated by the inhabitants of the school, or by the community at large. Maybe it is.

Going to that school was one of the worst experiences of my life. I dreaded getting up in the morning and facing new experiences of humiliation. To put it quite simply, students did not respect me. I did not command respect. And I found the workload staggering. Within a month I was physically and emotionally exhausted. I was persuaded to persevere by my family and mentors. Now I almost wish that I hadn't. But I have a hunch that, if I had not persevered, I would have left the teaching profession with a feeling of failure that would have haunted me for the rest of my life. And yet, I feel that it was my destiny to persevere in teaching because this major shift in my life catapulted me into a journey that would last nine years and take me into post-graduate work. The journey has been a good road for me. I started the post-graduate journey because I had to have answers to my questions about teaching, about kids, and about myself. I think that I've finally started to come to some of the answers; I just don't like them very much.

During that major shift of starting my first full-time teaching job, I felt only DESPAIR. Pure, unadulterated despair. And shame. What sense do I make of it now? Again, I feel that it was my destiny. It was my destiny to come face to face with myself, over and over again, until I was ready to start facing some hard truths.
about myself. One of those truths is that my ego was heavily invested in the “role” of teacher. My secret fantasy was to be a spectacular teacher. The truth is that I am not spectacular. I am quite ordinary. I am a caring human being, but I am not a spectacular teacher. Another truth is that I find the curriculum boring and, except when they are writing about themselves, I find the kids’ writing boring (for the most part). In short, I have discovered that I am not made for institutional teaching. And another truth is that I don’t know what to do about it. So I find myself a very well educated educator who cares a lot about kids playing the hypocritical role of remaining in an institutional setting which I find unsuitable for myself. It’s taken me twelve years to come to that truth.

My notion of identity almost always came from my family. My family defined who I was. And yet, I had a secret self that they knew nothing about. My secret self was neither Italian nor Canadian. She was just Beatrice. My inner self transcends nationality and culture. She is just me. Categories don’t mean much to me anymore. I know that my mind immediately goes to categories, especially cultural categories of male, female, Canadian, Italian, southern Italian, northern Italian, etc., in order to help me understand phenomena that at first seems puzzling. But, the more I simply look at people (including myself) without judgment, the more the categories simply fall away and the more I’m able to see both of us as just human beings. This is a recent identity shift for me. It’s happened since I started teaching in an area outside of Toronto after teaching in a predominantly Italian area. I went into the country making comparisons between “Italian” kids and “Canadian” kids.

*What I’m about to say isn’t going to sound too flattering to the kids in the predominantly Italian school - the loudness of the kids, their verbal nature, their friendliness, their outgoingness with one another, and also with people who come into the school. If you go into the school, put out your hand and say, “Hi, I’m Carmen Maggisano”, they’ll respond to that. Whereas, my impression, at the other school,*
was that there was much more aloofness on the part of the kids - both in the way that they related to one another, and also in the way that they related to adults. There are certain aspects of the Italian culture which, I think, are encoded in the DNA of these kids. Like the way they yell at one another, like you’re yelling across the piazza. Like, “EH, CARMEN!” - like I haven’t seen you in ten days, meanwhile I just saw you at lunch time. They tease one another, they’re very verbal that way. There’s a tremendous amount of gossipping that goes on that was not as obvious in the other school. It kind of reminds you of the hometown where everybody talked about everybody else, and they knew about everybody else’s business. That’s what it reminds me of. Also, just the physicality of their looks. I look at them, and I can imagine them in the hometown out in the piazza, out for a stroll or out for a coffee. I can imagine the guys, kind of eyeing the girls. They still have the same kind of physical look as their parents, their grandparents, their great-grandparents. The big dark eyes, the dark hair, la fisionomia (the physical features). It’s still very strong in them, it’s not washed out yet. They look Italian. I’m aware, even as I’m saying that, that I’m perpetuating stereotype (#6, pp. 7-8).

After a few months of making comparisons, I realized that not only was I making myself miserable, I was also doing both sets of kids an injustice. It’s in the here and now of relating to them. And so, now I’m saying to myself, “In the moments when I love my students, they’re just KIDS.” In those moments, there simply are no categories. And yet, I think it’s important to have an AWARENESS of a child’s cultural background. Awareness, however, does not mean definition or categorization.

I remember the Honour Specialist course I took was most unsatisfying as far as answering my questions about teaching was concerned. The course dealt with
academic and theoretical questions about language, and literature. My world at
the high school where I taught was real and concrete. Doing post-graduate work
in education encouraged me to stay in teaching. I finally found other teachers
who, like myself, were asking questions. I had found a place where I felt
intellectually stimulated and where I could self-direct my learning and connect it
to the real life issues of my job. I started to see myself as a “seeker”, as a
“questioner”. I relished this shift in identity. I had a goal in mind. I was a
“reformer”. I would become an administrator and right the wrongs of the
educational system! Towanda the Avenger to the rescue!

By the time I started my doctoral work I was tired. And my sense of the
educational system was that its problems were too vast for me to take on. I felt
myself moving away from teaching. This was a shift in identity as well. I feel
uncertain as to how to continue to work as a teacher, especially after graduate
school. I feel that uncertainty is the only thing that I am now certain of.
Uncertainty makes me feel pretty vulnerable and it’s hard to be vulnerable in an
environment (the school setting) where armour is required. At least, that’s my
perception, that I have to go into work armoured. I’ve been thinking about that just
recently. I know that, during the last major shift in my landscape, i.e. going to
work in the country, I went in pretty heavily armoured.

What has become increasingly clear to me over the last two months is that
I find myself increasingly uncomfortable in many of the roles which institutional
schooling requires me to take on: disciplinarian, evaluator, upholder of school
rules (many of which I do not believe in), departmental team player, and socializer
(I like to pick and choose who I work and play with), producer of results. This
realization is a big shift for me. At one time, I felt that if only I could find a good
way of doing these things then I would be able to do them gracefully. Now I
realize that I just don’t want to do them at all. And yet I want to be involved in the
lives of children and adolescents. There are moments in my teaching (rarely
during a lesson) when I feel that I have an important role to play in the formation
of my students' lives. That sounds a bit pompous. What it really boils down to is that I feel I have some love to offer them. I do love them. That's the crux of it. But all the roles are just that, roles. They have nothing to do with learning or loving.

The curriculum at my school is very prescribed. I suppose you want to hear something about my Italianness and how that is connected to my curricular planning? This was much more explicit for me when I was working in a predominantly Italian area. There, I would make a point of talking about Dante and Petrarch before introducing Shakespeare. At least I did at first. I wanted kids to take pride in their heritage and realize that great literature did not begin and end with England. I soon realized that they were not interested - not in Dante, Petrarch, or Shakespeare. I was fighting my battle, not theirs.

Similarly, during that time, I would take pains to correct students' spoken English - "sangwich", "close the lights", "underwears". I attacked these linguistic heresies with all the fervour of a Crusader. Kids' typical reaction was: "Relax, Miss. What are you getting so upset about?" Similarly, I would encourage these Italian kids to do things outside of the area they lived in - go on the school trip to Stratford ("What, Miss? Spend thirty dollars to go see a play?"); go on a leadership conference in Mono Mills ("I don't like the food there. I don't know. I gotta see. I might have to work. My mother doesn't want me to go. My father doesn't let me go on overnight trips."); go and study outside of Toronto. I never pressured kids, especially when I realized that the parents were holding them back. I didn't want to create the inner conflict that I had felt myself when I was their age - i.e. by not going, I was disappointing my teachers. When I was their age, defying my parents seemed like too big a thing for me to do. I would never deliberately push a kid beyond a place he or she feels comfortable going. They may already feel like a failure for not being able to stand up to their parents (I know I did). They don't need to feel like a double failure for not being able to accept my encouragement too. I try to support students in the direction that they want to go and only challenge them when they seem to be on the brink of something and they ask for
my help in crossing over to the other side. This is a very delicate balancing act and needs to be handled with great care.

My personal curriculum impacts more on my relationship with kids than it does on what I actually teach. Because of my own experiences of feeling lost and alone in high school, I try to encourage the kids who seem lost and alone. Again, I don’t push. I try to find an opening, hopefully an opening the kid gives me, and then I work from there. It may be one line in an essay. In one case this year, it was one paragraph in the final exam. It may be a sad look. It could be anything. I make a point of standing at the door at the end of each class and saying goodbye to kids. To kids who look sad I usually look them straight in the eye and say something like, “Take care, Lisa.” To kids who look tired, I might say, “See you tomorrow. Have a good evening.” To kids who have been pests, I might just look significantly, causing them to have a mini guilt attack - “What?? What did I do??” Someone who seems to be in anguish might get a brief touch on the shoulder as she walks out the door and maybe a gentle question, “Are you doing O.K.?”

Sometimes I’ll ask a student to stay behind for a minute. Here’s a little story about one of those moments of love I was talking about earlier that I said transcends roles.

A Moment of Love
A grade nine student (I’ll call her Dorothy) was being a pest all period - defying me, not paying attention, talking back, talking to her friend during the lesson, etc. She had been like this for a few days. I asked her to stay behind for a minute at the end of the period. She was wary. She stayed far away from me. I looked her straight in the eyes and I said, “Dorothy, have you been having a hard time this week?” She lowered her eyes a bit, dropped her head to one side and rather quietly answered, “Yes. How did you know?” I answered, “Because you’ve been giving me a really hard time this week and, sometimes, when I’m having a hard time, I take it out on other
people.” In a still softer voice she said, “Sorry, Miss.” Then her voice abruptly changed. It became the anguished voice of a very small child as she loudly protested, “But, Miss, Nadia (pseudonym for another girl in the class) has been saying bad things about me. You don’t know what she’s like! To my face she acts really nice and then, behind my back, she says mean things about me.” Knowing that I had to draw this exchange to a close because we both had to go and knowing that I wanted to give Dorothy some support, I simply looked at her with compassion and love and I said, “Well, that’s not very nice is it, to have someone say bad things about you behind your back.” Her eyes went soft, her voice became fourteen again and she said, “No it’s not.” And that was it. One moment of love that I hope Dorothy will take away with her as a moment when someone cared about her feelings and didn’t try to diminish her experience by casting her in the role of “student” (July, 1996).

As “student” Dorothy is supposed to put aside her feelings in the classroom and get on with the job of learning. I think that, in time, she will learn to shelve her feelings in situations where it is not appropriate to express them then and there, but I think that she will learn this much better in an atmosphere of compassion and acceptance than she would in an atmosphere of rules and prescribed expectations. In the latter, she is the “student” and I am the “teacher”. She has “misbehaved” and I will “discipline” her. In the former, she and I are both imperfect human beings relating to one another in an imperfect way.

Because of my personal curriculum of having hidden most of my life, I can see behind the faces of my students and I can hear behind their words. This is what hurts me the most. I feel that real learning takes place when I can go behind the faces and behind the words. And yet, I am bound by a prescribed curriculum. And they are bound by prescribed roles. Because of my personal curriculum, I can
recognize raw emotions in kids. I can recognize depression, hostility, fear, and excitement. I don’t always know what to do about these emotions, but I can recognize them.

The personal is more important to me than the curricular. How does this connect to my cultural background? The thing that comes to mind is that, in the world of my family, the personal dramas always took precedence over anything that was happening “out there”. The family was the most important thing in the world. Other things “out there” were important but peripheral. However, my personal dramas were not important to anyone but me, so I have developed a sense of the necessity of paying attention to the personal drama. “Attention must be paid”, says Linda in Arthur Miller’s play, Death of a Salesman. She says that Willy Loman may not be a great man, but that a terrible thing is happening to him and “attention must be paid”. Maybe this is the culmination of all of my years of education and all of my years of introspection and all of my years of living (so far) - paying attention. Paying attention because I wanted attention. Paying attention because I’ve come to realize, through that longing for attention, that every human being is worthy of attention. Once again, it’s a delicate balancing act. I pay attention to kids’ personal dramas, but I make a conscious effort to not rescue kids or conspire with them to create melodramas. When I find myself rescuing kids, I know that I am not holding onto my own centre. Instead, I am like a sponge, soaking up their emotions and, once again, I am playing a “role” instead of being a person with them. This too is connected to my personal curriculum. I think that, because I wanted attention so badly, but had swallowed the injunction that to call attention to myself was a bad thing, I either withdrew from getting attention or I did inappropriate and manipulative things to get attention. I recognize these games in kids and, while I have compassion for them, I can still see that they are games.

I think that this issue of attention is connected to how my parents valued me as a female and as a daughter. I think that my parents have always loved me and valued me. I wish that they had brought me up differently in some ways. I wish
that they had encouraged me more to come out of my shell. I wish that they had enrolled me in at least one thing outside of the home - music lessons maybe. As I was growing up, I watched my brother go out into the world and be involved in life. I retreated more and more into the world of my imagination. I was always reading. That was my one and only “extracurricular” activity. My brother played baseball and hockey in a league. He got skates and skating lessons. He also got music lessons. He got a typewriter and a desk of his own - it was understood that these would be shared with me and he did share, he was always good about that, but still they were his and not mine. He got a bike. When he outgrew it, it became mine. I didn’t learn to ride a bike until I was eleven and it was my idea. My brother coached me a bit and the rest I did on my own. My father taught my brother how to ride.

I guess what I’m trying to get at is that no one even thought to include me in all of these activities - including me. My brother got to go to day camp one summer. He got to go away to another city for a five day trip with his school when he was only in grade five. I had to fight to go on an overnight music trip when I was in grade seven. My father let me go that year because my mother came as a chaperon. He didn’t let me go the next year. My understanding music teacher arranged for me and two other girls who also weren’t allowed to stay overnight to be picked up in the late afternoon and driven back in the early morning by teachers from the school. I appreciated their kindness but it embarrassed me. It embarrassed me to hear the comments of the other kids, “Why aren’t you allowed to stay?” It embarassed me that all three girls who weren’t allowed to stay overnight were Italian girls. It made it seem as if our families were so backward and strange.

In short, my parents raised me to watch life go by like a parade. I was to stand on the sidewalk, wave, and cheer the paraders on. I was not to participate. Until I got married. Then I could do whatever I wanted. “When you’re married”,

my father said, “you can travel with your husband.” In those days I never questioned that I might not get married.

Last year, in a very brief conversation about overprotective parents, my father said to me that he had overprotected me because I had always seemed afraid. He said, “You seemed afraid to stick your nose out the door.” What a catch-22 situation! If I was afraid to stick my nose out the door it was because they never let me stick my nose out the door! And so, when I did stick my nose out the door, I felt fearful and incompetent. How lucky are the children whose parents manage to shelve their own fears and cheer them on. These are the children who know that their parents are there in the background feeling confident in their child’s ability to cope and willing to help them pick up the pieces when they can’t.

I think my parents valued my docility, obedience, reliability, intelligence, and precocious maturity. Because I saw that they valued these things, I cultivated them in myself. What I didn’t realize at the time was that these qualities were not good survival tools for all situations, especially for situations outside of my home. These were not “cool” qualities; therefore at school, I was always a social outcast.

When I was growing up I never felt that my parents loved my brother more because he was a boy. I felt that everyone simply liked my brother more because he was so much more affable, sociable, and outgoing than I was. He was allowed to go out into the world, I was sheltered. Ironically he was the delicate one; I was the strong one. I doubt that this had anything to do with gender. It was an accident of birth or a fluke of destiny. He was born prematurely at a time when my parents’ finances were precarious and their English almost non-existent - it was a vulnerable time for them. I was born at nine months gestation, strong and healthy at almost ten pounds at a time when my parents were more well established, and more self-confident. Our names say it all. As custom dictated, we were both given our paternal grandparents’ names, but my brother was given an Italian name and
I was given an English name. And yet the irony was that my brother was raised more “Canadian” and I was raised more “Italian”. (Reflections, July 29, 1996).

Choosing to Become a Teacher

I have always maintained that I never chose to become a teacher. I have always said that I simply wandered into teaching. I no longer believe this to be true. I think that teaching was the logical choice for someone like me who had grown up taking very few risks and who wanted very much to please her parents.

Teaching was the “nice” sort of white collar job that was considered respectable for women of my generation. It was something to “fall back on” while I waited for the real job - being a wife and mother. Not that being a wife and mother was something that was considered important by my parents. It was something that I wanted and it was the job that I considered the “real” job, the most important job that a woman could have, for me anyway. It was the “job” that I longed for. Teaching was just a temporary substitute.

Not exploring other options was the safe choice for me. So, you see, there was a choice, it was the choice of not consciously making a career choice.

When I entered the teaching world, it was really the first time that I was “out in the world” and having to relate closely to people. I had had part-time and summer jobs but this was different. This was a real job. This was serious. I never thought much about it at the time, but several years later it occurred to me that I was the only English teacher of Italian background in a school whose student population was almost exclusively made up of students from Italian background families. Ironic? Yes. It was even more ironic that, of all the English teachers in my department, I had the most education, and in English literature, no less.

Being in contact with the “outside” world brought me into contact with social attitudes that I had never consciously explicated. For example, my colleagues’ comments such as, “Oh, you still live at home?” To me, “at home” meant that I lived with my parents. The expression was weird to me. That phrase
is outside of the language framework that I grew up with. To say that I am living at home, to me, that is a very Anglo expression. My life is normal for me. I am normal to me. My home was my home. There wasn’t any “home” and then something else apart from home. My home was with my parents, until I got married and created a home with my husband and children. That was what I grew up believing. I found their attitude condescending. I found some of their comments about the students vaguely condescending as well. The students were described as “too loud”. Too loud for whom? Too loud compared to what? The female students’ hugging and kissing one another was declared excessive: “You’d think they hadn’t seen each other in months!” The students’ tendency to want to stay home to be at the death bed of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives was deemed to be unnecessary: “It’s not as if you can do anything for them!” The behaviour of Italians at the funeral home was labelled hysterical: “I just can’t handle Italian funeral homes - all that yelling and screaming.”

In the beginning I started to get sucked into the predominant culture. A few times, I caught myself saying things like, “They are loud.” or “What can you do for your uncle by staying away from school?” That sort of thing. But I was roused from my quasi-seduction by the funeral home comments. That’s where I drew the line! I started to fight back with comments of my own. I felt secure in my battle. My education was my armour and my buttress against Anglo snobbery. The battle became even more heated when I started hearing comments like, “Well, what can you expect from these kids? They don’t speak English at home.”

Looking back at how I threw myself into the fray in those days, I have to say that my St. Joan of Arc act was a waste of energy. I would have been better off putting all that valuable energy into the classroom. (February 17, 1997).

**Being Italian in the Classroom**

My Italianess is something that is knit into my bones. I cannot separate the strands of my identity: woman, Italian, Canadian. I am who I am. When I step
back from who I am, I can start to see the different threads, but I don’t particularly like this analytical approach to myself. In any case, I feel that I am a very particular brand of Italian. I am a small town Southern Italian of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. This world is a part of who I am and, at the same time, I’ve gone beyond it. Because of this, I am fiercely loyal to this world and, at the same time, I can see its limitations.

My cultural background has significantly coloured my expectations of my students. I have very high expectations for respectful behaviour and self-reliance. When I first started teaching, I had these expectations in a punishing sort of way. I felt anger towards my students and looked down on them at the same time as loving them. What I can say, in all honesty, is that, when I worked in a school which was predominantly Italian, I both fiercely loved the kids and, at times, wanted to soundly shake them. I would get furious with them when they acted like cafoni (bumpkins). “Non fatevi pigliare per fessi!” (“Don’t allow others to take you for fools!”) That was my biggest reprimand to them! I wanted them to see that if they acted like jerks then they were the ones who were losing out, not the people in charge. I suppose this is true of any kid in any school, but it particularly irked me to see Anglo-Irish background teachers shaking their heads over the misbehaviour of Italian background kids. It was as if they were saying, “Well, what can you expect?” And, at the same time, I couldn’t deny the reality of what was right in front of me.

I taught in a predominantly Italian community for eight years. By the end of those eight years, I had softened in my attitude towards the kids. I spent less time battling over things I couldn’t change. I came to appreciate what was instead of trying so hard to change reality into what I wanted it to be. I came to appreciate for example, the way I could communicate with those kids. I loved being able to simply make sound and have them understand exactly what I was saying. For example: “Em be’?!?” or “O!” accompanied by the right look or gesture was immediately understood. Like the Italian saying, “A buon intenditore, poche
parole!" (Enough said), I loved hearing my students say, “Miss, you remind me of my mother.” I considered that a compliment.

Now that I teach in a school where Italian students are in the minority, I miss this way of communicating and relating. I miss the Italian kids terribly. They were flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone. This came home to me very poignantly just last week when a former colleague invited me to the opera with three of her students. They were all dressed up - the girls looked chic and beautiful, the boy looked handsome. The girls shook my hand in a very grown-up way and the boy (a former student) kissed me on both cheeks in the Italian way. I get a lump in my throat just thinking about it now. How I miss the hugs and kisses! How I miss the yelling even! The way we could argue hotly in class and then, at the end of the period, as they were leaving the room, the kid would say, “You’re not mad at me, are you Miss?” Or, when I saw him or her in the halls afterwards, they would smile and say hello as if nothing had happened. This was relating! This was life! Fire and blood!

At the end of the first semester this year, three of my students hugged me good-bye - two were of Italian background. Coincidence? I don’t think so.

I have shifted significantly in the last ten years. I still have high expectations, but I believe more in letting kids make their own choices. In this way, I really have transcended my own upbringing, where personal choice was not much of an option. Immediate obedience to authority was the primary way of being in the world. On the other hand, because I was given a lot of responsibility at a very young age, I just don’t buy it when parents try to rescue kids. On the surface, it looked like my parents overprotected me and, in some ways they did, but they also expected me to do a lot of things on my own. I find it incredible when the parents of high school students are still babying their children to the extent that the student takes no personal ownership for his or her homework. This is unacceptable to my way of thinking.
The first step is to even acknowledge or notice that I have a self. This has been a difficult process. I have jokingly said in the past that I was raised in the past and future tense and in the first person plural. In the family of my formative years, the first person singular did not exist. There was no "I". There was simply "we" and "us". Unidentified ego mass.

Teaching is like that too. Maybe that's why I drifted towards it so naturally. In the teacher culture, I am expected to be part of a group, to believe in "esprit de corps", to be a "team player", to go along with the prevailing ethos of the group. My spirit rebels against this. At the same time, I like the feeling of "belonging". So what to do? I am convinced that I have to get out of teaching, among other reasons, because, in my opinion, there is too high a price tag attached to "belonging". The price is the sale of my soul. I haven't lost my soul completely because, to a certain extent I still do things my way in the classroom. But, I'm tired of pretending that I believe in things that I don't believe in: school uniforms; punishment; obligatory and set curriculum; mandatory schooling. I believe that education is valuable, but there are too many things in the educational system which, in my opinion, obstruct education.

Ironically, if I had not become a teacher, I would not have embarked on the journey of reclaiming my self. When I started my post-graduate work, that's when that journey really began. The work was the impetus, the launching pad for so many other initiatives. I guess that's true because, when I started my M.Ed. I felt that, for the first time in my life, I was in charge of my learning. I loved the learning atmosphere in most of the courses I took. I was free to design my own program to a great extent. That suited me because I am a fairly self-directed learner.

It's ironical that the nice safe, secure, feminine job of teaching turned me into a woman who, in her thirties, started asking a lot of questions about herself and life. The readings that I was doing, the people that I encountered, the research
that I did, the spiritual direction that I sought - everything seemed to come together
to point me in the direction of defining more clearly to myself who I was. During
my studies I came across an author who I simply fell in love with - Sylvia Ashton-
Warner. Here’s an excerpt from her autobiography entitled *Myself*.

I must preserve my individuality and not be influenced by what
others do. I must not catch their speech or their ways but keep my
own. I must not resist doing what I think fits when others don’t think
the same; I must set and maintain my own standard ... Whatever of
heart pain the price. I must have faith in my own judgment, my own
impulses, born from the conviction that there is *some* good in me
however it appears to the contrary ... I must be true to myself. Strong
evenough to be true to myself. Brave enough, to be strong enough, to
be true enough to shape myself from what I actually am. What big
words, O my Self: true, strong, brave and wise! But that’s how it is,
my Self. That’s how it must be for me to walk steadily in my own
ways, as graceful as I feel, as upright as I feel, with a ridiculous
flower on top of my head ... a sentimental daisy. For therein lies my
individuality, my authentic signature, the source of other’s love for
me" (1967, pp. 192-183).

Ashton-Warner was an elementary school teacher in New Zealand. Like
myself she sort of wandered into teaching. She was a very creative and artistic
teacher, but always doubted her own abilities. She became well known for her
work with Maori children. In the last years of her life she taught teachers in
training at Simon Fraser University. She would teach through an experiential
method in which she asked the student teachers to put themselves in the place of
the children they were going to teach. I loved reading about the way she taught
children to read. She would ask them what word they wanted to learn. Each child
had a different word. Each word became the basis of a story. Her reasoning was
that a child will only learn words that are relevant and important to him or her.
The British primers she was given had no cultural relevance to the everyday lives
of her Maori pupils, so she created her own.

I agree with her and can see the relevance of her method in my own
classroom, but I am constricted by a curriculum and by the fact that, at the end of
the semester, my students have to write a common grade level exam. So how can I play with the curriculum? I tried my best when I was teaching. I had a lot of freedom because my department head was rather laissez-faire and, even there, I felt that I had failed. Accustomed as they were to a standard curriculum, the students rebelled against my methods. They wanted freedom but they also wanted license. The few who were more mature than the norm learned; those who had been corrupted by trying to get away with as little as possible not only did not learn but felt that they had been cheated because I had not acted in the same way as other teachers. They both hated and loved their intellectual prison.

I have become convinced that a non-standard way of teaching is not possible within a standardized institutional school system - at least not for me. I'm not the stuff that martyrs are made of. I'm no Joan of Arc material.

How does this fit into the framework of cultural experience? Well, I guess you could say that my cultural experience set me up to be a martyr. I had a few strikes against me: woman, Italian, Catholic, child of immigrant parents. Within the framework created by these girders there were many injunctions, not the least of which was "Be nice". Others were: "Don't make waves." "Keep the peace." "Be a good girl." Don't make anyone angry."

I took these injunctions with me into my teaching career and almost died within the first month. I overcompensated by swinging to the other extreme and becoming mouthy and arrogant for a while. Now I'll make a comment, now and then, but I choose my battles selectively. The way I look at it is, "Is this something I want to waste valuable energy on?" If the answer is "No", then I'll keep my mouth shut.

**Voice**

Voice keeps changing for me. My voice keeps changing. I don't want to say that I never had a voice until some magical time when ... it was magically released. It doesn't work that way for me.
I think it would be more accurate to say that, the way I was brought up, I was expected to not voice my opinions in my home. My opinion was neither solicited nor valued. My attitudes, beliefs, and values, were ridiculed and oftentimes deemed "stupid", or "silly". I was idealist and often criticised for being an idealist.

School was a place where I could voice an opinion - sometimes. So, I guess you could say that, for many years, I had a voice, but it was sottovoce, or underground. It was like a little stream running underground. Maybe nobody can see it or hear it, but it's there.

As a teacher in the classroom, I tend not to worry too much about voice. I try to be diplomatic, but often am not. My students seem to consider me quite opinionated and I've been told that by adults as well. I guess I don't care very much what they think of my opinions. I'm not much afraid of them repeating my opinions to parents or administration. I follow my rule that anything I say in the classroom, my students are free to repeat to whoever they want. There have been a few times when I've come close to getting into trouble. I never worried about it. I had no intention of lying about anything I said.

As a classroom teacher, when my students ask for my opinion, I give my honest opinion. However, there are some things that I refuse to discuss. For example, last semester, the students wanted my opinion on administration's crackdown on the uniform. I refused to engage in this discussion. I did not feel obligated to tell the students that I thought the policy was useless. I simply stated another truth: I want to focus on the lesson today.

I used to be more of an advocate for students, more of a rescuer. Now, I encourage them to speak up for themselves if they don't like something. They certainly have big enough mouths in the classroom. I encourage them to put that energy to good use.

I struggle with the issue of voice. I'm more selective than I used to be about who I use which voice with. I have my social voice which is pretty neutral. I guess
I use that one with most of my colleagues. My authentic voice I save for a privileged few, my journal, and my prayers. My authentic voice is a wide spectrum of emotions - a good range. I say much less than I used to - out loud I mean. I feel the need to say less. Maybe I'm finding some equilibrium on the spectrum of the two polarities of being muted and of being mouthy.

**Authority**

I feel that I am an authority on myself. I know what works for me in the classroom and what doesn't. No way can I come across as the authoritarian teacher. It doesn't work for me. But I am firm. I feel that I am an authority on kids - to a certain extent. I don't feel that I know everything, but I have confidence in the things that I believe. I don't presume to state an opinion on matters that I know nothing about.

In terms of patriarchal authority, there's no doubt about it - my father was the ultimate authority in our house as I was growing up. At least that's the way it looked to me then. But, I can't, in all honesty say that, within myself, that made him (or my mother) the ultimate authority for me. What I mean, is, inside of myself, I continued to have my own opinions about issues. My father had decided opinions about how girls should be protected by not being allowed to go out - I never agreed with that either. My father also felt that I might regret having spent the time and energy to earn a university degree because he reasoned, I would want to stay home and raise my children. I didn't agree with that either. My university degree was for me, children or no children. That was my reasoning.

I've also thought about church authority as part of patriarchal authority. I never took church authority very seriously because my parents were not practising Catholics while I was growing up. Church authority was somewhere there in the background of my life, but it wasn't something that I could take very seriously. For example, the Church said that it was a mortal sin to miss Mass on Sunday. Well, my parents wouldn't let me travel the three miles or so to get to Sunday Mass on
my own and they never went themselves, so I committed a lot of mortal sins between my First Communion (age 6) and the establishment of a local parish (age 10). Even though I dutifully confessed the sins, in my heart, I couldn’t help thinking that it was all a bit ridiculous. How was I supposed to get to church if my parents didn’t take me? I remember being told by one priest in the confessional, “Tell your parents to go to hell and mind their own business!” Right! Also ridiculous! How does one take such advice seriously? I suppose it confused me if anything else.

Church authority didn’t really become an issue in my life until I started university and started reading books on moral theology. That’s when I learned about *Humanae Vitae*. Up until then, I had had no idea that artificial contraception was a sin. (I had gone to public school. Representatives from Planned Parenthood came in to talk to us about contraception and they never mentioned anything about sin!) Again, I felt confused. And a part of me felt that the whole thing was somewhat ridiculous. I wanted to be a good Catholic and tried to be for several years, mostly because I longed for a sense of belonging. But, I must confess, I didn’t make it as Catholic Woman of the Year. *Sic transit gloria mundi.* Thus goes the glory of the world!

I really do consider myself the expert of my own experience. That doesn’t mean that I reject others’ opinions, just that there are fewer and fewer people whose opinions about myself I’m even willing to listen to.

As this relates to teaching, I would have to say that I feel like a fish swimming upstream while all the other fish are happily swimming downstream. That sounds pretty arrogant I suppose, and I don’t mean it that way. I just feel out of place in institutional education.
Chapter Six
Francesca
Re-collecting Hometown and the Old Neighbourhood

There is only one heaven,
the heaven of home.
Mimosa, Di Michele

Everything that related to my growing up was within a four kilometre radius from my home: relatives, school, church, stores, public transit, and so on. In thinking about being the child of immigrant parents (who took up residence in a working class, ethnic neighbourhood - primarily an Italian Canadian neighbourhood, with back yard vegetable gardens, and so forth), I'd have to say that one of the positive things about that was the gift of sensuality. This keeps coming up for me. I lived in the same house for thirty years. There is a strong sense of rootedness that has to do with making a location your home. There was a sense of rootedness around home, and making home, not just the back yard, not just the house. What is the rootedness about? Rootedness means digging deep and being firm, and steady in areas. This rootedness takes me back to language and certain customs. So my rootedness, which means my ability to feel most at home, is with the people from il basso ceto (lower class) of the hometown. Also, for me, that stability was the fact that I grew up in the same house in which I was born. This is reminiscent of the people in the hometown who lived in family homes for generations.

Our house was an average, 1920s, semi-detached home - no more than fourteen feet wide, two storeys high. It was a long narrow house, with a long hallway and stairs going up. We had tenants living upstairs for three or four years. They were a young Italian couple with a baby. The upstairs had a washroom with a toilet, a small sink, a little window facing the backyard, and an old-fashioned washtub - no shower head. Next to the washroom was a tiny kitchen and then
down the hall there were two rooms. The tenants used one as a bedroom and the other larger room as a living room.

While the upstairs was being rented, we occupied the first floor. To the left, as one entered, was the living room, then the dining room, and then the kitchen in the back. The dining room, during the time we had tenants, was our bedroom. I was three years old at the time. All four of us slept there. My sister slept in a crib.

There was a wooden veranda, a wooden porch, and then stairs leading down to the backyard. There were stairs leading to a creepy, dingy, unfinished basement. There was a huge old oil burning furnace that made a lot of weird noises. The washroom was down there also. It had a toilet seat, and a shower head with just a little partition separating the two. We washed our hands and faces in the washtub just outside the bathroom.

I grew up in a neighbourhood, where the cultural background awakened my senses. Something as simple as the smell of bread, I remember the smell of freshly baked bread which permeated our little house. There were Italian bakeries in our neighbourhood but my mother insisted on baking her own. (She still does.) She was proud of making her own bread. Baking bread transported my mother back to the hometown where women always baked their own bread in a communal oven.

_A Voice From the Garden_

My father and uncle made wine in September and I was part of that process. I can still smell the fragrance of grapes which filled small wooden crates waiting to be being crushed. In August, my mother preserved tomato sauce and made enough to last for the whole winter. During those times the smell of tomato and basil filled the air. The whole layout of the landscape in the old neighbourhood was quite meticulous and appealed to my sense of sight. All of the homes had a small patch of closely clipped grass in the front yard. Some had flowers, ours did not. I read an article in the _Eyetalian_ written by an Italian
Canadian who describes the Italian Canadian garden. The following passages are taken from that article.

This is a special landscape planted and cultivated by our parents, who valiantly tried to recreate much of their old rural ways in a new world. ... A group of men and women with no real political and social representation in their adopted society managed to give expression to their identity by way of the spaces upon which they would exercise control, their gardens. (Ferrara, Summer, 1997, p. 12)

One of my favourite places to just sit and read a book was the stairs leading to the backyard. This space was close to the kitchen yet it was outside. I remind myself of the women in the town who stood at the balcony or sat at the front door stoop. While sitting on the back steps I faced a cement patio, and a vegetable garden. Mary Di Michele describes a similar scene to what I used to look at:

There’s a walk of broken tiles through the well trimmed grass leading to a vegetable patch, fenced and carefully tended, a nursery for deep purple eggplant, whose mature passions keep them close to the security of the ground, garlic, the most eloquent of plants, with the grace of a lily, from white clusters of buds, the flower, is sticking out a long green tongue. Zucchini, tomatoes, peppers, tender peas, and Italian parsley, the season yields. (Di Michele, Mimosa, in C.M. DiGiovanni [Ed.], 1984, p. 157)

Originally the backyard was all grass. When we came along my dad put a swing set for my sister and I, he put in a vegetable garden and a few fruit trees: peaches, plums, and a glorious fig tree.

[My uncle is] usually tending to his fig tree. ... Sometimes he’s dismantling the shed that he erects every year around his miraculous fig tree. My uncle’s shed, a small construction to protect a sapling brought back after a visit to Italy, began its life over twenty years ago. [The shed] has grown over the years and its shell has changed, from wood to metal to composite insulation panels, to allow for the growth of the fig tree. The tree now stands thirty feet high and at summer’s end produces a gorgeous purple fruit foreign to this climate. All of this is possible as a result of hard work and ingenuity
(in the winter months heat comes into the enclosed shed from a window connected to the furnace room). [I call these gardens] “the project”. (Ferrara, 1997, p. 13)

Things growing intersected with wires and chain link fences. In fact the whole garden seemed to have been interwoven with something else...

The project is a tapestry, a work of art that has been woven into the fabric of the city. This tapestry has been created by the calloused and mutilated hands of construction and factory workers who, in their spare time and with the assistance of their children, used recovered materials and countless hours of recycling to reconstruct and restore land for productive purposes. (p. 13)

Fences were an important item in the politics of the backyard.

It was not surprising to me that one of the first articles to appear in “Toronto Life” about Italians in Canada was about Woodbridge and its landscape. The article, a WASP lament about planting catalpas versus pines in the area, understood a shift that was taking place unbeknownst to most Canadians. The gardens being cultivated by Italian Canadians were altering the city’s environment. (p. 14)

You could see neighbour’s tomatoes, you could hear people’s voices, and they were Italian, so we understood. But, the backyard wasn’t always like that.

Beyond a white metal fence lie a series of prefabricated concrete paving stones laid out neatly in a grid. Beyond the stones is a planter surrounded by prefabricated concrete out of which rise three aluminum pipes that are tied back to the house with stainless steel wires. A thriving Concord grape vine climbs up the pipes and over the wires providing shade to the patio. In the middle of the patio is a table made of metal (my father repaired trucks and trailers). All of my uncles have a similar patio. However, their tables have tops of terrazzo and bases of concrete (you guessed it, they worked in concrete forming).

I first became aware of “the project” when I was a graduate student at the University of Toronto trying to understand the nature of the suburbs. ... I came across historical photos of my own neighbourhood. .. I [saw] lines marked over acres of farmland in the photos from the 1940s. ... These were the aerial photos used to lay out highway 401 and 400 - the two major traffic arteries in the city.
Upon further review I uncovered photos of my old neighbourhood. A street pattern was etched from the earth in the late 1950s, the roads were laid and then houses were built in the 1960s. As I continued to scan the photos well into the 1970s something else was emerging. Unusual patterns exposed the result of activity by my father, uncles and their paesan[i] as they began to work on their gardens and transform the landscape. (Ferrara, 1997, p. 13)

Besides preserving tomatoes my mother made sotto aceti (pickled vegetables), roasted peppers, jams, and marmalades. She ruled the kitchen. She had help from her sister-in-law - one uncle and his family, an aunt and her family, and two older cousins with their respective families lived within a two kilometre distance from our home.

Why the obsession with the garden? The tapestry they form tells the history of what it took each of them to survive the harsh economic and isolating cultural climate they discovered in this country. Canada was a place where they could build a new life for the family but it was cold, lonely, and foreign. These gardens became an immediate outlet for their expression. I expect [eventually these] monuments will be lost. Their gardens overgrown with new grounds forged by younger hands. (p. 15)

The gift of sensuality continued ... Then, of course, the kinds of discussions, and the pitch of the discussions, appeal to my sense of sound - dialect spoken among paesan[i], music, and rhythm. My mother read Italian stories to me, so there was the rhythm of the language that was appealing to the sense of hearing. It's cliché but even opera was part of the extended family. I had an older cousin who loved opera.

Even the negative things about the body couldn't be divorced from the fact that we were talking, we were involved in bodily things. So, it was very sensuous, even the negative messages. Growing up a female, just in terms of my body image, it was, “Cross your legs”. Then around puberty, menstruation. There was always something secret, and therefore dirty about this. I think those are the
messages that I picked-up about the body. I couldn’t get away from the body, my mother’s body. My parents’ bodily presence was always in your face.

One of the most difficult things about being the child of immigrant parents, for me, as a woman, has been (in terms of the images and sense of self created in that type of upbringing) forming a self identity that would take me away from the small town culture into the Canadian mainstream, English speaking culture. That would involve, for me, the value of autonomy, risk-taking (versus home-making), self confidence, projecting (language) and ambition. I don’t see that those values were encouraged. I think that has had a long lasting effect that I am working through now.

If I were to use a spatial metaphor, I can’t go back, I don’t know what going forward means, and I don’t know what shape holding these tensions needs, for these tensions to be integrated. Gender, culture, and language feed into each other. They are threads of the same tapestry.

The Church

The pivotal experience of my culture was a church based experience. Even though I was going to a Catholic elementary school we were expected to go to “Sunday” school. When the Italian national parish was built it drew together a lot of people. My parents began to take us there - it was only a ten minute walk from home. We went regularly. It was my mother’s task to make sure that we were involved in the church’s catechism program because communion was coming up. It was also my mother’s task to teach us the prayers, and take us to confession - which was done regularly, and it was done with the same kids I went to school with.

These catechism classes took place in the church hall, which was the church basement. It was an off colour of ‘mouldy’ beige - it wasn’t very attractive. It had a stage, it was wide - in fact, they had wedding receptions down there also. One length of the wall had mirrors on it. We sat at standard banquet hall tables
to do our work. There were no dividers, only space between the classes and the tables. We were exposed to each other’s noise all of the time.

The church had been built by the Italians for the Italians. An Italian priest had spearheaded the project. For my parents it was within walking distance from our home. This was like the town that my mother grew up in. In her town there were at least two churches that claimed importance on their lives. The Italian national parish built in our neighborhood was a 1960s representation of modern church architecture. It was built with a low ceiling as opposed to a cathedral ceiling, this gave it a sense of width as opposed to height. The importance was placed on people, which was reflected in the fact that, unlike the churches in the town, that I remember anyway, there were pews, and they were bolted in. There was no spaciousness per se, except a space that was for people, not for awe and amazement. Horizontal space was emphasized over vertical space.

This type of church is a reminder of factories. They used cinder block and wood to build it. It was grey, but it was pretty. There were statues in this church that I thought were very Italian. There was, for example, a statue of the Virgin Mary of a particular town, and that town was the town of people in the community. There was also a statue of St. Anthony. People going into that church had a sense of feeling that they were walking into a church belonging to their culture.

The women in that neighborhood walked to church, regardless of the kind of tasks they had to do at home, this was their time. They didn’t require the help of their husbands. The women were self-sufficient and walked, which, I think, reflects what I’ve heard of my mother and father’s stories of the hometown where they walked to church. There were communal ties outside of the church and the same with my mother’s life. Neighbors went to church.

Every year there was a feast that centered around a particular saint’s day. The men were on the committee and they arranged for everything that was required in order to celebrate this saint’s day at a public park. They arranged for a permit
for the park, a band, and money was raised for this particular feast day. They arranged for the statue to come from wherever it was kept during the year. They had statues of Mary, *la pietà*, and the men would carry the saints on their shoulders and have a procession up and down the church. The *Madonna* would be draped in a black mantel, and women would reach out to touch her, and they would cry. I remember that vividly around Easter - it would have been a Good Friday event.

I also remember the church being a cultural centre. When I was 15, the Italian priest brought in an Italian theatre group to perform an ‘in church’ play. They used the altar as a stage. This was a cultural event for the community. It was a huge success. I don’t remember what the play was, but I remember the church was filled with people. That stands out.

My faith, the religious expression of that faith in an Italian Canadian national parish came together and from that I moved into teaching, because I was doing Catechesis which is the Catholic counterpart of Sunday school. In Italy *Catechesi* is Evangelisation; it has a different nuance. It was also in this church based experience that I had the opportunity to speak the Italian language with the Italians in the community that came to the church. My mother had insisted that we speak the Italian language.

*School*

School necessitated the first rupture with language, the Italian language. I can understand the dialect but my mother spoke to us in Italian. This had its advantages, but the drawbacks were that we lost some of the wonderful words, expressions, and cadences which are full of personality in the dialect. This was my mother’s choice. My mother prepared us for school, however, by ensuring that we had little friends in the neighbourhood with whom we spoke English. There was a strong emphasis on keeping the Italian. She taught us how to read and write
Italian vowels, the alphabet. Since her family was in Italy she used to send away for *Lo zecchino d’oro* books. I remember the stories and pictures in those books.

**Looking Back - First Movement**

There’s a theme of missed opportunity in this story. My mother loved reading. She grew up during the period of the war and she came out of a family of several girls and one boy. The boy, my mother’s only brother, left the small town when he was quite young and moved to a large Italian city. He apprenticed with an uncle who had a textile business. The short story is that he is now a very wealthy man.

During the war my mother, and her eldest sister were told to leave their mother’s home in order to become the servant girls of an uncle, who was a priest. My mother was later asked to go to the city to work with her cousins and her maternal uncle in their textile business. Because this family had connections, if my uncle (my mother’s brother) went to work for them, he would not have to go into military service that he was expected to do. In return for this favour, they asked that my mother work for them too. In doing so, her brother would not have to serve in the war. I hear snippets of my mother’s story and see the missed opportunities in her life. She had to sacrifice her own life in order to make sure that her brother’s life was saved, and that her uncle’s life was rendered more comfortable. That’s another theme; the theme of women in my family sacrificing themselves over, and over, and over again.

My father was not a major force in all of this because he worked as a welder for a huge company, and at the time, he was commuting, so he wasn’t a strong force in my life, and that’s a theme. He is in the background as the loyal,
conscientious, dutiful, honest provider. But, as a strong force, he doesn’t appear. This leaves a gaping hole in my life.

**Looking Back - Second Movement**

My mother taught me how to read in Italian, and English. I remember, in grade 2, sitting back to back, because the lesson was called “Looking Back”. It was a review lesson of 50 words. Neither one of us understood what ‘looking back’ meant. We understood it literally. So we sat back-to-back, and she would read the words to me and I would spell them for her. That was how we understood “Looking Back”. I remember that particular episode. I remember that time in my life as a time when I loved to dance, and I was very loquacious, yet school was not a happy place.

I remember the elementary school I went to. St. Andrew’s Catholic School (a pseudonym). My mother started taking me to school, then an older Italian girl, a grade 8 student, who lived down the street, took me to school for a period of time. Then I remember going to school with my friends, that is, other Italian kids who were living in the neighbourhood. We walked along a main secondary road running parallel to the main street, so I passed rows of houses like mine, and many secondary streets along the way. There were times when I walked to and from by myself. It was a half hour walk to school, and it was, at the time, being filled with immigrant children - both Greek and Italian, mostly Italian. I remember the feeling of loneliness around the windows of this big yard, and the windows had bars. At first I thought that school was going to be exciting. I thought that the teacher I was going to have was this beautiful woman, who had red lipstick, big blue eyes, and well-coifed reddish, strawberry blonde hair. She was very sweet and very kind. I remember being there with my father. That woman didn’t turn out to be my kindergarten teacher, she was the secretary.
I don’t know when this happened but my feelings were permeated by a sense of being evaluated. I remember doing crafts, and thinking whether I was doing them properly or not. There was tension around skills.

What stands out for me in this time is that the only activity that seems natural to me in school was listening to books being read. That takes me back to some very sensuous experiences of books and being read to. First by my mother - when she read to me, in Italian, from children’s storybooks, and then I loved going to the library. This relates to memories of school trips to the library. It was a half hour meandering walk through side streets to the public library from our school. The library had that wonderful smell or scent of books, old books, musty books. There was a long hallway which led into a very wide, almost circular shaped room. In front of the main counter were the stacks of books. To the right was a smaller room, and the bottom floor had the children’s section. It was long and wide, and had lots of space. Kids could run up and down it - it was exciting.

We sat in this kind of amphitheatre which was in a small room off to the right where the social science and biography sections were. It was tucked away, like a sunken living room, with steps going down. It was quite lovely, and it was dark, and unused, with a black wrought iron gate that separated it from the rest of the library. The teacher would pull out the books. They had all those wonderfully crinkly plastic covers, and it was terrifically sensuous - just the turning of the page, the way she held up the picture books, the voice intonation - I loved it. That was one school activity that seemed to me to be natural. I was instinctively drawn to it.

There is an instance in my school history wherein the class went off for swimming lessons and I was terrified of that. There was a sense of there not being any adults who recognized and knew what to do with the fear, if they had, I could have learned how to swim. But, there was no one there who saw it, and had patience with it and took me through that. What stands out for me, as a child in the middle years was a sense of not belonging in the classroom in that regard. I felt
judged by teachers who I had to be with while everyone else went and swam and had fun. That period of time stands out as a hard time. To balance that was the sense of reading and being affirmed in that. The reading provided an escape and a way for my imagination to be expressed especially in writing. By age 10 I knew I wanted to write a novel. I was affirmed by my mother who made it be known that there was more to do than housework, and by my teachers.

It seemed that as I became less affirmed in school with regards to physical activity, I became more affirmed with regards to religious kinds of expressions. I had an interest in the big, ultimate questions, but it seemed that I was also affirmed in them by my teachers. So there is the theme of me growing in the identity of a religious, spiritual person.

*An Innocent in the Garden*

My parents had separate beds. The result of that was that I and my sister, and my mother slept in the same bed until I was about 14. I entered puberty with my mother’s body beside me, and my sister’s body beside me, and me in the middle. While as a child that provided enormous comfort, as I moved on into puberty it carried a lot of emotional weight and anger. No affection between my parents and I had my period when I was 11. There was a feeling of sickness associated with my period, and the blood. The flip side of that was I felt very confidant when I was on my period. It gave me a sense of womanhood, nothing could hurt me; I was invincible, strong. This ties into a kind of religious sort of sensibility around blood and the crucifixion. Going to church regularly was part of the family tradition on Sundays. But, my blood became associated with the pain of Jesus. I remember saying that I would offer this up, and it became a kind of all-encompassing sort of compassionate thing for the world. This was a way to identify with the sufferings of the world. It was not fearful, I did not feel it as a burden. As a child of 12, the strongest influence on me religiously was not Scripture, it was a Star Trek movie. I tied it together. The episode was called ...
The Empath

The story was about Kirk (the Star ship’s captain) and Bones (the doctor) going down to the underworld where aliens with huge bulging, throbbing heads spoke telepathically with one another. They had in their keeping, a young, waif-like girl, a pixie. She had dark hair, she was short, she had very white skin, and wore a white robe. She didn’t speak, she was mute. This waif girl is tied to the unconscious, the underground, the feminine. Why feminine? Her role is to take on the suffering of the men that enter the underground world. What is her power? What does she affect in the world around her? Her role is that of healer. But the point is, at what cost?

In the episode she heals Bones and Kirk who are rendered impotent against these aliens. They don’t use language. They have these huge pulsating heads - the mind, the brain. [The logico-scientific.] The aliens are testing Bones and Kirk to see how much pain and suffering humans can endure. They were also testing her own empathetic skills. Every time their pain increases her healing power is equally matched. She heals them by taking on their pain within her own body. Everything that they experience, she experiences. In the end she rises again like the phoenix but with a tremendous drain of energy. It’s at a cost to her body. I say that is the feminine role. That’s what it is to have power. The positive side of the power to heal, associated with the feminine, that is, taking on other people’s suffering is a power that was scripted, upheld, and esteemed in the church. That’s the role of women in the Italian family, in the Church. You have two realities here. If I behave as a woman I will be getting the affirmation and given a sense of power in terms of how I am in other relationships that is esteemed. But, in the male world, the negative side of that is that it works to the detriment of the woman
because it is a power that is not recognized because you don’t affect anything.

It’s the role of Eve, who was expelled from the garden. This waif, is essentially alone. She has no ties either to the aliens, whose role is basically to look after her. She never comes up from the underground, she never says a word, she is not able to say, “enough!” She simply does. It’s completely instinctual. She sees suffering so she heals, out of compassion, or empathy, because that is her nature. That’s my struggle. Who is helping me out in this? It’s not modelled in the culture.

That image became for me the image of Christ. Since it was modelled after a woman, it also gave me a way of being a woman which my identity, at that age, was keen for. What I learned, religiously, was that to take on the sufferings of the world meant to listen to people in a way that took on their pain. In an empathic state you disregard what you’re feeling at the moment. There is not a blurring of identities. It’s not that I become your pain or take it on; I mean in order for empathy to happen, I need to be aware of what I’m feeling, and at the same time, tune into what it is you’re feeling. In this episode she healed Bones and Spock. The wounds and lacerations on their skin disappeared as she touched them and they appeared on her body. (#3 pg. 3 & #1, pg.6)

In this story resounds the legacy that was passed on to me by my mother. Although she encouraged me to pursue education, she passed on the internalized story of the continuity of women’s experience (in my family) which was one of suffering for the sake of others, namely the men. So, there was a kind of religious awakening with this figure of Christ, plus my own bleeding as a woman. Grades seven and eight were a time of confidence for me. While I wasn’t excelling in any
sports (and there were cliques around that kind of popular girl who was actively involved in athletics) I carved out a space for myself because I took on public speaking. The belief in public Catholic schools was that in order to gain credibility (vis a vis the regular boards) as a ‘system’ of education they had to do well in sports. Sports was never encouraged in my family, yet I was encouraged to go to a Catholic school which was pushing students to do well in sports - look at St. Mike’s. Nevertheless, the sense of self that I had by the time I finished grade 8, was of a girl who was able to speak and had her own circle of friends. I felt “Italian”. Any distinction between Italian, Canadian, Italo-Canadian, or southern Italian did not begin to happen until high school.

I went to an all-girls Catholic high school. The transition was not hard. There was no debate. I wanted to go. My neighbourhood friends were going. I loved religion class, and I loved English class. There were both clergy and lay people teaching at the school. The subway was a five minute walk from home. The school was four subway stops, and a ten minute bus ride away from home. The actual school was a fairly small old building with radiators, wooden desks that were not attached to the chairs, and huge windows that looked onto the street - it was not the modern classroom as of yet. The school itself was on a well trafficked secondary road. There used to be an adjacent elementary Catholic school which offered several of its rooms for use for us as high school students. There was a church close by as well. The women who ran the school were mostly nuns. It was a warm building, it was old, and welcoming, and polished, and run well by the nuns. It was considered an academic school.

Also, in grade 9, I broke away from sharing a bed with my mother. I directed anger towards her. My father was very much in the background. I think it had to do with the fact that I was the one that had to say, “get out”. It was actually a high school friend who helped me to see things differently. She was Italian (I’ll call her Maria), and came from a family of four brothers, and her mom and dad worked. Maria had to take on practically all of the household
responsibilities, including taking care of her two youngest brothers. She said that at night was the only time that she felt that she could relax, when the lights went out, and she could just be in her bed alone. Her story shifted this ‘night thing’ for me, and allowed me to move into it in a more relaxed way.

Because I grew up in an immigrant, working class neighbourhood with lots of Italians, the parish had requested, and had just received priests from Italy. From ages 15 to 22 I was actively involved in a real catechism parish counsel with a group of real people. That took me into leftist social consciousness Catholic groups in the city, youth corps, that kind of thing. That gave me community. It gave me a place of belonging. It affirmed my abilities, and it was Italian. I went to Italian masses, and so on. There was conflict though.

While I felt very rooted in this Italian tradition, I could not bring myself to speak Italian to these priests that had come from Italy. Now I acknowledge a power differential. I had no problem speaking Italian to the Italians that were living here but with the priests from Italy I felt timid and shy. Years later, with another priest friend from Italy, I recognized that not only was there an Italian/Italo-Canadian difference, but a man/woman difference and an age difference. I had to, in some way, bring up my own power, assert myself, and I did it by speaking English. He was going to have to relate to me on my terms.

That church was a place where people could come in day and night. There was food, there was grappa, there was community. It was a blessing for me to have been in that community. It was also a community that drew some young Italian Canadians. We were a hot group of young people. One went on to teach in a university, one went on to be a person in Development and Peace, in CUSO. It was through the church that I started to reach out to the greater Italian community in Toronto. It was there that I became aware of the Carlo Levi Club, Italian cinema, and so forth. From the church there was a cultural experience of Italy in a way that I hadn’t had before. I was also studying Italian in high school.
Rumblings in the Garden

When I was 23 I fell in love with an Italian Canadian woman. She was from Central Italy, and had the airs of being self-assured. She spoke beautifully. Her father was politically active and had access to government funding and so she received a grant to do research and she asked me if I wanted to write with her. This, to me, was an introduction to another class of Italians in Toronto. That summer I was able to look at my home, my parents, and say, “I come from a working class background.” Up until that time I had thought that my home was IT. I had never been introduced to this expression of Italian Canadian culture before. Her parents were educated, at least they gave the impression of being educated. They had art on their walls, they spoke both English and Italian. Everything was formal, even when it was informal. They discussed politics around the table. This was not the “come-and-sit-down-and-have-a pomodoro (a tomato)-with-me-and-giochiamo-alle-carte (we’ll-play-cards)” kind of Italian. I found myself unable or unwilling to speak Italian with them as well. I was intimidated, and felt insecure.

There was a power difference that I didn’t know how to name, however, we became lovers. The relationship lasted seven years. Oddly enough, we both came out at the end of our relationship. I spoke about this to an Italian woman who had done her masters in theology, I had known her for some years. She reflected it back as a problem religiously, and a problem psychologically - a neurosis, a stunted stage of development. She said it was symptomatic of something deeper and whatever is deeper is a psychological problem that should be fixed and then I would be interested in men again. At age 23 I entered therapy for the problem of homosexuality. At the time I believed it.

I now think it is hetero sexism, and it causes tremendous inner conflict. It was reinforced by a religious ideology that says that heterosexuality is normative. I believed it because until this time, I was completely thinking of myself as being married and having children. I had taken in the whole romantic notion of marriage as a sacrament, and the loftiness of it. I struggled with the idea that I was choosing
second best. My lover was able to detach herself. She was surprised that I believed what the church was saying.

My mother knows about it. She never speaks about it. She knows it, clandestinely. My mother completely freaked out when I told her. Without ever knowing what the reality was, she told me that my lover had put a spell on me, and that she was going to perform some of those scongiure (removal of evil eye). She told me that I would rot in hell, my soul would rot because I was disobeying the laws of God. She shook me and she felt completely powerless and frustrated, and I left the house in tears. I don’t know if my father knows, I don’t know what he knows. At age 31 I moved out. That was a big deal. Lately he’s been asking me various questions but he has a sister who lived with a woman for over 30 years in the hometown. They shared a bed. I don’t know for a fact that they were lesbians but he’s never talked about it with me.

I subsequently saw pictures of my ex-lover who had taken up with someone else. I saw a family photograph of my ex-lover with her new lover, and this new lover’s mother in the family photo. It was then that I realized with clarity that there was a class difference between she and I and that this could never happen between my family and her family. It never did while we were together. My mother was always very suspicious of her family, and she thought that my ex-lover was bossy, and dominating (#1).

**Teaching**

It was during this time that I went into teaching and I would have to say that I went into teaching because there were no other role models, in terms of ‘what a woman can do’ that struck me. It was either being a woman in the house, or being a teacher, and there were no other living immediate role models. The other thing is that it was a natural progression out of my own inclination towards faith and having those questions answered. The way that they were answered, and the way that expressed itself, in terms of self-identity around puberty was in an Italian,
parish context. What was I going to do with my life, well, what have I always done? I was in with kids, in some kind of teaching capacity, in the Catechesis program (Sunday school), and it was always related around gospel, church, and so I knew from what was familiar to what I thought, again, would be familiar, but it wasn’t.

She’ll Be a Priest Someday
Entering the classroom as a high school teacher was like being born into a world both familiar and alien - familiar enough in its sounds: voices of students, the sound of chalk on the blackboard, the sound of words - love, faith, humanity, etc. And a world that was not imagined although anticipated and so alien to me: firstly, my own voice as a teacher, the minutiae of lesson planning out of fear - the great Void of disorganization where Anything could happen Anything Terrible, that is, the volume and pace of marking, the emotional demands of interacting with over 250 human beings in the course of a few days. I came out of the womb of my adolescence, and young adulthood into a world that in its demands, in its competitive base, in its standardization was like cold water thrown into a new born’s face.

There was only one paradise, the garden/that kept them little children even as adults. Mimosa, Mary Di Michele.

The pre-cursor to any formal teaching-in-the classroom experience was in an Italian national parish. This community of people was at its zenith of activity and vitality as I moved through adolescence. In this setting, I moved comfortably within an Italian cultural setting, I prayed in Italian, conversed in Italian, socialized with Italian immigrants or Italian Canadian peers. What I now call a teaching role was called “catechesis”. A word that is rich in meaning and flavour. Situated within the context of the early Christian
community, it evoked passion and motivation arising from what was for me, at the time, a felt religious experience. A wonder at the mystery of God’s world, and a strong although nascent belief that I had a role in it - simply, to let others in my community know that life was Good, that at its centre was Love. A catechist was someone who like the catechists in El Salvador at the time who were killed for being insurgents - a catechist was someone whose life could be put on the line for her faith. This, of course, was not going to happen in Toronto, but it illustrates the felt sense within me of the importance of teaching. I had several classrooms - a space in the church hall, or one of the priest’s offices, or a church basement room, and so on. I had small round tables or tables that on other occasions were decorated with white tablecloths for *spaghettate*. Sometimes I had simply carpeted floors. I had bibles for books, sometimes an occasional text, sometimes Italian resource books. I was an integral member of a larger Italian, Italian-Canadian community at a time when that community was “in flow”, vital, risking, and so forth. Teaching or being a catechist was part of that momentum. I also had friendships, especially in the person of one of the parish priests, a mentor, a friend, and the object of a deep infatuation which grew into love.

There were no marks, no grades except do we confirm this person or not? There was much philosophical talk around that theme. No teacher evaluations, no supervision. No competition. I have pictures with me and my “catechumens” on field-trips. Visits to their homes, worship in their homes. It was all of a piece, my work, their lives, my sense of purpose, prayer, Italian culture, outside parish events: Carlo Levi Club, Italian films, *Benedetto sei tu Signore*, *Dio dell’Universo* (Blessed are you Oh Lord, God of the Universe) ... my
parents seeing me read in front of the community ... my visibility. “She’ll be a priest some day.” The old Italian pious women peering at me through the corner of their eyes, then they’d come to me at the end of Mass, “Brava, brava, tu ami Dio é vero?” (Good, good, you love God, right?)

As a religious studies high school teacher in the catholic system I contracted, withdrew even before I began. Work for a living, work to make the good salary. This was teaching only marginally, yes, I was a teacher, yes I held on to the hallmarks of teaching - being human, looking at the students in front of you, marvelling at their uniqueness, even the bad ones - tell them about God’s love. Tell them, dammit, tell them in the midst of tests, in the midst of rows, before blackboards, tell them in isolated classrooms, where you meet for an hour a day. Tell them, Damn it, that God loves them. But live, and worship, and eat, and dance, and talk somewhere else. This is teaching. (Reflections, July 23, 1996, appendix to interview #2)

I remember that the first high school where I taught was about 32 kilometres away from home. I was in my mid twenties and my parents called the school the first time to see if I had arrived! This particular school was the first high school to be built as a high school by this board of education, and it was situated on prime land on a beautiful old winding road just outside of Toronto. The school had incredible greenery surrounding it, and it had huge windows that opened up to this greenery.

The school was beautifully designed. It was next to a convent which was situated on beautiful grounds. The convent itself had two parts: the older original house, which was an old home, one of the earlier homes on that road, and then the new addition which had a tennis court. Behind that was a wooded area and
fields. This was a private school. Originally it was a private girls’ school which was purchased by the board of education. The staffrooms were originally the bedrooms of the nuns.

The particular incident I am about to recount happened in one of the carpeted classrooms on the third floor. The windows looked onto the greenery. The classroom was big - it could comfortably accommodate up to 50 students. The desks were removed that day.

A Fall in the Garden

Fr. X

The incident happened on a Friday, in a grade 12, religion class. It happened on October 31 when I, the teacher, came in dressed in clerical drag. Sporting a stiff white collar, I readied the class of senior girls for the first activity of our seventy minutes together. A group of them was to lead the class in a liturgical service around the theme of trust. They were a responsible team, on time, organized, enthusiastic. It looked like they had prepared something that would involve class participation. I was excited, and relaxed when Fr. X appeared at the door, and it seemed appropriate to invite him to join us. The girls welcomed him too. Fr. X, in his mid to late thirties, had an ambivalent relationship to his charge of 850 girls. Always dressed in his clerical shirts and collars, he clearly demonstrated ecclesial authority - he was unmistakably Fr. X. He wasn’t someone the girls easily went to for counselling. But, he did represent the authority of the Church well, and for some this provided security. He and I carried on a relationship that focussed mainly on intellectual wrangling of theological themes. Outside of this, we had spent some time together at cafes, and a day trip to the island. For the most part, I enjoyed his company, but felt a bit uneasy around Fr. X’s need to
play the Grand Inquisitor with the girls. I believed that he was passing on a theology that painted them as the tainted descendants of Eve. His prayers were often negative, highlighting the suffering of the world; I often wondered what he was doing providing chaplaincy services in an all girls’ school when I believed he carried many unresolved emotional issues around women that were propped up by a misogynist Church. When push came to shove Fr. X could use the “teachings” of the church to support actions that resulted from his own defence mechanisms.

On that Halloween day, Fr. X took part in a trust exercise to which I had invited him. The girls asked us to choose partners. Ignorant of what was to follow, I asked Fr. X since he was the only other adult in the room. As I invited him, I knew intuitively that perhaps I should reconsider, but I quickly dismissed the thought. As it turned out the trust exercise was one I had done many times before: while your back is turned to your partner you allow yourself to “fall” into their hopefully outstretched arms. Simple. Fr. X was to catch me. I, indeed, allowed myself to “trust”. Fr. X did not catch me. Stunned, I lay on the floor while students and Fr. X gathered around me. I was momentarily disoriented, embarrassed, and humiliated. What on earth! How could this man NOT CATCH me?? Students voiced their disapproval of Fr. X’s inattention. All of us decided things had to go to normal pretty fast, so I dusted myself off, Fr. X left and life went on. I don’t remember Fr. X apologizing although he did say that he misjudged the timing of the fall. I wasn’t reassured.

Basically, I inwardly believed that his “inattention” expressed a passive/aggressive attitude perhaps towards me in particular, perhaps towards women in general. Speculation regarding motives is fruitless, nevertheless I believed the matter warranted more
attention so I sought Fr. X out for further discussion. During our long
conversation, I heard no apology, but I did hear that I was clearly
taking this much too seriously, (lighten up, it was just a joke) and
that perhaps I ought to consider the significance of forgiveness, in
this and other more personal matters. I left exhausted, and feeling
manipulated. I had come to him angry, wanting an apology, a
demonstration of empathy, instead in some perverse play of roles, I
tended to him, listened to him, counselled him, trying in vain to
bring down his defences. It was crazy and all too familiar.
It was only in speaking to a friend who also taught at the school, that
I was persuaded to action. What followed involved the teacher's
union, the principal, the chaplain, and myself in a series of
encounters that never had us-as the parties in question-meet to
mediate conflict. The Powers took over. For me this meant putting
up with receiving anonymous extreme right Catholic newspapers in
my mailbox, and Fr. X dropping into class unannounced and
undermining my authority in front of students.
In taking this action I felt strengthened in myself. Whatever the
consequences, taking action signalled something important to me:
that I was no longer a hand-maiden to authority. What had
happened was unjust: students witnessed an interaction between
two adults of different genders and clearly representing two
dichotomized authority stances within the church, i.e. religion class
- a lay woman and an ordained man. They witnessed not just a
simple accident, but a misuse of power that has been perpetuated in
our church and in our culture. I needed to stand up for myself. And
I did.
How deeply embedded is the power of authority figures came home
to me quite literally when I chanced to recount this story to my
mother. A few months had gone by, I had some emotional distance from the event, and so was taken by complete surprise when she asked me “if I had given him a chance to explain himself.” Something to that effect. The meaning behind the words, and that she questioned my judgment first rather than supporting my conclusion and actions, left me wounded. Another instance of women supporting male authority figures at the expense of other women!

I came to teaching because of my experience as a catechist in a vibrant Italian national parish. There, my faith, my leadership abilities were drawn out, put to service. I had a place. Teaching religion came out of that experience of myself as catechist - it was almost a “natural” move. In that parish culture, language, faith, and service, came together in a way that allowed my identity to flourish. Entering teaching was an extension of that earlier experience. Familiar with being in front of people, I did not anticipate how difficult the transition from Italian based parish activities to institutional education would be. The culture as expressed in the parish both provided a sense of roots, and wings; institutional education was entrance into a foreign world where underneath the posturing of competence and confidence demanded of its teachers, the basic message was still - MIND YOUR PLACE. (Reflections, July 18, 1996).

When I was speaking with my mother (about this incident) it came home to me that the expectation around my handling that situation would have been to have let it go. That is a position that I have seen the women in my family take on. When it comes to themselves, their feelings, their thoughts, their impressions of life, with regards to men and authority figures, what I have learned is to let it go.
It’s typical, you maintain peace, and that’s what I grew up with. Basically, my mother took his side. I could not understand how she could. She immediately questioned my judgment, my action, and my feeling intensity around it. She chose to communicate to me that she thought that perhaps I had been too harsh.

I would say that this particular event brings together two things. The first is what I picked up in terms of how to deal with conflict when you are pitted against an authority figure. It wasn’t just any authority figure, it was a clerical, authority figure. That brings me right into the realm of Church, faith, God, what’s right, what’s wrong morally. The other point is that my taking action broke what I think is the continuous thread from my days as a student to myself as a teacher as an authority figure. What I mean is that if I had not taken action, then I would have, as a teacher, continued to relate to myself as the pliant, accepting waif-girl.

The fragments of memory that I have as a child, was that I did have a lot of brass - I spoke up for myself. I would say that somewhere along the line in the educational system, that was lost. Educationally, I think what happened was a rigidity around self expression. It was not permitted. The breadth of it was not given an opportunity in the classroom. There was not a sense of “you’re alive, little girl, let’s see what you can do in writing, in dance, and in music”. What took over was a sense of expectation, standardization, and wanting approval. Kids want approval, and I learned quickly that the way to get approval in this system was to shut down a feeling component, or an expressive component, and work through tests, standardization, asking knowledgeable questions that got answers, that got attention, more than answers.

The complicity of the family in this “shutting down of personal expression” came from parental fear. If I rocked the boat, there would be severe repercussions. My sense as a child was that I was expected to care, provide, be kind, be gentle, all of those words that we know.

The following is a story that I think is about integration and relationships in the classroom, out of the classroom, and personal landscapes. It’s not a dramatic
story, but I think it has some points of convergence. It illustrates a personal curriculum.

Right Livelihood

I was teaching a grade 11, world religion class. There were 21 students in the class, most of them male (six females), from different backgrounds. Few are university bound, most are college, or work bound. There are no Italians in this class except for me. There are kids from Poland, Africa, Trinidad, Western Prairies of Canada, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Croatia. It’s quite a mixed group. I was discussing the Buddhist meaning of right livelihood - good work. My personal curriculum keeps me from departing from a sense of what makes me feel at home. I like to bring the world to me, and to make it home as opposed to my going out into the world. I mean that literally in terms of travel, and adventurous experiences. I feel a sense of adventure in bringing the world home.

I invited my eighty year old father to come and tell his story of work to these 17 year old kids. He told them what it was like for him, as an Italian man, of a particular generation to come to Toronto in the 1950s to work. In his broken English he told of his experience working in a mushroom plant for 50 cents an hour, and his escape from that experience. He had a contract for a year but they were not prepared to give him anything to eat. Nutritionally they were being starved, or semi-starved and so he left and was brought back by the police. He told of his periods of lay-off, and periods of searching for work. He also told them that he decided that he needed a skill, and that he decided to do 1,000 hours of apprenticeship as a welder.

When the time came for the kids to ask him questions what I found interesting was that many stereotypes about Italian Canadians came
out. My father fielded them really well. I was very proud of how he handled the questions that were meant to provoke. For example, “Did you know Mussolini? Are you part of the Mafia? Do you make wine? Have you ever hit anybody? What does wop mean?”

My father recounted a story about being Italian in the early 50s on the Danforth and being asked to disband by the police if there were four, or five men milling around, or walking up and down on the Danforth. For me, his sitting there, as a wise elder, telling younger folks about his experience, which was no more dramatic or wasn’t filled with anymore wisdom than any of their grandparents’ stories, meant that these kids were placed in the position to learn anything, something, at the hands and feet of an elder. This is subversive because it transgresses the unwritten rule that elderly people are there to receive charity. Kids will do that, they go and sing songs, and bring treats to “old folks” in “old folks” homes. But, to have a person come in and speak to them about their personal history, about a particular period of time, is something that they don’t get the opportunity to do often, publicly. The experience was a point of integration for me, for me as a daughter, to hear my father speak about his experience in a public forum, and make visible his Italian experience in a classroom of non-Italian students. You have the convergence of the personal curriculum, the personal dimension which involves how I perceive my relationship with my father, and then there’s my own sense of what a classroom can be used for, and what gives life to my teaching. Events like that show the kids, in an unstated way, “here’s my father, here’s a relationship that you see your teacher have.” I’m not just a teacher - that’s a role. I’ve brought another role into the classroom. Education is not about theory and abstraction. The living person is a story. That’s the conviction with
which I brought my father to class. I was trying to say to those kids that if you want to talk about work, we can read about it, but you also need to hear people’s lives. Knowledge is not this value free, abstract, objective series of truths. All of it comes packaged in personal histories which means that you see the warts and all the biases. And you hear my father saying, “Polack” (italiese for polacco or Pole) when he means Polish. You know that you are dealing with human people with biases and not this ‘seemingly’ scientific, objective, faultless, flawless truth. (#5, pp. 1-7)

So, the rootedness in the hometown, and the opportunity to speak languages (Italian, and dialect) is to know that there is more to me than my Canadian passport would indicate.

I’d like to relate the various contexts that have been discussed in this thesis thus far in terms of self identity, and the people that represent or embody certain things. I would say that the Canadian Anglo Saxon world is the world of performance, is the world of profession, is the world of ambition, is the world where I am tested. It is the world of making or breaking my life. It is the world that tests whether my parents have made it or not, as it is reflected through my success, what I do with my world, materially. My role as teacher lies in this world.

The mainstream Italian world, for me, is embodied in the negative elements of class. It’s the world that my parents felt uncomfortable in, often humiliated by, and sought redemption from by teaching us Italian. It’s a world that intrigues me, it’s a world that presents itself beautifully in its literature, and its art, and it’s also a world that I feel inadequate in, often times, particularly in language, even though I studied Italian and can speak Italian.

The Italian Canadian culture, as I have come to know it, in my neighbourhood, and in the church environment is the world of playfulness, is the world of warmth, is the world of freedom to express myself without fear of
mistakes, it's the world that gives me the most sensuous visceral link with whatever it might mean to be the daughter of Italian immigrant parents. That's the energy circuit that is most close to home. In terms of self image, it's whatever is wonderfully expressive, and loud, and brassy about being an Italian Canadian woman.

The Italian Canadian culture, as I know it, is closely tied with what my parents have to say about the hometown, and the values of the hometown that I have picked up through the stories that they tell. The hometown is memory. The hometown is narrative; it comes alive in the stories that my parents tell, which are all about people in their hometown, and their growing up. The hometown is my link to my parents, and their world.

My teaching persona is the Italian Canadian, hometown persona who can be dramatic, and brassy, loud, and a clown, and who feels quite at home within il basso ceto (the lower classes). There were no real role models for me, in terms of the family. I had to learn it from the Canadian mainstream. Teaching seemed to be something that was close, something I could handle. Yet, I don't feel like I 'fit'. I'll explain. If I were to draw out some of the positive aspects of being a daughter of immigrant parents, that is, the sense of rootedness, and sensuousness, hospitality, and so on, then I would say that one of the reasons I don't fit in the mainstream, in the world of teaching is because that world, which is circumscribed by the professional, doesn't value rootedness, I would say, by and large, hospitality, warmth, and sensuousness. I think that professional mainstream world requires efficiency, requires loyalty to a certain way of working according to rules that other people have laid down. Its structure minimizes spontaneity, and hospitality, warmth, and creative flow. So, there is a reason why I feel like an outcast in the professional setting. It feels like an expulsion from the garden. It's not the kids, it's the structure. (#4, pp. 1-8)
Chapter Seven
Marina

The Landscape Surges Up Inside of Me

I spent a great many years rejecting the Italian regional hometown, and its values as they were recreated around me here in Toronto. I was not interested in pursuing my roots for a very long time. What I had built up was a lot of anger. I felt that my marginalization in society as a young person was due to being Italian and I felt isolated as a result. Being Italian -specifically with the culture that my parents brought with them from a small southern town, of a lower class was a burden, it made my life hard and my perception was that it was something shameful.

My first elementary school teacher changed my name from Marina to Meg. The Canadian educational system, in my mind had rejected my name, my grade 4 teacher (who I will discuss later) rejected me because I was an immigrant, I was rejected in high school by non Italian students, I was rejected in Italy when I went back at age 23. I didn’t fit into the scheme of things in the hometown (I was too ‘wild’ for them), and I was rejected in northern Italy because I was a southerner. I felt burdened being Italian. Italy was a country that had burdened me with this thing I had to carry into a foreign country (#3, pp. 2-12).

I subsequently realized, even if it was an internal, not fully conscious realization, that there was no way that I could be a whole person without reclaiming that part of me, and embracing it (#9, p.9). This has been an incredibly radical shift for me (#3, p. 14). In fact, in 1993 I changed my name back to Marina. I went to a poetry workshop in the United States, and when I told people my name was Marina they, being poets, thought this was a remarkably beautiful name compared to Meg. It is a lovely name; Meg is more monosyllabic, it’s clipped. I don’t think it suits me at all. It’s efficient, but the point is that it isn’t my name. Through my art, therapy, AA meetings, and so forth, I was able to develop
a greater sense of myself and who I was, and to understand the injustices I had incurred as an immigrant that made me shame-bound. I finally took actions to redress those in my own identity. After I changed my name back I decided that I would go to Siena. I still felt inferior, however, when I encountered people from Siena who wanted to know where I was from. I have a few stories to tell about that experience. It was a closed and unaccepting place. Nevertheless, it became a quest to rid myself of shame. Since the arts, to me, are probably the greatest thing I value in life, I found connections through art. I found a famous architect with my last name in Tuscany, an influential composer of Baroque music for recorder who shares my last name, I found pictures in a gallery by someone with my last name, I also discovered that one of the liberators of Siena had my last name. I felt a kind of grounding, a sense of rootedness. There was a strange sense of place, and belonging.

What happens when you are growing up as a child of immigrants and you never see your name mirrored? What vacancy is created in your identity? Anglo Saxon names show up in movies, in newspapers, literature, on the street ‘hither and thither’. I could buy a key chain that said ‘Marina’ on it when I was in Italy (#3, pp. 17-18). Anyway, the whole Italian Canadian experience, growing up in Toronto, and then going back to encounter the hometown and northern Italy has been very interesting, to say the least. I eventually wrote the following poem about some of these experiences and their embodiment in the physicality of the landscapes I encountered.

**Old Stone**

A small stranger was waving
from a distant Italian port,
every night she walked through
the crevices of my broken sleep,
she tugged on my spinal chord
gesturing back to the hard country
that had sent me
away.
I remember
the oak floor, the teacher
shaming my rolling words
clipping my name -
Meg.

I don’t know if that blunt one-syllable
made me turn but everywhere
English flattened Italian,
and when the hairdresser snipped
my hair, I looked away,
pretended those orphaned ringlets
belonged to someone else.

Blonde, blue-eyed goddesses
who never ate garlic filled the temples
of the Golden Book Encyclopaedia,
the face of Ancient Rome
belonged to our teacher now
but pictures of blinded statues,
and old sun threaded
in the cracks of fallen ruins,
moved me, the column in my spine shook -
my bones stiffened to keep in
that mute, abandoned stranger.

What was it that made her wave harder
that summer? She carved
messages in my aching shoulders
and unyielding sacrum,
she seized my hip joints,
and forced me finally toward
her fluttering hand ...

my fingers clutched
the boarding pass, I remember the airplane
lifting me to a warm unknowing sleep
then sudden morning, air
opening onto old stone, the July heat
rusting on palm trees, wind
cupped in the umbrella pines
and everywhere taxis.
I rode
back into my dusty body,
into Rome's dusky fall
still echoing in the stone.
I wandered with tourists
into the navel of the Colosseum.
Mad emperors, gypsy children
wove into the crowd, I wove into an ancient
stand of columns, not knowing anymore
who to walk with ...
but walking, the cobblestones rippling
through my heels, my hands cool
in the modest turtle fountain
of the old Jewish quarter
I don't remember rising
only standing eye level
with billowing cupolas and angels
stepping off rooftops.

I leaned on the smoky veins
of white marble.
From the Italian stone,
my numbed blood flowed naturally.
I heard my name
calling from the balcony -
Marina.
Our old house-bound language
free in the raucous street,
and songs we hummed quietly
singing now at the top of their voices.

Everywhere there were steps:
steps leading to cathedrals,
museums, ornate palazzos,
carefully chiselled waves narrowing
up away from the street
rising toward doors opening in
I kept opening doors
dancing with Etruscan women,
I ran into Minerva
and found Queen 'Marina' of Naples.
Impossible stone flowed everywhere that summer, familiar figures I had never seen before gestured to me from tops of buildings and because I could accept the gesture, the blunt sounds softened, my tongue, my bones grew more porous and the child flowed out of the hardness into my body and quietly whispered my name.

I took many photographs on the trips that helped inspire this poem. I recently ‘dug up’ these photographs and chose the ones that highlighted the physicality of the landscape of the hometown. The following reflection is based on these images that stood out for me in the photographs: the cemetery, the elementary school, the fountain, the elevation of the town, the blazing sunset, the rolling hills, the wild trees, the winding roads, the climbing stairs, the arches, the piazza (the size of my living room), my paternal aunt (an eccentric woman), pictures of deceased relatives, religious statues, my cousin’s children, all chic, dressed in Benetton - juxtaposed with the photo of a woman carrying a bundle of kindling on her head, the bleakness of the town on a rainy, cold day, the look of tedium on my 30 year old female cousin’s face (#9).

The Rise of the Town

Every time I walk into my mother’s house, the town announces itself. In a print, enclosed in a large, ornate frame, embossed on textured paper to look like a painting, the town looks Greek with white-washed buildings nestled high on a mountain surrounded by thick green. Made of unrelenting stone and unwilling to render a living to its inhabitants, it rises in the hallway, broken by poverty, yet breathtakingly beautiful. I have read, or heard, and I cannot attest to the authenticity of this account, that in the 15th century, that part of our region was
conquered by Philip of Aragon who called it the balcony of the South because, perched up so high, it gives a spectacular view - all the way to Naples - on a clear day, you can see Vesuvius.

In my memory, we live at the top of a climb (la salita), and from my balcony within this balcony, the sunsets burn the sky until it radiates crimson and gold, aching in a lexicon of lost images. From this perch you look north to Italia that shouts, "Terroni" (a racist term used by Northern Italians to signify the uncultured, dark-skinned Southerners who work the land).

In the dining room, on a small side table is my mother’s shrine to the dead - a piece of the town cemetery. A bouquet of pastel silk flowers in a crystal vase, painted plaster statues of Jesus with his sacred heart worn on the outside of his body, inflamed by love for us, wearing a crown of thorns reminding us of how we hurt him with our sins. My brother and I bought this as a present for our mother at Honest Ed’s when we were kids. It cost all of $3.98. It has a chipped nose but she won’t throw it out, as it is forbidden to discard any holy image. You have to drag them around with you until you die - even then they outlive you. The statue of Mary is smaller, benevolent in her blue grace and white robe. Various smaller icons of saints picked up on mother’s pilgrimages grant a variety of favours in times of trouble.

The photographs show the faces, like on the tomb monuments in the town. On the right is an enlargement of my father’s picture that is on the communal mausoleum at Prospect Cemetery where my father rests along with other paesani (compatriots). On the left is a photograph of the statue of the crucifix that holds centre stage at the altar of one of the town’s two churches. This photograph shows a pained, suffering Christ, crown of thorns causing droplets of blood on the brow - standard fare for guilt-inducement - but, the graphic work just below the right shoulder where the cross has scraped away the skin and left raw, blood-grained flesh, and the dark bruises on the body are a reminder of the more disturbing, sado-masochistic elements of Catholicism. The picture of deceased family
members are dotted throughout the icons. My aunt, my cousin, my two uncles, and the occasional ricordino (souvenir picture of the deceased with a prayer written on it) of a recently deceased paesano or paesana visits for awhile and is then put away. A small light, sculpted in the shape of a flame, is always kept on. Day and night, the electric candle burns, and lights an absence that never goes out - my father, the town, Italia.

So, death is the town, and it moves with you wherever you go, the pictures, the rituals, the loss. Many from our village emigrated to Toronto. We have a displaced town here. There is the town social club here, although now it is located in a township just outside of Toronto. They have dances, picnics, and festivals which my mother faithfully attends. There is a bronze, full-size, copy of “Our Crucifix” at Martyr’s Shrine in Midland. It was paid for by the Club, commissioned and brought over from Italy. There is a yearly pilgrimage there by Club members such as my mother and our extended family.

Every time a paesano/a dies the 'phone tree' that has organically grown here, in Toronto, goes into action. My mother’s contact is my aunt, Zia Emilia. Then my mother does her phoning and the town rises again. She has to go either to the funeral home, or the funeral, and she starts bothering one of her kids to go with her so she will have a ride. The paesani show up at one of three rituals, the other being the memorial mass. Rituals are a town gathering (a piece of piazza) and a testament to the value of dovere (duty). At these events you hear town catch-phrases such as, cummari or cumpari, and also bonanima for the deceased who are all in attendance as well. Weddings used to be like that when I was a child. 500 people were invited to my sister’s wedding in the late 1950s. In the late 1960s, when my brother got married, 1000 people were invited. You would get the list of all the town folk who had immigrated here from the wedding coordinator, and then you invited who you wanted. When my father died in the mid 1970s they had to open up three rooms, in the funeral home, to accommodate all the flowers and the people who came to pay their respects. Most
of them were *paesani*. My father was well-liked, and well-respected. His nickname (it is very common to have a *sopranome* [nickname] when living in the hometown) was *Lu Parente* ('The Relative') - which makes me *La Figghia dellu Parente* (this is dialect for ‘the daughter of ‘The Relative’’). I am proud to have had a father with a nickname that speaks of relation. He was such a positive presence in my life, and in the life of others. My mother faithfully attends one of these rituals for all the dead *paesani*, thereby insuring a good crowd that will testify to her good standing in the town when she dies in Toronto.

The cemetery where my father is entombed, is another place where the town manifests. There are many *paesani* of all ages buried there and my mother meets their living relatives there on her weekly visit to the grave. She has taken me on a little tour (like stopping in on a few folk in the town) at the cemetery.

Even in death, my father was not left to rest because my mother was not at peace. Originally, my father was buried in the ground at one of the cemeteries downtown. After a decade or so, my mother lost her ride to the cemetery, and was uncomfortable that he wasn’t closer for her regular visits. She was also uncomfortable because the custom in our town is to bury the dead in a tomb above ground. At a cost of many thousands of dollars, she bought two mausoleum spots (one for herself as well) and had my father exhumed and reburied. Embedded in such an unusual gesture, and in my mother’s regular visits for over 20 years, is the great respect for the dead that is in the value system of the townspeople. My dead father is honoured, and remembered. His grave is kept well-stocked with flowers to show the proper respect and what a devoted wife my mother was and is.

The town churches are both present in the house. In the town, your family belongs to either the congregation of the Crucifix or the congregation of the Madonna. My mother belonged to the former and my father to the latter. Aside from the Crucifix in the shrine, there is also a framed print of the Madonna from the other town church. In my mother’s bedroom is another enlargement of the
entire statue of the Crucifix and a very large picture taken in the 1920s of my mother’s family where she would have been about 3 years old. Devotion to the Church and family is another value that endures and shows itself through the imagery. Along with this is the notion of charity. My mother donates money to a number of charities as well as her weekly contribution to the church. She gives money to the homeless. When I was a child, I remember beggars coming to the door and my mother would speak of giving l’elemosina (alms). I have a strong moral sense of responsibility for the underprivileged of our society.

While I do not have any devotion to the rituals for the dead, I do go to memorial masses for immediate family; my sense of respect and concern for not offending members of the extended family has stayed with me, embedded in my own landscape. As for religion, I have no truck with Catholicism especially since it gives a secondary role to women. By secondary, I mean as opposed to essential and defining roles.

The town’s textures pervade the house - terracotta, the other presence, baked earth, red clay. Throughout the house are small vases made by local artisans and brought back from the many trips back. They are sold at the many fairs that are held for religious celebrations. This brick red is one of my favourite colours as weathered stone is one of my favourite textures. My home is filled with terracotta, and weathered stone, and a large headless statue that mimics a ruin decorates my kitchen. ‘Italian-Victorian’, one of my friends calls my home. While the images in my mother’s house centre on the town and the art is mostly photographs, and religious reproductions from the town, the images in my house embrace Italy - Da Vinci heads, Michelangelo prints, Siena’s Tower, watercolours of Firenze. I claim it all as mine and designate a different aesthetic and a value for my Italianness - for art, education, and culture. This is a visceral connection. I have this connection to Rome and Pompeii - old world ochre, and brick-red on the buildings - faded frescoes, antiquity, colour, and texture muted by centuries
seem such a part of me that my body yearns for them like hunger. I suffer from deprivation.

"Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler"

One year I did a novel study with one of my grade 4/5 classes. This particular story, written by E.L. Konigsburg, called *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, deals with two runaway kids who decide to hide in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The story is written by an American author who is obviously mad about the Italian Renaissance. These children are quite ‘taken’ by a statue and the mystery is, “who is the artist that sculpted it?” Is it a Michelangelo or not? So, the Renaissance becomes a big deal. This is a part of Italian history that most people are somewhat familiar with, and is also a time of high achievement in Italian art, and because my love for art is boundless the children seem to pick up on my enthusiasm. I also do art lessons that involve the children painting their version of Italian Renaissance masterpieces. These pictures hang in my classroom and anyone who sees them is amazed by what the children are able to produce. ...

Indoor plants and my mother’s garden. The need for green, living things that sustain life. My mother’s garden is divided - half for beauty, half for function. The section near the house consists of grass and flowers, the back part is vegetables and herbs. I would say that this differentiated us in our own extended family of my parents’ generation. My parents had a sense of style and were different in some ways, more refined than our immediate relatives. My father was a barber and fashionable in trench coat and beret. My mother, a factory worker, has an amazing capacity to recollect, with detail, the dresses made for her by the town
seamstresses from the time she was a child. She names fabrics, collar, and sleeve styles like a fashion designer.

Basil - a pot of basil, a plot of basil, a pinch of it in everything, plus the smell of garlic, oregano, and parsley on my fingers, and in my home. My niece has confided in me, as if confessing a betrayal, that she doesn’t like basil and that she has just managed to acquire a taste for parsley. She is cultivating loyalty to our foods and cuisine that once marked us as exotic, smelly eyetalians. Olive oil and olives always in the house. Black, wrinkled, prune-like shapes with the thick taste of bitter earth are the essential olive I associate specifically with our town, an olive I could never acquire a taste for myself - too musty, too close. Raw, green olives in cases in our basement, cracking them with a stone to split the flesh open before curing them.

I have now collected my parents’ past; remnants of the town, photographs, and heirlooms that have the town embedded in them. The blanket my grandmother gave to my mother, La Crivara’s (my maternal grandfather’s second wife) linen bed set, my grandfather’s dog-tag from WWI, my grandmother’s rosary, my father’s papers, the songs from the town in my mother’s house, on a table-top record-player - I have gathered them all. Kitchen-gear, and pieces of china that my mother moved across the ocean in the 1950s are displayed in my own kitchen, a part of my everyday landscape. They came to be here from my mindscape. Like statues in a church, they express an inner part of my spirit that I need to look upon to know it still is, to affirm its interior existence, to collect more fragments as I attempt to gather the pieces and reshape myself.

Faces and Photographs

My mother recently told me that my aunt, Zia Emma, who is now 90 years old has just run away from a senior’s home where she lives. When she was a young woman, my aunt was a nanny to the son of a successful, well-educated politician, and acquired some of their airs, and a patina of sophistication drawn
both from movies of the past, and the environment that she worked in. When I visited her in 1993 (she was 84), she told me that, in order to be more glamorous, I should wear more make-up, and I should smoke. She asked me if I had brought her any cigarettes, and insisted that I put on some lipstick before I showed myself on the balcony. She commented on how beautiful my legs were.

I'm looking at a picture of her. She lives in an old palazzo, in an apartment that she owns in a big town. She's staring into the distance, she's wearing make-up, she's in her eighties. Behind her the walls are filled with old photographs of family members, some of which are repeated, in frames, on tables and walls here in our homes. My cousin, a photographer, restored many of the old family photographs, and now copies of them have been brought back to the town, and also dispersed to many of us here. So, we share these faces, these images across time and across space - some of them will also be in the cemeteries. I look at my photographs of her wall and I see the pictures of my grandparents, identical to the ones I have in my own home. She has photographs of her nieces and nephews in Canada and their children which will be prints of the same photographs some of us have here in our homes too. The walls are filled with religious relics, some strangely disjointed prints of famous paintings and old, useless calendars whose pictures must be meaningful still. Strapped to a chair, is the doll my paternal grandfather brought back for her from America in the early 1900s.

Here is an intermingling of faces. She looks like my father, and especially like my sister and I. We carry the faces with us in our faces, in the images of faces we keep around us to keep us grounded as we drift away from our roots. America has drifted over there as well from all the visits of dislocated families struggling with loss, fragmentation, and reconstruction. (Reflections, March 3, 1999)

The things I have described are part of my everyday landscape. They sit quietly as part of the background of activities that are the focus of my attention. I rarely go to the hometown, or back in time to my old elementary or high school
and I cannot recall all of the particulars of those places. I can only vaguely describe what I have described. I can only narrate.

At one time, these places were part of my intentional landscape which means that I chose them as the focus of my perception (attention), and looked at them and saw them as opposed to other elements (or objects) that I left as present but unseen - as part of the background. Memory works like perception and intentionality. Out of the mindscape, or landscape of the past I choose the specific events that I will revisit and look at again. Why I choose one event or person over another has to do with my landscape today, and what is askew in it and needs to be fit back properly into “my world”, or the whole landscape.

I am vaguely familiar with these places and believe they exist with all those indeterminate details that make up places in general. Because I believe that they exist - especially the hometown, and have a set of beliefs about them, I could deliberately seek them out and visit and find out exactly what they look like. Since they are part of my reality they can attract me and draw my attention to them; but as the subject of my actions, I have the power to leave everything as part of the background or to flesh out their reality by becoming acquainted with their particular aspects. Whether I do or not, these places (especially the hometown) are in my consciousness as part of the beliefs that shape my reality, my experiences, and who I am.

Stepping into A Culture that
Splinters, Fragments, and Re-forms Itself

I enjoy writing stories, because it is kind of prosing, and poetic at the same time, so I can give a flourish to events. I hate dry chronology. The idea, and I understand this from when I was studying existentialist philosophy, specifically Jean Paul Sartre, of ‘being’ the stories that we tell of ourselves, and to ourselves that our identity is constructed from the stories that we tell - has always intrigued me. I thought I would try to come up with stories that are related to my personal
life as well as to my identity as a teacher, as an immigrant, and as a woman. I thought of myself as a teacher first. Then I thought, I also have stories about teachers who taught me, influenced me, and therefore had given me my identity as a student, and as a teacher. Then I have these immigrant stories as well.

An Immigrant Story

Immigration is a great teacher, the best teacher of changing landscapes and absence. My father left for Canada in October, 1951. I was 2 years old. What happens to a two year old when her father suddenly disappears. What shifts take place in her landscape? She encounters abandonment for the first time.

What happens to this immigrant’s daughter as she is acquiring her language? The word ‘father’ and ‘dad’ has absence attached to it. This person was known to me only as an abstraction - the words don’t have anything concrete to attach themselves to. My father is an airmail letter, I associate the colours blue and red with him and tears - my mother’s tears. The word father is loaded for me all my life, coloured by a pale blue distance.

At the age of 2, I am fatherless - one of the daughters whose father is in ‘America’. At the age of 5 I am an anxious child. When my mother has to go away for the day to look after our affairs, I wait - the hours drag by - her possible disappearance plagues me. I go to the piazza to get closer to her arrival. My memory of her is of a dignified woman carrying herself and her load with grace. She used to call me, “Marinella mia”, and her flesh and embrace felt all-encompassing and protective - a restful home.

What does it mean to be ‘abandoned’? To a child it signals that something is wrong - she is not worth staying around for, she has done something wrong - things don’t last, don’t get too attached - try
and get things attached to you- change is bad - there is no control over one’s environment.

As an adult, abandonment fears have plagued me and have been unconscious motivators for relationships and choices I have made in my life. I have created dependencies upon me in my romantic life in order to not be abandoned. Fear of abandonment has checked my pursuit of success in many areas of my life - if I am too successful people will get threatened and leave (not to mention the ‘uppity immigrants’ syndrome). A terrifying loneliness will return.

As I wrote in the above story I think that my father’s disappearance, without any cognitive ability to deal with it myself, would probably have traumatized me in the sense that people can disappear and not come back, and therefore, “what happens then?” As I said in the story, I think I still live today with an ongoing issue of abandonment that has been aggravated throughout my life through my experiences, but I would say that was the initial abandonment that happened to me.

I remember a lot of stories circulated as fathers left for America, there was also a lot of envy. I still remember this really funny story. I must have been 5 or 6 years old when this incident took place. I was certainly smart enough to have these kinds of conversations. It involved a little girl that I knew. She was obviously being mean to me in some way that I don’t recall, and I said to her in Italian, “You think you are just so smart because you are going to Canada, don’t you?” This kid must have had a good literary bent because her phrase sticks in my mind. She said, “That’s right, and you have to stay here among the weeds and nettles”. These ardicchie (nettles) were all over the village, we were always getting stung by them, the burrs would be in our hair. That’s pretty strong, but this is the kind of quality of little things that jump out from my life. It was always associated with absent fathers because of the poverty.
My association with Italy is strongly attached to my mother because we were there together without my father. I was the apple of my mother's eye because I was the youngest, and precocious, and cute. The 'concrete' Italy, being the village (hometown) is more attached to my mother and that gave me a strong association to the village. I do think, however, that I also have a strong cultural link to Italy via my father, and many other things, the romance of it, the poetry and all that, because of my father. I think my association with Italy as what Italy represents as a nation, as a country, as a culture, is via my father. Also, I started grade 1 in the village school.

**Teacher Story**

In 1955 I am 6 years old and enter grade 1 in the village school. This is an important time in my life - I am about to shine as a student. My teacher is a largish woman who had a twisted mouth (something like Chrétien) her nickname in our dialect was *musu-stortu* (twisted mouth). My identity as a learner is budding and I learn to read immediately. I read out loud every morning perfectly and get a 10 [out of 10] every day (memory tells me that I got one 9), my handwriting is careful and meticulous. My mother dresses me every day in my dark uniform with my white collar, she winds my ringlets carefully. I am cute and well-groomed, I am gifted and bright - smarter. I stand out in my own mind.

I am especially smarter than my cousin Pasquale who is a messy writer and cannot read very well. I learn that I am better than boys - superior in some areas - areas of refinement. This notion will be inculcated in me as a girl - men are rough, uncontrolled and unruly - it is the job of women to civilize them. This was my entry into public life and I was successful and safe in the role of student. My mother and my teacher were proud of me. I was smarter than my brother.
who is 3 years older than I am. I learned to be competitive and to somehow look down on boys while at the same time living in a culture that valued them more than girls and that gave them preferential treatment.

I have always been very competitive with men in this area. I need to be smarter and better educated than they are - I need to be their teacher.

We left for America just a couple of months before the end of grade 1. My father had friends in Canada but he was the first one of the relatives to go to America, later he sent for everybody. Basically the reason he left Italy was because of poverty. People who don't know about the individual towns and all the little differences in Italy, but who know that Italy is beautiful because they have visited there, will ask me why my parents ever left such a beautiful place. I look at them and bald facedly say, "Poverty, that's why they left." At that time, there was an open door immigration policy here. The subways were being built and there was a lot of need for labourers (#1, p.11). My father actually wound up working on the railroad yards when he first came, then he worked as a barber, which is what he did in Italy.

Anyway, we finally had to leave. We left Italy in spring of the mid 1950s to come to Canada. First we took the train from our hometown to Naples, and then the ship, La Saturnia, to Halifax, and then a train from Halifax to Toronto. It was arduous and it took two weeks, I think.

When I came to Canada, I started in grade 1 and I had a rather strange occurrence. My father rented a slummy place, it was extremely slummy and I think it was shocking to all of us, because our image of coming to Canada was of this land of milk, and honey, and gold paving the streets, and we were living in this wretched flat. I think it had rats if I am not mistaken, at the very least it had very large mice. It was an extremely bleak and barren, and "stenchy" place. My
father enrolled us in the Catholic school nearby. I don’t remember this, but certainly my cousin who had come to visit us from the States talked about how I cried everyday and I wouldn’t go to school. She remembers that I really kicked up a fuss.

As I revisit this period of time my association is laced with grief, and a sense of loss. There was a flow of life and a sense of belonging that I felt in the hometown. I knew what my place was, at home, at school, in the streets, and so on. I don’t think I had any sense of self-consciousness, of being ‘other’ so to speak. When I arrived here everything, all of a sudden, was strange. The language was different. I was not “it”, or “the”, I was the “other”. Also, my mother went to work in a factory the second week in Canada, my father worked, my sister, who was 15 years old went to work in a factory. She still resents that to this day. My brother and I were left alone in this strange country - no language, no familiarity, no friends. I even lost my curls. My father cut my hair shortly after we came here. I had the most beautiful ringlets that my mother worked on everyday and I remember my mother coming home and being very upset that he had cut off all my hair. He had given me a boy’s haircut. He did it because there wasn’t any time to groom my hair in the morning. I felt, partially, that was one of the reasons my mother did not find me cute anymore.

I remember nuns, I remember horrible tasting food. Because it was a poor area I think we used to get food donated by caterers. I remember eating egg salad sandwiches, and I just thought, “What is this garbage? This is awful”. It’s only in hindsight that I realize that it was probably attached to poverty. It was all just wretched. I remember we used to call the sliced, white, Canadian bread, wrapped in cellophane - pane alla fisarmonica (accordion bread). The reason we called the Canadian bread, accordion bread is because when we tried to take it out of the bag it fell apart - it opened up like the bellows of an accordion. It tasted totally uncooked to us because it was so soft. The only bread we were used to eating was the bread that my mother baked in a brick woodburning oven (#1, p.13).
I also remember that I could write with a pen (this is what they had taught us in Italy in grade 1), here in Canada they would make me print with a pencil. It was dreadful. I felt horribly invaded. I felt horribly that moment. I cried, and my father didn’t make us go anymore. It was April, he thought we were going to buy a house and move anyway, so what was the big deal. Well, we didn’t buy a house, and we didn’t move until December. I don’t think I went to school at all until December. I started grade 1 again, this time it was at a public school. By then I could speak a little English.

The public school I went to was very similar to the one I teach in now. Both schools were built during WWI. The classrooms were standard 1950s classrooms with big wooden desks, all in a row, and the teacher sat in the front. The buildings had a sense of grandeur to them, unlike our schools today. The first school I taught in, for example, was a portable school, and then a new school was built. That was a different experience. There was a sense, when they built those schools in the old days, of ornamentation, of using granite and oak. The buildings had a sense of grandeur to them, unlike our schools today. There was a sense that learning institutions, churches, and public places generally should point to some loftiness. I agree with the older architectural view that we don’t make functional boxes for ourselves, that humans need beauty, and we need something that is grander than these spaces that we ‘need’ and use.

As a new Canadian, going to school reminded me of the hometown. I was living at the bottom of a hill, and I had one of the biggest hills to climb in order to get to school. It was quite the climb and there was a wooded area that surrounded it. Running down the hill, I would fall. In the village it was the same, I was always falling. There’s a strange similarity in the climbing, and the movement between climbing that hill to go to school, and the hometown. One of the big differences was the streetcars that used to pass me on my way to school in the old neighbourhood.
The school was located at the top of the hill. North of it was, and still is the wealthier neighbourhood, and also adjacent to it. The kids from the bottom of the hill were the poorer kids. Then you have the climb to Casa Loma and the ritzier neighbourhoods. The school sits there perched gathering them all together and the different social classes show up in the classrooms (#9, p. 2).

I was in grade 1, it was winter and I remember my teacher, Miss W. She had beautiful, long, red fingernails, but somehow I don’t associate Miss W. with kindness, but that may not have anything to do with Miss W., that might have to do with my own fear, and the strangeness of the place. I don’t want to attach unkindness to Miss W, but somehow I don’t have a feeling of warmth and being welcomed or feeling any special attention being given to me because I might have special needs, as a new Canadian. It would have been the mid 50s and at that time, consciousness around the special needs of children was dismal and non-existent. So I don’t have any feeling of having been given any extra support in any way (#1, p.6).

I think I did well in grade 1. I was certainly different than the other children. I felt different than the other children but I don’t remember any major upsets, which was nice. My difference wasn’t handed back to me by teachers until grade 4 (#9, p. 3). I dressed differently when we first came from Italy. I wore gold earings. I don’t remember the Anglo-Saxon girls in the class having their ears pierced. I stood out. I had tunics that my mother had made for me in Italy that I wore not to soil my clothes. The teacher thought they were gorgeous. They had long sleeves, they were fitted, with little snaps on the back. The cloth was a blue gingham pattern. During art time the other kids probably wore dad’s old shirt. My mother had a velvet coat made for me before we left. It may have been impractical for the weather, nevertheless it was very stylish. I remember feeling a kind of disjuncture between wanting to be really well groomed and stylish, and not having the means anymore to be that way. The concreteness of being different
was that I wasn’t English, it’s as simple as that. I didn’t look Canadian (English). I didn’t act Canadian. I didn’t smell Canadian.

Although I wasn’t ostracized, for example, I was included by being invited to birthday parties, and so on, but in the huge school yard with this swirl of children, I was anonymous. I couldn’t speak the language. Also, I would have to say that I have always felt old. The landscape surges up inside me. Italy is an old, old culture. So, the other thing that makes me different when I come here is that I’m old. I’m not of the new world, I am of the old world. There is a wisdom that I carried with me because of the images I was exposed to and that certainly shaped me. I was raised by people who came from an old culture, and who are not optimists. I come from people who have struggled to make the land give them food - an arid land where all of the trees were cut down, where day to day life was hard. It was very hot, and dry, stoney, and mountainous. There was a lack of water, and great distances between places that required walking for hours to reach (#9, pp. 8-9).

I remember Miss S in grade 2. She was an older woman who I do attach warmth and kindness to. This is when, I would say, my realization that I was gifted in the language area began to develop This is important to me. You’ll note from how I’ve storiied my school experience in Italy that I was gifted and smarter than most other kids, and academically that would be a place where I could shine. I knew the difference between Italian and our dialect but we spoke the dialect at home. It wasn’t until my sister dated a man who was from the north that we started speaking in Italian because the dialects are so different.

Grade 2, I would say, is a pivotal point for me because once again, my experience in Italy was corroborated for me. In the language area I would be able to acquire affirmation, encouragement, and the ability to stand out, and to shine. I remember Miss S. asking the principal to hear me read when he came up to the classroom because I had learned to read English so well, so quickly. I still remember that as a pivotal point when I said, “See, I’m really smart”. I was also
a terrific speller. The interesting thing is that I used my Italian, I used my knowledge of Italian to help me spell. Italian is basically a phonetic language. Words that were difficult for me, I would say in my head, when I had to learn the word ‘business’, I still remember I would sound it out in Italian (b-u-s-i-n-e-s-s) and I would even say the double ‘s’ at the end so I could hear the difference. I’m sure that if you go around and ask all of these Italian kids, they were doing this spelling in their head but you think you are the only one, and that you are so smart. The fact that I could read Italian very well really helped me. Whatever language knowledge I had, I put it to good use.

The “B-u-s-i-n-e-s-s” of Phonetics

I’ve just finished telling my students about this phonetics strategy that I used to use when I was a kid to help me spell. Fortunately for the education system they’ve realized that whole language needs a little bit of help. It works, I think, for children who take to language. It doesn’t work for children who don’t take to language, and so we need the direct teaching of language. I grab language, and I’ve understood it, but it didn’t make any sense to me as an immigrant because English is a mystical kind language. It’s not phonetic like Italian. There are rules to the language that you just have to learn, you can’t just pick them up.

There’s a new spelling series for children. In order to empower children you take the word structure that you are teaching, and you have some of the words from a word box in the speller, and children add their own words to the spelling list. The way I do it is that they go home, and they look at their environment, they look in the dictionary, and they look for words with these spelling structures. They bring those words and we make up a word list that is a
combination of some of the words I’ve chosen from their speller and their words, so the list is mostly their words.

Every lesson has a spelling strategy that it teaches children if they’re running into challenge words. I ask them to think back to see if they’ve developed any spelling strategies of their own. Even though I work with Chinese students primarily, and Chinese is very different form Western languages (the rest of the students are from different ethnic backgrounds) the point is that they’re immigrant children. They all have parents at home who speak, read, and write different languages. I share with them. I say to them that maybe they have a strategy that isn’t written in the speller. I wrote an example on the board of what I used to do, and I told them that I was an excellent speller when I was in school. So, I ask them to go back into their experience to see if they have found a strategy that works for them because of who they are. I share a lot of that kind of stuff with my children (#9, pp. 1-2).

Once again I find from these experiences the thread was a positive thread in my education. I did not sense in grade 2 any kind of trauma, and I sensed this developing consciousness in reading and in writing - this would be very powerful and strong. So I was developing an identity in that sense. Somehow I had this sense, in my family, that I had to be a really good student, which I always wasn’t in school. I sort of picked and chose my areas of excellence and the ones that bored me I would just sail along in. The feedback I received later on, in grade 4, was that there was something wrong with who I was. The starkest example of that was Mr. L.
Teacher Story - Mr. L

A traumatic thing happened when I was in grade 2 and it had to do with my brother. This would later have an influence on me. My brother was in grade 5 and he had a teacher who may have been a bigot, and who was certainly afraid of immigrant children (#1, p.8). He may have been afraid because he didn’t know what to do with them. Having grown up here in Canada in the 50s I got the sense that teachers would have still had the history of the war on their minds. I think that they would still have remembered the internment of Italians in Canada during the war.

Unfortunately, my brother was having a very hard time adjusting and one day, at recess time, he came to me and asked me to go home with him, he was responsible for me. I told him we couldn’t go home because it was recess and not the end of the day. In an effort to get me home, he pulled on my coat and ripped it. He was later struck for that by my parents, and the principal gave him the strap. I think he was very disturbed. I was younger than he was and had no idea what might have been going on for him. I felt that something had happened to him and he wanted to go home.

My brother is very intelligent and financially very successful to this day. He dropped out of school in grade 9. He is a very bright person, with great ideas, he was never a bookish person in Italy either, but the point is that his experience was very negative and he hated school. I was frightened for him because we were very close as children, and that was an episode that stands out in my mind. A conflict between my brother, myself and the educational system. I had that same teacher later on myself, and it was traumatizing for me too, and so I understood later on that he actually was a jerk. Mr. L. had just come out of Teacher’s College, later he became the head
of the ESL Department for a public board. There’s quite a bit of irony and drama in that.

I did a lot of therapy around Mr. L. I know a lot about this man. I think he knew that he had done my brother and I a lot of damage and sought me out. I met him a few years ago. He’s a really interesting story. As I have said, he had taught my brother and there was this concatenation of unfortunate events which leads to my story with him. My brother was a very different child and he had a lot of trouble adjusting and I think he was probably behaviourally difficult in his class. He was a boy, he was 10 years old, and different from me, and so he may have acted up more in class. I am telling this story as an adult after having told and retold this story at AA meetings, after 18 years of teaching experience, therapy, creative story and poetry writing about the experiences I have lived, and so on. It was also Mr. L’s first year teaching, and I don’t think he had ever encountered any immigrant children. We were off the boat just six months. He taught my brother and whenever my brother got in trouble he would get strapped. My brother has a lot of bitterness and hatred for his first few years at school.

When I came into this teacher’s class, two years later I was just this kid who had positive experiences at school. I was an excellent academic student, unlike my brother, my teachers liked me. I felt quite like I belonged, the kids liked me. It wasn’t until this year that something happened. I remember Mr. L putting me in the corner the very first day of school, which just shocked and humiliated me, and saying to me, “You’re just like your brother”. This was for talking in class. It wasn’t for anything like getting out of my seat. It was a perfectly innocuous incident, no rudeness, nothing like that.
I remember him moving my desk away from the rest of the class and putting me at the very back of the room. I remember him singling me out and humiliating me at various points which was just unnecessary. I was just doing ‘kiddish’ things.

If we look at the physicality of spaces in a classroom - the corner, the back of the class, the outside of the classroom - they are the morally loaded places where kids who don’t belong, or who anger the teacher get sent to. It is the removal from the group. I understand, being a teacher myself, that, at certain points, when children are disruptive, sometimes you have no choice other than to remove a kid, but, you exhaust everything first, and you don’t do it with malice. I have them go to a morally neutral space. It’s not a big moral thing, “you’re bad!” Rather, one could say, “The group cannot continue to work like this, you’ll have to go over there until you are ready to join us.”

But, he did also recognize that I was quite a bright, gifted child and so he did do various things that appreciated that and pushed me. He especially encouraged me to write poetry. To be frank with you, I think he was conflicted. I think he was confused and he didn’t know what to do with ethnic kids, or Italian kids. Something inside him told him that he wasn’t behaving well, so he would be conflicted and give all kinds of mixed messages (#3, pp. 5-6).

When I place myself back, in my memory of that grade 4 classroom as a child, my sense of isolation, abandonment, loneliness, and humiliation is palpable. Whatever that man did to me over that year was damaging. Also, that was the year that my sexual abuse was in full force, so probably my acting out may have aggravated him more, I have thought about that. Or my sensitivity, my sense of loss may have been heightened. I lost my home (my place of birth and
all that was familiar to me), I lost my mother because she went to work full time in a factory, I lost my childhood. Whatever. The point is that when I place myself there, the experience was so deep, and so continuous that year that it’s palpable to me. I can touch it (#5, p.1).

My recollection of grade school in the Canadian Educational system is that of this bigot teacher. Up to the point of grade 4 I was neither really here nor there, I was just a kid who was good at school, and my teachers liked me. It wasn’t until I encountered this man, who epitomized the classic cultural clash, that trouble began. I was unconscious of any shame attached to whatever your background is until someone says “There is something wrong with your culture, with who you are.” This is exactly what this man conveyed to me in grade 4.

I know that all of this was linked to my being Italian because years later this man looked me up. He found me. I met with him a few years ago and he virtually admitted it to me. And, I experienced the irony of this man telling me that he now loves all things Italian. He knew that he did us wrong. Nevertheless, I do have a redemption story I would like to tell.

**A Redemption Story**

This year I’m teaching a grade 4/5 split class. Up until about 3 years ago we had more of an ethnic mix of children in our school because of our proximity to teaching hospitals, and the university. Because of fellowships, and visiting doctors to these places we had children from all over the world. It was like a little United Nations. We now have predominantly Chinese students in the school - I would say about eighty-five percent. Approximately half of them have parents
who are either doctors or researchers. It's a beautiful place to teach at. I'm in my element. I have recently read a statistic that Chinese has replaced the Italian language in Toronto. There I am with them now. They are children of immigrant background.

In the middle of the year I got this little boy in grade 5. My brother was in grade 5 when he started school here in Canada. He's come from China, and doesn't know a word of English. Normally, I find that Chinese immigrant children are not problematic. They're eager, they're respectful - like the Italians - we were taught to venerate our teachers. Now, this kid has a big chip on his shoulder. If I tell him anything he rolls his eyes, he turns his back like he's not listening to me, etc, etc. I have children in the class who speak Mandarin, and I don't take disrespect from children. So, I got one of my little translators to tell him not to do that, I don't like it. I wanted him to hear my tone of voice as well, that it was no nonsense. But, he continued to do this.

His sister is in grade 3, in the room next door to me. I would have been in grade 1 when my brother was in grade 5, and I guess he was a 'bad boy'. My sense is that he was having a hard time adjusting and the teacher didn't like him. I was just going along probably trying to be 'Miss Goody Two-Shoes'. She didn't speak any English either, and she was very sweet. She got lost one day. She came home from lunch, but being new to the area she must have lost her way and wandered off. She was missing for hours. I was down in the office with the brother, the mother was weeping, I wanted to know what was going on. The child was eventually found at 2:30 in the afternoon wandering downtown. It reminded me of being lost trying to go to the library when I was little. But, the brother was just being a pain in the butt. He couldn't care less that his sister was lost. Even
though he didn’t speak a word, his demeanor told you that he didn’t care.

Our French and ESL teacher is Chinese, and she came to see me about this kid. She told me that she thought that he was a real pain, and I told her that I thought that he had lots of attitude, and that he was also getting on my nerves. I don’t take that kind of attitude from kids, and I was just about to read him the riot act (through one of my little translators). Then the teacher told me that these two kids came over on the plane by themselves. Their parents had left them (in China) with the grandparents 7 years ago. Like my father who left us when we were little. Then they came over by plane by themselves. They hadn’t seen their parents in all of these years.

My students pepper my existence, especially the problematic ones, and I come home and start thinking of ways to approach them. My brother is still full of invective when he thinks about that Mr. L, and the principal, Mr. H who strapped him for tearing my coat one day during recess. I thought of my brother. My brother didn’t need that, he needed something else. He needed gentleness, and he needed kindness. I thought about it and I thought I’m not going to do what they did to us. I’m going to do it entirely differently.

I went back to school the next day and I went to the french teacher - she’s a great teacher, and although I didn’t tell her my story, I said, “before we do anything heavy, this kid’s had a hard time, he’s angry, why don’t we try building something around him - kindness, and cajoling him, and seeing him instead of seeing him as ‘the other’. If that doesn’t work, then we can try a tougher approach.” I started by first calling him, and asking him to look in my eyes, I touch him (his shoulder or upper back), I say, “yeah, good”. I ask kids to teach me how to say something, “thank you for being my friend” in Mandarin,
and my pronunciation is dreadful, but I’m trying, and it amuses him. The kid softens. Then we got another boy from China, now he’s got a buddy. We smile to each other now. He does all of his work. The grace in all of that suffering that my brother and I did is that this child didn’t have to suffer. I called my brother on New Year’s day and gave him this story as his New Year’s present. I told him, “your suffering is redeemed through this child, somewhat.” He was very moved. As soon as I told my brother that this little boy was acting up, he immediately said, “it’s not his fault.”

I really think that the only way to redeem suffering and injustice is that, at some point in your life, a situation presents itself whereby if you weren’t exactly who you were with those experiences, those painful experiences, you couldn’t handle the situation that way. It takes exactly you with those sufferings to be able to understand. I wrote the story, what I mean is, in the sense that I made conscious decisions. I authored it. I exerted control and conscious choice (#9, pp. 5-7).

My experience in grade 5 was not bad. I had a different teacher, and she was very different. I also remember going to the home of one of my friends in that grade 5 class. Her mother was a kind of cultured person. She was an actor and she had been to Italy for filming. She spoke of Italy with such fondness, she could even speak Italian. She would ask me questions and I remember responding to her in Italian. I think trying to speak proper Italian too. I don’t know where that came from, but I do remember thinking that this was the first time someone, an Anglo Saxon - of the dominant culture, ever showed any positive interest in my culture, and made it seem like it would be something positive to me. This encounter, with a more knowledgeable, gracious, Anglo Saxon, gave me something positive to
look at so that I could maybe begin to feel a little differently about my cultural identity.

There is an inferiority complex that goes along with being a southern Italian. I believe it was present in my home, as I was growing up, in my parents. It was probably exacerbated to some extent, because my sister married a northern Italian. They lived with us, so my parents spoke to their son-in-law in Italian. I always got the sense that being southern Italians my family members felt humiliated by their dialect, and felt that they couldn’t speak proper Italian. It wasn’t specifically aimed at my brother-in-law, but it was something that I sensed in the house. There was an inferiority complex. My father considered Italian to be important, and being able to communicate with other Italians was important.

I took Italian in high school. I hated the Italian teacher because there was this snobbism that he projected. My response was that I always had this hesitation and nervousness to speak proper Italian, even if I knew how to speak it. It was something that I imbibed or that was passively passed on to me. Even when I could speak it well, I would have to be prodded to speak it.

At this time I totally rejected being Italian. If anything, I was going to be Meg. I had no interest in the Italian culture or pursuing any of my roots. What I had built up was a lot of anger. I felt that my marginalization in the society as a young person in an elementary school was due to being Italian - being isolated and being the only Italian person. My main psychological urgency and my push was to become as Canadian as possible. Being Italian was a burden, it made my life hard.

Ironically, my father once said that the Italians were going to teach the Canadians how to raise their children, because they didn’t know how. He was a man who was proud in very many ways even though he was humiliated, I think, having come here. He was very proud of being Italian, of the family life, and that gave him a feeling of superiority. At least, that’s what he conveyed to us vis-a-vis the Anglo Saxon family. So, my experience was one of not belonging, and not
being allowed to have any fun. I used to have to go home and do the housework everyday after school (#3 [2], p. 7).

As a young woman, as an adolescent, my greatest anger was in not being able to date and seeing the disparity between my brother and myself. The indignation of the injustice of that gender description that goes on, went on, and still goes on - to a great extent in Italian homes, I think really, really bothers me. I saw my brother able to go out and carouse with his friends and I had to stay home and do laundry and chores. My sense of it is that family virtue sits on the shoulders of Italian girls. It’s not so serious today with birth control, but at any rate, that whole notion of your daughter getting pregnant, the big vergogna (shame) coming down, was a serious issue. For instance, when I was in high school, one of my cousins got pregnant. There was a shotgun wedding. I came home one day and my mother said, “From now on you will be home at 4 o’clock”. So I found out later that this had been going on with my cousin and they forced this wedding. The guy didn’t want to marry her but they talked him into it because it was the right thing to do. Obviously, that is what had triggered this kind of imposition, this curfew. But, another one of my big angers, I just realize, is housework.

The amount of housework that I had to do as a child, because my mother worked in the factory, was incredible. I had no childhood. Our parents didn’t have any childhood to speak of at all so that concept is absent from their experience. (For a more detailed discussion on this topic see Danesi, 1994.) As children my brother and I had all of these chores to do every night after school, and before we went out we had to wipe down all of the base boards, wash the chairs and table, make sure no dust gathered in places. Saturdays we had to dust all of the furniture, and vacuum. I don’t remember if we had to do the laundry. When I was in grade 7, on Fridays, I had to do the laundry with the old wringer washer for what seemed to be five hours - it took all night. In summer we had one major, hard chore a week, like scrubbing all the hard wood floors. I hated house work. I still have a very hard time with it. I have a very clean house but the point is that I need
a cleaning lady. I will hire someone as soon as I have the money. I used to feel like a prisoner. It's doubled with a kind of double oppression. I have a lot of anger about not having any adolescence. I couldn't date. I couldn't go out. I was not allowed to have fun. One of the dreadful things that, I think, happens in a patriarchal society, and even more so exaggerated in an Italian home such as mine, is the invisibility of the women and their relegation to the private realm - which is reminiscent of the piazza culture of the men.

The cloistered upbringing, the chores I had to do because my mother worked in the factory, the immigrant household, Mr. L., these stories are all embedded in the everyday. At a formative time in one's life, these experiences, and images I am left with bleed into everything and influence me for the rest of my life, to this day. Ignoring any of these experiences, which have helped shape my teaching identity would be to amputate something that was very, very potent, and influential in my identity formation (#9, p. 4). The dramas of everyday life. What makes one story, one event, one experience more worth telling or acceptable to tell than another? Except, perhaps, people's discomfort at hearing or reading certain things. ...

**The Doll Story**

When I was in elementary school my entire family worked, including my 15 year old sister who worked in the factories, and my 12 year old brother also started working after school. I was left alone to fend for myself. During this time, a male cousin, 10 years older than me, was sponsored by my father to come to Canada. He stayed with us. I was in Mr. L's class. I would come home from school and do the housework, and my cousin would come home from the doll factory where he worked, and prey on me. My parents never had a childhood, and for those who had no childhood of their own, and have no concept of childhood, they
never considered buying me toys. I didn’t have any toys, and I
would have killed for a doll. My cousin promised to bring me a doll,
limb by limb, from the doll factory where he worked, in return for
sexual acts. It was a full-grown doll, not a baby doll, or Barbie doll.
He brought a leg, then another leg, the torso, the arm, then the other
arm. I still remember the dress, it was a kind of silvery blue with fine,
lighter blue stripes on it. He never brought me the head.
It’s only in hindsight that I realize that if he had brought me the head
I would have had the completed doll and I might have said, “No,
you can’t touch me anymore”. He was objectifying me purely as a
body with no head. Of course, the double irony is that I’m supposed
to be cloistered, and kept in this virginal state to be marriageable
and be the proper Italian girl. Meanwhile, at the age of 9, I am
completely sexualized, and a sex object (#8, pp. 10-12).

I didn’t live in the Italian ghetto. I didn’t have any Italian friends and as I
have said before I felt like a real misfit, that was coupled with the notion of being
very much Italian. Two of the things that really disturbed me were first, that being
a girl you couldn’t go out, and secondly, that housekeeping was such a source of
self esteem for my mother - especially when English people walked in. I remember
the furnace salesman coming in once and my mother was basking in the glory
when he commented on how immaculate our house was, and I’m thinking “yes,
but we do all the work”. I mean my mother had to work, she would have preferred
to stay home and not work in factories, but the point was, “so what”, that was her
life. As children we suffered a great deal. I can understand my mother’s
experience, but it didn’t change my experience one iota (#5, pp. 1-2).

My mother had to bear a lot because my father was not the best
breadwinner. He was a bit of a dreamer and he was just happy being a barber. My
mother was much more ambitious and worked three times as hard as he did. He
was sheltered in his barber shop where people are civil. His life was nowhere as hard as my mother's who aged here in the factories with all sorts of abuse, and hard physical labour, chemicals and all kinds of things. I feel like my father's joviality and ability to sustain this better nature was to some extent at the cost of my mother. She had to be more severe, nastier, angrier (#2, p. 10).

I think I was afraid of physical violence. My father beat me once but usually he didn't believe in hitting children. He lost his temper that time because I had really crossed his values. My mother was given to bouts of rage and lashing out. She had to temper this violence because of my father's influence. He didn't believe in disciplining children that way. We were lucky that he was a true anomaly in the culture, and I don't know how he came out that way. He was a thinker and believed that talking to your kids and reasoning with them worked better than violence. My mother was given to flights of rage and it may have been an unrealistic fear but it was there. I was afraid of being hurt. I was afraid of rejection for being bad, but I would say my primary motivator was that I was afraid of the disgrace I would bring upon the family, and there's the kick. That's what I say about the tenacity of the family if I misbehaved. My tendencies to go off in this direction or do that, were always guided by my fear of hurting my parents.

I think that I went through most of my life feeling inferior, trying to be me. I tried to do things that Anglo Saxons did, but I couldn't. This marked my high school years. There was this negativity all the way along associated with the Italian myth and one of the things in high school was that I couldn't date. Because I couldn't do that, I couldn't belong. I attributed that directly, not to the choice my parents made, but because my parents were Italian parents. I lived on a street where I was known as Italian, I was the only Italian kid on my street and I was the only Italian kid in my class in elementary school. I felt isolated in the larger culture.

In high school, because I carried a lot of my Italianness with me I didn't feel like I was an active participant in the social life there. When you're in high school
and a teenager that's probably the most important counter for your identity, and I didn’t have that. I grew up during the hippie generation, and leaned toward the counter culture. I went to a high school (a collegiate) that had the Ivy league type kids, or the Italian immigrant kids. I couldn’t belong to the Ivy league because I didn’t have the money, and I had never been accepted anyway. I chose the counter culture. The counter culture appealed to me because I had rejected Catholicism - that came from radical politics that I had been attracted to in high school. The idea of protest, and that these people were rebels really appealed to me, although I couldn’t really engage in that either. As I have said already, I didn’t want to hurt my parents. Everything seemed to be dictated by what ‘the family’ decided.

**Puzzling Over Why I Went Into Teaching**

The teaching profession was something that fit in with the family. I think I started saying I wanted to be a teacher when I was in grade 4. I remember writing a paper on “What I want to be when I grow up ...” and stating that I wanted to be a model or a teacher. I think I would have preferred to have been a model. I wanted to be Katie Kean, like in the comic books - that’s part of a child’s fantasies from the popular culture. As far as the teaching is concerned I may have been told I was going to be a teacher. I have no recollection. I have asked my mother about it. She says that I said I wanted to be a teacher.

I said I wanted to be a teacher but I have no idea where it came from. I have already mentioned Mr. L, my grade 4 teacher. Because he caused me a lot of grief maybe I wanted to become a teacher to show him how to be a teacher. It was my anger, “When I grow up I’ll show you how it’s done”. I am not really sure, but my sense is, whatever it was, it was not my spirit or my gifts. Although I am a gifted teacher, I think I am very natural at it, and OK with it. Certainly if my soul were going to speak, it would not have said, “be a teacher” (#2, pp. 4-5). I don’t
think that I had any kind of a sense of self, I mean enough of a sense of self to say, “I want this” (#2, p. 6).

For me, this teaching dilemma is related to a passivity that has filtered through my life. It is so peculiar because I present this very opinionated, dynamic person who has charge of this and charge of that; is competent at being a perfectionist; pulls things off beautifully, yet, underlying this or hovering in the background is this passivity that I have picked up in my life. I sense that the teaching was part of this passivity. Whatever came it seemed to just happen to me. I don’t know if I wanted it. I don’t know what I would have wanted. That’s the thing, what would I have wanted instead? I do think that passivity, the lack of care, and the lack of an emotional support and presence that every child needs, is at the core of wanting someone to take over and to do things for me.

I think my father wanted me to be a teacher. My family wanted us all to be professionals. We were not to be labourers, not even to marry labourers. My sister is ten years older than me and she fell into a different category because when we came to Canada she was fourteen and she went to work. She still has resentments about the fact that she was never offered the opportunity to go to school. She belongs to my parents generation. They wanted my brother to be a doctor. They wanted him to be educated but he hated school and dropped out in grade 9. He is very bright, financially very successful - he lives through his wallet. His wallet is his self-esteem, which is a typical type of immigrant pattern, but he was supposed to be a professional. Even when he dropped out of school my father insisted he get a trade. My brother became a hairdresser, he was very successful but he hated the trade and left it for another trade which is where he made his money. The point was not to be this unskilled labourer.

My dilemma was different. I think I should have been the doctor for instance. If they had said to me, “you are going to be a doctor”, I probably would have complied. Being the obedient one, I think they said, “you are going to be a teacher”, and I would be a teacher (#2, p. 11). I wasn’t encouraged to do much
because I was supposed to get married. I had been reared with all the skills to be a wife - to iron, cook, clean, and so on. In the 1960s women weren’t encouraged to go into other professions. For immigrant kids, teaching was good because you could have a profession and you didn’t have to go to university, so it just seemed like I fell into that lot (#2, p. 12). It was a path, Mary Catherine Bateson (1989) would suggest, chosen by default.

**Teaching Story**

In 1974, 4 years after I got my certificate from the Toronto Teacher’s College, I ran into a friend who told me that a Roman Catholic Separate School Board was expanding, building new schools and hiring. I was hired as a supply teacher and I also offered to do French. Consequently, I got many core French assignments for 3 weeks. Around my fourth week I got a call from the superintendent asking me if I would take a full time teaching position - a split J.K./S.K., half-day at two different schools. I didn’t want to teach such young children but I decided to think about it. This is how my full-time teaching career began purely by chance encounters and linked to my “Italian Heritage”.

I had gone to Teacher’s College with the woman who was working as a teacher for that Catholic Board; we were two of the few Italians living on this side of Bathurst St. We were both intelligent, bright girls and Teacher’s College was one way to become a professional without a university education. In the 1950s and 60s there was a heavy emphasis by the Ministry of Education, in Ontario to stream immigrant children into vocational schools. This explains, in part, why Italian Canadian women have concentrated in particular sectors. Italian Canadian women of my age were encouraged to go
into secretarial work or teaching. There was a precise focus on the part of the educational system to make sure that immigrants were somewhere else. Maria Castrilli (lawyer, Ph.D. and past Chair, University of Toronto Governing Council in Mirrors and Windows, 1993) says that this was well meaning but the perception was such that: “this is where these people belong”!

This was a bitter time between the public board and the Catholic board which was raiding the public schools in the Italian community because of the strong Catholicism of the poor, southern Italians. The schools were in the thick of the Italian community and it was because I was Catholic (nominally only), Italian-speaking, and without a B.A. (cheap salary) that I was hired.

When I think about this confluence of events, I am struck by the Italian thread that runs through them - forcing my Italian-ness upon me despite my ongoing attempts to reject it. I see how externally motivated my choices were. My father had died that year and I desperately wanted a surrogate and took up with a married, left-wing artist who in my perceptions embodied everything I wanted to be and lacked the means, courage, and direction to pursue.

I was a bank-teller and this man was an intellectual. I remember thinking that an intellectual was more suited to a teacher than a teller. My teaching certificate would have expired at the end of that year too. The problem of working for the Catholic Board posed great ideological difficulty for me. I was working for a conservative, right-wing, religiously based board of education while I was constructing this left-wing, Marxist identity to compensate for not belonging during the hippy era and the Vietnam war protests. My left-wing politics also came from my identification with oppressed groups in Canadian society. It allowed me to express my anger at the
discrimination I had felt as ‘a poor immigrant’ during my elementary and high school life; the rich Anglos had rejected me, now I would reject them [by working for a Catholic Board of Education which catered to immigrants as opposed to a Public Board of Education which catered to Anglo-Saxons]. I felt shame at working for that Catholic Board of Education, and inferior to teachers working for the Public Boards of Education, yet because that job had fallen into my lap, I stayed with that Catholic board for 15 years. Eventually I switched over to a public school board of education.

Shame Stories

When I started to teach grade 6 something happened. Teaching grade 6 resonated with me very, very deeply. What it resonated with was this very difficult time in my own personal experience, and aside from that what I brought with me was my mother’s severity. My mother spoke very harshly to us, she was imperious, and expected to be obeyed immediately. I think I brought that with me in terms of dealing with older children. What I don’t like is that, although I was nice to the special education children, the little children, and my elite enclave of gifted children, I was demanding and had trouble with the children who had behavioural problems. At that time, I took everything personally. When they were acting up I interpreted it as, “they were making my class look bad, and making me look like I wasn’t a good teacher”. I would “guilt them out” if we were going on a field trip, and they weren’t behaving exactly the way I wanted them to behave. There would have been a number of strategies that would have been mature and effective, but at that time I was constantly taking things personally, and shaming them, which is what I had experienced. During those three years, and as an outcome of my anger, I slapped three children. I will recount what happened on one of those occasions.
I had taken a class of students on a field trip, and while we were out at a park a kid swore at me, and I slapped him in the face. The worst of it is that he came from an abusive home. My view is that physical violence simply engenders more anger in the world. "What does one want to create?", is what one has to ask oneself. In a classroom, in a school, in the world at large you imagine the environment you want to create, and then you set out to create it. You either know, or you decide what is going to create it. I did not have this understanding, or had developed this kind of wisdom that I think about now. I have actually looked for this kid to apologize to him.

Another tragic story occurred one day when a child, who had been misbehaving had been called into the principal’s office with his mother. The principal, in this Catholic elementary school, allowed this mother to whip the child with a belt, at the school, in his office. The mother took down his pants, in the principal’s presence, and whipped him. The principal had called me, and asked me if I wanted to be there, and to my undying shame I didn’t say, "You can’t do that, I’m leaving." I think that also had something to do with my background, and the principal’s. I think that there would have been lots of people who would not have allowed that to happen even in those times.

The importance of telling these stories of shame is that if you keep them a secret you stay bound to them. I tell these stories because they need to be told. I also know how far I’ve come. Nothing like this ever happens in my class now. I have a profound bond with these children. They’re all nurtured, they’re all valued.

My personal and professional teaching experiences are expressed in the following poem that I wrote following an incident which occurred at school. The poem captures the essence of both my personal and professional story. First, it is an example of teaching life being turned into art; secondly, it illustrates the various themes that have indelibly stamped my life. The ethereal quality of the poetry clearly opens the door for me to delve into the ‘invisible’ world.
Black Paint

_for the world of affects_

_is invisible_

_(Carl Jung)_

Julia, age 9, paints a picture
and colours herself all black,
the blind face
resistant obsidian,
her coal-coloured hair
pulled into the stubborn
ponytail she wears everyday.
Night fills her hands
and deepens in her clothes.

She draws the teacher
all light,
bright violet shirt, cool
green pants, strappy sandals.
Yellow hair foams
around a pink face
bold lashes define
wide-awake eyes.
The teacher smiles
with the inverted rainbow
of her full red mouth.

Julia doesn’t see
the night child
inside the teacher.
Long ago, the teacher
swallowed black paint,
and now she pours it
into the classroom jars.

I feel that Julia (a pseudonym) is our shadow. She was a dual designation student, meaning she was L.D. (Learning Disabled) with social-emotional special needs as well. Primarily she was a behavioural problem. She had a learning disability, furthermore she would sexually ‘act out’ all of the time. I taught Julia for two years and I knew that she had some very serious problems she had to deal
with, she was a very challenging student. Julia painted this picture (the one depicted in the poem) one day, when she was in another class and her teacher, who may have been, 'malicious and unthinking', put this art in her Ontario Student Record (OSR) file. I feel that teachers who have undigested, suppressed stuff do things like this. Julia is basically 'acting out' our anger. In the poem, I drew a sinister portrait of the teacher. The rainbow of her mouth, which traditionally represents promises of good things to come, is now inverted. Through this poem I wished to show the sinister, repressed side of this 'pink' teacher who is 'precious' and superficial. I fought to have this picture removed from Julia's OSR file because I thought it would be misread out of context and I was successful in my efforts. The child in me is writing this poem. I remember when I was in grade 4 and I remember that teacher, and how I felt so indignant. He wanted me, at all costs, to be a bad girl. I suffered great humiliation, for two years, with him in grades 4 and 6.

I feel that my passion for the rights of the child are clearly illustrated in the fact that I was instrumental in having Julia's picture removed from her OSR file. In this 'story to live by' I feel that I am both a rebel and an artist in that the poem has allowed me to artistically express a particular teaching incident. Poetry has allowed me to make sense of things, in whatever little ways I could express them. I read a lot of poems as a child, and they were always very important to me. Blake, for example, wrote some poems for kids and so did Emily Dickinson. I had an anthology of poems my grade 5 teacher gave me. I have read this book many times, and I still have it. There is a quality of children suffering in the poems contained in this book that I could relate to.

Writing this particular poem was an experience set within the context of my experience as both an immigrant child, a student in the Canadian educational system, and teacher in the Canadian educational system. I story myself as an 'off beat', non-conventional teacher. I am a 'loner' meaning that I do not 'mix' socially with the other teachers in the school. However, I also see how positive and
grounding teaching has been. My teaching is, and has been joyful, fun, delightful and pleasurable. I see this when the actor/performer/artist ‘self’ is put into action. I incorporate drama, fancy language, and a lot of comedy into my teaching. Teaching has become an incredibly meaningful part of my life and a great source of pleasure and security.

A Philosopher’s Tale

When I was 40 years old I graduated from the University of Toronto with a major in philosophy by studying part-time. I graduated with high distinction, and was sent a scholar’s certificate which still makes me proud. Only 6 people out of 200 in that section had achieved that rank. If I had my way I would have been an artist and I would have pursued a post graduate degree in philosophy. The stories and poetry I write are my attempts at consciously taking control of crafting my own story - a control, I do not feel, I have always enjoyed. In retrospect, if I think back on my sensibility and what I would have been attracted to, I would have been an artist. Certainly, I would have been a writer. My sense is that I was never really directed towards art by my parents. I took direction from them very much. I don’t know where that ‘honour thy father and mother’ comes from. (#2, p.1) Making sense of it is hard for me because what I have difficulty with in that area is the tenacity of the family. I understand patriarchy, which is cross-cultural, although it has its own specific forms. When I started to understand that, meaning the patriarchy, the subservience, marriage and the social forms of oppression, I realized that we all grew up under the family. What I have trouble with and what I see that is very specific to myself as an Italian, is the tenacity of the family. The hold it has. I took direction from them in all other areas of my life. This ‘honour thy father and mother’ comes from centuries of our background. It is embedded in hundreds of years of cultural history.

Being the kind of person I was, I find it very puzzling to me how obedient I was in some ways. In other ways, I was very rebellious, and to this day have
done ‘terrible, unorthodox’ things like living on my own since I was 20, which is quite young! I certainly did not wait until I got married in order to leave. I think that part of me was nurtured by Canadian culture. The emotion behind my being a rebel was nurtured by my anger at growing up in an Italian family, the gender injustices I directly experienced and witnessed, and feeling like such a misfit. My obedience I attribute to fear (#2, p.2).

When I look back on my life, most of it seems like a paradox to me. I think that I embody the coexistence of opposite and seemingly conflicting drives, attributes and achievements. For the last 12 years, the personal work that I have been doing is trying to collect the fragments to re-piece myself into a whole being. It reminds of the story that Clarissa Pinkola-Estes tells in her book, Women Who Run With the Wolves, about the old man who is looking for all the bones of the wolf, and when he finally puts the bones together the wolf comes to life, turns into a woman, and runs free. As a fragmented person, this is my process. I am very frightened as I think and write about my future. To be a self-determined being and to be true to your authentic self feels very risky to me, I don’t know if I’m up to it - and yet, having finally chosen to live a conscious life, I have no other choice.

What I most regret is the lack of direction that has ruled me, allowing other people to choose for me. I hear my mother’s continuous exhortations to, “play it safe, stay with what you know, at least you know where you stand. Don’t look for change, you might just get worse.”

At the same time, in the immediate community of my paesani and extended family, I would appear as a self-determined rebel. I have already mentioned that I moved out in my early twenties, and have lived on my own, or with a common-law mate since then. I have never married, this has been a conscious choice on my part. I finally purchased a home when I was in my mid forties. Contrary to the drive for new homes that is prevalent among Italian Canadians, I purchased a hundred-year old Victorian house much like the houses abandoned by my parents’ generation in the area of Toronto known as “Little Italy”. This is a misnomer as all
that remains are the restaurants and food stores; the Italians have long ago moved to the suburbs. This was a major step for me. I am proud of this space which is artistic, filled with books, and my personal flourishes and creations. I have painted it myself, and designed it myself. I am proud of its beauty and sense of calm. This is as close to sistemata (settled) as I have come.

I find it ironic how my role in the family has turned around. Rather than being the black sheep, and the “screw-up”, I have acquired a good deal of respect. I am educated, and also have a good relationship with my mother and my siblings. A short while ago, my mother came to live with me for a month while her condo was being finished. I could feel her admiration for my decorating style - done mostly with second hand antiques which she used to belittle. I have passed on my conscious living to my niece who is in her late twenties and is working very hard at developing a sense of self. She has learned to have compassionate confrontations with her mother. I see this niece as my heir. We have a very open, honest, and truly intimate relationship. I believe she will be a musician, and I am thrilled to encourage the artist in her.

Despite much encouragement by poets and professors throughout my life, I have never published a book of poetry. Being a poet and a writer has been an ongoing source of identity for me. The publication of a book would allow this part of me to manifest itself in the outside world. This fills me with fear. I don’t know whether it is fear of failure, or fear of success, or my father’s unlived life that plagues me. I just know that the time to publish my first volume of poetry has come. My writing voice is lyrical with dense imagery, and I must give myself permission to write about my life, without worry that I am not a worthy subject, or that I am betraying the family by writing my experiences and thoughts. Sometimes I think the fear is fear of joy and happiness; language brings such energy to my being.

There are two other areas of my life which plague me still - visual art, and music. Somewhere along the line, I was given the message that I couldn’t draw
and that I wasn’t good at music. In the future, I see freedom in the ability to draw, and play classical guitar - to be a fully artistic person. I have already taken steps in that direction by taking lessons. I see this reunification as becoming whole. I believe that for most of my life I have been brave enough to keep seeking solutions and truth. In spite of depression, abuse, alcoholism, and an eating disorder, I am today healthy, conscious, artistic, intelligent, a useful member of my community, and proud to be a teacher who is loved and appreciated in my school community.

In my development as writer and artist I want to use my voice to speak for groups in society who have no voice - children, the poor, and the disenfranchised. This is one role that artists can play because they have a public voice. Although I have a comfortable life, my comfort is uneasy because I continue to puzzle over how we can be a free, and civilized society. Social activism is necessary to me because I need to transcend my self.

The area where I am most satisfied with my growth is in my teaching. I have done a lot of changing, reflecting, and experimenting, especially after I started therapy. I feel that I give the best of myself in my teaching. When I am teaching, when I am interacting with children, I feel whole, I live entirely in the present moment and here I truly transcend myself because I put the children’s needs before mine. I am still growing in this area but I feel very mature and grown-up because I have clarity about what I want to create in the classroom, the kind of relationships I want with the children and among the children. I have a lot of respect from the administration and my peers. The most satisfying for me, is the quality of the emotional relationships that I have with some parents and students. There are families where I have taught all three children, the mothers and I hug each other, the kids and I have deep bonds. I am invited to their homes, and it is another family - very wide, inclusive and truly beautiful. Although I have been encouraged to go into administration, I have no interest in that because I love children, and I like being close to them and I deplore schmoozing. Maybe it is just
another one of those challenges I am afraid of - I don’t think so! In the future I may teach gifted children where my love for abstract thinking, intellectual pursuits, and art would have some more play.

And what of my intellectual life? My other choice, aside from being an artist would have been to be an academic. I love the solitary life, and yet I know the importance of community - the uneasy balance for persons like me is to find that space between isolation (which is damaging), and solitude (which is regenerative). I constantly battle about doing a masters and then a doctorate degree. I weave the intellectual life into my everyday through my thinking and reading. This area of my life has helped me wean myself from Catholicism. Atheism, political, and social activism took the place of religion for about 20 years. The conflict for me is between intellect and religion. “If you want peace go to religion, if you want truth go to philosophy”. This line by Nietzsche haunts me. I read books written by Bhuddists, and Jesuits. This feels very right to me. I am not ready to join any groups, but the teacher in me rises to find my resources to teach myself. I see a growing self-knowledge in me, an ability to live more in the present, to enjoy peace rather than crises, and to live mindfully - to cause as little suffering to other living beings as possible. I have worked hard at healing my wounds, and my chaotic past is dissolving in the present. Teaching has provided a grounding, stable structure in my life, and I see an interesting future for myself as I pursue my intellectual and artistic interests (Reflection, March, 1999).
Chapter Eight
Crafting an Identity: Toward an Understanding of the Importance of Self-Definition in Educational Contexts

living, telling, retelling, reliving
only to return to the retelling once again ...

This thesis may be read as a ‘narrative in the making’ (Greene, 1995). Indeed, a journey in the making. My journey started with the many puzzles and unresolved issues I carried with respect to my identity. Greene articulates her educational quest as involving herself in all of her personal and professional capacities (as teacher, mother, citizen, and so forth). Her words resonate with me as I think back upon what my thesis journey has been about ...

I stand at the crossing point of too many social and cultural forces; and, in any case, I am forever on the way. My identity has to be perceived as multiple, even as I strive towards some coherent notion of what is humane and decent and just. At the same time, amidst this multiplicity, my life project has been to achieve an understanding of teaching, learning, and the many models of education; I have been creating and continue to create a self by means of that project, that mode of gearing into the world. (Greene, 1995, p. 1)

The poem that opens this thesis, and its cryptic delineation of meanings in its metaphorical form helps “re-create experience through its form, never signifying a closed, literal meaning but enabling the reader to experience that which it expresses” (Eisner, 1991). Similarly, there is no ‘closed, literal meaning’ in this thesis. I can only narrate a sense of emerging from this narrative process stronger, and with a better understanding of who I am.

I started my story by conveying an understanding, when I started the doctoral journey, that I was living in isolation, a separate self - a wounded soul as it were - left alone in this world to fend for myself and fight the forces of evil, primarily the patriarchy. As the thesis process unfolded in a quest to understand the puzzle of who I was, I started to make more sense of my lived experiences.
In articulating my educational quest, I have focussed on two of my personal and professional roles, that is, on my role as daughter and my role as teacher. In defining my historical self as daughter of immigrants I have made my mother's presence in this thesis obvious, that of my sisters, and also that of my women participants. As I continue to define my 'self' by means of my educational project and 'gear myself into the world' I also acknowledge the presence of my daughter Vanessa.

As I think back on my narrative journey one of the realizations I have come to is that as I have put forth an experience centred argument I have actually put forth a people-centred argument. What stories do we share as human beings? In crafting a story of self I have realized that essentially there are only a few stories that have been written, but they have been written in different narrative texts, that is, people tell their story differently. People are people, and although it is important to recognize distinctions such as gender, class, and ethnicity, it is important to transcend distinctions when considering the human condition. This is what makes us a community.

As I journeyed through my quest to uncover the 'truth' and resolve the puzzle of who I was, I reached the understanding that community is the nature of reality (Palmer, 1983/1993). My perception had been that the communal living epitomized in the Italian regional hometown of my parents was a value not viable in a North American world. When I started the inquiry I had never questioned my beliefs about the nature of our reality, how we know our reality, how this knowledge informs how we teach and learn, and how our experiences can be educative or miseducative. The popular images I describe in Chapter One had helped shape my beliefs that informed my understanding of who I was, that is, separate and 'wounded'. My tendency initially was to blame others, and not necessarily consider how I had contributed to my own story.

Who else has contributed to my story? I must also acknowledge the presence of my husband, my father (who, after my mother passed away, cooked
numerous meals for my family while I was busy with my research work), my brother, my thesis advisor who has been instrumental in the dissertation process, and has been a Master teacher. And my son who inspired the poem I wrote at the beginning of this preface with his poem which I dedicate to my husband - a man’s man, who, although he did not always understand why I was doing what I was doing, gave me the space to do it in.

I Am

I am a normal boy

I wonder when the world will end

I hear squirrels chatter in the trees

I see myself as a sports player

I want to go to Florida right now

I am a normal boy

I pretend I’m in the majors

I feel very cool

I touch my bed when I go to sleep

I worry that a war will come soon

I try when somebody hurts me

I am a normal boy

Marc Joseph Maggisano (age 8)

This poem, written by Joey, reminds me that “I am striving towards some coherent notion of what is humane and decent and just” (Greene, 1995, p. 1). It
is the resonance, for me, of those images, in the shape of childhood, of the human condition. I feel inwardly related to his experience, he, conversely has entered my experience. It is a reminder that human strength and human frailty is common to everyone - student, preservice teacher, in service teacher, researcher, and academic. The same holds true for people who are well established in a place as well as "the newly arrived Thais and Koreans and Laotians and Russian Jews and Haitians, each with a life story, a distinctive background knowledge, and a desire and a dread when it comes to reading the world" (Greene, 1995, p. 191). The aesthetic experience and the resonance it generates "reflect(s) the quality of knowing at its deepest reaches, the quality of a truth that draws us into community" (Palmer, 1983/1993, p. 58).

Although Greene is addressing a more global community I am reminded that my inquiry started in the classroom, that is, it started when I questioned who I was when I was a student, who I was when I was teaching, and why I had gone into teaching. I realize now that with every turn in my life's experiences I have felt a shifting sense of self. I also realize that in order for life's experiences to be educative they are to be viewed as a lifelong project of meaning making.

Since last fall I have been working as a Teacher Education Program Assistant (TEPA). I have been working with Carola Conle who teaches a foundations course at the Faculty of Education/UT on teachers' stories, and teachers' lives. Conle bases this course on the claim that much of the professional knowledge of experienced teachers is non-technical and best recognized and opened to reflection via narrative. Much of what we know about schooling we learned as observers and experiencers of teaching and learning situations. This knowledge is practical; it is embodied knowledge. It is at once very personal and very social. It is not easily made explicit; yet it is active knowledge and shapes much of what teachers do in classrooms. It is a fund of knowledge that teaching candidates need to work with through self-study. Resonance in joint self-study and
narrative forms of expression have proven useful in efforts to recognize, express and work on tacit practical knowledge.

The aim of the course is to come to a better personal understanding of the practice of teaching by telling and listening to stories of teaching and learning. The following is a brief ‘narrative observation’ of the practicum experience of two of the pre-service teachers in this class. In my role as a TEPA I went to visit a few of the schools where preservice teachers were teaching students under the guidance of their associates. This field experience gave me the opportunity to reinsert myself in the classroom, although temporarily, to see what is “out there”. I immediately felt the inter-relationship between the theories and methods I studied at OISE/UT and the situations faced by teachers in the schools.

On each occasion I arrived at the high school at least ten minutes early. This gave me the opportunity to ‘roam the halls’ and get a quick sense of the school. What struck me immediately was the diversity of the school population. In the hallowed halls were pictures of graduates. Most of the students were either immigrants or children of immigrants. As I sat and watched these very competent preservice teachers my eyes kept focusing on the diversity in the classroom. I was reminded of Dewey’s view of our ‘endlessly variegated universe’. There were students from visible minority groups, and those who were not from visible minorities were from either Eastern European countries or South American countries. In one particular school students were identified as coming from 26 different language groups. As I sat and watched these students I was reminded of my high school years and the uncertainty of my place as an invisible minority in a predominantly Anglo-Saxon school. I wondered about how these students saw their reality. I wondered how the white Anglo-Saxon preservice teachers I was observing storied themselves amidst this cultural diversity? I sit now and think that through this thesis I have taken a narrative stance toward the writing of my reality.

As I sat and watched I was reminded of Sotto (1994) and his assumption that we learn attitudes the way we learn our first language or the way we learn to
play a game by playing it. Much of such knowledge, he suggests is encoded below our conscious awareness when feelings are engaged and we respond to aspects of a situation in a global or holistic way, not holding what is being learned explicitly in mind; not naming it. Later we may discover that listening to our feelings is leading us astray, that is, it makes us act in ways we do not like, such as being uneasy or hostile toward foreigners, or judging people by the colour of their skin. We admit to ourselves that a feeling or attitude is inappropriate. At that point we can work toward attitudinal change (Conle, 1997, p. 10).

Conle reminds me that “a person who believes he is free of prejudices and - confident in the objectivity of his procedures - denies that he is himself conditioned by historical circumstances, experiences the power of the prejudices that unconsciously dominate him” (Gadamer 1960 [1993], p. 360 in Conle, 1997, p. 13). Conle urges us to prepare teachers for the “daunting task before them in their highly diverse and multi-ethnic classrooms.” She also encourages us to “come to terms with our own cultural heritage, whatever that may be”, because “once we understand more clearly our place in that heritage, we may be able to see more clearly and less narrowly what our students bring to the learning situations we devise for them. We want to bring to our interaction with students as great as possible an awareness of our own history and the part it plays in our current contexts” (p. 14).

Between the study of ‘broader patterns of historical, anthropological, and sociological data’ which provides part of the truth, and the family and classroom stories which provide the other part of the truth we see the story of our own lives. My participants have helped me bridge the gap in my understanding that what lies “out there” historically, exists “in here”, in the self. In order to gain a more deeply textured understanding of this broader truth we need to go inside. Harney tells us that, “The broad categories of social history like the broad categories of prejudice, are conveniences for those too lazy to comprehend the complicated nature of man
in the city and of individual migration projects or separate ethnoculture” (Harney, 1985, pp. 6-7). The narrative approach to my inquiry has helped me see that categories break down, and that we are all implicated in each other’s stories.

Narrative inquiry is very accessible to people because we all tell stories, and we retell stories that have been told to us, as well as retelling stories that we have constructed. Sometimes we are conscious of doing this, at other times we do it unconsciously, not realizing that as we tell these stories we are actually shaping our self-image, and either breaking or reinforcing the ‘self’ others have shaped for us by the stories we have grown up with. Engaging the imagination helps us consider possibilities. Because stories are not objectively given, but instead are constructed, they have intentionality because stories are chosen to be told. The ordering of details is chosen, and the conclusion or ‘moral’ of the story is also chosen. What role does the imagination play in both the storyteller’s and the reader’s mind? Maxine Greene reminds us that

Imagination is as important in the lives of teachers as it is in the lives of their students, in part because teachers incapable of thinking imaginatively or of releasing students to encounter works of literature and other forms of art are probably also unable to communicate to the young what the use of imagination signifies. If it is the case that imagination feeds one’s capacity to feel one’s way into another’s vantage point, these teachers may also be lacking in empathy. (Greene, 1995, p. 37)

My hope is that the story of four main characters presented in this thesis: Marina, Beatrice, Carmen, and Francesca through the narrative text which I provide has helped encapsulate narrative moments which bring us closer to an understanding of their lived experience. It is an intuitive, aesthetic way of coming to terms with life in an immigrant home, and life in the classroom. Francesca’s encounter with the priest, for instance, and her decision to pursue ‘the incident’ has a number of morals that she could have chosen as her conclusion. She storied herself as acting as a courageous woman to retain her sense of activity and dignity, but in the end it really did not change the story very much because she continued
to be harassed in her classroom by the priest. The story does not merely become “an object of study, but one that draws out our meanings even as we draw its meaning out” (Palmer, 1983/1993, p. 59). The characters converse with us, they “reveal us to ourselves in ways not possible through simple self-analysis. ... We discover the autonomy of such characters when they tell us things about ourselves we would rather not hear!” (p. 60).

What is the story of self that Marina has crafted? What is the conclusion of her doll story? For Marina’s mother it was betrayal, but she could also conclude that we need to be more attentive to our children and listen to them more. As Beatrice said, in quoting Willy Loman, “attention must be paid”. Attention is to be paid to our mundane experiences if we are to learn about ourselves. I had set out to challenge the ‘bi-focal’ view of our lived experience as daughters of immigrants. Traditionally we (Italian Canadians) have been described by academics as being bi-cultural, or bi-lingual, yet the very complexity I wished to convey had eluded me too the minute I had started writing because I saw myself as separate from others. I realize now that the internalized formalisms of the structuralist training I had received was still a force to be dealt with. I followed my narrative inquirer’s intuitions and sense of researcher/participant collaboration. This allowed me to see that multiple, possible, parallel worlds exist. In Francesca’s priest story, for example, the possible world of the priest catching Francesca existed along side the possible story of the priest not catching her. The priest’s action ‘wrote the ensuing story’ to some extent. On the other hand, Francesca could have listened to her inner voice and then another story would have unfolded. Francesca continues to look for ways to be a better teacher. She has just completed a Master of Arts in Ministry and Spirituality in a Faculty of Theology. Her story continues.

In fiction, authors extrapolate from reality to write their stories. We, as authors of our own selves can do the same. Whatever the reality is, what are the possible story plots that I could pursue? Given the setting and characters involved
in my life right now, what are the stories I could construct in my future? Which resonate with me when I envision them in my creative imagination? When I think of the cultural diversity I have encountered recently in the classrooms I puzzle over how teachers explore their attitudes toward people of different cultures. I consider the work necessary to understand who the storyteller inside of the teacher really is? Which stories are really ours insofar as we actively choose to construct and tell them? Which perceptions do we own? Crites (1979) draws our attention to consider the point that deception, or fantasy is important to be conscious of. It is, therefore important to construct our possibilities consciously and creatively with ‘attention’ to what exists around us today.

When I read another person’s story of experience and we share certain aspects of the story, either because she is a teacher, or a southern Italian immigrant, or any number of shared spaces, then I can identify with the story and the character, and the story opens up a richer repertoire of possibilities for me. It may also corroborate feelings or perspectives that I have felt but was isolated in. This is one way the images and events in the story resonate for the reader. One of the common stories of Francesca, Marina, Carmen and Beatrice is that the path to go into teaching was chosen by default. The image of ‘default’ would resonate for others whose parents’ insecurity in the larger society would not allow their children to be independent and try a ‘riskier’ type of profession. The image in Beatrice’s story of being a non-participant, of watching, of watching life go by, and Marina’s regrets about her passivity is representative of an inertia that seems to plague many people. How does it happen? The images of religion, homemaking, and the feelings of inferiority at the interface of a standard language and dialect, and mainstream attitudes of risk-taking and independence would resonate also with different people, as would the role of parents, and family in identity formation.

Within these resonances lie the possibilities which can bring about an awakening in the form of questions, feelings of anger and loss, and the questions
which underlie resonance, “Can things be different?”, “Do things have to be this way?”, “Is this the only possibility?” Stories show these possibilities, so do our responses to them. I would say that my story is a story of transformation. I am writing another story than the one I started fifteen years ago. Now, at the end of this thesis, there is yet another story to be told from the one I started in Chapter One. Puzzles open up possibilities and free the imagination. They help to liberate our capacity to choose and to pursue freedom. (Greene, 1995) We can move from victim to active agent. Conscious living will be an examination of stories we live by, a heightened self-awareness of which stories fit and which should be discarded and sent back to the author with a rejection slip. Choice and freedom entail what stories we will write with our actions, with our relationships, with our lives.

When we begin to break with the character of the victim and our passivity, we begin to end our complicity in writing stories that are harmful and limiting to women and people in society generally. When we hear Joey tell us that he ‘wonders when the world will end, and worries that a war will come soon’ he forces me to wonder how similar we all are. Our complicity lies in perpetuating stories and living stories that we have not examined or chosen. My struggle and challenge has been to provide a model to my students (professionally), and to my daughter specifically, which was largely lacking in the cultural stories I have told.

The hope is that teachers begin to view professional development, like education, as a life-long process - a drawing out of self. Personal-self is beginning to be recognized as a necessary part of teacher development. How will teachers meet the needs of an increasingly culturally diverse student body? A theory of aesthetics in research into teacher inquiry has certainly helped me gain a deeper understanding of self, which will help me understand others. This thesis journey has been a pivotal educational experience. It marks another shift or time of transition in my education. It is a ‘fortuitous juncture’ where I see that the ‘impossibility of preserving old patterns gives rise to a leap into new productive configurations’. I am reconstructing the journey process and I have come to the
point in this last chapter of retelling the story yet again. But, I am in a different
place. Things have changed, there has been a shift. Stories have helped me
understand rather than ‘merely conceptualize’ via reading about the history,
demographics, and economics of a particular group of people (Greene, 1995) -
namely, Italian Canadian women.

An examination of the storied lives of self has, I hope, provided a way to
explore the personal values and meanings that motivate individuals to engage in
life. Looking at the storied lives that teachers and students live suggests how
education might focus on drawing out the full potential of students in light of their
unique personal and social histories, interests, and values. This personal
development has important implications for teaching, learning, and research.

Through discussions of how one’s autobiographical experience of self is
central to identity development we develop an understanding of how individuals
find meaning and identity in their personal experience of culture, and how they
are educated to become full-fledged members of their culture. This sense of self
is intimately tied to narrative. Narratives are integral to how we construe our
participation in culture. Narratives are instrumental in orienting an individual’s
interpretation of life events, including choices they make as they strive to construct
their own personal identity, or to assume the identities that culture constructs for
them. Narratives associated with gender, ethnic identity, or family serve to frame
and orient action. How one becomes a person in a particular cultural setting is
essential to personalizing cognitive development, and such personal cognitive
development has important implications for teaching, learning, and research.

I hope that my stories will contribute to your repertoire of stories. The
vicarious nature of story will help teachers make education personally significant.
This stance will integrate students’ authentic everyday experience and informal
knowledge into their learning of the formal curriculum. How do students act to
reconcile competing stories to live by such as the stories of school and family?
This is especially important for students who have ambiguous identity status, such
as those who consider themselves of mixed race, or children of immigrants who live in very traditional ethnic households. It is important to explore the influence of having to coordinate or reconcile competing stories to live by on the possibility and nature of student educational aspirations and activities.

Reflecting on one's own stories to live by (narratives) and deliberating over the possibilities that these narratives do or do not afford for action, individuals can to some extent orient their own personal development in ways that add meaning to their lives. Personal development is important to consider because people's actions are essentially meaningless outside of a broader personal, social, and even historical context. These contexts come into play when we and others act and interpret actions. While one's 'stories to live by' are important to orienting and framing action, it is just as important to look at what people do and what they can successfully accomplish. Likewise, one could also consider what educators can do to help orient students' actions through a caring pedagogy that treats students as developing persons who are building or mastering the cognitive tools needed to achieve personally valued ends.

The basic premise for this study is that understanding and accepting others begins with the understanding and acceptance of self. [I had not understood this concept at the onset of the inquiry.] I have used a narrative inquiry framework to develop the perspective that would assist the restructuring of how we understand our teaching identity. How do I know what I know? What images have influenced or shaped my identity formation, both personally and professionally? Why is it important to inquire into what I know? Self-reflection is the idea of being committed to teaching all students. Commitment to student learning is fundamental in research.

I have used a paradigmatic, inductive form of analysis in which concepts developed or emerged from the data rather than imposing previous theoretically derived concepts. The commonalities which exist across the stories were uncovered, generating general knowledge from a set of particular instances. What
is your understanding of your immigrant experience and what was its impact on your identity formation?, and What are the connections between how you teach and your immigrant experiences? These questions were central to the inquiry and served as a common focus for the resulting narratives. How did ethnic culture, language, and the immigrant experience contribute to your identity formation? Although there was a shared story among the participants, there were also distinct differences.

In designing and teaching courses in multicultural education owning our perceptions of self and relationships to others is important. The recognition that some of our inward and outward behaviours may be indicative of internal struggles with identity and heritage (Banks, 1996) is also important. Examination of our own beliefs and perceptions is done in an effort to broaden our perspectives about colleagues, and students. This understanding is more in keeping with a community based experience of living. As a researcher I am reminding teachers to teach students, not curriculum, and to continue a life-long process of exploring the multiple perspectives students bring to the learning context.

A heightening of my awareness as researcher has come about as a result of the incorporation of immigrant experiences into the work of teacher educators. What makes each experience so unique but still universal is the common act of crossing the borders - both physical and emotional. We are all interconnected.

Narrative inquiry is one methodology which allows teachers to make their experiences and knowledge concrete so that they can examine them and share them with others (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, 1990). Narrative is also a means by which teachers can make sense of their actions (Conle, 1996). Furthermore, narrative inquiry entails self-reflection and making sense of one's own story. It is the interpretation of an action within a particular context. It is a meaning-making process that includes raising awareness of an event or action.

As I story my way into the future I realize that simply narrating a story of self is not enough. Creating an identity for myself is based upon self-discovery and not
necessarily upon biological and ethnic inheritance (Myss, 1996, p. 187). I feel it is important for me to keep expanding my vision to include multiple perspectives, and infinite possibilities for professional development as I continue to craft a story of self. Herein lies our own sense of authority, or authorship. Embedded in this notion is the sense that self-knowledge promotes choice and action in re-structuring oneself. As I re-vision my past and look forward I would like to end with a message to my daughter.

My dearest Vanessa (a.k.a. Bombesca),

As I sit here thinking about what to write to you I can hear you telling Joey that he doesn’t remember what I was like before I started this thesis journey. You remind him that I used to be happy. Dad laughs and reminds me that your memory is selective! To use your words, “Cià, whatever!” I do feel a sense of relief that this thesis writing is coming to an end, as you, Joey, and Dad do too, I’m sure. But, if I’ve learned anything Vanessa, I realize that this is actually the beginning. It’s the beginning of what I hope will be more conscious living on my part, and continued reflection on my thoughts and actions, more conscious choice making is what I’m saying. I hope this will make me a better teacher, researcher, and academic. I hope this has made me a better mother. I should like to think that a tremendous burden has been lifted off of you. You see, I don’t have to live through you, I can let go and let you ‘be’ or allow you the space to ‘become’, as I have been given the opportunity to ‘become’.

I’ve spent a lot of time talking about nanna in this thesis, in a sense she helped me write about my ‘historical’ self. I’ve thought about how she helped shape who I am. But, the continuity of her experience is also reflected in you. I watch you and know that you speak and understand everything in our dialect, and in Italian - nanna had a lot to do with that. Remember she took care of you when you were a little girl, during the years I taught in high school. How the years fly. In September you’ll be starting high school. I actually see a lot of nanna in you Vanessa. You like cooking like she did, remember the little aprons
she made for you and Joey, and how you used to help her make cookies, and gnocchi. You’ve definitely got nanna’s savvy. You’re a wise, old, soul like her too. Sometimes I think you know me better than I know myself.

I hope you read the thesis some day. I’ve talked a lot about stories, how other’s stories of us shape us, and how we in turn shape other’s stories. You’ve certainly helped shape my story. I’ve also talked about how important it is to become conscious about authoring one’s own story. If there’s any one thought I would like to leave you with Vanessa it is, “Write your own story.” Use your creativity, and imagination to get in touch with the endless possibilities that are available to you. When nanna was dying her words to me were, “There’s a world out there for everyone, you’ve chosen to take advantage of the opportunities available to you, go for it and make sure you finish!” It was challenging enough for me to stay in Toronto and earn a doctoral degree, but I’ve tried. Well, my dear I’m telling you the same thing, “Go for it!” Recently you mentioned law school at Harvard, you’re taking things the next step. I say, “Why not?” If you stay focussed you can accomplish whatever you set out to do. As you face challenges I hope you make choices that enhance your spirit and personal power, not those that drain it.

I’m very proud of you Vanessa. I see you moving forward self-confidently and secure. Remember the mantra, “I approve of myself!” Stay in the light, and remember to stay focussed on the ‘eye’ of the storm - everything else is a distraction. Learn to know yourself from that quiet place and stand in your power. Seek the images that will enrich you, not diminish you. Go to that quiet place within and know yourself from that place, it will help you go out into the world from a more peaceful place. Honour who you are within-automatically that will flow over onto those around you. I’ll be standing by you cheering you on as you - Weave your own magic!

God Bless you Vanessa,

Love, Mom. xoxoxoxo
## Appendix A

**Working with My Participants**

Field Text Gathered from Interviews, Conversations and Written Material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Genre</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topics of Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #1</td>
<td>02/15/96</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>Started the oral history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #2</td>
<td>07/17/96</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>Continuation of stories that were pivotal educational experiences that reflected cultural identity, and language in Sofia’s teaching experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #3</td>
<td>09/08/96</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Sofia’s thoughts on the major shifts or boundaries on her landscape, and how her personal curriculum is a metaphor for her teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #4</td>
<td>01/17/97</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Slightly more structured interview - cultural identity questions: What did being Italian mean to you when you were growing up? How did going to Italy influence your concept of being Italian? What have been some of the positive and negative aspects of being the daughter of immigrant parents? How did the Canadian educational system influence your identity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #5</td>
<td>05/07/97</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>Teaching stories - Italian internment and how it connects to curriculum in our schools, especially with respect to multiculturalism and national identity - the conversation led to a discussion of Woodbridge - issues of power and self-esteem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name/Genre</td>
<td>Date</td>
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<td>Topics of Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tape #6</td>
<td>08/19/97</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Reclaiming self &amp; voice, mother stories, teaching career, a look at the future, home/school landscapes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #7</td>
<td>02/23/98</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Interdependencies studies and personal metaphor for teaching, teaching profession and present status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronicle</td>
<td>02/1996</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chronicle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>05/07/97</td>
<td></td>
<td>Letter written to herself on her 30th birthday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>07/1996</td>
<td></td>
<td>The formation of my teaching career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>05/08/95</td>
<td></td>
<td>Who are We? Deciphering the identity of Italo-Canadians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marina</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #1</td>
<td>08/21/96</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Started the oral history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #2</td>
<td>10/20/96</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Teaching, family, Mr. L. - teacher story, theme of passivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #3</td>
<td>01/24/97</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>Language &amp; cultural identity, teaching stories, ethnicity, Italy, her name being changed by teachers at school, hometown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #4</td>
<td>01/27/97</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Teaching stories linked to immigrant experience, she describes her understanding of narrative inquiry, Catholicism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name/Genre</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Topics of Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tape #5</td>
<td>03/7/97</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Teacher story - Mr. L., student teacher story, student N. story, principal story, shame stories, student S. story, identity crisis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #6</td>
<td>08/04/97</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Barolini, Di Manno article, Catholicism, marginalization, family, deep core metaphor, tensions between teaching and wanting to be an artist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #7</td>
<td>08/11/97</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Self, voice, teaching stories, authority, the importance of telling one’s story, pre-service student, principal story, language/actor metaphor - met at Marina’s mother’s home (Marina’s childhood home).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #8</td>
<td>01/05/98</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Rebel and artist metaphors, “Julia” poem, shame, family abuse, doll story &amp; sexual abuse - met at Marina’s mother’s home (Marina’s childhood home).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chronicle</td>
<td>08/1996</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chronicle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>08/21/96</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching Story</td>
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<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>08/21/96</td>
<td></td>
<td>Immigrant Story</td>
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<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>08/21/96</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poems</td>
<td>08/1997</td>
<td></td>
<td>Black Paint, Elegy with Oranges, Fingerprints, Old Stone, Fragmenting Prayer, Strong Bread.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>03/03/99</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Rise of the Town.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>03/15/99</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Future.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name/Genre</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Topics of Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Francesca</td>
<td>04/16/96</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Francesca did not submit her chronicle, she started her oral history by stating that what she was doing was “more chronicle-autobiography than ... personal mythology” - meeting was held in O.I.S.E. cafeteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #2</td>
<td>07/18/96</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>Discussion of a story Francesca wrote called Reflection - this story dealt with the Fr. X incident, authority, the Catholic church, family, why Francesca went into teaching, fear of teaching, her present teaching experience, metaphors and images of teaching, family Teaching, family, Mr. L. - teacher story, theme of passivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #3</td>
<td>01/11/97</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>Story of her disclosure to students, in a Catholic school, that she is bi-sexual, her views on religion, being Italian, trips to Italy, language &amp; identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #4</td>
<td>01/22/97</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>Being the child of immigrant parents, family, teaching, the Church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #5</td>
<td>04/14/97</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>Personal curriculum story - her father, bi-sexuality and being of ethnic background, lesbianism &amp; Catholicism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #6</td>
<td>07/24/97</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>Power, core image, sources of knowledge, praxis, the Church, deep core identity affected by emptiness, teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name/Genre</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Topics of Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting #7</td>
<td>06/24/98</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>This meeting was not tape-recorded. Tied up loose ends: pseudonym, why she chose her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mother’s name dialect, transformation, father.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>07/18/96</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fr. X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>07/23/96</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching</td>
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<td>Essay</td>
<td>11/04/97</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflections on Power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>07/28/98</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Old Neighbourhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lina</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #1</td>
<td>02/02/96</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Oral History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #2</td>
<td>02/15/96</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Continuation of oral history based on chronicle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronicle</td>
<td>02/02/96</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chronicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>08/06/96</td>
<td></td>
<td>The major shifts that took place in Lina’s life, what Lina thought happened at the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>borders of these shifts, how did she feel then and what sense is she making of it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>now, identity, personal curriculum and how it is a metaphor for her professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>life, family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Story</td>
<td>08/06/96</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lilla and Her Granddaughter (deals with patriarchal control of women through the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>generations, the escape of one woman into invalidism).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beatrice</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #1</td>
<td>02/02/96</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>Oral history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name/Genre</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Topics of Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #2</td>
<td>07/18/96</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>A discussion of landscape, other people's definition of our landscape, psychic landscape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #3</td>
<td>02/13/97</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Dialect, Italian Canadian theme, Anglo-Saxon culture, teaching, shame, marginalization, Catholicism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #4</td>
<td>07/24/97</td>
<td></td>
<td>Self, voice, authority, core metaphor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #5</td>
<td>07/31/97</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>Di Manno article, Catholicism, education, family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #6</td>
<td>01/31/99</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Physicality of personal landscape. Meeting was held in Beatrice's home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>02/1996</td>
<td></td>
<td>How cultural background shaped who Beatrice is as an educator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>07/12/96</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching Story: First official teaching job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>07/18/96</td>
<td></td>
<td>The landscape of the small rural town in Southern Italy in the 1920s and 30s, the large urban Toronto landscape of the 60s and 70s - this is the landscape within us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name/Genre</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Topics of Discussion</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>07/29/96</td>
<td></td>
<td>When and where have the major shifts taken place in your landscape? What happened at the borders of these shifts? How did you feel then, and what sense do you make of it now? How did you negotiate a sense of identity during these shifts? What was your story of yourself as a teacher as your landscape shifted? Teaching/future - How is your own personal curriculum a metaphor for the curricular planning in the classroom? How did your parents value you as a female and as a daughter?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Stories</td>
<td>02/12/97</td>
<td></td>
<td>Choosing Teaching, Being Italian in the Classroom, Expectations of Kids, Relationships with Colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Entries</td>
<td>07/22/97</td>
<td></td>
<td>Self, coming to voice, authority: patriarchy and being the expert of my own experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>12/07/98</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hometown Life - the physicality of the landscape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rosanna</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tape #1</td>
<td>02/12/96</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Oral history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #2</td>
<td>07/22/96</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Teacher identity, name change, Canadian educational system, transition in identity (border shifts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #3</td>
<td>09/09/96</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>Father's teaching stories - Franciscan seminary, major shifts in her landscape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name/Genre</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Topics of Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tape #4</td>
<td>10/17/96</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>Father’s philosophy of education, authoritarian pedagogy, language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #5</td>
<td>01/15/97</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>Language &amp; identity, the four perspectives (mainstream Italy, mainstream Canada, hometown, Italian Canadian).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #6</td>
<td>01/30/97</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Catholicism (connects religion to father again &amp; Franciscan discipline), dynamics within the classroom space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape #7</td>
<td>08/07/97</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Di Manno article, hometown, ethic of caring, P.J. (meeting held at Rosanna’s home).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronicle</td>
<td>02/12/96</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory Box,</td>
<td>Between</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories,</td>
<td>02/12/96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pictures,</td>
<td></td>
<td>to</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images</td>
<td></td>
<td>07/22/96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>07/22/96</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moral Commitment to Dialogue: ‘Jumpin’ Joanne’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>07/22/96</td>
<td></td>
<td>Major shifts in landscape, identity, How is your own personal curriculum a metaphor for curricular planning in the classroom?, teaching/future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative</td>
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<td>Reconstruction</td>
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<td>Life line.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>07/1997</td>
<td></td>
<td>Description of the Hometown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Reflections</td>
<td>11/27/95</td>
<td></td>
<td>Musings of a Disgruntled Teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name/Genre</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Topics of Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carmen, Marina, Francesca, Sofia, Rosanna</td>
<td>12/09/98</td>
<td>4 hrs.</td>
<td>Hometown life, our values, and how our values are embedded in the physicality of the hometown landscape.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Unless otherwise specified, all meetings took place in Carmen’s home.


Sturino, F. (1986). The role of women in Italian immigration to the new world.


