WOMEN IN A SOUTHERN ITALIAN-CANADIAN SUBCULTURE: SEXUALITY AND SOCIALIZATION

FRANCES TALARICO

Women in a Southern Italian-Canadian Subculture: Sexuality and Socialization

by

Frances Talarico

A thesis submitted to the

School of Graduate Studies

in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master's of Women's Studies

Women's Studies Programme

Memorial University of Newfoundland

March 2003

St. John's Newfoundland

Library and Archives Canada

Published Heritage Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et Archives Canada

Direction du Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 0-612-99119-9
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 0-612-99119-9

Abstract

This thesis examines issues of sexuality and socialization among young women in a Southern Italian-Canadian community. How are sexuality and socialization experienced and expressed, and how are conflicts negotiated? The study focuses on the young women's perceptions of the Southern Italian-Canadian upbringing of girls, attitudes about sexuality and socialization in their community and the impact of these attitudes on life choices.

The study is based on eleven in-depth interviews conducted with second and third generation Southern Italian-Canadian women. The topics explored are: the issues of autonomy experienced by these women, and their socialization with regard to virginity, sexuality, marriage and family; whether heterosexist and hetero-normative expectations exist for Southern Italian-Canadian women; how these women explain their experiences, justify their lifestyle decisions, and negotiate the divide between their two cultures.

It was found that this group of Southern Italian-Canadian women experience repression of their sexuality and independence. This is evident from the participants' narratives regarding their struggles with oppressive old world traditions, expectations, and ideals found in that community.

Acknowledgments

I would like to give a special thanks to the women who shared their stories with me. This study would not have been possible without your collaboration in the research.

A grateful thanks to Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman and Professor Elena Hannah, for your expertise and support in the undertaking of this study.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the Women's Studies program at Memorial University of Newfoundland for the assistance and guidance given to me.

I am indebted to Maria, Dennis, Jenna and to all my friends, who have given me unflagging encouragement and emotional support.

Thank you to my parents, Dominic and Lina, for their love and encouragement.

Table of Contents

List of Appendices

Chapter One

Introduction

1.2 A Personal Narrative

"Go into the larger world but don't become part of it . . . Go into the larger world but don't become part of it . . . Go into the larger world but don't become part of it" (Tomasi 1985: 102), continuously echoes in my mind. I am a 24 year-old, second generation, single, Southern Italian-Canadian woman in academia. Coming from a traditional Southern Italian-Canadian family, I am very much pressured and expected to conform to *la via vecchia* (the old world ways). I am constantly told that marriage and children are the be all and end all of my life. Of course, I should go to university; however, at the same time, I am expected to put just as much effort into finding a proper man to take care of me. I am to marry at the respectable age of 27 or 28, and bear a couple of children by the age of 30. Success in my family is equated with marriage and having children, not in living my life as an independent woman. Getting a ring on my finger is deemed more important and more of an accomplishment than having a degree in my hand.

For myself, marriage and children is what will complete my life in the eyes of my family. This is what is continuously told to me by the women in my family. My desires in life, if different from my family, are devalued and disregarded, and this in turn brings

conflict.

The issue of sex in my family is very taboo; it is simply not discussed. It is implicit that, for an unmarried woman, virginity is mandatory. Moreover, it is implicit that if I have premarital sex, I am considered a *puttana* (whore) and will be ostracized by my family. Sex education and birth control are not discussed in my family. Sex comes with many risks, and when I need advice concerning sex and birth control, I know that I cannot go to any family member.

Moreover, I am expected to live at home until I am married, unless I leave for school. I am never to have independence. I am expected to go from my parent's home to my husband's home. Thus, I am expected always to be sheltered and dependent. Accordingly, I was told that if I chose to move out, I would be shaming the family, that I would be ostracized. Thus, my freedom and independence would come at the cost of losing my family.

As a teenager, this did not trouble me much; however, as time went on I found myself in conflict with the ways to which I was expected to conform. As I began to develop intellectually, I began to question all the musts in my life, that is, "you *must* be like this," "you *must* believe in this." I want my life to be open to all the possibilities that it allows me. I do not want my life planned for me; I want to see where life takes me; there is a whole world out there waiting for me.

Over the years, trying to balance two cultures with opposing values, I have struggled with an internal conflict concerning my cultural identity. I am a Southern Italian-

Canadian woman. I am not Italian yet I do not feel fully Canadian. I am Canadian born yet I am expected to live by the ways of my Southern Italian-Canadian culture. This conflict has left me feeling marginalized, like a puzzle piece which simply does not fit. Consequently, I feel as though I must deny my Southern Italian heritage to come to peace with my cultural identity.

After years of conflict, tension and frustration with family expectations and pressure, I have come to the realization that autonomy is too much to ask for in my family. This leaves me wondering, is this conflict felt by many women, or am I an exception? Also, if it is felt by other women, how do they explain their experiences, justify their decisions as to how to live their lives, and negotiate the divide between their two cultures? Thus, my rationale for this research emerges from my own conflicts with these expectations, which I believe may be felt by many second and third generation Southern Italian-Canadian women.

1.2 The Research Problem

A traditional Southern Italian-Canadian upbringing, which incorporates *la via vecchia*, places emphasis on virginity, passivity, and dependence (D'Alessandro 1998). My research question was whether restrictions are placed on sexuality and autonomy for most Southern Italian-Canadian women; and, if so, how were they experienced and expressed, and how were conflicts negotiated? My intent was to study the perceptions of the Southern Italian-Canadian women regarding their upbringing focusing on attitudes

toward sexuality and family life; and the impact of these attitudes on life choices.

The objectives of my study were:

1. To examine the experiences of autonomy felt by Southern Italian-Canadian women and their expectations in relation to virginity, sexuality, marriage and family.
2. To explore whether heterosexist and hetero-normative expectations exist for Southern Italian-Canadian women.
3. To examine how these women explain their experiences, justify their decisions as to how to live their lives, and negotiate the divide between their two cultures.

This was accomplished through open-ended questioning, which covered the topics of virginity, religion, ideal womanliness, the body, masturbation, sex education, financial independence, marriage and motherhood, sexuality, family rules and expectations, and individuality.

1.3 Relevance for Research

Women's experiences of sexuality within the Italian-Canadian community are important to study because the voices of Southern Italian-Canadian women have not been widely heard on this issue either in the social science literature, or in the community. Much of the current literature discussing sexuality and cultural conflict is found in literary sources, such as autobiographical non-fiction, poetry and novels. Social science literature, such as academic and research literature, written about or by Southern Italian-Canadian women is virtually nonexistent.

As Southern Italian-Canadian women, living in the broader Canadian society, which generally holds more liberal expectations for women, we may feel unduly pressured by family to live up to the expectations of a society in which we do not live, and to support the beliefs of our families, which we may not personally hold. This research aims at bringing about social change for Southern Italian-Canadian women and for future generations of Southern Italian-Canadian women, through validating and honouring their experiences. The research is also intended to allow for "consciousness raising" (Cook and Fonow 1986) within the Southern Italian-Canadian community in relation to women's sexual autonomy. I wish for myself, as for other women in my situation, a transformative and liberating experience through my research.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

To guide my research, I use both socialization theory, as well as acculturation theory. Socialization is the process where parents and community "ensure that a child's standards of behaviour, attitudes, skills and motives conform closely to those deemed appropriate to his or her role in society" (Hetherington, Parke and Schmukler 2002: 428). Acculturation, on the other hand, is the process where one adopts the culture of their new homeland (Yinger 1994). As a child develops, socialization becomes "interactive, or transactional" (Bell's 1977; cited in Bugental and Goodnow 1998: 391). That is, child and parent negotiate and compromise in their relationship, thus allowing for a balance between the parents' cultural expectations of them and their desires for themselves.

Also, I used the work of many Italian-Canadian and American scholars and writers to guide my research. The social science works of Del Negro (1997) and Pichini (1987) discuss the experience of first-generation immigrant women, as well as the conflict of values with their second generation daughters. The literary works of Ricciutelli (1987), Ciccia (2000), Ciatu (1998), Feola (1998), Patriarca (1997; 1999), Schembri (1998), and Petrone (1995), explore the struggles of second and third-generation women of Italian heritage with the values pressured onto them by their families. The social science work of Pallotta-Chiarola et al. (1994; 1995), as well as the literary works of Di Cuore (1998), Capone (1998), and Le Rose (1998) specifically discuss the experience of being a lesbian of Italian heritage. The social science works of Gambino (1974), Rolle (1980), Ahearn (1985), Bellicoso (1996), and Bona (1999) discuss the struggles of the second-generation with outmoded Italian values and the first-generations resistance to change.

Also, I use the works of many Latin-American writers, who deal with similar issues. The social science works of Zavella (1997), Melhuus (1990), Pavich (1986), Moraes-Gorecki (1988), Horowitz (1983), Preto (1990), as well as the memoirs of Moraga (1986), Trujillo (1991), Navarro (1998), discuss the attitudes towards issues of sexuality in Latin-American culture, and the oppression of sexuality which is placed on Latin-American women.

Lastly, I employ Audre Lorde's theoretical work, "Uses of the Erotic" (1984), which discusses women's desire for freedom and choices in life, and the oppression by those around us.

1.5 Plan of the Thesis

Chapter Two is a review of literary (fictional and non-academic) as well as social science literature, examining the experiences of immigrant Italian women. Literature about experiences of women of Latin heritage was incorporated because through my perusal of the literature on Latin culture, I have found that it is quite similar to Italian culture with regards to socialization and sexuality.

As well, the Italian heritage literature shows that second and third generation women of Italian heritage experience a great deal of conflict concerning Italian values and the values of the broader community. However, this literature does not adequately address sexuality and traditional views of marriage and family for the Southern Italian-Canadian women of the second and third-generation.

Chapter Three is a description of how the research was conducted. I discuss the participants of the study, where the research takes place and the methods used. As well, I discuss why I consider the study feminist research. Issues of ethics and validity are also discussed.

Chapter Four describes and analyses my research. Through statements from the participants, I present their experiences regarding their socialization and issues of family, sexuality, dependence/independence, marriage, heterosexism, divorce, and Catholicism. I discuss growing up as a Southern Italian-Canadian woman and issues of biculturalism. Also, I explore the image of the "good girl/woman" and the "*puttana*" (whore).

Chapter Five is a summary of the arguments presented in the thesis. I present a

summary of the participants' narratives regarding their socialization and struggles with old world traditions, expectations, and ideals found in the Southern Italian-Canadian community. As well, I discuss suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine literary (fictional and non-academic) as well as social science literature concerning women of Italian heritage with regard to socialization and sexuality. In addition, I review the related areas of acculturation and cultural conflict, as well as family relations and their effects on individualism. The literary quotations are used to illustrate the lives and conflicts of women of Italian and Latin heritage.

In my discussion of the literature I refer to the "Canadian way of life," which is to be viewed as a social construction. That is, many Italian-Canadians tend to view anyone who is outside their ethnicity as *inglese* (English). Thus, all Canadians, of whatever background tend to be seen as "other," and as a homogeneous "other." For second and third-generation Southern Italian-Canadian women, "other" women are often perceived as having the freedom to do what they please. The term "other" is referring to the notion many Southern Italian-Canadian girls and women may have in terms of viewing others of a different culture as being very different then themselves. Second and third-generation Southern Italian-Canadian women often grow up hearing that the "*femmine inglese* (English women) do that, not Italian girls." Thus, second and third-generation Southern Italian-Canadian girls may have this social construction of what it is to be "Canadian"

ingrained in their minds: a utopian lifestyle, liberated and free.

2.2 Sexuality

The sociological work of Rolle (1980) states that "immigrant sexuality remains an uncharted sea" (132); however the same could be said about the second and third generation descendants of these immigrants. Del Negro (1997), whose work is based on interviews of first-generation Italian-Canadian immigrant women, remarks on the sexual repression found in old world Italy as well as in early immigration to Canada. She notes that many first-generation Italian-Canadian immigrant women recall that they were often supervised and only on rare occasions were allowed outside the home alone. Del Negro (1997) quotes a research participant: "life was too closed in, we couldn't go out, no, no, no, for nothing, home and church" (19). Petrone (1995), in her memoir of growing up as a second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian woman, notes that "proper female behaviour" (38) did not allow dating. In the past, virginity was mandatory before marriage, for "only marriage legalized and sanctified her sexuality" (Rolle 1980: 132). Del Negro (1997) similarly states that "the 'fallen' woman brought shame to herself and to the whole family" (78). Most first-generation Italian-Canadians still hold this value, the value of virginity, which they lived by. The sociological work of Pichini (1987) notes that many first-generation Italian-Canadian women "still uphold the same traditional, conservative, double-standard values" (22) which existed in old world Italy. That is, many still hold the notion that women "must protect themselves from 'spoilage'" (Del Negro 1997: 81).

Similar to Southern Italian-Canadian women, Trujillo (1991), in her autobiographical work, states that "our sexuality is suppressed by our culture -- relegated to secrecy or embarrassment, implicating us as wrongful women if we profess to fulfill ourselves sexually" (192). She adds that

> Chicanas, both lesbian and heterosexual, are taught that our sexuality must conform to certain modes of behaviour. Our culture voices shame upon us if we go beyond the criteria of passivity and repression, or doubts in our virtue if we refuse. We, as women, are taught to suppress our sexual desires and needs by conceding all pleasure to the male. As Chicanas, we are commonly led to believe that even talking about our participation and satisfaction is taboo (186).

To be seen as a "good girl," in Italian-Canadian culture is to be chaste, as well as obedient (Perry 1978). Italian-Canadian girls are warned that, " 'good' girls did not allow themselves to be touched . . ." (Ricciutelli 1987: 25). Moreover, Ricciutelli (1987), in her memoir of growing up as a second-generation Italian-Canadian woman, states that Italian-Canadian girls are taught that sex

> could only take place with your husband . . . my mother used to insist that . . . should I succumb . . . I would be 'spoiled' forever, and never be able to raise my eyes to a man again (25).

This image of the "good" Italian girl can be seen in Baldassar's (1999) sociological study of second-generation Italo-Australians, which found that many held the view that " 'Italian girls are for marrying' and, by implication, that 'Australian girls' are for sex . . . [also] Italo-Australian women who have 'bad reputations' are said to have 'become Australian' " (12). The term "Australian girls," as Baldassar (1999) notes, refers to any ethnicity other than Italian.

Many Italian-American and Canadian poets describe scenes in which young women are seen to step outside the strict code of good behaviour, in terms of sex, and the shame brought to them by their families. To illustrate, Patriarca (1999), in the poem "Daughters," describes:

> my father called me a whore
> and my mother cried
> a young Italian woman's
> claim to prostitution
> is any activity past
> the midnight hour
> . . . if only I could be more
> like my married sister
> or the virgin daughters
> of the virgin neighbours (11)

Similarly, in Schembri's (1998) poem "*Meglio Morta che Disonorata*" (Better Dead than Dishonoured), she notes a young girl's struggle with her mother over her desire to date,

> Mom, whether you like it or not
> I'm going out tonight.
> *No figlia -- non t'arrishchiare*, [no daughter don't risk it]
> *Di tuo padre ti vui fa' ammazzare* [your father will kill you]
> . . . no! Mother, you don't understand,
> We're not in Italy anymore --
> Girls here, go out and date
> We don't want to be married.
> *Figlia, che disgrazia!* [daughter, what a disgrace]
> *Ma come fai a guardami in faccia?* [how can you look me in the face]
> Mother, I'm spending the night out
> . . . *mi vuoi fa cadere ammalata?* [Do you want me to get sick]
> Mom, nothing will stop me/I'm going with him tonight.
> *Oh, figlia che rovina*, [oh, daughter what a ruin]
> *Meglio tu non torni viva!* [it's best you don't return alive!]" (29)

Petrone (1995) recalls that in a Southern Italian-Canadian home, the names of the

shameful body parts were never mentioned . . . nakedness and talk of body functions were taboo" (214). Patriarca (1999), in the poem "Mary," clearly illustrates this,

> . . . our bodies were foreign countries
> never to be looked at
> never to be touched
> never to be understood
> preserved in plastic
> like Teresa's couch and chair
> like her *giardiniera*
> petrified in vinegar
> to last forever
> for some great, sacred
> feast" (68)

Likewise, for the issue of masturbation, Maria Perez recalls her mother's reaction when she discovered Maria exploring herself. She states,

> she was pretty pissed off. She brought me by the hand and slapped me and she says 'those things you don't do, you can get infected.' Later I learned about masturbation, the concept, but it was like, 'don't do it,' right? Don't give yourself pleasure, that's a sin, you're being in temptation, and then God will punish you (Zavella 1997: 399).

This shame in one's body is further seen illustrated by Ciresi (1994), in her short story "*La Stella d'Oro*" (The Star of Gold), where she gives an account of two young sisters and their exploration of their sexuality:

> she stood at the other end of the room, her silhouette bathed in light from her bedside lamp . . . she was stripped down to her panties, a silver Christmas tree garland wrapped around her shoulders like a boa. She thrust her right hip forward and then her left, manipulating the garland to expose first one slightly swelling nipple, then the other . . . then Lina danced, a provocative bump and grind that made the little fat she had on her thighs and belly quiver. She pinched her nipples between her thumb and forefinger and tweaked them at me. She straddled the garland and pulled it up slowly between her legs, purring with pleasure . . . slipping her thumbs into her panties, she began to inch them down over the mound of her

> buttocks . . . I giggled wildly. Then the doorknob turned. My laughter went dead as Mama stood grim-lipped in the door. 'What's going on here?' she demanded. Lina pulled up her underwear. 'I'm getting dressed,' she said. 'Cover up your filthy body right now. Right now.' I looked down at my bedspread. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Lina walk over to our chest of drawers. Her back toward Mamma, she got dressed" (127).

Moreover, Ricciutelli (1987) notes that "the mere suggestion" of sex, especially penetration, is "enough to inspire shudders of abject horror through the body of any Italian mother" (25).

In the poem, "*Loreta, la calda,*" Patriarca (1997) discusses the fact that sex is not generally discussed in the home, as well as the shame that the first-generation Italian-Canadian women attribute to sex,

> they won't talk about sex
> they talk about everything else
> it embarrasses them
> as if their children
> were all announcements by Gabriel
> you know, the Angel
> not me, it doesn't embarrass me
> i had my legs wide open
> as well as my eyes
> look at their faces
> they hide them
> red with shame
> for having desires . . . (74)

Similarly, in Latin-American culture "knowledge about sexuality is often 'nondiscursive,' that is knowledge that is assumed rather than made explicit . . ." (393). In interviews Zavella (1997) notes that a frequently heard statement was: "'we just *knew*. There was certain things you did not talk about, and sex was one of them' or, more pointedly, 'talking

about sex meant I was a bad person. So I didn't talk about it' " (393).

The sociological work of Gambino (1974) asserts that "the most damaging result for second-generation [Italian] youth was the sense of shame imposed upon them about sex . . . the older generation instilled a broad sense of sexual guilt in their children to preserve premarital chastity" (195). Similarly, in Latin American culture "a woman must endure sex, but she must not enjoy it. The sexual act is portrayed, by women, as 'his will'. She must sin, but not be sinful. She must conceive, but not in pleasure" (Melhuus 1990: 17). Moraga (1986), in her memoir, illustrates this as she states,

> even if we enjoy having sex, draw pleasure from feeling fingers, tongue, penis inside us, there is a part of us that must disappear in the act, separate ourselves from realizing what it is we are actually doing . . . and if we have lesbian feelings -- want not only to be penetrated, but to penetrate -- what perverse kind of monstrosities we must indeed be! (186)

Cisneros (1991), in the short story *"One Holy Night,"* tells the story of a young Mexican-American girl who, at the loss of her virginity states, "I know I was supposed to feel ashamed, but I wasn't ashamed" (30). Thus, the sociological work of Melhuus (1990) states that this idea of shame "assumes that there is a state of purity, which is expressed through virginity . . ."(9). Melhuus (1990) also notes that "the shameless woman has not only lost her own honour, she is in addition a threat to the honour of her husband and her kin group . . ." (15). In her narrative "*Becoming La Mujer*," Navarro (1998: 39) recalls,

> in my family, being a good *hijita* meant more than simply being an obedient daughter. It also meant being desexualized. Being of mind but not of body . . . my body (and what I did with it) could make or break our family's future . . . I needed to keep my legs tightly locked, and everything would be all right" (39).

She recounts:

> I used to dream that Superwoman would fly into my life . . . she would swoop me up and take me somewhere . . . in this distant place, I would feel sensual for the first time ever, without feeling dirty (38).

The difficulty experienced by many first and second-generation parents to discuss sex with their children may be due to the fact many have been raised without sexual guidance by their own parents (Gambino 1974). Consequently, as Petrone (1995) notes, in many Italian-Canadian homes, sex education did not exist; she recalls, ". . . we received no instruction as to how babies were made or where they came from" (214). Similarly, the sociological work of Pavich (1986) notes that for Chicanas a positive sex education within the family is nonexistent and "the information from the church and school is generally cautionary" (58).

Pavich (1986) further states that, due to the fact that there is to be no premarital sex, birth control is supposedly not needed. Moreover, with the strong Catholic influence, "after marriage children are a blessing, so there would be no reason to prevent their conception" (55). However, Navarro (1998) argues the need for support and education in terms of sexuality, "instead of shielding me from boys and sex, they should have prepared me for what I would come to expect. Instead of 'protecting' me by teaching me body hatred, they should have taught me to cherish myself" (46).

In summary, Latin-American and first-generation Italian-Canadian immigrant women recall that they were often supervised and only on rare occasions were allowed outside the home alone. Issues of sexuality were not often discussed with Italian-Canadian

daughters. As a result, many women did not hold any intimate knowledge of their bodies. In the past, virginity was mandatory before marriage. Today, many first-generation Italian-Canadians still hold the value of virginity. It is never discussed, it is simply expected by families, and implicitly known by daughters. A woman who steps outside the strict code of good behaviour, in terms of sex, brings shame upon herself in the eyes of her family. To fit the ideal, that is, to be seen as a "good girl," in Italian-Canadian culture is to be chaste.

2.3 The Ideal of Womanliness and The Double Standard

Traditional Italian culture places strong emphasis on *la serietà*, that is the ideal of a chaste woman (Gambino 1974). Gambino (1974) states that any behaviour which undermines *serietà* "is not tolerated at all" (163). Similarly, in Latin American culture, there exists the ideal of *marianismo*, inspired by the Virgin Mary, which refers to a woman's essential moral virtue and chastity (Moraes-Gorecki 1988).

Gallismo (Belliotti 1995: 48), in Italy, and *machismo*, in Latin America, are "the cult of male virility" (Moraes-Gorecki 1988: 28), based on expectations of pride, authoritarianism, and prowess (Pavich 1986). The sociological work of Melhuus (1990) asserts that *machismo* confirms and perpetuates manhood. Women, on the other hand, "take recourse to the Virgin Mary to establish their self-respect and dignity." Chicana women are traditionally "expected to be demure, naive and unworldly" (Pavich 1986: 54). Conversely, the Chicano male, as Pavich (1986) notes, "is traditionally encouraged to be sexually active from his adolescence onward" (53). The sociological work of Moraes-

Gorecki (1988) states that for Latin males, "free sex, extramarital relationships and even common law 'polygamy' are signs of social prestige, personal attractiveness, persuasiveness, whereas for females, monogamy is socially expected, imposed, preserved and buttressed by religion" (28).

Accordingly, the sociological work of Horowitz (1983:117) notes that "when two unmarried people engage in sexual intercourse, a man's gain is a young woman's loss." The man gains prestige and status from the successful seduction of a woman, whereas a woman's status is damaged "as an unmarried nonvirgin." Preto (1990: 18) states that, "it is shameful for women to lose their virginity . . . since a woman's honor and place in society depends so much on whether or not she is a virgin."

The difference between the "good woman" and "the whore" is simply stated as "no sex before marriage, and afterwards an accepting attitude without much demonstration of pleasure. The clear message is that sex is for procreation, not for pleasure" (Preto 1990: 15). Pavich (1986) reports that traditionally the Latin woman is given the option of two roles:

> to be *good* . . . a wife and mother, saintly and virginal, [or to be bad,] the one who may be taken as a mistress or as a playmate by men. The good woman is not erotic; she tolerates her husband's sexual needs and does not develop her own sensuality. Sexual relations are for procreation and are tolerated because of the rewards of having children . . . the bad woman exists to fulfill the erotic needs of men and to be a seductive, willing partner who enjoys and responds to the sexual prowess of the man (54).

In traditional Southern Italian culture the bad woman is simply defined as a *puttana*, a whore (Gambino 1974).

In traditional Italian culture, the family's dream for a woman "was to see her *sistemata*, settled and competent in her role as woman" (165), that is, to bear children and to develop household skills (Gambino 1974). Likewise, this is seen in Latin-American culture, as Maria Perez notes, she was

> taught that it is very important to have a family, and sacrifice for your family. You should get married because the husband will take care of you; he has to be the provider. You need to learn how to cook, sew, clean up the house and do all the chores, and especially make good food because that will give happiness to your husband. You've got to have children because that's your role in life, as a woman, is to have children. If you don't have children, nothing you do will be meaningful (Zavella 1997: 398).

The sociological work of Preto (1990) notes that in Latin-American culture, mothers raise their daughters to be dependent; firstly, on their parents, and thereafter, on their husbands for 'financial and sexual protection.' Moreover, mothers teach their daughters "to protect their honor by not having sex" (17).

Gambino (197) contends that "the clash of the ideal of *serietà* with American ways forms a major part of the dilemma of Italian-Americans" (172). In her book, Looking Through My Mother's Eyes: Life Stories of Nine Italian Immigrant Women in Canada, Del Negro (1997) cites Stefania Annibale, a first-generation Italian-Canadian immigrant woman, who desires to "transplant and sustain Old World values in the New World," yet must face the lack of the "belief system that made those goals desirable and feasible" (30). The lifestyle expectations placed on women and the "image of young womanhood" are ones of "village life in the 1930's," and may not be relevant to today's young woman (Alfano 1998: 88). The autobiographical work of Ciccia (2000) describes the feelings of

anxiety in having to live up to the restrictive expectations of her grandmother, ". . . I feel the pressure of traditional Italian expectations like a crushing blow and my mind whirls with countless debates I have had with her."

These repressive boundaries are felt by many Italian-Canadian women. Italian culture is very much centered on the woman, yet being a woman limits one in many ways. As Ciatu (1998) comments in her autobiographical work,

> growing up, the contradiction had laid itself out like asphalt on an untread path, thick and unmoveable: in such a women-centered, women-lead, women-affectionate, woman-speak culture, how could it be that my choices, my expansion as a being were so limited by my gender? . . . in the feminist community I could release my voice to endless boundaries in reach of all that it meant for me to be a woman, a working woman, a university student, with or without children, with or without a partner, a woman not conforming to sexually oppressive realms. This, when the most I was meant to do was to become a hairdresser, a secretary, marry a man, keep house, and have children, parameters that defined success within the culture and class in which I grew up (17).

Moreover, Ciccia (2000) further contends, as I myself feel, that "women should have the freedom to choose their own destiny without shame! Times are changing, and as much as the Italian-Canadian community attempts to hold on to traditions, some will be modified and this should be welcomed" (Ciccia 2000). The work of Barolini (1985) affirms that ". . . there is resistance to change, but change is inevitable" (9). The lives of the women who decide to make this change, to live their life as they choose, are echoed in Patriarca's (1999) poem, "Some Women":

> they are the mavericks
> daring to enter the room
> the forbidden garden
> where trespassers

are condemned
but they persist
they scratch open the dark
and sometimes their heads rest
in open doors of gas ovens
sometimes they fill their glass
with the final taste of sweet poison
but they have walked in the garden
they have altered the shape of the room
they live (73)

In summary, traditional Italian culture places strong emphasis on *la serietà* for women. Similarly, in Latin American culture, there exists the ideal of *marianismo*. For men there is an emphasis on *gallismo*, in Italy, and *machismo*, in Latin America. *Gallismo* and *machismo* both confirm and perpetuate manhood; whereas *serietà* and *marianismo* impose chastity and unworldliness. In traditional Southern Italian culture a woman who is not seen to possess *serietà* is simply viewed as a *puttana*, a whore. The difference between the "good woman" and "the whore" is simple: no sex before marriage, and after marriage, sex is expected but without pleasure on the woman's part. Moreover, in traditional Italian culture, the family's dream for a woman is to see her *sistemata*, to fulfill her role as a wife and mother. Consequently, women may experience feelings of anxiety in having to live up to these restrictive expectations.

2.4 Autonomy

In her short story "*Una Lettera Alla Mia Cugina Americana*," Alfano (1998) notes that asking for independence is not comprehensible by the traditional Italian family:

> we say . . . I want to be on my own, independent. *You want your own place so you can do what you like with whomever you like* . . . I want to sustain myself financially, emotionally. *Why won't you let us help you? Why do you hate us so much?(88)*

The sociological work of Johnson (1978) adds that for someone to leave the home is "unthinkable to an immigrant." Thus, moving out creates "considerable conflict." This is because they cannot comprehend why one would want to leave the "warmth and protection" of their own home (241).

Gambino (1974) notes that, as in Southern Italy, it is "unthinkable for a single woman"(14) to live on her own. In her periodical article "Mixed Messages: The Personal Fallout When Old Values Meet New Worlds," Bellicoso (1996) states that for a single person, [male or female], who seeks to move out, the family sees this as "an 'act of betrayal' and reacts with outbursts of anger, bouts of depression and attempts to control" (7). For example, Schembri (1998), in the short story "Hyphenated Identities," illustrates the anger and conflict brought about by a single daughter moving out, "after she moved out, I did not want to speak to her anymore. I felt that she had rejected you and me, our sacrifices, our love and values" (108).

Moreover, Perry (1978) states that "sexual initiation" does not define a female as adult, but "sexual coupling" does by "becoming a wife and mother," which is seen with pride, as bringing "honour upon herself [and] her parents (who raised a 'proper' daughter) . . ." (223). This is clearly illustrated in Pallotta-Chiarolla's (1995) interview with Gloria, a married bisexual woman. Pallotta-Chiarolla states,

> Gloria and I are sitting on her back veranda eating her home-made tiramisu. Her husband, Sam, is swinging their kids on the clothesline in between cooking the meat on the barbecue. Both sets of grandparents are in the garden discussing tomatoes, wine-making and basking in the satisfaction of sitting in the backyard of married children, knowing they have fulfilled their parental duties in getting their children to this stage of 'sistemazióne' [Gloria states] . . . he's there cooking the barbie and playing with the kids and I'm here scoffing my face with tiramisu and our parents are there seeing what they want to see and not needing to know the rest (140).

Thus, the sociological work of Ahearn (1985) asserts that "if nothing else, marriage is the sanctioned way for a daughter to leave her parents' house" (135). In "Marta's Monologue," Mary di Michele (1984) describes the shame brought on Lucia, a young woman who is called a

> *puttana* because she doesn't live at home
> and because she won't say hello
> or pretend to like Uncle Joe
> whom she calls a macho pig.
> Secretly I know she pretends to write
> and the family is ashamed of that gypsy
> daughter, the bohemian, the cuckoo's
> egg in our nest.
> Sometimes we wish she were dead. Sometimes we wish she were married. (159)

For second-generation Italian-Australians,

> sexual behaviours and marital choices may be monitored by parents and ethnic community in order to maintain ethnic purity, family cohesion and the continuation of community strength . . . this is framed by the wider society's need to monitor sexual behaviours and choices in order to maintain the established patriarchal heterosexist structures (Pallotta-Chiarolli and Skrbis 1994: 270, cited in Pallotta-Chiarolli 1995: 143).

Thus, women of Italian heritage may be pressured to follow expected paths, that is *la via vecchia*, in order to reinforce it within the community.

In summary, desiring independence is not comprehensible to many traditional

Italian or Latin-American families, and often causes a great deal of conflict within the family. Moreover, marriage identifies one as a woman in these communities, and is the acceptable reason for a daughter to leave her family home.

2.5 Religion

Pichini (1987) asserts that the "predominance of church dogma" (23), which regards premarital sex as a sin, strongly influences the views of many Italian-Canadian women. Ricciutelli (1987) notes that Roman Catholic Church dogma holds "mandatory virginity" as the way to repress women's "'inherent' wantonness," and that women are told by the Catholic Church to have sex with ". . . no one but [their] husband and even then, certainly not for pleasure, but only to bear his children" (25).

Ricciutelli (1987) maintains that "the gradually accrued sense of all-pervasive guilt that the Roman Catholic church is so good at, never goes away" (26). Petrone (1995) recalls that "premarital chastity was sacrosanct. Preserving one's virginity was a religious duty. Sex was dangerous . . . I had all sorts of hang-ups." (215). Patriarca (1997), in her short autobiographical story "Espresso, Camaros and Gianni Morandi," similarly recounts

> we wanted sex (the little we knew about sex) but we didn't dare . . . we had been taught fear like a prayer. Fear governed whatever we did. It kept us in line. The fear of getting pregnant, of being defined *puttana*, of thinking thoughts that were sinful, of not meeting the ideals of our parents (13).

As for guilt due to lesbian feelings, Moraga (1986) recalls

> I always knew that I felt the greatest emotional ties with women, but suddenly I was beginning to consciously identify those feelings as sexual. The more potent my

> dreams and fantasies became . . . the more I retreated from my body's messages and into the region of religion. By giving definition and meaning to my desires, religion became the discipline to control my sexuality. Sexual fantasy and rebellion became 'impure thoughts' and 'sinful acts' (119).

In her autobiographical work, di Cuore (1998) recounts,

> while other lesbians have described falling in love with a woman as exhilarating, and euphoric, I experienced it as a wrenching of my flesh. I was a daughter of the patriarchy, and it demanded heterosexuality; it would not allow me to pursue my love without guilt and shame. I was backed into an existential corner. Perhaps because ties to the family and its prominence in my life were becoming more and more tenuous, I reacted to this unnamed loss with a strange blend of nostalgia and anger surrounding rituals of family life: engagements, wedding showers, family Sunday meals, any of the words and gestures investing our sexual lives with meaning. Growing up Catholic, I, too, would have been the recipient of such a well-ordered and divinely sanctioned life. After all, I wanted five children and the rituals of family life. I was Catholic and terribly romantic in the peculiar ways that only Catholicism can inspire (114).

2.5.1 *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*

The Vatican describes the "Cult of Mary" as "proper veneration and piety toward Mary" (Hamington 1995: 22). Carroll (1986) notes that the "Mary cult seems to be a distinctive feature of the Latin Catholic countries . . . [moreover,] Marian devotion in Italy and Spain seems especially intense . . ." (10).

Throughout history, the "Cult of Mary" has been used in "backlashes against women" (27) to curb unwanted activity such as sexual freedom (Hamington 1995). Mariology, which is the study of Mary, seeks to "personify the characteristics of the new humanity in Mary" (Halkes 1983: 67). The theological work of Hamington (1995) states that "Mary was the vessel for salvation . . . her virgin-motherhood, was the model for all

women" (75). That is,

> the archetypal Eve became swallowed up in the Christian unconscious and was projected on to real women . . . and just as the [socially unacceptable] aspects of 'Eve' were projected on to actual women, so [certain] good qualities of 'Mary' were held up to them as an example. As a result Mary's virginity gave rise to the devaluation of women's sexuality and the high value placed on virginity as a state of life (Kassel 1983: 77).

Thus, as Hamington (1995) notes "Mary contains a strong sexual message that has contributed to the Catholic Church's static position on sexual morality" (53).

In the Church's sexual teaching, Mary is the central figure (Hamington 1995). For women, Mary is the "torch-bearer for Christian sexuality" (74), the "Catholic icon of entrenched sexual morality" (82). Hamington (1995) states that

> for Catholics, Mary's virginity is a form of indirect advertising. The language of Mary's perpetual virginity is present at liturgies and the myths and stories Catholics grow up with as they learn about their religion. The message that exists as a constant whisper is that virgins are good and sex is bad" (85).

Hamington (1995) also notes that the "Cult of Mary" reinforces " 'compulsory heterosexuality'," through the linkage between Mary's virginity and motherhood. According to natural law in Catholicism, heterosexuality is "normative because the ultimate purpose of the sexual organs is reproduction. Any other type of sexual activity is illicit because it violates the natural order" (75). Thus, Mary's heterosexuality and eternal virginity "supports the Church's present position on sexual morality," that is,

> sex outside of marriage is a sin . . . sex that is not both physically and psychologically unifying for the couple, as well as open to the possibility of procreation, is a sin . . . artificial contraception is wrong . . . homosexual acts are wrong (81).

In summary, the predominance of Catholicism and the "Cult of Mary" strongly influences the views of many Italian-Canadian women. In the Roman Catholic church, Mary is seen as a model of sexual morality for women. That is, virginity, heterosexuality, and motherhood are seen as ideal for women, and women are expected to try to achieve this ideal. Consequently, this may draw up feelings of conflict and guilt in women who grow up with a strong Catholic influence.

2.6 Acculturation and Cultural Conflict

> In 'Southern Italy,' women knew their place, married the persons they were expected to marry, and never went out at night. This was the land of order and propriety, where the appropriate norms, *il buon costume e l'ordine della famiglia* (good customs and the order of the family), were always obeyed . . . 'America' was the structural inversion of 'Southern Italy.' In 'America,' the dead were not buried properly, and went unmourned; women and children ran wild; and men were not really men. In 'America,' children betrayed their parents, denying the fundamental bonds between them (Orsi 1990: 138).

Acculturation is defined as a shift towards "greater cultural similarity" (69) with an adopted culture (Yinger 1994). Acculturation includes the "changes and choices . . . [of] how to live, what to eat, what language to speak, how to behave toward relatives and friends, and whether to follow a pattern of behaviour dictated by the culture of origin" (Velazquez 1999: 129). In the acculturation process, Ahearn (1985) cites four stages: the first stage is the immigrant stage of "trust in one's cultural values" and hope for a better life; the second stage holds shame and doubt towards one's heritage, and "a desire for new goals in life;" the third stage is that of role confusion, where the goals of one's heritage are in

conflict with one's personal goals and the goals of the adopted culture; in the final stage, integrated autonomy, "all three forces are resolved in a personal manner satisfactory to the specific individual" (26). This final stage can be seen in what sociologists term "creative ethnicity," that is, using one's "ethnic heritage as the foundation to build upon one's own identity in a selective and critical way, as opposed to total and unquestioning acceptance of tradition" (Barolini 1985: 14). This is seen in Pallotta-Chiarolla's (1995) interview with Gloria, a married bisexual woman. Gloria states, "Sam and I are bisexual, we occasionally have other lovers in ongoing relationships, we are very happily married, and we love being Italian and hope our children cherish their cultural heritage the way we do . . ." (140). Although cultural traditions give one a "framework of purpose and identity" (129) in life, the sociological work of Velazquez (1999) notes that Latinas, the ethnic group she studied, are divided into simply accepting, "without frustration," those traditions, and needing to "reshape" them (129).

Pichini (1987) states that "first-generation Italian mothers cannot escape the constraints of their unliberated past," and thus, it is "all the more difficult for them to accept the image of a free and independent woman" (22). Yet, many second-generation Italian-Canadian and American women do not want to conform to traditional beliefs and "familial customs expected of them" (22). Consequently, the second and third generation are experiencing conflict; that is, they want freedom and independence to do what they choose, but also desire the "approval and support" of their mothers (22). Gambino (1974) states that these women are "American [or Canadian] in form," but remain "Italian in

substance" (175); they are American or Canadian born, yet traditional Italian values are ingrained in them. Gambino (1974) further notes that having adopted these traditional values and beliefs, not only do the women experience inter-generational conflict, but also intra-individual conflict.

The cultural conflict felt by many Italian-Americans and Canadians is cited by Tomasi (1985) in his book Italian Americans: New Perspectives in Italian Immigration and Ethnicity, where he states that Italian immigrants and their descendants are "of two worlds: the little world of the family and neighborhood and the big world of America . . ." (94). That is, parents want their children to conform to and follow *la via vecchia*, but the second and third generation want to have the freedom of choice in being a Canadian or American. Italian-American author Tina De Rosa (1980) recalls

> I was not lucky enough to grow up Italian. It seems to me that to be purely Italian would be a simpler thing to be. I grew up Italian-American, and we are a strange breed. We insist that our children be raised Italian but become American. That leaves our children -- in this case, me -- confused and cut off from both. We are Italian, no matter what street in America we were born on. (38)

De Rosa (1980) further states that being Italian-American is being ". . . not quite Italian and not quite American . . . you don't belong to either . . . you are in a class by yourself" (39). Similarly, Bellicoso (1999) notes that "second-generation Italian-Canadians can have difficulties developing a positive sense of identity," that is, they feel that they are "not quite Italian and not quite Canadian" (7). Thus, the second and perhaps third generations suffer an "identity conflict," they feel marginalized, "not belonging entirely in either world, feeling constantly the tug-and-pull of opposed ways of life" (Tomasi 1985: 94).

Bellicoso (1999) further states that many Italian-Canadians "feel they have to deny much of their Italian heritage and, in turn, experience feelings of internal conflict" (7), in order to assume an identity. As with Italian-Canadians/Americans, Moraga (1986), a Mexican-American, acknowledges this rejection of heritage, as well as the reasons for it. She states:

> I did not move away from other Chicanos because I did not love my people. I gradually became anglicized because I thought it was the only option available to me toward gaining autonomy as a person without being sexually stigmatized . . . at each juncture in my development, I instinctively made choices which I thought would allow me greater freedom of movement in the future. This primarily meant resisting sex roles as much as I could safely manage and this was far easier in an anglo context than in a Chicano one. That is not to say that anglo culture does not stigmatize its women for 'gender-transgressions' -- only that its stigmatizing did not hold the personal power over me which Chicano culture did. (174)

Pallotta-Chiarolli (1995) states that, as a consequence of their stigmatization, many Italian-Australian lesbians may separate themselves from their "ethnic communities and move away from home," (137) which causes them significant loss and guilt in their lives.

Pallotta-Chiarolli (1995) notes that lesbians of Italian heritage often feel as though they are ". . . belonging and not belonging to the multiple worlds [they] move in . . ." (133). In an interview with Pallotta-Chiarolli (1995) Italian-Australian Luisa states,

> I love being Italian. Considering they'd probably burn me alive, it must be pretty good for me to still want to be part of it . . . being a lesbian doesn't mean you can forget all that or want to forget all that. But it does mean having to decide which parts of you to show which people . . . I don't particularly like this compartmentalisation of my life. I go to work and I automatically change when I'm at home with my parents I'm their Italian daughter whose glory-box is waiting for her to do the right thing. Then I'm among lesbians and some of them worry about why I look so feminine, and then among heterosexual friends who know, and heterosexual friends who don't know, and then I'm involved in the Church and

> trying to maintain my religious faith, and I'm literally different all the time . . . (134)

Although she feels conflict in many areas of her life, this can be seen as an example of "creative ethnicity" (Barolini 1985: 14). That is, Luisa embraces her Italian heritage and identity, yet feels conflicted as she lives her life as a lesbian. She must selectively piece together her identity, choosing the different aspects of her identity she displays in different situations in her life. Conversely, in an interview with Pallotta-Chiarolla (1992; cited in Pallotta-Chiarolla 1995), Caterina states,

> If I could just deal with [coming out] to my immediate family, that would be one thing, but then I'd have to deal with all the cousins [and] Mum also has to put up with what the rest of the family say about me . . . I'd love to totally deny my Italian background. I could still have a cappuccino and a pizza . . . [but] I feel much more comfortable not being involved with Italians. (138)

In summary, the second and third-generation women of Italian heritage are American, Canadian or Australian born. However, traditional Italian values are ingrained in them. Most second-generation daughters of Italian immigrant families do not want to conform to the traditional beliefs of *la via vecchia* and family expectations, or want to conform only in certain respects.. Accordingly, these women may experience a great deal of conflict between their desires and the support of their family. In addition, the second and third generations may suffer an "identity conflict," and feel that they must deny their Italian heritage in order to assume an identity. However, there is also the possibility of creative ethnicity (Barolini 1985: 14) which may, to some extent, allow one to draw on the positive and pleasurable aspects of both cultures.

2.7 Family Ties

La via vecchia incorporates the highly valued and enforced rules of old world Italy, "that could be broken only at the risk of ostracism" (Rolle 1980: 113). Bona (1999) notes the rules of the Southern Italian family as being those of "responsibility to and protection of the family; sexual relations within the context of marriage only; and respect towards one's elders" (81). Upholding these values is seen as having the all important *bella figura*, which is defined as "a code of good behaviour" (81). Gambino (1974) notes that "if one loses place in *la via vecchia*, there is no self-respect" (14). This is reflected in the common warning "to walk the straight path (*fare la strada diritta*)" (Del Negro 1997: 77). Gambino (1974) states that "obedience to parental authority" (21) is a highly enforced rule, as illustrated by Feola (1998), in her autobiographical essay "An Ethnic Passage," where she states

> . . . I was taught to fear authority and follow tradition . . . speaking your mind was understandable; challenging the status quo, however, was not . . . inquiry, esoterica, and independence were tribal taboos that evoked earnest and frequent 'God forbids' from the family . . . (282).

In her poem, "Dago Dyke," Capone (1998) relates,

> . . . I picture
> me at 23
> breaking the traditions I was raised by.
> *Che Vergogna*! *Malafemmina*! [What an embarrassment! Bad woman!]
> Defying la famiglia [the family]
> . . . At 23
> the power of the family is strong
> It's everything,
> in fact,
> and knowing that you don't belong

brings misery
. . . at 33
. . . [I] remind myself
that despite the cost
I'm the boss
in my kitchen
and my life (128).

The second generation grew up aware of "'*gli altri*' (the others) or *'che dira la gènte'* (what will people say) by which they are to determine behaviours and actions upon," thus are "expected to 'protect the good name of the family' . . . [and] for women sexual purity and a good marriage, may be valued as 'accruing to the good name and status of the family' according to the community's codes and sanctions" (Pallotta-Chiarolli and Skrbis 1994: 266). Furthermore, Gambino (1974) states that "all obligations, feelings, or rights of radical individuality were repressed" (10). This maintains the "codes of *omertà* and *onóre* in support of *l'órdine della famiglia*," that is, the codes of silence and honour in support of family order, which calls for "subordination of the individual to the family and of any member deviating from family solidarity" (Bona 1999: 166). In her autobiographical work, LeRose (1998) recounts

> *Nònna* (Grandmother) devoted all her attention to me, making me feel like a princess. And she wanted me to marry a prince . . . when I was twelve, my paternal *nònna* crocheted a tablecloth for me to put on the table under my wedding cake. When I was 20 . . . she gave my mother her silverware to give to me when I get married. Now I am 38. I'll never marry. I'll never use the tablecloth. I'll never get the silverware. And no one will dance the *vera tarantella calabrese* [true Calabrése tarantella] for me and my lover . . . I will honour the code of silence -- *omertà* -- I will never 'come out' to her. She will always know me as her little princess . . . (146).

Gambino (1974) asserts that the Italian-American or Canadian is placed in the predicament

of "reconciling the psychological sovereignty" (35) of their family with their own individual desires. As Pallotta-Chiarolli and Skrbis (1994) note, "they may not want to risk total rejection by families and the community on whom they rely for strength and support, or they may fear ostracism from elements of the ethnic culture" (268). Accordingly, Barolini (1985) questions

> . . . do you keep close to family, enjoying its emotional warmth and protectiveness, and lose your individualism; or do you opt for personal independence? Do you go against the grain of your culture to embrace the American concept of rugged individualism? Do you choose loneliness over denial of self for the family good? (26)

She further states that

> this is an issue of separating, present in all human beings; the process of individuation by which one becomes him- or herself. The working out of independence/dependence factors is critical in the development of both men and women and for people of all backgrounds. But some cultures, in effect, demand too enormous a ransom to release the individual from benevolent captivity (26).

That is, individualism and freedom at the cost of family and peace of mind.

In summary, Southern Italian-Canadian culture places strong emphasis on *la via vecchia*, which values *omertà* and *onóre*, as well as making a *bella figura* in the eyes of others. Consequently, one's desires and individuality may be repressed for fear of hurting loved ones, or even ostracism, if it means stepping outside these boundaries. Thus, one's individualism may come at the cost of family and peace of mind.

2.8 The "Erotic"

In this section I discuss Audre Lorde's "Uses of the Erotic," in Sister Outsider:

Essays and Speeches (1984), and the way in which her theory can apply to the lives of Southern Italian-Canadian women.

Lorde (1984) states that, "in order to perpetuate itself, every oppression must corrupt or distort those various sources of power within the culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change" (53). As women of Italian heritage, many of us want and struggle for change. We want to enrich our lives, to live out every possibility. Lorde (1984) refers to this as "the erotic," which she defines as "an assertion of the lifeforce of women; of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives" (55). Sartre terms this "positive praxis" (Bloom 1998: 65), where one overcomes their "conditioning" to live life as they choose.

Lorde (1984) contends that,

> our erotic knowledge empowers us, becomes a lens through which we scrutinize all aspects of our existence, forcing us to evaluate those aspects honestly in terms of their relative meaning within our lives. And this is a grave responsibility, projected within each of us, not to settle for the convenient, the shoddy, the conventionally expected, nor the merely safe. (57)

However, she notes that, "we have been raised to fear the *yes* within ourselves, our deepest cravings . . . [in turn, this] keeps us docile and loyal and obedient, externally defined, and leads us to accept many facets of our oppression" (58). When our lives are externally guided, we conform to those outside needs and desires. Yet, Lorde (1984) states that,

> when we begin to live from within ourselves, and allowing that power to inform and illuminate our actions upon the world around us, then we begin to be responsible to ourselves in the deepest sense . . . our acts against oppression

become integral with self, motivated and empowered from within. (58)

Fearing the "yes" within ourselves, following and conforming to our family's desires rather than my own, is accepting my oppression. This is the case for many Southern Italian-Canadian women. If we, as Southern Italian-Canadian women listen to the "erotic" in ourselves, then we can fight against our oppression, and in turn reclaim our lives to live them out according to our own desires.

Lorde (1984) states that, "recognizing the power of the erotic within our lives can give us the energy to pursue genuine change within our world . . ." (59). This recognition for desire within the lives of Southern Italian-Canadian women may liberate us from these boundaries, and transform our lives to encourage growth, change and fulfillment.

2.9 Socialization

Socialization is "the process by which parents and others ensure that a child's standards of behaviour, attitudes, skills and motives conform closely to those deemed appropriate to his or her role in society (Hetherington, Parke and Schmukler 2002: 428). As noted by Westen (1996), one's "innate temperamental disposition" will influence the socialization process. Also, socialization is "interactive, or transactional" (541), as one develops one becomes active in one's socialization. This can be seen in Sartre's idea of "positive praxis," where an individual takes control of their life and "surpasses her or his conditioning" (Bloom 1998: 65). Another way in which socialization becomes "interactive, or transactional" is illustrated in Bell's (1997, cited in Bugental and Goodnow 1998)

"control system" model, which emphasizes "mutual adjustment and accommodation . . . leaving some options on each side" (391). That is, as a child becomes an adult, they may begin to employ negotiation and compromise in the relationship with their parents, thus allowing for a balance between their desires and their parents' desires.

2.10 Research on Southern Italian-Canadian Women Today

My exploration of the literature draws me to the conclusion that there is a lack of social science literature dealing with sexual repression in second and third generation Italian-Canadian women, as well as literature dealing with traditional views of marriage and family for these women. As seen in the literature review, there is much literature on these issues. Second and third-generation Italian-Canadian women writers, such as Ricciutelli, Ciccia, Ciatu, Di Cuore, De Rosa, Feola, and Le Rose, give autobiographical narratives of their struggles with Italian-Canadian values pressured onto themselves. Also, authors and poets, such as Ciresi, di Michele, Schembri, Patriarca, and Capone, discuss these issues from a literary rather than sociological perspective. Scholars, such as Del Negro, and Pichini, discuss the experiences of first-generation Italian-Canadian immigrant women, rather than the second-generation. Petrone does discuss her experiences as a second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian women; however, her experiences occurred prior to 1960. Social science literature written on or by second and third generation Southern Italian-Canadian women is lacking.

Through my research I would like to give a voice to Southern Italian-Canadian

women, to enable them to express their own experiences, in order to achieve a better understanding of these issues, and their effects on second and third generation Southern Italian-Canadian women.

In the following chapter I discuss how the research was conducted, as well as the issues of ethics and validity.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Research Design

3.1 Introduction

My research is intended to be emancipatory research which, as Lather (1991) states, "calls for empowering approaches to research where both researcher and researched become . . . 'the changer and the changed' " (56). For emancipatory research, reciprocity, that is, "a mutual negotiation of meaning and power" (57), must be more than minimal (60). Lather (1991) notes that "for researchers with emancipatory aspirations, doing empirical work offers a powerful opportunity for praxis to the extent that it enables people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations" (56).

Cook and Hale (1992) state that feminist research encourages "a nonhierarchical relationship" (281) between the researcher and the participants of the study. They further note that "the interviewer and interviewee are considered 'co-researchers,' equally committed to gaining a better understanding of the experience" (281). Given that I am a second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian woman, sharing many of the experiences of my research participants, my research is participatory and collaborative. That is, "the distinction between [I, the researcher] and those on whom the research is done disappears . . . [I,] the researcher abandons control and adopts an approach of openness, reciprocity,

mutual disclosure, and shared risk" (Reinharz 1992: 181).

The issue of sexuality can be an emotionally charged one for women (Espin 1999). Cultures which "have fairly traditional (i.e. conservative) views of female sexuality frequently make it difficult to discuss these issues" (138). Moreover, Italian-Canadian culture places strong emphasis on *omertà*, that is, see nothing, hear nothing, say nothing, and therefore betray nothing (Barolini 1985). As a Southern Italian-Canadian woman, with a shared experience of the culture, mutual understanding of these issues was more than possible on my part.

As the research is feminist research, it primarily utilizes feminist methodolgy. Yet, as women's studies is interdisciplinary, and the research is qualitative, it also draws from the disciplines of psychology, sociology and education through the examination of such issues as family relations, acculturation, socialization, attitudes towards sexuality and family, and sex education.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 *Who? When? Where?*

The sample was composed of "nonrepresentative sample participants" (Hughes and DuMont 1993: 777), second and third generation Southern Italian-Canadian women. When I speak of generations I refer to the first-generation being the immigrants; the second-generation being the Canadian born children of immigrants. The sample consisted

of specifically Southern Italian-Canadians for the reason that there exists a subtle cultural difference between Northern and Southern Italians, this difference being that Southern Italian culture tends to be much more traditional and conservative. The women sampled were born between 1960 and 1980. They were selected through convenience sampling.

The community in which the research was conducted has a population of approximately 117,000, and approximately 10% of the population consists of Italian people, that is 15,000 individuals. The city has a very solid, strong, and active Southern Italian-Canadian community. Southern Italian-Canadians have a long history in the city, were very active in its growth, and continue to be.

In the community where the research was conducted, I advertised through word of mouth, asking individuals within the Southern Italian-Canadian community to suggest young Southern Italian-Canadian women whom I could contact. The study involved ten interviews altogether, nine individual interviews, and one interview with two sisters. The one interview was conducted with the two sisters because doing so made each of them more comfortable, and allowed them to be more candid in the interview. Only one interview was conducted with each participant. All the interviews were conducted in 2001/2002.

3.2.2 *How?*

I used in-depth individual interviews, as well as one group interview with two sisters to collect my data. In terms of level of structure for each interview, I took a loosely

structured approach that emphasized free discussion. However, I had a guide of specific topics (Appendix IV) that were to be covered (Morgan 1997). Thus, this approach allowed me to initially listen to the participants' own perspectives, yet allowed me to ultimately focus on my own specific interests (Morgan 1997).

Reinharz (1992) states that "interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than the words of the researcher" (19). She further states that "open-ended interview research explores people's views of reality and allows the researcher to generate theory" (18). Anderson and Jack (1991) state that "the spontaneous exchange within [a less structured] interview offers possibilities of freedom and flexibility" (11) for the researcher and the interviewee.

The discussions were "interviewee-guided," that is, I focused "less on getting [my] question's answered and more on understanding the interviewee" (Reinharz 1992: 24). This allowed the participants more opportunity to converse, and thus give me a "clear sense of each participant's reaction to [the] topic" (Morgan 1997: 42). The discussions, unstructured as they were at the start, thus differed from individual to individual, and allowed me to further explore topics raised in one interview with another interviewee (Morgan 1997). However, an obvious disadvantage to a more unstructured interview is that it lessened the level of comparability among participants (Morgan 1997). Morgan (1997) contends that "a tradeoff exists between a greater ability to learn about the participants' perspectives in their own words and less ability to pursue any aspect of these perspectives in a consistent fashion" (40).

In introducing the topic to be discussed, I presented it in general terms and stressed that I was there to learn from the participant; this was done in order to prevent participants from restricting and channeling the discussion. That is, the participants could then generate discussion which, while not specific to the topic of study, might still be relevant or helpful to the analysis. Each discussion began with an ice-breaker question, where I, the interviewer, and the participant gave a very brief self-introduction. Specifically, I asked each participant to give their name, age and family background (what generation they are), as well as describe how much freedom was allowed to them, by their parents, as they were growing up. The discussion-starter question, that is, "what are the dominant images of women in your family? In the community?" introduced the topic and turned it over to the interviewee. In concluding the discussion, I asked each participant to give a final statement, which allowed them to express any opinions that they had "been holding back from the open discussion" or "what they think the most important elements of the discussion have been" (Morgan 1997: 62). The topics to be covered through open-ended questioning included issues of virginity, religion, ideal womanliness, the body, masturbation, sex education, financial independence, marriage and motherhood, sexuality, sexual orientation, family rules and expectations, and individuality. Furthermore, to ensure that no misinterpretation had occurred in the research, the participants were given a copy of the thesis, and I made the requested changes before the final draft was submitted.

The primary means of data collection in each interview was audio taping. The recordings were not disclosed to persons other than myself and my supervisors, and the

tapes were held in a secure location and will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

3.3 Data Transcription and Synthesis

In my transcription of the discussions, I retained "all the essential points of the discussion," and "sift[ed] out the nonessentials" (Bertrand and Brown 1992: 200) by asking myself what am I seeing instances, and what are the major themes coming out of these interviews (Weiss 1994).

The approach I took in synthesizing the data was "margin coding," in which I created colour codes for each topic in the discussion guide, notes and transcripts (Bertrand et al. 1992). Also, " 'quotable' passages [were] marked with an asterisk" (Bertrand et al. 1992: 204). Once I coded, and made additional notes in the margins of the transcripts, I went over my "marginal notes" (Weiss 1994).

With this approach, once I coded the transcripts I then cut them apart and organized them by theme. Excerpts dealing with the same topic were placed and organized in folders (Weiss 1994).

3.4 Data Analysis

My analysis was issue-focused. It concerned "itself with what [could] be learned about specific issues . . . from any and all respondents" (Weiss 1994: 154). My analysis was guided by "identification of patterns and associations" (Coffey and Atkinson 1996: 144). I looked for and analyzed "commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures" in

"relevant phenomena" (29).

Weiss (1994) states that once the transcripts have been coded and organized by topic into folders, the next two steps are (1) "local integration": "the material of the file folder is interpreted;" and (2) "inclusive integration": "the collection of file folders is organized into a coherent sequence" (157).

3.5 Feminist Research

I consider this to be feminist research because it places second and third-generation Southern Italian-Canadian women's experiences at "the center of [the] inquiry" (Lather 1988b: 57). In addition, it corrects " . . . the invisibility [of Italian-Canadian] female experience" (57). A semi-structured interview allowed the participant to "tell her own story in her own terms" (Anderson et al. 1991: 11). Anderson et al. (1991) notes that

> an oral interview, when structured by the narrator instead of the researcher, allows each woman to express her uniqueness in its full class, racial, and ethnic uniqueness . . . when the woman, not the existing theory, is considered the expert . . . one can begin to hear the muted channel of women's experience come through. (20)

Furthermore, my data collection consisted of individual interviews and encouraged feedback, oral or written, on the part of the participant.

Interviews allow for an understanding "from the participants' perspectives" (785) of how their experiences are shaped (Hughes et al. 1993). Interviews have the "ability to 'give a voice' to marginalized groups" (133) such as women (Morgan 1996). Interviews, as a feminist method, give "a 'voice' to the research participant by giving her an

opportunity to define what is relevant and important to understand her experience" (Norris, Nurius, and Dimeff 1996: 129). For this reason, interviews, as a qualitative method, are well-suited for feminist research, which "should pay particular attention to the needs of 'those who [have] little or no societal voice'" (Rubin and Rubin 1995, as cited in Wilkinson 1999: 233).

3.6 Validity Issues

In my consideration of validity, I went back to the participants with my analyses and interpretations, at which point I considered any changes the participants desired. The research encouraged feedback, oral or written, on the part of each participant. To encourage a collaborative relationship between each participant and myself, as well as to ensure that no misinterpretation had occurred in the research, the participants were given a copy of the thesis and I made the adjustments before the final draft was submitted.

Furthermore, I also considered "catalytic validity," that is, "the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it . . . respondents gain self-understanding and, ultimately, self-determination through research participation" (Lather 1991: 68). This research allows "consciousness raising" within the Southern Italian-Canadian community concerning these issues. This is achieved by bringing awareness to Southern Italian-Canadian women and future generations of Southern Italian-Canadian women, through validating and honouring their experiences.

3.7 Ethical Issues

The ethical issues in the research are many and varied. First, I evaluated the impact that my research might have on the lives of the Southern Italian-Canadian women in the community. In obtaining feedback on my research, I evaluated how I included their views and considered the effects of this feedback on the research. I also considered how I represented Southern Italian-Canadian womens' diverse experiences. Lastly, I also questioned how and if my research was empowering and how it would help to bring social change, if desired, to Southern Italian-Canadian women. The focus on "consciousness raising" within the research aimed at bringing empowerment for these women.

To protect my participants, I explained to them what the research was about and what it is for, that is, I obtained informed consent (Appendix V). Moreover, I questioned myself regarding a true understanding of the meaning of the term "informed consent." I gave the potential participants thorough information about the type of questions I planned to ask, and gave them an opportunity to discuss the topic. Also, I gave each potential participant sufficient time to consider whether they wished to participate, before I presented them with a consent form to sign.

As well, I informed the participants how the information gathered would be stored and destroyed. I asked myself whether my research recognized that women are the best experts on their lives, and whether they are speaking on their own behalf.

As previously mentioned, the discussions were audio taped. However, I did give the participants the option of not being taped. These recordings were not disclosed to

persons other than myself and my supervisors, and the tapes were held in a secure location. All the information gathered in the study remained strictly confidential and at no time were individuals identified. The participants' anonymity was protected and all records of their participation in this study were kept confidential. All comments made during the discussions were kept private and anonymous. Participation was voluntary and participants were free to withdraw from the research at any point if they chose. Aliases were used in the study instead of real names. To ensure that no misinterpretation had occurred in the research, the participants were given a copy of the results before the final draft was submitted, and asked to comment either orally or in writing.

3.8 Conclusion

As Southern Italian-Canadian women living in a society which generally holds more liberal attitudes toward a woman's sexual autonomy, they may feel unduly pressured to conform to the ways of another society in which we do not live, and in turn, to support beliefs which we may not hold. Through the use of individual interviews, I give a voice to these women who have not had a voice, to express their own experiences, in order to attain a better understanding of this cultural conflict, and in turn its effects on Southern Italian-Canadian women.

The following chapter is a summary of my research in the Southern Italian-Canadian community. Through statements from the participants, I present their experiences regarding their upbringing and their experiences with family expectations

towards sexuality and family life.

Chapter Four

Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an examination of the socialization of Southern Italian-Canadian women within their families and the Southern Italian-Canadian communities. I explore issues found in growing up as a Southern Italian-Canadian woman, that is growing up bicultural. I examine the values and attitudes held by many Southern Italian-Canadians, and the resistance to these values and attitudes by their daughters who are, in effect, being socialized one way by their parents and a different way by the outside society. Also, I discuss two distinct images of Southern Italian-Canadian women, that is, the image of the "good girl/woman" and the "*puttana,*" issues of family expectations, and the issue of "others." Furthermore, I explore issues of sexuality, dependence and independence, marriage and heterosexism, divorce, and Catholicism for Southern Italian-Canadian women. Statements from the participants are included to fully illustrate their experiences.

The themes discussed in this chapter were generated by way of a number of steps. Firstly, a thorough literature review was conducted to determine issues which women of Italian heritage may be currently facing. From this literature review, I drew up a discussion guide (Appendix IV) of topics I wished to explore with the participants of the study. Lastly, after all the interviews were conducted and all the transcripts were transcribed, I

examined each transcript for major recurring themes, themes which I perceived as holding importance, as well as themes which contradicted the literature review. Accordingly, these themes are the focus of this chapter.

4.2 The Women of this Study

In the following section I introduce each of the eleven women who participated in this study. These women are second and third generation Southern Italian-Canadian women, born between 1960 and 1980.

Linda is a second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian. She is 24 years old and single. She is a university graduate, and currently lives with her parents. She is the youngest of four, with three brothers, all of whom are married.

Anne is a 27 year old second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian. She is a university graduate and married. She is the oldest child, and has a younger sister.

Melanie is a second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian. She is 26 years old, single, and currently lives with her parents. She is a college graduate, who is currently returning to school. She is the only female child, and has three brothers.

Margaret is a 35 year old second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian. She is married and is the mother of a baby girl. She is a graduate student, and is a professor at the local university.

Caroline is a second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian. She is 35 years old, married, and is the mother of two little girls. This is her second marriage. She was first

married at the age of 25. She married for the second time at the age of 30, after which her two children were born. She is a university graduate, and is the youngest of four.

Nicole is a second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian. She is 35 years old, a college graduate, and single. She is the only female child, has one brother, and currently lives with her parents.

Kelly is a 34 year old second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian. She is single, and currently lives with her parents.

Jennifer is a second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian. She is 22 years old, single, and currently lives with her parents. She is a university graduate, and has one older brother.

Christina is a second-generation Italian-Canadian. She is 40 years old, and is married with three sons. She is a college graduate and is the youngest, and only female child.

Susan is 24 year old, and her sister Catherine is 20 years old. They are second and third-generation Southern Italian-Canadian. Their mother is a first-generation Southern Italian-Canadian, and their father is a second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian. Susan is newly married, and is a medical student. Catherine is currently pursuing her undergraduate degree. They have one older brother.

4.3 Growing Up as a Southern Italian-Canadian Woman

The experience of growing up as a young woman in a Southern Italian-Canadian

family is described by most as restrictive and sheltered.

> . . . strict, I think. Oh yeah, my parents are really protective (Kelly, second-generation, age 34).
>
> . . . overprotective would be good word (Susan, second and third-generation, age 24).
>
> Ah, we were never allowed to sleep over at anyone's house, because we had a bed at home (Anne, second-generation, age 27).
>
> They were protective, I was sheltered . . . I had a normal childhood, it's just that it was strict . . . not necessarily strict but restrictive. Like there was a lot of things I could not have done . . . most girls, they're nine, ten, eleven years old, they have sleep overs. Never happened to me. Because they look at it as being a bit of a disrespect . . . there's friends of mine who live across the street, who they've known ever since they've moved across the street. No can't do that. So, I mean, I've missed out on doing those kinds of things, kind of girlie, normal things (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

Thus, a discrepancy exists between many parent's desires and hopes for their daughters' socialization, and the desires and hopes held by many daughters (Bugental and Goodnow 1998). Many Southern Italian-Canadian parents are very protective in allowing their daughters to experience the culture of the broader community. As Anne and Linda state, such a restrictive upbringing means missing out on common childhood activities, such as sleep overs, which are seen as "normal" in their eyes. Although these activities may be viewed by some as a "normal" part of childhood socialization, they are not common for many Southern Italian-Canadians, or a number of other ethnic groups. As Haas and Shaffir (1998) state,

> the process of becoming socialized occurs in a cultural context . . . we must expect that the content of socialization differs greatly from one society to another. People in different societies learn different norms, values, and lifestyles and are likely to

approach their environment from different perspectives (31).

Sleepovers are not common in many Southern Italian-Canadian culture, thus they are seen as strange and not valued as part of a child's socialization. Often their children experience "role confusion" (Ahearn 1985), in that the values and norms held by their cultural heritage comes in conflict with their own desires, which although not generally acceptable in Southern Italian-Canadian culture, are often acceptable and seen as "normal" in the broader community. Activities such as dating in highschool and highschool dances, as participants note, may be unacceptable in Southern Italian-Canadian culture.

> . . . my parents were somewhat strict . . . they were stricter about dating, than going out with friends. They were generally pretty good about going out with friends and stuff. Just depended on where I went, they would always make sure they knew where I went. Couldn't go to certain places til I was older, generally to a bar or something, that kind of stuff. Basically, they weren't too too much in some areas, but I found more in other areas . . . the dating thing, they were more strict on that (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

> . . . I never went to any high school dances, whereas the 'Canadians' they went every Saturday. I didn't go to any high school dances. And, I really didn't even start going out til I was in university, and started going out with my friends, or to the pub, and stuff. But, before that I never really did (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

Participants' discourses display resistance, in that they question the rationality of their parents' rules. Yet, their actions in general are not resistant, in practice they accept those rules as unchanging. Their early socialization messages are so strongly ingrained in them that it causes them distress and conflict. The resistance displayed in their discourse shows that they want to defy aspects of their upbringing, but at the same time they do not want to risk the loss of other aspects, such as the warmth and protection of their family and

community.

> When 1 o'clock comes around, Cinderella's coach turns into a pumpkin or something. I don't know, like mysterious things could happen at 1 o'clock in the morning, [but] they couldn't happen from 7 to midnight. That's what it seems like. Basically, if I come home, I should be home by, I don't really come home after 1 o'clock ever. And, if I am home later than that, 'oh, it was late, what were you doing, why are you so late' . . . even now, my friend had a party at his camp, and I have a boyfriend, and it was like our mutual friends that had a party at his camp, and most people were sleeping out there. But, I just make an excuse, 'oh, got to work in the morning,' just because it sounds so stupid, 'why won't you sleep over,' 'mom won't let me.' Just the thing is, I never ask her, because I just assume that I wouldn't be able to anyway (Catherine, second and third-generation, age 20).

> . . . I never stayed over [at my fiancé's camp]. They had a camp, and I always drove back at 11 o'clock at night, because my father didn't want me staying down there. And they thought it was totally retarded. But, what could I do? The compromise was that I got to go down . . . that's just the way it is (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

Lorde (1984) asserts that fear keeps women "docile, loyal and obedient" (58), and thus accepting of expectations in fear of upsetting the relationships in their lives. Moreover, Bugental et al. (1998) state that "when parents' ways of rearing children are shared by others and are part of routine daily life, little thought may be given to why one might proceed in one way rather than another" (442). As these women were raised in a mainly European-Canadian environment, they may question their upbringing, yet at the same time see it as similar to their other family members and their friends of European descent.

Conversely, Linda displays "positive praxis" (Bloom 1998). Even through disappointment she defies the rules and expectations, to live her life as she desires.

> . . . if I came home late, they'd yell, and then turn into arguments, still happens to this day . . . if I come home at 2 or 3 in the morning, it's okay with them if they know I went to a bar . . . because they'd expect me to be home late. But, if I've

> gone to a movie, or somebody's house, it's like, 'you should be home by like 12,' and sometimes I don't do that. I come home at 3, 4, 5, and they get upset, and it disappoints me (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

Although Linda bypasses the parental rules ingrained in her, one can still see the conflict she finds in disobeying parental rules. Linda's resistance to her socialization comes from what Lorde (1984) terms "the erotic," which is the empowering "lifeforce of women" (55) in gaining one's freedom. Moreover, as noted by Westen (1996), one's "temperamental disposition" influences one's socialization. Also, as socialization is interactive or transactional, one becomes active in one's socialization. That is, as we have seen with Linda, one actively chooses the beliefs and values to accept "as their own," and what aspects of their socialization to resist.

As noted in the literature review, the children of many first and second-generation Southern Italian-Canadians are often considered first and foremost "Italian" in their parent's eyes. As with many ethnicities, Southern Italian immigrant parents generally retain an "Italian" ethnic identity (Parke and Buriel 1998). Thus, many first-generation Southern Italian-Canadians tend to view anyone who is outside their ethnicity as *inglese* ("Canadian"/"English"). Accordingly, all Canadians, of whatever background are seen as "other," and as a homogeneous "other." This is to be viewed as a social construction, a cultural model (Bugental and Goodnow 1998), that is, second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian women, may often perceive *inglese* girls as having the freedom to do what they please. This may be a result of their home socialization as "Italian" girls. That is, as previously mentioned, second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian women often grow up

hearing that the "*femmine inglese* ("Canadian"/"English" women) do that, not Italian girls." Consequently, due to these early socialization messages, second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian girls may have the social construction of what it is to be a "Canadian" woman ingrained in their minds, that is a woman who is liberated and free from social and familial expectations.

When asked how they viewed *inglese* girls growing up, participants responded that they see them as having parents who are much more relaxed in terms of rules and expectations, in comparison to their Southern Italian-Canadian parents.

> Obviously, you could see that they had a lot more freedom . . . I had a friend that was Canadian, that lived across the lane from me, and had far more freedom than I could ever imagine. So, when you're comparing yourself to someone like that, it's like 'geez.' Where she had the freedom to go out, her parents were a lot more relaxed as far as what they would allow her to do . . . big difference, yeah (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

As Nicole recounts, this perceived difference between herself and *inglese* girls surfaced more so when attending school.

> That is your first big eye opener. You think, oh that's not what I was supposed to be doing . . . couldn't go to school dances, couldn't be dating . . . the only thing they worried about when they were younger was staying out late and having a curfew . . . (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

> They got more freedom . . . other girls didn't have any problems going to dances . . . (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

> English, *mangiacaky* friends, they'll come home at 2[am], 3[am], and it doesn't matter . . . I don't think that [for myself] that would really go over well, you know (Catherine, second and third-generation, age 20).

> As for mother and daughter relationships, *inglése* girls are generally viewed as

having much closer and more open relationships with their mothers.

> You look at your friends who are 'Canadian,' pure 'Canadian.' And you see how fathers and mothers act, where they're friends. They actually have a friend relationship, where they can go to their mom's and they can talk about anything, relationships or sex, you know like, 'mom, my boyfriend's an asshole,' whatever. As an Italian, you can't do that. Your mother's your mother, she's an authority figure, she's not your friend (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

Additionally, *inglese* girls are often viewed as being allowed to date at a much earlier age in comparison to themselves.

> Grade 6, 12 years old, and they had boyfriends already. I'm serious. And their parents knew. Oh my god, if I'm going to a birthday party I can't even tell my mom that there's boys there when I was 12 years old (Catherine, second and third-generation, age 20).

> Oh yeah, they got to date. They got to bring their boyfriends home in grade 9. They had 20 boyfriends by the time they were in grade 12, and they got to bring every single one of them home (Anne, second generation, age 27).

Participants show much resistance and defiance to many aspects of their upbringing. As noted, Linda's desires for creating her own rules in life drives her to resist and defy her socialization messages. At the same time, these socialization messages, emphasizing respect, are strong. As we see with Linda, she values many aspects of her background, aspects which she does not want to lose. Thus, she negotiates ways around parental rules as a way to fulfill her own desires, while still showing respect to her parent's rules, and thus not severing the ties to her family and community.

> . . . you got rules, you got expectations, and you do your best to try to live with them and around them. Because having the rules and the expectations is a sign of respect, you know, so you do try your best to live with those rules, and live up to those expectations because in some small way if you don't, it's showing disrespect to who raised you. But at the same time, you need to be able to kind of bend those

> rules, or push the limits, and push the expectations, so that you can get some measure of freedom so you're not going completely out of your mind, and end up a fairly normal individual, and not a cloistered nun almost, who's very innocent and doesn't know much about the world (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

Like Linda, many participants note that understanding their parents' rationality is important in finding ways to live with or around their rules and expectations. As already stated, they do not want to lose the closeness and warmth of their family and community. Thus, they use secrecy as a way of keeping that warmth and closeness, and gaining their own independence.

> It's understanding where they're coming from, but then also finding a way to live your own life. You find the boundaries, and you manipulate it to stay in those boundaries. For example, I always babysat when I was younger. So babysitting required you to stay sometimes until 1am, sometimes until 2am, depending on when the parents got home. So, there's really not much difference from going out with your friends and staying out until 1am and letting them know that you were babysitting. It always worked out well. My mother always knew where we were. My mother was always more understanding. So, she would actually be our protector. She would always know where we were . . . (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

> . . . you also do learn that there are other ways to organize and live your life . . . and so I do think you find ways of circumnavigating cultural expectations and norms. I mean one of the ways I did it was, although my parents were liberal, I had a friend who, she was Italian-Canadian like me, my family's from Abruzzi, her family's from Calabria, of course my mother said *calabrése* kids were more restricted than *abruzzése* kids, right. Of course, I meet [her], and she gets to do whatever she wants, essentially. I mean, she's got way more freedom than me. I think part of it is because she's the youngest girl, she's got a 30 year old sister, she's the youngest girl. Her mother had 10 pregnancies or something. So, there's a huge span between the oldest girl, the eldest is a boy. There's such an age difference between them that [she] got to do a lot of the things that a 30 year old got to do. Her mother didn't take that time span into account. So, [she] got way more freedom, huge amounts of freedom. So, she didn't have a curfew, when she turned 16 she got the car whenever she wanted it. And one of the ways I got around everything was I slept over at [her] house. We could stay up til 2, 3 in the

> morning; we could drink; we could do all sorts of things. I didn't have to deal with trying to explain to my mother or father, because as long as I was sleeping over at [her house] it didn't really matter . . . so, this was one of the ways I got around being the 'good girl' (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

As noted by Margaret, not every Southern Italian-Canadian family is as restrictive with their daughters. Depending on how many children are in the family, the difference between the children's ages, and whether parents take into account these age differences, socialization for the youngest child may be different from that of the eldest child.

Apart from secrecy, for most, negotiation becomes a big part of many Southern Italian-Canadian women's relationship with their parents. In dealing with such restrictiveness, and keeping the respect that is demanded for these rules and boundaries, open negotiation may be necessary in gaining one's independence. As Bell's (1977; cited in Bugental and Goodnow 1998) "control system" model illustrates, "mutual adjustment and accommodation," that is compromises in the relationship, allow for choices and options. As Nicole states, discussion and rationalization are important in trying to find a balance between one's desires and the rules one is expected to live by.

> . . . . I always had a pretty good understanding with my parents in trying to find a way, not around it, but just a way of coming to an understanding with them . . . I always say my views, and then say 'well, if I do it this way, it's still not doing it wrong' . . . I just see [these restrictions] as such a road block. It just blocks everybody from doing anything or learning anything . . . oh yeah, it's very frustrating. Like I don't have to do all a hundred things that everybody else does, I don't have to do all a hundred of them. But, let me do at least 80 of them. You don't have to let me do every single thing, but let me have my life, let me have my friends, let me talk to people (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

> If you care enough, yes, you can balance it. You can achieve your own goals and objectives, and your desires, while keeping a happy medium, as well with your

parents, and the relationship with your parents. Because eventually they're going to have to realize that you're going to have to make your own choices (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

Catherine – . . . I think we challenge some things.

Susan – . . . if we come up with a logical argument for why we disagree with that rule, well my parents may not accept it, they just leave it alone . . . some things just aren't worth the argument . . . having said that, if it was just sleeping over, then that might not be worth pushing the envelope on that one. But, if she just said 'oh, you have to come home at midnight,' then I don't think we would really.

Catherine – I would say, 'we're coming home whenever we get a ride in., and if you don't like it then I'm sleeping out there. Pick one' . . .

Susan – We don't really lie. Some things we push the envelope on. You have to figure out what your chances are of having a full blown argument for three hours, is it really worth it, 'no,' then just don't even bother. If they're being absolutely ridiculous, I'll just be like, 'yeah.'

Catherine – Send them off smiling.

Susan – If we're arguing, we usually try to explain these rational thoughts to them, but.

Catherine – Yeah. If you go out, say at 6 o'clock, and they say, 'don't be later than 1o'clock,' what's the difference, it's 7 hours. You know, I mean, what's 1 hour difference after that. 'Oh, it's after 1 o'clock, you never know.' But, seriously, that's how dumb it sounds to me. I don't know what they think

(Susan, age 24; Catherine, age 20; second and third-generation).

. . . when I was in high school, it was either you abide by the rules, or there's five doors and five windows chose one and leave and I'll change the locks. But, now I think, as I'm getting older, there's some of them I do accept, there's some that I don't, and I kind of stand up and tell them how I feel about it . . . if my parents don't like it, I'll bluntly say, 'this is the way I'm going to go with it. I'll take your advice into consideration.' But, I kind of do stuff on my own, but still have their input (Melanie, second-generation, age 26).

. . . a lot of the times you can use their life, and their choices to your advantage. Because if you look at my parents, my dad left home well before the age of 18, and lived in various countries. So for him to deny us of doing the same, we just bring up situations where 'you traveled the world, so why can't we.' 'But you're girls'

> would be the answer. But then we remind him, or tell him, 'you know, you taught us what's right and wrong, we're old enough to know the difference, we're smart enough to make the right choices.' (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

Linda notes how, through compromise, she can find agreements with her parents. With such compromise she is keeping her freedom, while at the same time not taking all the control her parents have on her out of their hands.

> It's a bit of give and take, really . . . I show to my parents, yes I can go out, but yes, I can stay home when I want to. They complain, 'we never see you anymore,' 'you're never home anymore.' Well then you kind of make the compromise, and say to yourself, 'maybe I should stick around for the next 2 or 3 nights.' Or, they think you're going out too often, well maybe cut it down and don't go out as much. You just got to give them that sense of that bit of control left over you . . . you give a bit of it and you take a bit of it . . . (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

We see the above participants' progressive movement, in that they have defied their restrictive upbringing to come to the point of discussing with their parents their feelings regarding the restrictions placed on them and eventually making compromises with their parents. Yet, as noted, participants display much resistance and defiance to their parents' rules and expectations.

> . . . I'm not going to do things just to please them, if it doesn't please me. Hopefully, we're both happy . . . hopefully, we'll meet . . . it is a struggle (Kelly, second-generation, age 34).

> There's only so many times you can fight, and there's only so many times you can tell somebody something, or where you get to a point where you say and listen to them, and get 'yeah, yeah.' So, whatever, you're pretty much going to do what you want, to a certain extent (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

> . . . at some point it's my life. Like, the guy that I'm seeing right now, they don't accept it, they really don't. But, we've been together for two years. It is my life. They have to kind of get over it, someday . . . you're still under their roof, and you kind of have to follow their rules. But, this is something different . . . you can't

> accept all of it. I do think about it. I know they don't care for the situation . . . but it all comes down to, it's about me . . . like, it can't always be their way, you know. And, some things, yeah, it doesn't matter, 'okay, fine, I won't do this. Or I'll do that.' But, this is my life, so (Kelly, second-generation, age 34).

As we can see, defying parental expectations and rules distresses these women. They do not want to lose their family's respect. The socialization messages ingrained in them are strong, and cause them distress and conflict. Yet, their own desire for freedom in their life choices is stronger. As Linda states, surpassing the boundaries is the only way she sees in being able to live her life as she chooses.

> It's a little more flexible because I'm 24, and I've sort of reached the boundaries of going 'I don't care what you think of what I'm doing, because I'm just going to do it.' It's pushing the limits and getting freedom, because that's about the only way your going to do it (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

As participants may show resistance, they see their parents as showing equal resistance in not trying to understand their daughters' point of view.

> . . . essentially, there are moments where the things are simply not negotiable . . . it's really hard to deal with it, and it's not always possible to negotiate it, broker an understanding or any of that kind of thing . . . in some ways you talk about it, and you just keep talking past each other (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

> . . . you are expected to come home. If you don't come home, there's shit to pay, there's hell to pay if you don't come home . . . it's a non-negotiable thing at all. There's no questions about it, you have to be coming home, that's all there is to it, is you must come home. Like it doesn't matter how long you stayed out, you have to come home (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

As many first-generation parents believe that they must protect their daughters from the broader community, they are much more protective of daughters than sons, and socialization messages emphasize dependence. Moreover, patriarchal ideologies are

persistent Southern Italian-Canadian boys often grow up with much more freedom and independence than allowed to Southern Italian-Canadian girls.

> It was somewhat difficult growing up, in the sense that there was a double standard where my brothers were allowed to do things, had more freedom of going out, versus myself being a female (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

> I know for me, living in a house of mainly boys, I find that my parents are more lenient on them, they let things slide sometimes (Melanie, second-generation, age 26).

As participants note, in the case of dating, males are given free reign compared to women.

> God forbid you take to a boy, let alone have one over. It's all got to be above board. If you're a guy, have a girlfriend over, go to a different room, no problems. If you're a girl, yeah right, whatever, no I don't think so . . . (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

> . . . when I go out it still comes up. Well, it's okay that my brother's not home and it's 2 o'clock, but if I walk in, they wonder, it's a big deal. So, there's that double standard in that way. Even with him, my brother with his girlfriend, it's okay if [he] goes to camp with her or whatever, it's okay. Like, they still say it's not very nice, you shouldn't be staying with her. But, he doesn't nearly get hassled as much as if I had a boyfriend . . . the man is viewed as it's not a big problem for them to stay. Like they don't get as much flack for it. It's not a really negative thing. I think it's more negative if us women do it. Like if I stayed, like at a boyfriend's place, even if I came home late but I didn't stay the night, it would be like, 'she's probably up to no good because she's still there' (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

Southern Italian-Canadian parents often give their sons autonomy and leniency when it comes to dating relationships. Although they may not always approve, the patriarchal ideology of *gallismo* (Belliotti 1995), which is "the cult of male virility" (Moraes-Gorecki 1988), nonetheless often exists. They give their sons autonomy, with the belief that boys will be boys. However, for women, there is much importance placed on *la serietà*, that is

a woman is to be chaste. Thus, restrictions are placed on their daughters in order to keep the daughters' reputations intact. The socialization of sons and daughters is generally different, where with their sons *gallismo* is emphasized, with daughters *serietà* is emphasized.

Equally important to note, not every Southern Italian-Canadian family is as restrictive as noted above. With Jennifer, it seems that her parents did not reproduce the patriarchal ideologies which are found with the other participants' families.

> Actually, my family I find were very lenient with me . . . I think a lot of it had to do with, because they knew who my friends were. They knew a lot about who I was going out with, or what not . . . so, with that sort of thing, they weren't as strict as most people think. And I did have an older brother . . . when he turned 19 and started going out, they were more strict with him . . . (Jennifer, second-generation, age 22).

> My family, my mother especially, was quite liberal, compared to many of my other cousins. Not so much compared to my non-Italian friends. But, there was definitely a degree of freedom that my mother allowed us, that I found that a lot of other women/girls of Southern Italian parentage actually didn't get (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

Moreover, as Margaret recounts, because both her parents worked full-time, specifically since her mother worked full-time, this allowed her more freedom and less supervision, compared to her Southern Italian-Canadian friends. As noted by Parke and Buriel (1998) "daughters of working [sic] as compared to nonworking [sic] mothers often perceive the woman's role as involving freedom of choice, satisfaction, and competence . . ." (518). Thus, Margaret perceives her mother as more liberal than her aunts.

In summary, the socialization of a Southern Italian-Canadian girl can generally be

described as restrictive and sheltered, emphasizing *serietà*. Southern Italian-Canadian women are often raised to live their lives within the boundaries placed on them by their families. However, many of these women resist and defy this aspect of their upbringing. At the same time, the socialization messages are so deeply ingrained in them that defying such messages can cause them much distress and conflict. Thus, negotiation, compromise, and secrecy are important strategies in trying to keep some aspects of their upbringing, while trying to achieve personal independence.

4.4 Issues of Biculturalism

In the following section I examine the issues of living in a "dual-cultural context" (Parke and Buriel 1998), that is Southern Italian and Canadian. I discuss the struggle of many Southern Italian-Canadian women in trying to keep a balance between these two cultures.

Ramirez (1983, cited in Parke and Buriel 1998) defines biculturalism as "the simultaneous adoption of the language, values, and social competencies of two cultures" (500). Growing up bicultural can be a struggle. A child's socialization is "heavily influenced by the socialization goals of their parents' culture" (497); this is often the case with Southern Italian immigrant culture. One is given the socialization messages of one culture, yet the socialization messages of the broader community may be quite different. Thus trying to balance the two can create much conflict. Similarly, Gambino (1974) notes these women may be Canadian, yet outmoded Southern Italian values are ingrained in

them. Tomasi (1985) further notes that Italian-Canadian parents may want their children to conform to *la via vecchia*, yet their children want the freedom to choose to be Canadian. Participants noted similar findings to those of Gambino (1974) and Tomasi (1985),

> . . . you're dealing with a European family, but then you've got kids that are going into Canadian lifestyle. For me it's kind of, you know, I find it sometimes tough . . . (Melanie, second-generation, age 26).

> . . . you see families that have been in Canada for generations, that have kind of let go of a few things. So, it is a struggle. Your friends are doing something, or going somewhere, and this group isn't (Kelly, second-generation, age 34).

Buriel and Cardoza (1993, cited in Parke et al. 1998) note that with the second-generation, the "child behaviors shift in an individualistic direction, particularly in the area of ethnic identity" (498). Many first-generation Italians prefer "Italian," where their children prefer Italian-Canadian or Canadian.

> . . . you grow up with sort of difficulty with being Italian-Canadian, because you've got your traditional Italian parents, who've instilled the traditional Italian values, yet you're growing up Canadian. With the freedom, and the differences, and the different values, different outlook on life, and what society perceives women and men, and relationships, and this and that. And it conflicts. And it's very difficult to balance both, in order to kind of satisfy each side, like your parents and yourself. Because you consider yourself Canadian, you don't really consider yourself Italian, because, yes you have Italian parents, yes you come from an Italian background, but you are not born in Italy, you were born in Canada, so you consider yourself, first and foremost Canadian, more than you're going to consider yourself Italian. It's like Italian is my background, but it is not who I am, you know. Canadian is who I am. But I grew up with Italian values. And it's a very hard thing to balance both. Because one's freedom, and one's restrictive (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

Nicole notes, due to the difference between her socialization and that of her schoolmates,

being with friends became very difficult for her,

> . . . I found that I just didn't want to be with friends, like people who weren't the same way as I was, because it would just be so hard to. Then I'd really have to be struggling between both. Like I found that really hard . . . like 'aren't you coming to the dance,' 'no no,' 'why?,' 'because I can't,' 'what do you mean you can't?' (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

Participants state their Southern Italian-Canadian parents kept the values that they brought with them to Canada from Southern Italy, and thus while these values have evolved in Southern Italy, for many Southern Italian-Canadians they did not. Consequently, the socialization messages are often even more different than those in the broader community.

> . . . the immigrants that came from Italy, maintained a lot of their ways and a lot of their thinking when they came to Canada. Whereas, in Italy itself, I think over time, they were able to kind of change with the times. And, just by what I saw around me with immigrants who were here, obviously they didn't change with the times with over there, but they kept in their minds the mentality that was there at the time when they immigrated from there, and that's how they raised their families, with that old sort of thinking and mentality. Where over there, they changed, you know. And, I found that to be a really, really big difference. They wouldn't change with the times here, because they felt that was the tradition of the Italian ways and things like that, and didn't realize that back in their homeland that things were changing, and they never did. And I don't blame them in some regards, because they did the best that they could. That's the values that they grew up with, and they felt that they wanted to instill in their families, and their children and whatnot, not realizing that the times were changing, and you know, maybe could've loosened up somewhat, but didn't because they felt was the right thing to do, that they were doing the right thing (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

> Yeah, you find that especially when people move away from a country, they bring with them these values, and there it's changed, but they think it's the same as when they left (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

> Times have changed, their thinking hasn't. That's a lot of the problem I find. Times have changed, times are evolving. People are becoming more liberated, more socially involved, yet their thinking, parent thinking, anyway, with their children, have not. They have not entered the 21st century. They have not kept up

> their thinking with the times. They are stuck in the past. And that's a very very hard struggle. Very, very hard struggle (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

In summary, second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian women may be expected to live by the Southern Italian values ingrained in them by their parents, and may find it difficult to balance that with the socialization messages of the broader community. Nevertheless, participants find a balance, as well as show an understanding of why their parents raised them as they did. Thus, unlike the findings of Bellicoso (1999), who found that many second-generation Italian-Canadians feel as though they must deny their Italian heritage to find a balance in their lives, the women of this study did not express similar feelings of denial.

4.5 The Image of the "Good Girl/Woman" and the "*Puttana*"

In the following section I explore the distinct and opposing images of Southern Italian-Canadian women, that is, the social categories of the "good girl/woman" and the "*puttana*" (whore). Also, I discuss the effects that they may have on Southern Italian-Canadian women.

As noted by Perry (1978), to be viewed as a "good girl," in Italian-Canadian culture is to be chaste and obedient. I similarly found that the image of the "good Italian girl" is primarily described by participants, as a woman who is virtuous. Socialization within Southern Italian-Canadian culture often reinforces the patriarchal ideologies of the virgin bride.

. . . she stays a virgin . . . 'Oh, can't touch me, no, can't have that! (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

They're always pure and a virgin on their wedding night (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

. . . I've heard that from a lot of my cousins, 'Oh, she was married as a virgin. She was such a good girl' . . . the 'good Italian girl' in white . . . (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

Furthermore, patriarchal ideologies of a woman's domesticity, respect, and nurturance are also reinforced in these Southern Italian-Canadian women's upbringing.

She grows up the same as her mother, she follows the same things as her mother. Mom cooks, cleans around the house, so does she. She helps her out, does the same things (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

Catherine – The 'good girl,' she goes to church every Sunday. She cleans her brothers' dishes, she helps Mama around the house, without having to be asked she vacuums, stuff like that. She's very respectful . . . like when you see someone on the street you never not say hello . . .
Susan – She does the cheek to cheek with the *comare* . . .
Catherine – Yeah, that's it. Like when you walk into a room and see a bunch of people you know you have to greet all of them and be very respectful . . . even if you don't know who they are. My best friend, she's Italian too, and I remember I had to go to her house, and I was at her house all the time when we were young, there was people I had no clue who they were, but I walked up and kissed all of them. She's a 'good girl,' yeah.
(Susan, age 24; Catherine, age 20; second and third-generation)

. . . this whole 'good girl' thing is also one who goes around. I'm seen as this terrible, terrible person. I don't go around and do all these visiting relative things. I don't visit around. I don't visit my aunts or my uncles during holidays . . . I moved back to . . . I gather that someone gave me a blast for this. I was expected to go around and see all the aunts and uncles. Well, I didn't do that. I sort of inadvertently insulted them all, because I didn't go pay them respect, and that was something that was sort of expected of me, and I didn't do it . . . part of me says, oh I'm not going to cater to that. Then part of me says, geez, I should really do that, these people are my relatives. So, how do I balance off not going over there,

> and going over there. I still fight this idea of being a 'good' niece. It's not that I'm totally outside of that, I understand that that's expected of me, and I try not to do otherwise. You know, to a point I give in. I feel guilty, I feel guilty . . . (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).
>
> A 'good Italian girl' is always very respectful, very loving, always there for their families. More of a nurturing type person. Very moral, lots of values (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

These expectations of kindness, nurturance and respect are very healthy; however, the fact that women are pressured to behave this way is unhealthy. One may want to have these qualities out of their own choosing, not out of fear. Equally important, the participants' statements suggest a discourse of obedience and silence. Accordingly, the image of the "good girl" appears as that of a child.

> . . . very polite, and you don't speak unless you're spoken to, and you stand there and keep quiet and you smile and you nod . . . (Linda, second-generation, age 24).
>
> I think that a part of it is, for younger girls especially, you do your job, but you don't really speak unless you're spoken to . . . (Susan, second and third-generation, age 24).
>
> In an Italian dinner party . . . I felt it when I was 17 or 18, sort of expectations of helping with the clean-up and helping with the food preparations. That marked you as a 'good girl.' It marked you as a 'good girl' absolutely. And, I think before you're married, you're expected to do those things. The more you do, the more praise you get. In part because they can see that you'd make a good wife . . . if you don't do it, you're putting into question the goodness of you as a woman (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

Furthermore, from Margaret's statement, we see the emphasis placed on the patriarchal ideology of domesticity as a sign of a woman's worth and virtue. To the older generation of women, domesticity is a woman's job, which she takes pride in. The younger generation, on the other hand, view domesticity as a job which they do not want to be

expected to do. They do not see it as a sign of their worth and virtue.

As noted in the literature review, the dominant image of the Southern Italian-Canadian woman is by far wife and mother. Accordingly, as stated by many of these participant's, once the "good Italian girl" marries, she is to become the "good Italian woman." Again, the patriarchal ideology of domesticity and selfless nurturance is echoed in the participants' statements of what it means to be a "good Italian woman."

> . . . when you get married it's honour and obey thy husband. And you know, sure you can have a job, but who cares if he gets home before you, you better make sure his dinner is on the table, and he's well-cared for . . . like, God forbid he should pick up a vacuum and help you vacuum. He shouldn't know how to use it, he shouldn't know how to clean, he shouldn't know how to diaper a child, he shouldn't know how to cook for himself (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

> . . . they cook, they clean, they take care of the men in their house . . . I think that's basically it, someone that cooks and cleans, and takes care of all of their family (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

> The 'good Italian wife' is more woman, is one who's a good wife, and is one who is extremely stoical, and giving, and uncritical . . . extremely obedient to her husband's whims and desires (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

> . . . and of course the issue that is the most dominant is the selfless, all giving mother, sacrificing everything for her children . . . there's this idea that she lives exclusively to take care of her family (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

Caroline notes, a woman may feel as if she, as a person, is being engulfed by this image of the "good Italian girl" who is an extremely obedient woman.

> . . . what happens is when somebody, especially when they know you're Italian, okay, other people have this image of you because you're Italian, and I don't know if we attract certain people because they expect us to put up with everything and stuff. They just always think, because people have always said, "oh if you marry an Italian they'll never, you can do whatever you want, basically they're there for life," okay. And I don't know if people take advantage of that, or what it is about

> that, but they really think that you'll put up with everything. And it's almost like we drown, and when you chose to listen to that, and you chose to fall into that 'good girl' Italian life, yeah you start getting this weight on your shoulder. And with myself, I was a completely different person, there was nothing left of me. I was a yes person, like everything was 'okay okay,' I didn't even recognize myself. Because that's the way I was raised. But, then all of a sudden my parents were going 'why are you letting that happen? Why are you letting this happen?" Well, what choice do I have, it's either I put up with it, or there's war in the house. So, then that's when, well, you can't let everyone boss you around like that. So, then it's like it's confusing, well, it's one or the other. I either stick to the family, choosing to be this good Italian 'good girl,' or I have a brain in my head and I start acting like an independent person who actually knows what she's doing, and the two aren't gonna, you can't be both. You can't be both. I was always fighting that stupid image too (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

As Caroline recalls, she became the "good girl" beyond the point of recognition, as she was raised to be. She asserts that one cannot be strong and independent and be the "good girl" at the same time. Thus, choices must be made to either follow the values of your upbringing or your desires for yourself and your future.

On the other side of the "good Italian girl" image is the *puttana.* These are two distinct and mutually exclusive categories, there is no in between.

> You're either the pure breed girl who grew up listening to her parents, and doing what their parents wanted them to do. Or, you, 'oh my God you slept with someone before you got married.' Or, you take the pill. Or, the ultimate disgrace, you're divorced! . . . you're the black sheep. Literally, you're the black sheep of the family. There's a lot of expectations put on you (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

> . . . the 'good girls' are that they're always pure and a virgin on their wedding night. As opposed to the floozies that are out to all hours of the night, and slept around. That's pretty much it (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

The discourse of "virginity is good" and "sex is bad," permeates the participants' statements. Likewise, Ricciutelli (1987), in her narrative recalls, Italian-Canadian girls are

warned that, "'good' girls did not allow themselves to be touched . . ." (25). The ideal of virginity mainly stems from the notion that otherwise a woman is seen as "damaged goods," that is, a *puttana*. Emphasized in the participants' statements is the patriarchal ideology that men respect and desire virgins, and expect their future wives to be virgins. Thus, a woman who is viewed as a *puttana* is often expected to live an undesirable life.

> . . . if you sleep with a lot of guys, then nobody wants to marry you because you're used goods. I think that's more so where the save yourself for your husband, and your virginity for your husband comes from . . . (Anne, second-generation, age 27).
>
> You're not a nice girl even if you've had sex once, because you're not a virgin anymore. And they think that the man expects that from her when they get married (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).
> [I've been taught] 'don't do it until you're married. Don't do it until you're married, because . . . guys will look at you differently (Melanie, second-generation, age 26).
>
> Sex is something you do when you're married, when you have a ring on your finger, not before hand, because before hand you're a slut or you're a whore or you're a tramp. So, your life is going to hell, very quickly (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

Accordingly, with importance placed on marriage for these women, many expectations were placed on them by their parents when it came to dating. That is, they should be careful of their reputation. The "good girl" is not to date "that much" or "too early," since reputations can be damaged easily, even without anything actually happening on her part.

> . . . it was typical for males to look for, if they would have intentions of getting married or things like that, that it was, yeah, look for the 'good girl,' the one that hasn't gone out as much, or that kind of thing. So, yeah, there was the pressure, I guess, of our parents trying to raise the girls in that regard, so yeah, in preparation

> for when the time came for marriage, and things like that, that that was something that was in Italian culture was very important. And, there you go where the lack of freedom . . . if you were known to go out with several fellows, well, you were given a bad image . . . if you were one to go out a lot, or go out with a bunch of guys, it was nothing for people . . . to give you a name of a slut type of thing. Not necessarily meaning that you slept with anybody, but it was just the image of portraying someone who's, kind of the terminology of loose, or just going out from guy to guy, that was frowned upon, and you were not considered, I guess, 'marriage material' (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

> . . . you know the biggest thing, if you had too many boyfriends, no one's going to want to marry you, no one's going to take you seriously . . . I have a cousin who's had many boyfriends, and people talk about her so much. And I think how stupid can that be, because she's had boyfriends, so they haven't worked out. To the point where she moved away. So, like big reputation. It's awful, awful, just because she's had so many boyfriends. There's nothing wrong with her, well in my opinion anyway, but I guess to the Italian community, she's a target for everyone to talk about. It's sad . . . (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

> Catherine – You don't have a boyfriend until you're 19, 20 years old.
> Susan – Until you're ready to get married, 'this one.'
> Catherine – And you don't change boyfriends very many times . . .
> Susan – . . . oh, yeah. I think rumors spread vividly.
> (Susan, age 24; Catherine, age 20 second and third-generation)

> . . . then you got the ones that had like a different boyfriend all the time, they weren't considered as nice, I guess, or went out all the time, seen at the bars all the time (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

As seen with the participants, individuals "come to know the categories that exist, the categories they are usually assigned to, the categories it is desirable . . . to aim at" (430) and which categories to avoid (Bugental and Goodnow 1998). These women are fully aware of the social categories and images of the good girl and the *puttana*. These women were socialized to clearly understand the expectations placed on them, and the reasons for these exceptions.

In summary, the image of the "good Italian girl" often reinforces patriarchal ideologies of the ideal woman as one who is virtuous, respectful, domestic, obedient, and nurturing. The socialization of these Southern Italian-Canadian women emphasizes the message of "virginity is good" and "sex is bad." The ideal of virginity mainly stems from the notion that a woman who is viewed as "getting around," or sexually active, is seen as "damaged goods," that is, a *puttana*. Thus, these restrictions and pressures are placed on women as not to ruin her chances for marriage. However, having to live up to this "good girl" image may place a great deal of emotional strain on a woman. She may feel as if she as a person is completely taken over by this image.

4.6 Issues of Family Expectations

In the following section I examine the family expectations placed on Southern Italian-Canadian women. As noted in the literature review, having to live up to these expectations puts much pressure on these women, pressure which can be emotionally straining.

> It's not been a healthy situation for me to live in, because I've had so much pressure and expectations, and whatever else placed upon me, that it's too stressful, because I'm the youngest female, I'm the only female, and I have these sets of rules that I have to live by, and they're almost impossible for me to do that (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

Having to live up to the "good girl" image can become overwhelming. As one participant states, she as a person disappears in her struggle with this image, or is in constant conflict with it.

> There's no such thing as being yourself, all there is are these negotiations between these different expectations . . . I think that I've learned in my old age that they just don't come together, and when they do sort of come together, I just sort of have to play it by ear. And so I feel like I'm constantly playing. And I think that individuality, that's what it is, we're always playing . . . we're always trying to reduce conflict . . . the reduction of conflict . . . (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

As Margaret notes, she can never be herself for she feels she is always in limbo. She is constantly playing different roles in every different situation, in attempts to avoid conflicts. Linda and Margaret are distressed and feel that they must play different roles, for the reason that they do not want to lose what they have with their family and their community. Moreover, the socialization messages are so strong that they become internalized, and in turn, a struggle to not reproduce these expectations develops.

> . . . you internalize them growing up . . . 'Oh yeah, that's what people think I should be doing.' So, I think when you grow up being taught that that's the way things should be, it's hard not to reproduce them at some level (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

> I try to get home early enough so that I'm still pleasing them. At some points I've gotten to 'why am I doing this? Who am I living my life for?' You know I shouldn't really care that they care about what time I come home. That's something I really shouldn't be concerning myself with, but at the same time I do, so I try to kind of, do the get home not to late . . . (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

This internalization of expectations is seen in Margaret's earlier statement, in trying to be a "good" niece and visit her relatives, as she is expected to do. This internalization is further seen in Linda's statement about her struggle in trying to please her parents.

In the Southern Italian-Canadian community, there is a strong expectation for marriage, as Jennifer notes,

> It is always in the back of your mind, because you're raised with that mentality, that you should be married and have children (Jennifer, second-generation, age 22).

Accordingly, as stated, often along with this expectation of marriage is the expectation of reproduction. The dominant discourse of these women asserts that the role of a wife is to produce children. In the eyes of many Southern Italian-Canadians, a strong tie exists between marriage and reproduction.

> . . . they expect you to have a child 9 months after you fucking get married. That's what it's all about to them, grandkids once you get married (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

> I've had cousins of my generation say to me, without flinching, that marriage is about reproduction. This all came up of course because I got married and didn't have kids for nine years . . . and so if you put it off for nine years . . . it brings up a lot of, sort of anxiety. Because some of my cousins believed that, and have said that openly. Because I have another cousin who put off having children . . . she herself, has been told by female cousins of her age, her generation, as well as their fathers, 'what's wrong with you? You haven't had any kids yet' . . . marriage is tied to conception in many of my relatives eyes . . . it's not something you do in and of yourself. When you get married, it's to have children. When you don't . . . you begin being questioned, and all sorts of anxiety around why those two things are not going together (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

Pregnancy for an unmarried Southern Italian-Canadian woman, on the other hand, may place her in a position of unbearable shame and ostracism. Margaret recounts the story of her sister's teenage pregnancy, and the shame that was placed on her,

> . . . my sister had a child . . . she got pregnant when she was 16 . . . she had the baby, and she gave it up for adoption . . . my sister was just a *puttana* from there on in . . . it was like 'oh, poor --,' my mother, 'poor --, what is she going to do with this kid,' who sort of has brought more or less disrespect on your family, and how is she going to deal with that . . . with my sister, it took everything away from her . . . she went away to university, there was no money, my parents were not going to support her going away to university. But there was also relatively no arguments about her going away . . . [she] was a write off in a way. She needed to be away

> from [home], since she was such a black mark on the family. At least, I think that's how my mother thought about that 10 years ago or so . . . she was damaged goods . . . [she was] going to pave herself a certain life, when she got pregnant . . . she was going to be like this spinster (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

The dominant discourse surrounding an unmarried teenage pregnancy is that of the *puttana*; she is thus "used goods." As patriarchal ideology states, a man desires a virgin bride, consequently, a teenage pregnancy seals a woman's fate as a spinster.

In summary, the lives of many young Southern Italian-Canadian women are externally guided (Lorde 1984). They are expected to conform to the desires and expectations of others. Their "life endeavors" are not only to bring satisfaction to themselves, but are to satisfy the dreams that their family members have for them. They often are *told* by those around them what will satisfy and complete their lives. Southern Italian-Canadian women may have many expectations placed upon them, which become a struggle not to internalize. The socialization messages of Southern Italian-Canadian parents are strongly ingrained in these women. Moreover, Southern Italian-Canadian women may not want to risk losing the warmth and closeness to their family. Thus, conflict and distress arise in trying to negotiate and play different roles in order to please both themselves and their family.

4.7 In the Eyes of "Others"

In the following section I discuss the issue of "others," that is, anyone outside the immediate family. Moreover, I discuss the importance and pressure in how the family and

their daughter are seen in the eyes of "others" in the Southern Italian-Canadian community.

Much of the restrictiveness placed on Southern Italian-Canadian women by their families is due to the worry around how they will be perceived in the eyes of others in their Southern Italian-Canadian community.

> They're worried about what other families and what other people are going to think of them as parents, and as their child having a bad reputation . . . like what are people going to say . . . it's amazing, because I always say, what people, what are people going to say (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

As Caroline states, there exists this idea that "everyone is watching," and if one does not follow the patriarchal ideology of the "good girl," "others" will "talk" about her and her parents. That is, the community will "talk" about their failure to be "good" parents. In turn, the parents are pressured to live up to these expectations.

Pallotta-Chiarolli et al. (1994) state, that the second-generation grows up being aware of "*gli altri*" ("others") or "*che dira la gente*" (what will people say) by which they should determine their actions. Thus, their socialization messages from their parents are reinforced by the notion that "others" in the community have the same expectations as their parents.

> . . . if you have a boyfriend, even if you're engaged to be married, you may not at any time go on a trip or stay at the camp . . . people might talk . . . 'ehhh, it's not nice. It's not nice to do that. You know, what are people saying' . . . (Catherine, second and third-generation, age 20).

> You know what's really scary, those people don't even live in the same house, and you don't see them on a daily basis, and they don't affect your life at all. But yet they have such control over the quality of your life . . . making decisions based on these people . . . what's your family going to think . . . I mean, how much pressure is that on a person, it's hard enough to make a decision just for yourself (Caroline,

second-generation, age 35).

Thus, these Southern Italian-Canadian women feel pressured, in that they must judge all of their actions on what these "others" will think of them and their family. They feel that their lives are in the hands of these "other" people, and that they must follow the expected ideal of the "good girl." Therefore, they must consider everyone but themselves.

In summary, the dominant discourse is generally that one must follow patriarchal expectations because "everyone is watching." These women feel that they live their lives in constant judgement. They further feel that they must listen to and act in accordance with the dominant discourse of the "good girl." Thus, these Southern Italian-Canadian women, may not feel that they are living their lives solely for themselves. Their "life endeavors" (Lorde 1984) are not only to bring satisfaction to themselves, but are to satisfy the expectations of their family members and "others" in the Southern Italian-Canadian community. Thus, the lives of these Southern Italian-Canadian women are externally guided. The fear of stepping outside those expectations and risking the ostracism that may come with it can be paralyzing. They are expected to conform to the desires and expectations of others. They are expected to live their lives according to certain beliefs, within the boundaries placed on them by their Southern Italian-Canadian community.

4.8 Issues of Sexuality

In the following section I explore issues of sexuality for Southern Italian-Canadian women. I will discuss the importance of virginity, the lack of sex education, the shame

placed on sex, as well as the effects of this for Southern Italian-Canadian women.

As noted in the literature review, it is implicitly known, if not explicitly stated, that virginity until marriage is fully expected of Italian-Canadian daughters. That is, references regarding virginity and sex allow their daughter to "notice, interpret and encode the expectation" (Bugental and Goodnow 1998: 435) of virginity.

> It's always a big thing that if you're not a virgin and you're getting married, it's a big thing. You have to be a virgin when you get married. Yeah, that was kind of a big topic . . . from my dad, it was just through other families and what they've done, and if their daughters were pregnant or whatever, 'well you know, she's not a virgin. I can't understand these kids, why are they not raised as they should be' . . . from my mom, it was generally, 'well, a good girl is supposed to be a virgin' . . . the virginity thing was always a big thing with my mom, in terms of, you always have to make sure that you're a virgin when you get married. Because then you're a nice girl (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

As we can see from Nicole's statement, Southern Italian-Canadian girls are given the message that "nice girls" are virgins, and sex is shameful and is viewed as a failure of "parenting." Equally important, the ideal of virginity further discloses the patriarchal ideology of the sacred purity of a woman, which is to be saved for one's future husband.

> No premarital sex. And virginity is something you give to your husband. You save yourself for your husband on your wedding night. That's pretty much how we were taught . . . (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

> . . . her words to me was 'a woman is like a white piece of paper, the minute that it's touched, it's not white anymore' . . . a woman being like a white piece of paper, a white piece of paper is clean and pure. And, once she's touched by a man, or whatever, you're not pure anymore, and their belief was that to be pure until you got married . . . it was something very important and sacred . . . I'll go back to the words of my mom and the white paper, and that to this day always stuck in my mind. Because, that's in her way, trying to tell me was that it was something that was very important to them. And that you remain a virgin until you got married. That's how they were raised, and that's what they believed in, and

> that's how they truly believed that the Italian daughters raised in that second-generation, that that's how it's supposed to be also (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

This ideal of virginity may be ingrained in one's mind from childhood. In these Southern Italian-Canadian homes, discussions surrounding sex disclose the notion that virginity is what is right, it is what is good. As we can see in the following statement, Linda overcame the expectation of virginity, and subsequent disappointment, to make her own choices in life. For Linda, her resistance comes from her desire for the freedom to make her own decisions, that is, the "erotic" in her.

> . . . you remain one until you're married. That simple . . . that's what's ingrained, and been ingrained in you, and even the hint of having sex, or like myself, sleeping over at your boyfriend's house, that was pretty heavy, pretty hard (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

As noted by Zavella (1997) in Latin-American culture, issues of sexuality are "nondiscursive." Although, for many study participants the ideal of virginity is explicitly stated, a few note that virginity is never explicitly discussed; it is simply known that it is expected of them.

> . . . you stay a virgin until you're married . . . I don't know how, I just know I knew. And, they must have sensed that I knew, and that's why they never said anything. Because my father never had to say anything, my mother never had to say anything. I just knew, and I can't even explain it to you. It was never discussed, I just knew (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

> In unspoken terms, you wait til you get married (Kelly, second-generation, age 34).

> . . . although I was never told directly, if there were these expectations on me in terms of virginity . . . it was always coded in the sense that I was to be married, to which I grew up hearing over and over again . . . my mother was always very proud

> with the fact that, her father had asked her, when she was growing up in Italy, to be married in white. And she delivered on that promise, unlike, unlike many of her sisters. So, there was always this tension of being like her, and not being like her own sisters, siblings (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

As first-generation Southern Italian-Canadian parents were raised with the same patriarchal ideologies, they feel that this is the "right" way to raise their own children, and this is the way for their children to live their lives. A woman who does not follow such expectations may be labeled as a *puttana* by her family and the Southern Italian-Canadian community. Thus, as these women do not want to lose the respect of their families and community, as Linda states, one begins to play the role of "good girl" in trying to hide one's actions and true self from everyone.

> . . . girls in our culture have grown up to be virgins until they get married. That is what you are supposed to grow up with, that is what you are supposed to stick with. So, ones that don't get labeled. And, not kind ones I must say. And so, as kids you try to give your parents the impression that you're innocent, even though you're not, because your parents are going to think you're a whore, you're a slut, or you're this or you're that, if they suspect that you're sleeping with somebody (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

As Petrone (1995) states, in the past, for many Italian-Canadian families, sex education did not exist. Today, most forms of positive sex education for these Southern Italian-Canadian women are received in school or through friends. As in the past, often it does not exist in the home.

> . . . if I didn't have school to explain it all, there was sort of nothing there . . . my mother never talked about it, there was never any direct conversation about it (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

> Haaaahaaaa. I've never had a sexual discussion with my parents . . . not like sitting me down and discussing the facts of life. No. It would always be alluded to, or

> comments being made . . . you get most of your sex education in the school (Anne, second-generation, age 27).
>
> . . . basically through friends, that sort of thing. Through school, a little bit, but that's what everybody sort of gets. Other than that, it's been my own sort of research, or what not (Jennifer, second-generation, age 22).
>
> From my mom, no. Not at all (Christina, second-generation, age 40).
>
> No. Ha ha ha (Susan, second and third-generation, age 24).
>
> That's foreign to us. Whereas one of my friends, her mother, she's had a boyfriend for a year and a half or whatever, her mother actually asked her, 'oh, are you sleeping with this person? Are you using protection?' And I'm thinking, oh my God, I could never, I would never have that conversation . . . (Catherine, second-generation, age 20).
>
> No, not my family. No (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).
>
> No. For Southern Italian females their sex education comes in the school, it doesn't come at home. Because at home, dad's there with a shotgun 'hi, you're getting married.' There's your sex education. 'You had sex with him, now you're getting married.' Especially if you're pregnant . . . (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

In these Southern Italian-Canadian homes, sexual education consists of the explicitly stated ideal of virginity. A Southern Italian-Canadian daughter's sex education may often come as warnings, given by parents, that men desire virgin brides. Ricciutelli (1987) notes that Italian-Canadian girls are taught that sex "could only take place with your husband . . . my mother used to insist that . . . should I succumb . . . I would be 'spoiled' forever, and never be able to raise my eyes to a man again" (25). Likewise, many participants noted that when sex is talked about in the Southern Italian-Canadian home, it is generally negative and precautionary.

> It was always like those stories, like my mom has given me, like 'once you make your bed, you lie in it;' 'guys don't really look at you if you've gone to bed with other guys' . . . I'm still told that (Melanie, second-generation, age 26).
>
> . . . [my mother] was always, 'well you're not supposed to,' 'a nice girl wouldn't whatever,' you know (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).
>
> I guess the closest of sex talk my mother ever said was 'whatever you do, reflects on yourself. So, I can only teach you morals up to a point, then you make your own choices' (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

Accordingly, the general negativity and fear surrounding sex stems from the universal fear of pregnancy, from both the daughter and her parents. Such fear arises from the fact that it is the woman who is shamed, not the man. Men will have excuses made for them, that is, "boys will be boys."

> . . . my gut feeling is, is that, even if they get a girl pregnant, it's the girl's family that's going to have to deal with it, not them. But, when you're the daughter, it comes back to you. It's different. The girl gets pregnant, it's her family that has to deal with it. But, if it's the guy, and it's his son that get's another girl pregnant, what's that family going to have to deal with, not really his son . . . the consequences aren't as severe, so. Women are afraid. It's more of a fear factor. I don't know what they think's going to happen, but it's a fear factor. Probably of being totally rejected by your family. Whereas the son, even though he probably doesn't want to shame his family, the consequences aren't as severe, they'll excuse it away (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

One of the reasons sexual education may not be given in the Southern Italian-Canadian home is because virginity is seen to be mandatory, therefore it is deemed not to be needed.

> . . . they expect you to be a virgin until you get married. And then there's this thing, where mothers have this need to have the talk with their daughter on the day of their wedding or the night before, before their wedding, about sex, and it's like 'ah, yeah, even if I was a virgin, there's nothing that you're going to tell me that's gonna help'. . . (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

> You don't have to know about it, because you're expected not to do it until you get married. That's exactly why . . . they figure you'll figure it out on your wedding night. Or they figure your husband will teach you . . . (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).
>
> They don't discuss sex education, because why would they, you shouldn't be doing this (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

Moreover, as Pavich (1986) notes of Latin-American culture, I found that in Southern Italian-Canadian culture, as there is to be no premarital sex, birth control is viewed as not being needed. Thus, generally mothers do not discuss birth control with their daughters. These Southern Italian-Canadian parents want to believe that their daughters either are not sexually active, and will not become sexually active until they are married, and that, therefore, they do not need to know about birth control.

> . . . birth control . . . in Italian culture, they're not going to think you're doing it at 16. You're not going to do it until you get married (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).
>
> Well, if you assume your children are not having sex, then there is no reason to talk about birth control (Anne, second-generation, age 27).
>
> . . . the expectation from my mother was, the implicit expectation was, well you're not having sex, right, and you don't have to worry about birth control if you're not having sex, you're not going to have sex until you're married. But, it was all quite implicit (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

Pavich (1986) further states that in Latin-American culture "after marriage children are [seen as] a blessing, so there would be no reason to prevent their conception" (55). Likewise, as Catherine notes, socialization messages emphasize that sex occurs only within marriage, and sex is for the purpose of procreation, after which sex is seen as something "bad."

> . . . like the major vibe you get is that basically you have sex to procreate and after that's done it's dirty or something . . . you're never supposed to need birth control. You're celibate (Catherine, second and third-generation, age 20).

Thus, as Catherine notes, these Southern Italian-Canadian women are socialized to believe that sex is solely for the purpose of procreation, not for one's own sexual satisfaction. Similarly, Trujillo (1991) notes that Latin-American women are taught to suppress their sexual desires, which are seen as "taboo."

Another reason as to why a more positive form of sex education is not discussed in the Southern Italian-Canadian home may be that for many Southern Italian-Canadian parents, sex was never discussed with them. Gambino (1974) states, as participants similarly note, that many first and second-generation Italian-Canadian parents may find difficulty in discussing issues of sexuality with their children because many have been reared without sexual guidance by their own parents. Thus, having these discussions with their children becomes uncomfortable, since they do not know how to approach the issue.

> . . . they grew up in the thing, that there were just certain things that you didn't discuss. She was never open about certain things, because that's the way she was raised. So, we never got into great depths of discussions . . . (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

Moreover, as Gambino (1974) states, for many first and second-generation Southern Italian-Canadian parents, their own parents may have ingrained "sexual guilt in their children to preserve premarital chastity" (195). Thus, they may feel that it is not right to talk about it with their own children. That is, as the message "sex is bad" may have been ingrained in them, they have done the same with their own children.

> . . . it was one of those things that I knew if they weren't talking to me about it, then it was awkward for them. It was more or less that it was awkward. But, they talk to you about everything else you need to know in life. So, you figure, that if they were really okay on that, on talking about it, they would tell you that . . . I think part of it is because they weren't told about it. And, I think a big thing for them is that because they weren't told, they think they shouldn't tell us. I think you always go to your scripts in how you were brought up. So, it's always like, 'well, my parents didn't tell me. So, I guess it's not proper for me to tell them.' Basically, they just feel it's not proper for them to say anything, therefore that's why they feel the awkwardness in discussing it . . . (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

As Nicole states, her parents are retracing their past, in that, as their parents did, they do not discuss sex education in an informational and positive way. The absence of informational and positive discussion surrounding issues of sex in her parents' past has ingrained in them the ideology that sex is "bad." Consequently, they are repeating the past, the socialization messages of the past are being passed on to their children.

The fact that positive and informational sexual education is not received in the home, for many Southern Italian-Canadian women, negatively affects these women's sexual lives. Due to the shame surrounding sex, for many Southern Italian-Canadian women, as may be with women of many cultures, they come to fear pregnancy.

> The only thing that really really affects it is the whole if I get pregnant scenario, because you're not supposed to do that, you are not supposed to have a child prior to getting married . . . to them, children are a part of a marriage, not something that is created outside of a marriage before you even got married . . . (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

> It's not really a fear of having a relationship or actually having sex, it's a fear of pregnancy . . . she would kill us . . . that's the worst thing . . . yeah. Sword in your spine til you die (Susan, second and third-generation, age 24).

> Well, the thing is, personally, it just makes me paranoid . . . the fear . . . like I could

> never imagine [pregnancy] . . . I think, actually, that's what qualifies you as a bad girl . . . end of days (Catherine, second and third-generation, age 20).

Moreover, due to this lack of information, for many Southern Italian-Canadian women there is the fear of the unknown. That is, as students, they receive sexual education in school. However, that is mostly talk of reproduction and biology, not sexual acts, the intimacy, and the emotions involved. Thus, not knowing creates fear, uncomfortableness, and mystery towards sex.

> . . . that instilled part of the fear of not knowing, you know. And not being educated in some ways. Sure you got it in school, they had sex education in school, but it was more the talk of the biological side of it . . . I think a lot of it instilled a fear or a nervousness in me because of not knowing or not knowing what to expect, or how you're supposed to act or that kind of thing. So, I think the uncertainty made me really nervous about it, only because it wasn't something that, it wasn't openly discussed or talked about. So, you kind of almost think, it's sort of like taboo (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

> I wonder how it is . . . like at times I feel scared, scared. Like you didn't experience it, it wasn't talked about. So, you kind of feel, am I doing this the right way (Melanie, second-generation, age 26).

Also, the guilt of doing what is perceived as wrong, and the fear of going home to unknown consequences, may become overwhelming for these women.

> It affected my life to the point that I was so terrified of ever being in a situation like that . . . worried about getting in that situation where anything like that could happen to you, because you've got it hammered in your head that you're not supposed to get to that point. You're not supposed to get in that situation where that could happen . . . just terrified of going home. More like the guilt. More the guilt . . . of being worried about what's going to happen, getting to a point where you think you actually done something, part of the guilt thing . . . (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

As Nicole notes, the ingrained ideology that sex is "bad" leads her to believe that she has

done something wrong, that sexual activity is "wrong." As already stated, the dominant discourse surrounding sex is "virginity is good," "sex is bad." Accordingly, as participants note, this fear and guilt is validated by the fact that if it is found that a woman is sexually active then she may be subject to slander.

> . . . if you do sleep with someone before you get married, then you're the black sheep of the family. And they'll tell you you're the black sheep of the family, and they'll tell you you're a slut, and they'll tell you you're a whore, and they'll tell you that no one in your family respects you (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

Petrone (1995) notes that, in the past, in the Southern Italian-Canadian home, the sexual body was taboo. Even today, as participants state, talk of the sexual body, often may be nonexistent in the Southern Italian-Canadian home.

> . . . the body as a sexual body wasn't really talked about, not directly, no . . . I mean even talking about menstruation, I remember my mother saying, 'oh, that means you can have a baby now.' But, if I didn't have school to explain it all, there was sort of nothing there. My sister's friend taught her how to use a pad. The little thing, you think you're old enough now, why would you need someone to teach you that right. The thing of putting it on, rolling it up with toilet paper . . . so, at that point, when your body is going through these changes and stuff, it was quite quiet. There was quite nothing, no discussion of it, whatsoever (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

> Ha! It's not. It's not. Sex is not something that is discussed in the home *at all* . . . the body isn't talked about unless you have something physically, medically wrong with you. Or you have aches and pains or whatever . . . but, sex is taboo . . . the whole issue of birth control and everything else, that's like, whoa! (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

> Not at all. My mother never talked to me about it (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

> It was never a big topic of conversation, ha ha ha (Susan, second and third-generation, age 24).

> Growing up, not very much at all, it wasn't talked about (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).
>
> Very little. Next to none. Not at all (Christina, second-generation, age 40).
>
> Not at all . . . it never gets talked about (Jennifer, second-generation, age 22).
>
> . . . it was hardly talked about (Melanie, second-generation, age 26).
>
> Growing up, hardly anything . . . no, not big at all (Kelly, second-generation, age 34).

Accordingly, as with many cultures, self-exploration of the body is not discussed in the Southern Italian-Canadian home. As illustrated in the narratives of Ciresi (1994), Zavella (1997), and Patriarca (1997), self-exploration of the body is seen as very shameful. Moreover, it tends to be implicitly known as very negative and shameful by Southern Italian-Canadian daughters.

> That's not even a topic. I've never had anything on that, so I don't even know (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).
>
> It's not something that was ever discussed; ever (Anne, second-generation, age 27).
>
> Not talked about (Kelly, second-generation, age 34).
>
> I don't know how it is viewed in my family, because no one ever talks about sex in my family . . . you don't have sex so nothing else attached to that should be happening . . . (Linda, second-generation, age 24)
>
> Never [discussed]. If you did that, no one should really know about that. Anything that has to do with your body is very private (Catherine, second and third-generation, age 20).
>
> I can't say that's something discussed in our family. But, I imagine that if it was discussed it'd be something on how bad it is (Susan, second and third-generation).

> I don't think they know. My mother, I don't think that she would even know. I don't even think I know . . . you live in your parents' house, how much exploration can there be. I mean if you're in the bathroom for more than 5 minutes, 'are you okay, does your stomach hurt, what's wrong.' Okay, if you're not sleeping, what are you doing in your room, 'are you sick, are you okay, are you sick' . . . so, good luck to you if you go into the bathroom for more than 5 minutes. When you're taking a shower, you're washing (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

However, masturbation may be seen less negatively by some Southern Italian-Canadian parents; firstly since it is not intercourse, thus the woman remains a virgin, and her reputation may not be damaged; and secondly, she cannot become pregnant.

> That's interesting, it doesn't really come up. It doesn't really come up. It just seems to be this silence around it. Like it doesn't exist, but somehow it's at least more legitimate than having sex with someone else. Masturbation's not having sex in a way, although it's sexual, it's not having sex, not having penetration, intercourse, all that sort of thing. So, I think that in a way it seemed, although we never talked about it, it was okay, because at least it wasn't intercourse (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

A woman growing up in an environment where issues of sex and the sexual body are not openly discussed, or are seen negatively, may develop feelings of low self-confidence and shyness towards her sexuality. As noted by Haas and Shaffir (1998), our childhood socialization ". . . influences our self-concept . . . for as long as we live" (49) Consequently, as a woman journeys through young adulthood, the sexual negativity ingrained in her from childhood may still be omnipresent, and in turn showing itself in the form of sexual repression.

> . . . if you grew up in an environment where self-exploration, even sexuality was not promoted or talked about, discussed, you wouldn't feel so shy with your body (Catherine, second and third-generation, age 20).

Southern Italian-Canadian daughters, as a result of the socialization with regard to

sexuality, may feel shame and fear in allowing their parents to know that they are sexually active. As one participant notes, out of this shame and fear, she did not tell her mother that she was taking the birth control pill. She recounts the extent she took of hiding the fact that she was taking it.

> I totally kept it from my mother . . . I went to the doctor when I was 17, and when you first get birth control pills . . . they give you a 3 month supply. I remember for 3 months I would lug every single pill with me, that's the whole stock, because I didn't want my mother to find out . . . I was bringing them to school, I was bringing them to the complex, I was lugging around 3 months, and then even the empty containers, right, there's no way I was putting them in the trash at home . . . I always got this impression that she didn't want me to have sex. So, I didn't want her to know . . . this expectation that you're not supposed to be having sex . . . you internalize it, that there's something wrong with it, there's something bad about it (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

Accordingly, medicinal reasons are most often given by these women as to why they are taking the birth control pill. In turn, this displays the participants' resistance to sexual ideals and expectations. This resistance comes from the fact that the younger generation are from a different time. They are living in a time which is more sexually liberal, where birth control, and excuses for it, are more available to them.

> Endometriosis, or you're not getting regular periods, and the doctor wants you to have regular periods. Yeah, I've heard that, women of Italian heritage say that, 'oh the doctor's putting me on this because I have irregular periods.' Or 'it's to control my hormones so I'm not so flighty.' Or, the other thing too, some people say, 'oh, I get really bad periods, I'm on the pill to lighten them up, and not debilitate me for a couple of days,' that sort of thing. So, it's like medicinal, not for some other reason, not for sex (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

> In the event that you are on birth control, you hide it with the fact that you have massive abdominal cramps and you need it to regulate your period (Susan, second and third-generation, age 24).

> . . . you need it to clear up acne (Catherine, second and third-generation, age 20).

> I went and said to my mother that I want birth control. Well, the obvious reason why I wanted to do it, obvious, but to her you've got to give her this song and dance routine as why you want to go . . . I said it was for my period. And to this day I think she believes me about it. Cross my fingers, pray to God . . . you can't really sit there and tell your mom, by the way I want the pill because I'm having sex. Well, you're supposed to be a virgin until you get married, so there you go (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

However, by not being truthful as to why they really need birth control, participants are still playing the "good girl" role. Such strategies of secrecy allow these women to control their own lives, yet still retain their "good girl" image and the respect and warmth of their family and community.

As seen in the discussion of the patriarchal ideology of *machismo/gallismo* and *marianismo* in the literature review, a double standard often exists in Southern Italian-Canadian culture.

> . . . double standards, because I think . . . it was okay for the males if they have to have sex outside, but never for the females, never for the daughters (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

This double standard may be due to the fear of pregnancy for the woman, and consequently the shame brought by it. As unmarried sexually active women are generally seen as "bad," the woman is the shameful one who is at fault. Although, as previously noted, it may be looked down upon if a man gets a woman pregnant, it is more often expected of the man, and excuses are given as to why it occurred.

> Susan – I think it's strictly all about getting pregnant and getting caught. I don't think it's viewed as good if a guy gets someone else pregnant.
> Catherine – . . . it's the girl that's the dirty one.

Susan – That's what it seems like.
Catherine – It's not right for you to get someone pregnant. But, that someone that you got pregnant, well, it was more her fault than it was your's. That's what it seems like.
Susan – It seems like it's more taboo for women, yeah, because women can come back pregnant.
(Susan, age 24; Catherine, age 20; second and third-generation)

Often, when a Southern Italian-Canadian woman gets pregnant outside of marriage, she is seen differently in the eyes of others and she is slandered, unlike the man who helped her get pregnant for he was "just being a man."

> . . . if they got some chick knocked up, then it's their responsibility to get married to her. He's not going to be thought of any differently, she however will. It's like there's no onus on the guy, it's on her. She's screwed him up, she's fucked up his life. She didn't get pregnant on her own here, people (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

> . . . I think they think boys will be boys, because you know what, the fathers were probably like that. They worry about who their sons are going to marry. But, they don't worry what their sons are going to do up until. Now it's a little different though too, because usually then they worry if their son gets this girl pregnant, then he's going to have to be responsible, he can't just walk away. But, they themselves aren't ashamed, because it wasn't their daughter, it's the son. So, the slut girlfriend got pregnant. Okay, it wasn't the son. I don't know how to explain that. It's just the way they think . . . the consequences aren't as severe, they'll excuse it away (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

> . . . we have illegitimate children, but not just my sister's in our family, we have men who have screwed around and have fathered other kids. And I think, although we don't talk about it, it does come up in conversation, but the man who does that almost doesn't get a bad rap. I think in fact they get sort of more status about it. Fathering an illegitimate child, in a sense it's like, 'oh, this is so and so's.' Where, with my sister's situation, it was like 'oh, poor --,' my mother, 'poor --, what is she going to do with this kid,' who sort of has brought more or less disrespect on your family, and how is she going to deal with that. Whereas, with the uncles, one of my *zii* who that's happened to, it's interesting to sort of see how nobody really talks about it, but at the same time there's this underlying thing about the good man, as long as he's taking care of the kid . . . so, it's interesting how that gives him this

> additional status, whereas, with my sister, it took everything away from her (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

As seen from the above statements, unlike the woman who is slandered, the man is generally not seen to be at fault, he more often will gain status from fathering a child.

In summary, the patriarchal ideology that "virgin is good" and "sex is bad" is clearly seen in many participants narratives. These Southern Italian-Canadian women implicitly know that virginity is mandatory in the eyes of their family. The notion that "sex is bad" has been ingrained in them and they reproduce this in the shame they have in letting their parents know that they are sexually active. In order to keep the respect of their family and community, they must play roles in trying to hide the fact that they may not be living their lives as their parents expect them to. Also, warnings explicitly stating the ideal of virginity are the main form of sexual education for these Southern Italian-Canadian women. Women are seen as the gatekeepers of sexual activity in all circumstances except in the marital relationship, where women are obligated to keep their husbands sexually satisfied.

4.9 Issues of Autonomy

In the following section I examine the issues of autonomy for Southern Italian-Canadian women. I discuss the markers of adulthood for Southern Italian-Canadian women, as well as issues of moving out of the family home. Also, I discuss the negative aspects of growing up in a restrictive and sheltered environment.

As noted in the literature review, the Italian family's dream for a woman is to see

her *sistemata*, that is to be married and bear children (Gambino 1974). Participants similarly noted that the main and significant event that marks one as an adult woman in a Southern Italian-Canadian family is marriage.

> When she gets married. That's pretty much it (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

> . . . obviously when I got married . . . once I got married and stuff, then in their eyes you're basically an independent woman now (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

> . . . getting married . . . before that it's nothing, you're just a kid, it doesn't matter how old you are. All of a sudden your family sees you in a different way. Yeah, definitely marriage . . . more mature . . . you got this ring on your finger, even when my cousins got married at 21, all of a sudden you're more mature, whereas I'm 34 . . . I'm not married . . . still at home. I think it's just the image of it. She hasn't gotten there yet (Kelly, second-generation, age 34).

As Kelly notes, once one is married, age disappears. A younger married woman is seen as more mature than an older unmarried woman. Accordingly, as marriage is a marker of adulthood, Margaret notes, after marriage a whole new world opens up. An unspoken discourse of sexual activity becomes spoken.

> . . . when I got married I found that a lot of things started changing in terms of the kinds of things that we talked about. I found that my mother, as well as my aunts, would start talking much more about sex . . . all these stories of illegitimate children and who was sexually active, people would say whores, back in the old country. All these sorts of stories started coming out. But, I wasn't privy to it until I was married, because there was some sense about being corrupted . . . (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

This occurs after marriage, because as sex is seen as "bad." Discussion of it in the presence of an unmarried woman is seen as shameful, as well as corruptive.

As Margaret notes, pregnancy gives a woman increased status in the eyes of

Southern Italian-Canadians, it concretely marks one as an adult.

> Being a mother gives you a certain kind of status, in a Southern Italian-Canadian culture it makes you absolutely an adult (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

As marriage is often linked with reproduction, and as sex is generally only acceptable within marriage, motherhood must happen within the context of marriage. This is seen in Margaret's description of her sister's teenage pregnancy.

> She had a baby, but it wasn't within marriage. It marked her as something quite different . . . it's the same thing as having a baby, but they have different contexts. They don't give you the same status (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

To a lesser extent, education and financial independence, as well as entering the work world, are other markers of adulthood in this Southern Italian-Canadian family.

> . . . it was me finishing school, finishing university and finding a career, job, was a big step, because then I had a lot more freedom. Obviously from high school to university I had a lot more freedom, and then first year, second year, by fourth year, when my father was sure I would actually finish school, then it was a lot more freedom. Then after that, once I got a job, and I was working with a CA firm, I had to travel out of town, and basically I went out, and I had a lot more freedom then, once I had a job and my own career, that marked me as an adult, because really I could support myself (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

> . . . going to college. I think that's when it starts, when you go to college or university. When you're dealing with more people, when you kind of learn from other people. And, say for example, when you go out of town, that's a big step (Melanie, second-generation, age 26).

As well, to a lesser extent, age and maturity are also markers of adulthood in the eyes of these Southern Italian-Canadians.

> . . . age wise too. At the point where they start seeing you use reason, instead of using emotion to deal with the situation, then they start treating you more as an adult (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

> I guess basically if you are mature enough, if you show a lot of respect, and you really take a lot of responsibility for things (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

Ahearn (1985) states that marriage generally is the only sanctioned way for an Italian-Canadian woman to leave her family home. I found that as marriage is the primary marker of adulthood, in these Southern Italian-Canadian homes it may still be the only circumstance in which one is allowed to move out. In these Southern Italian-Canadian homes a daughter is socialized with the patriarchal ideology that she must go from her family home to her marriage home. However, moving out of town for work or school may also be acceptable, if you have no choice but to leave.

> Absolutely marriage . . . it doesn't really matter what age you are, what marks you as your mother and your father literally deal with you not being at home is being married (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

> I think in their eyes, in a perfect world for my parents, when you get married, it's when you get married you move out (Kelly, second-generation, age 34).

> Oh, getting married. Yeah, pretty much, I think that would be the most acceptable. And then the second would be getting a job out of town (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

> Well, if you moved away . . . marriage, because it's not accepted that living without marriage or what not (Jennifer, second-generation, age 22).

> Either going to school out of town, or finding a job out of town. The obvious getting married . . . (Melanie, second-generation, age 26).

> In their eyes, marriage. I don't think anything else was acceptable. I could tell you the truth. If I had to go away to school possibly, I would really had to have fought (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

> Susan – When you get married.
> Catherine – Or, go away to school.
> (Susan, age 24; Catherine, age 20, second and third-generation)

> . . . when you get married you're free to move out. So, that's pretty much a kind of a given . . . or, if I had a job out of town, or if I went to university out of town. I went to college here, but if I went to university out of town that would be when I would move out (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

> Get married, or you have to move away because of your job (Caroline, second-generation, age 40).

This is a change from the preceding generation. As the first-generation acquired more wealth, the second-generation were given the opportunity for higher education, which led to greater financial independence and prestige, as well as giving them a reason to move away.

As stated, moving out to go away for school may be accepted by most Southern Italian-Canadian families. However, it is more acceptable if the program is not offered in town, and thus one *must* go away.

> Only one other cousin of mine, everybody else stayed here, and they only went away if they needed to like, they didn't get into teacher's college here, but they got in in Winnipeg, or there's no law school . . . only if you can't do it here, then it's absolutely necessary for you to go away . . . (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

One may leave home for school, but one is often expected to return home when schooling is completed, and then can only move out for the reasons previously mentioned, that is a job or preferably marriage. Living on your own, for the purpose of education, is generally not seen as a permanent move because there exists the idea that, as you are not married, you are still a dependent child. Therefore your family home is still your home. Often, the only permanent move out of the family home is marriage.

But, then you're still not really moved away from home, because you come back

there (Susan, second and third-generation, age 24).

> . . . the funny thing, they'll let you move out of town for school, but you are expected to move back home, get a job back home, and not leave the town in which you have grown up in . . . the circumstances in which you move out of the house, is marriage, ultimately it is marriage. Because, like I said, they'll let you go for school, and that's fine and dandy, but they expect you to come back, until you get married. And that's pretty much the bottom line, the only way you're ever going to leave your home on the circumstances that they want you to, is by being married, and getting married (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

Moving out of the home while living in the same city is viewed negatively, and simply not accepted and not understood by these Southern Italian-Canadian parents. Participants note that, as Alfano (1998) states, desiring this sort of independence is incomprehensible by these Southern Italian-Canadian parents. It is seen as something *inglese* do, not Italians.

> They look at the 'Canadian' kids, who get, sometimes their parents say 'here's $500, you're 18, time for you to move out of the house, you do it on your own.' Parents that come from an Italian background are absolutely shocked with this . . . they think that's a bad thing, they really do (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

> . . . it would be like, 'oh my God, why are you doing that' (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

Catherine	– My parents they wouldn't understand, what's the point of moving out, you don't have a reason to move out . . .
Susan	– Oh yeah, that would be very strange. Unless you were, maybe, 32 or something like that. If you reach that age where it's like, okay cut the cord. Then you could convince them enough, you could convince them that you know it's time to move out.
Catherine	– Or you could use the excuse that no one's going to marry someone who's 35 and still living at home.
Susan	– But, if you were like 23 and moved out to live in the city, no I would think they would think that was very strange.

(Susan, age 24; Catherine, age 20; second and third-generation)

Thus, moving out of one's family home, to another place within the same city may become acceptable to some parents if their daughter reaches an age where they believe there is no possibility of marriage since she is not seen as youthful anymore. Thus, as marriage, and moving out, are seen as unlikely, she has more freedom in leaving the family home.

> I know some girls now that have done it. But, they're not girls, they're women, because they're my age or older, which is what, 35, so pretty old. And you know what I think it is at that point, like the couple of girls that I know, although one she was still young, the other one, I think it's the point that the parents didn't think that they were going to get married anymore, so . . . (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

One of the primary arguments against a child moving out is that it is seen as a waste of money in the parents' eyes. These parents cannot understand why someone would want to waste so much money, as they do not see a need to move out of the family home.

> I think the first line of argument we get is, 'what a waste of money. You should be saving that money so you can buy a huge house' (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

> . . . wasting money, because why do you want to spend money when you don't have to (Jennifer, second-generation, age 22).

These Southern Italian-Canadian parents do not seem to understand that their children desire autonomy. Johnson (1978) states that they cannot comprehend why their child would want to leave the "warmth and protection" of their own home. Likewise, participants noted that Southern Italian-Canadian parents believe wanting to do for yourself is strange when there is someone willing to take care of you.

> If you move out because you want to move out, because you don't want to live at home, they see there's something wrong with you, because you should be fine living at home, you don't pay rent, you don't pay food, you don't do this, you

> don't do that, you're taken care of. So, why would you want to move out and give all that up, and start doing for yourself. The way they look at it is, you move out, you give it all up. No, it's not giving it all up, it's having your own measure of independence. Because, you can't really have your own measure of independence, while still living with your parents (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

Moreover, as one can see, women are given the message that they are still children until they are married. Parents are not comfortable with the idea of their child taking care of herself when she does not have to.

Johnson (1978) notes, moving out of the family home creates "considerable conflict" among parents and their children. Similarly, participants state that if one does choose to move out, the response is very often negative.

> Well, you know what, I probably wouldn't get a very good response, in the beginning. I would know that for sure. But, I think after a period of time it wouldn't be as bad. It probably wouldn't be the greatest situation . . . they would be angry and not understanding what you're doing, like what your motives are or whatever . . . I think anger, yeah, I think anger would be a big part of it (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

> Oh, my dad would be angry. Very very angry (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

> They would have had a hard time. Probably very angry . . . I don't know what my parents would have done, I can't honestly believe that they would disown me if I wanted to leave home. But, I think if there reached a point where I was old enough, and say, I wasn't married, and I wanted to move out, it would have been difficult, I probably would have done it for myself, but it would have been difficult. It would have been a bit of a battle, because it's just something that was not accepted. You don't leave the house for just no reason at all, you know, you leave when you get married, you know, or unless someone went away for school or whatever, but that's it (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

> If you try to leave your house because you want to, they see that there's something wrong with that, and they don't tend to support you in it, at all. Like, I've been told, 'if you want to leave this house, go ahead, don't expect us to support you though.' I was like, 'well thanks, that really gives me the encouragement in willing

> to go. Because I need support if I move out.' So, but they won't do it (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

Pichini (1987) notes, as does the above participant, that one may desire freedom, yet also want the "approval and support" of her parents. Similarly, I found that, as noted in the above statements, women want their independence, yet, do not want to lose the warmth and support of their family. Thus, they are torn between their own desires and the desires of their family. They do not want to risk their relationship with their family.

On the other hand, as the following participants note, they have been socialized with more independence; they believe their parents would accept the decision of moving out.

> I think they would be accepting of it, if let's say I was 25, or just an age where I wasn't getting married any time soon and I just need that independence . . . (Jennifer, second-generation, age 22).

> I know my mom would be all for it, because she wants to see me be independent, and to have a little budget, how much I've got to put towards groceries, bills and all that (Melanie, second-generation, age 26).

As the above statements note, age is a strong factor in parents accepting one's moving out before marriage. From Melanie's statement, we see that as she is 26 years old, her mother views her as an adult and would be accepting of her moving out. Jennifer likewise speculates that at an older age, and with no plans for marriage, her parents would be similarly accepting.

Yet, for some participants, as one is not following family expectations, moving out of the home may be seen as a sign of disrespect to the family. As Bellicoso (1996) notes,

Italian-Canadian parents often view moving out of the family home as an "act of betrayal," and may react "with outbursts of anger, bouts of depression and attempts to control" (7). Participants similarly state that moving out is seen as very shameful. A woman's and her family's reputation is at stake, "others" may talk. As living with the family until marriage is expected in this Southern Italian-Canadian community, moving out would be seen as unacceptable in the eyes of the community, and seen as disobeying one's parents, in which case one is slandered as a disgrace.

> Not if we were in the same city. Not if we moved to an apartment. He would never accept that. It would be insulting . . . because it's not so much that we're doing it to them, it's so much that all the people would talk about it. All the relatives would comment on it. So it's an unacceptable thing . . . they would feel embarrassed, they would feel ashamed . . . 'what is it that drove you from leaving your home? How bad was it at home? What was the problem?' That's how people perceive it, that something was wrong at home. That they had to get away, that they had to get out (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

Thus, where the desire for autonomy and moving out of the family home is often the norm for many young adults in Canada, often for a Southern Italian-Canadian family it is often seen as bringing disgrace to the family. Moreover, such a disgrace, is seen in these parents' eyes, as damaging one's reputation, and therefore ruining one's chance for marriage.

The disgrace of moving in with a boyfriend is often seen to bring even greater shame to the family and to oneself. On the other hand, it is not seen as shameful for a man to move in with his girlfriend. As stated with the issue of pregnancy, sex is expected of men, it is not shameful of them, whereas this is not the case with women.

> . . . like you wouldn't move out to go live with your boyfriend . . . one of my cousins, she lived out of town, but she lived with her boyfriend. And her parents knew, but for her grandmother she never said they were living together. But, when her brother moved in with a girl she knew about it . . . it's shameful for the girl, but not as much for the guy (Kelly, second-generation, age 34).

Accordingly, as the expectation of the "good girl," who is obedient to her parents' wishes, may be strong, the parents' control and tendency to be unsupportive can negatively affect one's will to leave the family home. One may not want to disrespect one's family, and thus one conforms to these boundaries.

> You think you can, you fool yourself into believing you can, but you don't, because ultimately they put the foot down, and that's it, you do tend to respect them and do what they say. Sad, but true. And, they don't want you to end up moving out, and you won't. It's a sign of disrespect, and you don't want to be disrespectful. Because they're like 'live here as long as you want, we have no problems with it' (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

As one is seen as a child until one is married, another reason for not accepting a child's desire for autonomy may be the loss of control and supervision of "children."

> . . . that factors into this, especially if you're a woman, is that, it's very threatening to do something like that. Because, you are disentangling yourself from the control of your mother and father. Because you're in between the control of your natal family . . . (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

It is interesting to note that once a child has brought shame onto the family, and has been seen to ruin her reputation and chance of marriage, this expectation to stay close to the family until marriage may become nonexistent. These women are socialized to follow specific expectations and once they have broken these expectations they are seen to be on their own.

> This is interesting. My sister got pregnant, she had the baby, she gave it away for

> adoption. She went away to university, there was no money, my parents were not going to support her going away to university. But there was also relatively no arguments about her going away. She's a year older than me. When it was my turn to go away to university, my mother started saying things to me like, 'stay, I'll pay your tuition, I'll buy you a car, I'll buy you a fur coat' . . . there was a real attempt to stop me from going. And when I said, 'well, tell you what, you keep the car and fur coat, and help me pay my tuition and I'm going away anyways.' 'No, that's not the deal, the deal is you have to stay here.' So, I think, in a way, because I was still perceived as this person, this daughter who can still not go wayward, in terms of bringing anymore disrespect to the family, it was not appropriate for me to be going away to university . . . [my sister] was a write off in a way. She needed to be away . . . since she was such a black mark on the family. At least, I think that's how my mother thought about that 10 years ago or so. And I think, by and large, she still thinks about it that way (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

In the case of moving out, the double standard is relatively nonexistent. Males, as much as females, are often socialized to be dependent an their parents until marriage. Accordingly, moving out of the family home is primarily not accepted for either sex.

> I don't know if it's any different for Italian men. Just because of my friends that were Italian men, they were in the same position, they didn't move out until they got married or got a job out of town. Obviously it's worse for women than men, but I don't see it being that different only because it's a culture thing, I think it's a culture thing. With Italians, they expect their kids to stay with them until they get married, because a nephew of mine who lived with his mother, I don't think he would have ever; and if he moved out on his own, it's a big thing. It is a big thing, when they move and it's the same city. Because as parents, I don't know if it's an insult to them. I really do think it's a cultural thing, I don't know if it's a female/male thing, but I know it's a cultural thing, that there's no reason for them to live on their own. Even if they're forty, because I know Italian men who are forty and still live at home with their mothers. It's a cultural thing. I look at my cousins, my male cousins, they lived at home until they got married. If I did it, of course it would be a big thing. I don't know anyone that's done it to date, that's been in the same city. I don't know anybody that's done it to date. Oh, actually a friend of mine did, a friend of mine did, but she was 32 when she did it, and it was like, I don't know if it was a big deal either, because her father passed away, but if her father was alive I think it would've been a bigger deal. She's Italian too, and I grew up with her, but they were always more lenient with her . . . I remember a male friend of mine, we used to joke around about it, he used to laugh, and he's a

> year older than me, he used to laugh and say, 'yeah, it's like they take it as a personal insult,' if you move out, eh. And, it's like, 'okay mom, keep cooking and cleaning for me.' Because they have the freedom that they can come and go as they please, as long as they go home to eat and the mother does their laundry. It's a big thing (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

As seen in Caroline's statement, a double standard does not generally exist in the case of moving out. However, while living at home, men often have much more freedom than women. Freedom is given to men, not women, because generally a woman's purity needs to be protected, unlike a man's.

> . . . because even though the guy has to live with his parents until he gets married, in between things, he can come home at 4 o'clock in the morning, or he can have a slut girlfriend, and it doesn't matter. The mothers don't like it, but they kind of, hopefully he doesn't marry her. I think that's how they think. As long as she doesn't get pregnant, and they don't marry her, they're okay with it. Okay, the moving out is the same. But, the dating and stuff isn't (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

As childhood socialization influences us throughout our lives, the restrictive and protective upbringing of these Southern Italian-Canadian women, may not nurture self-confidence and autonomy. These Southern Italian-Canadian women grew up with limited opportunities with regards to life experience. They grew up sheltered and controlled. They feared independence in the world as they were sheltered from it.

> I know very few Italian girls that are really self-confident. They aren't very independent. I don't think Italian families nurture those type of qualities . . . they're always insecure, very insecure, I think. Not very independent, in the sense that, I just look at other people and think how do they have that much confidence? Like what in them, because they're not any different than me, but they're very self-confident. So, I don't know what the difference is, and I usually think well it's got to be some sort of upbringing that they had because I think a lot of the decisions I've made I either had other people let them make the decision for me or I've been so insecure about things that (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

> . . . I myself would have not had the nerve or the guts to be able to do it. Only, because being raised in a sort of sheltered life, and not being able to do a lot of things, and having the freedom, I grew up as being sort of a quiet and reserved person . . . I remember having to go away, as part of my program, for my course at the college, that we had to go away for 2 or 3 weeks, I think it was 3 weeks placement, and that was difficult enough for me, as it was to do that, and I had to go with 2 other girls. So, that kind of gave me a bit of an edge. If I had to go by myself, I would have had a really hard time, only because I was never given the opportunity of being independent . . . so, if I look back then, I wouldn't ever even have wanted to go out of town for school for that reason, of being fearful whatever, because of being sheltered up to that point . . . (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

> . . . when it came to the rules of being able to go out, or things like that, I would voice my opinion, but the bottom line was, when it was no it was no, and that's it . . . even if I went against what they wanted to do. And I kind of thought about, what am I gonna do, threaten that I'm going to run away, where was I gonna go, okay, with no money, what was I gonna do? So, I think the fear of that also kind of made me accept and abide by the rules. Because I didn't have anywhere to go, and I thought well, at least I'm home, I'm safe, I thought, well. I wasn't happy, and I think that's why back then, I also reverted to, as far as eating habits and that, where I did put on the weight, for that reason. Where I was one that kept a lot of things internally . . . food became my, kind of provided me temporary comfort for that moment . . . I also had some problems with my stomach as far as nerves, because I kept a lot of things internally . . . but, I think that eventually as time went on, and as I matured, I realized at that point that I had to make certain decisions and choices, and it was like, this wasn't right. And, I think at that point I realized that I needed to be a little more assertive, and fighting for what I really believed . . . I felt at that point I had to put my foot down, because I couldn't continue that way (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

As noted by Christina, although she had very difficult choices to make, she realized that at any cost, she must gain her independence for herself.

As Pallotta-Chiarolli et al. (1994) note, one may desire independence, yet may not "want to risk total rejection by families and the community on whom they rely for strength and support . . ." (268). As they grow up very sheltered, they may feel that they need

emotional support. Yet, the daughters want freedom to lead their lives whichever way they choose. Choices between one's individualism as a woman, and the acceptance on the part of one's family may have to be made.

> . . . I think for your own peace of mind, and your own nature . . . you want to be an independent woman. I think every woman, that's their goal, they want to be independent of their own family, regardless of what your heritage, background is, it's a common struggle. Your individuality and your individual freedom, and being that way, or sort of [toeing] the line and being what your parents want you to be, kind of have to combine a bit of it. Because you can't be your own person without a bit of disappointment, without a bit of hurt, without a bit of anger involved on your parents side. Like, that can't happen, that doesn't happen, regardless if you're Italian or not, you have to be your own person and expect there to be a bit of struggle in trying to get there. And at the same time though, you do want to be this person your parents are going to be very proud of, so you don't want to end up sort of doing anything where your parents might perceive as screwing you life up beyond any measure of being able to fix it. So, you're an individual that's got limits, because of it. Like you have your own freedom, and you do what you want to do, and you live your life for yourself, because that's the only person you can live your life for, you can't live it for anybody else. But at the same time, the way you live it, and how you do things, you want it to reflect the fact that your parents did a very good job in raising you, and instilling their morals, and instilling their values, and instilling your heritage in you. Like, you don't want to do anything that will ultimately disappoint them or think that you are a disappointment, or that you can't completely have control of your own life, you don't want to be doing any of those things . . . you've got to take one and the other, and hold them together . . . you live your own life for yourself, but at the same time the way you live it, the way you do things is for your parents. It's the respect and the reflection of who raised you and how they raised you . . . but there comes a point in your life when you do everything to sort of please your parents, and then you kind of realize 'well, why?' Because you know what, you can't please people all the time. You can please some people most of the time, but you can't please all the people all the time. I mean, there's bound to be expectations that you fall short of what your parents want for you in terms of your life. But you can't help it because you're going to do what you're going to do . . . and if it ends up disappointing your parents, it ends up disappointing your parents, you don't have any control over that. But at the same time, as a human being, you either let that bother you, or you don't. And some people it bothers them. So, they always in the back of their minds live their life for their parents . . . you're entitled to live your life however

> you wish, wherever you wish. Like I said, if it disappoints them, or they possibly think a little less of you for it, or not give you credit for, then that's their own problems to deal with. That's not yours, and you can't wrack your brain trying to figure out what else I can do to make up for it to please them, and this and that, you can't, it's going to drive you insane. I know, because I've tried. But, eventually you've just got to give up. Try to say, 'well, my parents accept me for who I am, faults and everything' (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

As Linda states, there comes a point in one's life when one has to put one's foot down, and make the choices which are best for oneself, without the support from one's parents that they may desire. With women expected to conform to such restrictive patriarchal ideologies, one has to make a choice. As many participants have noted, one cannot follow those ideals and have their individuality. As Barolini (1985) states, "the working out of independence/dependence factors is critical" for one's development, however, the first-generation may "demand too enormous a ransom" (26) for one's individuality. Similarly, with Linda we can see that the many expectations placed on her growing up have not left her. As previously noted she plays roles, giving her parents the image that they want to see. The socialization messages given to her by her parents are ingrained in her. She struggles in trying to defy her socialization, yet limits herself by trying to please her parents in order not to lose them. She fears their disappointment, but wants to live her life for herself.

As previously mentioned, many first-generation Southern Italian Canadian parents often try to hold on to their values and culture. It may be difficult for them to change their ideologies. Yet, as Christina states, parents may have to accept their daughter's ultimate and unchanging decision.

> They weren't too happy about [my choice to pursue a college education], to say the least. There were, I don't know if you would call them arguments, there were discussions that we had. At first I didn't think they were very pleased, but I think they realized afterwards that they have to learn to accept certain things, and that I wasn't going to change my mind and that's the way it was going to be. Eventually they came around. It took time, but they came around. And again, it was they're trying to fight for something they believe in, for how many years, you know, and it's hard to sort of change old habits. Basically, that's what it was . . . there were times that were tough. But, I think overall, we were able to work it out (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

With such struggle concerning one's socialization to following familial expectations and pleasing everyone but oneself, the journey to making one's own decisions can be a long and straining one. In the following statement, Caroline recalls the struggle with family expectations as she made the difficult decision to proceed with a divorce.

> When I was younger, it was hard, because I made choices, regretting them and knowing that I couldn't change them, because it would upset too many people. And I went through with things that I shouldn't have gone through with because of family pressures and stuff. I think I did a lot of things to make my family happy, not to make me happy. . . at 25 I did a lot of things to just make the family happy, because it's just the way it is, I didn't think I had any options, it's hard to break free when everyone else is following that mold. At 30, all of a sudden things change . . . first I chose my family, and it didn't go very well. Then I was forced to make a choice and it had to be me. Because in the end, see I had to learn the hard way. When I chose making everybody else happy, in the end I was alone. See these other people don't help you out where you got problems after, and you're in your own house. They're not there to help you out at all, they're just there to say, "ever nice, she's married and she's this and she's that." So, they're not there to help you out with your problems. So then when I finally chose to be true to myself, it was hard, because you know what, I was abandoned. And the Italian community, to this day, I mean people don't look at me, don't talk to me, I'm probably the biggest whatever, I don't know what they call me. But, treated completely different. Obviously, I have enough confidence now that I didn't care, but at first it would be very very hard for me . . . so, yeah first time I chose the family didn't go that well. The second time, well it's not the second time, I was pushed into the position, either I had to live a miserable existence or if I want happiness and have something left of myself (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

As Caroline states, due to family pressures and expectations, her decisions were made to please everyone but herself. As with other participants, Caroline found it difficult to escape the expectations of her upbringing. As her socialization did not allow for any options, she initially accepted these limitations. After getting married, she fulfilled her parents expectation of being *sistemata* (settled), and in turn received her autonomy. However, with this autonomy she was left to herself to deal with her marital problems. She realized the decision to get married, which she made to please her family, was the wrong decision. She discovered that, despite what "others" may say, she needed to listen to herself, and make decisions for herself.

In summary, as the dominant image of woman in Southern Italian-Canadian culture is generally wife and mother, what primarily marks one as an adult woman is marriage and pregnancy within that marriage. Such a restrictive and protective upbringing may not nurture self-confidence and independence in oneself. Women are often raised with few opportunities for independent experiences. Such a socialization does not give one the self-confidence to go out and experience the world independently. Their childhood socialization becomes an obstacle in obtaining independence and confidence in their lives. These women often find themselves making difficult decisions in order to have some autonomy, yet still manage to maintain close family ties.

4.10 Issues of Marriage & Heterosexism

In the following section, I explore the issues of marriage and heterosexism in the

Southern Italian-Canadian community. I examine the importance of marriage for women in Southern Italian-Canadian culture, and moreover, the expectations of a heterosexual relationship for these women.

As with many cultures, the single life is not often something which is easily accepted in a Southern Italian-Canadian family. Marriage is generally seen as a "must" in life. As previously mentioned, being a wife and mother is seen as a woman's role in life.

> If you're not married you're a nun. It would be the nunnery. You'd be a nun . . . you have to be married to something . . . because if you're not married then they try to set you up (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

> Your goal in life is for you to get married, to a guy . . . (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

I found that, as similarly noted in the literature review, in Italian-Canadian culture a woman's socialization strongly stresses marriage. As one participant notes, the question of dating frequently is asked.

> You're always 'so, do you have a boyfriend?' Even my parents' older friends, 'does [she] have a boyfriend?' 'How are your daughters doing?' Like that's the first thing that comes out of their mouth (Kelly, second-generation, age 32).

> . . . I get 'you're still not married yet, you're 35? How come you're still not married? What's a good girl like you doing not being married?' kind of thing (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

This may be partly due to the fact that for many first-generation parents, in their time, women were married at a very young age. Also, they often lived their lives for their family, not for themselves.

> Going into your thirties, especially for females, they . . . think, what's wrong with that person (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

> I am single, and my grandparents are confused, like 'why don't you have a boyfriend'. . . so, it's that whole idea. That expectation (Jennifer, second-generation, age 22).

As marriage is often seen as very important in the Southern Italian-Canadian community, as a single woman ages, the fear that she will not marry grows. Pichini (1987) suggests, first-generation Italian-Canadians may have difficulty accepting a woman making the choice to remain single, as they "cannot escape the constraints of their unliberated past" (22), where that may not have been possible. I also found that the thought of a woman not desiring to be married is incomprehensible to many Southern Italian-Canadians. They may not have had any choices or options not to get married, and thus, they may not understand their daughters' position. They have difficulty accepting what they cannot understand.

A double standard generally exists in how unmarried women and men over the age of 30 are viewed. Where unmarried men over the age of 30 may be seen as carefree bachelors who are still looking for their "ideal" woman, unmarried women over the age of 30 are more likely to be seen as spinsters, who in all probability will never marry due to their age. In this Southern Italian-Canadian community's eyes, as with many cultures, youthfulness equals fertility. As marriage is often seen as being for the purpose of reproduction, youthfulness is critical in a woman's chances at marriage.

> How many men do you know that are in their 30s and are bachelors. It's not looked upon as being that there's anything wrong with them, as opposed if you're a, let's say a 35 year old female that's Italian. You are spinsterish, you're never going to get married, you're an old hag, so you should just give it up. Where men are considered, 'oh, they're being picky' (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

> They have a fear, that the older the woman gets, the less the chances that she will

end up in a relationship and be married (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

Another reason as to why so much importance is placed on marriage for a Southern Italian-Canadian woman is that marriage may be viewed as a comfort for the parents, that there is someone to economically and socially support her. Moreover, as one is often seen as a child until marriage, they want their daughters to be married and thus taken care of and not be dependent on them.

> . . . for them, they have a comfort when they know that their child, for some reason is married and they're on their own. It's as if they don't have to worry about them (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

> It's just because, as you get older you become more dependent on the person you're with, and so your parents don't feel that they successfully raised you if they don't leave you with someone to take care of you (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

The issue of dependence for the daughter on her parents and her future husband is evident in the above statements. A Southern Italian-Canadian daughter is raised to be dependent firstly on her parents and then her husband.

As with most cultures, the expectations of a heterosexual relationship are described by the participants as implicitly known. Moreover, heterosexuality is simply assumed by most Southern Italian-Canadian parents. These women's socialization may not allow for any options regarding sexual orientation.

> They don't come out and say it in words, but definitely understood (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

> It was never discussed, and it was just assumed . . . (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

> I think it would be a shocker to them. They would be like, 'oh my God.' I could just see my dad having a heart attack, or something . . . (Melanie, second-generation, age 26).

> Thank God I didn't have to deal with that issue, because man that would have really . . . that would have put my mother in the looney bin for sure (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

Furthermore, as issues of sexuality are often not generally discussed in the Southern Italian-Canadian home, homosexuality is something which may never be discussed.

> I don't think they even talk. I have never ever ever heard anything about homosexuality from my parents. Never ever ever (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

It is noted by participants that homosexuality was not discussed with the first-generation, and thus may not be understood by their parents.

> They don't understand this whole same sex couple, homosexuality, or lesbianism. They do not accept it because they do not understand, and they don't accept what they don't understand . . . you know its just looked at as this delusory entity, and they don't know how to handle it . . . (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

Another reason for this may be that, for first-generation parents, in their time, homosexuality was much less visible than it is today.

> That's something that's really far fetched for them. Only because that was something that they never grew up with in their time (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

However, one might argue that this issue is almost universal, and is not only found among Southern Italian-Canadians.

> It'd be like any family . . . if in the event that it was to happen, they would never disown us as their children, but they would not be happy with the fact that it happened (Catherine, second and third-generation, age 20).

Yet, as these women are raised with an emphasis on making a *bella figura* for "others" in their Southern Italian-Canadian community, there is even more of a stigma attached to lesbianism than there may be in some other cultures. With Chicano culture, Moraga (1986) notes, it "is not to say that anglo culture does not stigmatize its women for 'gender-transgressions' – only that its stigmatizing did not hold the personal power over me which Chicano culture did" (174). I found that in this Southern Italian-Canadian community, not only is the stigma more meaningful, but it is greater as well.

> It would probably be more so in these Italian communities, because this person knows this person, and what are people going to think, you know. How is this going to affect how people respect you? . . . it wouldn't be something that would be well accepted, I could say, definitely for the rest of our lives (Catherine, second and third-generation, age 20).

> They would be very uncomfortable I think . . . they would never be carefree about it (Susan, second and third-generation, age 24).

This intolerance may be linked to the undermining of Southern Italian patriarchal ideologies. This Southern Italian-Canadian community's ideal woman is one who is a dutiful wife to a man, and a mother to *his* children, which a lesbian relationship undermines.

> A lesbian relationship would undermine my father's authority . . . a woman's natural role in life is to be a wife and mother, and to reproduce, right? And if you're having sexual feelings for a woman, well then you're ruining that order (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

In summary, marriage, specifically a heterosexual marriage, is generally very important in Southern Italian-Canadian culture and a woman's role in life is understood to be wife and mother. A woman's socialization emphasizes dependence, and she is often

viewed as a child until marriage. Thus, marriage is viewed as a comfort for the parents, their child is taken care of by someone, while at the same time she is fulfilling her expected role as a wife and mother.

4.11 The Issue of Divorce

In the following section I explore the issue of divorce in the Southern Italian-Canadian community, and the image of the divorced Southern Italian-Canadian woman.

Today, as many marriages end in divorce, divorce has become more acceptable, yet, in the Southern Italian-Canadian community divorce may still bring with it much disgrace.

> Divorce is not an option. What you have to do as a woman, if your husband is fucking around on you and having illegitimate children, is just deal with it. Divorce is just not something that should enter into the equation (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

> . . . if the man walked out on her, and is with someone else, then of course she couldn't really do anything to avoid it. But, if it is the woman that leaves, oh yeah, it's not as acceptable, in that way. I think that's their view on that . . . if it was her choice, and she left him, and they don't think that it's a good enough reason, then that's not a good reason to leave. Because right until the very very last moment, you should always be trying to keep your marriage together . . . (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

As already stated, a Southern Italian-Canadian woman's socialization may not allow her any options, that is especially the case with regard to divorce. The socialization message ingrained in these Southern Italian-Canadian women is that a woman is to be a dutiful wife in any and all circumstances. Generally, they are not given independence in her choices.

The most common Southern Italian-Canadian image of the divorced woman is that she is a *puttana*. In their eyes she is not a "good" woman, she wasn't a "good" wife and mother. A woman who has made the choice to leave her husband is selfish. Making independent choices for oneself is seen as being selfish. Moreover, as previously mentioned, a "good girl/woman" is generally viewed as having to be obedient. A woman who steps outside of the obedient "good girl/woman" image is often seen as not being virtuous, a *puttana*. For a man, unlike a woman, *gallismo* is expected, obedience and virtue are not.

> . . . I will often hear my father, specifically in the case of divorced women, adamantly, steadfastly insist that if a women is divorced she's a *puttana*. Because, if a woman is divorced, he has this impression that it was her fault because she wasn't a good enough wife, she wasn't good enough, she didn't take care of her husband well enough, she didn't take care of the kids well enough, therefore she's being selfish. And there's this link between a woman perceived as being selfish and worse perceived as being unvirtuous, in his mind. And, it's not just him, I heard this round table conversation between him and his brothers, him and his other friends. That sort of discussion how the divorced woman is selfish otherwise she wouldn't be divorced, right, because she would be a 'good' wife. And, that automatically influences this idea that she's sexually cheating. It's a really interesting link up, that if you're divorced, you must be a *puttana*, because you're selfish, and if you're selfish that means you're not keeping you're libido in check. There's a sort of link between those ideas . . . there's no way that I can try to make him see that if a woman's divorced it's not necessarily her fault. It's not because she wasn't a good wife or a good mother. It may be that she wasn't willing to put up with a husband that was fooling around with 20 different women . . . it doesn't really matter what he does, sexually. It doesn't really matter how awful he is to her. It doesn't matter if he hits her. It doesn't matter if he hits the kids. That doesn't matter, it's sort of all on her shoulders. So, I think in some way there's this idea that the 'good Italian wife' is more woman, is one who's a good wife, and is one who is extremely stoical, and giving, and uncritical. In a way, extremely obedient to her husband's whims and desires (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

Thus, divorce, in Southern Italian-Canadian community may become the woman's fault, this is quite evident as one participant recounts her experience as a divorced woman,

> . . . the Italian community, to this day, I mean people don't look at me, don't talk to me, I'm probably the biggest whatever, I don't know what they call me. But, treated completely different . . . to this day, to this day, same people won't talk to me, won't look at me . . . alienated . . . because no matter what happens, the woman's always at fault. In Italian communities, no matter what happens the woman's always at fault. So, basically the husband can do anything, unless you catch them cheating in the house or something and walk in on them, but if you're the one that . . . if the marriage doesn't work, the woman's always to blame. My mother even told me that, you know, you realize, no matter what's said, you will always be blamed 100%. And, I knew that, no matter what, I knew that I would have to take 100% of the blame myself. To this day, I run into people, and the comments that come out of their mouths. But I think to myself, they're 70 year old Italian women, keep that in mind, I always say that to myself, and try not to let it hurt me. But, it becomes very hurtful, because you know what they don't know anything about me or my life . . . you know what, then I felt sorry for my parents because it's probably the worst thing that I could've done. I mean, I didn't do it by myself to them obviously, but it's like, of course I had to take 100% of the blame, because that was basically almost like an agreement. I had to be willing to take 100% of the blame, all the talk, put up with everything, be willing to be isolated. I had to make that choice. And I made that choice. And I had to be willing to accept the fact that I wouldn't to be looked upon as such a good person, as I was before. People that knew me one day, versus another day, they completely changed their point of view of me, completely (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

As noted above, the images of the "good girl/woman" and the *puttana* may be so prevalent that it is all "others" see. Divorce may cause a woman to go from the "good girl" to the *puttana*, losing all respect from the community. As Caroline states, not only did the divorce affect her own image, but it affected her family's image. They were no longer as respected. Divorce is seen as 100% as the woman's fault, and she and her family, consequently pay 100% of the cost.

In summary, divorce is generally not acceptable in the view of the Southern Italian-Canadian community. A woman is often raised to be a dutiful and obedient wife, she is not given many choices in her marriage. Divorce is generally only acceptable if it was not her choice. The choice of divorce may be seen as a selfish choice, which means a woman is not a "good woman," thus she is a *puttana*, there is not any in-between.

4.12 The Issue of Catholicism

In the following section, I examine the issue of Catholicism. I discuss the influence that Catholicism may have in the lives of these women and their families.

Pichini (1987), notes that there exists a "predominance of church dogma" (23) within the Italian-Canadian home, and thus the Roman Catholic church strongly influences the views of many Italian-Canadians. However, this is not the case with most of the participants in my study.

Most of the participants, when asked if church dogma influenced their family's or their own views, responded that there is little influence or that it simply did not have an influence.

> None . . . the only time I went to church was for school stuff. My parents never went to church with me (Margaret, second-generation, age 35).

> Well, I guess they're very similar, in the fact that they don't believe in homosexuality, and that they don't believe in premarital sex. But, I think the premarital sex, I don't think stems so much for the church, rather than if you sleep with a lot of guys, than nobody wants to marry you because you're used goods. I think that's more so where the 'save yourself for your husband, and your virginity for your husband' comes from. I think church has somewhat, but not the be all

> and end all of it . . . it wasn't so much I was saving myself for my husband, it was waiting for the person that I felt comfortable with. So, no, not really. The church I don't think has a lot of influence on my choices per se (Anne, second-generation, age 27).

However, Roman Catholicism is so ingrained in the culture that it may be indistinguishable for the participants. The participants show such a resistance to blaming church dogma, that they simply may not see the relationship. Southern Italian values and Catholic values are virtually intertwined, so they may be seen as one and the same. Moreover, as noted in Anne's statement, although Catholicism may not affect her own choices, in all likelihood it has affected her parents' values which she has been raised with.

Conversely, some participants note that Catholicism influences their lives, yet not directly enough to describe how. As with issues of sexuality, parents may implicitly, and not explicitly state the Catholic values that they want their children to follow, thereby not making these values visible to the participants.

> I think it has an influence, but I don't know to what extent. It's there, and partly that's how they live their life . . . I think it's been there, but not necessarily guided our family life . . . with my mom, it's not. I mean she goes to church, but she doesn't really impose it . . . I don't think I'd ever just turn to the church to say, 'oh, what should I do.' Like, what does the church say. I know it's been important. But, I don't think it's really influenced the way I live my life (Jennifer, second-generation, age 22).

> I think it's kind of a big part of it. Although I think that a lot of their views are based on their parents and their generation and stuff. I think some of it is from that, from the church, but it's not as much as say their own values. But, certain things from the church, like they'll say certain things about living together . . . well, the birth control, I don't think is a very very big thing. My mom said that when she was younger, before she had us . . . she actually used it . . . also, the church's views on homosexuality, I think that's a big . . . [as for myself,] I think pretty directly, I guess because I consider myself a pretty religious person . . . but not as much as my

> parents. I think my parents more so, because from what I've been taught when I was younger . . . (Nicole, second-generation, age 35).

As Linda notes, Catholicism influences her parents' views, however for herself it does not.

> In my family, church dogma has never been too much of an influence, in terms of sexuality. Like I said, my mother expects me to remain a virgin, my father expects me to remain a virgin. That's about the extent of it . . . No. Church dogma has never influenced my way of looking at sexuality or marriage . . . I think maybe it's done the opposite, in terms of gotten me angry. Because I'm like, the church pushes you not to have birth control, the church pushes you to be married, it pushes you to procreate as many fuckin' kids as you possibly can, regardless as to what today's societal cost may be . . . like the whole thing about birth control, you're not supposed to take it, you're not supposed to be on it, because you know you're supposed to be following Catholic dogma. Well, fuck that. Because that doesn't always happen (Linda, second-generation, age 24).

She states that it does not directly play a part in her life, yet she still feels the pressure of church dogma, and thus shows resistance to it. Such resistance and conflict reveals that the parental and Catholic messages are ingrained her. Although she resists, her early socialization messages are strong enough to cause distress. Socialization is not a straightforward patterning and following of rules. One may also resist.

Christina notes the strong influence of the church in its teachings of virginity and birth control, which are similarly held by her parents.

> The church believed in marriage, that a female, both really, should be virgins prior to getting married. And, they believed in this proudly. I mean, that's how we were raised and we went to church. I mean, they didn't strictly talk about that, but you knew that that was understood. And, if it was outside of being married, that it was considered a sin in the eyes of the church . . . back then their views was that abstinence was birth control . . . I mean a lot of us took it with a stride, you know I didn't totally believe in that portion of it once I was married, because only the fact was that it wasn't guaranteed that you weren't going to get pregnant, and someone

> who didn't want to get pregnant didn't practice that method of it . . . so, in some ways with the church I kind of took things with a grain of salt (Christina, second-generation, age 40).

Although sex is seen as a sin for men as well as women, the double standard often still exists, in that there is more fear instilled in women because of the chance of pregnancy. Men do not physically carry the shame of sex which women do. Moreover, men are generally expected to want sex, whereas women are expected to be demure, as emphasized in the ideology of *gallismo* and *serietà*.

As Ricciutelli (1987) notes, the Roman Catholic church instills much guilt with its teachings. Similarly, I found that being socialized with strong religious faith can cause many dilemmas in life decisions. As the following participant states, what one has been taught, in terms of what is the "right" thing to do, is always in the back of your mind.

> Well, obviously it did because I followed those rules I guess, you know what I mean. And then, I guess yeah, a lot of dilemmas obviously, because I mean the rules of the church, you don't get divorced. Unless you have an annulment, which is what I went through . . . I followed these rules, so I must have believed them somehow. Although, I find a lot of it hypocritical, but at the time I followed them (Caroline, second-generation, age 35).

In summary, participants asserted that church dogma does not seem to greatly influence the Southern Italian-Canadian family's or Southern Italian-Canadian women's views. However, one must note that Catholicism, throughout history, has been strongly imbedded in Southern Italian culture. Thus, although participants may not regard Catholicism as a direct influence, it is so imbedded in the culture that the two are inseparable, and consequently they have, in an indirect way, been raised with Catholic

values.

4.13 Conclusion

In conclusion, second and third-generation Southern Italian-Canadian women are often raised with the Southern Italian values instilled in them by their parents, and thus may find it a struggle to balance that with the values of the broader community. These "Southern Italian values" are likely not current in Southern Italy anymore. The parents left Italy a generation or more ago and may have retained ideas of "Italian culture" that are now outdated. Part of the reason these values are so important to them may be that they are linked to their sense of what it means to be Italian and to retain their identity in a new country.

These Southern Italian-Canadian women are raised to live up to the patriarchal ideology of the "good Italian girl," that is, one who is extremely virtuous, respectful, domestic, as well as obedient. Moreover, a these women's socialization is restrictive and protective, and does not nurture self-confidence and independence.

Restrictions are placed on these women's desires. They are expected to live their lives within the patriarchal boundaries placed on them by their families. They are expected to conform to the desires and expectations of others. Accordingly, their lives are externally guided. The "yes" within themselves is silenced for fear of stepping outside of family expectations. These Southern Italian-Canadian women may not feel that they are living their lives solely for themselves. Their "life endeavors" are not only to bring

satisfaction to themselves, but are to satisfy the expectations of their family members and "others" in the Southern Italian-Canadian community (Lorde 1984) . Consequently, the boundaries placed on these Southern Italian-Canadian women become obstacles in obtaining desire and satisfaction in their lives. Their desires in life, for the most part, are restricted, and thus may become unexpressed and unfulfilled.

Their early socialization messages are so strong that they often find themselves conflicted and distressed because they do not want to lose their close family ties and the respect of their Southern Italian-Canadian community. Moreover, these Southern Italian-Canadian women often use negotiation, compromise, and especially secrecy as strategies for fulfilling their own desires and independence, while still maintaining close ties with their family and community.

The following chapter is a concluding summary of the arguments presented in the thesis. As well, I discuss suggestions for future research.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis questions whether restrictions are placed on sexuality and independence for most Southern Italian-Canadian women, and, if so, how were these restrictions experienced and expressed, and how were conflicts negotiated. The intent of the research was to examine the socialization experiences of second and third-generation Southern Italian-Canadian girls, focusing on attitudes toward sexuality and family life. The research explored the issues of virginity, religion, ideal womanliness, the body, masturbation, sex education, financial independence, marriage and motherhood, sexuality, sexual orientation, family rules and expectations, and individuality. The participants' narratives regarding their struggles with old world traditions, expectations, and ideals found in the Southern Italian-Canadian community provide evidence that there is repression of one's sexuality and independence in this community.

5.1 Summary of Findings

As illustrated in the literature review, the works of Barolini (1985), Bona (1999), Patriarca (1999), Ricciutelli (1987), and Schembri (1998), describe their conflict with the traditions and values of their Italian heritage, particularly their conflict with the prescribed image of the "good Italian girl." Likewise, participants also find conflicts between the

Southern Italian values and traditions and those of the broader Canadian community. They felt that they had been socialized to fulfill the image of the "good Italian girl."

The dominant discourse, as found in the literature review and participants interviews, surrounding issues of sexuality is that "virgin is good," and "sex is bad." Moreover, the patriarchal ideology of a man desiring a virgin bride is emphasized in socialization messages. A recurring theme of the participant interviews delineated the message of virginity as mandatory, as being their main form of sexual education.

Also, marriage and thereafter pregnancy are what primarily mark one as an adult woman in the Southern Italian-Canadian community. Thus, as noted by Perry (1978), and as further reinforced by participants, "sexual coupling," becoming a wife and mother, are what makes a Southern Italian-Canadian woman an adult in the eyes of her family and community. Before marriage a woman is socialized to be a dependent child who needs to be taken care of. A woman is restricted to always having to live under someone's protection.

Participants recalled that the experience of growing up as a woman in a Southern Italian-Canadian family is sheltered and restrictive. The participant interviews reinforced Bellicoso's (1996) and Johnson's (1978) findings of parental anger and shame brought about by a child moving out of the family home. However, as noted by many participants, gender differences do not exist with the issue of moving out of the family home. Men, as women, are expected to live at home until they are married.

Furthermore, homosexuality and divorce, are not generally accepted, and both may

be stigmatized in a Southern Italian-Canadian community. The all important notion of serietà reinforces a woman's role as the "good wife" is to be dutiful and stoical. A woman who deviates from these expectations calls into question her goodness as a woman. Thus, divorce is generally acceptable if it is not her choice, otherwise the divorce becomes her fault; and she is labeled a *puttana.*

In contrast to the issue of moving out of the family home, gender differences do exist with the issue of divorce. As noted by participants, the fault of a divorce falls mainly on the woman, she is viewed as the cause of the divorce. The notion of serietà, being dutiful and stoical, plays an important role in the issue of divorce. That is, a "good" wife is viewed as enduring and holding a marriage together through any difficulties that may occur. A husband, on the other hand, as *gallismo* asserts, is expected to be virile.

With regard to church dogma, many participants stated that it does not influence their family's or their own views. However, while the daughters may not regard Catholicism as affecting their own choices in life, it has affected their parents' values which they have been socialized to follow, and which have been ingrained in them. Nevertheless, the families are clearly moving away from the church and this will likely have a significant impact on the next generation if not this one.

The "good girl" image places a great deal of emotional strain on women; they do not want to hurt their family, or lose the respect of others in the community. As a result, women feel they must often play roles. It is evident that negotiation, secrecy, and compromise become significant in obtaining a balance with their desires and their family's

expectations of them.

Lorde's (1984) theory of the "erotic" is a useful tool for analyzing Southern Italian-Canadian family life, and the expectations placed on these Southern Italian-Canadian women, in regards to sexuality. For these Southern Italian-Canadian women, their desires in life are undeniably restricted, and may become unexpressed, and thus unfulfilled. It is implicit that for an unmarried women, virginity is mandatory and independence is very difficult to achieve. The "yes within ourselves" is silenced for fear of stepping outside of family expectations. Not following this expectation of virginity and dependence before marriage brings shame to a woman; she is simply viewed as a *puttana*.

The voices of Southern Italian-Canadian women have not been widely heard on this issue either in the social science literature, or in the community. Most of the current literature discussing sexuality and cultural conflict in this context is found in literary sources, such as autobiographical non-fiction, poetry and novels. Social science literature, such as academic and research literature, written on or by second of third-generation Southern Italian-Canadian women is virtually nonexistent. This research focuses on giving Southern Italian-Canadian women a voice in social science literature, through validating and honouring their experiences.

5.2 Suggestions for Future Research

This thesis presents many directions for future research. As the research sample was relatively small, examining these issues with a larger group may draw out other

findings and a greater number of issues which could be further examined. Also, a larger sample might have resulted in alternate views, as well as a greater response to the issues discussed.

Moreover, it might be beneficial to conduct the research in a larger urban centre, rather than a smaller community. A larger urban community would allow for greater diversity in demographics. As the sample in this research did not have any "out" lesbian participants, in a larger urban center a researcher could obtain a sample with much greater diversity. As the thesis examines sexuality, lesbian voices would greatly enrich the data, which is lacking these voices.

As the socialization of girls in some other ethnic communities is very similar to that of Southern Italian-Canadian girls, a further suggestion for future researchers is to explore these issues in other ethnic communities.

Social change is a collective as well as an individual process. Daughters must become aware of the restrictions and silence involved in their socialization, and in turn not repeat this with their daughters.

References

Ahearn, C. B. (1985). "Definitions of Womanhood: Class, Acculturation, and Feminism." In The Dream Book: An Anthology of Writings by Italian-American Women. Ed. H. Barolini. Schocken Books: New York.

Alfano, M. (1998). "Una Lettera Alla Mia Cugina Americana." In Curaggia: Writing by Women of Italian Descent. Ed. N. A. Ciatu, D. Dileo & G. Micallef. Women's Press: Toronto.

Anderson, K. & Jack, D. C. (1991). "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses." In Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History. Ed. S. B. Gluck & D. Patai. Routledge: New York.

Baldassar, L. (1999). Marias and Marriage: Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality Among Italo-Australian Youth in Perth. Journal of Sociology, 35 (1), 1-22.

Barolini, H. (1985). "Introduction." In The Dream Book: An Anthology of Writings by Italian-American Women. Ed. H. Barolini. Schocken Books: New York.

Bellicoso, M. P. Mixed Messages: The Personal Fallout When Old Values Meet New Worlds. The Eyetalian, Spring 1996: 7.

Belliotti, R. A. (1995). Seeking Identity: Individualism versus Community in an Ethnic Context. University Press of Kansas: Kansas.

Berlitz. (1998). Italian Today. Berlitz Publishing Company: Princeton, NJ.

Bertrand, J. T.; Brown, J. E. & Ward, V. M. (1992). Techniques for Analyzing Focus Group Data. Evaluation Review, 16 (2): 198-209.

Bloom, L. R.. (1998). Under the Sign of Hope: Feminist Methodology and Narrative Interpretation. State University of New York Press: Albany, New York.

Bohan, J. S. (1992). "Prologue: Re-viewing Psychology, Re-placing Women -- An End Searching For a Means." In Seldom Seen, Rarely Heard: Women's Place in Psychology. Ed. J. S. Bohan. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Bona, M. J. (1999). Claiming a Tradition: Italian-American Women Writers. Southern Illinois University Press: Carbondale & Eddwardsville.

Bugental, D. B. & Goodnow, J. J. (1998). "Socialization Processes." In Handbook of Child Psychology, Fifth Edition, Volume 3: Social, Emotional, and Personality Development. Ed. W. Damon & N. Eisenberg. Jouhn Wiley & Sons, Inc: New York.

Capone, G. (1998). "Dago Dyke." In Curaggia: Writing by Women of Italian Descent. Ed. N. A. Ciatu, D. Dileo & G. Micallef. Women's Press: Toronto.

Carroll, M. P. (1986). The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins. Princeton University Press: New Jersey.

Ciatu, N. A. (1998). "The Moon Only Howls When Hands Leave Lips and Words Spread Like Dew to Conspiring Minds." In Curaggia: Writing by Women of Italian Descent. Ed. N. A. Ciatu, D. Dileo & G. Micallef. Women's Press: Toronto.

Ciccia, F. (2000). A Double Standard. Equality Today [On-line]. Available: http://www.equalitytoday.org/edition3/double.html

Ciresi, R. (1994). La Stella d'Oro. Voices in Italian Americana, 5 (1): 123-138.

Cisneros, S. (1991). "One Holy Night." In Woman Hollering Creek. Random House: New York.

Coffey, A. & Atkinson, P. (1996). Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complementary Research Strategies. Sage: Thousand Oaks.

Cook, J. & Fonow, M. M. (1986). "Knowledge and Women's Interests: Feminist Methodology in the Field of Sociology." Sociological Inquiry, 56: 2-29.

Cook, L. M. & Hale, C. L. (1992). A Feminist Approach to the Empowerment of Women Mediators. Discourse & Society, 3 (3): 277-300.

Cottrell, B. & Lord, S. (1996). "Feminist Action Research: Building on Experience." In Feminist Voices. Memories and Visions: Celebrating 20 Years of Feminist Research With CRIAW/CREF 1976-1996. Ed. L. Clippingdale. CRIAW: Ottawa.

CRIAW. (1996). Feminist Research Ethics: A Process. CRIAW: Ottawa.

D'Alessandro, L. (1998). "Italiana Lady." In Curaggia: Writing by Women of Italian Descent. Ed. N. A. Ciatu, D. Dileo & G. Micallef. Women's Press: Toronto.

Del Negro, G. (1997). Looking Through My Mother's Eyes: Life Stories of Nine Italian Immigrant Women in Canada. Guernica: Toronto.

De Rosa, T. (1980). An Italian-American Woman Speaks Out. Attenzione, May: 38-39.

De Salvo, L. A. (1985). "A Portrait of the *Puttana* as a Middle-Aged Woolf Scholar." In The Dream Book: An Anthology of Writings by Italian-American Women. Ed. H. Barolini. Schocken Books: New York.

Devault, M. L. (1990). Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Interviewing and Analysis. Social Problems, 37 (1) February 1990: 96-116.

di Cuore, F. (1998). "Leaving Home: Reflections of a Catholic Lesbian." In Curaggia: Writing by Women of Italian Descent. Ed. N. A. Ciatu, D. Dileo & G. Micallef. Women's Press: Toronto.

di Michele, M. (1984). "Marta's Monologue." Italian-Canadian Voices. Ed. C. M. DiGiovanni. Oakville: Mosaic Press.

Espin, O. M. (1999). Women Crossing Boundaries: A Psychology of Immigration and Transforming Sexuality. Routledge: New York.

Feola, M. S. (1998). "An Ethnic Passage." In Curaggia: Writing by Women of Italian Descent. Ed. N. A. Ciatu, D. Dileo & G. Micallef. Women's Press: Toronto.

Gambino, R. (1974). Blood Of My Blood: The Dilemma of the Italian-Americans. Anchor Books: New York.

Graham, H. (1984). "Surveying Through Stories." In Social Researching, Politics, Problems, Practice. Ed. C. Bell & H. Roberts. Routledge & Kegan Paul: New York.

Halkes, C. (1983). "Mary and Women." In Mary in the Churches. Ed. H. Kung & J. Moltmann. T. & T. Clark Ltd.: Edinburgh.

Hamington, M. (1995). Hail Mary? The Struggle for Ultimate Womanhood in Catholicism. Routledge: New York.

Haas, J. & Shaffir, W. (1998). "Socialization." In New Society: Sociology for the 21st Century. Ed. R. J. Brym. Harcourt Brace & Company: Toronto.

Hetherington, E. M.; Parke, R. D. and Schmukler, M. A. (2002). Child Psychology. McGraw-Hill Ryerson: Toronto.

Holland, J. & Ramazanoglu, C. (1994). "Coming to Conclusions: Power and Interpretation in Researching Young Women's Sexuality." In Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective. Ed. M. M.aynard & J. Purvis. Taylor & Francis: London.

Horowitz, R. (1983). Honor and the American Dream: Culture and Identity in a Chicano Community. Rutgers University Press: New Jersey.

Hughes, D. & DuMont, K. (1993). Using Focus Groups to Facilitate Culturally Anchored Research. American Journal of Community Psychology, 21 (6): 775-806.

Johnson, A. (1996). "It's Good to Talk": The Focus Group and the Sociological Imagination. Sociological Review, 44: 517-538.

Johnson, C. L. (1978). "The Maternal Role in the Contemporary Italian-American Family." In The Italian Immigrant Woman in North America. Eds. B. B. Caroli, R. Harney and L. Tomasi. Multicultural History Society of Ontario: Toronto.

Kassel, M. (1983). "Mary and the Human Psyche Considered in the Light of Depth Psychology." In Mary in the Churches. Ed. H. Kung & J. Moltmann. T. & T. Clark Ltd.: Edinburgh.

Lather, P. (1991). Getting Smart: Feminist Research & Pedagogy with/in the Postmodern. Routledge: New York.

LeRose, D. (1998). "La Nipota Diversa." In Curaggia: Writing by Women of Italian Descent. Ed. N. A. Ciatu, D. Dileo & G. Micallef. Women's Press: Toronto.

Lorde, A. (1984). "Uses of the Erotic" In Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches. Crossing Press: New York.

Melhuus, M. (1990). A Shame to Honour -- A Shame to Suffer. Ethnos, 55 (1-2), 5-25.

Merton, R. K.; Fiske, M.; & Kendall, P. L. (1990). The Focused Interview: A Manual of Problems and Procedures. The Free Press: New York.

Moraes-Gorecki, V. (1988). Cultural Variations on Gender: Latin American Marianismo/Machismo in Australia. Mankind, 18 (1), 26-35.

Moraga, C. (1986). "From a Long Line of Vendidas: Chicanas and Feminism." In Feminist Studies/Critical Studies. Ed. T. de Lauretis. Indiana University Press: Bloomington.

Morgan, D. L. (1996). Focus Groups. Annual Review of Sociology, 22: 129-152.

Morgan, D. L. (1997). Focus Groups as Qualitative Research. Sage: Thousand Oaks.

Navarro, M. (1998). "Becoming La Mujer." In Adios Barbie. Ed. Ophira Edut. Seal Press: Toronto.

Norris, J.; Nurius, P. S. & Dimeff, I. A. (1996). Through Her Eyes: Factors Affecting Women's Perception of and Resistance to Acquaintance Sexual Aggression Threat. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 20: 123-145.

Orsi, R. A. (1990). The Fault Memory: "Southern Italy" in the Imagination of Immigrants and the Lives of Their Children in Italian Harlem, 1920-1945. Journal of Family History, 15 (2), 133-147.

Paget, M. A. (1983). Experience and Knowledge. Human Studies, 6: 67-90.

Pallotta-Chiarolli, M. & Skrbis, Z. (1994). Authority, Compliance and Rebellion in Second Generation Cultural Minorities. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, 30 (3), 259-272.

Pallotta-Chiarolli, M. (1995). "A Rainbow in my Heart." In Ethnic Minority Youth in Australia. Ed. C. Guerra & R. White. National Clearinghouse for Youth Studies: Tasmania, Hobart.

Parke, R. D. & Buriel, R. (1998). "Socialization in the Family: Ethnic and Ecological Perspectives." In Handbook of Child Psychology 5th Edition; Volume 3: Social, Emotional, and Personality Development. Ed. W. Damon & N. Eisenberg. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.: New York.

Patriarca, G. (1999). "Some Women." In Ciao, Baby. Guernica: Toronto.

Patriarca, G. (1999). "Mary." In Italian Women And Other Tragedies. Guernica: Toronto.

Patriarca, G. (1999). "Daughters." In Italian Women And Other Tragedies. Guernica: Toronto.

Patriarca, G. (1997). "Espresso, Camaros and Gianni Morandi." In Daughters For Sale. Guernica: Toronto.

Patriarca, G. (1997). "Loreta, la calda." In Daughters For Sale. Guernica: Toronto.

Pavich, E. G. (1986). A Chicana Perspective on Mexican Culture and Sexuality. Journal of Social Work and Human Sexuality, 3, 47-65.

Perry, H. (1978). "The Metonymic Definition of the Female and the Concept of Honour Among Italian Immigrant Families in Toronto." In The Italian Immigrant Woman in North America. Eds. Betty Boyd Caroli, Robert Harney and Lydio Tomasi. Multicultural History Society of Ontario: Toronto.

Petrone, P. (1995). Breaking the Mould. [sic] Guernica: Toronto.

Pichini, L. (1987). Two Generations in Conflict: Sex Role Expectations Among Italian-Canadian Women. Canadian Women's Studies, 8 (2): 22-23.

Preto, N. G. (1990). Hispanic Mothers. Journal of Feminist Family Therapy, 2 (2): 15-21.

Ranke-Heinemann, U. (1990). Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven: The Catholic Church and Sexuality. Penguin: New York.

Reinharz, S. (1992). Feminist Methods in Social Research. Oxford Press: Toronto.

Ricciutelli, L. (1987). Growing Up...As A Roman Catholic in an Italian Family or, How I Flushed My Virginity Down The Toilet. Canadian Women's Studies, 8 (2): 22-23.

Rolle, A. (1980). The Italian Americans: Troubled Roots. The Free Press: New York.

Rubin, G. (1984). "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." In Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality. Ed. C. S. Vance. Routledge & Kegan Paul: Boston.

Schembri, F. (1998). "Meglio Morta che Disonorata." In Curaggia: Writing by Women of Italian Descent. Ed. N. A. Ciatu, D. Dileo & G. Micallef. Women's Press: Toronto.

Schembri, F. (1998). "Hyphenated Identities." In Curaggia: Writing by Women of Italian Descent. Ed. N. A. Ciatu, D. Dileo & G. Micallef. Women's Press: Toronto.

Tomasi, L. F. (1985). Italian Americans: New Perspectives in Italian Immigration and Ethnicity. Center for Migration Studies: New York.

Tong, R. P. (1998). Feminist Thought. Westview Press: Boulder, CO.

Trujillo, C. (1991). "Chicana Lesbians: Fear and Loathing in the Chicano Community." In Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About. Ed. C. Trujillo. Third Woman Press: Berkeley.

Urwin, C. A. & Haynes, D. T. (1998). A Reflexive Model for Collaboration: Empowering Partnerships Through Focus Groups. Administration in Social Work, 22(2): 23-39.

Velazquez, L. C. (1999). "Finding a Voice: Latinas in the South." In Neither Separate: Women, Race, and Class in the South. Ed. B. E. Smith. Temple University Press: Philadelphia.

Weiss, R. S. (1994). Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies. The Free Press: New York.

Westen, D. (1996). Psychology: Mind, Brain, & Culture. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Wilkinson, S. (1998). Focus Groups in Feminist Research: Power, Interaction, and the Co-Construction of Meaning. Women's Studies International Forum, 21 (1): 111-125.

Wilkinson, S. (1999). Focus Groups: A Feminist Method. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 23: 221-244.

Yinger, J. M. (1994). Ethnicity: Source of Strength? Source of Conflict? State University of New York Press: Albany, NY.

Zavella, P. (1997). "'Playing with Fire': The Gendered Construction of Chicana/Mexicana Sexuality." In The Gender Sexuality Reader? Culture, History, Political Economy. Ed. R. N. Lancaster & M. di Leonardo. Routledge: New York.

Suggested Readings

Barolini, H. (1979). Umbertina. The Feminist Press: New York.

Barreca, R. (1999). "My Aunts Taught Me to Dance." In Beyond the Godfather: Italian-American Writers on the Real Italian-American Experience. Ed. A. K. Ciongoli & J. Parini. University Press of New England: London.

Battigelli, R. (1998). "Francesca's Ways." In The Anthology of Italian-Canadian Writing. Ed. J. Pivato. Guernica: Toronto.

Ciresi, R. (2000). Sometimes I Dream in Italian. Dell Publishing: New York.

Di Michele, M. (1988). "Les Plaisirs de la porte." In Pillars of Lace: The Anthology of Italian-Canadian Women Writers. Ed. M. De Franceschi. Guernica: Toronto.

Hendin, J. G. (1988). The Right Thing to Do. The Feminist Press: New York.

Patriarca, G. (1997). "The Kiss." In Daughters For Sale. Guernica: Toronto.

Suriano, A. (1998). "coupled." In Curaggia: Writing by Women of Italian Descent. Ed. N. A. Ciatu, D. Dileo & G. Micallef. Women's Press: Toronto.

Appendix I

Glossary of Italian Terms and Phrases

abruzzése: people from the Southern Italian region of Abruzzi.

Bella figura: "a good code of behaviour" (Bona 1999: 81).

calabrése: people from the Southern Italian region of Calabria.

Che dira la gènte: "what will people say" (Pallotta-Chiarolli et al. 1994: 266).

Comare: Godmother.

Fare la strada diritta: "to walk the straight path" (Del Negro 1997: 77).

Gli altri: "the others" (Pallotta-Chiarolli et al. 1994: 266).

Il buon costume e l'órdine della famiglia: "good customs and the order of the family" (Orsi 1990: 138).

La via nuòva: the new way; North American way of life.

La via vecchia: the old way; "values centered on family solidarity, practical wisdom, and self-contained sexual pride" (Belliotti 1995: 42).

L'órdine della famiglia: "the unwritten but all-demanding and complex system of rules governing one's relations within, and responsibilities to, [their] own family, and [their] posture toward those outside the family" (Gambino 1974: 3).

Mala femmina: "a 'naughty woman,' one who is sexually wicked -- delightfully or destructively" (Gambino 1974: 162).

Mezzogiórno: the areas south and east of Rome. It is composed of the six provinces of Abruzzi, Campania, Apulia, Lucania, Calabria, and Sicilia.

Nònna: grandmother.

Omertà: "silence which sees nothing, hears nothing, tells nothing, and thus betrays nothing" (Barolini 1985: 23).

Onóre: "honor, solidarity, tradition, 'face'" (Gambino 1974: 4).

Serietà: the ideal of a chaste woman (Gambino 1974: 162).

Sistemata: to be settled.

Sistemazióne: the process of settling down.

Zii: uncles.

Appendix II

Glossary of Calabrése Dialect

The Italian language is based on the Tuscan dialect, which became the national language of Italy after its unification in the 1860s (Berlitz 1998). Accordingly, "until then, people spoke in their own regional dialects which are still much in evidence today (66). It is noted that "there are twenty dialects in Italy, one for each region" (5). Each dialect has its own vocabulary, as well as spellings for many of the same words (for example, *putana/puttana*). The following glossary is the Calabrian dialect.

Paése: village.

Puttana: whore.

Femmine inglese: "English" women.

Appendix III

Glossary of Italo-canadése

Italo-canadése is "an amalgam of spoken dialect and working-class English that was developed by Italian immigrants" in Canada (Petrone 1995: 95).

Mangiacake: derogatory term referring to "English" people.

Appendix IV

Discussion Guide

1. What are the dominant images of women in your family? In the community? What are the images of "good girls" and "good women"?

2. In your family, what are the benchmarks that would make you an adult woman?

3. Under what circumstances can you move out of your family home?

4. If you chose to, or have, moved out of your home, how would, or did, your family respond to this?

5. If family rules and expectations exist, do you accept them or do you find a way to get around them and live your life the way you want to?

6. Do you feel that you must make a choice between your individualism as a woman and the acceptance of your family?

7. Is a heterosexual relationship implicitly and/or explicitly stated as mandatory by your family? Do you think this is rooted in Southern Italian culture?
If so, how do you respond to these attitudes?

8. What kind of sex education did you receive, and how would or does this affect your sexual life?

10. To what extent is the body and sex talked about in your family?

11. What have you been taught about virginity?

12. To what extent does church dogma influence the views of your family, in terms of family life and sexuality? Does church dogma directly or indirectly influence your views of marriage and family?

13. How does your family view sexual activity outside of marriage?

14. What are women in your family told about premarital sex?

15. How is self-exploration of the body viewed in your family?

16. Do believe a double standard exists? How are standards different for men than women? Do you have an explanation for this?

I would very much appreciate your participation in this research. If you would like to participate in the study, please sign this consent form.

Sincerely,

_____

Frances Talarico
Principal Researcher

_____

Date

I _____ hereby give permission to take part in a study examining the area of sexuality and Southern Italian-Canadian women being undertaken by _____. I consent to be interviewed for the purposes of this study contingent on the conditions listed above. I completely understand the terms of this study. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw permission at any time. I hereby consent myself being audio taped, and I understand that the recordings will not be disclosed to anyone other than the principal researcher. I further understand the tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the study. I understand that my anonymity will be protected and that any record of my participation in this study will be kept confidential. All information is strictly confidential and no individual will be identified. I understand that I will be given a copy of the results before the final draft is submitted, and that the information collected from this research will be submitted as a Master's thesis to Memorial University of Newfoundland.

_____ _____

Date Signature