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THE MULTIPLE MEANINGS OF SAN DIEGO'S LITTLE ITALY: A STUDY OF
THE IMPACT OF REAL AND SYMBOLIC SPACE AND BOUNDARIES ON THE
ETHNIC IDENTITIES OF EIGHT ITALIAN AMERICANS

by

Thomas Joseph Cesarini

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2016

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IDENTITIES OF EIGHT ITALIAN AMERICANS

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Abstract

The literature suggests that identifying with a particular place can promote a sense of ethnic identity. This study focused on eight Italian American community members' perceptions of San Diego's Little Italy as both a container and creator of ethnic identity. The study addressed a) how the participants define and convey their Italian American ethnic identity and b) how the participants perceive the role of San Diego's Little Italy pre-redevelopment and post-redevelopment in creating and shaping their sense of being Italian American.

The study employed a case-study design. Ethnohistoric accounts of life experiences were gathered from participants selected through convenience and maximum variation sampling procedures. Polkinghorne's narrative analysis process was used to organize and display the individual accounts, and a cross-case analysis was conducted to identify emergent themes.

Three overarching themes emerged from the narratives: a) Elements and Manifestations of Social Capital, b) Cultural Characteristics and Dynamics, and c) Evolving Purpose of Place. Each theme in turn comprised four subthemes that helped to illuminate each theme's dynamics.

Overall, a sense of community ownership was evident in the narratives from both former and current residents. For some participants, Little Italy was less about ethnicity and more about an upscale urban lifestyle enhanced somewhat by an Italian American cultural sensibility. For others, Little Italy in its current manifestation holds little meaning; instead, these participants look to the former neighborhood and its characteristics to maintain an emotional connection to place and their cultural heritage. A

noteworthy subgroup comprises participants who grew up in San Diego's Italian neighborhood and are now an integral part of Little Italy's rebranding. For them, a measure of tension exists: They are focused on continued progress in Little Italy but also lament the community's changing cultural climate along with the disappearance of its historical assets.

Further studies could illuminate dynamics of Little Italy's managing organization and its role in shaping an updated Italian American culture. Studies of Italian Americans with no connection to a designated Italian American place also would provide opportunities to better understand the role of place in the development and maintenance of ethnic identity.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Margaret and Andy—may they always strive to lead with compassion, maintain their youthful curiosity, and fulfill their aspirations and ambitions; and to my parents for their integrity of character, unyielding support, and infinite wisdom.

When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer — Walt Whitman

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Culture is transmitted and cultural identities are formed through interacting with other members of a cultural group and by participating in day-to-day life within a community of similar individuals. It is through interacting with members of a culture, for example, that young children learn a culture's language, and interactions also teach the uninitiated—and reinforce for the already initiated—cultural values and norms and the standard operating ways of doing business that are characteristic of a cultural group. Rituals and ceremonies are sometimes used to highlight cultural beliefs and to reinforce, at times in rather dramatic ways, the sacred elements of cultural life.

It is hardly surprising, then, that immigrants to a new country often live in close proximity to other members of their ethnic groups. Throughout the history of the United States, for example, recognizable and bounded ethnic communities of African Americans, Greek Americans, Chinese Americans, Southeast Asians, Italian Americans, and many other ethnic groups have emerged.

Over a number of generations, members of these communities often become assimilated into mainstream American culture and, during this assimilation process, members of an ethnic group often leave the communities where their parents and grandparents had lived. It is not unusual, for example, for those who are upwardly mobile economically to move out of the city, where ethnic neighborhoods are often located, to suburbs with no easily discernable ethnic identity. This historical pattern of assimilation

had certainly occurred during the previous century among Italian Americans and among other ethnic groups as well.

Of course, when people leave the places they and their family members inhabited in the past, they seldom cut their ties completely with the past, nor with the places they inhabited in the past. African Americans, for example, often travel from the suburbs to the inner city on Sunday mornings to attend an African American church service, and African American males sometimes continue to get their hair cut in what is often a mainstay in African American communities, the African American barbershop.

There is always the possibility, however, that, over time, as more people move out of somewhat bounded neighborhoods that have been inhabited by members of particular ethnic groups, the neighborhoods themselves might begin to disappear. This phenomenon has certainly happened in a number of U.S. cities that once had relatively large Italian American communities. In New York City, for example, the once expansive Italian American community on and around Mulberry Street now covers only a few blocks.

Furthermore, changes in neighborhoods often involve more than changes in size. Today, New York City's Little Italy is filled more with Italian restaurants that cater to visitors from uptown, midtown, and areas beyond Manhattan than with Italian American families. This contemporary pattern of cultural change because of redevelopment has been repeated in American cities across the nation over the past several decades.

Ultimately, what does a rebranding of Italian American communities mean for Italian Americans? Do the Little Italys of today continue to have at least symbolic meaning for Italian Americans? What do Italian Americans concerned with maintaining their ethnic identity say about how they go about doing this and the role, if any, that the

existence of the commercially oriented and somewhat romanticized entities named Little Italy play in the ethnic-maintenance process?

This study extrapolates the constructs of culture and ethnicity as boundaries to a place and time. In this regard, the Italian neighborhoods of yesteryear and today's Little Italys serve as places in which ethnic boundaries have been formed and shaped. Culture, then, can be found as artifacts within these neighborhoods, such as through the stories of residents past and present. Through the construction and exploration of such stories, an attempt at meaning making and cultural definitions within a context of place and time by individuals as well as the broader community is possible. The context for this study is San Diego's Little Italy.

Statement of the Problem

Although significant literature exists on Little Italys and their important role, historically, in maintaining Italian American identity, there is limited research on the role that Little Italys play for contemporary Italian Americans, especially those who have assimilated into mainstream American culture. Significant research on how ethnic identity as well as *culture* (and, by extension, the notion of *cultural preservation*) is defined by Italian Americans is also lacking.

In San Diego, in fact, a rather obvious dichotomy is evident: an economic revitalization of the city's Little Italy community symbolized by a growing number of new apartment buildings and businesses that followed an exodus of Italian families and businesses from the space that, historically, served as the center of the Italian American community. A closer examination of San Diego's Little Italy is warranted: What is the effect of place on the perceptions of the local Italian community? To what extent does

this recently redeveloped neighborhood act as both a container and creator of Italian American culture and ethnic identity? What is the relationship, if any, between contemporary Little Italy and the perpetuation of Italian Americanness in San Diego?

Purpose of the Study

This study focused on eight Italian American-community members' perceptions of Little Italy's role as both a container and creator of ethnic identity. The study addresses a) how the participants define and convey their Italian American ethnic identity, and b) how, if at all, the participants perceive the role of San Diego's Little Italy pre-redevelopment and post-redevelopment in creating and shaping their sense of being Italian American.

This assessment was conducted through the construction of ethnohistoric accounts of the participants' life experiences. The first aspect of this research is to consider the role of the former Italian neighborhood in shaping Italian American ethnicity; the second aspect is to determine how, if at all, the existence of Little Italy in its redeveloped form preserves and represents Italian American ethnicity.

Research Questions

The following research questions served to guide this study in order to better examine how meaning is derived through place and time for Italian Americans:

1. How do eight Italian Americans in San Diego define and convey their Italian American ethnic identity?
2. For eight Italian Americans in San Diego, what is their perception of the role of San Diego's Italian neighborhood pre-redevelopment and Little Italy post-redevelopment in creating, representing, and shaping their Italian American ethnicity?

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Academic and institutional discussions of ethnicity and culture are found across multiple disciplines in research literature on multiculturalism and ethnic identity. Many of the discussions are historical; others are based on research of contemporary phenomena and current sociopolitical climates. Surprisingly, however, little discussion has been conducted on how individuals make meaning of their own ethnic identities as their social contexts change over time. And, in particular, not enough attention is given to the essential role that *place* plays in forming and maintaining individual (and community) ethnic identity.

This study focused on ethnic-identity formation and meaning making for Italian Americans who have a connection to San Diego's Little Italy. In order to analyze the relationship between ethnic identity and place, the study begins with a review of scholarship that provides a sound foundation and also reveals gaps that are left unaddressed. The literature that is most relevant to this study encompassed the following three topics: a) Ethnic-Identity Conceptualizations in Meaning Making; b) Enclaves and Ethnic Communities as Evolving Place Identity; and c) Italian Americanness and Little Italy as Re-Imagined Landscape.

Ethnic-Identity Conceptualizations in Meaning Making

Scholarly literature examines ethnic identity through two primary lenses:

a) ethnicity as fixed essence achieved through the course of developmental stages, and b) ethnicity as fluid and changing—shaped by situation, context, and even others' influences and perceptions. A third lens for looking at ethnic identity is that of the life story, which

has gained currency in 21st-century scholarship. This perspective, which incorporates a narrative approach to ethnic-identity discourse, provides the primary framework for the current study. As a whole, the literature also focuses intently on examinations of minority groups and attendant ethnic-identity characteristics, perceptions, and dynamics of those groups.

Traditionally, questions of ethnicity and culture in scholarly literature have been conceptualized and operationalized vis-à-vis the disciplines of “psychology, sociology, anthropology, and social welfare, among others.” (Phinney, 1992, p. 157). A broad discussion of the concepts of assimilation and acculturation is also found in the literature around ethnic identity, as is the concept of symbolic ethnicity—a key concept in this study—particularly as it relates to newer generations. The literature is varied but characteristically tends to focus on attempts at definitions and measurements of ethnic identity as well as on the dynamics and processes of ethnic-identity formation for minority ethnic groups managing ways to situate themselves into a dominate culture.

Conceptions of Ethnic Identity

Historically, the discourse on ethnicity and ethnic identity began with the erosion and rejection of the concepts of assimilation and Americanization—and the consequent reliance on pluralism as a more appropriate construct of analysis. As Kazal (1995) has asserted,

When the notion of an Anglo-American core collapsed amid the turmoil of the 1960s, assimilation lost its allure, and students of European immigration retreated to a focus on one of the building blocks of the earlier accounts: the ethnic group.
(p. 437)

Kazal (1995) has invoked historian David Gerber's idea that social history "concentrated on groups in isolation from one another, . . . or in conflict" (as cited in Kazal, 1995, p. 437). Kazal has noted that this idea "had special resonance for immigration studies" (p. 438). According to Kazal, Gerber has commented, "It was easy to get the notion . . . that our history is the story of vaguely related groups which inhabit the same space, fail to communicate, and often get in one another's way" (as cited in Kazal, 1995, p. 438).

Some scholars writing in the 1990s rejected the value of assimilation as a construct. Historians, psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists made assertions such as, "The concept of an unchanging, monolithic, Anglo-American cultural core is dead" (Kazal, 1995, p. 438), and "Assimilation is not today a popular term" (Glazer, 1993, p. 123). Indeed, Glazer (1993) has elaborated on the notion that assimilation did not mean the inevitable loss of racial identity:

Our ethnic and racial reality, we are told, does not exhibit the effects of assimilation; our social science should not expect it; and as an ideal, it is somewhat disreputable, opposed to the reality of both individual and group difference and to the claim that such differences should be recognized and celebrated. (p. 123)

As a response to the rejection of assimilation theory, then, the notion of pluralism was employed. Pluralism "is concerned with a fundamental question of how the world would look different were the experiences of the excluded placed at the center of our thinking and with the ways in which immigrants actively shape their own lives"

(Zhou, 1997, p. 73). Zhou favored the pluralistic approach with regard to ethnicity and has emphasized, “Ethnicity can serve as an asset rather than a liability” (p. 73).

As the scholarship shifted away from assimilation, acculturation, and Americanization toward a broader concept of pluralism, so too did it invite conversation around identity and ethnic identity.

Erik Erikson generally stands as the pioneer of identity-formation theory. His scholarship is recognized for providing a solid foundation that follows the evolution from identity to ethnic-identity formation and development. As Phinney (1989) has reminded us, “Erikson’s (1968) theory of ego identity development, as operationalized by Marcia (1966, 1980), provides a useful starting point for studying ethnic identity in adolescence” (p. 35). Phinney has stated, “Marcia’s paradigm describes four identity statuses based on the presence or absence of exploration and commitment” (p. 35). These statuses are *Diffuse*, *Foreclosed*, *Moratorium*, and *Achieved*, which Phinney has discussed as follows:

- 1) Diffuse: Little or no exploration of one’s ethnicity and no clear understanding of the issues.
- 2) Foreclosed: Little or no exploration of ethnicity, but apparent clarity about one’s own ethnicity. Feelings about one’s ethnicity may be either positive or negative, depending on one’s socialization experiences.
- 3) Moratorium: Evidence of exploration, accompanied by some confusion about the meaning of one’s own ethnicity.
- 4) Achieved: Evidence of exploration, accompanied by a clear, secure understanding and acceptance of one’s own ethnicity. (p. 38)

(For further discussion on Erikson's model of identity and Marcia's operationalizing of this theory, see Crocetti, Fermani, Pojaghi, and Meeus, 2011; Crocetti, Rubini, and Meeus, 2008; Crocetti, Schwartz, Fermani, and Meeus, 2010; Syed and Azmitia, 2008; Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, and Bámaca-Gómez, 2004.)

Glazer (1993) has also connected the notion of identity to ethnicity (also invoking Erikson), as he has stated,

The term "identity" has become indispensable in the discussion of ethnic affairs.

Yet it was hardly used at all until the 1950's. The father of the concept, Erik H.

Erikson, remarked on its novelty in . . . *Childhood and Society* (1950): "We begin

to conceptualize matters of identity . . . in a country which attempts to make a

super-identity of all the identities imported by its constituent immigrants." In an

autobiographical account published 20 years later, Erikson . . . quoted this passage

and added that the terms "identity" and "identity crisis" seemed to grow out of

"the experience of emigration, immigration, and Americanization." (pp.124-125)

Mann (2006) has noted, "The formation of personal and group identity is a complex phenomenon, a mixture of psychological, biological, social, cultural, and

environmental factors" (p. 211), and Quintana (2007) has affirmed, "With longitudinal

methodology and large samples, developmental psychologists are conducting important

investigations into how racial and ethnic identity develops" (p. 259). Yet Yeh and Hwang

(2000) have asserted, "Despite the wealth of scientific and theoretical literature

concerning ethnic identity, there is still not a widely accepted definition" (p. 420).

Moreover, by the late 20th century, a trend emerged using race and ethnicity

interchangeably. Quintana (2007) has stated:

In a rare moment of consensus among scholars, the American Anthropological Association (1997) formally declared opposition to treating ethnicity and race as different social groups; the official statement reads: . . . by treating race and ethnicity as fundamentally different . . . , the historical evolution of these category types is largely ignored. For example, today's ethnicities are yesterday's races. In the early 20th century in the U.S., Italians, the Irish, and Jews were all thought to be racial (not ethnic) groups whose members were inherently and irredeemably distinct from the majority white population. (para. 20). (as cited in Quintana, p. 260)

Ethnic Identity as Process, Content, and Development

For this review (and this study overall) I have relied less on precise definitions of ethnicity, race, and culture and instead have leaned toward a more constructivist approach that relies on narrative-based frameworks to reveal the process, formation, and development of ethnicity. Quintana (2007) has observed, "A clear trend in the uses of these terms has been an evolution from definitions that are restricted to these terms' demographic denotations to definitions that include socially constructed connotations of these terms" (p. 259). This is an important assertion to note in light of the narrative focus of the current study and the concept of the fluid nature of ethnicity that we find in the literature.

Ethnic-identity formation offers insight into how ethnicity, identity, and culture—as constructs and as social utilities—combine and develop. Ethnic-identity scholarship that focuses on identity as a developmental process primarily looks to Erikson's model of identity formation as a basis for empirical study. Some researchers have examined ethnic-

identity development using linear-stage models (e.g., Phinney & Ong, 2007). Others have taken a dynamic and narrative approach to ethnic identity formation, one that is contextually based and situated within a socially constructed framework (e.g., Nagel, 1994; Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999).

The psychology literature in particular (and perhaps most obviously), is a fertile source for the discourse surrounding ethnicity and ethnic identity. Most models of ethnic identity, however, focus on individual minority groups (see Phinney, 1989, for a broader discussion). Phinney (1992) has confirmed, “In attempting to measure ethnic identity, researchers have generally focused on specific groups and tried to identify and assess the key components of ethnic identity within those ethnic groups” (p. 157).

In an attempt to describe a fundamental characteristic of ethnic identity, Phinney and Ong (2007) have suggested, “Ethnic identity derives from a sense of peoplehood within a group, a culture, and a particular setting” (p. 271). The authors, however, situate ethnic identity within a developmental framework, along the same lines as stage theories’ portrayal of self-identity formation through stages. Phinney (1992) has also contended,

Ethnic identity is an aspect of a person’s social identity that has been defined by Tajfel (1981) as that part of an individual’s self-concept that derives from his or her knowledge of membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. (p. 156)

Phinney (1996) has identified three aspects of ethnicity that relate to its utility in psychology that are also useful for this study’s review of the literature, notably,

(a) the cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors that distinguish ethnic groups; (b) the subjective sense of ethnic group membership (i.e., ethnic identity) that is held

by group members; and (c) the experiences associated with minority status, including powerlessness, discrimination, and prejudice. (p. 919)

Phinney (1996) has also acknowledged that other components of ethnicity exist including “political, economic, and historical factors” (p. 919), but has further asserted that “the three named components are the critical features from a psychological perspective” (p. 919).

Phinney (1996) has also attempted to bridge the concepts of ethnicity and culture, however, in stating,

Ethnicity is perhaps most often thought of as culture. A common assumption about the meaning of ethnicity focuses on the cultural characteristics of a particular group, that is, the norms, values, attitudes, and behaviors that are typical of an ethnic group and that stem from a common culture of origin transmitted across generations. (p. 920)

Ong, Fuller-Rowell, and Phinney (2010) have also derived important insights. Focusing on ethnic identity theory and process, the authors have raised essential questions that continue to drive research on ethnicity and identity:

What is the nature and form of ethnic identity, and how should individual differences be conceptualized and measured? What are the relevant components of ethnic identity that contribute to greater psychological well-being? How does ethnic identity develop? What are the conditions that threaten and undermine its maintenance? What are the factors that support and promote its growth? Does ethnic identity vary from day-to-day? (p. 40)

Ong, Fuller-Rowell, and Phinney (2010) have furthermore highlighted Phinney's differentiation between "the *process* of ethnic identity and the *content* of ethnic identity" (p. 41). The authors have noted, "To suggest that ethnic identity is a process is to claim that development of identity among ethnic and racial minorities is characterized by cycles of self-exploration, change, and consolidation" (p. 41), an assertion for which, according to the authors, ample data exist to confirm.

Ultimately, Phinney (1992) has approached the topic of ethnic identity attempting to find common ground across ethnic groups in the hope of generalizing a theory, at least across some common components of ethnic identity we find among groups. Phinney has emphasized, "It is clear that each group has its unique history, traditions, and values; yet the concept of a group identity, that is, a sense of identification with, or belonging to, one's own group, is common to all human beings" (p. 158). Phinney has delineated the components of ethnic identity as Self-Identification, or "the ethnic label that one uses for oneself" (p. 158); Ethnic Behaviors and Practices, especially important here are the "involvement in social activities with members of one's group and participation in cultural traditions" (p. 159); Affirmation and Belonging, or the idea of "feeling good about one's background, and being happy with one's group membership" (p. 159); and Ethnic Identity Achievement, or the process of "an exploration of the meaning of one's ethnicity (e.g., its history and traditions) that leads to a secure sense of oneself as a member of a minority group" (p. 160).

Yi and Shorter-Gooden (1999) have used a socially constructionist lens to examine ethnic identity formation, noting that through social constructionism, "A notion of a constructed self is favored over the essentialist notion of the self, which treats self as

if it were a substance or an unchangeable essence” (p. 18). Their work is also grounded in psychology and geared for use in psychotherapy, yet their insights are relevant for understanding ethnic identity in a more general sense and across disciplines. In their analysis, Yi and Shorter-Gooden have emphasized the fluid nature of ethnicity and how ethnicity is a dynamic created by the self as well as others. This notion remains central to this current study because (noting one relevant example) a key construct associated with Italian American identity—Little Italy—is a label originally developed by others outside the confines of the Italian American community.

Nagel’s (1994) analysis has also looked at ethnicity through a constructivist lens and has emphasized “two of the basic building blocks of ethnicity” (p. 152)—identity and culture—through which “individuals and groups attempt to address the problematics of ethnic boundaries and meaning” (p. 152). While also emphasizing the fluid character of ethnicity, found within both individuals and groups, Nagel has contended, “Ethnic identity is most closely associated with the issue of boundaries” (p. 154). Nagel has noted further that these boundaries are the determinants of membership within an ethnic category, and, importantly, also determine which of these categories are at an individual’s disposal within a spatial and temporal frame. In terms of an overarching view of ethnic identity, Nagel has stated:

Ethnic identity, then, is the result of a dialectical process involving internal and external opinions and processes, as well as the individual’s self-identification and outsiders’ ethnic designations—i.e., what *you* think your ethnicity is, versus what *they* think your ethnicity is. Since ethnicity changes situationally, the individual carries a portfolio of ethnic identities that are more or less salient in various

situations and vis-à-vis various audiences. . . . Ethnic boundaries, and thus identities, are constructed by both the individual and group as well as by outside agents and organizations. (pp. 154-155)

Moreover, Nagel (1994) has commented on the lack of discussion around meaning making, which provides an insight particularly relevant to this study:

Research speaks fairly clearly and articulately about how ethnic boundaries are erected and torn down. . . . However, the literature is less articulate about the *meaning* of ethnicity to individuals and groups, about the forces that shape and influence the contents of that ethnicity, and about the purpose ethnic meanings serve. (p. 161)

Nagel (1994) has also suggested that any potential meaning of ethnicity can be found within the domain of culture and makes a clear distinction between ethnicity and culture. To elaborate on this distinction between ethnicity and culture, Nagel has asserted,

Culture is constructed in much the same way as ethnic boundaries are built, by the actions of individuals and groups and their interactions with the larger society. Ethnic boundaries function to determine identity options, membership composition and size, and form of ethnic organization. Boundaries answer the question: Who are we? Culture provides the content and meaning of ethnicity: it animates and authenticates ethnic boundaries by providing a history, ideology, symbolic universe, and system of meaning. Culture answers the question: What are we? (p. 162)

In a return to Nagel's (1994) assertion, Portes and Macleod (1996) have acknowledged the elusive nature of ethnic identity, arguing,

It is precisely this symbolic interaction between ethnic minorities and the host society that makes the understanding of identity so elusive. In-group, out-group interactions are not simply additive. Instead, what they think your ethnicity is influences what you think your ethnicity is, to say nothing of what they think you think your ethnicity is. (p. 527)

Yeh and Hwang (2000) have provided an overview of models of ethnic identity, discussing definitions, categories, and theories. As the authors have also affirmed in their embracing of ethnicity as a social construct, however (stating that although stage models can offer important insights into an individual's own development), these models "frequently do not address the extent to which minorities are contextually bound to social, historical, cultural, and institutional factors" (p. 427). The authors have contended that "there is growing recognition in the social and cultural psychology literature that one's identity and conception of self is inextricably linked to one's social context" (p. 427).

While the frameworks of ethnic identity as developmental stages and social construct have traditionally dominated the literature regarding ethnic-identity discourse, the concept of the life story has also played an important role in the identity literature in a more contemporary context. McAdams (2001) has emphasized that, when it comes to ethnic identity, one's own story is "the thing" (p. 101). In other words, when we speak of the meaning that people try to associate with their ethnic identity, we need to examine individual life stories in order to ascertain this meaning that people ascribe to their lives. It is in the accounting that we find the meaning; indeed, the stories themselves become

the meaning, according to the narrative framework and life-story approach to ethnic identity.

McAdams (2001) has suggested that life stories offer an individual “some degree of unity and purpose” (p. 102). The life-story model based on McAdams’s perspective insists,

Identity itself takes the form of a story, complete with setting, scenes, character, plot, and theme. In late adolescence and young adulthood, people living in modern societies begin to reconstruct the personal past, perceive the present, and anticipate the future in terms of an internalized and evolving self-story, an integrative narrative of self that provides modern life with some modicum of psychosocial unity and purpose. Life stories are based on biographical facts, but they go considerably beyond the facts as people selectively appropriate aspects of their experience and imaginatively construe both past and future to construct stories that make sense to them and to their audiences, that vivify and integrate life and make it more or less meaningful. Life stories are psychosocial constructions, coauthored by the person himself or herself and the cultural context within which that person’s life is embedded and given meaning. As such, individual life stories reflect cultural values and norms, including assumptions about gender, race, and class. Life stories are intelligible within a particular cultural frame, and yet they also differentiate one person from the next. (p. 101)

Syed and Azmitia (2008) have taken a narrative life-story approach in their study of emerging adults’ experience of their respective ethnicities. The authors have noted that the traditional focus on developmental frames has “overemphasized the process of ethnic

identity formation and overlooked the content of ethnic identity” (p. 1012). Referencing McAdams, the authors have suggested,

From this perspective, individuals’ life stories are their identities, for stories—and identities—are constantly being renegotiated and reassessed as new experiences shed light on and help make meaning of the old ones, which contributes to a sense of integration and coherence. Identity, then, from life story perspective, is inherently dynamic and developmental. (pp. 1014-1015)

The authors have also elaborated on the importance of the life-story approach to scholarship on ethnicity, by stating,

Stories surrounding ethnicity can highlight the nature of individuals’ experiences as well as the action they took to cope, resolve, or make meaning of what they experienced. Through the resolution of conflict and the meaning emerging adults ascribe to their experiences, they may disclose their personal views and concerns about their ethnicity, thus providing a personal, everyday account of ethnic identity development. (p. 1015)

In referencing the group of scholars who adhere to a narrative approach to identity study, other observers have also emphasized the centrality of the life story to our understanding of ethnic identity. Singer (2004) has explained,

To understand the identity formation process is to understand how individuals craft narratives from experiences, tell these stories internally and to others, and ultimately apply these stories to knowledge of self, other and the world in general. In an era of evolutionary psychology and neuroscience, these researchers are distinguished by their determination not to lose sight of a humanistic concern with

how individuals look for meaning and spiritual depth in life; they do not want to relinquish an interest in the content and quality of thought by focusing solely on biochemistry, process or mechanics. (p. 438)

McAdams (2001) has also offered an important distinction, however, in relation to the life-story model and its Eriksonian foundations, noting,

Although full-fledged life stories may begin to reveal themselves as identity formats in the adolescent and young adult years, identity construction does not end when this developmental epoch is over. Erikson's (1963) original stage model confined identity formation to a single psychosocial stage (emerging adulthood), but McAdams's life story model emphasizes the continuation of identity work across the adult years. (p. 106)

Symbolic Ethnicity

The important work of Gans (1979) culminating in his concept of symbolic ethnicity also adds a vital element in the ethnic-identity discourse. (See also Gans, 2014, for a current discussion.) Noting the contemporary phenomenon of a societal focus on ethnicity and a sort of "ethnic revival" (p. 1), Gans has asserted that the phenomenon is hardly a revival at all, but rather "a more visible form of long-standing phenomena, or a new stage of acculturation and assimilation" (p. 1). Gans has based his suppositions on two primary points: ethnics' acquired upward mobility and currency of ethnic symbols. As Gans has stated,

My hypothesis is that in this generation, people are less and less interested in their ethnic cultures and organizations—both sacred and secular—and are instead more concerned with maintaining their ethnic identity, with the feeling of being Jewish,

or Italian, or Polish, and with finding ways of feeling and expressing that identity in suitable ways. (p. 7)

Gans's (1979) use of the term identity, he has explained, is restricted to the "sociopsychological elements that accompany role behavior, and the ethnic role is today less of an ascriptive than a voluntary role that people assume alongside other roles" (pp. 7-8). Gans has also suggested that a "nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation" (p. 9) is a defining characteristic of symbolic ethnicity and a primary form of its expression, something "that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior" (p. 9) as past ethnics were required to do. Gans has elaborated on this component of symbolic ethnicity, asserting,

As the functions of ethnic cultures and groups diminish and identity becomes the primary way of being ethnic, ethnicity takes on an expressive rather than instrumental function in people's lives, becoming more of a leisure-time activity and losing its relevance, say, to earning a living or regulating family life.

Expressive behavior can take many forms, but is [sic] often involves the use of symbols—and symbols as signs rather than as myths. Ethnic symbols are frequently individual cultural practices which are taken from the older ethnic culture; they are 'abstracted' from that culture and pulled out of its original moorings, so to speak, to become stand-ins for it. (p. 9)

In an almost prophetic way, Gans (1979) has divined some of the characteristics of a new ethnicity for future generations:

Some cultural patterns and organizations will survive. Patterns which lend themselves to transformation into symbols and easy practice, such as annual

holidays, should persist. So will organizations which create and distribute symbols, or ‘ethnic goods’ such as foodstuffs or written materials, but need few or no members and can function with small staffs and low overheads. In all likelihood, most ethnic organizations will eventually realize that in order to survive, they must deal mainly in symbols, using them to generate enough support to fund other activities as well. (p. 17)

Ultimately, in the increasingly prevalent literature on ethnic identity, the focus has been on an individual’s own developmental process or the emphasis has remained on the social aspects of identity. Phinney has approached the distinction between the two trends, suggesting a different approach in claiming,

The most serious need in ethnic identity research is to devise reliable and valid measures of ethnic identity. To accomplish this, it is important to distinguish between general aspects of ethnic identity that apply across groups and specific aspects that distinguish groups. (as cited in Ong, Fuller-Rowell, & Phinney, 2010, p. 39)

In fact, in an effort to measure ethnic identity, Phinney has developed the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), “a questionnaire designed to measure ethnic identity as a generalized phenomena across ethnic groups in the United States” (Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Stracuzzi and Saya, 2003, p. 504).

Most notably, a narrative approach to ethnic identity remains at the forefront of current and relevant scholarship—by examining (and constructing) individual life stories, the researcher will find meaning in relation to ethnic identity.

In concluding this section, then, we turn to Medina (2004) who has posed insightful questions regarding future study surrounding ethnicity:

What role should the category of ethnicity play in the study of identity and in identity politics? What are the tasks and challenges for the philosophy of ethnicity in the twenty-first century? And what is the place that ethnicity occupies outside the academy, in artistic and political practice and in everyday life? (p. 93)

Medina (2004) has written largely from a philosophical perspective, however, and for the most part has examined the epistemology of ethnicity and attendant concepts. And while it is notable that Medina's questions have been raised through myriad lenses—"African American Studies, English, Ethnic Studies, Philosophy, Performance Studies, Sociology, and Women's Studies" (p. 93)—the provocative questions punctuate the absence of leadership studies as an additional lens that can lend important insights to the discourse.

How, then, if at all, are the answers (at least in part) to the queries of Who are we? and What are we? (as Nagel has asked in constructing a framework for discourse) found in a physical space and perhaps even a certain moment in time? For Italian Americans, how do the Italian neighborhoods of a bygone era and the redeveloped Little Italys of today figure into the discussion of ethnic identity and culture? For that exploration we delve into the next sections of the literature review.

Enclaves and Ethnic Communities as Evolving Place Identity

Several examples from the literature encompassing ethnic communities provide analogues to both the cultural dynamics and physical representations of San Diego's Little Italy as urban enclave (and thus situate this study's primary purpose in broader

scope). The studies cited are noteworthy for the descriptive treatment of their respective ethnic settlements but remain more important for their utility in illuminating attendant concepts such as identity, place, and culture and how these intersect as well as manifest across diverse cultural contexts. I examine several types of “communities” in the literature, and these studies describe dynamics that include both spatial and temporal characteristics. Exemplars include Koreatown in Los Angeles; the area surrounding Broadway in Los Angeles; San Antonio; Chinatowns in Chicago, Toronto, and St. Louis; Chicago’s Polonia community; and Toronto’s Little Portugal. One final example highlights a former landmark Mexican restaurant in Echo Park in Los Angeles, which one might view as a rich microcosm of dynamics generally present writ large in ethnic neighborhoods. Discussion of other Little Italys, however, is addressed in the third and final section of this literature review on Italian Americanness.

The rich variety of literature on tourism offers another excellent resource and thus serves as an additional reference, including particularly the role tourism plays in ethnic-community evolution and its connection to the construct of place. Lastly, I include a brief overview of the business improvement district model, which is essential to this study, as the model has become ubiquitous in contemporary urban-renewal practices, particularly in the redevelopment of ethnic districts.

To frame a discussion on cultural dynamics in ethnic communities, however, the concepts of enclaves and communities, as well as constructs of space and place, provide important and relevant insights. These concepts serve as primary discursive elements, and thus that scholarship provides a useful point of departure.

Enclaves as Identity Markers

Abrahamson (1996) has set the context for a discussion on urban enclaves by citing urban theorist Robert Park, who, in 1925, “described cities as comprising ‘a mosaic of little worlds that touch but do not interpenetrate’” (p. 1). In referencing Park’s work, Abrahamson has illustrated further the basis for a working definition and evokes characteristics of the urban enclave that will remain useful for the current study:

He [Park] was primarily calling attention to the fact that various types of people tend to seek out others like themselves and live close together. Located within these distinctive clusters are specialized commercial enterprises and institutions that support the inhabitants’ special ways of life. . . . Each distinctive group, along with its stores and institutions, occupies a geographic area that becomes intimately associated with the group. Through this linkage, areas acquire symbolic qualities that include their place names and social histories. Each place, both as a geographic entity and as a space with social meaning, also tends to be an object of residents’ attachments and an important component of their identities. . . .

Because many relationships tend to revolve around place of residence, Park concluded that people who live in “little worlds” have their most meaningful relationships with those who cohabit their worlds. (p. 1)

Many examples of research on urban enclaves and ethnic communities are found in the literature, mostly framed through socioeconomic, class, or lifestyle lenses (for some examples, see Abrahamson, 1996). A substantial number of discussions link identity with place (see Abrahamson, 1996; Arreola, 1995; Erdmans, 1995). Ultimately, for this study, this linking of identity with place remains an essential focus; the notion of

identity is borrowed from Abrahamson (1996): “From a social-psychological perspective, the term *identities* refers to people’s definitions of their (social) selves and tends to be linked to roles and statuses. Most people occupy numerous roles, are involved in many different relationships, and have multiple identities” (p. 5). The value of this assertion is found in its reflection on the fluid nature of ethnic identity as a social construct, not a rigid framework that does not change temporally or contextually.

Ultimately, Abrahamson (1996) has drawn a conclusion about enclaves, stating, “The place then becomes a calling card, symbolizing the social identities of the residents of the enclave” (p. 13). The place is consequently and inextricably woven into the fabric of the residents’ identities. Indeed, we can extrapolate and argue that *place* reflects, as a whole, dynamics present within the individuals that compose place, an argument that remains sparse in the literature and one that can be aptly framed through the lens of leadership.

The concepts of urban enclave, ethnic community, and even the notion of “community” itself have, of course, evolved over time. Immigrant patterns as well have changed temporally, as have the needs and aspirations of residents of ethnic neighborhoods. Thus, for a more thorough analysis, inquiry should address how the purposes of these neighborhoods have changed. The examples cited in this section demonstrate the multiple dynamics present in ethnic groups, their neighborhoods, their institutions, and their interactions with individuals within their own cultural milieu as well as “outsiders.” What remains constant is the connection between an ethnic sensibility and its “community” for grounding (however that community might be defined), as we shall see in exploring further.

Space and Place

The literature on tourism (i.e., heritage tourism in more specific terms), provides insight into the importance of individuals' ties to space and place albeit a scarcity of substance overall in the literature in this regard, according to McKercher, Wang, and Park (2015). The authors have asserted,

Place and sense of place are central to the human condition. People want and need to feel attached, that they belong to places, and consequently look for signs that validate that sense of belonging. Importantly, it seems to be part of the human condition to classify peoples as insiders or outsiders. While insidedness exists along a continuum, and while people are adaptable, change occurs faster than people can adjust during periods of rapid growth, leading to a sense of alienation. (p. 63)

The authors' meta-analysis points to the idea of tourism as a catalyst for positive and negative feelings toward place and "the impacts of tourism on host communities" (p. 52). The idea of tourism and heritage tourism become important in a discussion on enclaves, ethnic communities, and identities, especially in light of contemporary trends of gentrification and neighborhood redevelopment that tend to brand communities and commodify a neighborhood's assets and resources.

The concept of boundaries prevalent in the scholarship on leadership is a natural extension of the authors' notion that "place is a socially constructed idea" (p. 53) and that "place is dynamic" (p. 53). Furthermore, the authors' contention that the concept of place is threefold (tourism, non-tourism, shared) nicely lends itself to the construct of boundaries and boundary management. It also may be a catalyst for dialogue in terms of

how stakeholders come to terms with and work more efficiently in such an environment, or said *place*.

At this point we must examine the defining characteristics between space and place. Ling (2005) has suggested,

It is generally understood that any settlement includes two basic elements: physical space and social space. Physical space provides geographical boundaries in which the settlement is defined and its members interact with one another in a variety of economic, social, and cultural activities. While the physical space is easily recognizable, the social space of a community is not necessarily clearly demarcated by a physical space and could extend beyond the physical boundaries of the settlement. (p. 77)

(For more discussion on heritage tourism and the roles of space and place in the discourse on identity, see Fyall & Garrod, 1998; Garrod & Fyall, 2000; Herbert, 2001; McCabe & Stokoe, 2004; Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2001.)

Arreola (1995) has punctuated this association of identity with place: “To analyze the identity of a city is to begin to understand human association with place and how localities become defined by varied interest” (p. 518) and, notably, that similar to an individual’s own ethnic identity, “Urban identity is inevitably a constructed idea that is tied to a real or ideal landscape” (p. 518). Through Arreola’s assertions, we find the components of place ties, stakeholder agenda, and social construct—all of which form the catalyst for change in the evolution of contemporary ethnic neighborhoods.

Many ethnic-community analogues to Little Italy exist in the literature through which we can derive important insights. Collectively, this scholarship demonstrates how

these urban enclaves have evolved, to a lesser degree the notion of how culture is defined and preserved, and to a larger degree how identity and place are intertwined, if largely in a romanticized sense (for an example, see Arreola, 1995). For this comparison, Los Angeles and the current dynamics of ethnic communities in flux in this most diverse city provide a noteworthy starting point.

Koreatown, Los Angeles

As Arreola (1995) has noted, “One of the strongest measures of American urban identity is the association of a city with a specific ethnic group and its landscape” (p. 518)—or a *neighborhood* with a specific ethnic group. An examination of Los Angeles provides some grounding when it comes to urban space and ties to ethnic communities: Southern California has, decidedly, an immigrant milieu that has been influential in shaping its cities and communities (Hawthorne, 2014b; Molina, 2015). In Los Angeles, more than a third of the population is foreign born, “a figure three times the national average” (Hawthorne, 2014a, para. 8). With many instances of gentrification, renovation, and re-imagining currently occurring in many of its communities, the City of Angels invites us to (according to Hawthorne, 2014a), “catch a glimpse of its cultural future to see how a metropolitan region, over many decades, has dealt with profound demographic change. And when L.A. wants to see its own future along those lines? It looks to Koreatown” (para. 10-11). As a narrative in and of itself, Koreatown weaves a rich and vibrant tale:

If K-town increasingly resembles an empire on the march, gobbling up new territory by the week, it is not an empire made of bricks and mortar. It is a net draped over the existing cityscape, a net of signage and light, easily stretched and

infinitely expandable. It fills, cloaks or remakes spaces in the city others had abandoned or forgotten about. In a city that has often demolished even its best-known landmarks, that makes it both an anomaly and a suggestion of the L.A. to come. . . . K-town is a thriving, charismatic advertisement for a more intensely urban Los Angeles. It is also a reflection of a city whose immigrants are more settled than ever before, increasingly gaining the clout to shape public and private architecture. (Hawthorne, 2014a, para. 5-7)

Koreatown remains noteworthy also because its primary demographic comprises Latinos, not Koreans (Hawthorne, 2014a), and stands as an exemplar regarding a contemporary dynamic of the multiethnic enclave, wherein multiple ethnicities intersect across physical and cultural boundaries (see Luk & Phan, 2005). Today, many Korean entrepreneurs, their livelihoods firmly rooted in Koreatown, live elsewhere in the city (Hawthorne, 2014a).

Ultimately, Koreatown stands in stark contrast to the redevelopment outcomes of other communities in Los Angeles or nationwide, where neighborhoods are redesigned from their very foundations, residents often displaced, and histories all but forgotten. And Los Angeles, on the whole, certainly has evolved on a different path contrary to what Park asserted at previous-century's beginning with his view of "little worlds that touch but do not interpenetrate" (see Abrahamson, 1996, p. 1).

Hawthorne (2014a) has helped us to understand this dynamic, having stated, One of the most stubborn stereotypes about Los Angeles is that it relies on an architecture of detachment. Each famous landmark—Griffith Observatory, Dodger Stadium, Pierre Koenig's Case Study House No. 22—stands apart from

the city around it, marooned on a hillside lot or in a sea of parking spaces. We've tended to think of immigrant neighborhoods in the same way. You are now entering Little Tokyo. You are now entering Thai Town. Little Armenia. Historic Filipinotown. One is here. The other is there. But L.A. has for decades been a messier, more crowded and more layered place than the clichés let on.

(para. 36-38)

The author's assertion also helps us to clarify some of the dynamics behind how narratives help to shape identity and form boundaries, real or perceived, and how the narratives we choose also contribute to the evolution of ethnic neighborhoods.

Latino Urbanism in Los Angeles

Examining further this layering on and around Broadway in Los Angeles, gentrification has taken hold, albeit with a twist, as the redevelopment gaze of the area is on “design cues from street life in Latin American cities” (Hawthorne, 2014b, para. 3) and exemplifies how, as Hawthorne has observed,

Politicians and policymakers in Southern California are finding inspiration in Latino Urbanism, a term that describes the range of ad hoc ways in which immigrants from Mexico and Central and South America have remade pockets of American cities to feel at least a little like the places they left behind. (para. 4)

And similar on one hand to Koreatown's current facelifts of standing facades and buildings, in this region “signs are mostly hand-painted, whether they announce an accountant's office or a nail salon. The walls of grocery stores are covered with pictogram-like drawings of milk jugs and boxes of detergent” (para. 11).

Most considerably, Hawthorne (2014b) has observed, “For decades in Los Angeles, Latinos have carved out space for entrepreneurial and community-minded activities in a city organized around the freeway and the private house. . . . In the process they've blurred the line between public and private space” (para. 9-10). This blurring of lines is perhaps at the core of discussions around the evolution of ethnic enclaves and communities, especially through a socioeconomic or sociopolitical lens. As a testament to this ambiguity, Latino Urbanism is emphasizing the authority of immigrants in shaping their ways of life in Los Angeles, Hawthorne has noted, adding, “They are seeing the ideas about residential design, public and private space and entrepreneurship they carried with them from their native countries shape official planning policy” (para. 18).

San Antonio

In Los Angeles, Latino Urbanism shines as an example of the dominant Latinos leading the way in urban redevelopment and illustrates a more organic redevelopment. In San Antonio, Texas, however (which has been culturally restructured and commercially refortified), the city’s identity, Arreola (1995) has observed, “is not solely a result of the dominant ethnic Mexican population but in large measure is a constructed identity conceived, assembled, and promoted by non-Hispanic patrons of the community” (p. 518). Arreola has examined how “ethnic association shapes urban identity and how ideal landscape is forged through a process directed by individuals and institutions in a specific cultural context” (p. 518). In San Antonio, this identity is a result of two “ideal landscapes . . . the Paseo del Rio, or River Walk, and La Villita, or Little Town,” located in San Antonio’s downtown area, which are “exotic creations” (p. 519), and interestingly, “Neither landscape is anything like the downtown landscape that has actually been

shaped and sustained by local Mexicans” (p. 519), Arreola has asserted. As Arreola has also elaborated,

The heart of the Mexican quarter of San Antonio was a commercial landscape operated chiefly by Mexicans and mostly for their benefit. When city officials decided to promote a Hispanic identity for San Antonio other than the missions, they did not select this vital quarter, the real Hispanic commercial landscape of the city; instead, they substituted an ideal landscape that was contrived, exotic, romantic, and in many ways the antithesis of the city's true Mexican downtown. (p. 524)

Arreola (1995) has extrapolated through this study of San Antonio a “lesson for many cities” (p. 532) and has emphasized the importance of “recognition and remembrance” (p. 533) insofar as the redevelopment of a city’s landscape and its reconfigured idealized use—especially to project an idealized past. The author has argued, “The common ground between an ideal past and an official or authentic past may be a landscape that tolerates temporal diversity and accommodates multiple landuses [sic] that give character, not charm alone, to the cityscape” (p. 532).

Chinatown, Chicago

We find a complementary dynamic to San Antonio’s re-imagined regions mirrored in Chicago’s Chinatown. Santos, Belhassen, and Caton (2008) have demonstrated “how current tourism representations of Chicago’s Chinatown are constructed through a process of negotiation with the infamous past imagery of this ethnic enclave” (p. 1002). The focus of the authors’ study is on the multicultural goal of

tourism in ethnic communities—“repackaged” (p. 1010) cultural assets of the community for cultural consumption, such as through tours of the neighborhood.

The study highlights themes that “exoticize this neighborhood, while simultaneously attempting to render it familiar and comfortable for tourists” (p. 1002), echoing the similar structure and purpose in San Antonio. Moving beyond a discussion on the marketability of culture, however, the authors have also discussed another noteworthy theme: characterizing Chinatown as *other*, “while reconstructing this Otherness in a way that appears friendly to tourists” (p. 1002). The appeal of exotic renderings for potential tourism motives and this conceptualizing of *other* helps to perpetuate this exotic notion for marketability and cultural consumption, the authors argue.

The authors have also asserted, notably, “The touristification of Chinatown has policy consequences, since the ethnic identity of the neighborhood must be preserved, if tourism to the neighborhood is to flourish” (p. 1011). Important to note here is that the authors have not argued “against the commodification of Chinatown as a tourist space” (p. 1011), instead viewing this move as an “unavoidable outcome of turning neighborhood touring into a leisure/tourism product” (p. 1011). Moreover, the authors have maintained, “Urban ethnic districts should be managed and preserved, due to limited resources in ethnic communities in the globalized urban space and in the wake of gentrification and homogenization of the post-industrial city” (p. 1011). Yet continuing on a crucial point, the authors have also contended, “Moral dilemmas regarding how to preserve ethnic communities, which will inevitably arise, should be addressed and studied by those who seek to promote ethnic tourism” (p. 1011). It is in delving deeper

into this branch of analysis that the literature is lacking as a whole—the notion of how to preserve these ethnic communities, what exactly that preservation means for different stakeholders, and who benefits from that preservation.

Polonia, Chicago

A logical next stop in the journey toward an understanding of how the concept of *other* forms an important dynamic within ethnic communities is to visit Chicago's Polonia community. In Polonia, however, *other* is part of the same ethnic group. There, immigrants and ethnics have been traditionally steeped in conflict. Erdmans (1995) has made a clear distinction between immigrants and ethnics, whereas traditionally some scholars have misused the terms or used them interchangeably, according to the author. The author has cited scores of studies and models that note the vital differences, however, especially highlighting the notion of ethnic identity as a social construct. In noting the differences, Erdmans (1995) has also suggested that cultural context and temporal frames remain vital to the discourse:

Low rates of immigration between the 1920s and 1960s allowed many ethnic groups to mature without close ties to the homeland culture, and there were times when those ties were dangerous to maintain (e.g., WWII, the McCarthy era). This time gap between the early immigrants (who have now become ethnics) and the new immigrants has resulted in disparate cultural identities of the two groups. The ethnic culture invented by third generation ethnics bears little resemblance to the concurrent homeland culture of the new immigrants. (p. 177)

In essence, then, although sharing a common background, these two groups have become worlds apart, generating different cultural identities and possessing different

needs. Erdmans (1995) has come to the inevitable conclusion that “ancestry does not always function as a basis for solidarity between immigrant and ethnic populations” (p. 175), and ultimately, as one outcome of this dynamic in Polonia, Erdmans has argued, “Immigrants think Polish ethnics are marooned in the past” (p. 180). Consequently, Erdmans has observed, “Polish Americans and Polish immigrants frame their relations in an ‘us/them’ debate rather than a ‘we’ dialogue” (p. 182).

Chinatown, Toronto

In Toronto’s Chinatown, another dynamic is present, one that emphasizes the intermingling of ethnicities. Luk and Phan (2005) have argued, “‘Multiple ethnicity’ can coexist in an enclave” (p. 17), contrary to traditional views that frame ethnic groups with rigid boundaries, again such as that promulgated by Park, discussed previously. What is happening in Toronto’s Chinatown West is “the existence of a Vietnamization process” (p. 17), with Vietnamese businesses reconfiguring the old Chinatown, and thus the authors’ focus is on “ethnic transition within an ethnic enclave” (p. 17).

The authors of this study have argued for a multiethnic approach to enclaves and offer several contrasting definitions of the enclave in light of a more globalized society and world. They have asserted, “The conventional enclave concept which bases on the singularity of ethnic group has to be abandoned in view of rising occurrence of ethnic transition, particularly in this globalizing era” (Luk & Phan, 2005, p. 17). The conventional concept, however, hardly need be abandoned at all; instead, Luk and Phan provide another viewpoint on the changing dynamics of ethnic communities, emphasizing the fluid nature of ethnicity not merely for an individual’s identity but also for the identity of a community by extension.

Chinatown, St. Louis

In another Chinatown, however, that of St. Louis, a different dynamic is present than what we see in Toronto. Indeed, in St. Louis, a re-examination of the very label “Chinatown” is perhaps warranted. There, “While the old Chinese settlement around Hop Alley was disappearing, a new suburban Chinese American community had been quietly, yet rapidly, emerging since the 1960s” (Ling, 2005, p. 65). This notable difference is that “although the Chinese population in St. Louis has increased substantially, one cannot easily spot either a commercial or residential Chinese district” (p. 66). That said, the imprint of the Chinese Americans are ubiquitous—in the city’s buildings designed by Chinese American firms, in its cultural institutions such as language classes, newspapers, and religious groups, community events and activities, and through restaurants and food purveyors (Ling, 2005). Overall, what Ling has attempted is to “propose a model of ‘Cultural Community’ to define the Chinese American community in St. Louis since the 1960s and its significance and applicability to our understanding of the multiethnic and multicultural American society” (p. 66).

According to Ling (2005), “A cultural community does not always have particular physical boundaries, but is socially defined by the common cultural practices and beliefs of its members” (p. 67). Ling has asserted, “The cultural community model helps one better understand the issue of cultural identity” (p. 68) in that “a cultural community is formed not because of economic need of mutual aid, but because of the psychological need for cultural and ethnic identity” (p. 68). In St. Louis, Ling has stated,

Without physical boundaries, the cultural community still proved a functional, cohesive, and tightly knit ethnic structure. . . . The cultural community thus

proved itself an alternative model for ethnic community, when a physical ethnic concentration was absent and a physical ethnic community difficult to construct.

(pp. 89-90)

Little Portugal, Toronto

Shifting the focus to redevelopment practices, in Toronto's Little Portugal, we examine the trend of gentrification more directly in an effort to capture the impact of this contemporary practice on any given ethnic group. We begin with a common understanding of *gentrification*, offered by Molina (2015):

Gentrification generally refers to the influx of the middle class into a working-class neighborhood that results in both an economic and social transformation of the area. Changes include a rise in median home prices and rents, the replacement of owner-operated, independent businesses with chain stores, and the displacement of long-time residents who can no longer afford to live in the area. Depending on one's perspective, gentrification represents either a form of urban renewal or a form of socioeconomic polarization. (pp. 99-100)

In their study on Little Portugal, Murdie and Teixeira (2011) have observed, "Despite extensive literature on the nature and impact of gentrification, there has been little consideration of the effects of gentrification on ethnic neighbourhoods" (p. 61), with most studies instead focusing on class and gender, according to the authors. Murdie and Teixeira have also emphasized the importance of scholarship on gentrification and ethnicity, having further noted, "This impact is important, however, because, in addition to residential and commercial displacement, ethnic enclaves have a particular significance for immigrant groups" (p. 63). As the authors have suggested, in Little

Portugal, “Gentrification has accelerated Portuguese relocation to the suburbs and continues to have substantial impacts on the large number of Portuguese who still live in west central Toronto” (p. 68).

El Nayarit as a Cultural Microcosm

One last notable case (also framed within a backdrop of gentrification) brings us back to Los Angeles, specifically Echo Park, to the now-defunct El Nayarit Restaurant. This example also reflects many of the dynamics present in the other community cases presented, captured in the microcosm of restaurant (or in the leadership lexicon, a subsystem reflecting dynamics of a larger system), which makes it particularly compelling as a culminating example. Molina (2015) has suggested, “Restaurants can serve as social spaces that shape the neighborhoods in which they are located in ways that empower those who inhabit the surrounding area” (p. 71). What remains unclear in that assertion is if that function is visible today or if it is a dynamic of a bygone era. Ultimately, this is a discussion for future study. Molina (2015) has conveyed the notion that El Nayarit and its proprietor significantly shaped the neighborhood, stating,

My goal is to reveal ways in which individuals and groups who do not work explicitly to subvert social norms can nonetheless be place-makers who leave a mark on the urban landscape for generations to come. . . . Natalia Barraza, the owner of El Nayarit, and her employees were place-makers who provided a social and recreational space where their customers, often other Mexican immigrants, could imagine their lives outside of the strict confines of being a “worker.” And regardless of their particular social status, by being a part of an urban and

cosmopolitan milieu, both the restaurant's customers and its staff were exposed to and were able to imagine "the possible." (p. 71)

Also consequential is the notion of the restaurant, the author has argued, as "a ready-made social network for immigrants new to a dauntingly large, foreign city. Access to a space in which the language, food, and atmosphere were reassuringly familiar helped to better position recent arrivals for success in their new lives" (p. 73). This dynamic can be seen as a microcosm of the historical role and function of the larger ethnic enclave for its newly arrived immigrants.

Molina (1995) has suggested that through an analysis of Barraza and the restaurants she established, "We can gain a sense of how the formation of multicultural spaces helped erode the isolation of ethnic enclaves, providing both the impetus and the means for immigrants to cross the color line" (p. 76). Moreover, the author has asserted, "These spaces shaped whom immigrants socialized and did business with, and whom they called their neighbors" (p. 76). These observations reflect the notion of *other* and also highlight the multicultural, pluralistic dimensions of community as well as redefine the very notion of community (Santos, Belhassen, & Caton, 2008; Erdmans, 1995; Ling, 2005).

This example of El Nayarit also succinctly illustrates how we socially construct our identities and how those identities are tied to a physical place and time. Molina (2015) has explained,

El Nayarit was where working people came to assume—or in some cases create—their full identities, ones that went beyond who they were as laborers. A busboy wasn't a laborer here; he was the fellow with the great voice who sang with a trio;

a waitress from another restaurant became a new woman, transformed as she replaced her uniform with a beautiful dress. (p. 83)

In reference to the trend of gentrification, Molina (2015) has emphasized “the importance of recognizing and memorializing the place-makers who helped to shape the urban landscape of Echo Park and of other, similar places” (p. 100). The author has noted further, “If we fail to acknowledge and value these actors’ roles, we risk viewing gentrification as merely an uncomplicated urban renaissance in which a new set of place-makers revitalizes a vapid cultural wasteland filled with crime and blight” (p 100). Molina has asserted, unequivocally, “Gentrification is not just about changing the present; intentionally or not, it erases the past” (p. 100.) Molina has ultimately argued, most importantly,

As historians and educators, we have a responsibility to the future as well as to the past. We need to find ways to ensure that the images of barrio wastelands that dominate the collective consciousness will yield to more positive representations, including acknowledgement of the ways immigrants, citizens, neighbors, youth, entrepreneurs, and service workers have served as essential place-makers whose contributions we ought to both preserve and celebrate. (p. 111)

Business Improvement Districts in Urban Redevelopment

As a final area of discourse for this section, we turn to the literature on business improvement districts (BIDs) and the notion of urban redevelopment through this lens, especially through the framework of BID as a nonprofit system.

Business improvement districts have been decreed a driving force in sparking the renaissances of downtown districts and increasing social capital. They have also been

decried as self-important catalysts for further greed in the pursuit of business self-interests. Whatever the views, a major consensus is found in the body of literature addressing the business improvement district: Downtown centers in North America have been forever transformed, floundering economies and neighborhoods completely reimagined and revitalized, and local governance within these entities more assertive and effective in their effort and voice.

The model itself has helped to reshape other districts worldwide as well: Beyond North America, the business improvement district (or variation thereof in nomenclature) now exists in abundant variety in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and South Africa, to name but a few nations (Hoyt, 2005). In this country, and from a purely fiscal framework, the impact of the BID entity is astounding. Levy (2001) has underscored, “To know that these organizations are spending in excess of \$100 million annually to improve the center of America’s cities is to recognize their significance” (p. 124).

In other parts of the world that use the model, however, the fiscal health of a given district perhaps takes a back seat to its general health and welfare, in that the focus remains more on safety and community cohesion than on increasing consumerism (Hoyt, 2005). Regardless, the BID model is here to stay—and it is rapidly evolving and becoming even more ubiquitous.

Business improvement districts come in a variety of different names to include special improvement districts, public improvement districts, and municipal improvement districts (Hoyt, 2005), adding to the obscurity often surrounding their definition, structure, and scope. But Mitchell (2001) has provided a concise and functional baseline:

The basic approach is one in which a geographically defined majority of property owners and/or merchants agree to provide an extra level of public service in a specific area by imposing an added tax or fee on all of the properties and/or businesses in the area. (p. 116)

Moreover, the BID gets its mandate from state law and is governed at the local level. Accountability largely remains in the purview of the business and property owners themselves, apart from budget requirements and largely fiscal oversight from local government offices. Once business and property owners agree to form a BID in a contiguous area, the assessments collected are mandatory, even from businesses and owners that might have not wanted the creation of the BID (Warner, Quazi, More, Cattani, Bellen, & Odekon, 2002).

As Meltzer (2011) has contributed to the discussion,

The motto ‘Clean and Safe’ has long been synonymous with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). These “private governments” are established to enhance the cleanliness and safety of urban commercial corridors for consumers who demand more services than the local municipality provides publicly and are willing to pay for them. (p. 863)

Those services that BIDs provide often include “street cleaning, maintenance, security, and marketing” (p. 863).

Mitchell (1999) has conducted the first, systematic survey to assess the very nature of BIDs in the United States—conducting comprehensive research on their “structure, function, and management” (p.6). Mitchell’s research has identified 404 BIDs across the nation. In the United States, the first BID was established in New Orleans in

1974, with the first ever BID established in Canada in 1970 (Hoyt, 2005). Yet BIDs are a relatively new phenomenon. Mitchell has noted that almost 60% of BIDs have been formed since 1990, with 28% being established after 1995. The states with the most BIDs remain California, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Wisconsin, according to Mitchell's findings.

Mitchell (1999) has also identified nine areas or activities in which BIDs primarily engage: capital improvements, consumer marketing, economic development, maintenance, parking and transportation, policy and advocacy, public space regulation, security, and social services. Topping the list in terms of what BIDs do most is consumer marketing; at the other end of the spectrum, Mitchell has found that BIDs engage least in social service delivery. Given the rather recent establishment of the BID model, scholarship on various aspects of BIDs, especially discussions on the consequences of their form and function, remain sparse; more complete is the discussion on the justification for the need for BIDs.

This rationale for the creation of BIDs, Levy (2001) has argued, is most clear:

Immediate causes for the formation of BIDs are set amid larger trends shaping the fate of American downtowns since 1950. The movement of people out of cities and the proliferation in the 1970s and 1980s of shopping centers, edge city office campuses, theme parks, and entertainment centers steadily eroded downtown's share of shoppers and workers. (p. 125)

In Levy's (2001) assessment, we see the clear aim of economic redevelopment for the sake of the businesses involved in the BIDs. Dawkins and Grail (2007) have also made a clear, concise assertion regarding the main function of a BID, which they have

claimed is none other than “to improve the economic conditions of a business area” (p. 79). The authors, however, have focused heavily on the BID structure in England (yet they have also examined the U.S. BID domain). Regardless of which side of the pond they have examined, however, the authors have argued, “BIDs should be driven by the private sector community, ideally from the early stages of development” (p. 80). In their work, the authors have advocated for the private interests of community planning.

Scholars have suggested business self-interests as providing the impetus for BID formation, but another viewpoint that might offer some rationale for establishing BIDs also warrants attention: a nod toward some semblance of civic duty and the notion of public-consumption goods. As BIDs begin to form and coalesce, largely fending for themselves to attract more business and draw consumers away from suburbia, sprawling shopping malls, and back to downtown areas, consumers benefit as well through safer and cleaner neighborhoods and increased social capital and networking through a return to urban life (Hoyt, 2005). As such, Dimaggio (2006) has discussed the notion of “‘collective consumption goods,’ the benefits of which cannot be limited to those who pay for them” (p. 437). In Dimaggio’s treatise, he has turned to the arts as an example of these goods in that most of us “benefit (whether we pay or not) from the survival of orchestras and the music they play or from the presence of murals in our communities” (p. 437). This might offer a nice parallel in the case of BIDs—the businesses self-assess and pay for the improvements to their communities with the general population benefitting from these improvements as well. This, then, might also provide an argument for a more charitable nature of BIDs in that (although by and large, business and private interests are well represented), the BIDs nevertheless provide an additional public good—

at no monetary cost to the general consumer. This idea also comes into play as we delve further into an examination of the BID structure.

While BID structures differ nationwide on a state-to-state basis, there are some common measures to the business improvement district form. Mitchell's (1999) survey findings come to our aid once again: Mitchell's (1999) data has shown,

Among the BIDs, 61% were operated by nonprofit organizations, 13% were the responsibility of public sector bodies, and 26% were run by a public-non-profit partnership. Generally, the smaller the community the more likely the BID was run by a public agency; the larger the community the more likely it was the responsibility of a nonprofit organization. (p. 17)

In sum, the dynamics discussed in this section all reflect dynamics present in San Diego's Little Italy: regionalism, "othering," ideal landscapes, multiculturalism, conflict, and tourism. Furthermore, the BID discussion illustrates a primary means of managing ethnic districts, espoused by Santos, Belhassen, and Caton (2008)—and we see this model in place in San Diego's Little Italy. The scholarship in this section helps to paint a more vivid picture of how dynamics in San Diego's Little Italy function to preserve and create ethnic identity, and so we now turn to a discussion on Italian Americanness to help set the stage for the more focused discussion on San Diego's Italian re-imagined neighborhood.

Italian Americanness and Little Italy as Re-Imagined Landscape

Italian Americans are the sixth largest ethnic group in the United States (Alba & Abdel-Hady, 2005). The current, diffuse body of literature on Italian Americans is comparable to the dispersion of the present-day Italian Americans themselves. But

whereas accounts of Italian Americans' collective experience in the United States exist in abundance within *popular* literature, similar findings within scholarly literature remain sparse, comparatively speaking. Moreover, popular representations often remain steeped in stereotypes generally found within the Italian American milieu (Cordasco, 1981).

Overall, the connection between Italian Americana and the larger, non-Italian American community provides a rich opportunity to investigate how ethnicity is socially constructed, changes over time, and is created by others as much as self.

Italian Settlement in the New World

Italian immigration to the United States, and Italy's immigration pattern in general, occurred during roughly a one-hundred year period: 1861-1976. During this time, more than 26 million Italians left their homeland in search of a better life (Gabaccia, 2006). The initial waves of immigrants to the United States from this region hailed from the northern parts of Italy; after 1880, the influx of immigrants came from the southern Italian regions (Nelli, 1967). For the most part, the immigrants as a whole were poor peasants who clustered in the slum or ghetto regions of the metropolises in which they settled (Nelli, 1967).

Upon their arrival, immigrants from Italy were faced with prejudice and persecution as were the many immigrant groups that came before and after them. The Italians found strength in these settlements and a connection to a familiar way of life, collectively combating the uncertainties and alienations the new world exacted (Lopreato, 1970). Similar to other institutions the immigrants would develop in America—such as newspapers, mutual aid societies, and banks—the original Italian settlements also served

as an overarching institution, a kind of moderator for adjustment in the New World (Hughey & Vidich, 1992; Lopreato, 1970; Nelli, 1967).

Scholars of Italian American studies have posited that the Italian neighborhoods during this time served two functions. First, the settlement served as a way of staying connected to the homeland, with immigrants relying on traditional, old-world ways. Second, the community served as a kind of “cultural incubator” (Lopreato, 1970, p. 46), “[providing] a means of bridging the gap between the old and the new” (p. 46). Through these neighborhoods, Italian immigrants were able to balance a resistance to relinquish their traditions and ways with a desire to become a vital part of their new environment (Lopreato, 1970).

In terms of identity labeling, scholars have linked immigration patterns chronologically to the Italian experience in this country. Cordasco (1981) has identified three periods of evolution for the Italians in the United States: The first period includes the surge of immigration between 1880 and 1920 for the “Italian Italians” (p. 58). The second period, which spans World War II and the 1950s, proved to be “a period of generational conflict and acculturation” for the “Italian Americans” (p. 58). The third period, which spans the 1960s through the present, includes the third and fourth generation “American Italians” (p. 59). One can loosely relate Italian settlement nomenclature to these periods: The first period marked the birth of the Italian colonies, the second the emergence of Italian neighborhoods and ethnic enclaves, and the third heralded the renewal of Little Italy districts.

Development of Little Italys

With the first arrivals of Italian immigrants, Krase (2006) has written, “The first Italian settlements were most often referred to as ‘colonies,’ reflecting the common perception by the native born that they were foreign outposts on American soil” (p. 85). Many of the original immigrants were men, who came to this country in search of stable labor, earning enough money to send home, and eventually return; thus, Krase has argued, “For economic sojourners, community building was not a priority. Only slowly did Italian ‘birds of passage’ decide to stay, raise families and create distinctive neighborhoods that in some ways reflected their places of origin” (p. 85). Historical and demographic examination of these neighborhoods has found that many of the immigrant communities at the time were indeed male-dominated rather than family based in stark contrast to the villages of Italy (Gabaccia, 2006).

Once familial stability became a part of the Italian neighborhoods in the United States, the neighborhoods echoed life back in Italy. Gabaccia (2006) has described the characteristics of the Italian neighborhoods, which proved similar to village life in Italy:

A lively street life, with vendors of food and businesses with Italian-language signs; crowds of children playing as women watched from open windows; men gathered around their clubs, cafes and bars; casual sociability within and between homes; workplaces dispersed among the residences; a Catholic church, and occasional street processions in honour of homeland saints. (p. 12)

In this description lies evidence for the formation of the enclaves that would become Little Italys.

The many Little Italys now found in cities across the United States represent a focus of study with the potential to provide important insight into the essence of Italian American ethnicity and identity. Krase (2006) has asserted, “Little Italy continues to serve as a powerful symbol for Italian Americans” (p. 79). One can corroborate Krase’s claim by examining Italian Americans’ and also the broader community’s fascination with Little Italys nationwide, with their “ethnic markers” such as “barbershops, pizza parlours, and various other purveyors of Italian foods” (p. 81), as Krase has depicted, as well as the dynamic street festivals that punctuate life in these districts.

It is interesting to note, however, that the *Little Italy* label came later than the first Italian-immigrants. Gabaccia (2006) has stated, “It was the efforts of natives to understand and to interpret the significance of the arrival and clustering of Italians that first generated the label Little Italy” (p. 19). Moreover, Italians did not consider themselves Italians in the national sense, unification having occurred only in 1861, which was recent history for the immigrants who first left Italy for the United States. Consequently, the *Italians* arrived in America with regionalism in tow; they self-identified as regionalists, not nationalists—hence, the *Genovese*, the *Calabrese*, and other regional labels. Thus, even the label *Italian*, let alone *Little Italy*, was a largely imposed construct these individuals encountered in their new land as members of the dominant culture tried to place them in a category (Gabaccia, 2006). Emphasizing this point, Gabaccia has commented, “In short, Little Italy was a creation of the English-speakers monitoring the growth of Italian neighbourhoods in cities they regarded as their own; it was not a term generated by the occupants of those Italian neighbourhoods” (p. 20).

Gardaphe (2004) has also commented on the role of Little Italy in the creation of an Italian American sensibility, shedding some light on the relationship between ethnic identity, storytelling—or what the author calls *ethnostories*—and Little Italy as space. He has asserted:

As long as Americans of Italian descent occupied Little Italys, the histories and stories never died. . . . Oral traditions were kept alive through regular and ritual interaction among families and friends. This is no longer the case. As the years go by, the old neighborhoods change. Whole families move away and with them go the stories. As long as that oral system operated, the need for reading and writing was limited. When that system started breaking down, the future of Italian America began depending increasingly on how its past was preserved in images and words. Now that the great majority of Americans of Italian descent no longer live in Little Italys, it will be the job of culture, and not place, to help maintain and transmit a cultural identity that we can call Italian American. (p. 151).

And Gardaphe ultimately punctuates, “Without knowledge of ethnohistory, without knowledge of ethnostories, individual ethnic groups are limited to reacting to what others produce and are kept from creating their own expressions. Italian Americans are being defined by others and not by themselves” (p. 159).

We can see elements of Gardaphe’s (2004) claim operating today: Italian American-community interest in the Little Italy phenomenon has increased, in large part, as a result of the physical revitalization of once abandoned Little Italy neighborhoods throughout U.S. cities. Their former Italian residents long gone, the neighborhoods now claim inhabitants within a gentrified community. Revitalization is occurring primarily

through the efforts of business improvement districts and merchant associations that now govern these neighborhoods. One notable example of this reinvention has occurred in San Diego with the renaissance of the city's Little Italy community.

At their origin, Italian colonies, settlements, and neighborhoods as a common unit served as an institution for adaptation in the new world for the Italian immigrants during the early periods of immigration. These enclaves played an instrumental role in shaping the ethnicity of new Italian Americans, both from within the group as well as from outside the group. But not until the 1990s would primarily business interests take precedence not only in an endeavor to revive these neighborhoods, but also to reinvent the districts while attempting some sort of historic preservation for commercial purposes (Ford, Klevisser, & Carli, 2008).

Some scholars examining the evolution of Little Italys across the United States have suggested that these districts "went from being somewhere between feared, shunned, or invisible at the end of World War II to celebrated tourist, commercial, or residential attractions by the 1990s" (Ford, Klevisser, & Carli, 2008, p. 85). In terms of ethnic acceptance by the dominant culture, some scholars have further contended, "The former ghetto has 'arrived' along with the immigrant groups who have given them their ethnic character" (Hughey & Vidich, 1992, p. 161). Along with the revitalization of Little Italy communities and other ethnic neighborhoods, American society is witnessing a rebirth of ethnic pride and consciousness (Hughey & Vidich, 1992). Some scholars suggest this resurgence of ethnic association has to do in large part with this country's renewed interest in cultural artifacts of the past to gain some semblance of substance and context within modern society (Conforti, 1996).

Some authors contend that today, “‘Little Italys’ play major roles in the personalities” of many cities (Ford, Klevisser, & Carli, 2008, p. 82). The main idea here, simply stated, is that these districts are “good for business” (p. 85). Ford, Klevisser, and Carli have observed,

Nearly all of these cities view ethnic districts as cultural and economic assets. The districts are places to be promoted in the tourist literature as interesting places to eat, shop, and be entertained. They are places that enrich local culture and add to the spice of urban life. (p. 82)

This is indeed the case in so many Little Italys across the nation—including San Diego. Describing the typical, modern ethnic neighborhood, Ford, Klevisser, and Carli (2008) have noted that “usually one dominant ‘banner street’ exists, on which ethnic restaurants, signs, street decorations, churches, and businesses congregate and provide the neighborhood’s personality, but ethnic districts can vary greatly in size, population, and degree of revitalization” (p. 85).

Italian Communities in Toronto

The case of Toronto’s Italian neighborhoods provides a most relevant and equivalent example to what has occurred in San Diego’s Italian neighborhood. In their analysis of four neighborhoods in Toronto, (two Italian infused), Hackworth and Rekers (2005) have examined gentrification and commodification, deriving important insights. The authors have framed their study through the lens of commercialism and marketing. In Toronto’s Little Italy, an Italian presence had been largely absent for years, the authors have stated,

Yet despite this [absence], the neighborhood's commercial identity became even more Italian in the past decade. The city invested millions in a streetscape improvement plan and installed thematic street signs, replete with the Italian flag. Moreover, thousands of Torontonians (some Italian, many not) flock to the neighborhood weekly to dine in one of its many Italian restaurants. (p. 212)

Hackworth and Rekers (2005) have also asserted, "Ethnicity is now sometimes commodified in a way that challenges both explanatory models of gentrification and traditional notions of ethnic landscape formation in urban theory" (p. 212), concluding that culture should not be separated from economics in order to understand today's evolving ethnic communities. This notion serves nicely as an initial framework for future study into San Diego's Little Italy, as the neighborhood continues to rapidly evolve into a more commercial district. Moreover, an exploration along the lines of the Hackworth and Rekers study would lend itself to discourse through the lens of leadership, with its focus on counting both elements—culture and commerce—as equally vital parts in the discussion. The authors have highlighted this dualism and have noted the challenges of failing to recognize the relationship between the two:

The prevailing dualism is problematic because it ignores the ways that ethnic culture can be produced to sell real estate. That is, the dualism diverts attention from the ways that cultural amenities—so important to "cultural" explanations—are strategically produced, rather than organically chosen by completely autonomous consumers. (p. 215)

San Diego's Little Italy

Ford, Klevisser, and Carli (2008) have closely examined one of the more current revitalization processes of Little Italys, that of San Diego's Little Italy. The significance of using this particular neighborhood, the authors have suggested, is that "unlike the larger and older Little Italys in New York, Boston, and San Francisco . . . most of the Italian imagery in San Diego is of recent origin and is largely confined to one six-block-long banner street" (p. 86).

In the early 1990s, the area of San Diego that had been known for many years as Harborview became known as Little Italy, due in large part to the efforts of local business owners. The merchants banded together to form the Little Italy Association, a nonprofit organization that now manages the district. In addition, Little Italy serves as a business improvement district benefitting from local taxes that are redirected into the neighborhood to fund further development (Ford, Klevisser, & Carli, 2008). Some of the physical and cultural elements that distinguish San Diego's Little Italy today include banners of famous Italian Americans along the main thoroughfare, chic furniture, Italian murals, Italian street fairs, and many other events including art festivals, stickball tournaments, a Venetian carnival celebration, an outdoor market, and a Christmas-tree lighting ceremony (Ford, Klevisser, & Carli, 2008).

As a result of these aesthetic and cultural changes, San Diego's Little Italy began to attract developers during its reconstruction in the early 1990s. Real estate also began to boom in the neighborhood through the construction of new condominium and luxury apartment buildings. Today, San Diego's Little Italy is being hailed as a new model for

other as yet undeveloped Little Italys in the United States. The district continues to attract attention, new residents, and further funding sources (Ford, Klevisser, & Carli, 2008).

Terzano (2014) has similarly addressed the transformation of San Diego's Little Italy and has provided important details with regard to its redeveloped status:

In the early 20th century, Italian fishermen and their families lived in an ethnic enclave, but this neighborhood was largely destroyed by 1962 with the completion of an urban renewal-era highway through the neighborhood. . . . The area continued to decline until the 1990s, when the city invested money into branding the area as Little Italy, which included installing a large, metal "Little Italy" street sign and building Amici Park. . . . New condominium buildings were given Italian-sounding names. (p. 347)

Terzano (2014) has added further insight in discussing more sociopolitical ramifications of the redeveloped neighborhood, stating,

The increased presence of tourists and visitors can exacerbate tensions between cultural groups, leading to intergroup conflict. . . . This may be particularly evident during festivals and parades held in the ethnic neighborhood, where members of the associated ethnic group may be affronted at the representation or depiction of their culture. . . . Some of the new entrepreneurs' restaurants and other businesses may displace preexisting businesses—which again could lead to increased intergroup conflict—perhaps especially when the replacement businesses are purportedly but falsely and inauthentically ethnic. (p. 348)

San Diego's Little Italy—its unique character notwithstanding—does exhibit two important characteristics that also can be found in other Little Italys across the United

States: The first is the reduction in the number of Italian residents in Little Italys; the second is the preservation of Little Italy, or perhaps more precisely, marketing of Little Italy, as an ethnic enclave for promoting tourism (Conforti, 1996). Commercialization, Conforti has argued, has transformed Italian American enclaves into a sort of “ethnic Disneyland” (p. 839) or, more generally stated, they have evolved into ethnic theme parks (Krase, 2006). Krase has further punctuated this point when stating that as a result of this evolution of enclave into ethnic theme park, “The enclave comes to symbolize its imagined inhabitants and stands for them independent of their residence in it” (p. 93).

Conforti (1996) has written of places like the Little Italy neighborhood in San Diego that is emerging today: “Preservation is clearly a selective process and what is selected usually reflects the interests of those making the choice” (p. 839). The author has suggested, “Those who are in a position to exploit the image of an ethnic or a racial group, thereby gain the right to define that group” (p. 840).

In order to combat the commercial effects of urban renewal, some scholars suggest establishing museums, cultural centers, and similar institutions within Little Italys in order to better preserve a sense of place and provide sites in which one can re-examine cultural and historical elements that have been all but forgotten (Conforti, 1996; Krase, 2006). This assertion figures prominently in the discussion on role-of-researcher, as presented in Methodology. This researcher has assumed responsibility for such an initiative through the establishment of a nonprofit organization, the mission of which is to explore—and, to every extent possible, protect—all-but-forgotten elements in San Diego’s Little Italy.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Site and Sample Selection

This study comprised eight participants with a link to San Diego's Little Italy. Participants included former and current residents of the community. In addition, four of the participants currently serve as Little Italy Association board members, the managing group that oversees all aspects of maintaining the neighborhood.

For purposes of convention and clarity throughout this study, I used the term *Italian neighborhood* to refer to the community pre-redevelopment and *Little Italy* to refer to the community during and after its revitalization. The characteristic of *former resident* was operationalized as individuals who grew up in the Italian neighborhood (pre-redevelopment), no longer reside in Little Italy, but nevertheless still return to it through connections with the local institutions (e.g., for shopping, church going, attending cultural events, etc.). Some former residents are also connected to Little Italy through serving on the Little Italy Association board. The characteristic of *current resident* was operationalized as individuals who grew up in the Italian neighborhood (pre-redevelopment) and have continued to reside in Little Italy, or individuals who currently make Little Italy their home yet had more limited or no exposure (than their longstanding residential counterparts) in spanning the evolution of the Italian neighborhood to revitalized Little Italy.

All the participants identified as Italian American and, thus, referenced an Italian American heritage—participants' parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents hailed from Italy. The participants, however, were all born in this country, and they ranged in

ethnic-generational order from first generation (first family member to be born in the United States) to fourth generation Italian Americans.

I employed convenience, purposeful, and maximum variation sampling for this study. As Creswell (2007) has stated, purposeful sampling “means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p. 125). Maximum variation sampling “documents diverse variations and identifies important common patterns” (p. 127).

For the study, I selected men and women, spanning several generations, who have had a range of roles in the community (e.g., residents, teachers, business owners, and community leaders). Moreover, I selected individuals who have been part of the continuum of the changing community—spanning its evolution from Italian neighborhood pre-redevelopment to today’s Little Italy as revitalized business district—as well as participants who have had more limited experience with this continuum (and instead have been more connected to Little Italy post-redevelopment). Many individuals who fulfilled the aforementioned sampling criteria were available for participation in this study; the participants in this study are in the age range of 32-93 years old.

The study took place in San Diego and focused on San Diego’s Little Italy. There has been limited information on the perceptions and meaning created by the Italian American residents and stakeholders of San Diego’s Little Italy community in terms of defining their Italian American ethnic identity as well as the role of the neighborhood in shaping perceptions of ethnic identification for Italian Americans.

Data Collection Methods

A qualitative approach was used to gather and analyze the data for this research study. A case study design was also used, culminating in a total of eight case studies. Donmoyer (1990) has delineated the advantages afforded by a case study design thus: accessibility, seeing through the researcher's eyes, and decreased defensiveness. Regarding accessibility, Donmoyer has asserted, "Case studies can take us to places where most of us would not have an opportunity to go" (p. 193), both outside one's own culture as well as within it. Insofar as another advantage to the vicarious experience that case-study design affords, Donmoyer has stated, "Case studies allow us to look at the world through the researcher's eyes and, in the process, to see things we otherwise might not have seen" (p. 194). This would include the worldview or paradigms the researcher is using to gather the data. A final advantage to case studies is that defensiveness is minimized through the use of case studies as is resistance to learning, due to the notion that vicarious experience over direct experience can be viewed as less threatening—and thus potentially greater learning can occur (Donmoyer, 1990).

I interviewed the participants using a semistructured interview-guide approach (Patton, 2002). Participant interviews were audio recorded and video recorded by the researcher, and after all interviews were completed, the data was transcribed through an online service and textualized by the researcher.

Through the semistructured interview-guide approach, the researcher develops a list of interview questions in advance (see Appendix) but is not obligated to word questions during the interview in the predefined way or ask them in the written-down order. In fact, in this study, the goal was to make the interview conversational, and the

predefined list of questions were used primarily as a checklist near the end of the interview to ensure that all relevant topics had been covered. This strategy was applicable to capturing the life histories of the participants because it allowed participants to take the lead, and it permitted much latitude in trying to obtain as much of the participants' life stories as possible.

Data collection in this study took place over the course of four months in order to allow sufficient time to interview each of the participants. When necessary, I conducted follow-up interviews to clarify details or extend information generated in the initial interviews. The interviews were held in a convenient location for the participants. I initially spoke with the participants by telephone (or with some participants in person) to inform them of the study, build rapport, and discuss the consent forms (which were completed at the interview). All the eventual interviews occurred in person. Follow-up interviews, when necessary, were conducted in person and also done on the telephone or via e-mail. A member-check process also occurred via telephone or e-mail to ensure accuracy of data by the participants as well as to continue the participants' roles in the narrative-construction process.

Data Analysis Methods

After all interviews were transcribed, I presented the data as findings in the form of ethnohistories, or life histories (i.e., accounts of the participants' life experiences, thoughts, and sentiments)—essentially as individual participant stories. Furthermore, findings were constructed through a narrative-analysis process, which Polkinghorne (1995) has defined as follows: “The procedure through which the researcher organizes the data elements into a coherent developmental account” (p. 15). This type of inquiry

“gathers events and happenings as its data and uses narrative analytic procedures to produce explanatory stories” (p. 5). Patton (2002) has also commented on narrative inquiry, stating, “Narratology, or narrative analysis, extends the idea of text to include in-depth interview transcripts, life-history narratives, historical memoirs, and creative nonfiction” (p. 115). Adding further to this discourse, Patton has stated, “Narrative studies are also influenced by phenomenology’s emphasis on understanding lived experience and perceptions of experience” (p. 115), the primary concepts which underscored this study. The method of narrative inquiry in the form of narrative analysis as deconstructed by Polkinghorne and Patton provided much depth for each case, created a data set rich in description, and enabled an understanding of the perceptions of Little Italy’s role in shaping ethnic identity for the participants. The narrative-analysis approach, that is to say, textualizing and contextualizing the data in the form of stories, provided a rich opportunity and at the same time unique challenges, particularly in acknowledging and exploring the role of researcher in the process.

After I transcribed and textualized the interviews, I had eight individual accounts as findings for the cross-case analysis chapter of this study, which illustrated themes found across all cases. Looking across the cases, I applied a coding structure in order to identify emerging concepts. I then grouped the concepts, by their similarities, into three overarching themes across cases, with the more striking concepts adapted as four subthemes respective to each theme. Moreover, the themes aligned with the research questions that have helped to guide this study.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Significance of the Study

Insofar as limitations, this research study included qualitative data from only eight participants. Consequently, any claims about generalizability, at least as that term has been traditionally defined in social science research, would be problematic. Furthermore, generalizing to other Little Italy neighborhoods was not the intent of this study; rather, its focus was on documenting the perceptions of a select group of San Diego Italian Americans. Thus, the study was not on a representative sample of Italian Americans. Moreover, the study examined one particular Italian community, San Diego's Little Italy.

The aforementioned constraints notwithstanding, the notion of generalizability has been addressed in further detail within the context beyond an N=8 for this proposed study (i.e., noting a move away from the more traditional approach of generalizing beyond the sample and toward the utility of such an approach through a more contemporary view of generalizability). Donmoyer (1990) has provided the language and conceptual framework for such a stance, having noted, "Social scientists' traditional, restricted conception of generalizability is consistent with traditional views of applied social science but inconsistent with more contemporary views" (p. 176).

To expand on a discussion on the current utility of generalizability I employ a philosophical lens by first examining the notion of what can truly be known. As Donmoyer (1990) has reminded us, "As Kant concluded long ago, it is impossible to talk of the nature of reality with any sense of certainty because we can never know reality independent of the cognitive structures that influence our perceptions" (p. 181). Going back further still beyond Kant provides the frame of the classical notion of the Forms, conceptualized by Plato. Through Plato's reasoning, the nature of reality can only be

determined through our perceptions. Plato discussed the notion of the Forms or Ideals, and distinguished between our perceptions of reality (what we are limited to in our realm) and a more universal fundamental reality (which we can only strive to achieve through self-actualization yet never reaching it on this plane) (Mannion, 2006). Thus, the idea of an absolute construct of knowledge has been problematic for centuries; by extension, then, so too is the notion of generalizability. Yet the implications for this are often overlooked or even dismissed by researchers (Donmoyer, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1995).

Fast forwarding from Plato to Piaget and his work with Schema Theory—discussed in Donmoyer’s (1990) treatise—an extrapolation is evident from Kant’s and Plato’s ideas to Piaget’s model in his use of *cognitive structures*. As Donmoyer has noted, “According to schema theorists, all knowledge of the empirical world must be filtered through cognitive structures, which shape what we know” (p. 191). The importance of contemporary Schema Theory is that it affords us a richer opportunity and one that takes us beyond mere generalizability and a discussion of aggregates toward a richer vicarious experience through a focus on the individual and the potential richness of that examination—the proposed focus of this study. “When generalizability is viewed from the perspective of schema theory,” (p. 194), Donmoyer has suggested, “The role of the research is not primarily to find the correct interpretation. . . . The purpose of research is simply to expand the range of interpretations available to the research consumer” (p. 194).

Ultimately, Donmoyer (1990) has asserted, “Researchers must inevitably rely on *a priori* conceptualization that is not determined by the data but, rather, determines what the data are” (p. 182). Donmoyer has also elaborated on this this crucial point:

Most social scientists have come to accept both that social purposes and social phenomena are too complex for social science to provide definitive answers to practical problems and that *a priori* assumptions or paradigms inevitably influence the conclusions of empirical research. (p. 182)

In other words, if we accept, as most social scientists do, that reality is socially constructed, it follows naturally that generalizability becomes an issue, not only for this proposed study, but also in more general terms, as it were.

Donmoyer (1990) has also gone one step further through the use of an example: “Thus, for practitioners concerned with individuals, not aggregates, research can never be generalizable in the sense suggested by Thorndike” (p. 182), the psychologist who, early in the previous century, championed the notion of a unified field theory in psychology—much to our amusement today.

It is also important to note in this discussion of the utility of generalizability the notion of the changeability of culture, as delineated by Chronbach:

The trouble, as I see it, is that we cannot store up generalizations and constructs for ultimate assembly into a network. It is as if we needed a gross of dry cells to power an engine and could only make one a month. The energy would leak out of the first cells before we had half the battery completed. So it is with the potency of our generalizations. (as cited in Donmoyer, 1990, p. 178)

The idea of the changeability of culture has provided much utility in the context of San Diego’s Little Italy and in this proposed study. How have cultural practices, artifacts, and norms changed within this neighborhood through the decades? How too have the perceptions of the residents and other stakeholders changed? And how has the

redevelopment of the neighborhood played a role in those perceptions? Ultimately, then, in this additional context, how can the notion of generalizability apply to other Italian Americans, other Little Italys, and even beyond those boundaries?

The discourse on the utility of generalizability makes manifest, arguably, the futility rather than the utility of generalizability—and illustrates the importance of the experiential knowledge and focus on the individual that this study proposed to examine. Ultimately, this researcher was concerned with individual life histories, stories, and the perceptions of a group of people with much to convey. This data ultimately informed us on a deeper level, and most discussion of generalizability in this regard has (in many ways) been rendered unnecessary. And for those researchers whose focus is the individual, Donmoyer punctuates, “Questions about meaning and perspective are central and ongoing” (p. 197).

This notion eventually takes us back full circle, albeit a hermeneutic circle, to a discussion of Polkinghorne (1995) and his focus on the importance of narrative analysis in qualitative studies. As he has stated,

Narrative reasoning does not reduce itself to rules and generalities across stories but maintains itself at the level of the specific episode. The cumulative effect of narrative reasoning is a collection of individual cases in which thought moves from case to case instead of from case to generalization. (p. 11)

In addition to the aforementioned limitations, this study also had some delimitations. As the study was intended to discover the role of Little Italy in shaping perceptions of ethnic identity for a group of Italian Americans in San Diego, the participants were local community members with continued access to the neighborhood.

Potential participants to the study matching the selection criteria that have moved out of the region and no longer have an ongoing connection to it, as well as individuals who are not Italian American, were not selected for this study.

The study's limitations and delimitations notwithstanding, this study helped to shed light on the perceptions of Italian American community members in San Diego regarding the role of the former Italian neighborhood and today's Little Italy in creating and sustaining Italian American ethnic identity. Such perceptions have not been formally researched or cataloged. This study also further illuminated, albeit in a particular context, the role of physical space and time in ethnic-identity formation.

Possibly, the themes that have emerged from the study *could* apply to other Little Italys across the United States. At the very least, they should add to our understanding of ethnic-identity formation and, when combined with the results of other studies of other Little Italys (or other ethnic neighborhoods that are not Italian American) should provide a framework for understanding the role that designated place plays in ethnic-identity formation.

San Diego's Little Italy provided a unique laboratory for this study in that it is the only Little Italy across the United States that has been commercially redeveloped into a business improvement district to such a great extent and one that is formally managed. This setting offered unique insights into how ethnic identity is formed and how meaning is derived for Italian Americans in San Diego, and by extension it has the potential to shed light on how other Little Italys have perhaps functioned across the nation.

Subjectivity and the Role of Researcher

This researcher has lived in the Italian neighborhood and has had some access to the neighborhood and also a few of the participants in this study. Moreover, in sharp contrast to the economic re-inventing of Little Italys and as a cultural response to commercialization, some scholars have suggested the establishment of cultural and historical centers to better preserve a sense of place and time. Through a nonprofit organization I had founded in 2003, I had taken such a stance in 2011, establishing a cultural center in the heart of Little Italy and operating it until 2015. Through my organization, I have also established a digital repository (the Italian Community Digital Archives of San Diego) as well as the physical counterpart to the archives at a local university for the collection and preservation of Italian community historical documents, photographs, and oral histories. Consequently, my role as researcher (and thus my subjectivity), also came to the forefront of the data collection and data analysis in this study. In more general terms, my own subjectivity remained vital to this study. As Peshkin (1988) has contended,

Researchers should systematically seek out their subjectivity, not retrospectively when the data have been collected and the analysis is complete, but while their research is actively in progress. The purpose of doing so is to enable researchers to be aware of how their subjectivity may be shaping their inquiry and its outcomes. (p. 17)

Polkinghorne (1995) has also emphasized Peshkin's (1988) overall argument, as he has argued:

The storied finding of a narrative analytic inquiry is not a third-person “objective” representation or mirrored reflection of a protagonist’s or subject’s life as it “actually” occurred; rather, the finding is the outcome of a series of constructions. Researchers engaged in narrative analysis need to be attuned to their contributions to the constructive aspects of their research and to acknowledge these in their write-ups. (p. 19)

Thus, in searching for some reasoning to monitor my own process, role, and sentiments throughout this study, I deferred to Peshkin (1988), who has stated, “By monitoring myself, I can create an illuminating, empowering personal statement that attunes me to where self and subject are intertwined” (p. 20). Consequently, I kept a journal record of my own thoughts, feelings, and musings. Going further and invoking Peshkin once more, I addressed Peshkin’s important question, “How did I know when my subjectivity was engaged?” (p. 18). And I acted similarly to Peshkin as he answered that question about his own research:

I looked for the warm and the cool spots, the emergence of positive and negative feelings, the experiences I wanted more of or wanted to avoid, and when I felt moved to act in roles beyond those necessary to fulfill my research needs. (p. 18)

Ultimately, with that objective in mind, I kept the research questions that guided this study at the forefront of my own process of construction.

The impetus of this study was twofold: First, there existed for this researcher a sense of urgency in collecting the rapidly vanishing historical narratives of San Diego’s Italian American community members. Second, the renaissance of Little Italy, and the attention it has garnered in many forms—economic, social, political—warranted an initial

exploration of the impact of the community on Italian Americans' sensibilities and identities.

This researcher's family settled in the Italian neighborhood in the 1960s. I remember the community well, even though my family moved out when I was around three years old. Yet we would return often to visit family and friends as well as to attend church functions and frequent a few of the local merchants.

Today, there is little appeal for me in Little Italy, save Our Lady of the Rosary Parish (where I spent much of my youth and engaged in many of our family's religious traditions); and a few of the merchants who have been in the community for decades—retailers (who are also longtime family friends) with whom I still maintain strong ties.

My upbringing with a strong Italian sensibility and an unshakeable sense of Italianness overshadowed my American roots. My parents taught me to speak Italian (more precisely, Sicilian) first—thus, I began my schooling without knowing any English. Subsequently, passion and commitment to my Italian heritage would lead me to establish a nonprofit organization, the Convivio Society, with the express purpose of filling in the gaps in programming left by other Italian clubs and organizations. The organization also serves to connect with the aspirations of the Italian community in San Diego—a community that collectively has called out for a focus on heritage preservation as well as the establishment of a cultural home for San Diego's Italians. The organizational vision is to establish an academic cultural institute to include arts space and a heritage center for the Italian community (and broader arts community) of San Diego. In large measure, we accomplished part of that vision in 2011 when we established the Convivio Center in Little Italy. Our tenure in the neighborhood was to be

short-lived, however, as we had also fallen to the redevelopment and ever-changing structure and purpose of the community.

And so a Peshkin approach has aided in grounding this researcher in this study, bringing light my many roles in the community, and helping to highlight my role in the construction of the narratives that form the essence of this study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS – ANDREW ASARO – ON THE STREET WHERE YOU LIVE

Andrew Asaro's recollections of his beloved neighborhood growing up on India Street are quite detailed and laden with anecdotes about people, places, and activities. He remembers one particular story from when he was about six years old, one that has stuck with him:

I was in the drug store looking at a comic book, and there was this guy in coveralls . . . eating lunch at the counter there, the soda fountain counter. And outside was a wagon with a couple of horses, and it was tied up there on the street. And he finished his lunch, and he got up, and he asked the waitress for a Bit-O-Honey candy bar. And so he took this Bit-O-Honey candy bar, and he opened it and was going to start to eat it, and he looked at me, and he said, "Sonny, have you ever had one of these? This is one of the best candy bars around." And he bought me one. He gave me a Bit-O-Honey candy bar. I mean that was amazing to me at the time as a kid.

Andrew has held on to many similar stories of growing up in the small Italian community of San Diego—holding fast to the feeling of camaraderie and the colorful anecdotes that have punctuated his life. He begins his life story stating, "My name is Andrew Asaro, and I was born in San Diego, California, at Mercy Hospital, on August 12th, 1936." Andy proclaims, "I had the luxury of being born in the hospital. My brother—he didn't have that luxury." (Andrew's brother had been born four years earlier at their family home at 2444 India Street.) So began the journey for Andrew Asaro (Andy), longtime resident of San Diego's Little Italy. He recounts his story from his

cherished home still in the neighborhood—Andy has the distinction of being one of the few remaining Italian residents whose family originally settled there. Andy remembers fondly times past: “It was a very nice place to grow up, this neighborhood of—well now—Little Italy.” Andy chuckles when he notes, “Sometimes, we used to refer to it as Woptown as kids.”

Andy continues his narrative noting that his father was born in 1900 in Mazara del Vallo, Sicily. “He became orphaned at somewhere around 1904 or 1905,” Andy says. “His father [Andy’s grandfather] had died—[he] was a fisherman and was drowned in a storm off of Mazara, and then his mother died of an illness, so he did have some hang ups,” Andy states. Andy’s mother was also born in Mazara del Vallo and remained there until she was about three years old. “My [maternal] grandfather had come to California and went to San Francisco, and he worked with the Alaska Packers fishing up in Alaska,” Andy recounts, adding that his grandfather also had sailed on the *Star of India* while fishing, and he had also experienced the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. “He subsequently went back to Mazara and got married, and my mother was born in 1910,” Andy explains.

Andy’s grandfather decided to return to the United States because he felt attached to his newfound country and the opportunities it afforded—his illiteracy in English (and also Italian) notwithstanding. “But he did it,” Andy states proudly, noting,

When he told my grandmother that he wanted to come over, she said, “Well, I’m not gonna go.” And he said, “Well, you stay here; I’ll go, and then I’ll come back and get you.” And she said, “Oh, no. I’ll go with you then.”

Andy recalls how his grandmother had the idea that she would not be welcomed in the United States and would not be able to remain because immigrants failing the physical examination would be sent back. “Well, she wore glasses and she thought that was bad enough. So she passed the physical at Ellis Island, and she was stunned,” Andy chuckles.

Another humorous anecdote Andy recounts is how his grandmother had never seen a banana: “My grandfather had bought some bananas there at New York, and she asked him what it was; he said it was a banana. And she said, ‘Well, how do you eat it?’ He says, ‘Well, I’ll show you.’”

Subsequently, Andy’s grandparents established themselves in San Francisco, where Andy’s grandfather continued to fish, then moved to San Diego in 1916. “They first lived on India Street between Ash and Beech on the east side of the street in the middle of the block,” Andy says. Andy recalls a story his mother would tell, after moving up to India and Grape Streets, about the time there was a fierce storm, noting, “It was like a little cyclone, and it tore the roof off their house.”

Andy states that his parents had an arranged marriage, his mother being introduced to his father through his father’s sister, who lived at 2442 India Street. About his home, Andy explains,

My mother and father bought this lot where I’m living now at 2230, I believe in 1944, for around \$2,500, and so they signed the contract to build this house on VJ Day, 1945, the day of the Japanese surrender.

One particular dynamic Andy recalls is that his parents did not overtly encourage speaking Italian (more precisely, the Sicilian dialect), even though Andy and his brother

spoke it, “as did most of us first-generation kids in the neighborhood,” he says. Andy remains grateful for his knowledge of Sicilian, emphasizing the importance he places on knowing a second language. He elaborates on the language use in his household, stating,

In speaking the language, it was just that it was a necessity, because my father, he knew English, I mean, he learned English, but he had a very heavy accent. And he could read and he could write English, but when he was conversing with my mother or talking to us, it was always in Sicilian. Or we'd go over to my aunt's house—and my uncle up the street—they would always be talking in Sicilian, and so we were always talking in Sicilian—or with my grandmother and my grandfather. My grandmother could understand English somewhat, but she couldn't speak it or read or write. And my grandfather, of course—he was illiterate from Italy. . . . My mother used to interpret for him. There was a little accounting shop down on Grape and Kettner. . . . Whenever my grandfather needed something translated . . . she would go down and ask . . . this fellow, and she said his name was Mr. Smith. So she'd go in and ask Mr. Smith if he could read this for her so she [could] . . . translate for my grandfather.

Andy also recounts in vivid detail another important part of the neighborhood characteristics—fishing and its attendant tasks—referencing the dynamic that, although the men would go out fishing, the rest of the family was also involved to a large degree in the livelihood. Andy describes a chore many of the neighborhood children would participate in, explaining,

My grandfather used to be a fisherman in San Diego, and then as he got older he started making bait nets for the tuna fleet, and he used to make nets for a lot of the

Italian boats and a lot of Portuguese boats. So our job as kids, and most of the other kids too, was to help out with different things. . . . My grandmother used to physically make the nets, the meshes, and then my grandfather, the small mesh; they would buy that, and then they would assemble the net. And then they would get Manila rope, about five-eighths of an inch. There was a thing called *stirari la corda* [ironing out the line], which was you soaked it in water first and then stretched it and got all the kinks out and then string lead and corks on those. . . .

And also one of the little chores I had was to go down to CJ Henry, which was on State between Broadway and E Street, in the middle of the block, and get five-pounds of skein of twine, and it would be No. 6 Medium, sometimes No. 9 Hard, depending upon what mesh my grandmother needed to make. . . . So I used to walk all the way down there being not even 10 years old, get a five-pound skein of twine, and bring it back. My brother used to do the same thing. And then we would put it on—we [had] . . . like a turntable, a spindle on a turntable . . . [we'd] put the skein of twine on that, and then we'd make balls of string. Also, we would load up the needles for them. . . . You'd have to line up different sections of the net . . . [we] call that *appuntare la rizza* [attaching the net].

Andy also tells another story, framing this particular memory as a “little digression,” but it is anything but: “On January 4th, 1941,” Andy remembers exactly, I was in the backyard of where I lived at 2444 India. . . . In the back there were some rentals, and there was a little kid there named George, and I think he was a year or two older than me. . . . I was four and a half. . . . We escaped from the backyard. . . . [We] were going to go down to where the pond was on Kettner and

Kalmia Streets, and as we started to cross the street, old George got across the street but I didn't. I got hit by an Olympic Fish and Poultry truck. . . . And so I was run over, and I was in the hospital for about a month and then in a body cast at home for about two months. But I recovered well. However, that put me back in school because I was held out of school for a year, and all my friends were ahead of me for a year. So everybody in my age group of 1936, most of them all graduated in 1954, but I started a year late, and I graduated in 1955 from high school.

Despite this setback, the trajectory of Andy's education followed a common one for most kids in the neighborhood—Washington Elementary School, Roosevelt Junior High School, and San Diego High School. Noting his affinity for the school environment and education in general, Andy says,

The neighborhood was composed of a lot of different kids and whatnot, and we all went to Washington School. And in those days we all walked to school, and we'd walk home, and of course . . . nobody worried about things like they worry about today. Anyway . . . a lot of us Italians were in the Junior Traffic Patrol, so that would be manning the intersection of State Street and Elm Street. . . . We'd be dressed in white pants, white shirt, and red sweaters, and a yellow garrison cap with a red stripe down it. . . . And most of the people, or most of the kids that I knew, enjoyed going to Washington School. As a matter fact, I enjoyed school a lot—I really did. I always felt that I was learning something every day.

Andy reflects further on his school years as he recalls a humorous anecdote from his days at Roosevelt Junior High, one typical of the childhood antics that were rampant in the neighborhood:

As we got older, of course, we then went on to Roosevelt, and we all used to walk to Roosevelt too. . . . So we would gather on the corner of Laurel and Columbia, and then we'd all walk up the hills to the park and through the park to Roosevelt. Well one year the bus company went on strike, so we thought we'd take advantage of that, so we'd get to school an hour and a half late. They'd call us into the office and say, "Why were you late?" [We said], "Well, there's a bus strike. It took us longer—we had to walk." And they [didn't know] . . . that we walked every day anyway.

Another institution that helped to shape a large part of Andy's youth (as it did for most of the people in the neighborhood), was the church. "We all went to catechism . . . a lot of the guys became altar boys and me too. So I was an altar boy from 1948 through most of 1949." But unlike many of the other kids in town, Andy didn't attend the other religious institution in the neighborhood—Bayside Social Center—explaining, "A lot of the guys were at Bayside all the time, and I wasn't too much at Bayside because we lived here on the north end." Andy adds, "Most of the guys on the south end of Little Italy went to Bayside and did things there," suggesting that in his neighborhood several blocks could make a difference in the dynamics of one's upbringing in terms of the institutions one would frequent and the activities one would participate in.

Andy also describes a rich and varied (yet consistent) family life and dynamic, growing up in a fishing family, stating,

Family life was pretty rigid in that my father went fishing, and so my mother had to keep a tight rein on us pretty much. But when my father was home we always ate at set times, and we always had to be home to eat. And . . . as in Italian families, you didn't eat without the father. So if my father wasn't home then we didn't eat. So my mother . . . would say, "Go down and call your father." Because when he came home he'd like to go to the card room and play Pinochle or Scupa [Sicilian card game] with all the rest of the old guys down there, so I'd have to walk down there—and the card room is where Assenti's Pasta is now. So I used to hate that because I used to have to walk through all these guys smoking, and when they smoke[d] those stogies they'd always expectorate—spit—the vulgarity. And they all had these spittoons all over the place, and a lot of times they'd miss and cough over the floor. . . . So I used to go down, call up, "Come home; you gotta eat. We gotta eat. . . ." So anyway that was a hard and fast rule, but that's the way [it was].

A typical day for Andy involved playing ball down in the empty lots. "This was of course during the summer time school was out," he says, and generally the kids would "roam around." And during wartime, Andy and his friends "always used to play war." They would gather wood scraps from the mill on Kettner and Ivy to "carve out what we thought looked like rifles," Andy says. He also mentions, "The older guys would make clubhouses behind the Foster and Kleiser sign. . . . They would gather different kinds of wood and make clubhouses between the structure in the back of the sign."

Andy recalls some further noteworthy elements of the neighborhood during wartime, which proved to be a period of heightened military activity even in this small

Italian neighborhood. And it was certainly a time of growing identity crisis for many.

Andy explains:

Anyway, during all this time, most of us kids thought we were Italians. We knew the war was on. . . . We knew we were Americans, but we really thought we were Italians. . . . When the war started, my mother had not become a citizen. My father became a citizen because he was going fishing, and he had passports and everything. But my mother—because she came here when she was four years old—she never did become a citizen. So during the war, we had an Atwater Kent 1934 radio, which we still have, with a shortwave band on it. Well, she had to register as an enemy alien, and I remember going down to the post office with her on E Street, [and they] took her picture and all that stuff, and they took our radio, because it had a shortwave band. So it rested in Bekins Storage in Los Angeles for the course of the war, and we finally got it back in 1946. . . . During the war . . . Little Italy was kind of interesting too. . . . We could see barrage balloons on the northern part . . . especially around by Convair. And then Convair had this big netting over it, and it looked like a field with just houses, and some telephone poles and things, and as a little kid . . . going on top of India Street, because India Street went up the hill, you'd look down and you'd see this big open space with all these little houses sitting on top of poles, and then when you went on Pacific Highway underneath, you were under this big net with all this shady area, because that was the camouflage over . . . Convair, because they were making B-24s. Then at that time, there was also the trolley cars that would go up and down, and you'd always hear them clang, clang, clanging; and during World War II we used to see

a lot of convoys coming through with Marines going down to the Navy pier and whatnot, some tanks, columns of tanks, going down the street and things, because they were going to go down and embark on the ships down there. So yeah, it was a very interesting place to be during those times. . . . There used to be anti-aircraft batteries too. There was an anti-aircraft battery, I believe, on Grape and Union.

Andy remembers so much detail of the neighborhood it is staggering, and he paints a clear picture of life on India Street. Andy remembers the many families living in the neighborhood perhaps best of all. He says, “We grew up . . . [on the] north side of Little Italy, bounded by Laurel Street. Actually, Little Italy went further because there were many Italians living farther up on India Street also.” Stylistically, Andy’s reference to many of the local kids is reminiscent of a Martin Scorsese film:

We had a lot of fun in this neighborhood, and as a group of guys, later on when we went to Roosevelt, we would congregate in the middle of a block of, or on the corner of, Laurel and Columbia. And Sebastian Mocerri would come walking down the hill and . . . Mario Sanfilippo used to live there on Columbia too, just up from Laurel. . . . Then we would start walking up the hills, and then as we got up the hill on top on Union Street, we’d meet Tony Tocco, and he’d come over, and Tom Gibaldi, and we’d all walk to school together. . . . Tony used to do body building. . . . He wanted to become Mr. San Diego, which he did. And he used to say, “Watch.” And he’d hang off the Laurel Street bridge with one hand. . . . And then later on also there was Tommy Marino who lived down the block here in the middle of the 2100 block, and his brother Jimmy. And then there used to be Vince

Parisi. . . . And then right next to the Parisi, of course . . . the Bregantes and their houses.

Andy also notes an important characteristic of the neighborhood: so many families having similar surnames. He describes how that matter was handled in the old country and its carryover to the new world:

We have also in the town of Mazara and other places in Sicily, they have a thing called *anciuria*, [family or name characterization] which is a family nickname so you can distinguish the families which have the same surnames. . . . So then as we got older and went to high school, things kind of spread out a little more, but still the whole neighborhood was pretty cohesive—everybody knew who everybody was. A lot of times everybody referred to people by their nicknames, especially even the older people—they had their nicknames from Italy and whatnot, and everybody knew each other by those nicknames.

In his depictions of the neighborhood, Andy also alludes to the regional characteristics and makeup of the residents in the neighborhood, stating,

The neighborhood was made up of a lot of different Italians. . . . There were the Genovese . . . the Castagnolas and the Canepas . . . then across the street from them . . . the Zolezzis. And farther up the street across Laurel Street were the Sabatinis, and they were . . . from . . . the Adriatic side—Marchegiani. And then going down the street, coming down, back down to 2100 . . . the Parisi on the east side of the street, and they were from, I think, somewhere around Porticello [Sicily] or that area. And then across the street, Tommy Marino. . . . [his] family was from Mazara.

Andy continues with a comment about the importance of this regional diversity, stating, “Everybody knew each other, and so there would be cross-learning going around. We would learn words from the Genovese kids, and they would learn Sicilian words. We learned all the swear words,” Andy laughs, adding, “So we learned their stuff; they learned our stuff. . . . Everybody got along well.” But insofar as the Americans, Andy states, “When we [referred] . . . to American kids, we used to call 'em the *Amirigani* [the Sicilian version of the Italian, *Americani*]. So the older gang kinda corrupted that into *Miggies*.” And Andy adds, “The older guys . . . my brother’s age and that gang there—when they referred to American kids, they said, ‘Oh, he’s a *Miggie*.’”

The retailers and merchants in the neighborhood were also an integral part of Andy’s upbringing—Busy Bee Market, and Emil Tate, the butcher who had “live chickens and rabbits and goats,” Andy laughs. And there was Nick Adamo, the shoemaker. And there was even a taxidermy shop in the neighborhood. Andy recalls, “Between the Busy Bee and the original De Falco’s [grocery] was an empty lot, and a lot of the guys used to play bocce [a form of lawn bowling] in there.” The owners of the Texaco gas station “on the corner of India and Juniper,” Andy adds, would allow the neighborhood kids to hang out, taking apart car engines, doing valve jobs, and other tasks. “So we learned a lot there about engines,” Andy states, noting, “We also learned to drive there because they had a Model A Ford, and they used to let us experiment with it—a Model A Ford truck.”

Andy and some of his neighborhood friends would also head over to Price and Horton Sheet Metal, as Andy remembers: “Bill Price and Fred Horton—they were the owners of this sheet-metal shop. . . . They used to let us do things with the galvanized

sheet metal that they used to make rain gutters and ducting and things like that.” Andy continues, “They would let us use the sheers and cut pieces of metal.” These activities would compose many summers for Andy and many of his friends.

Andy also recalls the many tastes, smells, and sounds of the Italian neighborhood, which still form many of the memories of his youth. As he describes,

Well, for instance, when my dad came home from fishing or my uncles would come over or whatever and they[‘d] recap the trip . . . while they were doing that everybody would have a shot of whiskey, and everybody was real oiled by the time they were done—either that or wine. And then toward the early 50s they got a liking for Manhattans, so I became the official, one of the official, Manhattan makers. I got . . . really proficient at making Manhattans, and I still like them to this day. . . . We made wine every year, and I just could not stand the taste of wine. . . . We had booze all over the house, and [I] never touched it—never—because I didn't like it. But once I turned about 22, 23 my taste buds completely changed.

Andy laughs at that remark, and he continues by going into detail about winemaking, an important activity for his family:

I used to love to make wine. We used to either go to Patella or go up to Escondido or Ramona. Patella was a wholesale produce man down on J Street . . . and so we'd order the grapes from him. We'd order about 1200, 1400, 1500 pounds. So my grandfather had the press and the grinder, so we'd do it all here and squeeze it out in the garage and then bring it down [to] the cellar and put the wine in the barrels down there. . . . Once, I almost blew myself up because . . . they used to

sell used whisky barrels because they would use them once and then they'd put them up for sale. So they were ordinarily very cheap—\$8, \$9, \$10 a barrel. So you'd wash the barrel out, and then you would, if it had been used for wine or whatever, you['d] burn a sulfur stick in there and top it up so it would kill all of whatever bacteria was in there. So you'd fumigate it, basically. So you had to be careful with the whiskey barrels because the fumes of the whiskey were still in there even though you washed it out. If you . . . [tried] to burn a sulfur stick in there without washing it out first, the thing would explode. Well apparently I didn't wash it well enough. . . . The sulfur stick—I put it in there, and it went Vroom! It didn't blow up, fortunately. . . . And around the whole neighborhood during that season all the gutters would be running red. And the smell [of the wine was] tremendous.

Other smells—the “aroma,” of the neighborhood, Andy says, included the fresh bread from the many bakeries around town: Roma Bakery, Frank’s Bakery, Quality Bakery, and Victor Lupini’s Bakery. And he recalls Ben Hur Coffee and Sun Spices. About Ben Hur Coffee, Andy remembers,

My grandmother's house was right behind it. . . . [Ben Hur Coffee] had this giant hopper on the roof, and they used to roast coffee in there and then grind it and put it in bags and take it out. . . . When they roasted coffee—what a smell, whoa—you just couldn't . . . believe it. Yeah—just terrific.

But not all smells were welcomed. Andy says of some of the other smells wafting through the neighborhood,

They were really gross . . . [such as from] Westgate Cannery. And they would cook the fish, and then they'd can it and everything and put it in the retorts. But when they were cooking the fish, the smell wasn't too bad. . . . But when they got the guts and all the other stuff that they made fertilizer and cat food out of—whoa, did that stink. . . . Yeah, that was typical of the area here.

“And the sounds, of course, were the trains,” Andy continues, noting,

The steam trains used to come, and their whistles were entirely different from . . . when they start[ed] bringing the electric trains in. . . . Also, when we were smaller kids, during the war . . . they were using a lot more streetcars, and you'd always hear the clanging of the streetcars going up and down Kettner Boulevard. . . . The other sounds, of course, were the airplanes, and you got used to the airplanes. I get used to them now, but there were certain airplanes that were really, really annoying. There was one called—and this was in the 60s going into the 70s—this was a high-wing Fairchild airplane, and it was a turboprop. And it just had a high, high whining scream to it.

Andy says that what stands out in his mind about the neighborhood is “the accessibility of everything,” and that “there were plenty of little shops.” He mentions only one restaurant: “Ortega’s restaurant, which was a very good Mexican restaurant, and there weren’t any really Italian restaurants,” as they weren’t needed in the neighborhood. “Everybody cooked at home, and it was just a close-knit neighborhood,” Andy explains.

Andy goes on to note, while laughing,

One of the other things about most of the Italian community is—you couldn't make *malafiura*. So you can't do this, you can't do that—you're going to be

malafiura, so you couldn't do that. And that was a bad show, *malafiura*. Basically [malafiura meant] . . . , "Don't embarrass us!"

Andy reminisces once more about one particular dynamic in the household—speaking Sicilian and Italian, noting that in the neighborhood “there were a lot of Italian kids that didn't.” Andy recalls, “While I was going to high school, I thought, ‘We speak Sicilian at home and all, which was very good, but . . . we don't know Italian, because Italian always seems to be different.’” Andy recalls that Italian courses in high school were nonexistent, although Andy did study French to expand his language base. While searching for classes for adults, Andy stumbled upon an Italian class. As he explains, “It was taught by a lady named Mrs. Reed. And she married an American soldier in Naples and then came to San Diego with her husband.” Andy would eventually enroll in her course and learn Italian from her, “which was very, very good and very helpful to me,” he proclaims.

After graduating high school, Andy attended San Diego State University, graduating in 1959. Andy continues, “I got my degree in June . . . and in July I received greetings from Uncle Sam—I was drafted into the Army.” Andy continues to elaborate on this important next milestone in his life:

On October 29th, I wound up at Fort Ord, and when you go into the Army they give you a battery of tests. And so I took the French test and the Italian language test. Well I didn't pass the French test, but I passed the Italian language test. So we also took the . . . officer training candidates course test. So I passed that. . . . When I passed the Italian test I was only in the Army two or three weeks, and they came back to me and said, “We're processing you for a position in Naples,

Italy. And that's where you're gonna be going . . . [to] become a clerk typist because that's what they want over there—we got a request for somebody with that. . . .” So after my training was over . . . [I] went through . . . clerk typist school. . . . I finished up in April of 1960.

While stationed in Naples, Italy, Andy would travel to Sicily to see his relatives in Mazara. He continues with some details of his time spent there:

So I worked in a communications center—I was the chief administrative clerk for the communications center. . . . That's where they had all the coding machines and teletypes and all these kinds of stuff, and we [had] . . . AP news and all those writers. So when I was coming up, it was early in the morning. The guys were going to work, and they all said, “You got extended,” because at that time that's when the Berlin wall started to go up, and Kennedy extended everybody six months. . . . And I said, “Give me a year,” because it was a great duty. I mean the Army gave me a working vacation in that we had no Army discipline at all. We didn't have any formations. We didn't have any bed check. You didn't have to sign out to go on three-day passes. When you got done working, you were done—just put your uniform on, go to work, come back. It was done. So that was it. The Army gave me a two-year working vacation in Italy. That was really nice.

Andy had purchased a Volkswagen while in Italy and would eventually ship it to Philadelphia. “We got discharged in Fort Hamilton, New York—[I] took a bus to Philadelphia [and] picked up my car.” Andy adds, “[I] stayed a week in Washington DC with some Navy friends that I had made friends with in Naples . . . and then I drove all the way across the United States and came here with my 1961 Volkswagen.”

But Andy recalls, “When I came back out of the Army, it was a little tough. Well it was tough finding a job because there was a recession at that time.” One of Andy’s Army buddies “had a clothing store on 5th Avenue,” he says, noting, “It was called Thurston’s. So I had gone in there, and he said, ‘There’s this guy from John Hancock Life Insurance Company looking for somebody or looking for anybody.’” Consequently, Andy would accept a position selling life insurance, working in that industry for 10 years—a job that Andy never really enjoyed. “And I found that I was doing more teaching—teaching people about insurance,” he states. Eligible for the GI Bill, Andy would then head off to San Diego State University to pursue a teaching credential. “So then I became a teacher, which I enjoyed quite a bit because I felt like . . . I was accomplishing something.”

Andy’s first teaching stint was at Memorial Junior High School, where he taught for a year, after which he transferred to O’Farrell, where he would work for another three years. Andy recalls, not fondly, “When they called and told me that I was being transferred to O’Farrell, I wanted to throw up.” He laughs, adding, “That’s a difficult school to teach at,” but he does acknowledge, “I got along okay there, and I got along well with the students and the faculty.”

Ultimately, Andy would end up at the San Diego School of Creative and Performance Arts, where he would teach for 20 years, teaching mostly courses in business, accounting, and typing. Andy would later teach computer literacy and computer applications to his students. Then in the early 1980s, Andy received a master’s degree in education. “That put me up at the top of the pay scale, so everything worked out pretty well,” he explains. Andy would retire in 1998 at 63, upon which he returned to his

longtime interest in finance, noting that during his youth he always had an interest in finance and investing. As he elaborates: “I started investing whatever little money I would earn—I’d put it in the stock market, starting when I was in about 11th grade. . . . I spent countless hours in the library just doing research on different companies.” Andy chuckles when he comments, “I don’t know—I just wanted to be a teenage tycoon.”

Returning to a discussion on being Italian American, Andy gives further details about his upbringing and the dynamics that surrounded him. He is specific on his explanation and characterization of his ethnic identity, stating,

Well, when I was a kid, prior to my middle teens, I thought I was pretty much Italian, yeah, but also knowing that I was American. Now I know I am fully American and not Italian. I am Italian in my sensibilities. I am Italian in my attitude. I am Italian—well, culture, of course. But I’m different from Italian Italians. Like after having gone to Italy—we were living here in a microcosm of the mores and culture of the late 1890s, early 1900s is what we were living in—and I went to Italy in the 60s being in the Army and said, “Wait a minute—these people are all different,” because their societies have progressed just like our society has. . . . You do have a feeling for Italy and whatnot . . . but basically, patriotically, I’m American.

Andy suggests that the neighborhood at that time affected his thought process and influenced his identity, stating,

I finally became aware that I was really American . . . probably when I was around 11, 12 years old. But it was fun being in the neighborhood because we had a similar, well, we had a similar culture, and we all talked about the same things.

Ultimately, Andy returns to another detailed memory of yet another drug store and the variety of people he would encounter in his neighborhood, a memory that continues to convey Andy's sharp attention to detail and one that punctuates the chapters of his life story. He explains,

In the neighborhood there were diverse people and besides us kids—we all knew each other in the neighborhood—but there was one man—it was very interesting. He used to live somewhere up on Kalmia Street on the corner of Kalmia and India—it would be the southeast corner. The building is still there, and it houses a rental-car agency now, but there used to be a drug store, and it was Allen's Drug store, and we used to go in there and look at funny books and things. But every afternoon, probably about one o'clock, there would be a man [who would] come walking down the hill . . . and he had a brown suit on and a cap and he was a little bit portly. And he had kind of a light-ish, ruddy complexion. Anyway, he would go in, sit down at the counter at the drug store, and automatically, without saying a word, the waitress there would give him a Cherry Coke. And so we always wondered, "What was this?" And so we finally found out that he was shell-shocked from World War I, and he never did speak. But he would just come in and sit down, and he'd automatically get a Coke.

In describing the neighborhood of his youth in a mere word, Andy expounds, "Bucolic," adding, "Just really pleasant, nice. . . . The general nature of the place, I would say for me, my memories—just a beautiful setting, nice surroundings." And today's description of the Little Italy in which he still resides? Andy laughs. "I've got to use more than one word," but he decides on "foreign" or "alien," explaining, "You have such a mix

of population. You've got such a mix of attitudes . . . and the density . . . with people, cars, and everything else.”

Today, Andy says that he is still connected to many of his childhood friends. “We still stay in contact . . . every . . . three months, we get together and have dinner or lunch some place.” And as a consequence of still living in the neighborhood, Andy has a unique vantage point as he is still witness to the many changes the community continues to undergo while holding fast to his treasured recollections of the neighborhood that helped to define him.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS – ROSALIE TARANTINO – PEOPLE WHO NEED PEOPLE

Rosalie Tarantino is one of a handful of residents who grew up in the Italian neighborhood of San Diego and who continues to reside in Little Italy. Rosalie reflects on her parents' generosity and an overall dynamic of giving that was generally evident in the community back in her day, stating,

My mother, when we lived at 1804 [India Street], had a grey, clay oven in the backyard. And she made the most wonderful Italian bread. . . . The Italian fishermen wanted to buy her bread. So she would make these huge loaves for them. She also made apron oilskins for fishing. . . . She was the most fantastic lady. . . . My parents made wine . . . in the downstairs basement. The grapes were delivered to them. . . . And I have to laugh, because when I used to go to the doctor, the doctor would say, "Bring me some wine." My father was very generous with his wine, very generous.

"My name is Rosalie Tarantino. I was born in 1934, [in] San Diego, California," Rosalie states. Rosalie was born "two doors away" from her current home, [at] "1804 India Street, [in the] downstairs apartment, owned by Jack Zolezzi's family." Rosalie vividly recalls many details of her family members, stating,

I had four brothers. My oldest brother, Joe Tarantino, was born in Sicily. My second brother, Vincent Tarantino, was born in Milwaukee. My brother John Tarantino was born just a few blocks away on Juniper Street, and my brother Peter Tarantino [was] born at 1804 India Street. My three oldest brothers, Joe,

Vincent, and John, are now deceased. My parents, Antonino and Carmela Tarantino, were born in Sicily.

Rosalie's father arrived in the United States around 1927. Rosalie notes that, similar to other immigrant males,

My father arrived before my mother. She came about a year later with my brother Joe who was about four years old. He and my mother sailed on the ship President Wilson. She was seasick all the time. They were taken care of by friends Filippo and his nephew Pietro Busalacchi.

Mother and child would eventually arrive in Brooklyn where they remained with relatives. After a brief stay, they all moved to Chicago. Rosalie comments, "My father worked there in Chicago at the Palmolive Soap Company. . . . It was depression time; nobody had any money. Then they moved to Milwaukee, and they were there about a year."

Rosalie recalls how much her mother missed her family she left behind in the old country. With Rosalie's mother's two brothers living in San Diego, Pietro and Giovanni Tarantino, both fishermen, Rosalie's parents decided they would settle in San Diego, if only so as to be near family. Rosalie comments, "My father worked at the Balboa Park Exposition when they were fixing up the park, and that's how he made some money, working at the park. Later he went fishing."

Rosalie continues with a discussion on her father and brothers and their strong work ethic, as she reflects:

My father purchased a small fishing boat, an albacore boat [called the Carmela], and he took my brothers [out fishing] as they were growing up. . . . My brother

John chummed—threw out the sardines and all that, the bait, I guess is what they call it—at the age of eight. . . . Vince and John also sold newspapers and shined shoes. My brother John was a very charismatic person. He had chubby cheeks, and the servicemen really loved him. He would shine their shoes and polish their buttons. My brother Vince worked as a box boy at the age of 12 at De Falco's Market, which was on the corner of India and Date, and he was with them for many years. De Falco's sold their company to Food Giant, located in Point Loma, and then it became Vons. . . . [And] Vince worked himself up to maintenance manager. . . . My brother Joe took over the fishing when my father became ill. Joe was 17 when he took the boat out himself, with his brothers and other crew members.

Rosalie's brother John later went tuna fishing, but he had difficulty with his vision because of the bright sun reflecting off the water, Rosalie says, adding, "And the eye doctor told him, 'John, if you don't want to go blind, you have to give up fishing.' So he gave up fishing and he decided to go into [the] restaurant business." John would travel to San Francisco to learn the restaurant trade from his friends. Upon his return, he opened "a small pizza place in Chula Vista." After that, he relocated to La Jolla to establish a restaurant with a more gourmet bent, opening John Tarantino's on Garnet and Prospect. Rosalie adds,

After a few years, he was asked if he would like a restaurant on Harbor Drive, [by] the San Diego Port Commission. They said, "You'd do good there." The family built a new restaurant on North Harbor Drive, and it was successful for 30 years. . . . When the lease came up for renewal, the Port Commission wanted to

triple his rent and asked him to spend a couple of million dollars redoing the restaurant, and so he decided to retire.

Rosalie also worked at the restaurant for a marked time, as did her other brothers.

Rosalie's restaurant stint was primarily on the weekends, and she also worked in civil service, eventually retiring after 37 years.

Rosalie discusses her upbringing in the Italian neighborhood, commenting particularly on the safety of the community growing up: "I grew up on India Street all my life. I went to Washington Elementary School. . . . I was able to start kindergarten at the age of four and a half. At that time, the rules were a little bit different," Rosalie chuckles, adding,

Once I learned how to cross the street, I was on my own. On State Street, they had the Junior Traffic Patrol that helped you cross the street, so my parents felt safe and there was not much traffic in those days.

Later, Rosalie would attend Roosevelt Junior High School. "We had to take the bus and trolley that went over to the school," she says, adding, "I went to San Diego High School; [I] graduated in 1951." Rosalie also notes the many friends and companions she had throughout her school days.

Rosalie retains some fond memories of her childhood growing up in the Italian neighborhood on India Street, as she states, "Downstairs in our house is a basement where we spent most of our time. . . . My mother cooked down there, and that's where we ate all meals together as a family. . . . My fondest memories are of having people come to visit us." Around the neighborhood, Rosalie recalls,

We had so many small businesses such as a shoe repair shop, barber shop, grocery stores, mattress factory, Kelly Laundry, macaroni factory, tortilla shop, bakery, beauty salon, and butcher shop. . . . People would come to India Street to shop for their Italian foods and stop at our house for a cup of coffee, talk, and spend the day. Also, at the age of five, I was reading books from the library at Washington School. . . . They had the best library there, and I would pick up five or six books at a time with my library card [and] bring them all home and read. . . . There was no TV. But we had a radio and music. . . . We'd listen to our favorite programs on the radio.

Rosalie mentions that her “fondest memories of growing up” were “the people.” And in describing some of her activities and the places around the neighborhood, Rosalie recalls,

We had a drug store on the corner; I think it was called Bay City. . . . They had a soda fountain . . . I had to have my ice cream cone, and at the bottom of the cone would be a little slip that would say, “You win,” and you could go get another cone. You could also buy a pitcher of root beer for a dime. . . . Things have changed. So many years have gone by. Growing up would be going to school, doing my homework, going to the library, which I enjoyed so much, and going to church. . . . They also had a movie theater right next to . . . what is now Nelson's Photo—five cents to see a movie.

On a typical day for Rosalie, she would help with the family duties. She offers an example of how she would help her mother, stating,

My mother would send me to the store to buy food. . . . I'd cross the street to Busy Bee Market, and they would fix up a bag of celery, tomatoes, carrots, you know, for 25 cents or whatever it was. And she'd make the big pot of soup. But I did the family shopping since I was five years old.

Rosalie chuckles when she adds, "Mother would say, 'Go to the butcher and get me a chicken.' In those days, chickens were killed right in front of you—I did not like that." When Rosalie would patronize the local merchants on India Street, she notes fondly, "They loved me. They'd tell me, 'Do whatever you want to—take whatever,' noting the element of trust that was rampant back in the day in the neighborhood. Rosalie punctuates, "And so I loved this neighborhood so very, very much. . . . They loved me so much. . . . I will always remember the beautiful people and how much they did for me, you know?"

Regarding languages spoken in the home, Rosalie states, "My mother did not speak English. She always spoke Italian—well, Sicilian. And we all spoke Sicilian or else we couldn't communicate with her."

Noting her parents' strict rules and a dynamic present for many of the neighborhood girls, Rosalie says, "I didn't go out too much, because I was the only girl in the family, so that's the way it was." She laughs, adding, "But . . . I was able to have friends over all the time." Rosalie elaborates further on the dynamic of being the only girl in the family:

Being the only girl, my parents were very strict. . . . I was always able to have friends over and cousins. . . . If I wanted to go somewhere, I'd have to take one of my brothers. . . . But as I grew up and worked, things got a little bit better. I was

able to go on vacations with my cousin Josephine. I was able to see most of the world. . . . We went to Italy. We took tours, and because we were by ourselves, as long as we had other people with us, it was okay. . . . We went to Sicily, Venice, Florence, Rome. We toured all over. And as years would go by, we'd take other tours. So the two of us did pretty good. Now I was very lucky that I was able to see . . . the Mediterranean, Greece, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, South America, Japan, and China. . . . I loved my trips. I really enjoyed them. I enjoyed the people. They were so nice to me.

About her discussion of her trips, Rosalie laughs as she muses, “I'm trying to think if it's just going on in my mind.”

Rosalie is adamant when she again says the most influential factor for her sense of belonging while growing up was “the people—the people more or less.”

Rosalie also remembers well Little Italy during wartime, and she was around nine years old during the war. She recounts,

It was very sad because some of the boys died. I remember the blackouts. . . .

Whenever the air raid sirens would go off . . . my mother would draw her drapes

or curtains, or whatever, ‘cause your windows had to be black. Another thing I

remember during the war is when the airplanes . . . dropped down sacks of—I

don't know if they were sand or whatever . . . because they were practicing, so

they would bombard us. . . . Everybody had to turn off their lights, but you could

have a candle for light. Another thing . . . when my father was fishing, he used to

find these parachutes. One was red; one was white, and he was told he could have

them. Well that was good because my mother made me a lot of clothes out of the parachutes—blouses out of the white nylon and red pinafores.

Rosalie also remembers her radio and the importance the authorities had placed on it and on the other radios in the community:

The FBI—I think it was the FBI—they came over and told my mother that she [couldn't] . . . have a shortwave radio because it was not allowed. So they took off the shortwave radio, and we couldn't hear my father who was out fishing anymore.

When the war ended, Rosalie vividly recalls,

Everybody was crying. . . . I do remember that as soon as we heard that the war was over, people ran out in the street, and all the ladies went to church. . . . I remember we went to pray, to thank God that the war was over.

Rosalie acknowledges the influence of the local parish, Our Lady of the Rosary, on her upbringing and its continued important role for her today, stating, “We went to catechism and mass on Sundays. Our wonderful teacher was Sister Anthony. I love the church; it's the most beautiful church, and I love everything about it.” Rosalie today still sings in the church choir, more than 65 years since she began. She also is active in the church Ladies Guild, contributing a lot of work for the church. She notes, “We also have fundraisers. I love to work the bake sale. . . . I also help with the Spaghetti Dinner and the Fish Fry, and I just hope I can help wherever I can.”

Rosalie acknowledges that she has seen a lot of changes in the neighborhood through the decades, noting,

I don't like a lot of the changes. I mean, it's okay and I'm not going to be here forever. A lot of the high-rise buildings [are] . . . what I don't care for, but that's okay. Lots and lots of changes. . . . I mean, there was a gasoline station, I remember that, on one of the corners. I remember across the street where Jimmy's is now, I remember that that was a body shop, an auto body shop at one time. . . . Well, as you can see at the corner, no more Reader. That's going to be—I think they said a six- or seven-story building. . . . I understand that they are going to have . . . a piazza. . . . They're supposed to have a lot of cafes and shops, so people can walk around, enjoy a cup of coffee, and relax. I think it's going to be nice. But I understand, I hope, The Princess of Wales will not have to go. There are many new restaurants.

Ultimately, in talking about the neighborhood today, Rosalie says that she doesn't think the changes in the neighborhood affect her sense of ethnicity, but she does acknowledge, "Well, you know . . . Little Italy is not Little Italy anymore. I mean, I know they've done the best that they can to try to help it, but it'll never be Little Italy anymore."

Adding an ultimate comment about Little Italy today, and perhaps reflecting her myriad experiences in travel, Rosalie states, "It's too much, you know what I'm saying? I think they have too many Italian restaurants. Maybe they should have a Chinese or Mexican restaurant."

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS – JIM BREGANTE – TRUE NORTH

“I’m a product of people,” Jim Bregante declares emphatically, referring directly to the many influential people that contributed to his upbringing in San Diego’s Italian community during the 1940s and 1950s. On September 23rd, 1936, Jim begins to recount, San Diego’s Mercy Hospital welcomed him as it had done for most of the Italian community living near San Diego’s waterfront and downtown areas at the time. “Ninety-nine percent of the people of the community were born there at that hospital,” Jim proclaims. He was raised in “seven little yellow cottages,” built by his grandfather Gerolamo Bregante in 1922. Today, those cottages are still standing, and they have served as one of the many topics that Jim writes about in his historical essays on the community that helped to shape him.

Jim recalls those cottages fondly, as they were “a little community among the larger community of what’s called Little Italy today,” he says. An interesting component of the diminutive, but distinctive homes was the courtyard in the center of the cottages, which had the clotheslines, and “that was the meeting place for the ladies.” In the courtyard, Jim notes, “You became familiar with everyone’s garments.” The courtyard (and clotheslines) served as common ground. Jim also mentions, “People would not move far from their families in the neighborhood,” describing his mother’s trajectory in her lifetime of a mere “two full blocks” over the course of 40 years in the neighborhood, similar to most of his other family members. Jim notes of this proximity, “You can’t get much closer than that unless you were living in a tenement in New York with all your relatives stacked clear up to the sky.” Jim notes further,

This little community—my mother named it the Honeymoon Cottages. She nicknamed it that because most of the people that lived there were all tuna fishermen, and most of those tuna fishermen were always out at sea, so these ladies formed quite a camaraderie and worked together, shared a lot with each other. If someone was in need, there was someone there to assist them. These ladies all wore aprons; you don't see aprons nowadays around India Street. But there were some real wonderful ladies, wonderful families, down there.

Jim remembers that walking through the courtyard, one could hear the commotion coming from the many shortwave radios. He explains, “All the fishing families had shortwave radios so they could hear their husbands speaking, or find out how their boat is doing, when it's going to come home.” And Jim recalls fondly another touching story about the Honeymoon Cottages that has stayed with him:

My friend told me about the time she was in labor with her first child, and she was taken to Mercy Hospital, and she told the doctor . . . “I just want to tell you, today's my wash day, the only day I can use the big clothesline. And if I am not in labor, I need to get back home and wash my clothes.” The doctor told her, “Honey, you are going to have a baby today. You're not washing clothes.” And this lady was in tears sharing that.

Jim's recollections of his family members, particularly his grandfathers, remain vivid and riveting. Jim's maternal grandfather, Agostino Ghio, came to San Diego via Ellis Island, settling first in San Francisco, as many other Italian immigrants had done. He began a fishing career, and he discovered a large Italian community in that city. Upon relocating to San Diego, he started his career as a fisherman and boat owner. Notably,

while living in San Francisco, he had also sailed on San Diego's famed ship, the Star of India. Because of his grandfather's influence, Jim used to pretend he was a fisherman, noting, "That was the closest I ever got to becoming a fisherman."

Jim's paternal grandfather, Gerolamo Bregante, also first settled in San Francisco but much earlier than Jim's maternal grandfather—in 1886. He also worked as a fisherman, but he then went into the retail and wholesale business and became a buyer for a fish market. Jim's grandfather was in San Francisco during the 1906 earthquake, and he moved to San Diego in 1910.

Interestingly, while in San Francisco, Jim's grandfather became good friends with AP Giannini, the founder of the Bank of Italy, which would later become Bank of America. Giannini asked him to serve on the bank's board of directors in San Diego. Jim mentions at this point, proudly, that his grandfather did not have a lot of education, but he was "good with people and had an entrepreneurial spirit." A book Jim has on the Italians of San Diego, published in the 1930s, dubbed his grandfather, "The Father of the Italian community," and Jim refers often to his grandfather's leadership and authority within the Italian neighborhood.

Regarding both of his grandfathers, Jim remains proud of their hard work and spirit, emphasizing that they came here looking for opportunity, and both became citizens and worked hard. Jim mentions often that they served as good role models for him growing up.

Jim says, anecdotally, that his maternal grandfather had an arranged marriage. She wasn't "too excited about that," Jim speculates, and offers confirmation by recalling, "I don't see her smiling in a lot of family pictures." Ultimately, what stands out for Jim is

that growing up in the Italian neighborhood, “You were always within a block or two of your relatives.”

Jim also remembers that other people from the community were always visiting his house. He states, “I kind of believe that environment added a lot to my life, the camaraderie of the people living there; most of those people grew up with each other.” He does not equivocate on the value he placed, and continues to place, on this community and the people there, especially in developing “lifelong friendships.” Some of the values he held dear were community and friendship, and he remembers that people were always there for each other.

A lot of the community was involved in the fishing industry, so the males were out fishing, and the community members depended on each other. “People would reach out to their neighbors,” Jim says, a community trait shared by most. He remembers the “lady with the outdoor oven, so we would always have a loaf of bread,” or “the largest fig tree in the neighborhood, always figs,” and there was always fish “from people sharing their catch.” In the neighborhood, everyone knew everyone else. “Adults would smile at the kids walking down the street,” Jim says. Overall, he adds, “It was a very close-knit community.” Jim elaborates on the neighborliness of the community, stating,

As we started to expand, we started meeting more of the parents of the kids that we were growing up with, and everywhere we walked down in the Italian community, people were on their porches. Everybody had a porch, and they used it. Again, prior to television sets and all that, people just sat outside and visited, and as you were walking down Columbia Street, heading towards, we'll say the church or the playground, there might be a mother sitting on the porch, visiting

somebody and [she would say], “Hi, Jimmy. . . . How's your mama? How's your papa?” And there was this closeness that everybody knew you, knew your family. And again, the negative thing is you[‘d] better be careful because they could get back to your family pretty quick. But just some real wonderful people out there, and it was just so tight-knit. Today, you could walk down the street and see a thousand people and not one knows you, neither do you know anyone else. But in my time, as I walked down the street, as I walked anywhere in the Italian community, I just knew people. Those people knew me. . . . I don't think that happens today. I'm down there periodically, and I may see one person that I remember, and that's probably it.

Jim explains that the primary businesses were on India Street, which served as the main thoroughfare in the neighborhood: “[The] bakeries, grocery stores, drug stores, barber shops, shoe shops—all within a three- to four-block area.” Regarding restaurants, Jim recounts, “When I grew up there was only one restaurant—Ortega’s Mexican Food,” which was operated by a Mexican family living in the neighborhood. Eventually, other restaurants started to be established through the 1950s. Today, Jim says, “People laugh when I tell them there was only one restaurant in Little Italy—they don’t believe it.” But Jim notes that restaurants were not really needed for the community residents, explaining,

When you think about it, why did you need restaurants on India Street when nobody could cook better than your mother and your grandmother? And as I grew older, I felt, “You know what? That had to be a sacrilege, to take your family out and pay somebody to eat their food.” I just firmly believe that, and I share that

with a lot of people today when I go out speaking on behalf of what life was like down in the Italian community and on the waterfront.

Remembrance of good times turns melancholic when Jim recalls wartime in his neighborhood. “I remember the sadness of my parents when the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor,” Jim reflects, adding, “We knew there was something bad.” The war heavily affected Jim, and he states, “I have a lot to share about my World War II thoughts.”

Jim was about four years old when the war began, about nine when it ended. “I was very aware that our country was at war. My parents were quite concerned, [and they] would listen to the radio as far as what was happening throughout the world.” He also describes that the U.S. Navy commissioned many of the neighborhood tuna boats to be sent to war in the South Pacific, stating, “A lot of fishermen were put aboard these boats. They had joined the Navy and then were put on these boats to haul supplies down in the Pacific.” Jim’s grandfather’s boat had been commissioned, he says, and “it was ordered to conduct patrols off the Mexican coast, and then the boat was released to come home and continue tuna fishing.”

During the war, “We always had servicemen coming to the house,” Jim recalls, and his mother would always prepare dinner for them. He notes,

Down on Broadway [the main thoroughfare in Downtown San Diego] there were always military parades going on. Looking east on Broadway you would see just a sea of white hats of sailors and Marines. In Horton Plaza, there was some chicken wire stockades, where people would bring pots and pans, aluminum, [and] throw them in there for the scrap-metal drive.

In the community, Jim states, “Each block had an air-raid warden . . . in his cellar, he had a lot of fire extinguishers. He had piles of sand down there in case of incendiary bombs coming in.” The air-raid warden would patrol the neighborhood at night to ensure everything was all right. Also, Jim says, “There were anti-aircraft guns in place throughout the area.”

Jim also remembers an important dynamic that was happening in the community during this time, explaining,

All the Italians who were not citizens could not be west of Kettner Boulevard [close to the waterfront] after five o’clock; that lasted throughout the war. The government did come in. Now those people, if they had a shortwave radio, the government confiscated them, had them stored, and people couldn’t have them until after the war.

A lot of rationing of food and gas went on in the neighborhood as well. “At nighttime you could see searchlights screening the sky,” Jim recalls. But perhaps he remembers best the festivities and celebration in the neighborhood announcing the war’s end. Jim expounds, “VJ Day—our neighborhood was a little noisier than normal, and our mothers came out and told us that the Japanese had surrendered.”

The physical boundaries of the Italian community when Jim was a resident there were more expansive than today’s markers. In addition, he emphasizes,

As children, we were allowed to walk all over San Diego: Balboa Park, Downtown, to school, Market Street, the waterfront, Old Town sometimes. I just had to be back at five o’clock for dinner, and I couldn’t be out after eight or nine at night.

“As children we had to make our own activities,” Jim says. When he was growing up, the neighborhood contained many empty lots where the children and adults would play. “I learned how to cuss in Italian by watching the old men play bocce ball in the empty lots,” Jim boasts. Furthermore, regarding those lots, he adds, “I don’t remember houses being built from the foundation up, but I remember houses being towed down the street where a foundation was waiting for it.” Growing up as children, Jim states, “We spent a lot of time watching people work,” whether it was workers digging ditches or watching people with jackhammers and shovels. Overall, Jim remembers, “You did a lot of observing as part of our activities and playing.”

Jim asserts, “The place that probably had a lot to do with our development was Washington Elementary School, and Washington had a huge playground.” The neighborhood children spent countless hours there. The school also had an underground gymnasium that was open in the evenings. Across the street from the school was Bayside Social Center, operated by the nuns—who would accompany the children on many varied outings—and they would offer cultural and educational programming, cooking classes, and the like. And down by the waterfront used to be Lane Field, which was the home of the San Diego Padres of the Pacific Coast League. Jim recalls many summers spent there, stating, “If we had 20 cents in our pockets, a few of us fellas would go down to watch a ball game.” If they didn’t, they had more creative means at their disposal to try to gain admission, such as getting tickets from the dry cleaner, waiting for a foul ball and exchanging it for tickets, or simply going in for free after the seventh inning. The children would also spend much time along the waterfront, observing the lumber schooners; they would walk along Broadway, talk to the sailors, go to the movies, and

play war during wartime. They were never bored, and Jim notes, “Things seemed to be spontaneous.”

A typical day for Jim included going to school, playing on the playgrounds, coming home to play and study, and listening to the radio. Interestingly, Jim says, “All the entertaining when I was growing up was done in the kitchen. When friends and relatives came over, the front room never had company in there until television came out, and then people moved in there.”

Recalling more of the neighborhood’s traditional ways, Jim says, “There were the trends of food,” but the overall traditions were not as strong with the Genovese (hailing from the north as Jim’s family) as they were for the Sicilians (southern Italians). Jim also explains that while his parents were proud of their heritage, they remained happy to be in their new country. Jim’s grandfather was most proud of his new country, dubbing his fishing boat, the North America. Jim also recalls that at the dinner table, his grandfather would say to the children, “Eat well my children—your father is in America.” At the same time, Jim’s parents would admonish him: “You’ve got an Italian heritage; don’t drift and become too Americanized.”

“Walking down India Street you could hear people speaking Italian all the time,” Jim says, but his parents spoke mainly in English. “When our parents wanted to keep something secret then they would talk to each other in Italian,” Jim recalls.

Regarding authority, discipline, and leadership in his family, Jim states, “The father wielded the big stick, but so did mom too,” adding, “We had a lot of respect for our parents, and that was part of our Italian culture.” Trying to adhere to the Ten Commandments in a devoutly Catholic family, Jim says, “The one commandment that we

really abided by was to honor thy father and thy mother. Naturally, being Italian, our mother was set a lot higher on the pedestal than our father.” Jim emphasizes, “The parents were the ultimate authority for us that helped set our compass.”

Not until Jim went to junior high and high school did he begin to branch out and realize “there was something out there larger than India Street.” In meeting Italians outside the confines of the community, Jim recalls that they seemed more Americanized, and he is emphatic in his response to the prompt of whether the neighborhood helped to keep its residents more Italian. “Yes, yes, yes,” comes the resounding response.

Jim remembers that during his adolescent years the kids were now “really starting to branch out.” In high school they were interacting with inner city kids. “We had all the different nationalities there,” he states. He got to travel while playing baseball for high school, recalling, “We got to drive up to San Bernardino and stay overnight [a few hours’ drive from San Diego]; that was a big deal.” He fondly remembers as well, “There were social clubs where guys and girls had what they called ‘joint meetings,’ and there’d be dances at someone’s home.”

In addition to his family members (notably his grandfathers and parents), Jim describes other community members who influenced him. In particular he begins with one priest from Jim’s church, Father Pillola, who remained an important person in Jim’s life. What Jim remembers most is Father Pillola’s work in tending to the poor. Jim recalls at one point after World War II had ended, in the hall of the church, “There were just pounds and pounds of clothing; he had a clothing drive going for Italy—and shoes—lots of shoes.” His humanity seems to really have affected Jim, and Jim states, “He was a good person, a good role model in my life. He was a good man.”

Then came Monsignor Trevisanno: “Had he not been a priest, he probably would have been a CEO,” Jim surmises. The Monsignor also knew a lot of people in Hollywood. He held major events at the El Cortez Hotel, a popular spot in San Diego, events that would involve many celebrities. He gave Jim a part time job as janitor at the church when Jim was in the ninth grade. “It was my first real job other than mowing lawns and delivering the paper,” Jim recalls, adding,

Even after I left being a janitor, he’d call me up at home and say, “Jim, we have some lights out up above at the top of the church, if you can come down and change them.” And this would go on for years and years. He was a neat guy.

And Jim mentions one particular nun, “Sister Anthony—God bless her. She was just one of the neatest little nuns I’ve ever met, and she knew how to have us walk the plank too. She made Christians out of us.”

Recalling his respect for the people who influenced him, Jim says,

I guess that was part of our upbringing—policemen, people of authority—we had a lot of respect and admiration for the schoolteachers, nuns, priests, firemen, policemen, servicemen. We had a lot of respect, great respect of the people with authority, and I think that helped set our moral compass.

As for influences of place, the ones that had the most profound impact on Jim were Washington Elementary School, Our Lady of the Rosary Church, and Bayside Social Center, of which “the biggest influence in the beginning was Washington School.” He notes, “That was the first experience to find out there were other people besides Italians,” as the school had other students from myriad backgrounds. “We were getting an inkling that there was a larger world out there.”

He describes the school in great detail: a three-story building, marble floors and stairs, and “two full-sized bears on pillars on each side of the stairs.” Especially important were Jim’s teachers, as he notes: “Some of those teachers really set the foundation for us kids and helped to establish our moral compass.” Their guidance, he states, has shaped him tremendously, as he explains,

And we did learn some leadership skills because a lot of us were Junior Patrol and we had to deal—work—with the police department out there and that kind of expanded our boundaries out there. And I just say the teachers played such a terrific role in our life. I just can't thank them enough for what they did and how they would bear with us.

Our Lady of the Rosary Church was another vital influence. “That was another chapter in our growth,” Jim asserts. Responsibility as an altar boy also provided an important framework for Jim. The church proved to be a great influence for Jim over the years, as he punctuates, “And our church, Our Lady of the Rosary Church—going to catechism, learning our faith—that was another area that really brought a lot to us kids.”

But there was also another important institution in the neighborhood, which served many of the children. As Jim relates,

And then another place, Bayside Social Center, another block and a half away from Washington School and Our Lady of the Rosary Church . . . if we were not playing on the playgrounds at Washington School, we were over at Bayside Center, playing over there, playing with the nuns. If we were altar boys, we had to go to Bayside to learn our Latin and how to say, how to participate, in the Mass. And then in summertime the nuns would take us on road trips to a Coca-Cola

factory, a milk factory, drive us out to Mission Beach, Bonita Bay out there, take us swimming, take us to a park. They were just a real neat group of getting us to interact. And then there were kids from other parts of the community there, so we were meeting new kids. I always thought we were the only ones, [the] only kids in San Diego, and it took a few years to realize that there were quite a few more people out there.

Ultimately, Jim would leave his community, and he discusses his departure from the neighborhood, which happened around 1958 when his family moved to Mission Hills. He states, “So that started taking me away from the community. I was still in contact with all of my friends, with all of my buddies, but I didn't get down there quite often.” Subsequently, Jim got married and moved to Clairemont, a San Diego suburb. “But I did stay in touch with the church,” Jim notes. And Jim recalls an important turning point in the community around that time:

And then came the freeway in the early 60s, and that really tore that community apart. All of our grandparents were gone, so they would not have felt that change there, but with that Highway 5 coming through there taking out 40%, 45% of that town, that started some major changes.

Jim attended Roosevelt Junior High School and San Diego High School, as did most of the kids in the Italian neighborhood. Jim says that San Diego High really prepared him for what would come next. “From there I went to San Diego State [University], [I] spent one semester at San Diego State and just had it with school temporarily.” The father of a close friend was “a mill superintendent down at Western Lumber,” and Jim landed a job there. He notes, “I learned how to operate some

specialized machinery and from there got promoted to a foreman. I was getting good experience now of working with people, training people, and I was enjoying that very much.” Jim continues with highlighting some other important milestones for him:

At the same time I did go back to school. I went to San Diego Junior College, got an associative arts degree, and later on did go back out to San Diego State and went up through my junior year, but with work commitments, family commitments, and everything, that was about the end of the line. But I've learned quite a bit. And in that time, in 1961, I met a lovely Italian girl, Jo Ann Bono, and I met her at my best friend Tony Asaro's wedding, I was Tony's best man. And I met this lovely young Italian girl; we danced and talked a little bit, and eventually we started dating. It was 1962 when we got married, and we stayed in the neighborhood on India Street, up towards the north end, renting from a Terramagra family, a lady—I'll never forget her name—Vincenzina. And we spent, I think we spent two or three years there, and our first born, our son Michael, was born there. And then we moved down to Curlew Street, right across the street from my mother-in-law, father-in-law, for a few years, and my daughter Diane was born there. And after . . . about six years, we moved up to Clairemont. . . . And at that time we were right near St. Catherine Laboure Church, so that was kind of the end for Our Lady of the Rosary. We still participated down there as much as we could, but we had a new parish. [There], I was one of the founders of the Italian Catholic Federation. . . . We were active with the church. Jo Ann was very active with the church up there. And after we were married about 30 years Jo Ann passed on in 1990. And during the next two- or three-year period, I was still

kind of active up at Our Lady of the Rosary Church. And two to three years later God blessed me with another nice woman, Donna Cravens. So I was too sad to have a real nice one leave, but I guess the good Lord was kind of looking after me and placed Donna with me. Donna and I—we've been married 23 years. She's Norwegian, but she loves Italians and loves to cook Italian, and she's pretty active at Our Lady of the Rosary, Italian Catholic Federation. . . . And in '93, Donna and I were married, but at the same time . . . Western Lumber Company shut down—first time in my life I was out of work. And I worked for Dixieline [Lumber] for about three months, but in 1993 San Diego was in quite a recession particularly in the lumber business and it was tough finding a job. I got a call from a company that used to own Western Lumber, Boise Cascade; they had a company up there called BMC West—Building Materials West—and they were looking for a fellow in the corporate office that would be a fleet manager who would buy all the equipment and would be involved in training and travel to 10 western states to look after all these stores up there. And Donna wasn't overly excited at first for she had already spent 15 years with the Diocese of San Diego, in their Religious Education office. And I said, “Well, let's go take a look at Boise.” So the company flew us up, and we spent two or three days up there looking around. I went through interviews. And yeah, she made a comment . . . “Gee whiz, boy, this would have been a real neat town to raise children.” A small town. It was the only town I've ever met or ever been where quite often you'd have to stop your car to let a row of ducks walk across the street to get on the other side. It was Small Town USA. I'd been there before when Boise Cascade owned us. And so I told

Donna, “Let's go up there for seven years, call it a seven year honeymoon, and then we'll move back to San Diego.” And her mom and dad were healthy; my dad had passed on but my mother was quite healthy and living with my brother, so we went up there. And we had probably seven of the nicest years. We were not in an [Italian] . . . community or anything like down here. However, the first thing I did was look for an Italian club when I got to Boise, and I found an Italian organization up there. And next thing I did, I looked for a good Italian restaurant. I found an Italian restaurant so . . . we were set up there. And we had a great religious experience with the church we were at up there. Donna loved it. Today I kinda joke about it, but I brought her up there kicking and screaming but I brought her home kicking and screaming. And she always tells me if I ever get hit by a train, she's moving back to Boise. And it was a real great experience up there—just [a] small town of maybe 100,000 people, [with] a river running through town. Some days I'd tell Donna, “You want to eat fish tonight?” She said, “Yeah.” So I'd just go over to the river, catch three or four trout, come home, and then we'd have our fish dinner. It was just a neat, neat place but I knew that I'm eventually going back home where I belong. And after seven years or getting close to it, I gave the company a year's notice that I was gonna be leaving. And the day I turned 65, Donna was sitting in the car downstairs waiting for me to come out of the building, and two weeks later we were in San Diego. Two weeks after that my house was sold up there and we were just all nestled here; we were back in Clairemont and just had a wonderful experience. But we came back; we just came back to where we belong and after a great experience.

Jim mentions that he paid particular attention to the many changes in the old neighborhood upon their return. “Just walking through the neighborhood seeing new buildings, some of the older places gone—there was quite a change developing at that time down in that community.”

While respecting those in authority seems to continue for Jim today, he seems to question the merchants who currently govern Little Italy. Jim contends, “You have a special group of people who are businessmen—that’s their expertise. Most of these people involved have never lived there, and they don’t really have a feel for what it was like.” He adds, “I don’t see anything on India Street” regarding Italian culture. He continues speaking about the governing association, stating, “Through their commercial endeavors they’re cultivating an Italian neighborhood, I guess, but not the neighborhood I knew.” Jim is clear on a necessary component for the neighborhood: “What they’re missing is a focus on the history of little Italy. I think they need a facility that is not commercial now but is historical.”

Jim discusses further the changes he has witnessed in the community. “When they started calling it Little Italy—word association—commercialism,” Jim expounds, speaking to the revitalization of his cherished neighborhood, which began in 1994. It was never called Little Italy in his day, he explains—it was just the Italian neighborhood. “In San Francisco, there’s not such a thing as Little Italy—it’s North Beach,” he points out. Jim affirms, “I have trouble with the word *Little Italy*. I prefer *the Italian community*, but from a marketing standpoint, I guess, so be it.”

But Jim also states regarding Little Italy’s redevelopment, “I was maybe indifferent to that growth. You’re going to have change; there’s still a lot of historical

buildings down there; there's still some landmarks that I can relate to." Jim does admit, however, "I don't quite have that warm, fuzzy feeling," recalling again his sentiments for those two decades—the 1940s and 1950s—and growing up in his neighborhood. But he is grateful that "there is still an India Street" to reminisce about, and he loves to participate and to be with people, walking down there and "sharing his culture." Jim does, however, offer the following thought: "The people are gone that I was really close with, and let's face it, I mean the people, they're the community regardless of what the structure looks like. If the people are gone that flavor is gone." In fact, Jim says, a few thousand Italian American people lived in the neighborhood in his day, while today not too many Italians reside there. "You're not connected to these people, the people living there now," he emphasizes.

Jim is proud of his efforts in preserving his family's history, and recounts an episode that helped to shape the direction his life would take in recent years. He explains,

And one day my grandson, Brandon, walks up, and he's in the fifth grade. He said, "Grandpa, "I'm gonna do an overnight stay on the Star of India." I said, "Brandon, Your great-great grandfather sailed on the Star of India." I said, "I'm gonna write you a two-page essay about your grandfather and the Star of India. I want you to share it with your teacher and your school kids before you go down there." So I went down to the Maritime Museum and to their library, did some research, had some pictures taken, and that kind of got me with a local connection to the Maritime Museum. So I put this essay together, gave it to Brandon to take to his school teacher, and she really . . . appreciated it. And I guess the kids got quite a bit out of it. My grandson loved his overnight stay, and I meet a lot of

kids, a lot of parents, a lot of grandparents who say their kids just really loved that experience down there. So [in] 2006, I went down and signed up with the Maritime Museum to start going through docent training . . . the first week in January of 2006, and that took about 13, 14 weeks. . . . And . . . when one of the directors found out that I grew up on the waterfront and Little Italy, he said, “Oh, I’m gonna turn you over to the guy in charge of our programs.” And this gentleman said . . . “How about putting a PowerPoint presentation together on what it was like growing up in your Little Italy and on the waterfront?” And I said, “Yeah, I’d be delighted to.”

As a result of this meeting, Jim now narrates a multimedia presentation about growing up on the waterfront and in Little Italy for community organizations around the county. Since he began his presentations nine years ago, Jim has spoken to nearly 11,000 people and presented close to 300 times. He knows firsthand that people have an interest in this subject of the history of the Italian neighborhood and its environs. He states,

So today . . . speaking about our neighborhood has been a real blessing to share what our neighborhood was like. People love to hear that, because the people I speak to sometimes will come up to me, [and] say, “Jim, I did everything you did, except I did it in Brooklyn,” or “I did it in Philadelphia.” So I don’t have a monopoly on being an Italian, growing up in an Italian community down there.

In choosing a word to describe his neighborhood of back in the day, Jim says, “Close,” repeating it. “Close.” And in finding a word or phrase that represents his perception of today’s Little Italy, Jim chooses, “Different,” or “Aloof.”

In summing up, Jim says, his Italian culture and identity signifies “growing up where I did and when I did and among the people who were Italian.” Jim adds, “The new residents of Little Italy don’t have the connection we had. The beautiful part is that we’re still connected to many of these people,” referring to his friends. “I’m just blessed, again, to grow up where I did, when I did. Amen.”

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS – FRAN STEPHENSON – A WOMAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Reflecting on her school years at Roosevelt Junior High School, Fran Stephenson recalls a dynamic that had a profound impact on her, one that imbues her life story with a characteristic that would ultimately shape her development throughout many facets of her life. It also illustrates an important sensibility that informed her way of thinking. Fran states,

I made friends with girls that were different . . . than I was. It made me wonder, “What is Italian? Why are Italians so close and don't venture out to find what other people are like?” And that was part of my curiosity in my life. I want to know more. I want to know more about people out there. I didn't know they existed, and I said, “I wanted to find out more.”

“My name is Fran Stephenson. I was born March 9th, 1923. And I was born in Little Italy, which they call Little Italy now, but it was called Woptown when I was born,” Fran begins to recount. “I lived on India Street until I was 22 years old,” she adds. Her curiosity, this drive to find out more, provides an establishing shot of sorts, as Fran begins her life story discussing Washington Elementary and how much she enjoyed learning and attending her neighborhood school. “It was a beautiful old school. I was very athletic. I played on the playgrounds and played on the rings and enjoyed all my little friends,” she states. Fran makes a point to note right away her affection for the librarian at Washington Elementary, Mrs. Krause, who would spark Fran’s interest in reading. More important, she would help Fran in learning how to pronounce words, as

Fran had difficulty in this regard. “I have her to thank for teaching me how to speak,” Fran proclaims. Fran attributes her speaking difficulty to her being Italian, explaining,

When I was home, in the house, my father insisted we speak only Italian. So when I was outside, and I played with my friends, and when I went to school, I spoke English. And when I spoke with my mother I spoke Italian and English.

Fran would participate in many school activities, stating, “I took courses that would teach me something. I wanted to learn not just because I want[ed] to learn reading and writing and my arithmetic—I wanted to learn something else.” Fran would eventually dabble in art, sewing, “foolish acting on the stage,” and she also joined the glee club. And most importantly about her school endeavors, Fran exclaims, “My parents came and saw me, and I was thrilled because my father, being a fisherman, he was never home. . . . I was very proud of myself, to look out there and see my parents in the audience.”

Many things stand out for Fran about her upbringing as she recounts her story, but she has special memories of the family members whom she held so dear. She goes into the details of her parents’ history, stating that her father hailed from “a little town called San Benedetto del Tronto” in Italy. He came to America in 1910, where he first landed in New York, then moved on to Chicago, followed by a stint in San Francisco, and finally settling in San Diego. “And so he decided he’d stay here because he liked the weather and the fishing industry,” Fran says.

Fran’s mother was born in San Francisco, she explains, noting, “And during the fire in 1906 . . . because her house burned down . . . they got in my grandfather’s boat—he was a fisherman in San Francisco—and they came to San Diego.” Fran’s mother got a

job “sewing fishermen’s nets,” as did some of the other Italian ladies in the neighborhood. Fran adds, “It was not a rich livelihood—they made very little money—she made a dollar a day. My father made \$10 a trip, and that wasn’t a lot of money when you had three kids to raise.”

About her family life, Fran paints an idyllic portrait, one whose canvas has not weathered, whose pastelled colors have not faded into mere memory alone but instead play a crucial part in shaping her own philosophy to this day. She states,

We had a very happy family. My parents were very kind, and they were very comical people. My father would play tricks on my mother, and my mother would play tricks on my father, and I learned joy from them, and how to treat one another, and how to be loving and giving, and I appreciate that to this day. They taught me so much.

Fran also notes that she had two siblings who have both passed: Joe, two years Fran’s senior, and Ortensia, “Toodles,” four years her junior. Fran says of her own personality and character traits:

And so I was this middle child that was . . . curious, tomboy-ish—asking questions all the time, wanting to go places and explore. I always wanted to play baseball with the boys; [I] didn’t want to play hopscotch with the girls. [I] didn’t have any dolls to play [with], because I didn’t like doll playing. And I never owned a doll really. Only one time in my life I did have a doll that I won at a grocery store named De Falco’s, which in 1936 was built by one of my cousins through marriage. And he built that big De Falco store, and when I went over there one day to buy a loaf of bread, they gave me a little ticket, and you turned

the ticket in the following week, and I won a beautiful doll. She was gorgeous, with black hair, and I thought she was beautiful. And I took her home. I was excited that I really had a doll, and I told my mother that I had a doll. "I've got a doll; I've got a doll. It's all mine," I said. And my mother said, "It's beautiful. . . . But you don't want to play with this, because it's not the kind of doll you play with. You can't undress it, and you can't comb its hair," because it had beautiful, long Shirley Temple curls . . . Shirley Temple was the big star those days. . . . So my mother . . . said, "Let me put it on my bed, and we'll use it as a pretty." She called it a 'pretty.' And so every morning when I would get up, I'd go look at my little doll and hold her, and then I'd lay her back on my mother's pillows, because I liked the pretty little doll I could admire.

And later Fran's doll-admiring interest would wane and her natural inclination toward more athletic pursuits continued, as she states that she learned to skate in a garage across the street from her home. "I would go in there and skate between cars and do my figure eights in there because it was a smooth floor." And Fran remembers an incident, still within a backdrop of athletics, which would inform her and her sensibility as a woman:

When I was about 12, my brother and two of his buddies formed a baseball team on an empty lot right there on the corner across the street from the Bernardinis, on the south side of the street. Huge lot. . . . And so I went over there one day, and I said, "Can I play?" And they all looked at me and . . . [said], "We don't let girls play on our team." I said, "Well, I play ball at school," and I was a good baseball player and I could hit the ball and they didn't know that. So I thought, "Well, I'm

going to prove it.” And I said, “Can I go out in the field?” And they said, “Sure. You can be out in left field.” So I went out in left field and I caught a ball and that surprised them. So I threw the ball back, and then pretty soon when my team was up and I was up to bat, I hit the ball, and I hit it down by Kettner Boulevard, and they all looked at my brother and said, “Are you sure she's a girl?” And after that they let me on their team, and every Saturday we had baseball games. And I played baseball with the guys, and I was so proud of me because I just wanted to show 'em that a girl could do what she wants to. If she wants to do it she can do it. But I had to constantly prove myself all the time, and I think because of that it's made me who I am today. I'm so damn stubborn.

A turning point for Fran would transpire during her time at Roosevelt Junior High, as Fran remembers an incident during Thanksgiving. “I had one teacher. Her name was Mrs. McCloud, and she taught music, and she also taught art. She also always put together plays or musicals.” Fran’s teacher was looking for pilgrims for the holiday play, but Fran would need to ask her mother to make the costume. “Well, I thought, there I go—I can't ask my mother to make me a costume, because she just doesn't have the money to go buy the material—so I was very sad,” Fran remembers, thinking she would not be able to be in the play. “Well lo and behold,” Fran continues, “I went home and told my mother, and she was very pleased that I asked her to make a costume.” But as Fran continues to elaborate on the costume-making episode, she makes note of one important element, not only for this particular incident but for many others as well. As Fran recounts,

My mother, being Italian, we [ate] . . . a lot of pasta, and she made all her own pasta, and she bought her flour in flour sacks. So she made a lot of my underwear and my slips out of flour sacks. And unfortunately, it always said ‘Globe A1 Flour’ on the flour sack. She couldn't get anything to take the dye off those. She tried very hard to soak them, [to] get that sign off of there, and it just wouldn't come off. So she made up clothes with the ‘Globe A1 Flour’ on it. She took the flour sacks and . . . made a costume out of . . . them. And then she took dye—you could buy dye in a little tiny box with little tiny pieces—and she dyed the pieces that she wanted me to wear. . . . She made . . . a pretty pink dress, and then she made a white collar, and then she made a cape. . . . The cape had—I'll never forget it—she had little cuffs on the sleeves on this cape. . . . Of course, she sewed, because she sewed all of our clothes. . . . She wasn't a seamstress, but she was talented.

But Fran's friends at school were not as receptive to her costume, as Fran continues to recount: “So I took that to school and showed it to my teacher and everybody laughed, because even though she dyed my dress, everybody laughed because it [said] . . . ‘Globe A1’ flour on it,” and Fran remembers that she was “very hurt.” And yet despite the mockery, Fran remained excited to be in the play, to don her mother's homemade costume, and to ultimately win praises from her teacher. She states,

I was excited because I thought I was an actress. I went home and told my mother what I did. This play was not done on our stage; it was in the classroom. It was special just for the class. And so the teacher [said] . . . , “Well, from now on when we have anything that we have to have a play, we're going to do it in the

auditorium, and that way we can have all . . . the parents . . . come and see their children . . . act.” And so I was real happy at that. “Oh, boy, I’m gonna have my parents come and see me.”

Attending Roosevelt Junior High would prove enlightening for Fran, as she would encounter people outside of her domain. As she explains,

I did bring up Mrs. Krause because Mrs. Krause—I adored her—because she taught me how to speak and how to also communicate with other people. And I told her my fears about . . . having to go to Roosevelt far away from my house. I had no idea—I truly had no idea that there were other people living outside of India Street. You might say our colony, our Italian colony, was from Laurel down to B Street, and from India Street, or I should say, Kettner . . . up to 12th Street, because that was just all Italians [who] lived around there. When I went to Roosevelt Junior High, I was intimidated by it. I felt like I didn’t belong there. It was another world. I met different people, different girls, and they all dressed differently than I was dressed. I wouldn’t say we were very poor, but I had anklets on, little anklet socks and these little girls had socks up to the knees, real pretty stylish clothes, and they had pretty sweaters. . . . I was lucky I had what I had, because my parents couldn’t afford to buy me a lot of clothes.

But Fran also acknowledges that the neighborhood’s ethnic composition was indeed varied: “Portuguese and Mexicans and Greek and every nation you can think of lived in our neighborhood,” paying particular attention to one childhood friend of Fran’s, a black girl. “We would go sit on their front porch some Sundays in the afternoon, and their grandfather would tell us about the old days in the South when he picked cotton.”

Unfortunately while at Roosevelt, Fran would be subjected to further teasing, as she continues to recount:

So then while I was in Roosevelt Junior High School I had no idea that some of those girls that were going to school would be very nasty to me because I was Italian and I didn't speak well yet. I had a lot of fear of not saying the right words, putting the right vowels together, or whatever, that I learned from Mrs. Krause. And so I was afraid of my diction and everything, and so these girls would tease me. After school they would follow me as I walked to gather my friends to walk home, and sometimes I decided I was so afraid of them I would take the trolley back home because they tease[d] me about being Italian and not knowing how to speak English properly.

As Fran's identity continued to develop through high school, her notion of her ethnic identity also would evolve as she contemplated further her upbringing and the dynamics that were shaping her future. She elaborates:

After junior high school I went to San Diego High School, and I learned more about myself, being Italian, and the neighborhood I came from and why I felt the way I did. And there were times I felt ashamed, because I was poor and I saw these other kids, that they brought beautiful lunch boxes, and at that time I was 15 years old and you'd think I'd know better, but I didn't, because I saw other things that I never had that I wanted but I knew I could never have. But I saw these people with beautiful lunch boxes and prettier clothes and their mothers picked them up in a car and I thought, "Wow, here I am in high school and what am I?" And I just didn't feel like a part of humanity at that time. I felt like I had lived and

been absorbed in a cocoon of some sort. I was hidden away and not shown off like these girls. Their parents came [and] picked them up. My mother didn't have time to walk to San Diego High School, which was 12 blocks away from home, to come and pick me up. We didn't have a car, so we walked everywhere. We walked [to] Downtown San Diego to go and do our shopping for clothes.

Shifting the focus of her story back to India Street, where she spent most of her free time growing up, Fran describes some of the many colorful elements in the neighborhood:

My life on India Street was quite entertaining at times . . . the Bernardinis next door to us had a little mom and pop grocery store. They were very kind . . . very sweet . . . and sometimes their little daughter, Angie, would come over. She would come up and have dinner with us when I [would] go down there to buy store-made pasta. Her mom would give me extra pasta because her daughter was going to have dinner with us and my mother used to always tell me, “Don't take it; don't take it, if Mrs. Bernardini wants to give you extra pasta,” and I would say, “Ma, she already gave it to me so I'm not going to take it back.” So Angie would have dinner with us, and then when my mother made something Mrs. Bernardini didn't know how to make—ravioli—so when she made her homemade raviolis, she [would] bring over a bowl of homemade raviolis to Mrs. Bernardini.

Fran recalls as well the not-so-fond memories of the rough times because, as she notes, “Those days, everybody was poor. The depression had started and believe me, it was tough.” But what Fran does hold fast to is how the neighborhood folk looked out for each other, as she explains,

So when my father came home from fishing . . . he'd roll up a fish in the newspaper and say, "Here, take this up to Mrs. So-and-So off the street," and when I [came] back he'd roll another fish up and he said, "Take Mrs. So-and-So down the street a fish." And then he['d] roll another one out and he [said] . . . , "Here, take this to the priest." And I [brought] . . . the priest . . . a fish. . . . He used to bring home a bucketful, and by the time he got down to one or two—we didn't have refrigeration those days; we had an icebox—and so we couldn't keep too much in our icebox, so he had just enough for us to eat for a couple of days. And so that's the way we lived. We shared with our neighbors. And the little Mexican lady up the street, when she made her tortillas, and she made [her] enchiladas . . . she would bring my mother her tortillas and her enchiladas, and we would just trade off food, and that's how we actually fed each other, and it was the most beautiful thing that I learned from my mother . . . and I was brought up that way, and she did that all the time.

But giving and sharing was not limited to the neighbors, family, or friends for Fran's family, as she continues to explain this tradition of sharing one's bounty:

And those days the train would come by; we lived two blocks away from the railroad tracks, and the train would come by, blow that huge, huge whistle—those days they had a huge whistle and when he'd blow the whistle and stop . . . we could hear the screeching and smell the burning of the wheels on the hot rails; we knew the train was stopping and the hobos would get off. Those days we called them hobos; today they call them street people. Well they were hobos to us those days, and they would come up and panhandle and ask you for food—never asked

you for money but they[‘d] ask you for food. So my mother had a little outlet, a little faucet by the side of the house with a hose, and . . . the hobos would come up and knock on our door and say, “Lady, do you have any food I could have?” And she'd say, “You go over there in my backyard. There's a faucet and a hose. Go wash your face and hands, and I'll bring you out a dish of food. . . . So she'd bring a huge plate full, and she'd ram a lot of pasta and whatever she had, whether she was cooking beans, and she used to cook them with pigs feet, and I know that sounds horrible, but they were delicious when she fixed them with beans. . . . She'd bring out a heaping plate out to the guy, and a fork, and this guy would just eat, and I'd watch him, and I'd think, “Golly.” And I'd come up and tell my mom, “He looks like he's starving.” And she'd say, “Yeah, he is; he's hungry.” And she said, “Just remember, when you're hungry, and if you don't have any food, that's what it looks like when people are really hungry, and you just remember that. If someone needs food, you be sure you help them and you give food.” And I'd say, “Okay.” So that was just another lesson I learned from my mother.

Fran's mother would also pass down the family's religious traditions. As Fran states, “I learned my catechism, and I learned all the lessons about our Lord, and I learned a lot of it at home because my mother taught me a lot, because both of my parents were Catholic.” But the local parish would also have a profound effect on Fran. She would do odd jobs around the church to help out, whether she “would dust all the pews” or “put the flowers in the altar.” At one point in her life Fran took under serious consideration the prospect of becoming a nun—Fran's father's sister was a nun—but against the wishes of her father, who “refused to have a daughter become a nun,” and live

a “very lonely, sad life for a woman.” Her parents felt she “should be married, have children.” Fran would study to become a nun, but “my parents fought me and fought me,” she recalls. And Fran ultimately decided against it. Yet Fran recounts that she often reflects on that decision: “I wonder if I would have enjoyed being a nun, because I enjoyed doing the work they did,” which indicates more than a nod to her sensibility of giving back and the prospect of being part of “sisters of charity.”

With her late teens looming, Fran would expand her horizons by starting work at her first job—at the local drugstore. She recounts the time she asked for the job:

Mr. Baerd was the man that owned that store. So I was getting up in age . . . 16 years old. I went up to Mr. Baerd and I [said] . . . , “Mr. Baerd, I need a job.” He said, “Well, you can't work here—you're not 18.” And I said . . . , “I can stack all the newspapers and the magazines for you. And I can even stand outside and sell some of your magazines if you want.” And he said, “No, I can't do that without your parents' permission, so you'll have to ask your parents 'cause you're too young.” So I went home and asked my mother if I could . . . stack some magazines and work for Mr. Baerd, and my mother said, “Well, if it means that you don't have to leave the street, you can stay there in the drugstore.” I said, “Okay.” So I did that for a while. I did that for a couple of months after school. And then when De Falco's built their store in 1936 across from my house, I got a job there.

Fran also recalls the decision to go to work full time, and although education remained an important element in her life, a perhaps more important element was family

unity and well being. She recalls her time going to work full time and her unwavering resolve in trying to land a full-time position. Fran explains,

When I was 15 years old, I also quit San Diego high school. I went to school one day and I thought, “Why am I doing this when my mother and father are working so hard, and we don't have enough food or enough clothes or my shoes—I was putting papers in my shoes ‘cause [they] . . . had holes in them—and I wasn't dressed like the other girls, and I resented it. And it's not that I didn't appreciate what my parents did for me; I just decided there's got to be more for me out there. So I decided to go to work full time. And I had gone to school that day making my mother think that I was going to stay. She fixed my lunch and everything else. But at noon, when it was time to go have lunch, I walked out of school and never walked back. I went home and my mother said, “What are you doing home?” And I said, “I'm home for good. I'm not going back to school.” And she said, “Oh, you can't do that.” She said, “I haven't had an education. Your father had never been inside of a school. You are not quitting school.” And I said, “I am quitting school. I'm going to go to work.” And she said, “Where are you going to go to work?” I said, “I'm going to go to the fish cannery. All my friends that I was going to school with have already quit school and they're off working in the fish cannery and they're making money.” So I decided to do that. . . . So I just went down to the fish cannery, which was down on Laurel and Highway 101 at that time . . . walked right in there like I knew what I was doing. I walked up to the lady, and they call[ed] her a floorwalker at that time. She was hiring that day, and there were a bunch of girls—all the girls that I knew were standing in line waiting to be

called, and you waited until she'd just say, "Do you wanna work or do you wanna work. . . ?" And she asked everybody but me. And I thought, "Why isn't she asking me?" So I turned around; [I] went home very sad because after she had everybody go to work, she just excused me. So I went home, and I was in tears and my father said, "What's the matter?" I said, "I didn't get hired." He said, "Hired?" He said, "Good. You should be in school." And I said, "No, I'm going to go tomorrow." So every morning I got up at 5:30 'cause everything started at seven o'clock at the fish cannery. So I decided I'm better. Nobody's going to stop me. I'm going to work. So I got up that morning, and I got dressed. I went back down to [the] fish cannery and stood in line. I stood in line and she said, "Do you wanna work? Do you wanna work?" She asked everybody in line and some of the girls I didn't know anymore. There were Mexican girls, Greek girls, girls from India Street all working . . . but I didn't realize they were older than I was, and I thought she just didn't like me. So I went back another day and I went for a whole week and finally one day, I'm standing in line and just staring at her, and she hired every girl but me. And she came up to me, and she said, "You know what?" I said, "What?" And she said, "You are so stubborn, and you are so sure you wanted a job. You have come everyday early in the morning, and you wanted a job. She said, "You're hired." And I said, "Really?" She said, "Yes."

Fran continues with her professional career choices, and her narrative reflects well her yearning for wanting to know more, broadening her horizons, meeting new people, and trying her hand at new things. As she explains,

Well the war years were quite different in my life. I was 17 years old, and one day I decided to help the war effort and go find a job in an aircraft plant. My brother had joined the Navy, and he was in Saipan. And of all things, he was teaching Japanese how to fish for tuna, which is shocking to me, but that's what he was doing . . . he didn't do that all the time because he was on a PT boat. And then I decided I'll go find a job down there, and I went down and I applied. . . . And they told me they needed electricians. I said, "Okay, I'll go to school and learn to be an electrician." So that's what I did. . . . And [I] went back about three months later, and they hired me. . . . And so at that time they were building the B-24s [at] Convair. . . . So they gave me this job to get into the plane, and I had to put wires from the tail gunner up to the pilot. And I had to put wires along the fuselage body, the airplane body, the belly and the top, all around. There was a gunner on top, and there was a gunner above the tail and then for the pilots. So I did that, and I did very well. . . . The days of working at Convair were delightful in a way that I met a lot of great people, and I met a lot of people that knew nothing about airplanes, and I lived so close to the airplanes all the time, and I was always interested in airplanes anyway.

Fran moves to a discussion of the next phase in her life—meeting her life partner and getting married while at the same time she reflects on her neighborhood: "I met my husband in 1945, and I was 22 years old." She continues, emphatically,

And it was still Little Italy. We still had the same stores and the same people, and it was just beautiful. And unfortunately, when I got married in 1945, they started building buildings and tearing down old houses, and making streets wider, and

doing so much that it took away the beauty or the personality of India Street. . . .

There's something that was very beautiful, not just because I lived there. There were some beautiful homes there that they tore down . . . just to put in Highway 5, and I think they could have found some other route. I always felt like there should be some other way to put Highway 5 in . . . somewhere else besides cutting right through a neighborhood where it just split families up and neighbors never saw neighbors again because they had to go build up a house in other parts of the city. I ended up living in East San Diego. And my girlfriend lived in Mission Hills, and some people lived on the other side of First Avenue. . . . One of my aunts moved up on the top of . . . Laurel and Union. . . . Everybody moved away from everybody else, and you couldn't see a neighbor. You couldn't go talk to a neighbor anymore. You couldn't bring a neighbor a piece of fish. You couldn't bring a bowl of pasta 'cause you'd have to walk six or seven blocks. And it just split up the personality. It just—it ruined the camaraderie. And now there are people living there that are still grandchildren of the people who built there to begin with. But they're the only ones that are hanging in there. And they find . . . it's a lonely life because you don't have Italians living around you. Where I live now, I live in an enclosed area, an apartment complex that has the gates all closed and locked so no one can get in but you can get out, and . . . you're lucky to know one neighbor and call them by name because people move all the time. I've been in my place now 15 years, and there's only one neighbor that lives two doors down from me that's been here 20 years, and they tell me all the time that they don't know anybody because they move in and live here a month and they move

away. So you don't know neighbors. And you don't know the neighbor up the street because everybody works, and they don't talk to each other. No one talks to each other.

Fran would decide to leave the work force altogether and dedicate her time to raising her children, noting, "I became very active with my kids in school. . . . I went to school and joined the mothers-teacher association, parent-teachers association, and I was president one year and just helped develop things for the school."

Fran's fonder memories arguably are from Sundays growing up, an important day for her and others in the neighborhood in terms of familial unity. "Sundays were our happiest days," she proclaims. Some activities would include going to the bay, going to the park, and taking the ferry to Coronado and having picnics. Even the simple activity of sitting on the front porch, arguably a lost art and practice, was important for Fran's sensibilities. She recalls,

And then my mother would give me 25 cents, and she'd give me a big water pitcher. And she [would say], "Go up . . . and ask the druggist to fill this full of root beer." And so I would have him fill it full of root beer . . . and we'd have root beer. And my mother would always make cookies, and so she'd bring down a great big platter of cookies. . . . So everyone brought a chair and put it on our front porch . . . but we sang. It was a musical party on Sundays, and I looked forward to that every weekend because it was such a pleasure.

Fran remembers not fondly, however, that she was limited to what she could do as a girl and as a young woman as a result of her family dynamics. Fran states,

You might say you're caged. You weren't allowed to go anywhere. You couldn't dance. You couldn't go to movies. . . . We called it a show those days. If I wanted to go to a show and see Shirley Temple or George Raft or some movie star that I liked that was playing in a movie, we'd have to go with a cousin, or my brother had to take me. If I went to a dance at church, our church—we had dances at our church on Friday nights—and if I went to that dance, my brother had to go. I could not go alone. He had to walk me home and take me there. And you just did not have a boy ask you to go out.

Her feeling of confinement notwithstanding, Fran would find the courage to make a stand and allow her voice to emerge, an important act of rebellion, as she explains:

But during the war, I have to say this: One day, I thought, “Well, guts up. Now or never.” And I told my father—I said, “Tonight, a young man is going to come and ask you if you could be okay if he took—if you allowed him to take me out.” And he said, “No.” And I said, “Pa . . . I'm a big girl now, you know. I've been working at the airplane factory. I've been earning our living,” ‘cause I [was] supporting my father now—he had had a heart attack. So I was supporting my father and my mother and my sister and my brother, who was still in the Navy. And I said, “I think I have a right to go dancing, or have a good time, or go to the show, or do something for me for a change. I can't just eat, sleep, and work for the rest of my life.” And he just looked at me . . . and it was shocking. It was very shocking. He looked at me for a very long time. . . . It was strange how he decided in his own mind, “I'd better give in to this girl because, you know, she's going to do what she wants anyway.” And he said, “Okay.” So I told the date that I was

going to have that night, I told him, “You have to come and ask my dad.” So he did. . . . And so this guy said, “You always have to do that when you go out?” And I said, “No, you're the first one that's ever asked my father.” He could not believe it. He said, “You're a big girl.” I said, “Oh, yeah. I could have been older than I am now. . . . But if my father said I can't, I can't. That's the way it goes around here.” I said, “Italian girls don't go out unless they have permission. . . . But I had to put it straight to my family that I have to go have a good time, because all I do is work anyway. I don't do anything else. And so I just did it. . . . That changed my life, too, because it made me very independent.

At this point Fran expands her anecdote to discuss an important dynamic that was happening during wartime in the neighborhood, and she connects it to her newfound assertiveness, stating,

My bravery really came to head when the war was getting really heavy, and a man in a uniform . . . an officer's uniform, came to our door and asked if he could come in and talk to us. And I said, “Sure.” I said, “What do you want?” He said, “Well . . . I have some papers here, and I want you to read these.” But he said, “Your family is going to—you have to leave your home and go to Oklahoma, and you're going to go into a concentration camp.” [I said,] “What do you mean, a concentration camp?” He said, “Well . . . we're going to take all the people who live near the waterfront. You're not the only ones. There's a lot of people who live near the waterfront, and we have to get you away from the waterfront, because you're too dangerous.” I said, “I don't understand why we're dangerous.” And I said, “My brother is in the Navy. I worked in an aircraft plant, and you're telling

me that you're going to put me in a camp with a bunch of people? And people who maybe are foreigners from this country?" And he said, "Well, that's what we're doing." I said, "I'm not a foreigner." He said, "Well, your father doesn't have second papers." I said, "I'll fix that, but don't tell me you're going to take me out of my house." And I said, "And who do you think you are, coming here and telling me—this is my country," and I got so mad, I forgot who I was. I just tore into him, that poor soul. And he just looked at me. He said, "Okay, okay, okay," and I'll never forget it, he said, "All right, all right, don't get excited." And I said, "Excited? I'm furious to think that my government would come and tell me that they're going to put my family and me in a concentration camp. Shame on them." I was so furious. He said, "Well, I tell you what—I'll give you a month. If your father can write his name and go get his second papers, we'll forgive you for that." I said, "Well, you got it." Oh, boy, after he left, I said, "Okay, forget dancing." I told my mother, "Get out a sheet of paper," and we got out a big sheet of paper and I gave my father a pencil and said, "You're going to write your name." He said, "What? I can't. I don't know how to write my name." I said, "You're going to learn, starting tonight." And his hands were so thick because he pulled in nets all the time that he couldn't bend them. There was no way you could bend his hands, even to shake hands, when he put his hand out flat, and that's the way it was. And so . . . my mother went and got Epsom salts; she put it in hot water; we soaked his hands for about two weeks, and every night he would sit there and he'd scrape with his pocket knife, scrape the skin off, scrape. It was nothing but skin built on skin, like your foot would be if you walked barefoot all your life. And he scraped

all that off until he just had baby-soft . . . skin. So when he got through with that and . . . could bend his hands, I put a pencil in his hand . . . and I said, "Okay, now, I'm going to show you." I took his hand, and I said, "Federico." I wrote, "Federico," but I wrote it in large letters, so I said, "Now, you write it by yourself." He said, "I can't write that." I said, "Yes, you can. You just did it with me. Now you do it again." So he said, "Do it one more time with me." So I did it [in] . . . great big letters, Federico, you know, and so, by golly, he took the pencil and very slowly he copied it; he did the whole thing and it was very big, and I took that to court with me to prove he could write his name, Federico Marline. . . . He looked at it for a while and he said, "That's my name?" I said, "Yes, Pa, that's your name." He said, "Ahva," an Italian expression of surprise he would use. "I've never seen my name written before like that. I never wrote my name. I never saw the inside of a school." He never went to school. And so that's why he was brokenhearted when I quit at 15. And so it was about six months after that, because they gave us plenty time, and I told them I was working on my father's hands, so after that it was about, not even six months, about four months later, we had to go to court, and I did not know it was about maybe 20 other people, all kinds of people were coming there to get their last papers. And he also had to learn to say the words, "The Constitution of the United States." Oh, come on now, you're asking a man who can't even speak English, he can't even write his own name, he can't say "the" and you want him to say . . . "the constitution." Well, okay." So we practiced it. . . . So the morning we got up [I said,] . . . "Pa, today we're going to court, and you have to tell the judge, you have to say, 'The

Constitution of the United States.” I didn't know what he'd kept in his head. . . . But he got up in front of him and the judge said, “Mr. Marline, can you say, ‘The Constitution of the United States?’” He replied, “Lo conna-sta-too-shon,” and that's all he said, “Lo conna-sta-too-shon.” And the judge . . . pounded his gavel and said, “That's okay—at least you tried.” And he got his second papers. And he was so overwhelmed, he said, “Gee, just think, I'm an American citizen now, for real.” He was so proud. . . . And even before he had . . . his papers given to him, every flag day . . . we used to have a little flag, and he'd put that outside the window. He had a little stand for it, put it outside the window, let everybody know that he believed in this country; he just loved this country. But he was so proud when he got his second papers. And I was proud of him, too. . . . On India Street there weren't many fathers that went to school. . . . They weren't ignorant; they were smart in their own way, in their old country way. And they brought their old country habits to America, and they tried to raise us the way they raised them in the old country; but it's awfully difficult to train a child that's born here, that goes to schools here with children that speak only English and you were speaking only Italian and then you're thrown into a school with a bunch of kids that speak English and dress different and look different and speak different and also speak different to their parents. Some of those kids spoke to their parents like I would die before I'd speak to my parents. But they were different, just like I was different to them. And so I had to learn what the difference was. And that's what I learned in my lifetime in Little Italy was being different, and yet the same. We're

all the same people, we're just different color, and different clothes, but we're still the same people. Yeah.

In response to the prompt of identifying one word or phrase that resonates with Fran in describing the old neighborhood, Fran says, “This sounds crazy, but I would say ‘the gang.’”

My brother had a drugstore gang and I had a girl gang, and they weren't gangs like they are today, not cruel gangs. They were just a gang of kids. . . . We all went to school together. We all went to church together. And on Sundays as we grew up, our families, we all went to the beaches.

A description of today's Little Italy in a word or phrase? Fran remains at a loss. “Not,” she says, explaining,

It's not Little Italy, I'm sorry to say. It is not Little Italy. . . . It is not Little Italy anymore, because you don't see the Italians running around doing the things they used to years ago. A mother would run in an apron to her neighbor's house and borrow a cup of sugar and run back home and bring her a cup of soup or something. But there was always this thing, people going back and forth in each other's house and talking and kids running around. You don't see that anymore . . . I'm sure you don't see that anymore in other big cities. . . . But everybody says that. The little town that you were born in, you were raised in, and that you dearly loved, and it was home . . . that is still my home—India Street—that will always be my home, but somebody comes in from another state or somebody thinks he's going to be a big shot and change the whole damn world and what does he do? He changes your little room . . . that little street that you were living in, and they

changed that for what? Then he walks away, and he leaves a mess that he made. To me that's not change. I don't appreciate the change, and that's with sheer honesty. I don't appreciate the change. I think they've ruined the personality, the beauty, the warmth, the tapestry. Everything about Little Italy, it has disappeared, and then they put a sign over it and said, "Little Italy." Well, I would like you to show me Little Italy, and you can't tell me it's just a row of restaurants [and call] that "Little Italy. . . ." So to me it's very dissatisfying, very disappointing. I don't like it anymore. . . . They're changing everything.

Ultimately, Fran states of her old neighborhood:

Life has changed, and we're supposed to change with it. . . . I think I've changed with it, but in my heart I am still that girl that lived on India and Date Street . . . India Street . . . [has] always been a part of me and it will always be. . . . And I know you have to change with time, but sometimes the change in time is not done in a realistic manner. I think it should be—you should keep some of the old with the new—always some of the old with the new.

CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS – LOUIS PALESTINI – BANKING ON A NEIGHBORHOOD

“When my buddies were going fishing, there used to be a place called Oscar's Drive-In on Pacific Highway, and it was a hangout—we used to all go down there,” Louis Palestini recounts. “These guys . . . would come in with all these fancy cars . . . and what am I doing? I'm going to school . . . big deal. . . . So I was obviously very envious of these guys.” Yet Louis acknowledges, “But you know what? I’m better off where I went. I took another path, and I'm happy with what I did.” Louis’s anecdote helps to convey his affirmation of a life direction he is most proud of, one that he has tirelessly and passionately pursued through the years.

“My name is Louis Anthony Palestini, better known as Lou or Louie to a lot of my friends. I'm a first generation Italian American,” Louis states in recounting his life story. Louis was born in San Diego on June 26, 1942, at Mercy Hospital. “I spent the first 15 years growing up here in Little Italy,” Louis proclaims, adding,

I also remember when I was growing up in little Italy, I really wanted to become a fisherman like my father, but of course, he and my mother had other ideas. . . .

Like many of our parents, they wanted something better for their kids, an opportunity for an education.

Those “other ideas” and that “something better” would eventually lead Louis away from the beloved neighborhood of his youth for a marked time but then would serve as catalysts in his return to the neighborhood in a more formal role than resident—Louis would become an integral part of the redevelopment of Little Italy that began in the early 1990s. Regarding one evolving characteristic of the community, Louis notes,

Back in the old days . . . we used to refer to Little Italy as Woptown. Needless to say, that's something you don't say today. And probably some of the old timers that it affected, many of them are gone. But guys like me, it doesn't bother me, especially if it's said from somebody, one of my own.

But Louis admits, however, “If it's said to me in a derogatory term or manner or what—another story.” Noting further the evolution of Little Italy’s naming, Louis acknowledges that the neighborhood was never called Little Italy when he grew up, asserting, “That name came later.” He affirms that as the neighborhood grew and developed, “As time went on, it became Little Italy. It's where it's at today.”

Louis remembers well the home of his youth in the Italian neighborhood: “619 West Fir Street.” Louis’s paternal grandmother lived upstairs, speaking no English, while his maternal grandmother “lived a block and a half up the street.” She also did not speak English. “So as I grew up, I mixed dialects between Marchegiano and the Sicilian,” Louis remembers, adding, “Today, when I go to Europe . . . I have friends there and I try to talk Italian, and they correct me a lot of times, and they make fun of me because I mix the dialects. But anyway, it was something that I'm proud of.”

Louis elaborates on some elements of his family history: His maternal grandfather, Onofrio Crivello, was born in Porticello, Sicily, and he arrived in this country in the early part of the 20th century, “1918, 1915, somewhere in there,” Louis says. He first settled in San Francisco and subsequently relocated to San Diego. After his grandparents arrived in San Diego, Louis says, “My grandfather spent time on the Star of India, when they used to go up to Alaska and fish.” Louis mentions that he still has his

grandfather's blanket, "The blanket that he would take with him onboard to sleep in."

Louis also holds dear a fond memory of his grandfather:

They lived over on State Street. They had a beautiful home there. . . . And I remember one time I went to visit my grandfather. . . . In the backyard, like most Italian families, they had the fig trees and all that kind of stuff. On the ground he had wooden planks. He would walk on wooden planks. So what's he do? He told me to sit there for a minute, and he goes in the little cellar, and he gets out my uncle's fishing boots, and he says, "Put these on." So I put the boots on. Then he had a piece of bamboo, and he put a string on it, and out of cardboard he made a fish, and he puts the fish on the string, and he says, "Here, bring in the fish like your father and your uncles are doing." So that was my fishing experience . . . in the backyard of my grandfather's house. He was a real quiet guy, and he really made you feel special, I guess like most grandfathers do.

Louis's paternal grandfather, Luigi Palestini, had died before Louis's birth. He had arrived in 1920 to this country, Louis says, "By way of Chicago Heights, down to San Diego. . . . In 1924, I believe it was, he sent for his wife and his only son at the time, my father, from the old country." Louis adds, notably,

Now, mind you, my father was born in 1920, so the same year that his father came to this country, my dad was born. The first five years he was raised by his grandfather, my great-grandfather, and I always used to think, "God, what a heartbreak." Can you imagine raising a kid for five years and then they take him away and they bring him out to another country? And that—I guess that was pretty standard in those days.

Louis explains that his grandfather had a small fishing boat, “The Palestini, of course,” as he recounts,

And as the story goes, they lived by the train tracks, and my grandfather got real sick one time, which led to his death, so my grandmother had to sell the boat, sell everything, in order to take care of burying my grandfather.

Louis reflects on his parents with a great amount of love, pride, and admiration. His father hailed from San Benedetto del Tronto, a town in the Marche region of Italy, while Louis’s mother was born in this country in 1922. Both her parents came from Porticello, Sicily. In speaking further about his parents (and also noting a long-standing dynamic of north versus south common with Italians), Louis notes,

Okay, my mother is a Sicilian, and my father is Marchegiano. And of course you have the boot and you have the iron. So I grew up between this feud, if you will, between the Italian and the Sicilian. And it was a loving feud, believe me, but sometimes they got kinda hairy.

Louis also recounts a story of how his father had helped him to build a coaster. “I remember that catty-corner from—or across the street from Kelly Laundry on Grape, on the west side of India Street—there used to be a lumber store, lumber yard.” Louis continues,

Well when we used to build our coasters and our scooters, we needed lumber. . . . We used to jump the fence at night; we'd have one guy up on the top . . . would check things out, and the rest of us were getting two-by-fours. Well . . . one day we hear a siren, and everybody took off. I ran home, and I'm watching TV. . . . [I] found out the next day, one of the . . . boys who was there . . . got busted. A lot of

us got away with it, but he got busted. But again . . . we didn't do any harm; however, we did wrong. We stole. But it was for something that we did in our neighborhood; we built coasters and scooters. . . . And then we would get the roller skates, the ball bearings, and those would be the wheels. Then to fancy it up we'd get bottle caps . . . and we would . . . nail them onto the front.

Louis says he didn't have a scooter himself. His father, however, stepped in to help in that regard: Louis recounts a touching story, referring to it as "a father-son moment," stating,

I remember my dad at the time, he was home from fishing, and they were down at Westgate [Cannery] unloading. . . . So he says, "You come with me for the next week." So I used to get up early in the morning, go down with him. . . . He knew a bunch of people working down there, and he was able to get some lumber and whatever it took, and he built me a coaster, like a soapbox. I swear, it was beautiful, but it weighed a ton. And I remember that very, very well.

Louis states that these moments between father and son were rare, not just for him but likely for other boys in the neighborhood as the fishermen were out at sea for long stretches. Louis offers an example of his father's lack of displaying affection (and perhaps a reinforcement of the stereotype of the men not showing any emotions): As a college graduation present, Louis's father gave him two checks. Louis relates, "I asked my mother, 'Why did Dad give me two checks?' And she said, 'Your father wrote one check before we went to your graduation ceremony, and when we got back home he wrote another.'" Although appreciative of the gift, Louis reflects on his sentiment at the time: "Well, Dad, can't you just say, 'I'm proud and happy and proud for what you did?'"

The emotional and physical absences from his father notwithstanding, Louis states that he was “a good provider and . . . father,” although contrasting that with Louis’s additional description of his father as a “hard guy” and “from the old school.” Louis admits, “And in many ways I didn’t like it,” while also acknowledging, “But in many ways I cherished it.” Ultimately, Louis says of his father:

I learned a lot from him. . . . He wasn’t one to show the affection by putting an arm around you and giving you a hug. But you knew, though—you knew that you were in his graces when he would see you. He had a presence about him.

Louis also recalls his mother fondly while at the same time reflecting upon a neighborhood dynamic, one of the neighborhood folk watching out for each other:

I remember my mother, God love her, when it was time to come home. I can still hear her amongst other mothers calling their kids, they call their name out, yell it, and it would go out to the whole neighborhood, and if you didn’t hear it, one of the older folks would say, “Hey, your mother’s calling you; didn’t you hear her?” And we’d all head home. So the thing was that everybody worked together, and everybody knew each other, and it just created a feeling of security.

Louis would spend his childhood as most of the other kids in the neighborhood did, playing outside and at Washington Elementary School. Of the school, Louis states, “That was the hangout; that’s where we met everybody. . . . We had a gym that was just huge . . . like a bomb shelter, down in the ground. And that’s where all the kids would hang out and play around.”

In addition to the school, other institutions in the neighborhood influenced Louis. The local church, Our Lady of the Rosary, served as a pillar of the community for him,

and the parish in which he grew spiritually comprises many memories for Louis. He states,

We all had our first communions here, confirmations, a lot of things have happened in this church. Baptisms. The Madonna del Lume Parade [Madonna of the Light]. I remember years ago, they wore a badge while marching in the parade. I think they still do. Actually, I still have the badge my grandfather gave me many, many, many years ago. And it was a big thing how we used to march down the street and how I used to go down to the bay for the blessing of the boats. I think the big band that we had was the Saint Augusta Band that used to march in the parade with everybody. My grandfather, God love him, we have some 8mm films at home showing him marching in the parade with his head down, always wearing a suit. It helps me to remember—it's kind of nice to see it again in the films because it brings back a lot of memories.

Another institution that influenced Louis (and many of the kids in Little Italy) was Bayside Social Center, a religious center in the neighborhood run by nuns. Louis states, Bayside was . . . across the street from the school. And it was, I guess, truly more of our hangout, because the nuns really tried to make us come together as a young group. And we would have dancing. They'd teach us how to cook. We used to make lanyards. It was a place to hang out. They had a camp called Camp Oliver, and I think it was once, maybe twice a year they would put us in a truck, and we would drive up the mountain, up to Camp Oliver. . . . We were kids. It was a good thing to do.

Regarding the families that lived in the neighborhood as well as in identifying the merchants that lined India Street and the surrounding area, such as Filippi's Deli, Tommy's (the local butcher shop), De Falco's Market, and Bay City Drugs, Louis proclaims, "The point I'm trying to make is within a matter of a few blocks—my life—that was there." And notably, Louis remembers the wine, not from a local merchant, but from one of the family homes, saying,

You know in the old days the old timers used to make wine. . . . I remember one time . . . and I'm not sure which street . . . [one of the dads] was cleaning out the vats, hosing them down, and of course all the residue was running down the curb. Did you ever see a drunk cat? Because the cats were over there lapping, two of them, and they were licking it up and then were *stunati* [dazed] . . . and you could smell the wine. But it was good.

Louis also discusses some characteristics of the local "gangs" that formed an important social and personal dynamic in Little Italy for many of the kids and teens, helping to shape their identities. Louis explains,

In the neighborhood, we had our own little gang, if you will. We had a lot of clubs out here. And it was based upon your age. You had the clubs called The Romans, The Itams, The Crusaders, The Jokers, I mean on and on and on. And the coats were something that you couldn't believe—either three-quarter length or short—but in the backs they had this big embroidered layout, pictures, either a Roman that says The Roman[s] on it—one of the clubs I was in was called the Crusader[s], and in the back of it you see this guy on a horse with a big long lance and the Italian flags, you know the colors. But this was big stuff to us. It kind of

said who we were. It was a fun thing to do. It put us in our place, if you will, in our neighborhood.

And Louis also recalls with a particular fondness the holidays spent in the neighborhood, noting importantly again the family dynamics during these times, saying,

Holiday times, like most families, we have the whole gang over the house. . . .

Actually, our family would go from house to house for a whole week. . . . My mother and aunts and grandmothers would make the pasta, raviolis, cookies, and of course, the cannolis. . . . I remember my grandmother making bread, like in the old days, with the ovens they had in the backyard. I used to love it when my grandmother would call us; she'd get the bread out of the oven and call me and my cousins and then she would cut the bread in half, put the oil on it—and it was good stuff. . . . Christmas was celebrated with your family but also the rest of your neighborhood friends. You'd walk down the street; they'd have you come in the house; they had all the homemade cookies. It was just a good life.

Ultimately, Louis also recalls the circumstances of what would lead his family members away from the neighborhood in which they originally settled, stating,

Like many of the men in those days, my father was a commercial fisherman [a navigator] and later became a contractor in the floor-covering business. You see, at that time, our country was starting to buy fish from overseas from Japan; and at the same time, the freeway, cutting right through our neighborhood, was becoming a reality in Little Italy. So many families packed up and moved out. My mother and father were no exception.

When he was 15, Louis's parents purchased a home in North Park, moving the family out of Little Italy.

Louis states of his early education, "At that time, my education initially followed the path of most kids here in Little Italy." He attended Washington Elementary School, (proudly serving as Safety Patrol Captain), then went on to attend Roosevelt Junior High School, and subsequently it would be off to San Diego High School. Louis recalls that at Roosevelt Junior High,

I learned the importance of self-defense. . . . It wasn't until I got to San Diego High that I actually practiced what I learned in junior high school, protecting myself. You see, in those days, San Diego High School had various parts of the school, hallways in particular, that you didn't really walk alone. Or if you did, the chances were you would encounter the enemy, who would attempt to beat you up.

According to Louis, the enemy was composed of various "gangs from different parts of San Diego—Logan Heights, Mission Hills, et cetera." And Louis remembers one fateful day when he was "walking home from the bus stop." He recounts, "I heard the St. Augustine band practicing and decided to ask my mother if I could go to Saints." Louis's parents would agree to send him to the school, and Louis asserts, "This was a major step in my life," explaining, "At Saints, the atmosphere was different, totally different. It made no difference what your nationality was: Italian, Mexican, African, Portuguese, Irish, whatever. Actually, we were all treated equally, and we were all Saintsmen."

Many Italians from the neighborhood were also already attending Saints, Louis explains, repeating that his time at Saints would prove "a turning point in my life," as he continues in recounting,

This was where I actually realized just how much I was missing by not allowing myself to push out into society. It was fun mixing with all different races, not having to worry about getting your butt kicked. It was something new for me, making new friends and many good friends that I still associate with today.

Growing up in a rich tradition of music within his family, Louis had also been part of a musical group in his youth during his time at Saints—the Sociables—which would have a profound effect on him as a young man. He recounts,

Years ago, there was a gentleman by the name of Salvatore Ferrantelli, and Sal was a musician. . . . He and one or two other guys started a band here in the neighborhood. And Sal . . . got an oil tin can, put a rope through it, and a stick, which made it real taut, and that was the bass. And another guy had the drumsticks . . . so that was the beginning of music to the degree that it got into our neighborhood. From that, we started forming our groups. I had the accordion. A guy named Jasper Asaro was our drummer. In my group there were two others . . . not Italians—one on the sax and the other a bass man. We would play a lot of Italian weddings. . . . And I remember the days when my friends would be calling me outside and I was in the house practicing. I had to practice; I couldn't go play.

Louis notes that, donned with their gold blazers, the Sociables “played a lot of Italian weddings . . . played for a lot of Portuguese events . . . played for a lot of bar mitzvahs, also a lot of anniversaries.” And Louis’s father would also be around to offer a guiding word or two on his practice sessions:

I also remember the days that my father, God love him. . . . He'd come over and he'd watch me practice, and he'd sit . . . two hours practicing. And if something

wasn't right he would tell me, "Play it again—it goes like this," and he would try to hit the key, but his fingers were so fat he would always hit two keys at a time.

Louis also penned two songs, "One was called, 'Safari,' and the other one was called 'Candida.' I had them both copyrighted." And that would lead to a jaunt up to Los Angeles. Louis recalls that one of the priests at Saints, "Father Williams, had a contact up in Los Angeles, and he said, 'Louie, we gotta go up there. I want them to hear your music.'" Louis elaborates,

So myself and two of the guys in the band, with Father, we drove up to . . . I think the NBC studios, and we went into this huge, huge—reminded me of a gym—but just a huge, empty room, and we sat and we waited. . . . I had a tape, a cassette of what we did. . . . We waited about 15, 20 minutes, and pretty soon you hear a door open and close and this guy walking across, in a suit, and he's the contact that Father Williams had, and we played the music for him. . . . But he did say, "I like what I hear. . . . At the moment . . . , I'm busy. . . . Down the hall we have Bob Hope and Marilyn Monroe." They were doing a film for USO overseas, and [he] wanted us to come back . . . it was like . . . two months later to come back up to another studio, and he wanted to do more work. [I] never went. So that was my own personal little claim to fame when it came to music. I loved it. . . . The Sociables—good group of people.

In 1961, after graduating high school, Louis "spent a couple of years going to junior college" in an attempt to find some direction. Louis got married in 1964 and started a family, "working at Marston Department Store and playing music for a living." Louis would eventually graduate from San Diego State University in 1971 with a degree

in marketing. He elaborates on his time attending school and raising a family: “So I became the first in our family to graduate from college, and I did this while working full time for the Marston company right Downtown on C Street and supporting my wife and son.” And Louis refers again to his musical talent and the role it played in his livelihood, stating, “Actually, what else helped me pay the bills is what most little good Italian boys do: I played the accordion. . . . Eventually I became an accordion teacher.”

Louis states about his move away and marked absence from his Italian neighborhood,

It was during this time that my involvement in Little Italy was only a visit to my grandmother living on Fir Street. I was making a new life out and away from the part of town I grew up in and loved very much.

Personally and professionally, Louis was exploring new dynamics and welcoming opportunities outside the confines of the neighborhood. He says, “For many years I had fun, while earning a living with music, and later, after 15 years in the retail business, I made a change into banking.” Louis would hold the position of vice president of Home Federal Savings and Loan for 16 years. Unfortunately, then, Louis states, “Along came the savings and loan crisis. I lost my job, and I sat for four months working around the house.” Louis would then find a position with USA Federal Credit Union, eventually moving to San Diego National Bank, working there another 16 years and retiring as vice president in 2008.

Louis’s tenure at San Diego National Bank is noteworthy because during that time, as Louis states, “I returned to my part of the world in Little Italy, a part that I thought I knew well,” and he adds, notably, “San Diego National Bank was also a

community-minded bank that allowed me to become more involved in Little Italy; it allowed me to give more time and support to a community I loved so dearly.”

Louis recounts in detail some elements and dynamics found within Little Italy during his youth. He states,

While growing up in little Italy, my friends and their families became my world. After all, we were all baptized, made our first communion and our confirmation here at Our Lady of the Rosary Church. . . . We all went to the same school, played on the same playgrounds, and all prayed at the same church. We even marched in the same parades together. . . . I remember St. Anthony's Day, when we would go from house to house, eating and praying. Actually, the kids ate and our mothers prayed. . . . And it seemed as though the world was a fantasy, really. I remember that on Sundays after mass while walking home, I would think to myself two things, which was kind of naïve on my part, but nevertheless, I can remember, “Gee whiz, I am so lucky to be a Catholic; I'm on the right path.” Then I would think later on, “But wait a minute, that's not right, because there's other people that are not Catholic. They're not bad; they're good people.” Well the same would apply to my nationality. I'd be walking home, especially Sundays, and like most of us, we would smell the sauce being cooked, and it really made you feel comfortable, like you were home. And again, I would think, “Jesus, I'm lucky—this is my world; this is my life.” Well in reality there's a lot of other lives out there. There's a lot of people out there, a lot of families out there. It's just that I'm happy that I have the one that I have. And I grew up in an area that everybody was close, with love.

And Louis also discusses his acknowledgement of the evolving neighborhood and the fundamental changes to which he has been witness through the decades:

It was after returning to the old neighborhood that I realized it had changed. Yes, the streets and buildings were still there, and even our schools and church—Washington School and Our Lady of the Rosary—but something was gone. I finally realized that many of my friends, those that I grew up with, were no longer around. You see, they too left the neighborhood to make their life some place else outside of Little Italy. Many of them live in San Diego but rarely visit the old neighborhood. There's a new group of Italians here today, a group just as proud but from different parts of the nation and the world. I don't know that the cultural buy-in of our neighborhood is really there. Yes, we're all Italians, but we all have different upbringings, different backgrounds, and different neighborhoods. This was a time I felt like a stranger in the Little Italy I grew up in.

Louis, however, would take a leadership role in the redevelopment of Little Italy that began in the early 1990s with the introduction of the business improvement district model in the neighborhood and the development of the Little Italy Association, the group created to manage and maintain Little Italy. As Louis states, it is “an organization meant to promote awareness of Little Italy,” through which Louis would be “helping them increase business, tourism.” He notes,

I was elected and remained the treasurer, as an executive officer, for many years, and I wore the position with pride. Since my retirement in 2008, I have become fully involved in my Little Italy, offering both time and service in doing something I believe in. . . . I was involved in the Piazza Basilone as the chairman

of the project. I'm the chairman for our summer concert, featuring the Marine Bands. I have other committee involvements, such as the Festa, the Amici Park, Piazza Famiglia, among many others. I sit as a member of Our Lady of the Rosary finance committee. I am a past member of Washington School Foundation committee.

In the wining proposal to the Little Italy Association addressing the naming of the new piazza project currently under development in Little Italy, Louis explains how he argued passionately for the name, “Piazza Famiglia” and emphasized “why we should pay tribute to San Diego’s Italian immigrants and their families.” As he had stated in his written proposal,

These are the people who planted the seed in this Little Italy community. They worked hard as a people and as a family. It was the family that created the strong ties with the church and neighborhood. It was the family who held everything together. Thus it was the family who helped secure our heritage in this part of the world. It’s because of these immigrants and their families that we have this Little Italy. It’s because of these immigrants and their families that many of you are able to make a living today—just like all the new businesses moving in. They all want a piece of the action—the action that was made possible by the Italian immigrants who settled here in San Diego’s Little Italy. Therefore, I would like to see us become more personalized in the making of our grand piazza. Let’s tell a story about who we are. Many of our families and friends were the people who gave us our Little Italy. These are the people we can’t forget. WE OWE IT TO THEM [emphasis in original document]. Yes, we have a select few families under the

Legacy program, but we all know there were many, many more families that helped form the Italian community we enjoy today—“Little Italy”—named for the Italian immigrant and families who traveled across the world to make a home here in San Diego’s Little Italy. Who better than these people symbolize the Italian foundations of the United States of America as having an entrepreneurial spirit—innovative and adventurous pioneers?

Louis goes into great detail when painting an overall picture of the dynamics of Little Italy, his thoughts of his own Italian American identity, and what it all means for him, stating,

It took a long time . . . for me to realize there was another world outside. All the way of living, the way of thinking, the way of eating was all Italian. And they were all Italian. And there were a few—a handful of people that were not Italians that lived here. But as far as we were all concerned, they were all part of the family, you know? And the mere fact that you walked down the streets . . . you knew everybody. And if nothing else, they knew you, because you were the kid. And they knew . . . who you belonged to. There may have been some arguments and feuds between the adults—but the kids—we all got along very, very well, okay? And again, I repeat . . . when you go to the same church, you play in the same school grounds, you go to the same school, you become one after a while. So I'm proud of the fact that I am one of the originals during my time from the old area. . . . I really, really cherish and love my Italian background. But, obviously, I'm an American. I was born here. I love the country. And what's part of our freedom is the fact that I'm able to complain about what I don't like about the

country, okay? I've been abroad; I spent a lot of time in Italy, and I like their mannerism. Like in many cases, it reminded me of growing up. Italians, to me, if you want to look at history, and I'm no historian, I think the Italians have contributed their fair share and then some, to the betterment of our country. So I'm proud of that. I don't think that I would ever deny it. . . . Italian American—American number one, gotta be, but my heart is [in] the Italian side.

In keeping some of the past alive, Louis mentions that he still gets together with many of his friends now and again. “We have coffee, and we talk about the old days. . . . And nobody's happy about what's happening down here, all right? And we all know, though you can't really do much about it, that's what they say—progress.” He also states, “The reason why the cultural thing is important to us is because we lived it. We were there. We remember the things that happened.”

For Louis it remains vital to keep more than just some semblance of the past, of the history of Little Italy. Most importantly for him, the people who made the community what it was and serve as the foundation of what Little Italy has become today need to be honored and remembered, although conceptualizing and realizing a direction in that regard remains elusive. He states,

What's going to bring it together? I don't know. . . . There has got to be a buy-in. There's a lot going on down here, and I don't mean to take away from what has been accomplished and what is yet to be accomplished, because it doesn't happen overnight, believe me. . . . And I think as you do things like that, you step on some toes and you offend some people. In many cases, it's not done personally, if you will; it's done because it's business. . . . I think, at least currently, we have

some major projects going on here, with the Piazza Famiglia. . . . When it's all done in two, three, four years, whatever it is, then maybe we can focus on something else, but I'm saying that I don't know that that's soon enough. . . .

We've talked about the cultural thing here—it's important. To me it's very, very important. . . . Well, it could be important to other people too to show what was here. . . . That stuff's got to come together, and if somebody doesn't really give a darn about it, it ain't gonna happen. Well I'm one who believes in it, you know, and I'm only one . . . and we need to convince or find time and find money . . . more importantly the interest that it's going to take. . . . If we can all come together and focus on such a thing, a heritage house, whatever you want to call it, okay—we can provide tons of information; it's just a matter of bringing everybody together and everybody wanting to do it.

Of course, noting the importance he places on family, it perhaps comes as no surprise that Louis saves the best for last when he talks about his immediate family, stating that his family is his “most cherished accomplishment.” He speaks further about his devotion and the meaning he places on family:

As I reflect back on my 73 years of life, I can honestly say that it is the family that makes one whole. It is the family that helps you establish yourself as a person in this world. It's your family that shares your utmost feelings—the good, the bad, and the sad. And, as you mature, it's your other family—your wife, your children, your grandchildren—that make your life and all that it is. Alicia and I have two children and four grandchildren. My son, Louis Jr., has two daughters, Sophia and Sabrina; and my daughter, Regina, has two children, Victoria, who's the eldest of

the four grandchildren, and my only grandson, the youngest, Vincenzo. Alicia, and I have been blessed to have traveled the world, at least the parts that we're interested in. We have learned to appreciate what we have and where we live; the grass isn't always greener on the other side.

Louis describes his Little Italy back in the day with the word, "Happy." And in describing the neighborhood today? Louis laughs, stating, "I can think of several words. I probably would say, 'Confusing.'" Ultimately, Louis says,

I grew up in these streets. My grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins, lived within a few blocks of one another. It was my world, and all I ever wanted was just to be a part of it. . . . I could say that all my memories, both good and bad, of friends and adventures growing up here in Little Italy, are very much a part of my thinking, mannerism, and my way of life. I'm so fortunate to have experienced an upbringing in a neighborhood so rich in its traditions and culture.

CHAPTER 9

FINDINGS – MARIANNA BRUNETTO – MAKING A MARK

Without question, Marianna Brunetto’s family has had a vital impact on her life. Her dedication to her family, especially her bond with her grandparents, remains at the core of who she is. She fondly recalls a memory of her great-grandmother, one that perhaps serves as an exemplar for how she associated with her family, and one that certainly illuminates her connection to and affection and respect for her great-grandmother:

We always remember my Nanna. . . . She loved Coca-Cola, like she would drink a liter of soda almost every single day. But it was always flat; she never refrigerated it; she never put the cap on; she always had this . . . piece of foil over it. And so as kids we hated it, because it had no taste; it was flat, and it tasted horrible. But she would have that glass of soda for us, so it was kind of like, ‘Well, we have to chug it down—Nanna wants it.’

Marianna Louise Brunetto was born in San Diego’s Mercy Hospital on March 9, 1983. “My father’s Pasquale Brunetto, and my mom is Tina Giammarinaro,” Marianna announces her progenitors. “I definitely had very strict parents growing up,” she remembers. “It was to and from school and then home, and you stay at home.” She adds, “And I had the older brother that got to do more and experience more, and I never really argued about it growing up. . . . That was the way my cousins were; that’s how my friends were.”

When she was 18, however, Marianna’s parents divorced. But Marianna chuckles when she states, “As odd as it sounds, even though they divorced, we all moved down

here” [Little Italy], within a three-block radius. That move would become influential in Marianna’s subsequent years when she would further explore her roots and embark on her life journey.

Returning to an earlier time in her youth growing up in Mission Hills, “which is very close to Little Italy,” Marianna reflects on how she is still “definitely close to all the kids that grew up in Mission Hills,” and remembers the many “other Italians that lived in that area.” Marianna notes the importance she places on being close to her family, stating, “I was very fortunate where my great-grandparents on both my mom and dad's side of my family were alive for a good majority of my life.” This strong family bond that helped to shape her would eventually become more than just a collage of childhood memories—it would become a part of her decision-making process, especially regarding her larger and more philosophical life directives.

Attending public school for a brief time, Marianna eventually would go to St. Vincent’s, “a small Catholic school in Mission Hills.” She notes, “My parents weren’t really comfortable sending me to the public school options that were available where we lived.” Marianna elaborates on her parents’ decision: “They’re a little more protective of me being the girl. I was my dad's only daughter,” she laughs, noting, “I think I enjoyed going to St. Vincent’s the most, even though it was the uniforms, the nuns, and it was strict.” Marianna punctuates, “I definitely think that was the point of time where it kind of set religion into my life.” But when it came time to attend high school, she states,

My brother went to Point Loma High School, and I wanted to experience what it was like to be back in public school—and I really wanted to go to high school with him. He was my best friend. We were very close in age. We did everything

together growing up. He was my bodyguard my whole life. . . . I had my nice, older, protective brother there. . . . So when I would get out of the class, my brother was there, and he would walk me to my next class and make sure nobody tried to bully me or tried to pick on me and especially wanted to make sure that no boys he didn't approve of talked to me. . . . I remember times where he even stayed home sick from school, and I was like, "Oh, I have a little bit of freedom." And then I'd open my classroom door and one of his best friends would be waiting there to walk me to class, and I'm like, "Oh my God."

After graduating high school, Marianna naturally had ambitions to pursue. But she could not reconcile those ambitions with a potential move away from her beloved family. She ruminates,

I went to college for a little bit. I didn't finish. . . . I went to school to be a broadcast journalist, and it just wasn't for me; it wasn't what I thought it was. I'm a very passionate person, and I believe that if you're going to do something, you have to do it with all of your heart, and my heart just wasn't in it, and I didn't see myself doing that forever. I wanted to be a news anchor, but if you watch the news, there are always different people on there, and, "Oh, I came from Texas," or "I came from Kansas," or "I'm going to New York," and that's just not a reality that I was going to be able to have in life. . . . I was so fortunate where I grew up where my extended family was like my immediate family because I saw them every day. So having to pick up and move to Kansas, or pick up and move to Texas for a job and be so far from my family just wasn't . . . where I saw myself.

Although Marianna acknowledges, “I was never the kid that had a clear direction of what I wanted to do,” she also affirms that, perhaps more important,

But one thing I do know is I've just always had this desire since I was little where I wanted to somehow make a difference . . . and I didn't then know how that was going to be—what was it that I was going to do that was going to make a difference.

In light of how she valued family and kinship, it would perhaps be most difficult for Marianna to address her parents’ divorce. She reflects on that painful memory, affirming,

And it was very difficult. I was 18. I just graduated high school, and my brother was 20, so we were adults . . . [we] understood the dynamic of what had happened and what was going to happen. And it was hard, especially growing up in the church and in this community, like you didn't really—even back then, it wasn't—there wasn't anybody in my family that had really ever gotten divorced, and it was kind of like we were the guinea pigs of the family to see like, “How is this gonna work? Like, what's gonna happen?” And I was a little embarrassed about it, because it was—I grew up where it was, “You don't do that.” But there’s also circumstances. . . . It was very difficult to have to go through that. . . . I definitely was scared, because I loved that family dynamic that we had.

Yet Marianna takes something positive from her parents’ divorce when she states,

I think culture-wise and the traditions, none of that was lost, and we were all still a family, and I think, as weird as it sounds that we all lived so close from each other, I value that, because I knew my dad was still just three blocks away. And so even though things were going to be different, it wasn't that different.

Marianna grew up with both sets of grandparents, great-grandparents, and even extended family members that she considered parts of her nuclear family and not extended at all. On her mother's side, Marianna's great-grandmother was born in this country, along with her brothers, but their mother had died when she was very young, not yet 10 years old. Marianna explains, "And so unfortunately, in order to make a living and provide for his family, he [Marianna's great-grandmother's father] had to go out fishing, and he had to put his children in orphanages." Subsequently, Marianna's "great-grandmother and her brothers were actually in what now is the Carmel Valley area. They were put up in orphanages there and separated." Yet Marianna's great-great-grandfather's sister, living in Sicily at the time, could not have children of her own and so would immigrate to this country with her husband and would settle in Little Italy. Marianna states, "And she took . . . my great-grandmother and her brothers out of the orphanage, and she raised them while her brother was out fishing." This story is particularly appealing for Marianna, as she explains:

I'm a person that believes in everybody has a calling. So I think the unfortunate reason why she wasn't ever able to have children of her own was because she was meant to raise them as her children—and she did.

Marianna describes her great-grandmother as "the glue of the family," adding, I think the fact that she was separated so young from her brothers, even though it was a short time, I really think that affected her, because even when I was younger she always instilled family and [said], "Always be close with your family; always be close with your brother." I think that really affected her to make sure that in her family that we always got along and we always valued each

other—and we really do. On my mom's side of the family, I have to say, if there was anything I ever needed. . . . There's just a sense of love and value that I got from that side of the family that I'll carry with me forever.

Regarding other family members, Marianna has a particular affection for her two uncles. "On my mom's side of the family, my uncle John and my uncle Angelo Canepa, which are my grandma's two brothers . . . will always be two of the most influential men in my life." Their positive influence coincided with the unfortunate passing, Marianna explains, of her mother's father, "Jasper Giammarinaro . . . from Lou Gehrig's disease, which was a very disgusting disease. It eats away at your muscles." Noting how proud a man he was, Marianna adds, "I think it's very difficult to watch a strong human being, a man that was used to taking care of his family, not having that ability." Marianna was only about 13 years old at that time and remembers, "That was a tough time to lose somebody that's so important to you and such a strong individual in your life." But her uncles "took over my grandfather's role," Marianna says, adding, "They never made me feel like I was a niece. They always made me feel like I was their daughter or their granddaughter, and anything I needed, they were always there for me." And today, she says, "They always tell me how proud they are of me and for getting involved in Little Italy and carrying things on." Marianna's respect for her uncles is in large part due to their strong work ethic. She states,

They have more life experience than I could ever wish to gain, and they've gone through so many hard and difficult times, but I've never heard either one of them complain about any of the difficulties or the struggles that they went through.

Marianna strives to follow their example, and insofar as a male influence, she says, “I think they're the best examples of what a man should be in my life. And I always try and make them happy and make them proud of me.”

Marianna’s mother’s side of the family resided on India Street, while her father’s side lived on Columbia Street. “I remember playing in the wine cellar,” Marianna chuckles, elaborating on how family time was usually spent, stating, “I missed those times where you'd cram 60 people into this teeny-tiny room at my Nanna's house and we would eat, and we would talk, and we would laugh.” And growing up her “best memory,” she says, was of “our fat family gatherings, and I was very fortunate because it wasn't just the holidays that we got together; it was every Sunday.”

Marianna notes that in her family, “Everybody always centered around the kitchen,” especially for the holidays:

I always remember at Thanksgiving—I always thought it was funny—obviously it's an American holiday, but my great-grandmother always wanted to make a turkey on Thanksgiving because everybody else was having it, so it's funny because she would have the turkey, but then her brother was like, “Well, I want pasta.” So then there'd be the bowl of pasta right next to it, so it was her way of doing a Thanksgiving.

Marianna describes how Italian and Sicilian languages were incorporated into her upbringing. “My dad’s family is from Sicily. . . . My great-grandmother . . . only spoke Sicilian; she did not speak English.” And Marianna acknowledges, “But I didn't speak Sicilian growing up, and I still don't.” And yet the two would be able to communicate nonetheless. “She spoke to me in Sicilian and I understood her perfectly. I spoke back to

her in English and she understood me perfectly, and we spoke and communicated that way for the great majority of my life.” Marianna’s grandfather, on the other hand, spoke Sicilian and English. Marianna “never really picked up on Sicilian,” and her father didn’t speak it much. She notes,

My parents were very big on education, and so I think they kind of steered it away. I kind of regret that; I think the easiest time to learn a foreign language is when you're younger, so I do wish that they spoke to me more.

While attending San Diego State University, Marianna began to work for San Diego National Bank. There she would meet Louis Palestini, manager for the North Park branch, who would take her under his wing, especially as he already knew many of Marianna’s family members. She states,

When I started working for the bank, I went full time, after I stopped going to SDSU, and I just had a desire for more. I just wasn't happy with just working 40 hours a week. I wanted to somehow get involved. And I thought back and my grandparents.

Marianna elaborates at length on that fateful meeting with her branch manager, as it had a powerful impact on her. As she explains,

My family contributed so much to what this neighborhood was, and I felt like I grew up and I enjoyed it. . . . I really took pride in it. . . . I was happy to grow up and be Italian American—all the values and the traditions that I grew up with. . . . At that time I felt like, “Okay, well what's my responsibility to carry this on?” My grandparents and my parents aren't going to be alive forever. . . . I feel like they have their legacy in this neighborhood . . . what's going to be mine? So I started

talking to Louis because I knew he was involved in the [Little Italy] Association. I wanted to start volunteering, and I wanted to get involved, and I wanted to make sure that this neighborhood was something in 20, 30, 40 years. . . . And he sat down and told me, “The board is the backbone of this community. . . .” And they needed younger people to get involved. And they needed the new blood to get in. But more importantly they needed people that have heart in the neighborhood and had ties to the neighborhood to get involved. . . . And so Louis told me, “You’re exactly what we need on this board, and I want you to come and get involved. We need your generation to start seeing the importance.” And when he said that to me, it dawned. . . . So I came with him to a board meeting, and I loved it from the first one, because I felt like it was more than just a board. . . . I had gone to board meetings for work and other different nonprofits associated through the job that I had, and there was something different about this one. When everybody walked in, there were side conversations, and who was asking, “Well, how's your dad?” or “How's your mom?” [or] “How's your daughter doing?” And it felt more like a family. Here was this group of 26-plus individuals that had serious business to discuss, but they were asking about each other, and getting updates on each other, and asking about their families. And that's where it hit home to me: Why did it take me so long to want to be a part of this?

The idea of leaving a legacy has always been important to Marianna, as she explains: “Growing up . . . I wanted to work towards building that legacy, and I wanted to somehow make my mark into this world, and those are two huge things for me.” And while she says that she still doesn’t know entirely what that mark will be or how the

desire will evolve in the future, Marianna does assert, “I feel my involvement with Little Italy is where that's supposed to be. My heart is in this neighborhood, and I do currently live here.” After speaking with Louis, Marianna would eventually join the board of the Little Italy Association, the entity that manages the neighborhood. Marianna also describes her moment of epiphany regarding her attachment to legacy and this notion of leaving her mark:

A few years back, I was at the State of the Neighborhood Dinner [for Little Italy]. And Marco [Little Italy Association executive director] was talking. And he said something that really hit close to home. . . . And that night . . . Marco had some of the younger generation of the board members . . . stand up . . . and he said . . . , “You guys . . . you're gonna inherit this neighborhood. You're gonna inherit the board. . . . This is what your inheritance is, and you guys have to make your mark in this community.” And when Marco said, ‘make your mark’ it finally clicked in my head . . . this is what I'm supposed to do. This is going to be my legacy, and this is where I'm going to make my mark. It's going to be in this community. And since that day, I've been down for whatever. Whatever committee you need me on, whatever you need me to volunteer for, whatever you need me to do, you have a 100% of my heart.

Another influential event happened for Marianna in 2009 when she met with Father Grancini from Our Lady of the Rosary, the local parish in Little Italy that has served the community for 90 years. Father Grancini had wanted to get Marianna involved in the church fundraisers, specifically the annual Amici Ball event. “And he wanted another generation to ensure that Amici Ball continued on,” she says. Marianna attended

some of the committee meetings, but noted early on that the current body of committee members was not ready, as she says, for “the change that we had, the ideas that we had, and the things that we were going to try and implement.” And when the novel idea of Ferragosto (a larger, outdoor-based fundraising event) started to form, led by Luke Vinci (another Little Italy Association board member), Marianna had her doubts. She recalls,

Is this something we're going be able to do? . . . I thought it was a great and a wonderful idea, but was it realistic? . . . Are we going to upset people? I think the difference between Luke and I is I grew up in this neighborhood.

Her reservations for getting involved and challenging the status quo in this instance perhaps also stemmed from her belief system. Marianna states,

And I always say that, whether you want to change things or you want to do things differently, or you may not agree with something, there's just a certain generation in this neighborhood and in this church that you just respect them. And I was always told from a very young age, “You respect your elders.” And so I was a little afraid of stirring the pot because these people have been doing Amici Ball for years, and I didn't want to come in and be a part of something that was going to upstage them, and I didn't want them to feel disrespected when these are people that are close with my grandparents. And I just was nervous to rock the boat, but I saw the passion that Luke and Father Grancini had behind it, and I guess that I want a legacy and I wanted to make my mark. So I figured, “Why not? Let's do this.”

Ultimately, Marianna reflects on the experience in a positive light despite working in a difficult environment: “It was a fight, and it was a struggle. Unfortunately we didn't

have as much support. We had a lot of naysayers . . . and people in the neighborhood that didn't want to see it succeed.” The lack of support notwithstanding, Marianna says about the process, “It was a lot of hard work, but it bonded a relationship with [Luke] . . . I always think of Luke as an older, nagging brother now because we worked together for so long.” The experience also cemented a stronger bond with her long-cherished Father Grancini. Marianna remembers faithfully and fondly the pastor that made such an impact on her and the entire community:

I got to see a different side of him. . . . I got to see the passionate side of Father Grancini. And I'm forever grateful for that. . . . One of my greatest, greatest memories is the day when we did Ferragosto, the very first one—Rome [theme]—we were standing in Amici Park. And Father Grancini—his health was failing at the time and we didn't really know how bad—and he had his walker, and it was very difficult for him to move around at that time. And he came up to me, and he had his walker in front, and he grabbed my hands and wasn't holding on to his walker, and I was concerned. I didn't want him to fall or anything, and he grabbed my hands, and he was like, “We did it.” And it was just—the sense of pride that I had when he held my hand and to see that huge smile on his face and for him to tell me, “We did it.” I was just—I don't think I've ever felt prouder of anything than in that moment. And it was a success, and in a few short months we have our fourth Ferragosto. There's nothing I wish more than we could have had Father Grancini here to see this. It was something that he was a part of starting. . . . Luke and I always say, “Father Grancini's looking down on us and smiling,” because he's proud to see what we're carrying out for him.

Marianna reflects as well on the church that contributed so deeply to her traditions and beliefs, so much so that she has become an ardent supporter of its charitable work in concert with her role on the Little Italy Association board. “I was baptized here at Our Lady of the Rosary Church; I made my confirmation here; I did my sacraments,” she states. Ultimately, “Father Grancini was somebody that I’ll always remember,” Marianna proclaims, adding, “He’ll always hold a special place in my heart. . . . I loved when he would tell me all the time, ‘I watched you grow up in this church’ and things that mean the most to me.

Marianna discusses the changes that have taken place through the years in Little Italy and some of the sights, sounds, and smells that stood out for her and continue to appeal to her regarding the neighborhood, commenting on one particular retail establishment. “As funny as this sounds,” she says,

I always remember the smell of the sausage that came from Pete's Meats.

Unfortunately, it's not there but . . . that was my brother's favorite place. . . . And I think that, like when you go to Point Loma and you smell Phil's BBQ Pit all over Point Loma, I feel you smell Pete's Meat sausage all over Little Italy.

Noting the changes after Little Italy was redeveloped, and contrasting those with the memories of years past, Marianna continues by adding,

The neighborhood's completely different from . . . [when] I grew up. It was a lot of parking lots, rental-car places. Very different. . . . I think it's beautiful now. . . .

There's a lot of condo complexes, but I think the architecture to them are just beautiful, and they add to the eclectic community. . . . We used to play soccer in the streets all the time. . . . There isn't a street in Little Italy that you could do that

on now. . . . This was always a safe neighborhood growing up. . . . I didn't feel like my parents were always so worried. . . . We didn't have a chaperone. . . . We all looked out for each other. . . . Nothing ever happened. And I still live in the neighborhood, and I'll walk to the gym or I'll walk down to the harbor. . . . If I have a meeting, I walk through Little Italy at night, and I've never had a problem. I've always seen it as . . . a very safe neighborhood.

Regarding her ethnicity, and her identification with an ethnic sensibility, Marianna expounds on her pride to be Italian American, but also acknowledges her Sicilian roots, differentiating the two ethnic backgrounds. She explains,

I'm very proud to be Italian American. . . . I grew up knowing the difference between being Italian and being Sicilian, so I always explain to people, there's a little bit of a difference. My dad's family comes from Sicily, which is a small island at the bottom of the boot. My mom's father's family is also from Sicily, but my mom's mother's family is from Genoa, which is in northern Italy, and the food is a little bit different. The language is very different. . . . When people ask me, "What's your nationality?" I never just say, "Oh, I'm Italian." I explain to them like, "Well, I'm Italian and Sicilian. . . ." I feel if I'm willing to sit down and explain that to somebody that doesn't know the difference, there's pride behind it.

Marianna contends that the neighborhood itself, as well as the changes it has undergone, influences her idea of being Italian American. Moreover, the neighborhood has established a foundation for her desire in preserving some of its more salient history:

I want to make sure that the element of what this neighborhood was doesn't get lost. And I was fortunate to grow up here, and I love listening to like, Danny's

stories, and Louis's stories [fellow board members]. And that's why . . . this needs to be documented, because these stories need to live on, because those memories and those stories are what needs to be preserved. And I think a lot of that's going to happen with the new piazza that's being built. . . . As modern as this neighborhood is becoming, we need some sort of way to preserve what it was, and the people who built it, and the people who made it this. One of the—the hardest parts for me is, being on the board, I'm 200% all in for the redevelopment of Little Italy, but unfortunately . . . historical pieces . . . are going away along with that. So where it's kind of like a contradiction for me—one of the hardest things is—I'm supportive of the redevelopment that happens, but I just watched my great-grandmother's house get torn down at the end of last year, and that was so difficult for me to do. . . . I went in there, and I took a look around, and . . . to see it all empty, at 32 years old looking at it . . . I was like, “God this house is so tiny, and how did all of us fit here?” But I envisioned . . . when I walked in that house, I saw my uncle sitting at the table in the kitchen smoking, my grandfather watching the Padres game, my mom and my aunts . . . cooking, and all of those memories. I walked into the living room and I was laughing. Oh, I remember Nanna's couch that, for however many years, had the same plastic over it. What was she preserving it for? Why was all of her furniture covered in plastic? . . . And you know, it was very, very difficult to know—I'm part of the board, and I'm so supportive of redevelopment, but it was hard to watch that house go, because . . . that was my history, and that's where I grew up. And it's not there anymore; it's a construction site. . . . And the developers . . . they just envision this modern,

gorgeous building that's going to go up . . . and that's just going to bring more people and more money to the neighborhood, and I support you, but they have no idea what went on in that house, and how many generations of people—my Nanna passed away there. It's hard to see it go, because those people that are building over it, they don't know the family, and they don't know the history, and they don't know the value behind what they just tore down. But then how can I not support redevelopment when I want this neighborhood to prosper, and I want this neighborhood to be around for 100-plus years? . . . Unfortunately, with redevelopment some of the old is going to go, but I think it's very important that not only the board supports redevelopment, but they also support historical preservation, and we have some sort of way of documenting everything that this neighborhood was way back when.

Marianna also comments on being an Italian American woman and reflects on gender roles back in the day, once again noting her appreciation for her family, especially the women in her life, stating,

My dad was a commercial fisherman growing up probably 'till I was about 11, maybe 12 years old. I always had this vision I think Italian women were—and not just Italian women—I know the Portuguese culture did the commercial fishing as well, but I always think Italian women of that generation of my grand-mom, my mom's generation, were so strong because they are the ones that raised us. The men were out fishing. The majority of all the men in my family were commercial fishermen. . . . They were gone more than they were ever here. . . . And I was fortunate enough that my mom didn't work because my father was gone. And she

was always home to make dinner, make sure we did our homework, make sure we behaved. . . . I think about it now. I don't have children yet, but I can imagine having kids and having to do that and my husband not being there to help me. . . . So I definitely think that generation of women—they don't get the credit that they deserve for the things that they did. . . . They were some of the strongest women, and I think a lot of my desire to have my own legacy and to make a mark is because I want to be just as strong as an Italian female as they were. . . . And they even did a lot for this community and a lot for the church and working for the canneries. They played so many important roles. . . . And I think what's so prideful about it is none of them really knew what they were building at the time; they were just doing. They were just living and they were providing, and they didn't realize that what they were building was going to be so important to my generation of people.

It is no surprise then, when Marianna emphasizes that she is one of three women on the 26-person board of the Little Italy Association—and the youngest member of the board as well—crossing gender and age boundaries in her professional and personal pursuits.

Ultimately, Marianna reflects on her family's legacy in Little Italy. "When people ask me my last name . . . 'Oh, you're So-and-So's daughter,' or 'Steve was your grandfather,' or 'Are you related to So-and-So?' . . . to me that's pride. And I'm proud that somebody's like, 'Oh, Tina's your mom,' or 'Jasper was your grandfather.' And I love that, and I want that for the generation after me." For Marianna, it's not about fighting for one's identity in this case; rather, it's a source of pride, a wish for her own

kids, when she has them someday. She states, “I want people to [say] . . . , ‘Oh, Marianna was your mom.’ And to me that's like, wow—I must have done something great if somebody is identifying me well enough.”

Marianna describes her beloved Little Italy of days gone by with one word: “Family.” She dubs the neighborhood today, “Different,” still accompanying her remark with a chuckle and with a nod to the legacy she is still shaping and defining.

CHAPTER 10

FINDINGS – MARCO LI MANDRI – DEUS EX MACHINA

For twenty years, Marco Li Mandri has been at the helm of the Little Italy Association, the organization that manages San Diego's Little Italy neighborhood. As he reflects on his life and work, he looks ahead with great optimism at the organization and community he helped to shape, proclaiming,

We're entering our third decade right now as the Little Italy Association, and I always tell people I think we're 30 to 40% of what we're going to wind up being. I think when this is all said and done, however long I live or other people, I think by 2030, 2035, this thing's going to be a machine, and a lot of people that owned property for a long time are going to do really well. People that rent their property are going to do really well. But if we lose sight of the fact that management is the key to all this stuff, then I think we're going to become like a lot of the other Little Italys, believing that they are just a place to get great Italian food and then—there's nothing else.

“I'm Marco Li Mandri. I was born December 2nd, 1954, actually on Columbia Street, north of here, probably a little North of Sassafras and Columbia, before the freeway.” Marco launches his life story from his office in Little Italy in a most direct, no-nonsense manner. “Dad was one of the only two Italian American insurance brokers,” he states (the other being Cosmo Cutri), with an office on Fifth and Grape Streets. “My family moved out of Little Italy probably about 1955 or 1956, and we moved to the State College Area.”

Marco notes, “All four of my grandparents were Sicilian immigrants,” and they settled in New Jersey and New York in the early part of the century. At century’s midpoint, Marco’s grandparents all moved to California. Marco states, “They moved out independent of each other, and Mom and Dad met each other and got married on Valentine’s Day in 1953 up in around San Bernardino.”

Marco adds some details about his parents, stating, “Mom was 20 when she married Dad, who was 33. He grew up in Manhattan . . . went to Fordham University and got his law degree there. Mom was a housewife and raised all of the kids.” Marco notes further, “I was one of six children. . . . I was the only male, the second oldest, and named after my grandfather,” a traditional approach to child-naming practices in the Italian sensibility.

Marco explains that the Magro family, Marco’s maternal grandparents, “Stayed up in Upland California, which is now referred to as the Inland Empire at the bottom of Mt. Baldy,” whereas the Li Mandris, Marco’s paternal grandparents, “Moved to the College Area [in San Diego]. Marco further comments on a dynamic that was present for many Italian families, the proximity of relatives, stating, “So we lived within two miles of my grandfather and grandmother.”

Continuing with his discussion on his grandparents, Marco says, “My grandmother passed away in 1966, my grandmother Li Mandri. And my grandfather Magro passed away in 1966 also.” He adds, “And my grandfather Li Mandri was alive until I was about 22.” Marco makes a point to emphasize about his grandfather Li Mandri, “I spent a lot of time with him when I was a teenager, just to figure out the way he thought, the way he was. He was a pretty intense guy.” Marco alludes to the

importance of his parents as role models, but also notes, “My grandfather Li Mandri was a great role model for me too, just in terms of what he did in his life and the way he related with people.”

Marco elaborates further on both his grandfathers, recounting that his grandfather Li Mandri, a Manhattan businessman, acquired a lot of property that he eventually sold. He ultimately relocated and retired on the West Coast. As Marco says,

He was well liked in the Italian community. He had a lot of respect. He was retired from the early 1950s. And he just liked playing cards, and eating good food, and hanging out in his house, and growing fruit trees. . . . He had a tremendous edge to him, which I think I inherit a lot of what he was, passed through to me, in terms of just his passion, and his determination, and his stubbornness, and things like that. . . . My other grandfather, grandfather Magro, was an extremely hard-working guy. He was a butcher. And Mom’s got great stories about him using the bathtub as a place to slaughter the animals for the store downstairs. So he was a very colorful guy and just a really strong guy.

Commenting on an American Dream sensibility that his grandparents possessed, Marco states,

I think the goal of every Sicilian was to own land and grow grapes. . . . And . . . all four of . . . my grandparents did that, and they were never vintners, so they did not know how to grow wine. I think a lot of their wine turned into vinegar.

And with an element of sadness at the limited time Marco’s children had with their own grandfather, Marco adds, “Dad passed away in 1988 when I was 34. . . . My two oldest kids knew my father vaguely. My three youngest didn’t know him at all. John,

my son, named after Dad . . . met Dad.” Sitting behind his desk, Marco points directly ahead and proudly states, “There's a picture of the two of them right there. Dad died about one week after that picture was taken. John was 13 months old.” Marco continues on his family dynamic, noting especially the influence of one particular individual, stating,

So after my father passed, Mom started going out with Tommy Battaglia who owned and operated Tommy's Meats [a local butcher in Little Italy]. Tommy's wife, Marie, had passed earlier. They [Marco's mother and Tommy] had known each other for years, and then they went together for 17 years before Tommy passed away . . . just a few years ago. But Tommy Battaglia, for all intents and purposes, was my kids' grandfather, and they have another grandfather on my wife's side, my father-in-law, Jim Zawadzki, who's a really great guy, but Tommy was the guy who was really very colorful and knew a lot about Little Italy, grew up in Little Italy, and the boys were extremely close to Tommy, and it was quite a blow to them when Tommy passed away. But Tommy was 89; he had a good life.

After he was born, Marco lived in the Little Italy neighborhood for only a year before his parents moved out of the community. He states, “All my formative years were in the State College area. It was called San Diego State College then, before it was San Diego State University, and it was a great place to grow up as a kid.” About his childhood and adolescence, Marco adds, notably,

It was a wonderful upbringing, but we had five kids in a three-bedroom house, and my parents moved when they were having their sixth kid. We moved to a

tract home in the new subdivision of San Carlos, around Lake Murray, which I always tell people were the worst three years of my life.

Insofar as his education, Marco attended Hardy Elementary, Horace Mann Junior High School, and then Patrick Henry High School, “which I completely hated,” he expounds. At 17 ½, Marco would attend the University of California, San Diego (UCSD).

Marco discusses further his family dynamic, especially noting the fact that his parents did not speak Italian, stating,

It was always frowned upon, and Mom doesn't really speak Italian at all . . . even though her parents, my grandfather Magro, spoke only Italian. My grandmother was bilingual but all my grandparents . . . had very heavy accents . . . it just was not considered part of the culture. They didn't want their kids to speak Italian. . . . My father never spoke Italian to me, ever. . . . The family dynamic was . . . very traditional Italian, where you always got dressed up and went to church, you were completely bored, and we went to catechism and had our first communions and had had our confirmations and did all that stuff at Blessed Sacrament, which is also in the College Area. But as I got older, 15 and 16 then, my father and I were just in a lot of conflict all the time . . . primarily because I wouldn't get my hair cut, which I think was typical of a lot of young Italian boys in the late 60s and the early 70s, and it just led to tremendous conflict, on an ongoing basis—to the extent that my father said that if I wouldn't get my hair cut I had to move out of the house, so I did when I was 17 and I just never moved back. . . . Then my father and I continued to have conflict, but he couldn't be upset at me every night, because he wasn't looking at me every night at dinner—I was living somewhere

else—and my father and I had our ups and downs over the years. Mom was always pretty consistent. Mom was always very supportive that she would—they would unload on me, from stuff I was doing in college at UCSD in the 70s—it would piss them off a lot.

Returning to a discussion on Little Italy, Marco says the he did not frequent the Italian neighborhood much during his college years, only “occasionally,” as “there really wasn't that much to go down to.” He adds,

There was Filippi's, and there was Mona Lisa, but I really didn't start coming down here again until about 1981 and 1982, and it was a completely different place. I used to really love going to Assenti's pasta, and then I would go to Filippi's. Mimmo's wasn't even really around at that point. Caffè Italia wasn't around at that point.

Marco continues his narrative by commenting a little bit on his move toward urban living and some of the dynamics present in San Diego's downtown area and its environs at the time, stating,

I actually moved Downtown in 1979 into what they now call East Village . . . I lived at 16th and East Street . . . a great old Victorian home, which I loved. I moved down there because I always liked Downtown San Diego, I always loved it, but back then it was pretty beat up. There was really nothing in Downtown San Diego, and there were no residents, for all intents and purposes, except for low-income residents. . . . I was living in a Victorian on the top floor, so I saw all the way from Mexico all the way up to Point Loma. The view was just outstanding, and I worked at UCSD at that point, so I would just drive up and down Interstate

5 to and from work in the late 70s and the early 80s. But the thing that was most fascinating, as I went to a place called Popular Market, which is on 12th and Broadway, and I noticed that the one thing that they had more than anything else was orange juice. And I couldn't figure out why they had so many varieties of orange juice there, and it's because people would buy vodka, and they'd buy orange juice, and they'd have screwdrivers, and that was basically the diet for a lot of people living in Downtown. But I used to spend a lot of time in Downtown. It was before Horton Plaza was built, so it still had the old street grid, and Fifth Avenue was not the Gaslamp yet. Broadway was really the place to go and to walk up and down. I used to love going there every Saturday. I always walked Downtown.

Marco spends a lot of time discussing his affinity for downtown living, and he notes, "For whatever reason, I always liked urban environments. And I don't know why, because I grew up in more of the suburban environment," referring to his youth spent around the San Diego State area. He conveys some details of his upbringing in this area, stating,

El Cajon Boulevard in the late 1960s was really the hub of the Jewish community. At 54th and El Cajon, there was a Jewish community center; there was Blumer's Bakery; there was a lot of stuff going on there, and Horace Mann Junior High School was a complete and total melting pot. It was a great school, and I really enjoyed it. El Cajon Boulevard had music stores. It was really the retail center before Mission Valley came into being. So El Cajon Boulevard was a great place to grow up . . . and I used to ride my bike up and down El Cajon Boulevard all the

time . . . and that sort of led to my desire to learn more about dense areas, as compared to the suburban areas, like San Carlos, Allied Gardens, which were the opposite of dense. So I just was always fascinated. I didn't know why, but it was intriguing to me how people could live in an urban environment, and that's why I moved Downtown when really nobody else was living Downtown in 1979. And I lived there until 1984, and I used to frequent Little Italy. I was probably down here every week picking up fresh pasta from Assenti's. And the old De Falco's Market was, at that time, the Wine Connection. It was before the Reader bought it; the Reader really created a black hole in the middle of the community where there was virtually no activity taking place in that building. But in the early 1980s, the one block was somewhat vibrant at that point, because you had the Wine Connection, Assenti's, and Mimmo's, and Filippi's. And then three blocks up you had Mona Lisa, and that was about it.

Marco recalls a turning point that happened for him in 1984, somewhat serendipitously, as he comments,

I had a friend, my sister's actual old boyfriend named Nick Zawadzki, and Nick and I opened a fresh-pasta company called the San Diego Pasta Company. Assenti's was very popular, La Jolla Pasta, and we said, "Well, let's open one up in La Mesa." So we got into food manufacturing in 1984, and then one day Nick's sister walked in, Laura, and she and I fell in love. She'd say that I fell in love with her instead of the other way around.

Marco and Laura married in 1986, and eventually would have three children.

Marco says, “I adopted two kids when I married Laura—Paul and Crystal. Crystal was four. Paul was one and a half. But then we had John, Joe, and Dominic.”

Marco elaborates further on San Diego Pasta, which started out “very, very small,” he says, adding, “But by 1989 we had a manufacturing plant in Normal Heights, and then we had a retail outlet in Kensington and in Hillcrest.” Marco notes, “And we were [a] pretty vertically integrated company.” San Diego Pasta served “all the Nordstrom stores in Southern California” as well as “the predecessor to Whole Foods, which was Mrs. Gooch’s.” Marco does lament, however, that although San Diego Pasta’s client list was “pretty extensive,” the company was “always completely under capitalized.” The business would endure until 1993, at which point, Marco explains,

San Diego hit a huge recession . . . and the aerospace industry was actually dismantled in 1993. General Dynamics, and Solar, and Rohr—they were all involved in aerospace. Convair. They leveled them. They don't exist anymore. . . . And Teledyne Ryan was there too, but they're all gone.

As a consequence of that recession, the restaurant industry was adversely affected, Marco elaborates, stating, “And our largest single account went into Chapter 11, which totally screwed us in terms of cash flow.” And thus Marco shut down his business comprising 30 employees. And now he found himself in a quandary. “Laura and I had five kids and no income and just said, ‘Now what are we going to do?’” At “38 or 39,” Marco would have to ask himself, “So what do I know how to do?” Marco states,

And one thing I knew I had to do was work with business and property owners, because I was the president of the Adams Avenue Business Association . . . it's

called [a] business improvement district. . . . So I started a company, which eventually evolved into New City America, and started forming these assessment districts under California state legislation. And that was 1995 and now, 20 years later, I do this work all over the country.

So in the early 1990s, right after he closed his pasta business, Marco found himself in Little Italy with a different objective than walking through the neighborhood or stopping for a quick bite or cup of coffee. As he explains,

So I came to Little Italy, back to Little Italy, in 1994, right after they had done the Sicilian Festival. I went to a meeting . . . and everybody was in this room arguing, just completely arguing. I knew about this law, and I knew that there were a lot of other districts that were getting what was called [a] Community Development Block Grant in order to create new sidewalks, new street trees, street lights, et cetera. After the meeting, I got together with Steve Galasso from Caffè Italia and Danny Mocerri from Filippi's and said, "You guys are missing the boat on this thing."

Marco points out that even though the neighborhood had largely succumbed to urban blight at that point, Little Italy as a name or label was a strong point of departure in potential redevelopment—and a name that went back decades. He asserts,

It's [always] been known as Little Italy. You talk to people like Tommy Battaglia, who was born in San Francisco, moved here when he was six years old. It was known as Little Italy in the 1930s, 1940s. It was always known as Little Italy. Then CCDC [Centre City Development Corporation], as part of the process of redevelopment . . . started calling it Harbor View, which was just a nondescript

name, so we said, “No. From a crime standpoint, and crime statistical standpoint, call it Harbor View . . . but from a community standpoint, call it Little Italy.” And so we just took the name, and we just accentuated it. . . . And if you ask . . . Lou Palestini, or Dominic Brunetto, Danny Mocerì, all those guys that grew up here, it was always known as Little Italy. . . . So I told the guys in Little Italy . . . “Names are everything, and you have a great name, the name Little Italy, but nobody knows about it. . . . So Little Italy was a neutral name. And I said, “You can take it and make it into a great name, based upon the work that you do.” So they got it, and they responded, and that was the launching pad from doing what we did, which was first forming the association, forming the business improvement district, getting incorporated as a Public Benefit Corporation, and then it was just step, step, step, step, step, step, step, step.

Marco continues to explain the reasoning behind his idea of redeveloping the neighborhood as a business improvement district, explaining that other areas of San Diego were all pursuing grant money—“North Park, El Cajon Boulevard, Normal Heights, University Heights.” As Marco explained at this meeting and in referencing these communities, “They’re organized, and they have one of these business improvement districts, and we should really look at putting one together.” So along with Tom Fat, who “had been part of the business improvement district up in old Sacramento with his family . . . and [who] was just known all throughout the city, very close with the mayor,” Marco put together the district in 1996. He elaborates on the process and dynamics of Little Italy’s renaissance, stating,

Our original business improvement district in 1996 had about \$60,000-\$70,000 in annual revenue. . . . We went to the old development agency, and the first thing that everybody had wanted was a sign just like . . . a Normal Heights sign, North Park sign. Our first real project was to raise the money . . . get revenue for the sign. Councilman Byron Wear put in about \$50,000 dollars and CCDC put in about \$50,000 dollars, and our Little Italy Association became the lead on designing the sign and locating the sign. At that point, Centre City Development Corporation was saying, “We've got plans for . . . new sidewalks and street trees, but you have no mechanism for maintaining the trash cans, the sidewalks, and everything. I was evolving in my knowledge. I understood that there were new forms and assessment districts, and one of them is based on property, not on business licenses. The Little Italy Association in 1996 created a business license-based district in which the business license holders paid into the district. We needed a lot more than \$60,000 to sweep sidewalks, empty trashcans, trim trees, pay for the maintenance on the sign. In 2000, I went to property owners and we had 17 condos at that point. We have 3,000 today, but we had 17 at that point. I started working with the property owners. I said, “Look, we can get all these millions of dollars [of] improvements on India Street, get the sign, get the new street lights, but you have to pay for the energy that lights the street lights; we have no mechanism to do that. You have to pay for the trimming of the trees; we have no mechanism to do that. And water—we have to pay for the water that goes for the irrigation.” With the property owners, we came together and we created a new assessment district . . . called the Community Benefit District. We generated

about \$220,000 so that combined with \$60,000 our budget was around \$300,000 in 2001. Then the Little Italy kept getting great branding and great branding and great branding. I always tell people that I think in 1996, 10% of the county knew there was a Little Italy here, and I say in 2015, 10% of the county doesn't know there is a Little Italy. I think it's been a pretty radical change in areas that were predominantly parking lots. In the heart of the community, India and Cedar, had three corners of parking lots where Villa Maria is now. . . . Little Italy at that point from the 60s, 70s, and 80s became the parking lot for Downtown. People could not park and drive to work in Downtown, and people are not used to using the trolley, so they would park in Little Italy and walk through Downtown. Now you have all of these blocks and blocks and blocks of parking lots. People start saying, "Well, you know if I sold my property for a \$100 a square foot, and I have this whole city block, I'll make . . . 6 million dollars for an entire city block." At that point, people said, "That's great. That's much more than what I'm getting in terms of renting it for parking." So all of these properties started flipping very rapidly. The first one was the Olson Company at India and Beech Street. That was the first market-rate housing project in Little Italy—about 80 or 90 condos. It was built by Sherm Harmer. And they put that little piazza there on the corner. Sherm really set the pace, and then everyone after that said, "We need to have some public space." So things evolved—2002, 2003, 2004—the market just really took off. Little Italy really attracted a lot of new condominiums. The difference in Little Italy versus East Village and Marina—Marina is a pretty well built-out area, which is down by the water, down by Seaport Village, great density, but doesn't really have a

business district. East Village in my mind is kind of still a wasteland. The ballpark did a lot to define it.

Marco emphasizes the importance of India Street as the main thoroughfare of Little Italy, stating, “And we had the only main street, for all intents and purposes, in Downtown.” He elaborates,

Little Italy was always unique in that it had a traditional main street, which was India Street. That was and has always been the main street. . . . Broadway is not a main street. India Street is really the main street of one of the original suburbs. So if you look at Downtown, we have Old Town and New Town, which became Downtown. You had original suburbs in the form of Sherman Heights, Golden Hill, Cortez, and Little Italy. Those were all the original suburbs around Downtown, and eventually North Park, South Park, Banker's Hill. . . . So based upon that . . . we're close to Downtown, but we're independent. We're close to the water. The tuna industry had always been the economy. The church had always been the spiritual foundation. We kind of put all those things together and just said, “This is really the most defined neighborhood in Downtown.” So the question really became in the early 2000s, How do you build an urban neighborhood in the 21st century? And with all these new condos coming in, the condos don't make the community; the community makes the condos.

And the direction Marco and the board would take “to enhance and develop India Street” would be in form of creating and maintaining public spaces. As Marco explains, And the first great public space that we did was the Piazza Basilone. And Piazza Basilone came around because I had met a Tommy Avila. . . . So this guy comes

up to me, and he's in his 70s, and he was with his wife, Liz, and he said, "All this great stuff is going on in Little Italy." It wasn't great stuff; we were putting up banners and doing events, and we had new trees and new sidewalks. He says, "But there's no tribute to the boys that never came home." And then he started crying, and I felt like a complete idiot. I felt like I'm totally missing the whole story of Little Italy. And he says, "There are boys that never came home from World War II and the Korean War, and we have no memorial to them."

So Marco would endeavor to change that, creating a task force, the "Piazza Task Force" under the Little Italy Association. This task force included "people that were born in Little Italy." Getting "all the old timers together," Marco states,

We wanted to do a memorial, but we also wanted to do something that was a public space. . . . Well that task force of Joe Cordileone, Sal Cresci, Tommy Battaglia, Rose Cresci, Lou Palestini, Danny Mocerì, and others that were involved in this had found the names of the boys that never came home. They [had] done research through the church; they went to [the] San Diego Historical Society; they found the names of those boys, and they communicated with their families, and so now we have 13 guys that never came home."

In researching the naming of the Piazza Basilone, Marco recalls, Anybody . . . in San Diego knows that when we drive up Camp Pendleton, you see Basilone Road, and you see this honorary John Basilone Freeway and [you] realize . . . that John was the most decorated Italian American in U.S. history. He got the Naval Cross and the Congressional Medal of Honor, and we found out the story of Basilone. We hired somebody to do a bust and pedestal of John Basilone,

and we took the idea of the Piazza Basilone because John Basilone was a hero to all these young Italian Americans, Portuguese, and Mexican kids that left Little Italy in World War II. They went down Fir Street to the bay; they went out on the naval boats, and they never came back. So it was so symbolic that you look at the waters here they left and they never came back. . . . And it took us two years to build it, but it was the first public space in Little Italy, with a fountain, and it just became a great public space, and we sold tiles for \$500, sold them out immediately, and then we raised money from different companies as well as different individuals and eventually got up to about \$460,000 to \$480,000, and then we dedicated it in 2003. And since we opened it, I realize that people loved public spaces. Now if you go to Gaslamp or Hillcrest, there's not a lot of public spaces; you can just walk and eat, and . . . maybe go shopping . . . but there's nowhere just to sit and people watch.

Marco understood that, along with the appeal of public spaces, “people loved sitting and reading stuff,” and so in addition to the piazza, the Legends Program was started (by Jack Pecoraro), with plaques dedicated to the families of Little Italy. Singer and San Diego resident Frankie Laine would have the distinction of being on the first plaque. Marco further notes,

But the next one we did was Sal and Rose Cresci [Little Italy “old timers”] on the side of Nelson Photo, and Rose was just so happy when that happened because it told the story about her and Sal meeting. We had a picture of the 65th wedding anniversary engraved in the granite, and I remember the last July that Rose was alive, she cried and said, “This will be here forever,” and I said, “Yeah, Rose,

when they take down the building, we'll just pull it off and put it back up. You'll be here for 500 years.”

Other families included in the plaques would be the De Phillippis, Busalacchis, Pecoraros, and a plaque for Tommy Battaglia, the honorary mayor of Little Italy. And the plaques would be part of a strategic component in attracting and maintaining visitors to Little Italy. As Marco elaborates,

So I realized that most people walk about four feet a second, so that means on a typical block in Little Italy, they could walk the entire block in 75 seconds. What we want to do is slow them up, so we put out tables, chairs, and umbrellas; we put up Legends plaques. If you go to the Little Italy sign, it's not just a sign: It tells the story of the sign. [It] has the story of the World Cup [celebration] that we had there and the opening of the Torino Olympics in 2006. So all those things are meant to slow people up, and I always tell people too that the streets should be a museum, and the sidewalks should be a museum. You should go to an area and find out what its history was. So we just have begun to scratch the surface on all this stuff. And that's what I think intrigues people about Little Italy. It's not about great food; it's really about public spaces. And I've been trying to tell people for a long time that [what] we're trying to do is build the town center in the city center, India and Date. When the piazza is done . . . the Piazza Famiglia will become the town center, and you'll have the sign, the town center, you go up the next block of the church, you go up the next block [to] Amici Park that we just entered into a 66-year lease with the school district in order to really develop Amici Park—so that's going to become the entire civic center, and what it means is people can just

come and hang out. Well if they're here then they're going to wind up walking down the street; they're going to learn about John Basilone; they're going to learn about the history of Little Italy; they're going to shop; they're going to eat. So that's a much better way to bring people to an area . . . through public spaces. I tell people a lot too that when I was growing up if you said Amazon it was a river, and now today, it's this omnipresent retail outlet that is making retail stand on its head everywhere. . . . So people don't come to Little Italy for its economic value; they come to Little Italy for its social value. And what I mean by that is the coffee is not cheap; it's not easy to park, and the food is not . . . inexpensive. . . . And I don't say any Little Italy, you come to this Little Italy because as part of my research I'd gone to nearly every Little Italy in this country, and they're all either gone or they're on their way down. Mulberry Street is the mother of all Little Italys, and it's just completely sad what has happened there, and it's not because of Chinatown; it's because of the real estate speculation on that becoming what would you call North Tribeca or South SoHo. There's a real estate play that's going on Mulberry Street where people like being in Little Italy but it's not Little Italy anymore. . . . North Beach in San Francisco is a great area but they do not accentuate the fact that they have a tremendous Italian culture there. We're doing a Piazza Giannini: We [Italians] invented the Bank of Italy, which later became the Bank of America. We're doing a piazza to Giannini. There's almost no knowledge of Giannini up in North Beach, which is completely stupid. I was in the North End in Boston two nights ago, [a] great vibrant Little Italy but not managed at all. Parking is not managed. Pedestrian flow is not managed. They

have banks on the corners, which are dead zones. So there's no organization of the community. Here we're on a mission to make this into an international community.

Marco is obviously proud of the organization he helped to put together as he continues his discussion of the Little Italy Association and its influence, stating,

We have a great board of directors, 28 members. . . . Our budget went from [in] 1996 about \$60,000, [to] now . . . about \$3 million this year and probably \$4 to \$5 million in the next couple of years because of all the fundraising that we're doing. It's like a machine, and it's driven to make this into a world-renowned Italian enclave, which means that we're not exclusive to Italians, but whatever we can do to attract young Italian Americans or young Italians to this area is part of our mission. Now, we'd tell you that it was not designed that we would be recruiting Italian entrepreneurs three, four years ago after the recession but . . . if you look [at] what's going on in Greece today, or Portugal, or Italy, they have phenomenal economic problems, and young people . . . don't really see a future in their countries. In Italy, they don't want to have kids because they have to live with their parents. It's very difficult to own a business. It's almost impossible to fire somebody. You can't make any money. So those entrepreneurs are coming from Italy here, and how it happened [is] just because we set the table. Now, they're not going to New York, and they're not going to Chicago, and they're not going to San Francisco; they're coming here. So anywhere from 15 to 20 of the restaurants and stores that have opened up in the last 10 years have been with Italian immigrants. So that means, in my mind, we're doing something right. Why? Because they love

the public spaces. They love the environment. They love the weather. They love the proximity of Downtown. They love the culture. They love the fact that Our Lady of the Rosary's here. They love the communal feeling that exists in Little Italy. Now does it mean everybody gets along? Of course not. Italians in particular—there's family members that hate each other, and that exists within almost any ethnicity. But it's not about this Italian or this Italian or this Italian. It's about Little Italy as a concept and moving towards that concept. Where we started and where we are right now is breathtaking, and I'm so fortunate that I've been part of it since the beginning in terms of the resurrection. And then there are pioneers, like Filippi's, of course, and pioneers like Mona Lisa, and the Waterfront, but then there are new pioneers like Steve Galasso and Caffè Italia, and then all the people that came after that.

Marco also comments in detail about the long-established institutions in the neighborhood and their influences on the redevelopment process. He doesn't equivocate when discussing the value of the local church and its role in the Association:

We also had Our Lady of the Rosary. And without Our Lady of the Rosary and Father Steven Grancini there would not be a Little Italy Association. There would not be anything that's going on in Little Italy. I always tell people too that nearly all Italians in the county were either baptized at, had their first communion, their confirmation, or married, or buried their parents at Our Lady of the Rosary. So it has this phenomenal web, and there's 43 Italian clubs that are based at Our Lady of the Rosary. Father Steve from the outset was always a strong advocate of the Little Italy Association and was always our biggest proponent. And it just meant

that the church and the association were not formally linked but informally linked.

And to this day, we continue to meet at Our Lady of the Rosary.

And Marco also mentions the local elementary school as an important institution for the neighborhood: “So not only did we have the church as a foundation, but we had the only elementary school in Downtown San Diego, with Washington Elementary School, which a lot of our board members attended.”

As Marco continues his story, however, he is clear that growth alone does not define the success of San Diego’s Little Italy, asserting,

It’s not about growth; it's about managing the growth, because there's certain areas that will rise and fall, and as many of us who are native San Diegans remember saying La Jolla used to be the place, and it's not at all. . . . But I think Little Italy is a neighborhood; we're not an entertainment district. And we need to make sure that we manage everything, whether it's land uses, bars, restaurants, new developments, parking, homeless, all those things, and we're going full bore on our public space development, and then trying to make sure that we've tried to control, to the greatest extent possible, those retailers that are coming in here. So there's a great mix. So there's not a lot of corporate entities that really dilute the retail and restaurant mix here.

Marco notes that that San Diego’s Little Italy is the only redeveloped Little Italy in the nation that is being managed formally. But when pressed about managing other Little Italys, Marco is pointed and quick to respond:

Life is too short. I've tried to do that in the North Beach in San Francisco, but we wound up creating a small community benefit district, right in the middle of North

Beach called the Top of Broadway. I have met with North End people in Boston many times, but it's just so much brain damage. . . . I worked for the guys on Mulberry Street for a year in 2013, 2014 [but] just could not get traction because there's just too much animosity on that street. There is a nice one [Little Italy] in Providence, Rhode Island, but it has its own issues. So rather than trying to fix those, what I really concentrate on, my primary business, is managing Little Italy, and we now have 30 employees that work in Little Italy, in Downtown Glendale, and at Downtown San Leandro, all throughout the state of California, where New City America [NCA], which is [my] company, manages those districts. NCA forms assessment districts all throughout the country. So that's our primary business, but our passion is Little Italy. So what I learn—I was in Boston yesterday, and what I see them do in different cities, I say, “That's a great idea. I love what they did on the Rose Kennedy Parkway; let's apply that here.” Or you go to Fell's Point in the inner harbor in Baltimore. And you look at what they did there and say, “This is a great idea, so let's apply them here.” So Little Italy is the testing ground . . . [to] take all the best elements of Chicago, New York City, Philadelphia, Washington DC, San Francisco, Seattle, and apply them here because we have the flexibility working with city government to do that here . . . because all areas have certain assets, and the assets might be isolated, but they haven't been put together in one place. What I'm trying to do is put them together in one place, so people can stay at a hotel here, and they can spend three or four days here, do a tour of Little Italy, and go online to Convivio, go to the church, go to Amici Park and play bocce ball, go to the county park, take a cruise to

Coronado, go to Point Loma, stay in Little Italy, eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner, take the trolley to Mission Valley or Old Town. But this becomes the hub, so this becomes the center of activity for their entire experience of San Diego. And we want to make it interesting enough where they're willing to do that, and I think that we're well on our way to do that.

Marco changes direction a bit when he comments on the latest (and likely, greatest) project for Little Italy, the piazza that will create the civic center for Little Italy:

I originally had a concept name for the Piazza Famiglia, which I really liked—I thought it was a great name. But Lou Palestini came up with a better name, Piazza Famiglia, and Lou explained why it should be named Piazza Famiglia, and it was a great idea. And so it wasn't about what I thought; it's really what the community wanted, and Louis articulated it well, and everybody agreed. Ever since then it's been called the Piazza Famiglia. So we, as long as we drop our egos, I think we're okay. It's a very difficult thing to drop an ego, but life's short. So if you want to get things done, as Ronald Reagan said, “You can achieve anything, as long as you don't mind who gets the credit.”

Ultimately Marco's story returns to his roots, and Marco conveys his ethnic identity in relation to his work in the Little Italy neighborhood, stating,

Well, I am 100% Sicilian, and my affinity to this area is, and all of our officers, for example in the Association, are all Italian Americans. And the majority of our board is Italian American, which I think really creates a sense of unity. . . . I think that what gives us a lot of cohesion is the fact that we're all very proud of what has happened to this Little Italy. This is based upon the fact that we believe that

we're taking, not only Italian culture—because the Romans were the original city builders; the Greeks built great cities, but the Romans were great administrators—that we've taken the idea of public spaces, from Italian cities, as well as the concepts in New England—which everything is built around the commons, around the town center—and I think that we've implemented that here. And so it's really a blending of Italy and, I think, older America that we've tried to implement here in Little Italy. I think we've done it, and we've paid tribute to a lot of the people that built this Little Italy. And we know that there's not only Italians that sacrificed in Little Italy. If you go to the Piazza Basilone, you'll see the Italian, Portuguese, and Mexican flag. Why? Because it was Italian, Portuguese, and Mexican boys that lost their lives. Little Italy is, and has always been, an immigrant community, and I think that that's great, and it should be an immigrant community. You go up and down Hawthorn Street—you still see a lot of immigrants that live off on Hawthorn . . . and their kids go to school at Washington Elementary School. That's a good thing. So I think we're all proud of that, and what's wonderful, and to me the greatest achievement, is attracting people like a Luke Vinci, or a Tom Cervello, or Marianna Brunetto, who grew up here, but are now all the next generation on our board. . . . And so we've crossed all the lines, in terms of age, as well as culture, and brought them all into the same entity, and made them feel very welcome on that board. The Little Italy Association board is a very results-oriented, not process-oriented, board. We all want to achieve things as quickly as possible so that, I think, is driven by the fact that we're all, many of us, are Italians, and that we have this heritage. And the

heritage could be from New York; it could be from New Jersey; it could be from San Francisco; it could be from Italians from all different places. . . . There are people from all over the country that wound up here, and so they bring the best of their cultures, and I think that they implement them here in Little Italy, and that's the glue, I think, that ties everything together.

In a word or phrase about Little Italy back in the day, Marco chooses,

“Authentic,” elaborating on the neighborhood’s evolution:

Little Italy then was a great immigrant community that was devastated by the Interstate 5, as well as the demise of the fishing industry, but it never lost its roots. Many Italians never sold their property. Our Lady of the Rosary remained. Washington Elementary School remained. We were always close to the water, and what we did was build upon those social and geographical assets [and] took them to the next level. And so this is like the renovation of Little Italy, at a much higher level, in a 21st-century model. Then, it was authentic, from a 20th-century perspective.

And in searching for a word or short phrase to describe today’s redeveloped Little Italy, Marco states, “Today, it's authentic and dynamic in a 21st-century perspective.”

CHAPTER 11

FINDINGS – LUKE VINCI – THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

Luke Vinci notes proudly of his surname, “The original last name is Vinciguerra,” which means “to win the war,” an apropos reference to his long-held stance of fighting the good fight in all his endeavors. He launches into the discussion of his life assuredly, proudly, and in a most matter-of-fact manner reminiscent of a Jack Webb script:

Okay. Luke Vinci. I was born in Pomona, California, on February 4th, 1979. I grew up in a little city called La Verne, which is next to San Dimas and Claremont, just above Pomona, against the foothills in the Los Angeles Crest. About the area where he grew up, Luke reflects fondly, and perhaps tinged with melancholy, as he remembers,

Growing up, it was a farm and suburban area of Los Angeles, which doesn't exist anymore; it's just wall-to-wall houses. When I was very young, it was orange groves, and then as I grew up in the 80s, the development came in and built tract homes.

Yet Luke also appreciates that he was “fortunate enough to grow up in a house that was a fairly large estate,” noting that his father would expand the family home for many years. Recalling some activities of his youth against the backdrop of the foothills, Luke says, “We could go up into the hills, and get in trouble, and shoot BB guns at each other, and climb rocks, and build forts.”

Luke admires his family greatly, recalling his father’s “A-type personality—very dominant in the house,” in contrast to his mother, who was “benevolently supportive, compassionate.” Luke reflects on one particular dynamic between his parents, stating,

“My mom, when she wanted her way, she got her way, so he always conceded. She just never really asked for her way.” Luke has two brothers his senior. The eldest, Colonel Mark Vinci, is currently serving a tour in Iraq, and as Luke says, “We’re very proud of him,” along with Luke’s other brother, Dominic, who “works in the auto industry.” Luke’s sister is two years his junior. Because of the gaps in ages among the siblings, Luke comments, “It’s like having two separate families growing up.” Overall, in commenting on his relationship with his siblings, Luke states,

I guess I grew up . . . I would assume as most families do—siblings that picked on you, and feed you cat food, and brothers that beat you up; and then you pass it on; you’d pick on your younger sister, and she makes up lies about you and tells on you, and you go back and forth in the family dynamic.

Noting a strong work ethic through which his life has been framed, Luke ruminates, “I’d say I grew up in a kind of American Dream family. Dad worked exceptionally hard—was self-employed. . . . My dad was able to work from home, so we had an office in the house.” Luke learned many lessons from his father and his strong work ethic by “just watching him,” and Luke says that attention to hard work was “one of the best examples he set forth to me.” Luke’s mother, a homemaker, also would help run the family business, he says, “So they were always constantly working but always constantly in our lives.”

Luke’s father “coached football for 20 years, had 15 championship teams, and one losing season.” The family members “have some roots in San Diego,” as Luke’s father was the football coach at the University of San Diego in 1972, with the team winning the national title. Regrettably, on one hand, Luke recalls, “They canceled football that year—

a whole bunch of politics—and then he ended up at Cal Poly, and that's how we ended up in Inland Valley up there—San Gabriel Valley.” Subsequently, coaching football did not prove lucrative enough, Luke states, “So he built a business around the insurance industry, was very successful with that, and that led to different tax planning issues with insurance, and he ended up in corporate tax reductions.” Luke recalls again his father’s unyielding devotion to his work, acknowledging, “So while he was there for the family, he wasn't always intimately involved in conversation for the family. Even though he worked out of the house and we always could go to him, he just didn't engage very much.”

Sadly, Luke recalls of his father,

He got sick, when I was 14 years old, with colon cancer and died two years later.

And . . . a lot of people say, “Oh, that's so sad; your dad died.” Yeah, it's sad; it sucks. But . . . on the optimistic side . . . I got to understand my dad and learn from my dad more than any of my other siblings did . . . because the age differences and how they just handled his sickness. . . . And so when my mom had to get some sleep, my dad would sometimes wake up in the middle of the night, and I would wake up to help my mom. So we did that for two years. He passed on August 9th, 1995—[we call it] the Founder's Day. We actually take the day off of work . . . [he is] probably rolling over in his grave that we're taking a day off of work, because you don't take days off of work. But I've learned as much from him as much as I've learned from his mistakes.

One thing Luke learned from his father was a strong religious tradition. He notes of his father’s influence, “He was also very instrumental in passing on that lineage of

what my grandmother . . . [instilled] of Catholicism,” adding, “We prayed the rosary every night. We talked more about God. It's easier to be more verbal or intimate in talking about God when you're on death's door.”

Noting a positive outcome that resulted from his father's illness, Luke affirms, “We had a really strong relationship in that last two years.” And perhaps most important, Luke says, “Even with a father's passing, it was a great childhood.”

As a result of his Catholic foundations, again largely stemming from his father's and grandmother's convictions and the examples they would offer, Luke maintains strong religious ties to his cherished Catholicism, and he discusses the importance of his connection to his spiritual views, expounding, “It's God, family, country—in that order.” Yet Luke returns to his father as a starting point for some discourse on the intersection of religion and relationship:

Growing up, instilling that Catholicism, my dad being sick, we didn't even know as a family that my dad prayed the rosary every day our entire lives until my dad got sick and demonstrated it. My dad was very much, “Close the door and pray by yourself,” and, “You don't need to demonstrate it,” which I think is problematic for a family, because you should portray it to your family. I think, to the whole world, you close the door. But as your family, you're the priest of the family, and that's kind of a lesson I'm learning. . . . I have a son that I have to instill that and show it to him. My mom showed it, but it comes from a stronger point when your father demonstrates it.

Luke also recalls humorous anecdotes surrounding religion that helped to shape him, and casually offers that “we were always around priests—my dad had priest

friends.” Luke recounts one particular story he remembers growing up, an anecdote that, while lighthearted, perhaps also serves as a nod to the power of spirituality that influenced Luke:

My dad would go out fishing. We would never catch anything. It's like—fishing. “Okay, we're just going to go hang out with Dad, because we're not catching anything.” And then we had a good priest friend—Father Bill Moore—he came. So [my dad] . . . takes the boat out and he says, “You know, my boat hasn't been blessed.” [Father Bill] . . . blessed the boat, and ever since then, they've never stopped catching fish.

The religious and secular traditions of church and school seem to combine, or perhaps more precisely should have been intertwined on one hand but remained an elusive objective for Luke. He states, “I went to public school, which for many people is shocking, because we're all very—or try to be—devout Catholics. We all fail as Catholics, but we just make our best attempt.” Luke’s parents had decided that a potential Catholic school for him “wasn’t really portraying good Christian values,” he says, adding, “So they didn't feel that it was beneficial to us to pay the money and not get the Catholicism out of it.” Thus it was off to public school—La Verne Heights, then Ramona Middle School, and culminating in Bonita High School, with a minor stint in junior college afterward. Subsequently, Luke says,

I spent some time in England, at Oxford University, which was a great experience. [I] learned a lot about cultures. [I] learned a lot more about how awesome America is, even though I was raised with how great America is, and then finished my college at UCLA.

Despite this strong allegiance to his birth nation, Luke also speaks in detail and pride about his Italian roots. “Well, my dad's Italian; the Vinci name goes to Bari, a little village called Acquaviva delle Fonti, just outside, or just west of Bari.” Luke’s paternal grandmother, a Leonardi, hails from Sicily (Siragusa). Luke mentions, rather noteworthy, “The in-laws of both sides are actually Counts from different villages, which is important to note in Italian communities.” As for his great-grandparents’ immigration, Luke says, “My grandfather's parents came over just after the turn of the century, and they had my grandfather in 1906. They had not naturalized until after.”

“My grandmother's side is a different story,” Luke continues about his Sicilian grandmother, explaining,

Her father and family . . . [were] tied very closely to the king of Sicily. And when Garibaldi came over, and the Red Army came over to conquer Sicily, they escaped, and they moved the entire family to Tunisia and sent my great-great-grandmother to Paris.

Luke also notes that they were “very wealthy but left all their wealth in Sicily and came across in a boat to Brooklyn and started a new life.” Luke’s comments, however, return to his American roots, stating,

We’re very proud to be Americans, and on both sides of the family, they were . . . taught to be American—that they left Italy for the promise of something greater, and they found what was something greater, and that was America.

Regarding a tradition of demonstrating use of the Italian language, Luke explains how it was not promoted in his family:

Where my father grew up, he was learning Italian in the house, because they were still speaking it, but they had all learned English. Both . . . sets of grandparents did everything they could to assimilate when they came to America. . . . Speaking English—they learned that coming over on the boat. When my grandparents were raising my father, they did not allow him to speak Italian. So it got lost on him, and as a little child, he was figuring out Italian, so they started speaking Sicilian in the house. . . . He started learning [that] . . . and they said, “Okay, we gotta cut everything off.” So he never learned that and was always taught to be American before being Italian.

Commenting on the opportunity that America offered his family members, Luke recounts a vivid story of his grandfather, explaining,

When my great-grandfather Vinciguerra died, my grandfather, being an artist and a cartoonist, and working with most people that couldn't say the whole name Vinciguerra, changed his name to Vinci. I think it was easier to say when you're an artist and carrying the name Vinci—it was a better sales pitch. . . . And he was working for Terrytoons with Mighty Mouse. . . . He worked for MGM and then ultimately ended up with Hanna-Barbera, and he taught Joe Barbera how to animate during the Great Depression. Joe Barbera didn't have a job. He could draw, but he didn't really know how to animate. And so the story that I've been told is that he sat next to my grandfather [and said] . . . “I don't know what to do,” and my grandfather says, “You don't know what the hell you're doing.” He goes, “No, but don't tell anybody. I need a job.” And he said, “Don't worry; I'll help you.” So when Joe met up with Bill Hanna, and they started Hanna-Barbera

Studios, Joe never forgot this and called up my grandfather and . . . [said], “We need an animator.” And it was . . . good timing because he'd gotten fired from Disney. . . . Walt fired my grandfather . . . supposedly for working too fast. . . . So he worked at Hanna-Barbera Studios, and he retired there, and created everything from the Flintstones, Scooby-Doo, The Jetsons, Huckleberry Hound . . . was a contributing animator to Charlotte's Web. So it was unique growing up, because my grandfather was an animator; we're a cartoon family.

Luke discusses further his grandparents and their influence on him. Luke's grandfather had no siblings, he explains, adding,

My grandmother . . . was the oldest of eight, two that died. Her father died . . . during the Great Depression. She went out and became a seamstress. Luckily, she landed a job, and I forget the designer of the time, but it was kinda like a Versace today.

Interestingly, Luke notes, “She provided for the whole family. So she had a totally different upbringing than my grandfather . . . not sheltered at all . . . and a very, very strong woman.” Luke says he traces “the lineage of our Catholicism” to his grandmother, “a very, very holy woman,” who “always prayed the rosary, went to daily mass.” And Luke's grandfather, he says, was “probably not the most religious until the later years of his life,” adding, “But definitely the impact of my grandmother on him had that effect.” Ultimately, about his grandmother, Luke asserts, “She was an example to me, and of all my grandparents, I was the closest to her.”

On his mother's side, Luke knew only one grandparent, “Grandma Claire, and she was mentally ill as a hoarder.” Strengthening his relationship with her after the onset of

her illness and her entry into a convalescent hospital, for two years Luke would visit her daily “and got to know her crazy life that she had of being adopted, and tossed around in the family, [and] her issues with poverty and the dust bowl.” Yet Luke maintains,

She had a cool life, a great life. And she ended up in Arcadia. My mom grew up as a native of California, and my grandmother, I believe . . . was born in Texas. Maybe that's why I love Texas so much.

Luke’s grandmother was divorced and thus his mother was “the product of a divorced family, or a broken family, which was very taboo in that day, to the point where they couldn't even play with certain kids.” Luke’s mother, as a result of her experience, he believes, “just always had a different, compassionate side towards people,” and he notes, “[That] helped in the rearing of me.”

Examining the intermingling of his two primary cultural influences, American and Italian, Luke states, “We grew up in a house that holidays were celebrated. . . . Tradition is very important in Italian families.” As his mother wasn’t Italian, Luke states that his father handled the “responsibilities for Christmas dinner,” adding, “We always have lasagna, and other than barbecuing, [Christmas] was the only time of the year my dad cooked.” Luke mentions the importance of the “family endeavor that we created” in the traditional preparation of the holiday meals. “We cooked . . . 15 trays of lasagna, and it would take a week, a day for the sausage, a day with the meatballs, and assembling it all, and cooking the sauce,” he explains. And while Christmas held special import for Luke and his family, Luke also notes, once again highlighting his American pride,

The biggest holiday celebrated in our family was Fourth of July. I always refer to it as the best damn day of the year. . . . So we would go in the parade; we would

have big parties at our house with 300, 400 people at them, and my dad would just foot the bill.

Referring to San Diego's Little Italy and his subsequent work in that neighborhood, Luke suggests, "And I think that's a little bit where I get my drive for throwing parties, especially in this neighborhood." Emphasizing once more his American sensibility, Luke adds, "So Fourth of July—that just goes back to saying more of like, 'We're American and very, very proud to be American.'"

Luke's drive and initiative in getting things done on his own manifested early on and not surprisingly reflects a rugged American individualism and spirit. Luke recalls that while he attended junior high school, he had wanted to paint the school different colors than the standard brown and yellow. Luke's brother had done the same for his high school as a senior, and Luke thought they should also do that at his junior high school. Luke remembers,

The school said, "You can't do that." And I've always been told you can't do things, and everyone in our family told you can't do things, and I [would] . . . come home and say, "Well, they said I can't do it." So growing up, my father said, "What do you mean you can't do it? You just make a choice to do it." So I organized a task force with a teacher and a leadership class and then proceeded to get everything donated—all the paint, all the supplies for Cokes and waters, and food, and everything for all the student body to come out, and the student body actually painted the school. But I can remember my mom taking me from store to store just to get a case of soda. And I had a letter; I drafted the letter, and I put this

out, and I went and collected everything. . . . At an early age, I got those skills, not knowing then, too, that people just don't tell kids 'no.'

It is quite likely that this experience and many similar ones were to have a vital impact on Luke's later directions and initiatives, especially in politics. He recalls,

My earliest memory of politics was coming home and . . . discussing that we were invading Iraq based on the Persian Gulf, and the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein, and that my brother may have to go to it, and that this was a call of service, and why we're doing it.

Luke continues with a discussion of politics and his connection to it, also with a nod to his father for the stance he once had taken:

The second thing that ties into politics is the 1992 election with Ross Perot, Bill Clinton, and George Bush. . . . So I remember my dad watching the debate and saying, "Oh, well, if Bill Clinton wins, we're gonna make a lot of money." And I said, "Well, why don't we vote for Bill Clinton?" And he said, "'Cause he's not right for the country." And I think my parents voted for Bush, but I was a Ross Perot fan out of it all. I always had this independent nature about it.

Luke also discusses some of his direct experiences in politics that would have a large impact on his professional objectives. He recounts,

I went off to college. I came back from England at 20. And my neighbor . . . was a teacher at Long Beach, and she decided to run for Congress. . . . [They] got me to volunteer, and within a week, I was the third in line running the campaign, doing fundraising.

Interestingly, Luke acknowledges that it was “not my political party . . . I was a registered Republican . . . and they’re Democrats,” although he notes, “I can’t say I’m a Republican today.” But back then, he says, “I was very non-partisan . . . saying, ‘Well, every side has good sides or merits to it,’ and I don’t really believe that today. But she’s a dynamic woman, and she’ll do good for the country.” Subsequently, they lost the election “by three votes per precinct.”

Luke would then learn more about city politics, specifically “no-bid contracts that go out in city redevelopment agencies.” Luke continues to elaborate on the experience, stating, “And the city was in transition with the freeway going through. There was no plan for architectural beautification, architectural ordinances for new buildings; there was no beautification plan for median projects to separate the freeway from the houses,” noting that current leadership “failed astoundingly across the board,” at which point, Luke, at 22 years old, decided to enter politics again and run for office. “I lost by 50 votes to a 20-year incumbent,” Luke remembers. Luke was also involved with “a non-partisan race up in San Francisco . . . did some stuff on the lieutenant governor’s race, worked on the Victory 2000 campaign for Bush, and went back and ran for office again.”

Ultimately, in light of these character-building and foundation-forming experiences, Luke says,

So I kind of saw my life going, ‘Oh well, if I win this election, well then I’m a career politician. Then what? Do I run for mayor? Then what? Do I run for assembly? What does a conservative or independent do in California? What do you really get accomplished?’”

Noting his belief in local politics, Luke muses, “I don't know if I would have gone to the state legislature, and definitely not the Feds, because they should just be evaporized. That's not the right word, but you know my point.” As a result of his careful considerations, Luke would land a position for a public relations firm in Downtown Los Angeles, working there for three months, having an overall successful tenure with the firm—“[I] had the second highest billable hours in the company next to the vice president in a short time, and then I got written up for coming in late 10 minutes every day,” Luke says, still annoyed today, adding,

And that goes back to being raised like, ‘Judge me on my merits; judge me on what I do, not on the little things. Judge me in the big picture.’ And I just couldn't take it, because I can't work for somebody else.

His conviction of independence leading the way, Luke would leave the firm and begin a business in San Diego where he would develop his ties to the Little Italy neighborhood, especially Our lady of the Rosary Parish. Luke managed the business with a partner for a year and a half until some unethical practices made him decide to leave that work behind. At that point, Luke recalls, “I got a call from my mom . . . to go to Medjugorje, which is a little village in Croatia. . . . And from the moment I said that we were going, my life changed.” He moved back to Los Angeles, and got “a sales job working for the Thomas Register,” he says, adding, “And I killed it the first month out, and then I left on vacation.”

Another turning point would come for Luke after his second election when he was campaigning—and he needed to raise more funds “to run the positive campaign” against the smear campaign being launched against him from the opposition. A friend of Luke's

refused to give him money but eventually conceded and offered a small check, but only if Luke would attend a church function with him. Luke agreed, and as he states, “It changed my life. I started to open back up to Catholicism,” which Luke had gotten away from a little because, as he notes, “I was just angry when my dad died, even though I was a practicing Catholic. . . . I think I used it as an excuse to do whatever I wanted to do . . . very regretful in a lot of ways.” He continues to recount:

And a client at the time, who I met through Knights of Columbus, networking, who is now a deacon . . . told me about a story . . . and giving when you have nothing. And I only had \$100 in my checking account, and I had \$100,000 plus in debt. . . . And so I was like, “I’ll write it to the church.” And then another person that I knew in sales, a friend of mine, she said, “Hey, why don’t you go to this novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help?” And I said, “Okay.” And I went to her and I said, “Well, can I pray for sales?” And she’s like, “That’s why I go.” And I said, “That’s my kind of prayer service.” So I went there. I needed a sale for \$4,000, based on my commission rate and everything, that I could just pay the minimums, and I needed to make it the next day. It was a Tuesday. I needed to make the sale on a Wednesday. Normally in the business, it took three sales calls to close the deal. It’s not uncommon. It’s not unheard of to close a one-call sale, but it just didn’t happen as often. Usually it took a few trips. So I knew it needed to be exact; it had to be \$4,000 based on what I would get. And so, on the next day, I had one sales call. I went on that sales call, and I walked out with a sale for \$4,000 to the penny. Sales weren’t . . . ever \$4,000 to the penny. They were like \$3791.22, based on the discounting and the template that the sales process had. So

when I walked out, I'm like, "Man, I prayed for \$4,000; I should've prayed for \$17,000." I've been going to that novena every Tuesday since then, and it's been 11 years, and sales always come in.

Subsequently, Luke would return to San Diego. "I missed San Diego, and I missed Our Lady of the Rosary," he says. Luke managed his workload and schedule so he could be in Los Angeles, doing much traveling across California, but he still would have weekends in San Diego. And as Luke recalls, one fateful day,

I walked across the street, and I passed by a sign that had *Amici Ball* on it. . . .

And I looked at it and thought, "Well, it supports the church. It's a ball. I don't know. Maybe I'll meet a girl there or something like that." Little did I know that it's an Italian wedding with all senior citizens, and there's no bride and groom there, either. But I went to it, and somebody became mayor of Little Italy. I said, "You can be mayor of Little Italy? That's awesome. Who's the mayor? Who's this guy?" It was a guy named Tommy Battaglia. . . . And I said . . . "How do you do that?" And they're like, "Well, you just buy them." I'm like, "How much does it cost?" They're like, "1000 bucks. . . ." By then I was at great financial strength. I had paid off all my debt in one year just hustling. And money was just pouring in, and money was easy then. . . . I said, "Okay, next year, I'm the mayor of Little Italy." And I wanted to be the mayor of Little Italy just so I could call my grandma and say, "Hey, Grandma, I'm the mayor of Little Italy," and she'd say, "Oh, that's nice, Sweetie," and joke around with my family. So I stayed down here that year. I actually started my own business.

As for this new employment, Luke started his company with a partner from a previous business out of a little house in the heart of San Diego's Little Italy. "We're eight years running, almost nine years running; we've been on San Diego's fastest-growing company list five times," Luke proudly proclaims.

Luke continues by noting his experience with Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Little Italy, particularly recalling again the Amici Ball event, stating:

And then . . . I go back to another Amici Ball—I put down \$5,500—bought the mayorship clearly, and everyone's like, "Who's this kid?" And I wore my sash. . . . And Tommy Battaglia came up to me. I love that man. He'll always be the real mayor of Little Italy. And he would always tell me I'm the real mayor, and I always say, "Nope, you're the real mayor." And he came up to me, and he says, "This is so awesome. You're young. We need young people on the board. We need young people involved. You're gonna do good things here." I'm like, "I bought this. This is not real."

But soon afterward, Luke would become a board member of the Little Italy Association and got involved with planning the annual Amici Ball. His experience unfolded thus, and would prove another turning point in his life and his interaction with San Diego's Little Italy:

Father Steve called me and said, "We need you involved. . . ." And the older people in the group all asked me, "What do the young people want?" And I said, "Well, I don't really know . . . let's just sell more tickets. . . . How many tickets do you sell to it?" They said, "300." I said, "We can get 400." They said, "400? We haven't had 400 in 16 years." I said, "We'll get 400 tickets . . . and after they're

there, let's ask what they want, what they do, and then let's change the event accordingly.” They all said, “Well, that makes sense.” And so we did that. We got 400 people that next year. We actually set up a whole thing for the live auction for the mayorship of Little Italy. My business partner actually bid on it on my behalf, and we bid against each other so we could raise up more money for the church. And it was good. It was entertaining. It was about the only entertaining thing at the ball. And I let Byron win it, so Byron's been the mayor of Little Italy for a hot second. And then he said, “There can be only one mayor of Little Italy,” and he gave it back to me. But it was a coup; it was all planned.

Father Steven Grancini was the pastor at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Little Italy during this time. Luke recalls fondly his relationship with Father Steve, recounting, Father Steve always looked to the future—great mentor to me, great spiritual leader, but quietly just set an example. He didn't have to say a lot. He never said a lot. He just made things happen. . . . And that's a mark of a great leader, much greater leader than me. And he saw the future of the parish, the future of the neighborhood, the future of the church, and he sees it in the youth.

But the youth in the community was not involved in the church to a large degree, so Father Grancini went to Luke, asking him what they needed to do to acquire a younger demographic. “So I created this plan to do everything outside,” Luke says. He explains his process for creating an Amici Ball the likes of which the Little Italy community had never seen and in discussing it with his pastor:

It's going to be kind of like a Hollywood premiere—carpet the street, put up a long entry with red carpet and Italian Cyprus trees, and the big booming lights,

and have your restaurants outside, and your dance floor . . . everything outside. And he goes, "That's great. . . . Where did you come up with this idea? . . ." I said, "I saw it in Siena when I went there on vacation. . . . If they can do it outside, why aren't we doing it in an Italian cultural neighborhood? And we have way better weather than Siena year-round." So he says, "I like that idea . . . well, what's it gonna cost?" I go, "Here's the budget I already did." And he goes, "Okay, excellent. Let's do it." I said, "Okay. Well, you have to get the rest of the committee to sign off." He said, "We should probably get rid of the committee." And I said, "No, no. You can't do that. . . . They've committed all this time to it." And he goes, "Okay. If you wanna take it that way." And I think he just kind of thought, "Maybe this kid can do it." Well I couldn't do it. That was my first taste of politics at Our Lady of the Rosary. . . . So I went around, got new people. . . . I got other people involved to come to this committee meeting. And I met with every single person that was also intricately involved in Amici Ball for the past 15-plus years, and they all told me face-to-face, "I like this idea. We can do it. The budget matches, everything does. Let's try it!" And it was a great time to do it because it was like the 20th anniversary of it.

Yet Luke would soon realize further the politics (of which he had already gotten a little taste) in his newly adopted neighborhood:

Then we get to the full committee meeting, and it was a coup d'etat. It was total stab in the back. They didn't want to do it. People said they wished it would rain on the event. And I'm like, "Whoa, there, they will know that you're Christian by your love, by your love. . . . This is a church event, and you're hoping it rains on

it?" It's just crazy. So . . . I stepped out. . . . I left for Washington DC, and when I was over there, I got a call from Father Steve, and he said, "Where are you?" And I said, "I'm in DC," and he goes, "When are you going to be back?" I said, "Tomorrow." He's like, "Okay, come over to the house." I'm like, "What's wrong? . . ." [He says], "Don't worry, don't worry." Everything was always "Don't worry. . . ." So I come back and go to the rectory and sit down. Father Steve is sitting there, just finished lunch, and he called Father Joe down. I'm like, "What the hell's going on here?" And he says, "We're having a revolt. We're having a revolt." He said it twice, and I'll never forget it. I'm like, "What is this? Like something from the Godfather? What's the revolt?" And he says that people were calling and saying, "I don't want to be a part of it; I'm not going to it, and I won't buy a ticket to something like this, and this just doesn't say 'class.'" So I said, "Okay, Father, let's do what's best for the parish. . . ." He says, "I want you to start a new event with a new committee." [I] probably should have just listened to him from the beginning and ended Amici Ball and called it something else and started a new committee. It would have saved a lot of political turmoil. So we started a new event, and it ended up being called *Ferragosto*. And that vision of that event became even more clear of where we need to lead as Christians. And a lot of it's all tied together with my past of political things, of navigating this neighborhood.

Luke explains in further detail the auspicious beginnings of Ferragosto and other reasons for wanting to create and oversee this new event, stating,

Ferragosto is historically a pagan holiday that the Christians took over to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption. [August 15]. It was originally the goddess, Diana, the Goddess of Fertility, so it was an easy tie over into Christianity to convert pagans. . . . In Italy, Ferragosto is a secularized term now that, while they still do celebrate the Feast of the Assumption, they call all of August Ferragosto. But they're Italians, so they don't work for a whole month. So we started this event, and a lot of people came out to support it. It was very exciting at the beginning. We took two years to plan it. We came up with a theme that was Roman but really it was my driving of it. I thought, "Well, if we're going to do a new event, I'm going to one-up my dad." And that's that whole American thing again like, "I'm going to do one better than my dad." And my dad . . . when he was at Cal State LA, he was ASP president, and they did this big fundraiser, and they did the Ides of March down Hollywood Boulevard, and it was this big parade . . . and they dressed up as Romans and they paraded down, and then they had this big festival. They actually had Ray Conniff—who was a San Diegan—he came and played there. It was just a fair, a carnival, and they called it Hades Day, Hades Day Carnival. So I thought, "Okay, I could do that." Now the dream of Ferragosto is much bigger than just the parade and everything else, and it's come to fruition . . . and it's starting to take hold. But I wanted a Roman event. And then I was having beers with my brother, and he goes, "You know what? If you're the mayor of Little Italy," and he had some other colorful words, "If you're the mayor of Little Italy, they should carry you in. You should be Julius Caesar." And I'm like, "All right." So out of a challenge to my brother, I'm like, "Okay, guys, I'll play Julius

Caesar.” And that was another way to one-up my dad. And so they didn't carry me in for political reasons, I nixed it, but I did have it in the budget and plan, because it would have been freaking awesome. And the Romans that we got to come down, the centurions that we got to come down from LA, when I mentioned it, they were like, “Oh yeah, that's exactly right.” They played into it. I'm like, “Geez, you guys are crazy.” They wanted to . . . they even said how, when they carried me in, one of the centurions would get down on all fours so I could step on his back, and I'm like, “That's just over the top.” But it would have been awesome. But we didn't do it. We nixed it, and it was the right thing to do at the time. There's one foe in the neighborhood, in the politics of this neighborhood, that he didn't want it to happen. We got into an argument at the Amici Ball, one of the last Amici Balls . . . and mostly because of his silent auction things, and he was drunk, three sheets to the wind. Everybody makes mistakes when they're drunk, I know. And it almost came to a physical altercation, like fistfight. And he held that grudge. I still don't hold that grudge to this day. He went on a rampage to end the mayorship of Little Italy, which he kind of did as far as me having to pay for it, but he didn't end it, because when they ended it, they retired it on me, and Father Steve looked at me and said, “Once a mayor, always a mayor. You're the last mayor.” So I'm the mayor in perpetuity, I guess, which is comical. . . . And it's been a good title, honorary title, to have for business, especially for fundraising for the community and what Ferragosto is. So whenever we can leverage it, we leverage it. Let's make money off of it. So he became a nemesis in the whole event to destroy it, and told people it wasn't happening, told people it was never

gonna be successful. He told me personally, “Nobody's gonna go to a church event in the middle of August,” and I told him, “Yes, they will. It will sell out, and you'll wish that you bought a ticket. And one day, you will go.” And all those things happened.

In looking back, Luke comments, “We ran a successful event.” Future events’ themes would revolve around Venice, the Roaring Twenties, and Pompeii, selling out at 700, 800, and 900 respectively. The event is held every other year, “for the planning, gives the restaurants a break, all these different reasons,” Luke explains. Ultimately, Luke aspires to have “an event that raises \$250,000 in the night, and is the premier event in Downtown San Diego,” notwithstanding the fact that “many people today would consider it the premier event already in Downtown San Diego,” but Luke is planning for a “crème de la crème of events,” adding, “We're still new, and anything can happen, so I'm humble that I'm just able to do it. And I'm even more humbled at the support of this neighborhood and that we continually come together to get things done.”

In light of his past political experience and his commitment to church events, Luke was encouraged by Father Steve to run for a board position for the Little Italy Association. About challenging the incumbent secretary, Luke says,

I was so fed up with his shenanigans that I ran against him—[I] pretty handily beat him in the board elections, and there was a lot of turmoil in the board at that time . . . and the turmoil was from his actions.

As a result of his victory, Luke notes, “We ended that turmoil on the board, and we continue to be a productive—not always in agreement—but constructive board to do and fulfill what Little Italy has done and will continue to do.”

Of his relationship with Father Steve (who is now deceased), Luke notes, “That vision that Father Steve sees is the same vision I share, and hopefully we can continue to share that, not just as a model for Little Italy, but as a model for other parishes across the dioceses.” Luke adds, notably,

For too long, we've had a culture in the Catholic Church that says, ‘Just raise money for ourselves,’ and it's not so much what the money does . . . it's more the impact that we lead and leave, that we're leading and creating that impact by actually raising money for other entities.

Luke cites the Ferragosto event as a great local example of what perhaps should be a goal on a larger scale, stating “The church raises the money, then gives 60% of it away to Little Italy Association, which is secular, and the Washington Elementary School, a public school. That's just unheard of.” He continues to explain his view, asserting,

That is a model of what Christianity should be. When you look in history, you look across Europe, you say, “Well, this awesome piazza built over here, [or] this massive fountain over here—who built it?” The Catholic Church built it all. Some of the public institutions over there . . . were . . . originally funded by the Catholic Church. . . . We forget that the Catholic Church built western civilization. Without the Catholic Church, you don't have western civilization. You don't have the advancements and everything from restoration of the roads that the Romans had built, to preservation of aqueducts and the water systems, to continued law in the Roman spirit, to sciences that were advanced.

Luke extrapolates that model and applies it to Little Italy's current evolution and development, stating,

We're just trying to create that model here on a very, very small scale. . . . We're making things happen, and the church is leading the way, and there is no Little Italy without this church, and there is no Little Italy without Father Steve.

Luke again brings to light that "Father Steve was instrumental in starting the board, and he left a huge legacy that very few people on that board will ever be able to compare to."

Luke also mentions about the new direction of the Little Italy community,

I think a lot of people would like the whole place to still be cottages, and those things are cool, and I'm not saying destroy them all, but . . . [the] population continues to grow. San Diego's a destination to live. Downtown San Diego's bustling. Little Italy is what I call the Upper West Side. It is the neighborhood to live in. . . . There's an attraction here, and there's an attraction here because of the culture here. And it's not just the restaurants . . . it's also the church. . . . And so while the buildings may change, there's still a lot of culture in this neighborhood, and we're all working very diligently to not necessarily just take that culture from the past but define our own culture.

For Luke, what does it mean to be Italian? "I think I have a different take on it culturally," Luke states, elaborating: "It's not just saying, 'Oh, I'm from Italy,' or 'This is my village.' Now, for many it is, and that's okay. But to me, being Italian is being Italian American, but American first." Luke also applies that sentiment to all immigrants, stating, "Every immigrant group has that tendency to do that if they assimilate and

become American. And then they become part of what the fabric of America is.” About the neighborhood of Little Italy, Luke proclaims,

In this neighborhood, we're American Italians, and we should be celebrating what Little Italy is as much as our roots. . . . We hang an Italian flag and an American flag at Festa. Well that's about to change because we're going to hang the Italian flag; we're going to hang the American flag; but we're also going to hang a Little Italy flag, and we're going to celebrate who we are today as much as where our heritage comes from. . . . So while we celebrate Little Italy and our own culture, I think what ultimately ties the whole neighborhood together is family. And a lot of that family comes from the church and carries through, and while you may not even be Catholic here, there's a difference to the church.

For Luke, however, everything returns to family, now that he has a three-year-old son, and now that he is newly married. As for his son, Luke asserts, “If I can get him to not repeat my mistakes, then we’re good as far as success in my life.”

He also discusses a new piazza project the Little Italy Association is taking on and its significance for his own family, explaining, “They named it Piazza Famiglia, and it's ended up being very fitting,” as Luke met his future wife, who works for the piazza developer, through meetings about the design and development of the piazza. “So the namesake of the Piazza is already helping create a family and continue on traditions in this neighborhood and write the history of our neighborhood in the future,” he proclaims.

In referencing Little Italy when he first arrived here, Luke uses the term, “Emerging.” And in looking for a word to describe the neighborhood 12 years later? Luke need not search for long. “Captivating,” he says.

CHAPTER 12

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

As indicated in Chapter 3 (Methodology), I used Polkinghorne's narrative analysis process in constructing the individual participant life stories. Looking across cases, I applied a coding structure in order to identify emerging concepts. I then grouped the concepts, by their similarities, into three overarching themes across cases, with the more striking concepts within each theme designated as four subthemes respective to each theme. Table 1 identifies the overarching themes and their subthemes.

The themes (and subthemes) presented in this chapter are not exhaustive, but they represent the most salient constructs that emerged across the narratives. Moreover, the themes aligned with the research questions that have helped to guide this study. In this analysis, I have continued to use the term *Italian neighborhood* to refer to the community pre-redevelopment and *Little Italy* to refer to the community during and after its revitalization.

Table 1.

Overarching Themes and Subthemes

Theme One: Elements and Manifestations of Social Capital	Theme Two: Cultural Characteristics and Dynamics	Theme Three: Evolving Purpose of Place
Familiarity and the Role of Neighbors as Extended Family	Gender Roles and Relationships	Changing Composition of Community
Spatial Proximity of Family Members	Italian and American Sensibilities	Labeling and Naming of Community
Role Models and Influential Figures	Insular Lifestyle of Residents	Preservation of Heritage Assets
Institutions and Businesses	Values and Traditions	Little Italy as New Construct

Theme One: Elements and Manifestations of Social Capital

The people (and institutions) of the Italian neighborhood during the peak of its Italian American presence—as well as those shaping Little Italy’s current trajectory—constituted a fundamental feature of most of the participant narratives. Individuals and institutions in the neighborhood often contributed important elements to the participants’ development—that was evident for current- and former-resident participants. Even Luke, the single participant with no ties to the Italian neighborhood pre-redevelopment, indicated that his association with the people in Little Italy (during his frequent visits and certainly after he moved there) also helped to shape his personal development. As an example, we can look to his strong relationship with Father Grancini as well as the volunteer work Luke has undertaken for the community. For Jim, a former resident, his

claim that he is “a product of people” succinctly punctuated the import placed on community members—a point most of the participants emphasized.

The overarching theme of Elements and Manifestations of Social Capital comprises the following subthemes: a) Familiarity and the Role of Neighbors as Extended Family; b) Spatial Proximity of Family Members; c) Role Models and Influential Figures; and d) Institutions and Businesses. These subthemes are discussed in detail below.

Familiarity and the Role of Neighbors as Extended Family

An emphasis on the notion of familiarity existed for most of the participants in their stories. This included the familiarity of values and traditions they grew up with and many still hold fast to; the importance of familiarity regarding their surroundings, especially in terms of safety and security; and the role of familiarity in maintaining an important component of their identity or in personal and professional motivations. The importance of camaraderie, especially as a stabilizing mechanism, was also evident through the comments of many participants. Several participants discussed walking down the street and just knowing everyone in the Italian neighborhood.

Furthermore, a noteworthy dynamic was that the residents in the Italian neighborhood looked out for each other, a dynamic that manifested itself in many ways—for example, as the first informal Neighborhood Watch program, one designed to observe the antics of the neighborhood children and report back to their parents, as one participant playfully stated. This dynamic also added an element of safety and security, which several participants discussed: Louis commented on that feeling of safety when he lived in the Italian neighborhood; yet Marianna also mentioned that she still feels safe in the

neighborhood today, alluding to the notion that the redevelopment has not really changed that feeling of security that was also evident for her growing up in the neighborhood.

Ultimately, the residents of the Italian neighborhood had a dependence on each other that, perhaps not surprisingly, for most people is absent from Little Italy today. Some samples of participant comments illustrate how social capital was manifest in the Italian neighborhood vis-à-vis the neighbors:

- “If someone was in need, there was someone to assist them.”
- “People would reach out to their neighbors.”
- “Everybody cooked at home, and it was just a close-knit neighborhood.”
- “We would just trade off food, and that’s how we actually fed each other, and it was the most beautiful thing that I learned from my mother . . . and I was brought up that way, and she did that all the time.”
- “My mother . . . made the most wonderful Italian bread. . . . She also made apron oilskins for fishing. . . . My father was very generous with his wine.”
- “While growing up in little Italy, my friends and their families became my world.”
- “So then as we got older and went to high school, things kind of spread out a little more, but still the whole neighborhood was pretty cohesive—everybody knew who everybody was.”
- “So the thing was that everybody worked together, and everybody knew each other, and it just created a feeling of security.”
- “And in those days we all walked to school, and we'd walk home . . . nobody worried about things like they worry about today.”

- “People would come to India Street to shop for their Italian foods and stop at our house for a cup of coffee, talk, and spend the day.”
- “I kind of believe that environment added a lot to my life, the camaraderie of the people living there; most of those people grew up with each other.”
- “And so I loved this neighborhood so very, very much. . . . They loved me so much. . . . I will always remember the beautiful people and how much they did for me, you know?”

Yet even in Little Italy today (in particular through the Little Italy Association board), the notion of family or extended family seems to be an important element, even if only in a figurative sense: According to some participants, the Little Italy Association board (and its close ally, the local parish) continue to create and maintain that feeling of community and family, at least for the Little Italy Association members. For these participants, the board members are united through a common goal and common culture. As a few participants on the Little Italy Association board noted:

- “And so we've crossed all the lines, in terms of age, as well as culture, and brought them all into the same entity, and made them feel very welcome on that board.”
- “Here was this group of 26-plus individuals that had serious business to discuss but they were asking about each other, and getting updates on each other, and asking about their families.”

- “So while we celebrate Little Italy and our own culture, I think what ultimately ties the whole neighborhood together is family. And a lot of that family comes from the church and carries through, and while you may not even be Catholic here, there's a difference to the church.”

Spatial Proximity of Family Members

Interesting to note is the dynamic associated with the fact that in the Italian neighborhood family members lived close to each other, often next door or on the next block, sometimes even in the same building. This helped to create the tight-knit community as described by several participants and helped families to create inseparable bonds for decades. Even for Marco, who grew up in the San Diego State area, the dynamic was present: He lived close to his grandparents during his youth, albeit outside the confines of Little Italy.

Furthermore, extending *spatial proximity* to a more figurative *closeness*, many of the participants discussed their close family ties and how these ties helped to shape them. In the Italian neighborhood, this dynamic likely helped to shape identity in that family members formed a crucial part of the cultural container of the ethnic enclave. Consequently, family members were always present and created a unifying and grounding element for the participants' identities. As some of the participants stated:

- “People would not move far from their families in the neighborhood.”
- “You were always within a block or two of your relatives.”
- “You can't get much closer than that unless you were living in a tenement in New York with all your relatives stacked clear up to the sky.”
- “We lived within two miles of my grandfather and grandmother.”

- “I think culture-wise and the traditions, none of that was lost, and we were all still a family, and I think, as weird as it sounds that we all lived so close from each other, I value that, because I knew my dad was still just three blocks away.”

Role Models and Influential Figures

The role models for many of the participants included parents, grandparents, priests, and teachers, to name several. They composed a large part of a collective image of the essential role model, and this characteristic was evident within many of the participants’ narratives. Most of the participants discussed their parents and grandparents who played important roles in the participants’ lives.

While some participants mentioned priests and nuns as a collective (illustrating the importance of the participants’ religious traditions), some participants singled out Father Grancini directly as serving as an important role model for Little Italy. They also emphasized his role in helping to create and maintain Little Italy and point to him as a key figure in the redevelopment process of the community. As some participant responses highlighted:

- “The parents were the ultimate authority for us that helped set our compass.”
- “We had a very happy family. My parents were very kind, and they were very comical people. My father would play tricks on my mother, and my mother would play tricks on my father, and I learned joy from them, and how to treat one another, and how to be loving and giving, and I appreciate that to this day. They taught me so much.”

- “He was a real quiet guy and he really made you feel special, I guess like most grandfathers do.”
- “I guess that was part of our upbringing—policemen, people of authority—we had a lot of respect and admiration for the schoolteachers, nuns, priests, firemen, policemen, servicemen.”
- “We had a lot of respect, great respect of the people with authority, and I think that helped set our moral compass.”
- “And without Our Lady of the Rosary and Father Steven Grancini there would not be a Little Italy Association.”
- “Father Grancini was somebody that I'll always remember.”
- “Father Steve always looked to the future—great mentor to me, great spiritual leader, but quietly just set an example.”

Institutions and Businesses

The primary institutions in the Italian neighborhood—Washington Elementary School, Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, and Bayside Social Center—were an important part of many of the participants’ upbringing. Today, Washington Elementary and Our Lady of the Rosary remain, serving the new residents and patrons of the community. Our Lady of the Rosary remains a pillar of the neighborhood for all the participants—it is the anchor that grounded the original Italian neighborhood, and it continues to be a part of Little Italy’s development while also serving as a catalyst in leading community change, as noted some participants. In addition, the role the church continues to play in terms of unifying Little Italy (as it did for the Italian neighborhood) also contributes to a sense of family in the community.

The local merchants were also a crucial component of the social capital they helped to foster in the Italian neighborhood at a time when everyone knew everyone else on the street. Yet today the new businesses in Little Italy are moving into the community, according to one participant, also because of the culture of the neighborhood—with the claim that Little Italy cultivates a similar dynamic now as the Italian neighborhood did then. One participant even noted that Italians are opening up shop in San Diego’s Little Italy because of the social aspects of the community. Some sample responses regarding the institutions and businesses were as follows:

- “We had so many small businesses such as a shoe repair shop, barber shop, grocery stores, mattress factory, Kelly Laundry, macaroni factory, tortilla shop, bakery, beauty salon, and butcher shop.”
- “They [the merchants] loved me. They’d tell me, ‘Do whatever you want to.’”
- “So anywhere from 15 to 20 of the restaurants and stores that have opened up in the last 10 years have been with Italian immigrants.”

Theme Two: Cultural Characteristics and Dynamics

What was visible in the Italian neighborhood in terms of social constructs stands in stark contrast to what is seen today in Little Italy, according to the participant narratives—not surprising as the community has undergone physical and socioeconomic changes. In the Italian neighborhood, an important cultural component was the cohesiveness of the community overall. For most residents, their entire world was found in the Italian neighborhood. Moreover, the immigrants in the community and their first-generation offspring had to hold both pieces—being Italian while being in America—and

had to navigate those cultural changes. What often helped them in that regard was their sense of place they found in the Italian neighborhood.

The overarching theme of Cultural Characteristics and Dynamics comprises the following subthemes: a) Gender Roles and Relationships; b) Italian and American Sensibilities; c) Insular Lifestyle of Residents; and d) Values and Traditions. These subthemes are discussed in detail below.

Gender Roles and Relationships

All three women in the study pointed out that growing up they were restricted heavily in their freedom to do things outside of school, church, and then later, their work environments. They all had strict parents growing up. This held true even for Marianna, the youngest of the three women, and thus this characteristic of how women's activities were limited crossed age boundaries.

In addition, the patriarchs were out working, often fishing, and thus the matriarchs raised the children and maintained an essential element of authority in the family unit. It is interesting to note as well, incidentally, that today on the Little Italy Association board there are only three women. Marianna is the youngest female and the only one who identifies as Italian American. As some participants noted about gender roles and relationships:

- “The men were out fishing.”
- “As in Italian families, you didn’t eat without the father.”
- “The one commandment that we really abided by was to honor thy father and thy mother.”
- “[My grandmother was] the glue of the family.”

- “I always think Italian women of that generation of my grand-mom, my mom's generation, were so strong because they are the ones that raised us.”
- “And I played baseball with the guys, and I was so proud of me because I just wanted to show 'em that a girl could do what she wants to. If she wants to do it she can do it. But I had to constantly prove myself all the time, and I think because of that it's made me who I am today.”
- “I didn't go out too much, because I was the only girl in the family, so that's the way it was.”
- “I definitely had very strict parents growing up.”
- “It was to and from school and then home, and you stay at home.”
- “Italian girls don't go out unless they have permission.”
- “And I had the older brother that got to do more and experience more, and I never really argued about it growing up. . . . That was the way my cousins were; that's how my friends were.”
- “But if my father said I can't, I can't. That's the way it goes around here.”
- “You might say you're caged. You weren't allowed to go anywhere. You couldn't dance. You couldn't go to movies.”

Italian and American Sensibilities

Many of the participants took note of their strong sense of Italian pride along with their allegiance to the American way and their American roots. A noteworthy dynamic that many participants discussed was that many of the children in the Italian neighborhood were discouraged from speaking Italian as their parents had assimilation in mind for them. Yet, for some participants, their upbringing reflected that traditional

dance that involved a foot in both worlds—old and new—and an attempt at learning, often clumsily, the necessary steps in that dance. Some of the participants' comments in this regard were as follows:

- “Eat well my children—your father is in America.”
- “Being Italian is being Italian American, but American first.”
- “Walking down India Street you could hear people speaking Italian all the time.”
- “When our parents wanted to keep something secret then they would talk to each other in Italian.”
- “My mother did not speak English. She always spoke Italian—well, Sicilian. And we all spoke Sicilian or else we couldn't communicate with her.”
- “When my grandparents were raising my father, they did not allow him to speak Italian. So it got lost on him, and as a little child, he was figuring out Italian, so they started speaking Sicilian in the house. . . . He started learning [that] . . . and they said, ‘Okay, we gotta cut everything off.’ So he never learned that and was always taught to be American before being Italian.”
- “It [Italian] was frowned upon.”
- “My parents were very big on education, and so I think they kind of steered it away. I kind of regret that; I think the easiest time to learn a foreign language is when you're younger, so I do wish that they spoke to me more.”
- “Anyway, during all this time, most of us kids thought we were Italians. We knew the war was on. . . . We knew we were Americans, but we really thought we were Italians.”

- “Well, when I was a kid, prior to my middle teens, I thought I was pretty much Italian, yeah, but also knowing that I was American. Now I know I am fully American and not Italian. I am Italian in my sensibilities. I am Italian in my attitude. I am Italian—well, culture, of course. But I'm different from Italian Italians. . . . You do have a feeling for Italy and whatnot . . . but basically, patriotically, I'm American.”
- “Italian American—American number one, gotta be, but my heart is [in] the Italian side.”
- “We're very proud to be Americans . . . they were . . . taught to be American—that they left Italy for the promise of something greater, and they found what was something greater, and that was America.”
- “You've got an Italian heritage; don't drift and become too Americanized.”

Insular Lifestyle of Residents

Many of the participants who were raised in the Italian neighborhood for a time up to and often beyond adulthood noted an ignorance of a world beyond the confines of the Italian neighborhood. This dynamic seemingly also helped to shape the participants as their worldviews were limited to the physical boundaries of the neighborhood and by extension the social constructs evident as a result of those spatial limits. As many of the participants described:

- “The point I'm trying to make is within a matter of a few blocks—my life—that was there.”
- “It took a long time . . . for me to realize there was another world outside. All the way of living, the way of thinking, the way of eating was all Italian. And

they were all Italian. And there were a few—a handful of people that were not Italians that lived here. But as far as we were all concerned, they were all part of the family, you know?”

- “And again . . . when you go to the same church, you play in the same school grounds, you go to the same school, you become one after a while.”
- “I had no idea—I truly had no idea that there were other people living outside of India Street. You might say our colony, our Italian colony, was from Laurel down to B Street, and from India Street, or I should say, Kettner . . . up to 12th street, because that was just all Italians [who] lived around there.”
- “That was the first experience [Washington School] to find out there were other people besides Italians.”
- “When I went to Roosevelt Junior High, I was intimidated by it. I felt like I didn't belong there. It was another world. I met different people, different girls, and they all dressed differently than I was dressed.”
- “We were getting an inkling that there was a larger world out there.”
- “I was so fortunate where I grew up where my extended family was like my immediate family because I saw them every day. So having to pick up and move to Kansas, or pick up and move to Texas for a job and be so far from my family just wasn't . . . where I saw myself.”

Values and Traditions

Many of the important values and traditions held by many of the participants involved getting together with family and friends. Traditions also followed common practices of attending church, celebrating holidays with a multitude of family and friends,

and sharing one's bounty with neighbors. Elements of respect and reverence existed in many of the narratives—important components in self-identification. As some participants reflected:

- “I missed those times where you'd cram 60 people into this teeny-tiny room at my Nanna's house and we would eat, and we would talk, and we would laugh.”
- “I was very fortunate because it wasn't just the holidays that we got together; it was every Sunday.”
- “Everybody always centered around the kitchen.”
- “Holiday times, like most families, we have the whole gang over the house.”
- “We grew up in a house that holidays were celebrated. . . . Tradition is very important in Italian families.”
- “My family contributed so much to what this neighborhood was, and I felt like I grew up and I enjoyed it. . . . I really took pride in it. . . . I was happy to grow up and be Italian American—all the values and the traditions that I grew up with.”
- “And she said, ‘Just remember, when you're hungry, and if you don't have any food, that's what it looks like when people are really hungry, and you just remember that. If someone needs food, you be sure you help them and you give food.’ And I'd say, ‘Okay.’ So that was just another lesson I learned from my mother.”

- “And I always say that, whether you want to change things or you want to do things differently, or you may not agree with something, there's just a certain generation in this neighborhood and in this church that you just respect them. And I was always told from a very young age, ‘You respect your elders.’”

Theme Three: Evolving Purpose of Place

In its prime, San Diego’s Italian colony along India Street (and later what was dubbed the Italian neighborhood) served as a holding environment, a means for new immigrants to transition from the old world to the new. That sensibility, the cohesive neighborhood, has been replaced today by Little Italy. At first glance, Little Italy would seem largely a commercial endeavor meant to attract new residents and patrons. But some of the participants (naturally those who are involved with the Little Italy Association) stated otherwise. Overall, how does a changing purpose affect what we see in little Italy and its effects on its stakeholders as well as the perceptions of the general milieu?

Most of the families that settled in the Italian neighborhood and lived there during its apex in the 1940s and 1950s have long moved out of the neighborhood. Today Little Italy is primarily a business district; its main street (India Street) and adjacent streets are lined with restaurants and other retail shops. Yet the Little Italy Association in general points to the history of the neighborhood (if only marginally) and a focus on a multicultural and multifaceted design in creating, likely, a new type of neighborhood, thus fostering a “dynamic” and still “authentic” community, according to one participant.

The overarching theme of Evolving Purpose of Place comprises the following subthemes: a) Changing Composition of Community; b) Labeling and Naming of

Community; c) Preservation of Heritage Assets; and d) Little Italy as New Construct.

These subthemes are discussed in detail below.

Changing Composition of Community

After the former residents of the Italian neighborhood all but moved out (save a handful) and the general area was all but stagnant up until the 1990s, the community has since witnessed an influx of residents moving into the new condominium developments over the course of the last 20 years since the redevelopment began. Naturally, these residents have staked a different claim in this community than that of their earlier counterparts, not one based on history and tradition but one based on an ever-changing definition of community. These new residents are likely creating their own sense of place.

The new merchants setting up shop in Little Italy are also flocking to San Diego's Little Italy, not to other Little Italys across the nation, according to one participant, specifically for the sense of community and for the ambience and feel Little Italy fosters. Many of the participants commented on this changing composition in its various forms:

- “The new residents of Little Italy don’t have the connection we had. The beautiful part is that we’re still connected to many of these people.”
- “The people are gone that I was really close with, and let’s face it, I mean the people, they’re the community regardless of what the structure looks like. If the people are gone that flavor is gone.”
- “Today, you could walk down the street and see a thousand people and not one knows you, neither do you know anyone else. But in my time, as I walked down the street, as I walked anywhere in the Italian community, I just knew

people. Those people knew me. . . . I don't think that happens today. I'm down there periodically, and I may see one person that I remember, and that's probably it.”

- “It was after returning to the old neighborhood that I realized it had changed. Yes, the streets and buildings were still there, and even our schools and church—Washington School and Our Lady of the Rosary—but something was gone. I finally realized that many of my friends, those that I grew up with, were no longer around.”
- “There's a new group of Italians here today, a group just as proud, but from different parts of the nation and the world.”
- “Yes, we're all Italians, but we all have different upbringings, different backgrounds, and different neighborhoods. This was a time I felt like a stranger in the Little Italy I grew up in.”
- “Everybody moved away from everybody else and you couldn't see a neighbor. You couldn't go talk to a neighbor anymore. You couldn't bring a neighbor a piece of fish. You couldn't bring a bowl of pasta because you'd have to walk six or seven blocks. And it just split up the personality. It just—it ruined the camaraderie.”
- “The board is the backbone of this community.”
- “So people don't come to Little Italy for its economic value; they come to Little Italy for its social value.”
- “They [the new merchants] love the communal feeling that exists in Little Italy.”

- “In this neighborhood, we're American Italians, and we should be celebrating what Little Italy is as much as our roots. . . . We hang an Italian flag and an American flag at Festa. Well that's about to change because we're going to hang the Italian flag; we're going to hang the American flag; but we're also going to hang a Little Italy flag, and we're going to celebrate who we are today as much as where our heritage comes from.”

Labeling and Naming of Community

Some of the participants noted that Little Italy was never a label used for the Italian neighborhood, while Marco argued that the neighborhood has always been called Little Italy. Interesting to note is the sentiment that the labeling engenders for the current and former residents as well as for the new group of stakeholders today. A sense of ownership for the participants in how they individually referred to “their” community and some implications arising from the labels formed an undercurrent in the narratives.

Participant comments on this aspect were as follows:

- “Sometimes, we used to refer to it as Woptown as kids.”
- “Back in the old days . . . we used to refer to Little Italy as Woptown. Needless to say, that's something you don't say today.”
- “And I was born in Little Italy, which they call Little Italy now, but it was called Woptown when I was born.”
- “As time went on, it became Little Italy. It's where it's at today.”
- “When they started calling it Little Italy—word association—commercialism.”
- “I have trouble with the word *Little Italy*. I prefer *the Italian community*, but from a marketing standpoint, I guess, so be it.”

- “It was known as Little Italy in the 1930s, 1940s. It was always known as Little Italy.”

And even today with the naming of the new Piazza Famiglia, the largest public space project the Little Italy Association board has undertaken, the naming forms an important component of Little Italy’s latest cultural artifacts, as one participant noted:

- “So the namesake of the Piazza [Famiglia] is already helping create a family and continue on traditions in this neighborhood and write the history of our neighborhood in the future.”

Preservation of Heritage Assets

The notion of preserving heritage in the neighborhood was evident in several of the narratives, either directly or indirectly through some of the participants' comments. For some participants, they discussed the notion of preservation at length, even if in a vague sense. A striking point in this regard: Two of the Little Italy Association board members were troubled by the direction of the community at the expense of a large part of its history. They felt that something needed to be done, but they did not have a concrete answer as to what a viable solution (or response to temper the rampant community development), might be. Participant comments included the following:

- “What they’re missing is a focus on the history of little Italy. I think they need a facility that is not commercial now but is historical.”
- “If we can all come together and focus on such a thing, a heritage house, whatever you want to call it, okay—we can provide tons of information; it's just a matter of bringing everybody together and everybody wanting to do it.”

- “I want to make sure that the element of what this neighborhood was doesn't get lost.”
- “This needs to be documented, because these stories need to live on, because those memories and those stories are what needs to be preserved.”
- “I always tell people too that the streets should be a museum and the sidewalks should be a museum. You should go to an area and find out what its history was.”

Little Italy as New Construct

As one might expect, participant comments were varied (and often impassioned) regarding Little Italy in its current revitalized form. If we divide the participants by Little Italy Association board members (Louis, Marianna, Marco, Luke) and non-board members (Andy, Rosalie, Jim, Fran), the commentary followed a path of (not surprisingly) polarization regarding Little Italy and its newfound direction. As many of the participants stated:

- “You have a special group of people who are businessmen—that’s their expertise. Most of these people involved have never lived there, and they don’t really have a feel for what it was like.”
- “I don't like a lot of the changes. I mean, it's okay and I'm not going to be here forever. A lot of the high-rise buildings [are] . . . what I don't care for, but that's okay.”
- “Well, you know . . . Little Italy is not Little Italy anymore. I mean, I know they've done the best that they can to try to help it, but it'll never be Little Italy anymore.”

- “It's too much, you know what I'm saying? I think they have too many Italian restaurants.”
- “And nobody's happy about what's happening down here, all right? And we all know, though you can't really do much about it, that's what they say—progress.”
- “I don't appreciate the change. I think they've ruined the personality, the beauty, the warmth, the tapestry.”
- “I think it should be—you should keep some of the old with the new—always some of the old with the new.”
- “Through their commercial endeavors they're cultivating an Italian neighborhood, I guess, but not the neighborhood I knew.”

In contrast, some Little Italy Association board members, not surprisingly, embrace the commodification and particularly emphasize the importance of the management and oversight of the board on the community, directly citing that as a contributing element to the success of the neighborhood: As these participants asserted:

- “Here we're on a mission to make this into an international community.”
- “I think by 2030, 2035, this thing's going to be a machine, and a lot of people that owned property for a long time are going to do really well. People that rent their property are going to do really well. But if we lose sight of the fact that management is the key to all this stuff, then I think we're going to become like a lot of the other Little Italys, believing that they are just a place to get great Italian food and then—there's nothing else.”

- “We're not an entertainment district, and we need to make sure that we manage everything, whether it's land uses, bars, restaurants, new developments, parking, homeless, all those things, and we're going full bore on our public space development, and then trying to make sure that we've tried to control, to the greatest extent possible, those retailers that are coming in here.”
- “But it's not about this Italian or this Italian or this Italian. It's about Little Italy as a concept and moving towards that concept.”
- “I think a lot of people would like the whole place to still be cottages, and those things are cool, and I'm not saying destroy them all, but . . . [the] population continues to grow. San Diego's a destination to live. Downtown San Diego's bustling. Little Italy is what I call the Upper West Side. It is the neighborhood to live in. . . . There's an attraction here, and there's an attraction here because of the culture here. And it's not just the restaurants . . . it's also the church.”
- “And so while the buildings may change, there's still a lot of culture in this neighborhood, and we're all working very diligently to not necessarily just take that culture from the past but define our own culture.”

In sum, participant comments illustrated how a wide spectrum exists for the participants in their connection to San Diego's Italian neighborhood of old or Little Italy today. The historical narrative, the individual life history, or Gardaphe's (2004) notion of the ethnostory should remain a core emphasis of future scholarship in San Diego's Italian community—more participant narratives should be collected to continue with an important component of heritage preservation efforts in the community.

As Gardaphe (2004) has stated, then, ethnostories become vital in the absence of culture. Yet I argue there is not an absence of culture in Little Italy; there is merely a changing of cultural artifacts. Little Italy represents a foundational element of a new ethnic sensibility that is still being defined.

CHAPTER 13

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

The primary purpose of this study was to collect the life histories of eight Italian Americans with a link to San Diego's Little Italy. A secondary and related purpose was to examine how the community (in both its past and current form) has contributed to an Italian American ethnic sensibility for the participants. Thus, a large part of this study was capturing experiences of participants, while another element was exploring the impact of place on identity and meaning making. Consequently, I have examined the process of ethnic-identity development using a social-constructionist lens and a life-story orientation. This effort produced eight participant narratives that, among other things, illustrate the different ways that place shapes and influences Italian American ethnicity and how perceptions of ethnic identification for all the participants have been formed.

For the participants involved with Little Italy as architects of the community's new direction and vision (i.e., the participants who serve on the Little Italy Association board), Little Italy seems to represent a new (and still emerging) construct, one that exists outside the boundaries of a traditional Italian American sensibility. Little Italy today is "dynamic," "authentic from a 21st-century perspective," "emerging," and "captivating," according to some participants who composed this group. Moreover, the management and oversight roles of the Little Italy Association, and the contemporary influx of individuals (many of whom are not Italian Americans but who are embracing the community by living, working, or visiting there), suggest a new model for existing Little Italys nationwide and possibly ethnic neighborhoods in general. Particularly for these

participants, Little Italy goes beyond symbolism and provides an emerging paradigm—one aligned with a hybrid model of urban development that integrates a socioeconomic-lifestyle lens with an ethnic one.

In contrast, for some current and former residents (particularly those participants who are not part of the Little Italy Association board), the Italian neighborhood of yesteryear, and not Little Italy today, remains the grounding representation of the community. Indeed, little to nothing remains in the community that resonates with these participants—save the local parish and some of the familiar merchants who have been able to sustain their businesses in the face of drastic socioeconomic changes in the community.

The meaning these participants derived from the Italian neighborhood is paramount to their identities. The neighborhood of the past was described, by most of this group of participants, as being a unique place during a special time—a neighborhood that contributed much to their personal development and enriched their lives. In sharp contrast, today's Little Italy is “different,” “alien,” “aloof,” or “foreign,” as some participants described it—leaving something to be desired for these participants.

For some Little Italy Association board members, particularly those who had a strong connection to the Italian neighborhood (as did other current and former residents), a measure of tension remains evident: They feel an allegiance to their current work and their volunteer roles on the Little Italy Association board, and they are more than proud and committed to continuing their involvement, but they also feel a strong sense of urgency in preserving elements of the Italian neighborhood in some manner. What that preservation would entail remains somewhat elusive to them, apart from some reference

to a “heritage house,” or that “those memories and those stories are what needs to be preserved.” Overall, these participants reflect the classic metaphor of assimilation: They stand with their feet in two worlds, trying to make sense of a community’s changing purpose and how they fit into it.

From these participants’ data, we can infer that these participants do not feel others on the board or the community’s commercial developers support them in their convictions. As such, the participants remain at a loss as to how they should go about effecting change. They do, however, continue to look at Little Italy’s new public spaces currently in development as a way to maintain some sense of cultural heritage. Again, however, the mechanism behind creating such a dynamic remains elusive.

In San Diego’s Little Italy, as most of the original families have long ago moved away, what has been displaced over time is the founding cultural identity; it has been replaced by new cultural artifacts. For the most part, what has been removed is the history of the region, the zeitgeist, the shared culture at the intersection of community and place. Consequently, we should return to Gans’s (1979) concept of symbolic ethnicity for a more complete discussion on Little Italy’s impact on ethnic identity—especially in the subsequent generations since the first immigrants arrived and settled here and as the purpose of the community has drastically evolved with later generations. Thus, what remains (using the Gans framework) in Little Italy today is largely symbolic, with individuals carefully choosing which elements of ethnicity to claim as their own and for the purpose of promoting Little Italy as a modern urban enclave, based more on lifestyle than Italian ethnicity while nevertheless incorporating that ethnicity from which the community evolved.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Overall, what points emerge from an analysis of the participant narratives? What information do we glean that can provide a framework that serves as a backdrop to most, if not all, ethnic enclaves (if we can attempt to generalize to that point)? And in terms of process, how does narrative construction affect the participants in terms of their ethnic self-identification and meaning making? In other words, what do the stories themselves reveal?

It is interesting to note how the economic development of San Diego's Little Italy compares with other Little Italys across the nation. Again, according to one participant, San Diego's Little Italy is the singular one that is formally managed, in this case through the formal structure of the business improvement district model. Moreover, outside the confines of Italian Americana and Little Italy, dynamics in San Diego's Little Italy have been found elsewhere regarding the redevelopment and repurposing of ethnic enclaves. Examples found in the literature illustrate and emphasize this notion.

We must also raise the point of how cultural appropriation affects the ethnic groups whose culture is being appropriated or co-opted for economic gain and purposes. How can a claim for the ethnicity of a neighborhood be maintained if very little remains to reflect that ethnic sensibility? What can groups do to collaborate on identifying key components of preserving more of the cultural heritage of a community in the development process? How might that preservation be defined? Who would need to be involved?

Notably, the participants with a strong connection to the Italian neighborhood pre-redevelopment did not claim that Little Italy should not have been revitalized. On the

contrary, these participants understood that progress was inevitable in the neighborhood. They asserted, however, that some important elements of the neighborhood should have remained along with the emerging elements, and that some manner of historical preservation of community assets should have served as a crucial complement to exploring directions in redevelopment.

Looking to the literature, as some scholars argue, culture and commerce should reflect two sides of the same coin. What might that mean for ethnic-community redevelopment if more funding and research coalesced around a cultural hub as a point of departure for future community development? How can state and regional funding and resources combine to effect change and incorporate rather than appropriate culture and ethnicity in the future? How can once-flourishing ethnic communities be re-invented or revitalized (for commercial purposes) while attending to preservation efforts?

In sum, the existence of Little Italy leaves many questions still to be addressed regarding its role in shaping ethnicity and culture, both for Italian Americans and others outside the Italian American community. An overarching question in terms of practice and policy is how a more collaborative approach to ethnic-community revitalization efforts, involving more voices, can benefit the entire community while better serving the organization that created and continues to shape the revitalization.

Implications for Future Research

Further exploration of Little Italy's dynamics—particularly through a novel approach of using a leadership perspective—can provide useful insights, and it can help to fill in gaps in the literature regarding Little Italys and the people and groups that both shape and are shaped by Little Italys. The following three areas of future research share

an emphasis on group dynamics, a large part of the leadership studies realm, and therefore provide a starting point for further discourse.

Little Italy Association and the Business Improvement District Model

The unit of analysis for this study was the individual participant. Further discourse on San Diego's Little Italy, however, should address the governing body at the heart of its redevelopment—the Little Italy Association. Consequently, future studies should examine more closely the inner machinations of the board—as well as a more general examination of the business improvement district model (BID). This model has achieved widespread use in the gentrification and commercialization practices of the redevelopment of ethnic enclaves. In San Diego, Little Italy has been structured as a BID, with all aspects of the community managed under the purview of the Little Italy Association.

Further study could illuminate how the structure of the BID in Little Italy (and in general) affects individual voice and agency and its implications on democratic aspects (or lack thereof) within the Little Italy community. Consequently, what has the BID structure marginalized (or erased) from the community through its processes and with its outcomes? By the same token, how has this structure contributed to the betterment of San Diego's Little Italy, and how has the BID structure benefited revitalized neighborhoods in general? One noteworthy approach at such an exploration is the Schein (2004) model of organizational culture.

Schein (2004) has stated in noting the intermingling of organizational culture and leadership, calling them “two sides of the same coin” (p. 10):

Cultures begin with leaders who impose their own values and assumptions on a group. If that group is successful and the assumptions come to be taken for granted, we then have a culture that will define for later generations of members what kinds of leadership are acceptable. The culture now defines leadership. (p. 2)

What Schein (2004) has provided is a framework to understand organizational culture and how leadership informs culture and likewise how culture shapes leadership. Schein's framework includes three levels of culture: artifacts, the "visible organizational structures and processes;" espoused beliefs and values, "strategies, goals, philosophies;" and underlying assumptions, "unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings" (p. 26).

Schein's (2004) elaboration on his three levels of culture illustrate how the model could apply to an exploration of the Little Italy Association to better understand its dynamics:

Any group's culture can be studied at these three levels—the level of its artifacts, the level of its espoused beliefs and values, and the level of its basic underlying assumptions. If one does not decipher the pattern of basic assumptions that may be operating, one will not know how to interpret the artifacts correctly or how much credence to give to the articulated values. In other words, the essence of a culture lies in the pattern of basic underlying assumptions, and once one understands those, one can easily understand the other more surface levels and deal appropriately with them. (p. 36)

Through an examination of the Little Italy Association, then, we could gain much insight on how it operates as well as what perceptions exist from outside the organization.

We could also gain scholarship into the business organization's role in employing ethnic sensibility and shaping cultural outcomes. Such an exploration through the Schein model would shed more light on how the Little Italy Association is positioned in the community, how others perceive it, and what it values overall. Further study would also illuminate how the Association has contributed to the creation of Little Italy's changed culture and how the Little Italy Association's culture shapes that culture as well as the impacts on other stakeholders in the community outside of the organization.

Ethnic Cohesion in San Diego's Italian Community

What is getting lost as Little Italy continues to grow as a cultural commodity? Does an economic focus on Little Italy today prove to be an obstacle to heritage preservation? Has the attention given to Little Italy from various stakeholders marginalized the authority of other Italian groups with other types of agendas such as cultural preservation?

An exploration of the level of Italian ethnic cohesion in San Diego would offer insights into how San Diego Italian American groups work together (or face obstacles in finding common ground). This researcher has experience with this subject matter as a nonprofit practitioner, but I have not introduced this data, instead relying on the more formal participant narratives. Suffice it to say that many Italian American groups, clubs, and formal organizations exist in San Diego, yet many of them have faced difficulties in reaching common ground and lacked overall efforts to collaborate, thus hampering a more efficient approach in their work and resulting in a lack of a collective focus as a community.

Furthermore, such an exploration would introduce the concept of in-group and out-group dynamics, which examine group boundaries—a parallel that we can extrapolate from the exploration of ethnic boundaries. This would open up study areas around regionalism and collaboration—thus once again the leadership lens (one that focuses particularly on elements of boundaries and group dynamics) would offer useful information to add to the literature—and contribute data that would offer a fresh look at ethnic communities and redevelopment.

The participants in this study identified people as an important part of their upbringing, not surprisingly. In the case of the Italian neighborhood, however, now that those people are no longer in the community, as one participant noted, “That flavor is gone.” The participant sentiments echo Phinney and Ong’s (2007) notion of “peoplehood” and its component in ethnic identity, a shared culture. It would be interesting to explore what has happened to Italian Americans in San Diego as an ethnic group now that several generations have passed since the first immigrants arrived.

Furthermore, work should be done on the notion of heritage preservation—it means different things to different stakeholders. Ultimately, is there a way to preserve more elements of the Italian neighborhood (or is it too late to do so)? One way is to continue with the collection of oral histories and narrative constructs from current and past residents of the community as well as from others. The discussion of preservation forms a cornerstone of ethnic identity discourse especially as bonds and cultural ties become looser and more ambiguous.

A useful premise is that the history of a community cannot be erased completely. It is still present in the zeitgeist of *place*. As a metaphor we can look to digital media:

Similar to when we obliterate digital data on, say a hard drive, the data still remain in some form, even though for all intents and purposes that data have been wiped clean.

Ultimately, in light of some notable sentiments found in the participant data, the question arises: How do we foster a community of both commodity *and* commemoration in San Diego's Little Italy—one that best serves all voices and interests?

Social Constructions and Perceptions of Others

How do individuals who are now making Little Italy their home, either through residences or retail endeavors, describe the community? How are other Italians (perhaps new arrivals) as well as non-Italian community members defining this community's place in their own lives? Is today's Little Italy less *place* and more *space*? More style over substance? What do visitors to the community have to say about its impact on them?

Naturally, more research is needed to address these questions as the study was delimited to eight Italian American participants. Yet perceptions of others outside the boundary of Italian Americana should also be explored. Others include non-Italian Americans, but it also includes Italians that have moved in (either as residents or entrepreneurs) gaining a foothold in Little Italy and playing an integral part in its re-imagining.

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Appendix

Interview Protocols

The interviews were semistructured and had open-ended questions. The objective was to capture the life histories of the participants. Probes were used as well when needed, but overall the approach was more toward a conversational style.

General guiding probes and questions:

- Tell me about your life growing up.
- What milestones have occurred for you and when?

Guiding probes and questions for some former and current residents:

- Discuss your upbringing in the Italian neighborhood of San Diego.
- How has the neighborhood changed over time?
- Have the changes in the neighborhood influenced your idea of Italian American ethnicity or not? How so?

Guiding probes and questions for all participants:

- What was a typical day like for you in your neighborhood?
- What was the family dynamic like in your home?
- What factors contributed to your sense of belonging within the community?
- How did proximity of other residents affect your upbringing?
- Discuss the importance of social structures to your upbringing (e.g., school, church).
- Discuss elements of the community that stand out for you.

Institutional Review Board Project Action Summary

Action Date: April 24, 2015

Note: Approval expires one year after this date.

Type: ☐ New Full Review ☒ New Expedited Review ☐ Continuation Review ☐ Exempt Review
☐ Modification

Action: ☒ Approved ☐ Approved Pending Modification ☐ Not Approved

Project Number: 2015-04-250

Researcher(s): Thomas J. Cesarini Doc SOLES
Dr. Robert Donmoyer Fac SOLES

Project Title: The Multiple Meanings of San Diego's Little Italy: A Study of the Impact of Real and Symbolic Space and Boundaries on the Ethnic Identities of Nine Italian Americans

Note: We send IRB correspondence regarding student research to the faculty advisor, who bears the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research. We request that the faculty advisor share this correspondence with the student researcher.

Modifications Required or Reasons for Non-Approval

None

The next deadline for submitting project proposals to the Provost's Office for full review is N/A. You may submit a project proposal for expedited review at any time.

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