ASSIMILATION, TRANSNATIONALISM, AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE MOLFETTESE ENCLAVE

IN HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY 1945-1975

“Get an education but don’t change.”

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**Abstract**

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**Chapter 1 THE PROBLEM AND PROCEDURES**

“Get an education but don’t change,” wrote Richard Gambino (1974m pXX) in his biographical text *Blood of my blood: The dilemma of the Italian American* detailing his experiences growing up in an Italian American ethnic enclave in Red Hook, Brooklyn. Gambino recounted the challenges and benefits of growing up in an immigrant household in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. In the chapter, “Childhood and Education,” Gambino explained the mixed messages sent to children in immigrant neighborhoods regarding education:

They [children of Italian American immigrants] are bewildered by the seemingly conflicting desires their parents communicate to them. Get an education but don’t change. Enter the larger world but don’t become part of it. Grow but remain within the mode of tradition. Go to church, even though we are lacking in religious enthusiasm. In short, maintain that difficult balance of conflicts which is the life of a second generation (p. 264).

Italian immigrants struggled with adapting to United States’ culture at varying levels and tried to understand what success and social mobility meant in the United States compared to what it meant within their own families in Italy. Attaining high levels of education was not necessarily an indication of success or social mobility or an indication of intelligence. In part due to unclear messages, as referenced by Gambino, and due to many other obstacles that typically faced immigrants, contemporary accounts over the last 100 years point to uneven levels of educational attainment in the Italian American community. Like other aspects of life, educational attainment is a decision is an individual decision. Determining what contributed to individual immigrants making the decision to further their education is at the heart of this study.

It seems counterintuitive to say, “get an education but don’t change,” because education usually broadens people’s scope of knowledge and skills, and thus change is almost inevitable. Gambino captured the confusion that immigrants felt growing up in Italian American households. He pondered how the confusion was encapsulated in the phrase “Get an education,” to position oneself to be successful in life, “but don’t change,” because Italian culture and values should be maintained. Yet, getting an education often changes an individual’s sense of the world, skill-set, and opportunities, to name a few.

Gambino wrote about his Italian American ethnic enclave in Brooklyn and noted how his enclave and other similar communities were tight-knit and often like-minded. At times, their values conflicted with what would have otherwise been referred to as “American” values at the time (Gambino, 1974). In a general sense, the ethnic enclave is a place where people from the same ethnicity live or work together (Gallo, 1974; Xie & Gough, 2011). The ethnic enclave was a collective that consisted of residents; neighbors from the same native villages in Italy who settled into an ethnic enclave possibly shared the same values, beliefs, superstitions, tradition, cultural and religious customs. Enclave members often formed cultural and civic associations and continued centuries old religious traditions in their enclave communities (Gallo, 1974).

Like other immigrant groups, Italian Americans experienced different processes as part of their immigration journey. For example, some Italian Americans assimilated more quickly to the prevailing United States’ culture; while others held on to networks, traditions, and languages from Italy, their native land. Some experienced immigration by mixing these processes at varying levels (Alba, 2009).

In fact, the theory of assimilation has evolved over the last hundred years or so, along with the process itself. Assimilation theories help researchers explain how immigrants and members of the existing population interact and reconcile their differences and assimilation occurs by the diffusion of values and norms from majority to minority (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Alba (2009) observed that immigrants have assimilated in nuanced and complex ways, which help them to keep more of their traditions and cultural values in place even in their new land. Similarly, transnationalism is defined as a process immigrants undergo in adapting to a new land or home and can involve maintaining networks with individuals in adopted and native lands alive, sending money back-and-forth and continuing traditions from native countries in their new homes (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Contributing to these already complex immigrant processes were ethnic enclaves. These tight-knit communities of immigrants from a similar native land often contrasted traditional American values as transnationalism styles of adapting to their new culture kept immigrants from fully blending with society. An ethnic enclave is sociologically defined as a locality where high concentrations of people from a similar ethnic group live or work together (Gallo, 1974; Xie & Gough 2011). Ethnic enclaves often kept immigrants sheltered as they maintained connections and traditions from their native lands. Coupled with transnationalism characteristics, immigrants often were discouraged from learning the culture and language of their new home (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Further, enclave members shared a value system and a sense of community, and the group often influenced individual members. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that all immigrants had different experiences. Some assimilated while keeping traditions, some abandoned traditions for new ways, some followed the precedents of the other enclave members and some combined some or all of these processes on various levels on a spectrum (Alba, 2009).

How the ethnic enclave influenced assimilation, transnationalism, and educational attainment of a particular Italian American group will be analyzed in the present study. The ethnographic research involves immigrants from the city of Molfetta, Italy who created an ethnic enclave of Hoboken, New Jersey, between 1945 and 1975. The study is designed to explore the ethnic enclave upbringing affected by assimilation, transnationalism tendencies, and the educational attainment of the Italian American immigrants. The study is designed further to examine whether the ethnic enclave, as a collective neighborhood built upon particular values and priorities, influenced members’ assimilation by encouraging or discouraging learning English, leaving the neighborhood, maintaining transnationalism networks and traditions from Molfetta and attaining education.

**Statement of the Problem**

Italian immigrants arrived in large numbers in the late 1800s and early 1900s (Daniels, 2002). Between the years of 1898 and 1923 during the largest wave of Italian migration to the United States, between 337 and 2705 immigrants left Molfetta each year, as part of the initial Italian migration movement (O’Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013). Italian immigration slowed during the two World Wars and during periods of the United States due to isolationist and anti-immigration policies but increased again after World War II (Daniels, 2002).

The study will focus on the approximate 26,000 Molfettese migrants that left Italy after 1952 and before 1970 with some of them arriving in the United States as part of the second wave of Italian - US immigration (Chiarello, Martinelli & Viesti, 2001; O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013). Most of the immigrants from Molfetta who chose to immigrate to the United States between 1952 and 1970, settled in Hoboken, NJ (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013). Hoboken’s proximity to New York City’s harbors made it a convenient location for the thousands of immigrants arriving by ship. Immigrants leaving from Molfetta between 1952 and 1975 joined family members who arrived decades earlier in Hoboken, New Jersey.

Italian immigrants weren’t the only newcomers to Hoboken after 1945. An influx of Puerto Rican immigrants also moved to the “Square Mile” city. As new Italian immigrants joined family members who had settled in Hoboken before or during the World Wars, they tried to assimilate to post-war American life that encouraged immigrants to assimilate and learn English as quickly as possible. Social and political tensions between immigrant groups were high and Puerto Ricans clashed with the police as well (Ziegler-McPherson, 2011).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this ethnographic study is to record the stories of the Molfettesi who migrated to Hoboken, New Jersey in the 30 years after 1945. These individual stories will give voice to the experiences and achievements of this ethnic group and provide illustrations of the sociological/anthropological theories of assimilation, transnationalism, and educational attainment. The theories of assimilation and the theory of transnationalism will be used to guide the study and help explain how the enclave's membership and values affected educational decisions and opportunities. The individual reasons why immigrants decided to further their education are important and do not necessarily cause a family or individual to be successful, assimilated, or intelligent. Rather, discussing whether the enclave’s influence impacted decisions like educational attainment is important when determining if and how this group’s collective and shared values had on decision making in general.

The study of immigrants can be useful for those who study human migration, ethnic enclaves, assimilation, and transnationalism. The study is designed to explore the influence of the ethnic enclave on the assimilation of the Molfettesi migrants into United States’ culture. The study is also designed to explore Italian Americans acculturation and educational attainment through lenses of transnationalism and assimilation.

**History: Molfetta**

To better understand this group of immigrants and why they immigrated, it is important to know the city’s of Molfetta’s history in the context of Italian history in the postwar period when this migration wave occurred. Molfetta, which dates back to ancient times, is in southeastern Italy, in the province of Puglia bordering the Adriatic Sea. Parts of the city are known as Molfetta *vecchia* (old Molfetta) with homes close to each other and very narrow walkways separating buildings (Benigni, 1911; Panunzio, 1921; Talesco, 2011). Newer areas of Molfetta include “Roman style dwellings with wider streets, monuments to Victor Emanuel, Mazzini, Garibaldi, Cavour, a Cathedral (*Duomo Vecchio*)” and *Il Corso* (the course), a large and popular street for stores and shopping (Panunzio, 1921, p. 6), which to the present day remains a place where some of the 59,000 residents go for an evening stroll (*passeggiata*) in impressive outfits. These walks are an especially important part of the town’s social life (Panunzio, 1921; Talesco 2011; R. Minervini , personal communication, February 1, 2020).

In 1861, Molfetta, with approximately 25,000 residents, was the largest fishing port in Puglia with an active fishing community (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013). This activity led to much trade, maritime traffic, and the construction of merchant ships and fishing vessels. Fishermen and fish traders often visited other cities and communities along the Adriatic seas for extended periods of time in the name of their fish trade (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013). Further, craftsmen, locksmiths, shoemakers, and carpenters also visited other cities and communities (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013).

The pursuit of fishing success contributed to a culture of mobility that people from the area of Molfetta felt (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013). In search of trade and work, it was routine for Molfettesi to leave for months at a time to the Balkan areas, ancient Greek ports like Piraeus and Patras, other Mediterranean cities, as well as other communities along the Adriatic Sea (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013). Molfetta saw promising signs of economic expansion until the two world wars decimated the population and the city, which was physically damaged by war bombs (Clio, 2020).

Between the 1960 and 1970s, Molfetta modernized very quickly in the areas of building housing, industries and businesses. Researchers who analyzed the transformation of Molfetta over time surmised that the migrants who left Molfetta had first helped the city become successful over the 50 years. If those migrants had stayed, there would not have been enough resources (food, money, labor) for this densely populated city. Further, immigrants sent money back to their families in Molfetta and these contributions helped financially. The immigrants became a source of assistance rather than a financial burden or drain on already limited resources (Chiarello, Martinelli, Viesti, 2001).

**History: Hoboken**

Hoboken, a small but densely populated city in northern New Jersey, is located about 10 minutes via public transportation from New York City. This small city in Hudson County, New Jersey sits on a flat but low-lying plane and houses many residents with its many high-rise apartments and multi-family dwellings. Sharing the Hudson River with Manhattan, Hoboken’s docks were important to the shipping industry. Beginning in the 1980s and continuing today, Hoboken has become home to many young, urban professionals enjoying the short commute to Manhattan. A square-mile city surrounded by many parks and open space and myriad small businesses, shops, stores, eateries and bars, Hoboken attracts those looking for an urban lifestyle where you can walk or take the multiple methods of mass transportation (Ziegler-McPherson, 2011).

The United States Census reported that in 2019, an estimated 52,677 people lived in Hoboken, NJ with 81% of Hobokenites in 2019 over the age of 25 having earned a Bachelor of Arts degree or higher and 95% of households had at least one computer. The average yearly income of a Hoboken resident in 2019 was $147,000 and the average cost of each home was $720,700 (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Hoboken city, New Jersey, 2021).

However, the demographics and socio-economic conditions were not always like this in Hoboken. In the years between 1840 and 1920 Hoboken saw mass migration until World War I. Some of the millions of immigrants who passed through Hoboken’s ports stayed, increasing the population of German, Irish, English then Italian, Russian, Scandinavian communities. After World War II, more Italians arrived along with Puerto Ricans (Ziegler-McPherson, 2011).

Hoboken’s Irish community observed their Roman Catholicism differently thus creating some tension between the two groups in the early 1900s (Ziegler-McPherson, 2011). Hoboken’s Irish American settlers focused on politics, while their German American immigrants promoted German churches, schools, language programs and their culture which revolved around alcohol, music, and social organizations until the start of World War I (Ziegler-McPherson, 2011). Puerto Rican newcomers defined themselves primarily through their Spanish language yet settled in Hoboken after World War II when there was immense social pressure to “Americanize” and speak English (Ziegler-McPherson, 2011).

In the late 1960s, 50,000 people lived within its square mile boundaries. At this time, most of Hoboken’s elder population were of Irish or Italian descent and worked in manufacturing, trucking the docks, and a large coffee processing plant (Bondarin, 1969). Some worked in the city municipal office or the school system. Between 1953 and 1969, the Hoboken School system consisted of mostly Puerto Rican students with smaller percentages of students with Italian or Yugoslavian backgrounds (Bondarin, 1969).

In the 1960s and 1970s, Italian Americans and other US-born Hobokenites often clashed with Puerto Ricans over race, national identity, and class. Hoboken’s changing workforce and job opportunities further alienated them as working-class Puerto Ricans had difficulty finding work as the area became gentrified, the docks closed, and other industries closed in the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The Puerto Rican population of Hoboken became elderly, and many lived in subsidized housing (Ziegler-McPherson, 2011).

Hoboken’s Italian and Italian American communities created lasting religious traditions, including devout festivals that paid homage to the patron saints of native villages in Italy (Ziegler-McPherson, 2011). Molfettese immigrants, in particular, left a legacy in Hoboken by leaving behind religious shrines and statues by their front stoops but their lasting legacy is the almost-century-old Madonna dei Martiri religious festival that occurs every September in Hoboken (Carlson, et al., 2007).

Once the Immigration Act of 1965 eliminated quotas established by the National Origins Act of 1929, Hoboken’s Italian American community began to increase again. An Italian American living in the United States could now sponsor and send for Italian relatives wishing to emigrate to the United States, thus more immigrants to the United States came from Italy than any other country in the 1970s. Approximately 11,000 Italian born residents in Hoboken made up almost 25% of the city’s total population and about 50% of the foreign-born population (Ziegler-McPhearson, 2011).

This large influx of Italian immigrants mostly joined already existing Italian ethnic enclaves, including those enclave communities in Hoboken. These enclaves were, in a sense, revived since earlier generations of Italian Americans had become assimilated after World War II forced many to feel proud and patriotic feelings toward the US (Ziegler-McPherson, 2011).

Hudson County continued to be a hub for immigrants into the 1970s. Of the approximately 609,000 residents of Hudson County, 42.5% were immigrants with many of them from Italy or Cuba. In Hoboken, of the approximately 45,390 residents in 1970, 7,835 were of Italian descent (The New York Times, 1972). Today, approximately 81% of Hoboken residents are considered white as the population has grown five percent between the years of 2010 and 2019 (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Hoboken city, New Jersey, 2021).

**Theoretical Perspectives**

This study is designed to examine Molfettese Americans through the lenses of several theoretical perspectives. It could be argued, given that many Italian Americans kept close connections with their native land, the families in their ethnic enclaves and their behavior showed characteristics of transnationalism and assimilation (Gabaccia, 2013). Alba (2009) suggested that Italian Americans redefined the traditionally understood concept of assimilation by not becoming exact copies of other Americans, nor did they remain exactly the same as when they arrived. Migration may have changed them. Following this redefinition, Italian Americans assimilated without surrendering aspects of their cultural and traditional identity, unlike some Irish and some German settlers from the late 20th century who more quickly embraced their new land and culture (Alba & Nee, 2009; Connell & Pugliese, 2018).

By becoming “American,” different immigrant groups have found varying levels of success in the United States, including high-paying jobs, establishing families, and/or achieving high levels of education. Educational attainment can be a goal of families who immigrate to the United States. Schooling affects the current and future well-being of an immigrant child and can increase chances of success in the future. Children who do well in school often acquire the skills needed to find their ways to promising opportunities. For immigrant children, school can greatly help them to navigate their new society meaningfully (Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Educational attainment generally opens otherwise closed doors, and historically the United States has been a country that allowed for such mobility (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). How Italian Americans and specifically Molfettese Americans became “American” will be researched in this study.

***Ethnic Enclaves***

An ethnic enclave is defined as a place where a high concentration of people from a similar ethnic group lives or works together (Gallo, 1974; Xie & Gough 2011). The number of enclaves grew in the United States after the 1965 immigration laws allowed immigrants from many nations to enter if they were connected with family. Chain migration aided in the growth of these communities, as relatives in the United States helped their family members by encouraging them to move into the area, sometimes on the same block (Gallo, 1974). Many immigrants from Latin America and Asia entered the United States after 1965 (Xie, 2011).

Italian enclaves formed around the United States in Boston, New York, Buffalo, Philadelphia and Chicago (Connell & Pugliese, 2018). According to data from the years between 1958 and 1969, 71.8% of the Italian American immigrants who settled in the United States lived in the New England and Middle Atlantic states (Gallo, 1974). In these same years, 13.6% of Italians Americans lived in Jersey City, NJ representing a considerable proportion of Italian Americans (Gallo, 1974).

When immigrants arrived in the United States, they often lacked skills to survive in the competitive labor market and thus tended to be forced to survive in a secondary labor market with less economic opportunities as secondary labor markets often restricted individuals from choices, activities, and situations that were available to those in the primary, more skilled labor market (Xie, 2011). Therefore, immigrant studies scholars believe there is a third labor market for those who worked in ethnic enclaves and called this the “ethnic thesis.” While research on this theory is still mixed, some evidence suggests that immigrants benefit from working in ethnic enclaves. Researchers have been examining this issue since the 1990s (Xie, 2011).

Like the Molfettese Hoboken community, ethnic enclaves allowed new members to survive and feel secure while allowing immigrants to adjust to life in their new land (Gallo, 1974). Once an immigrant group began living in a place, others from the same group followed, and these additional people continued to reinforce the cultural distinctiveness of the enclave (Clark, 2006). This enclave had characteristics of Italian and American life. Further, the small businesses located within these enclaves were successful because of the patronage of the group’s inhabitants (Clark, 2006). Strong feelings of attachment to their home village and native culture combined with uniquely American aspects stayed alive in these enclaves. The villages’ dialect was often heard spoken in the streets and evolved to include American slang and English phrases as well (Connell & Pugliese, 2018).

The enclave provided security and familiarity to the new immigrants (Puleo, 1994). However, the comfort of the enclave also encouraged the immigrants to delay or slow their efforts to learn the English language, although children and young people eventually learned English. A typical enclave was a safe haven for immigrants who might have experienced not being accepted by the majority population of their adopted nation. The enclave neighborhood, complete with dwellings, stores, clubs, churches, was often in the center of the city (Gallo, 1974). Since the enclave operated independently, to a degree, from the outside world and provided work and services internally, a strong need or desire to learn English was minimized. While this left enclave members comfortable, it also promoted a stereotype that they were different or needed to be feared. These thoughts lead to a culture of discrimination against Italian Americans (Puleo, 1994). The ethnic enclave was thought to be a stage in the process of assimilation, as sometimes immigrants passed through the enclave before moving to the suburbs (Clark, 2006).

Italians Americans left the ethnic enclave when work opportunities changed, when they could no longer run bakeries, factories, or other jobs that depended on the enclave for support (Connell & Pugliese, 2018). Youth from the enclave had few choices as their options, some chose to advance their education to obtain a white-collar job, even though education was not encouraged in the Italian American enclave, others sought a trade job through the connection of a fellow enclave member. But as the enclave began to break down, so did the jobs that were once considered automatic options (Alba & Nee, 2009).

Academic research first appearing in the 1970s showed that not all Italian enclaves were the same. Some enclave members were more transient than others, leaving the enclave more frequently and readily. Some enclave members encouraged inhabitants to assimilate to the United States’ culture more quickly. For example, migrants from the Sicilian village of Termini Imerese helped their neighbors, but more often encouraged newly arriving people to move out to other areas. The stronger the enclave ties were, the longer the enclave survived (Connell & Pugliese, 2018).

According to Milione, DeRosa, Pelizzoli (2011) Italian immigrants learned English at a slower pace than other immigrants and kept their children away from schools at higher rates than other ethnic groups. The Italian American enclave members did not prioritize academia or education like they did home ownership or financial independence (Milione, DeRosa, Pelizzoli, 2011). Students saw their family members as role models who worked primarily within the enclave or in blue-collar occupations. The prevailing pattern was that their children would follow in the family trade as a bricklayer or store owner. The grandfather who owned property would eventually bequeath it to next of kin. These options gave young people enough security to preclude completing high school or furthering their education in the 1900s (Milione, DeRosa, Pelizzoli, 2011).

Lack of knowledge about the school system in addition to the perceptions of the enclave contributed to Italian Americans having the third highest dropout rates in the 1980s and 1990s in New York City (Milione, DeRosa, Pelizzoli, 2011). The extent that the ethnic enclave did or did not encourage education affected the Molfettese-Hoboken community will be a central focus of his study.

***Assimilation***

Becoming part of a new country often starts with assimilation, a series of choices made by immigrants to reconcile the cultural values and norms of their native land with those of their new land (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). First defined by Gordon (1961) as an umbrella theory, assimilation encompassed many other sub-theories employed to describe immigrants’ adaptation to their new lands. As newcomers joined an already existing environment, they caused a change in their own culture and sometimes in their new culture, but assimilation helped resettle that balance, so the existing population felt comfortable again (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). As immigrants learned more about their new home, misperceptions and feelings of alienation dissipated, and sometimes they developed a more tolerant and accepting attitude. In turn, the host population also adopted some of the new culture’s food, language, and religious practices, and thus often became more welcoming toward them. These mutual movements of groups toward each other generated more social and economic opportunities. The degree to which an immigrant became part of the new society impacted language acquisition, job opportunity, educational attainment, and many other measures of success (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Throughout history, waves of immigrants from all over the world have settled in the United States. Theorists who followed the classical assimilation model felt that the Irish, German, Italian Polish and Jewish immigrants who arrived during the late 19th century, would eventually lose their ethnic identities while becoming “American.” This theory is also known as one-directional assimilation or straight-line assimilation as the process was once-considered one-sided with the immigrant doing the bulk of the adapting. The theory continues to hold that those who assimilate more quickly avail themselves of more opportunities (Feldmeyer, 2018).

Critics of this model believe that the theory, while dominant for almost fifty years, is now outdated for various reasons including being an ambiguous theory “light” on specific processes and details. Further, this theory relies on immigrant groups, which are also usually minority groups, eventually “wanting” to lose the culture of their native land and fully immerse themselves in the culture of the new nation, which is not always the case. Critics also pointed out that the newcomer tends to change but so does the host culture, a point not described in the classical assimilation theory. European groups that entered the United States in the late 1900s from Germany, Italy and Poland seemed to have shed their native heritage by following the classical assimilation model but immigrants who arrived after 1965 have maintained their cultures and traditions. The classical assimilation model also describes how immigrants moved to the inner city or ethnic enclave but on their journey toward assimilation later moved to the suburbs; however, it is now noted that that is not always the case (Feldmeyer, 2011). Last, critics like Alba (2009) and Felmeyer (2011) pointed out that assimilation and mobility are not always related. Classical assimilation theorists believed that immigrants would discover more financial and economic opportunity if they followed this straight-line theory, but it is now more understood that that is not always the case and there are variations within the immigrant experience (Feldmeyer, 2011).

Overall, the Italian American assimilation experience disproved the theory of a “one-way process” of acculturation, which involved immigrants’ accepting the Anglo-Saxon middle-class culture and cutting ties with any cultural values of their native lands (Alba & Nee, 2009). Italian Americans created a new, modern version of assimilation by not achieving closeness to the “core,” as they retained many social and cultural traditions, identities and even stereotypes from their native homeland (Alba, 2009). Also, oftentimes values, behaviors and languages evolved. This new and adapted version of assimilation is sometimes referred to by sociologists as neo-assimilation (Alba & Nee, 2009). Italian Americans have made their assimilation a two-way process by bringing food to the United States menu, adding Italian words to the American English language, and transporting their particular Roman Catholic traditions to the United States. Mixing in transnational characteristics, Italian Americans redefined assimilation and thus have forged a new path for future immigrant groups. Research supports the idea that Italians in other countries assimilated to other host nations’ cultures more quickly than did Italians who came to the United States. Although the United States was accustomed to receiving immigrant groups from Germany, England and Ireland, the Italian immigrants seemed to be the first European migrant group to resist a quick version of assimilation (Alba & Nee, 2009).

Specifically, Italian Americans who immigrated after World War II, experienced assimilation differently than had Italian Americans who immigrated in the early 1900s in part due to more welcoming legislation, postwar transportation improvements, and easier means to communicate (Alba & Nee, 2009). They did not lose connections to their ethnicity, kept family memories, retained personal identities and stayed connected with native lands and family members. Using this modern definition of assimilation, Alba and Nee (2009) noted that immigrants in the process of assimilating do not separate their familiar social and cultural norms from the mainstream society. Rather, they reconciled the two by maintaining aspects of their native culture and learning to live in the new society (Alba & Nee, 2009). The extent to which the Molfettese-Hoboken community assimilated as traditionally defined or re-defined by Alba will be discussed in this study

***Transnationalism***

As a multidirectional theory of immigration, transnationalism defines a pattern that begins when immigrant groups initially work toward creating a life in their new land, and after they have achieved a level of security; they reconnect with their native land in various ways (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).Transnationalism developed in the early 1900s but rapidly growing since the 1980s, helps researchers explain how some immigrant groups reconcile their native lands’ cultural norms, values, and tradition as they adapt to their new land (Vertovec, 2009; Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Portes (2001) defined transnationalism as a process created by immigrants to sustain social, economic, and political relations between their societies of origin and their new homes (2001). Examples of these social transnational connections include creating hometown civic associations, establishing enterprises importing/exporting goods to and from their native lands, and founding annual hometown festivals in their new residences (Portes, 2001). Further, transnationalism explains a resiliency that came with migrants who left and returned to the native land multiple times, sometimes maintaining two homes and sending money back to their family. Research has found that back-and-forth migration increased with the immigrant’s education, income and legal status (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). The extent to which the Molfettese-Hoboken community created cultural and religious organizations and clubs, sent goods like oil, fabric, pasta back and forth and visited their homelands often will be considered in this study.

The Italian American immigrants displayed myriad characteristics of transnationalism. Before it was a unified nation, Italy was a country of small villages and its inhabitants were loyal to that area (Gabaccia, 1999). Since many migrants from the various villages in Italy planned to re-settle back to their native land after they have earned money, the migrants felt little connection to their host land and it was only when women arrived to the new land did their stay become more permanent as children were born in their adopted lands (Gabaccia, 1999). These patterns displayed characteristics of transnationalism including connecting Italy’s villages with their new land through family, work and consciousness (Gabaccia, 1999).

Studying Italian migration around the world reveals deep roots in transnationalism. Connecting family, work, and networks in more than one nation was a normal way of life for Italians and Italian Americans in the 19th and 20th centuries. Since Italians throughout human history have migrated to lands all around the globe and throughout Europe, they have set up communities all over the world. These transnationalism communities were set up in South America, Switzerland, Australia, and the United States, to name a few (Baldassar & Gabaccia, 2011). There are organizations, such as AltreItalie, dedicated to keeping Italians who migrated to countries all over the world connected (Gabaccia, 2013).

As a way to keep ethnic traditions alive, transnationalism can limit an immigrant’s assimilation in the new country, but research on this point is mixed. Portes and Rumbaut (2014) argued that first-and second-generation immigrants can assimilate while keeping connections with their native country alive. Transnationalism is a bridge that successfully integrates a group to its adopted culture (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). The extent that the Molfettese-Hoboken community maintained connections with their native land will be a fourth focus of this study.

**Research Questions**

To better understand the influences that the enclave can have on assimilation, transnationalism, and educational attainment on a particular group of immigrants, the researcher created the following questions. Through a questionnaire survey and interviews with representative individuals from Molfetta who lived in Hoboken between 1945 and 1975, this study will analyze the influence of the enclave on assimilation, transnationalism and education attainment.

RQ1. How do the stories of the Molfettese Americans who settled in Hoboken, New Jersey between 1945 and 1975 illustrate the theory of assimilation and/or transnationalism?

RQ2. How do Molfettese Americans living in this ethnic enclave between 1945 and 1975 believe their experiences affected their educational attainments?

**Significance of the Study**

A thorough review of literature has demonstrated that the Molfettese American migration and their educational attainment in the United States have not been thoroughly studied. This study will extend the study of Italian Americans by focusing on the history of Molfettese Americans in the decades after World War II. It is important to understand why and how people from one particular city in Italy moved in such large numbers after World War II to one city in New Jersey. Did this adopted community function as an ethnic enclave? If so, how did the enclave affect assimilation, transnationalism, and education attainment of the Molfettesi who settled in Hoboken, NJ? This ethnographic study of the Molfettesi in Hoboken will extend research on ethnic constructs. Its findings might also yield recommendations regarding the acculturation and education of contemporary immigrant groups, such as various Hispanic groups that have formed ethnic enclaves in northern New Jersey.

Researchers on Italian American immigration have focused on the migration of the first wave between 1880 and 1920. The wave of immigration after World War II should not be considered a vestige of the first wave of the early 1900s, but should be studied independently (Battisti, 2019). This study will reference the first Italian immigrant wave as their immigration experience to the United States made it possible for other Italian immigrants to join in the later decades but will focus on the immigrants who arrived in the United States between 1945 and 1975. While very little documented literature can be found on this second immigration wave, it was the second largest migration of people from Italy to the United States (Ruberto & Sciorra, 2017).

Further, there are many studies, books, novels, movies and memoirs on the migration of people from the Sicilian, Molise or Calabrian provinces. Much can also be found on the migration from the northern regions of Italy as well. However, very little research can be found on the immigration of people from Molfetta or the province of Puglia.

This study will help provide insight on the impact that the ethnic enclave had on the educational attainment of this population. Also, the information obtained will provide insight on the Molfettese-Hoboken ethnic enclave, and/or if the enclave members followed the theory of transnationalism and assimilation.

**Limitations and delimitation**

Limitations may include personal bias that this researcher may hold being part of the Molfettese-Hoboken subgroup, as a second-generation immigrant. Further, considering this study is of a small subgroup of a greater Italian American immigration group, and a much smaller subgroup of U.S. immigrants, it will be difficult to generalize its findings.

The delimitation of this study includes the theoretical perspectives chosen and the variables. This researcher chose to analyze the influence of the ethnic enclave on educational attainment by also considering levels of assimilation and transnationalism. Other acculturation theories exist but assimilation, neo-assimilation, and transnationalism are the most referenced theories for Italian immigrants to the United States.

**Definition of Key Terms**

The following terms are defined for use in this study.

Educational attainment

A term commonly used by statisticians to refer to the highest level of education an individual has completed as defined by the United States Census Bureau Glossary (Bureau, 2021).

Immigration Act of 1924 (Johnson–Reed Act)

Also known as the “Johnson-Reed Immigration Act.” Limited the annual number of immigrants who could be admitted from any country to two percent of the number of people from that country who were already living in the United States according to the 1890 census, thus limited immigration from southern and Eastern Europe.

Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (The McCarran-Walter Act)

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 upheld the national origins quota system established by the Immigration Act of 1924, reinforcing this controversial system of immigrant selection. It also ended Asian exclusion from immigrating to the United States and introduced a system of preferences based on skill sets and family reunification. At the basis of the Act was the continuation and codification of the National Origins Quota System. It revised the 1924 system to allow for national quotas at a rate of one-sixth of one percent of each nationality’s population in the United States in 1920.

Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart–Celler Act)

This act removed the quota system based on national origins imposed by the Immigration act of 1924. There was a restriction on visas at 170,000 per year, with a per country-of-origin quota, but there were preference categories for visas depending on the skills of immigrants and their family relationships with citizens or United States residents. Immediate relatives of United States citizens had no restrictions.

Paese

A person’s hometown or town of origin. A paesano is a person from the same hometown.

Molfettese

Person from Molfetta

Molfettesi

People from Molfetta

Molfettese American

Person with roots from Molfetta currently living in the United States

Molfettesi-American

People with roots from Molfetta currently living in the United States

Pugliese

Person from Puglia

Pugliesi

People from Puglia

**Summary**

This ethnographic study will consider how the Molfettese-Hoboken ethnic enclave community, who settled in Hoboken, NJ between the years of 1945 and 1975 impacted the levels of assimilation, transnationalism, and educational attainment.

Historically immigrants have left indelible marks on their new lands and their absence has positively and negatively impacted their native lands as well. Italians who migrated to the United States brought with them values, traditions, languages in an attempt to keep “old ways” alive while some abandoned all they knew to blend into a new culture as quickly as possible.

Italian enclaves usually consisted of immigrants from a particular town or region in Italy (Carielli & Grosso, 2013). Similarly, the majority of Molfettesi immigrants settled in Hoboken creating their ethnic enclave. Italians who migrated to the United States assimilated within the United States less quickly than those from other countries and displayed transnational tendencies as they kept networks with their native land alive and maintained traditions.

**Chapter 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This chapter will include a review of literature on immigration patterns and trends of Molfetta, Italy and a literature review of ethnic enclaves, assimilation, transnationalism and educational attainments. Not included in this review are immigration theories including push-pull, micro and macroeconomics theories. Also absent are sub-theories of assimilation like segmented or downward assimilation or the Chicago School of Assimilation (Alba & Nee, 2009; Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Push-pull is a command theory generally used to explain economic, political and social reasons for immigrants to leave one country to another. A manifestation of push-pull would be when a country experiences “brain drain” as educated or skilled professionals leave a country with a low number of available jobs for another country with a higher number of available jobs (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Similar to push-pull theory is an economic immigration theory called macroeconomics where immigrants without job opportunities flee to countries with more abundant economic opportunities. Microeconomics is based on a similar immigrantion pattern but focuses more on the individual’s intent to immigrate after weighing the cost-benefit analysis of the journey (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Segmented assimilation theorizes how different subgroups of a similar immigrant group assimilate to different levels of society. Downward assimilation finds the second generation of the immigrant group in a less successful position than their first generation parents. Both of these theories more appropriately apply to the children of immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

In the first half of the 1900s, researchers of the Chicago School of assimilation suggested that immigrants would gradually assimilate to the dominant American culture and structure and with each successive generation, migrants would take on American ways while losing parts of their native land’s culture, traditions, and identity. Criticized by contemporary researchers, this original model of assimilation was once the dominant theory of immigrant adaptation for almost fifty years (Feldmeyer, 2018). Other theories include an assimilation process that involves more exchange between new and existing cultures and more of a blending of lifestyles as immigrants continue to settle in the United States, detailing that immigrants are not the only group that adapts and changes during the immigration process. The existing culture adapts as well (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

After a thorough review of literature, this researcher felt the theories of assimilation, neo-assimilation and transnationalism were most closely reflective of the Italian American and Molfettese-Hoboken immigration experiences and therefore those theories were more prominently researched.

Further, due to the limited amount of research on Molfetta and its people via United States’ journals and sources, this researcher used published articles and scholarly documents from Italian and European sources, in originally published English or translated from Italian by the researcher. Nevertheless, there were few available research items on immigrants from Molfetta and therefore this study was conducted to close these gaps in literature and provide research specifically on Molfettese Americans.

**Italian Immigration**

Italians turned to immigration in large numbers during the period of 1861-1985 when over 26 million people emigrated, averaging 3.4 million per decade between 1875 and 1928 and two million between 1929 and 1975 (Del Boca & Venturini, 2003). Between 1875 and 1928, 17 million Italians emigrated abroad, and between 1929 and 1985 nine million Italians left Italy (Del Boca & Venturini, 2003). Approximately a quarter of all Italians migrated (Del Boca & Venturini, 2003).

Southern Italy had become overpopulated, as its population increased from 6.9 million in 1871 to 10.1 million in 1936 and 11.9 million in 1951 (Dickinson, 1955). The economy was stagnant, but the population increased by five million between those years. Despite high numbers of migration, the agricultural productivity remained virtually unchanged (Dickinson, 1955). This economic flatness compounded the already existing problems and made it increasingly difficult to feed an expanding population. Further, the fishing industry and environment became depleted by the end of the 19th century and fisher mongers had to travel farther than in the past to North Africa and east of the Mediterranean Sea to find fish. This contributed to the outward migration of the late 19th century and early 20th century ((McKibben, 2010).

Throughout Europe, the Industrial Revolution left artisans, including Italian artisans, without work. It also increased agricultural production and urbanization and therefore, agricultural laborers had to now find different ways to earn money (Buliga, 2016). These reasons forced Italians to search for better opportunities in other European countries and overseas (Del Boca & Venturini, 2003). Pamphlets and flyers about prosperity in the United States from travel agents looking to profit off desperate and ignorant Italians encouraged them to migrate across the Atlantic Ocean (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013; Buliga, 2016). Politics, too, caused some migration by forcing some into exile (Buliga, 2016). In fact, a historian, political and eventual Harvard professor Gaetano Salvemini, born in Molfetta, Italy, found himself exiled to the United States by Benito Mussolini’s Fascist dictatorship in 1927 (Killinger, 2002).

Immigration between Italy and the United States during World Wars I & II slowed to a halt. In the three decades following World War II, immigration increased again. Although Italian immigration to the United States saw drastically smaller numbers than at the turn of the 20th century, over seven million Italians migrated between 1945 and 1975, fleeing Italy’s fractured political and economic systems after the fascist dictatorship of Mussolini fell (Ruberto & Sciorra, 2017). Unemployment in Italy rose to 1.6 million people in 1947 (Ruberto & Sciorra, 2017). During these three post-World War II decades, tens of thousands of Italians moved to northern Italian cities, northern European countries, Australia, Argentina, Canada, Venezuela and the United States. While very little documented literature can be found regarding this immigration wave, it was nonetheless the second largest Italian migration movement to destinations all over the world (Ruberto & Sciorra, 2017).

After the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, Italian immigration to the United States grew again when 10,821 immigrants arrived in 1965 and 25,154 in 1966. These numbers grew until the 1970s (Ruberto & Sciorra, 2017). From the 1970s and continuing today, Italian immigrants still migrate around the world in smaller and inconsistent numbers compared to earlier waves. Italian immigration to the United States began to sharply decline in the 1970s as Italy began to experience an economic boom, especially in the northern areas, as Italian goods became trendy and tourism expanded (Ruberto & Sciorra, 2017).

**Puglia Immigration**

Despite sharing agricultural and economic problems with other parts of southern Italy, people from Puglia (*Pugliesi*) did not leave the area at the same rates as did people from other regions. Only 50,000 people from Puglia migrated in the first wave (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013). In the years immediately following World War I, the number of Italians who left Puglia reached a new high in 1913 as people sought to escape political unrest in Puglia. However, when the world became embroiled in a global economic crisis in the late 1920s, again, few left Puglia (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013). Seven thousand people left in 1922, and only 2000 left in 1928. These immigration numbers continued to decline through the 1930s, dropping to insignificant levels during World War II (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013).

World War II decimated war-torn fishing and trading ports, producing an increased poverty and insufficient food supply (Talesco, 2011), and thus, in the years following the war, Puglia emigration would increase again, reaching a new high of 70,000 natives leaving in 1962 alone. Between the years of 1946-1976, Puglia had the third highest number of departures among the other Italian regions, following only Campania and Veneto (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013). These Pugliesi left for other European cities, northern Italian cities and Australia that had stronger economies and more job opportunities than did Italy (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013, Talesco 2011).

Between the years of 1876-1976, Puglia saw the highest rates of migration during 1913, 1920, 1957 and 1966. The rates of immigration in these years coincide with the first wave (1913, 1920) and the second wave (1957, 1966). Also, these peak numbers related to the United States immigration policies, World Wars and the economic problems in Puglia. Immigration rates were high when United States immigration policies were more favorable for immigrants and economic problems were more desperate. Immigration slowed during the world wars (King, Mortimer & Strachan, 1983).

**Molfetta Immigration**

The migration history of the Molfettesi people was different from the migration history of those from other parts of Italy. More Molfettesi left after 1945 than they did in the 19th century (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013). Despite the agricultural, fishing and economic challenges, the percentage of immigrants leaving Molfetta was small compared to those who left other regions. By the first decade of the 1900s, 60% of Molfettesi immigrants left for the United States, while 30% left for Argentina and the rest landed in Brazil with a few venturing to South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. During the 1920s, approximately 600-700 Molfettesi people migrated per year (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013). Of these Molfettesi migrants, 35% of them were farmers (*contadini),* 20% were workers in field building, artisans, mechanics, shoemakers, pasta makers and about 25% were fishermen and sailors (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013). Immigration numbers dropped drastically by half in the 1930s as the world was suffering from a global economic crisis. Yet in 1938 and 1939, over a thousand Molfettesi left with 300 of them settling in other countries including Italian colonies in North Africa. World War II stopped all immigration to and from Molfetta (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013).

Many people from Molfetta migrated after the end of World War II (Chiarello, Martinelli, Viesti, 2001). World War II had destroyed the economy of Molfetta. Industries had closed, maritime trade had ceased, and the fishing industry was taken over by the occupying armed forces. Immigration seemed like one of the only viable options available. Women joined the immigration waves as well, something that did not happen at the turn of the 20th century. In the past, men or young boys had emigrated alone, leaving their families to search for work but planning to return; however, World War II had left many young widows who now wanted to join family members abroad (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013). Molfettesi people migrated all over the world and left for the United States in greater proportions than they had during the turn of the century wave.

The United States, in 1952 and 1965, gave Molfettesi people two more reasons to consider emigration. In 1952, the United States passed the McCarran-Walter Act, which relaxed the immigration quotas. In 1965, the United States passed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act (Waters, at al., 2009). The Act of 1965 overhauled the United States immigration system and legislation gave highly skilled immigrants an opportunity to enter the United States and allowed for people with families already in the United States to immigrate ("Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 | US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives", 2020).

Since some Molfettesi had immigrated to the United States in the previous immigration wave, many other Molfettesi were now able to reconnect with relatives who had already settled in the United States. These United States policy changes resulted in this new influx of chain migration, which contributed to a new sense of transnationalism and infused the already existing ethnic enclave with new inhabitants. Existing enclaves expanded and replenished after 1965 as new migrants arrived for more permanent settlements (McKibben, 2010).

**Ethnic Enclaves**

Italian immigrants created ethnic enclaves upon arrival into the United States. They settled in almost every state and territory in the United States and approximately half of them lived in the south, specifically in Louisiana near New Orleans. However, approximately 97 % of Italians who immigrated from 1880-1920 passed through the New York harbor, and many of them settled in the New York area (Daniels, 2002). Many of these immigrants lived near each other in the ethnic enclaves of Brooklyn, Queens, Richmond, Bensonhurst (Daniels, 2002; Alba & Nee, 2009). These immigrants found work primarily in the manual labor/construction sector. Some sold goods with a pushcart (Daniels, 2002).

According to Hatton and Williamson (1998), studies have shown that migrants from a given village or city often followed a path created by earlier emigrants to new lands. For example, “[Paterson], New Jersey; [Noordeloos], Michigan; Pella, Iowa and South Holland Illinois became the home of more than 90% of Dutch immigrants from the province of Zuid Holland” (Hatton & Williamson, 1998, p. 17).

*Mount Allegro: A memoir of Italian American life* documented the Mangione’s Sicilian enclave in Rochester, New York while Richard Gambino’s “Blood of my blood” studied a Sicilian ethnic enclave in the Red Hook area in Brooklyn, NY (Mangione, 1998; Gambino, 2000). Sociologist William Foote Whyte studied Italian Americans and wrote that enclave members interacted with the neighborhood in a dependent way (Connell & Pugliese, 2018). Herbert Gans described the enclaves of the 1950s as “closed and self-referential” as the inhabitants were consumed by their own neighborhoods and resistant to the values of the American values of individualism and competitiveness. He surmised they were incapable of interacting with the greater society (Connell & Pugliese, 2018).

Some enclaves from the 1930s remained intact through the 1950s and 1960s, but by the 1980s and 1990s, many Italian American enclaves began to disappear. Italian American ethnic enclaves, such as Little Italy’s Mulberry Street in Manhattan, have mostly disappeared as second and third generations of Italian Americans moved away from the enclave upon finding success in the United States (Cinotto, 2013; Clark, 2006). Many of these neighborhood members saw their next generation move to the suburbs. In 1980, Bensonhurst boasted an Italian American population of 150,000 people, as Italian Americans comprised 60 to 90% of the general population of the area. A decade later, the Italian American population had dropped to 100,000, and today Bensonhurst has become the home of new immigrant groups (Alba & Nee, 2009). Factors leading to the end of the enclaves included the pursuit of educational opportunities and new work industries, marriage outside of the ethnicity and the personal decision to move from the enclave (Connell & Pugliese, 2018).

*Beyond Cannery Row: Sicilian Women, Immigration, and Community in Monterey, California, 1915-99,* was an ethnographic study of an ethnic enclave in Monterey, California. Like the Molfettese-Hoboken enclave, this Sicilian-Monterey ethnic enclave also followed transnational characteristics (McKibben, 2010). McKibben studied how this group worked, lived, interacted and socialized with each other over the three generations that they have lived in Monterey. The researcher noted that these enclave members were very close to their kin in their native Sicily, traveling frequently between the two nations for purposes of visiting family and friends or arranging marriages. During World War II, when the United States and Italy were on opposing ends of the conflict, members of this Sicilian-Monterey enclave remained neutral but they were concerned as to whether they would still be able to visit each other, send goods, and maintain their network. These fluid and intergenerational connections allowed members to feel at home in both Sicily and Monterey, as politics, conflicts and concerns of their countries were secondary to their trusted inter-connected communities. The migrants themselves changed and they changed Monterey as well (McKibben, 2010).

The immigrants from Molfetta who arrived in the United States between 1945 and 1975 primarily settled in Hoboken, New Jersey, which at the time was known as “the Molfetta of America'' (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013). Native-born Molfettese and eventual Harvard professor Gaetano Salvemini stumbled upon the Molfetta-Hoboken enclave in 1929 establishing its early and decades-long existence (Chiarello, Martinelli, Viesti, 2001). Even in contemporary Hoboken, while many Molfettesi-Hobokenites have moved to other parts of New Jersey or the United States, vestiges of the legacy created and preserved by those descendants of the immigration who reside near Hoboken and the community associations can be found. Italian immigrants from other villages such as Monte San Giacomo, Vallo di Diano and Caggiano also settled in Hoboken in the 1900s (P. O’Boyle, personal communication, January 4, 2021).

Migrants from villages in Italy, like the Molfettesi, felt attached to their dialect and land in Italy but also wanted a connection to their new country, creating a transnational connection (Gabaccia, 2013; Carnevale, 2010; Vertovec, 2009). The *paese* was the center of most overseas migrants’ social circles and satisfied their senses of belonging, intimacy, and community(Gabaccia, 2013). Many Italians were still speaking their village or *paese* dialects at the time of earlier and later immigration waves and were not speaking Italian yet (Carnevale, 2010). Molfettesi brought their dialect to Hoboken between 1945 and 1975. Still today, the dialect can be heard at the 11:00am Italian mass at Hoboken’s St. Francis Church, a mass mostly attended by Molfettese Americans who used to live in Hoboken.

When Molfettesi-Americans settled in Hoboken, they quickly brought to the United States their religious traditions, including honoring the Molfettese patron saint. Carrying a statue of the patron saint, the Madonna dei Martiri, during a procession and subsequent festival was an imported and important tradition. Molfettese in Hoboken felt continuing this tradition was important and served as a way to continue to be connected to their native homes, culture and tradition (Christie, 2002). Although the Hoboken festival is much smaller in terms of population, the event’s itinerary including a boat parade, music and a street procession with statue and religious leaders who visit the Hoboken festival from Molfetta often say the festival’s spirit is comparable to the spirit of Molfetta’s version (R. Minervini , personal communication, February 1, 2020).

In 1927, the Society Madonna Dei Martini was organized and based at St. Ann’s Parish, but now is sponsored by St. Francis Parish in Hoboken (Ziegler-McPherson, 2011). A tradition dating back centuries in Molfetta, during which religious followers carry a statue of this saint on the waterfront and then place her on a fishing boat, celebrates the saint's credit for protecting fishermen who venture out on dangerous waters. This religious experience created a Molfetta to Hoboken transnational connection (Sciorra, 2015; Vertovec, 2009). A subsequent street festival and fireworks rounded out the annual September celebration (Carlson, et al., 2007). In September 2021, the Hoboken festival celebrated its 95th anniversary.

The majority of Molfettese migration to the United States was not proportionate to the overall Italian American immigration experience. While the majority of Italian immigrants settled in the United States between 1880 and 1920, most Molfettese immigrants settled in Hoboken, New Jersey after 1945. The Molfettese-Hoboken enclave displayed similar patterns as other ethnic enclaves as there was a high concentration of Molfettese immigrants and relatives who would migrate across the Atlantic to join their enclave. Today, the legacy of these immigrants can still be found in Hoboken, NJ through cultural associations and religious organizations (O'Connor & Cosmini-Rose, 2013).

**Ethnic Enclave and Assimilation**

Some Italian American immigrants assimilated to their new country by exhibiting shared patterns of behavior similar to the traditional theory of one-way assimilation. These immigrants adapted to their country by altering many of their traditions and beliefs to fit their new home (Gordon 1961; Alba & Nee, 2009). Other Italian Americans immigrants assimilated to their new home by using the newer theory of two-way assimilation, sometimes referred to as neo-assimilation, some assimilated by not only maintaining their own cultural values and customs but also sharing them with their host country (Alba & Nee, 2009).

Earlier generations of Italian Americans remained isolated from mainstream American society by keeping in their enclaves when possible, fiercely holding on to native traditions and home networks, and avoiding school whenever possible. These behaviors kept them in what some might consider a downwardly mobile status with low wage jobs and thus subjected them to discrimination and prejudice. When the Great Depression began and fascism reigned and war in Europe loomed, Italian Americans were subject to more suspicion and financial hardship (Alba & Nee, 2009). After Italian Americans showed a high level of commitment to the United States’ war efforts by joining the United States Armed Forces in large numbers and after benefiting from nation-wide programs like the New Deal and the G.I. Bill, Italian Americans found themselves in better social and economic positions after World War II (Connell & Pugliese, 2018). Social scientists found that by the 1970s, Italian Americans had mostly entered the American mainstream (Alba & Nee, 2009).

Italian Americans have now been largely accepted into the “white” American culture and conversely, they have largely accepted white American culture as their own. In the early 1900s, Italian immigrants faced much discrimination from more assimilated ethnic groups in the United States. Italian Americans see or feel very little discrimination in today’s society. Once referred to as non-white ethnics, today’s Italian Americans have been able to forget the experiences of their forefathers as they have become more successful in assimilating in the American mainstream (Alba & Nee, 2009).

***Assimilation and Language Acquisition***

Data show that newly arrived United States immigrants continued to speak their native language regardless of age and education. Over the last century, increasingly more immigrants from nationalities who value higher levels of education shifted toward learning English more rapidly. They preferred to use their native tongue in their home, but the longer immigrants resided in the United States, the more they spoke English in the home (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). In 1910, 10.1 million people living in the United States considered a language other than English to be their “mother tongue.” These statistics are set in context by the fact that 3.4 million of those immigrants arrived from Ireland, Great Britain and Canada, English speaking countries. At the time, German was the most frequent non-English language, spoken by 2.8 million German immigrants who spoke their native language on United States soil (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Next in popularity in 1910 was the Italian language when the 1.4 million immigrants from Italy preferred Italian, or more accurately a dialect, to English (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014; Carnevale, 2010). Sixty years later in 1970, one million people living in the United States spoke Italian at home, and in 2010 that number fell to 738,871 (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Italian immigrants born in Italy but living in the United States who preferred to speak Italian at home were, on average, 64 years old in 2010. Fewer than 20% of them identified as speaking English “not well” or not at all, while 49.8 described themselves as speaking English “very well” (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Approximately, four-fifths (82%) of Italian immigrants to the United States have self-identified as speaking English very well. Those immigrants who arrived when they were older reported having had more difficulty reaching fluency in English. Of those who arrived between the ages of 13-34, only 45% identified as speaking English “very well,” and only 25% of those who arrived when 35 or older said the same (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

While many immigrant groups struggle to learn English, Italians from earlier migration waves had a particularly difficult time because immigrants from Italy came from different parts of Italy and spoke a regional dialect, oftentimes extremely different from the standardized Italian language (Carnevale, 2010). Italians often found themselves embarrassed to speak their dialect to someone from another town (*paese*), and this reluctance further isolated some families from others (Carnevale, 2010). Immigrant parents depended on their children to translate, which they often did in English. This dependency on their children stunted adult Italians in their ability to learn English and thus they learned English at a lower rate than other immigrant groups (Carnevale, 2010).

Naturally, the first United States-born generation of Italian Americans learned English as children, and for most, they regarded English as their native tongue. However, many also spoke a mixed dialect, a combination of Italian, a *paese* dialect, English, and Italianized English words (Carnevale, 2010). This “code-switching” phenomenon, flipping between two languages during one dialogue or conversation, complicated their language assimilation process (Carnevale, 2010). Code-switchers sometimes communicated in this blended language to “assert a specific identity, to signal in-group status, or to position oneself in a particular way with relation to the addressee” (Carnevale, 2010, p. 12). In a way that intersects the two theories of transnationalism and assimilation, code switchers were able to keep connections with their native land alive through communicating with the ancestral dialect (Carnevale, 2010).

According to Imbesi, Italians who migrated to the United States from the end of World War II until 2002 have successfully adjusted to living in the United States. They have retained their Italian identity or formed a blended Italian and American identity (Carielli & Grosso, 2013). Language acquisition and assimilation go hand-in-hand because learning the adoptive country’s main language helps accelerate immigrants' assimilation (Carnevale, 2010). Generally, but not always, the first generation speaks mostly their native tongue with a basic oral knowledge of the acquired language, while the next generation, more assimilated than their parents, is somewhat bilingual, speaking enough of the native tongue to communicate with their parents (Carnevale, 2010).

***Assimilation and Age of Immigrant’s Arrival***

There are other factors that affect an immigrant’s level of assimilation, including age of the immigrant’s arrival to the United States and level of language acquisition. Immigrants who arrive in the United States as children or teenagers are able to learn English more rapidly and thus assimilate more quickly than adult immigrants. English fluency is strongly associated with the level of education attained (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Almost three quarters of immigrants who arrived in the United States between the ages of 0-12 learn English (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Specifically, according to Portes and Rumbaut (2014) who extrapolated data from the 2008-2010 American Community Surveys and the United States Census Bureau,

Among immigrants who arrived in the United States as children under 13 years of age and who speak another language at home, 71% could speak English “very well,” compared to 35% of those who immigrated between the ages of 13 and 34 (in adolescence or early adulthood), and only 18% of those who were 35 or older when they immigrated. Even among the nationalities with the poorest English proficiency-those from Mexico and Central America, the Spanish Caribbean, Ecuador, China and Southeast Asia-between two-thirds and three-fourths of children under 13 spoke English very well. At the same time, level of education is strongly associated with English fluency. Among immigrant adults, almost two-thirds of college graduates speak English very well, compared to 38% of high school graduates and only 11% of those with less than a high school diploma. (2014, p. 231)

Between the years of 1977-1983, Italian immigrants in the United States between the ages of 25 and 44 had completed 13.2 years of schooling, while those older completed fewer. Italian immigrants aged between 45 and 54 years completed 11.8 years of schooling; those between the ages of 55 and 64 completed 10.6 years and those older than 65 completed 8.2 years. In other words, younger Italian immigrants completed more schooling than did their older counterparts. First generation Italian Americans completed 8.6 years of schooling; while the second generation completed 11 years of schooling and the third generation finished 13.3 years of schooling. Over time, Italians in the United States completed more and more years of schooling (Hirschman & Falcón, 1985).

The immigrants' age and generation in the United States affected the immigrants' level of educational attainment. Immigrants who arrived in the United States before age 4 recorded 0.35 more years of schooling than the second generation and .81 years more schooling than peers with United States-born parents. In comparison, those who settled in the United States between the ages of 5 and 19 were found to have received less schooling than did the next generation, and immigrants who arrived between the ages of 13 and 19 received fewer years of schooling than did their peers with parents born in the United States. Immigrants who arrived in the United States after the age of 30 have completed significantly less years of education (Chiswick & DebBurman, 2004).

Researchers found that age at immigration affected education attainment because the young acculturate more easily. Though educational attainment may vary with age at immigration, those arriving around age 15 to 18 completed fewer years of education than did those who arrived when they were older or younger (Schaafsma & Sweetman 2001). The researchers surmised that acclimating to their new home and society toward the end of adolescence and high school years may have a lasting effect on their educational pursuits (Schaafsma & Sweetman, 2001).

Of the United States-born population, 28.2% graduated from college while 27.3% of their non-United States-born peers graduated from college, despite probable language barriers, unfamiliarity with the culture and the educational system, and assumed lower socioeconomic status (Bleakley & Chin, 2004). Schools in the United States conduct instruction almost entirely in English. Therefore, English language skills are vital to scholastic success. More exposure to the language in a school setting aids English language acquisition, and those newcomer students are apt to complete more years of education (Bleakley & Chin, 2004). These researchers found that when the migration occurs critically affects English-language skill development and surmised that a program designed for junior/high school-aged students to acquire English fluency benefited (Bleakley & Chin, 2004).

Italian immigrants who migrated after World War II were generally more educated and although they still spoke their *paese* dialect, they knew the basics of the standard Italian language as well. This fluency gained them access in their greater Italian community, including immigrants and later-generation Italian Americans from towns in Italy, other than their own. Consequently, these immigrant groups assimilated more quickly than have those from the 19th and 20th centuries (Ruberto & Sciorra, 2017). The post-World War II immigrants had a greater sense of *Italianitá,* since Italy had been unified for their entire lifetime (Ruberto & Sciorra, 2017). In sum, all indications pointed toward Italian Americans having been assimilated, albeit with some with transnational characteristics, and have become part of the United States fabric.

Italian Americans experienced varying levels of assimilation due to different factors. Some Italian Americans learned English quickly and at a young age and assimilated quickly. Some immigrated later in life and found it more difficult to learn English thus delaying their assimilation. Further some engaged in assimilation patterns that were more similar to the traditional theory of one-way assimilation, where they lost much of their Italian culture as they tried to be more “American.” Yet most Italian Americans, and especially those who immigrated after 1945, assimilated to their new nation by displaying behaviors that were more reflective of the newer assimilation theory of two-way assimilation, or neo-assimilation, by maintaining values, traditions, and cultural traditions from Italy as they adapted to new “American” ways as well (Alba & Nee, 2009).

**Ethnic Enclave and Transnationalism**

Some immigrant groups display behaviors and characteristics of the transnationalism theory. This theory describes the patterns immigrants those of who maintain connections and networks with their native land as they acclimate. These immigrants keep many traditions alive and sometimes live their lives dually in both countries (Portes, 2011).

Immigrants, including Italian Americans over the last 140 years, in the United States have traveled back and forth from their country of origin to their new or temporary home and have created complex relationships with their native lands (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). The constant travel, sending of remittances, maintaining two households and creating cultural associations or organizations are characteristics of transnationalism. The networks that immigrants created during their temporary stays were vital to their economic success and survival (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Return rates of immigrants to Italy were estimated to be as high as 30% , as many Italian immigrants did not stay in their adopted lands, yet some returned to the United States for a second time (Daniels, 2002; Panunzio, 1921). Sojourning back and forth proved lucrative for the migrants and for Italy, as well. Money earned from permanent or temporary immigrants who worked abroad was sent back to their home country to support families and pay their debts (Del Boca & Venturini, 2003).

Many of Italy’s immigrants intended to return to their native country, as many men began their journeys as sojourners, a person who lives in a place temporarily (Gabaccia, 2013). A deeply sentimental attachment to their home village known as *patria* produced a homesickness (Gabaccia, 2013). A deep loyalty to one’s home village developed as a result of decades of exploitation by landowners in Southern Italy as well as a betrayal by government agencies, political structures, economic systems that caused the southern provinces to be so poor. These conditions forced inhabitants to rely on family and close friends for financial survival (Puleo, 1994). These migratory resettlements were woven with social networks between their new land and their native village. The constant back and forth contributed to the transnational characteristics seen in many Italian American communities (Gabaccia, 2013).

Italian Americans engaged in many characteristics of transnationalism. An immigrant group that experienced high rates of return and also traveled back and forth from Italy and the United States, it was natural that they kept networks alive and communication strong. Since goods were in high demand, Italian American immigrants imported and exported items back and forth. Further, since many migrants from one village in Italy settled with their neighbors and family members in their new city in the United States, like the Molfettese did in Hoboken, it was natural for them to follow transnationalism tendencies (Gabaccia, 2013).

**Ethnic Enclave and Education**

At the heart of the Italian American value system was and is the family: the survival, the advancement and the closeness of the family unit. Education and socioeconomic mobility are individualistic ideals that are considered once the demands of the family are met. It was and still might be common for an Italian American to prioritize family over education and career. An Italian American would consider not furthering his or her education or career to stay closer to home. Staying “closer to home” has geographic and socio-cultural meanings including being physically near family members or educationally/economically nearby as well (Ziehler, 2011).

Immigrants who arrived from Italy after World War II had completed more formal education prior to departure than had those who arrived in the United States in the late 1800s and early 1900s (Ruberto & Sciorra, 2017). Depending on their age of arrival at the time, some may have completed formal schooling until the compulsory age of 14. Some may have arrived with more schooling, including vocational school or college preparatory programs (Ruberto & Sciorra, 2017). Increased schooling supported them in assimilating more quickly and fully, learning English and obtaining a job to which their illiterate, unskilled ancestors could not have aspired upon arrival on United States’ soil (Ruberto & Sciorra, 2017). Post-World War II immigrants from Italy were thus able to succeed more quickly than had their predecessors as entrepreneurs, business owners. Some even advanced to higher education and professional industries such as law, education, research and medicine (Ruberto & Sciorra, 2017).

In 1975, Krase concluded that Italian Americans with United States born parents attained higher levels of education than those of Italian-born parents and those with United States born grandparents attained even higher levels of education than had Italian-born grandparents. Italian Americans who were surveyed as part of a 1975 Brooklyn College study indicated that they attended college for the practical reason of obtaining a specific vocation or career. While their parents’ may have harbored skepticism or distrust of higher education institutions, they still felt college would best prepare them for an occupation. This study indicated that they attended college for the practical reason of obtaining a specific vocation or career. While their parents’ may have harbored skepticism or distrust of higher education institutions, they still felt college would best prepare them for an occupation (Ziehler, 2011).

The United States-born population over the age of 25 fell below the average of the percentages of Italian immigrants with high school and college degrees in 2010. Of the 367,744 Italian immigrants living in the United States in 2010, 61% of them had a high school diploma while only 18% had a college degree. Most of these immigrants arrived in the United States an average of 41 years earlier in 1969. Only a small percentage (8.7%) arrived between the years of 2000 and 2010 (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Portes and Rumbaut surmised this complacency as being a United States citizen (fourth or later generations) compensates for less education, in a way that new immigrants cannot afford. Therefore, educational attainment was more important for immigrants who did not have the privileges of a United States born person (2014). When first generation immigrants come from families from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, they are on average better educated than those from modest socioeconomic backgrounds (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). As the status of immigrants improved financially, doors opened for their children. Research suggests that the family background of the immigrant affects their children’s education attainment. Specifically, parents’ educational history and the father’s occupation were found to influence the children’s educational pursuits (Hirschman & Falcón, 1985). If the parents did not support education, the children did not continue schooling. Specific research on immigrant adolescents’ individual and environmental influences on young adults’ education attainment found that young Italian immigrants in Australia had low levels of education and were more likely to be from lower social status than were immigrants from other countries like Poland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (Marjoribanks, 2004). Educational selectivity proves how country of origin values education could factor into educational attainment rates, perhaps explaining why Italian Americans rates are lower than those of neighboring European countries and the United States, as well. Immigrants’ educational selectivity is defined as the level of education compared to non-migrants in their native country, and the influence of this selectivity has the education attainment of their children of the immigrants in their adopted country (Ichou, 2014).

Immigrants’ characteristics in and relative to their country of origin factor together to shape their experiences and the experiences of their next of kin even when they are in their adopted countries (Ichou, 2014). This study compared the average relative educational attainment of the country of birth and the average immigrant child’s educational attainment of French immigrants (Ichou, 2014). Of the 20 countries studied including Tunisia, Mali, Germany, Morocco, Laos, Senegal, Spain, Belgium, Poland, Portugal and Italy, with significant immigrant populations in France, the 675 Italian immigrants were ranked last with a 30.8 average relative educational attainment, however their children were ranked fourth to last with a 53.3. Three other countries (Mauritania, Senegal, and Turkey) had higher average relative educational attainment but lower educational attainment for their children (Ichou, 2014). Nevertheless, compared to 20 countries overall, Italy ranked in the bottom fifth in valuing education (Ichou, 2014).

Between the 1990s and 2010s, a drastic improvement in educational attainment among Italian American students was noted. While high school dropout rates in the 1980s were at their highest, outreach efforts including mentoring programs helped lower the dropout rate in the 1990s. By the year 2000, Italian Americans in New York City, in particular, were at 12%, the lowest of all subgroups measured by the NYC Board of Education. Further in the 1990s, college attendance among Italian Americans increased (Ziehler, 2011).

**Schooling in Italy**

Before understanding how Italian Americans prioritized education, consider what schooling meant and looked like in Italy in the 1900s. In Italian, the literal definition of the term *ben educati* means *well educated.* However, colloquially, it means to *have been raised with the values, habits, attitudes of a good and moral family,* a much more complicated definition. The focus of families in the 1800s and 1900s was to raise children who were *ben educati*. This standard had nothing to do with any type of formal or informal schooling system; in fact, Italians had a longstanding and deep-rooted distrust of institutions including school systems (Gambino, 2000).

Northern Italians thought the southern Italians were poor because of traditions, culture and illiteracy. As the northern regions gained political power, the government then attempted to create an educational system that would replace their traditional values with new ways of thinking. Feeling this threat to their only system of values, southern Italians were very hesitant to send their children to school. Further, they couldn’t afford to lose the labor that their children provided to maintain farms, fishing or other businesses (Gabaccia, 2013; Gambino, 2000).

In 1930, only six of every 100 Italians had an upper intermediate school diploma, the equivalent of an eighth grade education in the United States. This number increased to nine out of every 100 by 1958. As recently as the 1940s, 57% of the total Italian population of 30,000,000 did not know how to read or write (Volpicelli, 1961).

Much change in the educational system in Italy in the 1950s and 1960s as new ideas that included education through television programs, companies conducting workplace training, subject-based course rotations, various grade band configurations, and Catholic and private school options were created (Volpicelli, 1961). The number of students who received an upper secondary diploma increased by 24% between 1940 and 1950 and continued to increase to 58% between 1970 and 1980 (Triventi et al., 2016). Today in Italy, primary and secondary schools are public and nearly free (Mocetti, 2012). The group from this study were mostly exposed to these most educational changes but were raised by those from the earlier 1900s who were not granted access to education and distrusted the educational system.

**Summary**

Most of the people from Molfetta who immigrated to the United States migrated between 1945 and 1975 and most settled in Hoboken, NJ creating an ethnic enclave. These immigrants had a strong sense of national pride, spoke their village dialect but also spoke Italian and arrived with more formal years of education and more work skills than had their predecessors who had arrived before World War I (Ruberto & Sciorra, 2017). Hoboken became their first home in the United States.

In Hoboken, their enclave neighbors helped them assimilate and still hold on to their transnationalism traditions, values and networks. But living and socializing in the ethnic enclave may have discouraged them from learning English, appreciating education and searching for vocations outside of the group’s network and prevented immigrants from assimilating with society quicker and encouraged them to hold on to transnationalism connections. The ethnic enclave and distrust in the education system may have dissuaded immigrants from furthering their education.

Age and levels of English acquisition impacted Italian American immigrants' level of assimilation, as first generation and older immigrants assimilated slower than second generation immigrants or immigrants who immigrated to the United States as young children. Further, since Italians had little trust in their educational system in Italy, they brought some of those feelings of distrust to the United States which could have influenced their children’s decision to continue their educational journey. Growing up in a successful ethnic enclave, allowed some Italian American youth to think continuing their education was not necessary as they would inherit the family store or continue in the father’s trade.

Today’s second and third generation Molfettese Americans, having a more distant immigration history, have also assimilated, reconciling growing up in both an American culture and an immigrant household that maintained some cultural, social and linguistic connections to Molfetta.

**Chapter 3 METHODOLOGY**

|  |
| --- |
| In person qualitative interview: informal conversational interview   * Informal conversational interview follows interest and leads that emerge during the discussion generally following questions sequenced below to address RQ1:   + Assimilation is…   + Do you think people in your neighborhood assimilated?   + If so, how?   + Transnationalism is…   + Do you think people in your neighborhood assimilated?   + If so, how?   + Tell me about the feast days?   + How was it living in Hoboken during this time? |
| Online qualitative questionnaire survey |

|  |
| --- |
| Transcription of interviews  Store safely, categorize into themes regarding assimilation |
| Code, categorize into themes regarding assimilation |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In person qualitative interview: informal conversational interview   * Informal conversational interview follows interest and leads that emerge during the discussion generally following questions sequenced below to address RQ2:   + Tell me about where you lived when you immigrated to the US?   + How was living in Hoboken during this time?   + Tell me if you, your parents, your school mates and neighbors thought education was valuable or necessary.   + Did your friends and family discuss education? | Transcription of interviews  Store safely, categorize into themes regarding enclave + edu attainment |
| Online qualitative questionnaire survey | Code, categorize into themes regarding enclave + edu attainment |

Chapter will include

* Data collection
* Ethical considerations
* Sampling
* Minimizing field issues
* Recoding info
* Collecting data
* Locating site/individuals
* Gaining access and developing rapport
  + Gatekeeper
  + Finding cultural group representatives
* Storing data securely
* Interviews and notes/transcripts from interviews
  + Determine open ended questions to be answered by interviewees
  + Review and refine questions in pilot interview
  + Obtain consent, distraction free area
  + Decide transcription logistics
* Online survey questionnaires
  + Online can reach more people, provide ease for participants
  + Can be cost and time efficient
  + Provides participants with time and space flexibility
* Coding of data
* Overall themes
* Describe setting and actors and events, draw picture of the setting
* Analyze data for themes and patterned regularities
* Interpret and make sense of the findings (how the culture works)
* Cultural portrait of group
  + Theoretical lens
  + Description of the culture
  + Analysis of themes
    - Themes 1, 2, 3, 4
  + Field issues
  + Interpretation
* Sample interview protocol
  + Name
  + Date
  + Place
  + Interviewer
  + Interviewee
  + Questions: See graph above

**Introduction**

A qualitative research approach will be used to complete this ethnographic study. This research will consider the impact the ethnic enclave had on the assimilation, transnationalism, and educational attainment of the Molfettese-Hoboken community between the years of 1945 and 1975. Using a qualitative approach, data from open-ended interview responses will be analyzed. As a supplemental data source, a survey questionnaire will be disseminated to a snowball sample of people over the age of 18 and throughout New Jersey to aggregate general data. However, primarily the research questions will be answered via the interview data. An initial interview and possible follow up interviews will be conducted with four representative volunteers. These individuals, who will be referred to as gatekeepers, will have stories that are similar to their peers. They have experiences that would not consider them to be outliers (Creswell & Poth 2016).

An ethnographer studies, observes, describes and interprets shared patterns of behaviors, beliefs, language. Ethnographic studies look for ways to connect existing theory to observed patterns. This researcher will use the theories of assimilation, neo-assimilation, and transnationalism with the members from the Molfettese-Hoboken ethnic enclave to determine if their shared beliefs, values and behaviors affected the levels of educational attainments. It is evident that this immigration group from Molfetta who resettled in Hoboken upon arrival to the United States qualifies as a subject for ethnography as they share many elements including a language, patterns of behavior, immigration experiences and common traditions (Creswell & Poth 2016).

Using ethnographic research methods, four volunteer gatekeepers will be asked to partake in in-depth interviews, with the goal of addressing the research questions. As a secondary source of data, adults who lived in this enclave were given an online, bilingual (Italian & English) questionnaire survey that was disseminated through a snowball (word of mouth) method through email forwards, Instagram posts and flyers to individuals and Molfettese American associations. The four interview participants were selected from the survey participants as their responses indicated they were eligible.

The purpose of this ethnographic study is to record the stories of the Molfettesi who migrated to Hoboken, New Jersey in the 30 years after 1945. These individual stories will give voice to the experiences and achievements of this ethnic group and provide illustrations of the sociological/anthropological theories of assimilation, transnationalism, and educational attainment. The theories of assimilation and the theory of transnationalism will be used to guide the study and help explain how the enclave's membership and values affected educational decisions and opportunities. The individual reasons why immigrants decided to further their education are important and do not necessarily cause a family or individual to be successful, assimilated, or intelligent. Rather, discussing whether the enclave’s influence impacted decisions like educational attainment is important when determining if and how this group’s collective and shared values had on decision making in general.

The study of immigrants can be useful for those who study human migration, ethnic enclaves, transnationalism and educational attainment in the United States. This study will determine how the enclave experiences impacted the levels of assimilation, transnationalism and educational attainment of the Molfettese-Hoboken immigrants between the years of 1945 and 1975.

**Research Questions**

RQ1. How do the stories of the Molfettese Americans who settled in Hoboken, New Jersey between 1945 and 1975 illustrate the theory of assimilation and/or transnationalism?

RQ2. How do Molfettese Americans living in this ethnic enclave between 1945 and 1975 believe their experiences affected their educational attainments?

**Settings and Participants**

An online questionnaire survey will be disseminated to the snowball sample. In a snowball sampling, participants can help identify additional people that could qualify for the survey (Burke Johnson & Christensen, 2016). Due to the nature of the time frame of the immigration experience, all participants will naturally be over 18 years old. From the survey respondents, the four eligible interview participants were selected. Eligible survey and interview participants had to meet the following criteria: ancestral roots in Molfetta, Italy and lived in Hoboken for any length of time between 1945 and 1975. The setting for these surveys will be on the internet. Interviews will be done virtually, due to Covid19 restrictions.

**Data Collection Sources and Analysis Methods**

When analyzing the data, this researcher will create and organize the data and transcripts of interviews. After making margin notes and initial codes of the interviews, the researcher will describe the settings. The questionnaire data and the qualitative interview transcripts will be analyzed looking for themes and trends to draw findings for the study.

***Instrumentation***

Questions for the interviews were considered after reviewing other ethnographic questions, considering the research questions of the study and considering all theoretical elements from this study. Questions were based on the research found and the goals of the research questions. Questions from peers who conducted other ethnographies guided the formation of this researcher's interview questions.

A flyer and a website will help promote the bilingual online questionnaire survey to first and second generation Molfettese Americans who migrated to the United States between the years of 1945 and 1975 and lived in Hoboken. Emails will be sent and forwarded to eligible participants. A questionnaire is a self-reported, data-collection instrument that each participant will compete as part of this study (Burke Johnson & Christensen, 2016). This questionnaire, in the appendix, will include open-ended and closed-ended questions.

**Researcher’s Relationship with Participants**

**Data Analysis**

Descriptive coding is… (Saldana)

***Appropriateness of the Research Design***

Inspired by similar ethnographic studies, this study will use qualitative methods research approach (Burke Johnson & Christensen, 2016). An ethnographic study looks at the culture of a group of people and tries to describe how the group’s shared attitudes, values, practices and perspectives can impact the whole group (Burke Johnson & Christensen, 2016). Specifically, this study will be qualitatively driven with a minor element of the quantitative data (Burke Johnson & Christensen, 2016).

This study will incorporate qualitative data to help answer the proposed research questions. Qualitative research is useful when studying phenomena in people’s lives and is not useful when making statistical generalizations about populations and it does not focus on testing theories and hypotheses using data. Qualitative relies on a collection of data and creates more credibility in cause-and-effect studies while allowing for some generalization when working with a subpopulation. Further, qualitative data is beneficial when describing a phenomenon by helping to provide a deeper understanding of the subgroup as it considers personal experiences. Conversely, qualitative research makes it more difficult to make predictions and can include more instances of researcher bias (Burke Johnson & Christensen, 2016). Particularly, a qualitatively driven research design model, like this one, will emphasize the qualitative data while very generally discussing some qualitative data as well (Burke Johnson & Christensen, 2016).

This study will mainly use qualitative methods to find the impact the ethnic enclave had on this group’s levels of assimilation, transnationalism, and educational attainment. The levels of impact of the ethnic enclave on the assimilation, transnationalism, and educational attainment of this group will be analyzed predominantly via the qualitative method of the interviews. This will provide the reader with a fuller and more meaningful answer to the proposed research questions (Burke Johnson & Christensen, 2016).

***Research Design***

This quantitatively driven mixed research design will collect data concurrently. Therefore, the following symbols will denote this study: QUAL + Quan (as qualitative research will be dominant) and QUAL→ QUAN as quantitative and qualitative research will be collected simultaneously (Burke Johnson & Christensen, 2016). Centering on the proposed research questions, a mixed methods design was deemed appropriate as quantitative data would help quantify levels of educational attainment while qualitative data would help assess the immigrant’s perceived level of assimilation, data more appropriate for open-ended questions.

Interview participants were selected by informing cultural associations and word of mouth. After determining the eligibility criteria to be having lived in Hoboken between 1945 and 1975 and having ancestral roots in Molfetta, Italy, possible representative individuals were identified. Individuals determined to be outliers of the general Molfettese-Hoboken experience were not asked to interview, although very few of these were known to the researcher. Thus, it was not a difficult task to find representative gatekeeper individuals to interview. Fortunately, all four agreed to participate in an in-depth interview, where they were asked a series of questions directly related to the research questions.

***Procedure***

To start creating a sample of participants, this researcher will reach out via phone call and emails to local Molfettese-Hoboken organizations and churches. A flyer, website and URL will be dedicated to promoting the bilingual questionnaire. Emails with a link to a website will be sent and asked to be forwarded to other eligible participants. Civic and religious organizations affiliated with Molfettesi people in and near Hoboken will be contacted to help disseminate the surveys. Also, immigration associations based in Molfetta who connect Molfettesi people around the world will be asked to distribute the surveys as well. When participants agree, they will be encouraged to share the website and questionnaire to family and friends who may qualify.

After six weeks the questionnaire portal will close with an approximate number of at least 80 participants. Of these participants four who completed the questionnaire will be selected as gatekeepers, individuals who represent the general voice of the community. An outlier type of individual would not fall into the gatekeeper category. After identifying these four representative individuals, they will be interviewed with prepared questions that can be found in the appendix. Six weeks later, after analysis of the interview responses and refinement of follow-up questions, a follow up interview will be conducted with the same initial participants. After the questionnaire results are reviewed and the interviews are transcribed and then coded, all data will be analyzed looking for themes.

There is minimal risk to participants and the probability of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research will not exceed harm ordinarily encountered in life. Should participants feel uncomfortable with the survey, for whatever reason, they can cease completing it.

**Ethical Considerations**

An informed consent form written in compliance with the American Educational Research Association’s guidelines will be given to each participant before they enter the online questionnaire survey. It will be clear to participants that they have the freedom to withdraw and that they are protected from mental and physical harm. Further and importantly, all survey data from all volunteers will be kept confidential and anonymous (Burke Johnson & Christensen, 2016). All data will be stored securely on the author’s personal Google Drive for five years and will be kept confidential.

Further, data will be analyzed honestly and by composting the stories so individuals cannot be identified for confidentiality concerns (Creswell & Poth 2016).

**Summary**

Using a qualitative approach, this ethnographic research study will focus on the data from the qualitative interviews from the four representative gatekeeper individuals who experienced the Molfettese-Hoboken ethnic enclave between 1945 and 1975. Through word of mouth, forwarded emails, flyers and connections with Molfettese civic and religious associations in and near Hoboken and Molfetta will help reach a large sample for the survey questionnaire. The interview participants were selected from the survey questionnaire respondent pool. All participants’ data, identities and personal stories will be kept confidential and the surveys and interviews will be voluntary. Following the six-week data collection period, this researcher will follow common ethnographic data analysis methods including coding, finding themes and patterns and conjuring data into charts and tables. Interview data will be coded and compartmentalized into themes for further analysis. To conclude, this ethnography will aim to draw connections between the ethnic enclave and how the Molfettese-Hoboken group’s values, beliefs and behaviors impacted assimilation, neo-assimilation, and transnationalism and ultimately education attainment.

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**Appendix A: Consent Forms**

**Appendix B: Informed Consent Forms**

**Appendix C: Interview Questions**

Research Question #1

* How do the stories of the Molfettese Americans who settled in Hoboken, New Jersey in the three decades after World War II reflect the definitions of an ethnic enclave?

Corresponding Interview Questions related to Research Question #1

In person qualitative interview: standardized open-ended interview. Exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance. All interviewees are asked the same questions in same order, questions worded in completely open-ended format.

* What do you think an ethnic enclave is?
* Do you think Hoboken was an ethnic enclave when you lived there?
* Describe your Hoboken neighborhood between the years of 1945-1975 as you remember it?
* Describe how your life was back then?

Research Question #2

* How do Molfettese Americans living in this ethnic enclave between 1945 and 1975 believe their experiences affected their educational attainments?

Corresponding Interview Questions related to Research Question #2

In person qualitative interview: standardized open-ended interview. Exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance. All interviewees are asked the same questions in same order, questions worded in completely open-ended format.

* What do you think assimilation is?
* Do you think people in your Hoboken neighborhood between the years of 1945 and 1975 assimilated?
* If so, what do you remember of it?
* Corresponding Interview Questions related to Research Question #3

Corresponding Interview Questions related to Research Question #3

In person qualitative interview: standardized open-ended interview. Exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance. All interviewees are asked the same questions in same order, questions worded in completely open-ended format.

* What do you think transnationalism is?
* Do you think people in your Hoboken neighborhood between the years of 1945 and 1975 followed methods of transnationalism?
* If so, what do you remember of it?

Research Question #4

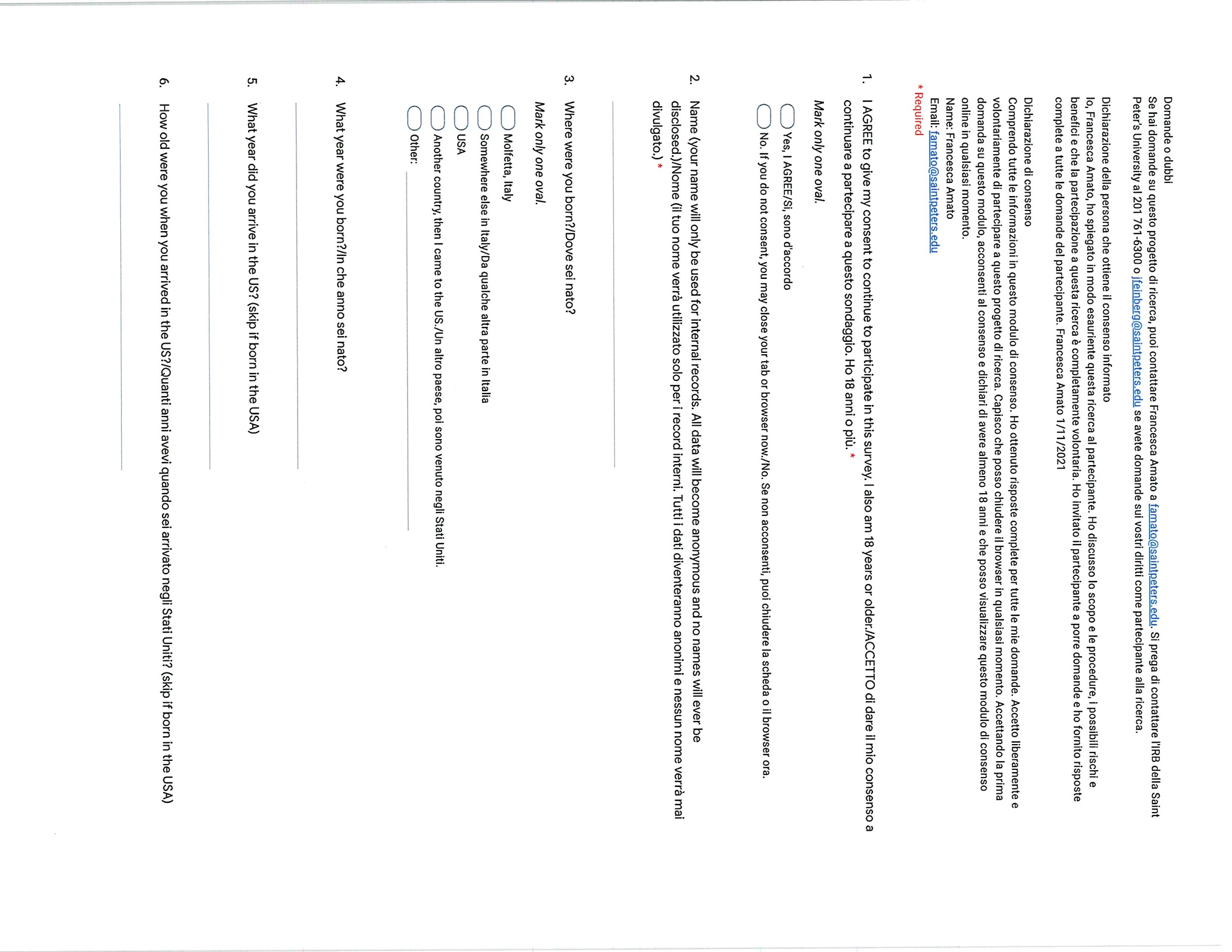
* How did the ethnic enclave experiences affect the educational attainments of the Molfettese Americans in the 30 years after World War II?

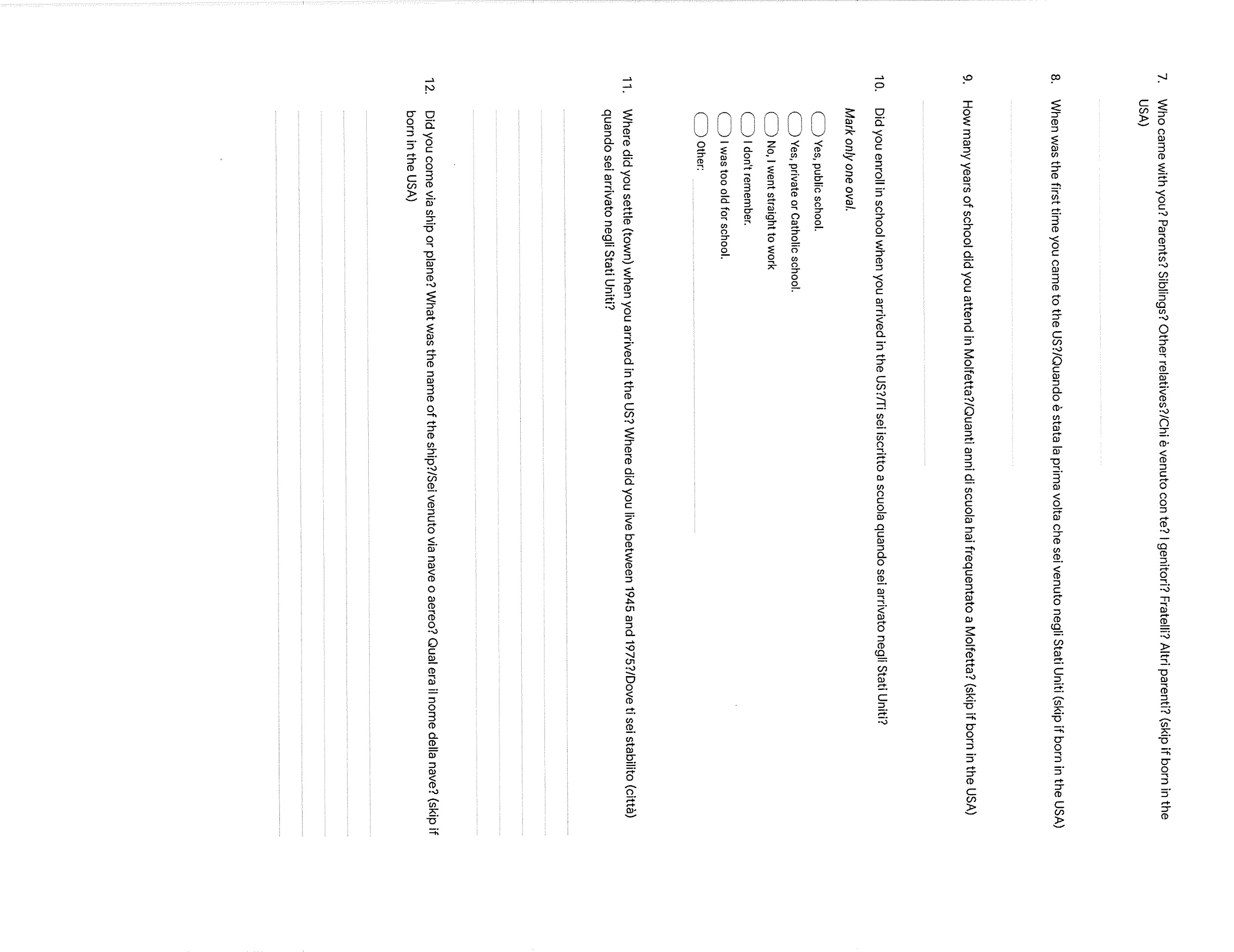
Corresponding Interview Questions related to Research Question #4

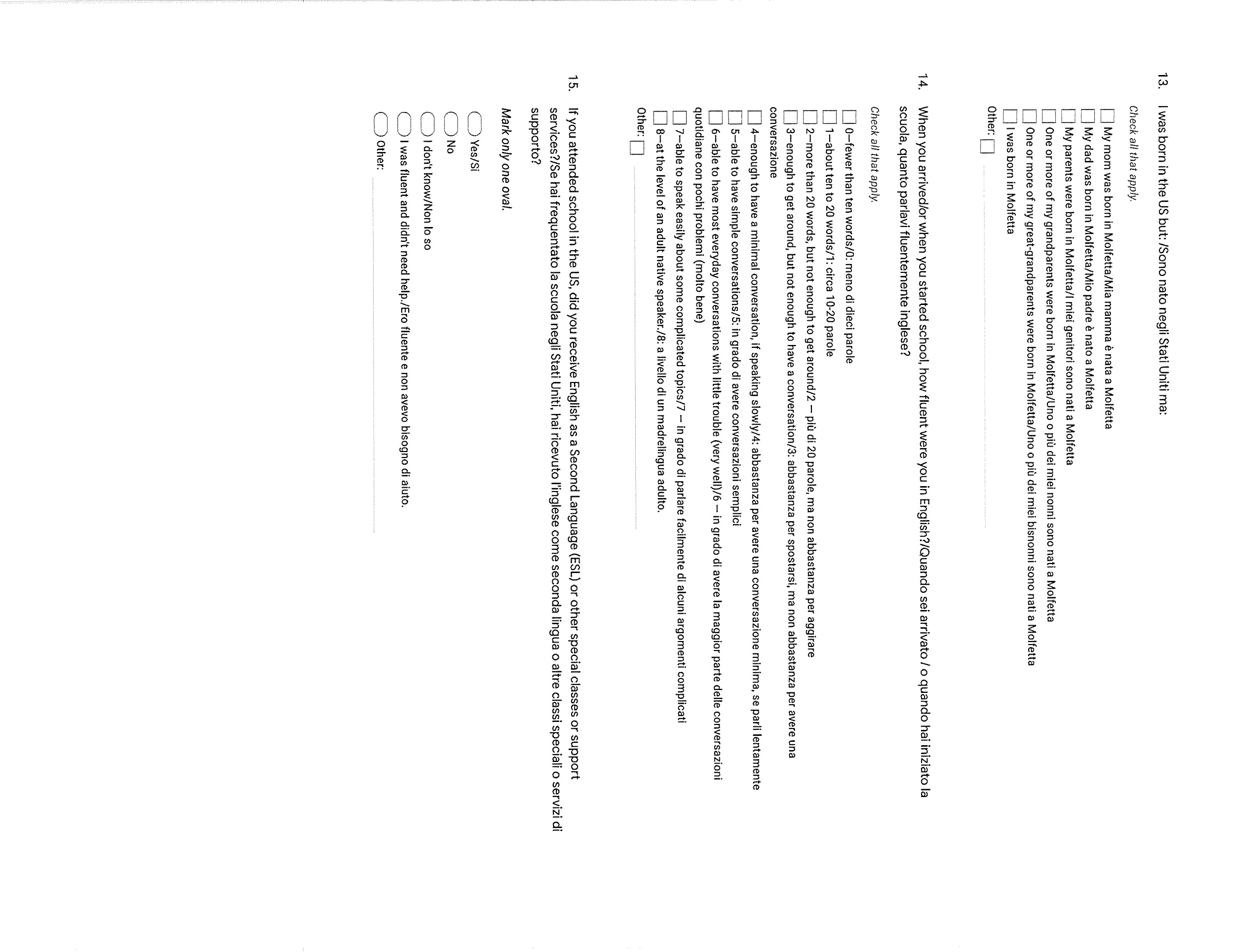
In person qualitative interview: standardized open-ended interview. Exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance. All interviewees are asked the same questions in same order, questions worded in completely open-ended format.

* Tell me about where you lived when you immigrated to the US?
* Tell me if you, your parents, your school mates and neighbors thought education was valuable or necessary?

**Appendix D: Flyer and Questionnaire Instrument**

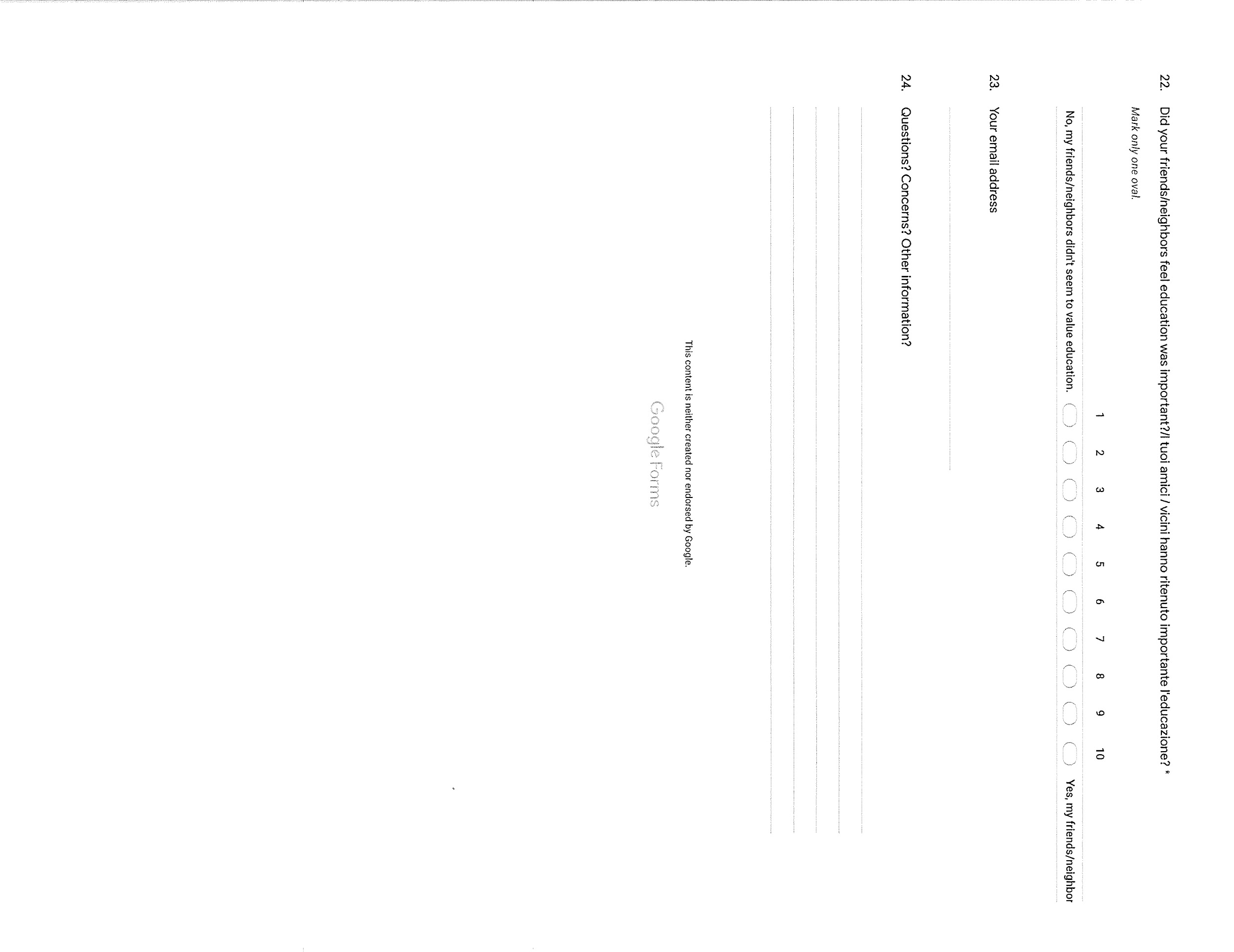
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**Appendix E: Tables**

**Table 1**

*Italian migration abroad (thousands): emigration and migration rate (per 1,000), 1876-1985*

Years Emigration Migration rate

1876-1885 1,315 4.56

1886-1895 2,391 7.76

1896-1905 4,322 13.06

1906-1914 5,854 20.60

1876-1914 13,882 11.01

1915-1918 363 2.44

1919-1928 3,007 7.70

1929-1940 1,114 2.20

1941-1945 4,121 0.32

1946-1955 423 5.24

1956-1965 3,166 6.28

1966-1975 1,714 3.20

1946-1975 7,351 4.86

1976-1985 861 1.53

Total 26,595

*Note*: Del Boca, D., & Venturini, A. (2003). Italian Migration. IZA Discussion Papers 938. Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA).

**Table 2**

*Immigration numbers between 1875-1900 in provinces of Italy*

Province Number that left

Piedmont, Lombardia, Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia (North) 3,000,000

Campania (South) 520,000

Calabria (South) 276,000

Sicily (South) 226,000

Basilicata (South) 191,000

Puglia (South) 50,000

*Note*: O'Connor, D. & Cosmini-Rose, D. (2013). Note sulla diaspora pugliese nell'Otto e Novecento: il caso di Molfetta.[Notes on the Apulian diaspora in the 19th and 20th centuries: the case of Molfetta.] Studi emigrazione: international journal of migration studies, 50(191), pp.522-532.

**Table 3**

*Departures abroad from Puglia 1876-1976*

Year Number

1876 339

1885 872

1895 5503

1905 21503

1913 41837

1920 40361

1930 5068

1939 1096

1947 11460

1957 32054

1966 41919

1976 10919

*Note*: O'Connor, D. & Cosmini-Rose, D. (2013). Note sulla diaspora pugliese nell'Otto e Novecento: il caso di Molfetta.[Notes on the Apulian diaspora in the 19th and 20th centuries: the case of Molfetta.] Studi emigrazione: international journal of migration studies, 50(191), pp.522-532.

**Table 4**

*People born in Puglia residing abroad*

Year Number

2007 297536

2008 304687

2009 309964

2010 313580

2011 315735

*Note*: O'Connor, D. & Cosmini-Rose, D. (2013). Note sulla diaspora pugliese nell'Otto e Novecento: il caso di Molfetta.[Notes on the Apulian diaspora in the 19th and 20th centuries: the case of Molfetta.] Studi emigrazione: international journal of migration studies, 50(191), pp.522-532.

**Table 5**

*Emigration and return migration for Italy, Puglia, Basilicata and Calabria, 1946-61 and*

*1962-76*

1946-61:

Region Population 1961 Emigrants Percentage Returnees Percentage

Puglia 3,439,806 385,721 11.2 185,363 5.3

Basilicata 642,362 110,322 17.1 48,119 7.4

Calabria 2,045,966 420,525 20.5 93,818 4.5

Italy Totals 50,624,000 4,452,200 8.8 1,913,760 3.8

1962-1976:

Region Population 1976 Emigrants Percentage Returnees Percentage

Puglia 3,771,329 470,782 12.4 338,513 8.9

Basilicata 614,596 132,134 21.4 107,835 17.5

Calabria 2,034,425 331,847 16.3 207,239 10.1

Italy Totals 55,510,000 2,995,130 5.4 2,426,162 4.4

*Note*: King, R., Mortimer, J., & Strachan, A. (1983). Return Migration and the Development of the Italian Mezzogiorno. International Migration Review, 17(1\_suppl), 79-86. doi: 10.1177/019791838301701s16

**Table 6**

*Annual Molfettese overseas departures 1898-1923*

Year Number

1898 337

1903 695

1905 1040

1906 1329

1908 1373

1910 1478

1912 2143

1913 1808

1920 2705

1923 1208

*Note*: O'Connor, D. & Cosmini-Rose, D. (2013). Note sulla diaspora pugliese nell'Otto e Novecento: il caso di Molfetta.[Notes on the Apulian diaspora in the 19th and 20th centuries: the case of Molfetta.] Studi emigrazione: international journal of migration studies, 50(191), pp.522-532.

**Table 7**

*Molfettese departures abroad by year 1947-1970*

Year Number

1947 213

1949 395

1951 759

1953 502

1958 497

1960 439

1970 314

*Note*: O'Connor, D. & Cosmini-Rose, D. (2013). Note sulla diaspora pugliese nell'Otto e Novecento: il caso di Molfetta.[Notes on the Apulian diaspora in the 19th and 20th centuries: the case of Molfetta.] Studi emigrazione: international journal of migration studies, 50(191), pp.522-532.

**Table 8**

*A Profile of Today's Italian Americans, 2020*

Italian American Population Total US Population

Total population 15,723,000 281,422,000

Male 49.5% 48%

Female 50.5% 52%

Population 17 and under 14% 13%

Median age 33.8 35.4

Number of families 3,948,000 72,262,000

Average family size 3.08 3.14

Median Income 1999 $61,297 $50,046

Urban living environment 88% 79%

Rural living environment 12% 21%

Born in the US 96% 89%

Foreign born 4% 11%

of foreign born: % born in Europe 76% 16%

Naturalized US citizen 2.5% 4.5%

Not a US citizen 1.2% 6.5%

Education (population of 25 years +) 9,853,000 182,212,000

High School graduate 29% 28.5%

Bachelor’s degree 18.5% 15.5%

Master’s degree 7% 6%

Professional school degree 2% 2%

Doctorate degree 0.85% 0.95%

Occupation total in workforce 49% 46%

White collar occupations 66% 64%

Blue collar occupations 34% 36%

*Note*: A Profile of Today's Italian Americans. (2020). Retrieved 29 March 2020, from https://www.osia.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/IA\_Profile.pdf

**Table 9**

*Educational attainment of principal immigrant nationalities in 2010*

Country Total College High School Immigrated

of birth persons (n) graduates (%) graduates (%) 2000-2010(%)

Total

native-born 267,410,918 28.2 88.7

Total

foreign-born 39,327,516 27.3 68.1 32.4

Above US average

India 1,783,907 74.8 92.0 46.8

Taiwan 365,243 70.0 95.0 22.7

Nigeria 207,106 61.1 95.7 42.9

Hong Kong 212,053 54.2 86.1 16.2

Pakistan 297,172 53.1 86.5 35.6

Former USSR 1,012,621 52.9 91.2 34.6

(15 republics)

Iran 344,557 52.8 89.4 25.3

Korea 1,088,870 51.1 91.3 30.1

Philippines 1,785,404 50.0 91.6 28.7

Venezuela 175,386 50.0 92.7 49.1

Japan 338,002 48.3 93.3 39.3

China 1,511,111 44.5 74.1 39.6

Near US average

Canada 808,749 41.5 89.5 24.9

United King 667,138 41.4 92.8 21.9

Argentina 169,932 37.1 85.4 40.5

Brazil 339,897 33.9 85.3 52.7

Germany 622,612 32.2 88.4 16.0

Poland 459,691 29.7 86.1 21.0

Colombia 636,329 28.9 83.2 34.5

Peru 413,562 28.7 88.2 38.9

Vietnam 1,215,136 23.2 67.7 20.2

Jamaica 649,925 21.7 81.2 22.3

Cuba 1,039,550 21.0 72.0 27.6

Below US average

Italy 367,744 17.8 62.4 8.7

Nicaragua 251,297 16.8 71.4 20.1

Haiti 563,850 16.7 73.4 31.2

Ecuador 432,768 15.5 66.5 37.7

Dom Rep 828,776 13.6 60.8 28.5

Cambodia 156,279 13.3 57.9 18.5

Laos 198,889 12.7 60.3 9.0

Portugal 166,519 10.1 53.6 8.1

Guatemala 798,430 7.3 43.1 46.1

El Salvador 1,166,579 6.7 44.4 32.8

Mexico 11,658,428 5.3 39.2 33.2

*Note*: Portes, A. and Rumbaut, R. (2014). Immigrant America. (4th ed.) Oakland, California:

University of California Press, pp. 114-115

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008-10. \*Persons age 25 or older.

**Table 10**

*Educational attainment of US immigrants age 25 and older, 2010, by region of birth and last decade of arrival*

All immigrants (25 and older) Immigrated 2000-2010

Region College High School Immigrated College High School

of birth graduate (%) graduate (%) (%) graduate (%) graduate (%)

Total

immigrants

25 and older 27.3 72.7 32.4 32.0 69.1

Asia 49.0 84.0 33.4 57.6 86.1

Africa 42.0 88.7 48.6 34.0 85.0

Europe, 37.0 85.5 23.9 50.9 92.9

Canada,

and Australia

Latin America 11.4 52.7 33.2 12.6 52.0

and Caribbean

*Note*: Note: Portes, A. and Rumbaut, R. (2014). Immigrant America. (4th ed.) Oakland, California: University of California Press, pp. 117

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, merged 2008-2010 samples.

**Table 11**

*Ability to speak English “very well” at age at US arrival, decade of arrival and highest education attained, among selected immigrant groups who speak a language other than English at home, 2010*

Percentage who speak English “very well” by

Age at US arrival Decade of US arrival Education completed

(graduated)

Country 0-12 13-34 35+ Before 1990s 2000s No HS HS College

of birth 1990s

Germany 88 84 72 85 86 76 68 84 89

Nigeria 84 85 72 87 85 77 27 76 90

Philippines 82 71 46 70 65 59 24 58 77

India 85 76 40 71 72 68 14 45 81

Pakistan 86 73 36 67 66 55 13 50 76

Brazil 84 49 27 64 56 42 16 40 69

Italy 82 45 25 48 63 57 27 61 78

Hong Kong 76 51 22 57 48 43 7 38 72

Iran 87 64 20 64 46 36 7 36 72

Poland 84 45 14 47 44 36 22 34 63

Former USSR81 49 13 47 45 36 10 26 47

Taiwan 81 44 13 50 43 33 11 23 53

Colombia 83 40 13 44 42 37 11 33 54

Peru 82 43 13 49 42 35 13 33 52

Haiti 72 43 16 47 45 33 14 43 66

Japan 60 41 21 45 52 28 19 32 47

Nicaragua 80 31 10 45 35 23 13 43 53

Ecuador 72 28 10 40 33 25 8 34 56

Cuba 83 30 8 46 28 19 11 36 51

Korea 76 32 9 37 35 30 14 22 39

Laos 70 19 6 34 22 20 9 38 65

Vietnam 70 24 6 35 24 19 6 24 58

China 64 35 9 29 35 25 3 14 51

Dom Rep 69 25 7 34 34 25 10 34 50

El Salvador 65 20 6 31 25 18 11 35 50

Honduras 63 18 9 39 26 16 9 30 47

Mexico 63 15 6 30 26 18 10 33 49

Guatemala 62 16 6 34 25 12 9 33 49

Total 71 35 18 44 39 32 11 38 64

*Note*: Portes, A. and Rumbaut, R. (2014). Immigrant America. (4th ed.) Oakland, California: University of California Press, pp. 232-233

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Surveys, 2008-2010 merged annual surveys. \*excluding immigrants from native-English countries and those who speak English only.

**Table 12**

*Language spoken at home and related social characteristics for the largest immigrant groups and the native-born, 2010 (ranked by percent of foreign born from non-English-speaking countries who spoke English only)*

Language spoken at home

Country Persons 5 English Non-English Length of College High-

of birth years or older only (%) language (%) residence in graduates (%) status

(n) US (years) job(%)

Germany 619,534 42 58 37 32 45

Nigeria 205,268 27 73 14 61 49

Italy 367,090 23 77 41 18 36

Japan 333,145 18 82 20 48 53

Korea 1,079,550 16 84 19 51 43

Philippines 1,777,857 14 86 19 50 40

Poland 459,026 13 87 24 30 29

Hong Kong 211,471 12 88 23 54 55

Former USSR 1,001,251 12 88 15 53 42

Iran 343,994 10 90 21 53 51

India 1,762,129 9 91 13 75 67

Brazil 338,340 9 91 12 34 27 Taiwan 364,071 8 92 20 70 62

China 1,491,659 8 92 16 45 47

Haiti 560,474 8 92 18 17 20

Laos 198,195 8 92 24 13 19

Pakistan 294,504 7 93 15 53 41

Colombia 633,945 7 93 18 29 27

Vietnam 1,210,036 6 94 19 23 27

Peru 412,526 6 94 16 29 22

Guatemala 782,144 6 94 14 7 7

Cuba 1,037,332 5 95 25 21 24

Honduras 491,087 5 95 13 8 8

Nicaragua 250,324 5 95 20 17 17

El Salvador 1,162,749 5 95 17 7 9

Ecuador 431,437 4 96 17 15 15

Dom Rep 825,765 3 97 18 14 14

Mexico 11,595,014 3 97 17 5 8

Foreign-born 39,067,294 15 85 19 27 27

Arrived 12,485,764 21 79 33 25 31

before 1990

Arrived 10,930,073 12 88 14 26 25

1990-1999

Arrived 15,651,457 11 89 5 32 24

2000-2010

US-Born 247,484,428 90 10 NA 28 33

*Note*: Portes, A. and Rumbaut, R. (2014). Immigrant America. (4th ed.) Oakland, California: University of California Press, pp. 228-229

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Surveys, 2008-2010 merged annual surveys.

\*persons 25 years old and older \*Professional, managers, technicians among employed persons sixteen years and older \*Totals include immigrants from native-English-speaking countries

**Table 13**

*English-speaking ability of immigrants from largest source countries, 2010*

Country Foreign-born Speaks English Speaks English Median age of birth persons 5 “very well” (%) “not well” or not (years)

years old or older at all (%)

who speak a non-

English language

at home (N)

Germany 358,522 83.2 2.2 59

Nigeria 150,067 82.2 3.7 42

Philippines 1,525,993 65.3 8.1 48

India 1,597,005 70 10 37

Pakistan 272,813 62.2 13.3 39

Hong Kong 185,803 52.1 16.3 45

Taiwan 333,806 44 18.5 47

Italy 284,112 49.8 19.5 64

Iran 309,366 52.6 21.5 50

Brazil 308,460 49.7 22.7 36

Japan 272,399 38.8 23.3 42

Poland 399,939 43.5 24 48

Haiti 517,787 41.9 25.5 43

Former USSR 881,861 42.3 27.4 43

Peru 389,265 41.7 28.6 43

Colombia 592,400 41.1 29.9 43

Korea 906,258 34.0 32.9 44

Nicaragua 238,637 38.1 36.7 42

Laos 183,241 30.5 40.4 44

Vietnam 1,131,845 28.1 41.1 43

Ecuador 413,405 32.2 41.8 39

China 1,377,462 29.8 42.0 44

Cuba 986,849 34.7 44.4 51

Dom Rep 798,746 31.6 45.4 42

El Salvador 1,109,449 25.1 50.2 37

Mexico 11,223,211 24.8 52.8 36

Honduras 467,326 24.3 54.1 34

Guatemala 738,150 21.5 56.1 34

Foreign Born 33,074,187 38.8 36.1 40

Arrived 12,305,028 44.4 29.6 52

before 1990

Arrived 9,634,961 39.2 35.6 37

1990-1999

Arrived 11,134,198 32.4 43.7 29

2000-2010

*Note*: Portes, A. and Rumbaut, R. (2014). Immigrant America. (4th ed.) Oakland, California: University of California Press, pp. 232-233

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Surveys, 2008-2010 merged annual surveys.

\*Totals exclude immigrants from native-English-speaking countries and those who speak English only. \*Asked of persons who spoke a language other than English at home.

**Appendix F: Interview Transcripts**

**Interview # 1**

**Interviewed Maria on 2/15/2021 virtually with Maria in Bergen County, NJ and researcher Researcher in Weehawken, NJ.**

**Born in 1957 in Molfetta, Italy**

**Arrived in Hoboken, NJ in 1968 at 11 years old with parents and two sisters.**

Researcher :

Hello Maria. I am going to ask you some questions, and there are no right or wrong answers. Your answers can include what you remember and how you felt during the time. As you know I am doing research on your particular immigrant group and when this group came to the United States, how they felt, how they assimilated, etcetera. If you are ready, we can get started.

Researcher: When did you get here, to the US?

Maria:

November 1968.

Researcher :

And you were 11 years old?

Maria:

Yes

Researcher :

When you got here, did you go to school?

Maria:

Yes. I went right into the fifth grade. It was hard, I have to say, because I didn't know one word English and there was a little bullying around, but we survived.

Researcher :

Right. And you had a sister, right? You have a sister?

Maria:

Yeah, I have an older sister and a younger sister. The older sister, she just couldn't really... I don't know, she just didn't like school. My younger sister stayed until we both graduated high school.

Researcher :

After the first couple years, did it get easier?

Maria:

Yes. After a couple years, yes, it did get easier because now you start to make friends. I really didn't like my school very much, so I transferred to Brant. Was it Brant? No. It was a school on 8th Street. I think it was Brant. I just couldn't go to Demarest. It was just a little too hard for me. But then Brant was fine. I made all new friends. It was more an Italian community there than it was in Demarest. In Demarest, we were a small group. We always hung out together and stuff like that, and that was important. You wanted to be with who you were familiar with back then.

Researcher :

Especially if you didn't know much English.

Maria:

You know? But if you didn't speak English, they would just pick on you and that kind of stuff.

Researcher :

Of course. No, it makes sense. Okay. When you arrived in Hoboken, how was it? Was it a shock? Was it wonderful? Was it scary? How did you feel at first?

Maria:

Oh, I did not like it at all. I hated it. I used to cry every night. I just wanted to go back to Italy, but my mom, she's like, "No, you can't go. There's nobody there for you." But I did. I had both my grandmothers there. But I know one of my grandmothers would definitely take me in, but that really wasn't an option. But then she died six months later, so now I had no place to go so I had to make do.

Researcher :

Wow.

Maria:

Yeah, it was tough. I just didn't like it.

Researcher :

How about your sister?

Maria:

She adapted much quicker than me. Now, my older sister, she never really liked it here, but she ended up finding a husband here in the United States from the same area, Molfetta, and eventually they bought a house in Italy. They would work here and just send all their money to Italy. They bought the house and eventually they went back. But they did come back a few times because it was just tough there. They just couldn't make it. But then ultimately, it was just too much going back and forth. I think twice she moved her furniture back and forth. So now she's there.

Researcher :

How about your parents? How did they feel coming here?

Maria:

I think they both loved it, I really do, because they had their whole family here. It was just a much better living situation. You can buy anything you want. We just didn't have that in Italy, and that was one of the reasons why we came here. When we came here, it was just my family's life savings that was poured into just coming here. They liked it. When they got here, all my aunts put some money together to rent an apartment for us and to make sure that we had enough money to... sorry. Just to make sure we had enough money to pay rent for a couple of months. We got all the hand-me-down furniture. They went from a two room apartment to four rooms here, so they thought they were living in Taj Mahal.

Researcher :

When your parents came, they stayed? They didn't go back and forth?

Maria:

Yes, they stayed. They liked it here.

Researcher :

Yeah? When you lived in Hoboken, were you surrounded by a lot of family?

Maria:

Yes. My whole family. I had your grandmother, she lived around the corner. We lived on Grand, she lived on Clinton. Then my other aunt lived on Garden Street. Then I had another aunt on Washington Street. But that was just my family. But then people from Molfetta lived next door in the building with us, so it was just like a close-knit community. If you lived in Hoboken, you know who people were.

Researcher :

How long did you live in Hoboken?

Maria:

I moved out of Hoboken in 1981, so from '68 to '81. As a matter of fact, my husband went to physical therapy today, and he told me that he met a lady in Hoboken. He met a lady there, and she was from Hoboken. She lived in Hoboken. She's living, I forgot where. I think she may be in Hasbrouck Heights now. I said, "What's her name?" He goes, "I don't know." "If you told me her name, I probably knew her." That's the type of area Hoboken was at the time.

Maria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, it was just... Sunday was church, and then somehow you always end up in somebody's house, family member. Either they came to you or you went to them. It was just...

Researcher :

Yeah, very connected.

Maria:

Yeah. And I remember one time, my mother said, "Come on, we're going to go to my aunt’s house." He wanted to go. My father wanted to go, but my mother, she's like, "Okay, let me call and make sure that it's okay." He's like, "Where am I going? To a doctor's office that I need to make an appointment?" It just stuck, because in Italy or at the time, you just showed up. You didn't have to call somebody and say, "Oh, is it okay for me to come over? Could I see you?" It was just the way it was.

Maria:

Even the holidays. You know what it is, I think? Now we just make a big deal about everything. Then, all you needed was a plate of olives and the company was good, the chatting was great. Now, it's like you got company, you have to put this whole show on, and it just was not like that before. It's like, "Take me as I am."

Researcher :

Did your mom have family here, too? Or just your dad?

Maria:

No, just my dad.

Researcher :

Was your mom's family still in Italy?

Maria:

Yes. My uncle lived in Canada, where we saw him maybe once a year. He would drive and visit us. Then that's it. She had a half brother in Palermo, which she rarely saw. My grandmother passed away, like I said, six months after we got here.

Researcher :

So it was really mostly your dad's side of the family?

Maria:

All of my... yeah.

Researcher :

All right. When you lived in Hoboken, did you do everything in Hoboken or did you go to other towns? You didn't need to leave, was it just Hoboken, or did you go to other places?

Maria:

No, you just stayed in Hoboken. If you wanted to go out, you would just... on Saturdays or Sundays, we would take the path to 33rd Street or the village, 9th Street. We would just do that every weekend. Then, on Sundays, if my friends didn't feel like taking the path, we would just hang out in Stevens. That was our go-to place.

Researcher :

Yeah.

Maria:

We never really walked around Washington Street. A lot of people did that. After church on Sunday, they would just walk back and forth on Washington Street. From 1st Street to I would say 6th Street. We never did that. We kind of went home, and in the afternoon we would meet again. Like I said, we would meet in Stevens.

Researcher :

Yeah.

Maria:

Where we couldn't get caught.

Researcher :

Writing this paper, made me wonder if Hoboken was an ethnic enclave for Molfettese people between 1945 to 1975. Do you think it was? Do you think it was a big community and it was a lot of Molfettese, and if they lived there for a little bit or they lived there for a long time, they went through Hoboken to get to other places? In your opinion, did this exist?

Maria:

I don't think they went through. I think for the most part, whoever lived there stayed there. Up until I would say maybe late '70s, people would just, they would start going to Weehawken or West New York, and then from there Little Ferry. But now, it's-

Researcher :

Now, it's...

Maria:

... everywhere.

Researcher :

Yeah.

Maria:

But that's really what most people did. For the most part, if you lived in Hoboken, you didn't need a car. You had everything there.

Researcher :

Right.

Maria:

I wish you could get some of that back, but it's just not the same.

Researcher :

Speaking of stores and delis and where you got your bread, for example, everything was in Hoboken?

Maria:

Everything.

Researcher :

Everything you needed.

Maria:

Everything was in Hoboken. You went to the bread store, you went to the fish store, you went to the vegetable store. You only went to the supermarket for a few things, but everything... Molfettese people, when they shopped, they would always shop at specialty stores. We would never go and get cold cuts from, say, I forgot what it was at the time, Food Town or Pantry Pride or something like that. No matter how poor you were, you always ate good. They would be very, very cheap on certain things or frugal on certain things, but when it came to food... they pulled all stops.

Researcher :

So your friends and maybe your cousins, whoever you would hang out with in your age group, were you all pretty happy or did everyone think, dream differently. Did everybody think or act the same or did they have their own feelings, or did you all... generally your age group, how'd you feel?

Maria:

Yeah, I think we were pretty happy. Oh God, we used to laugh. Looking back now, I wish I would have treasured more because it just doesn't exist anymore, but no, I think we were very happy.

Researcher :

How about, did you guys ever talk about goals or dreams? Did you all have the same goals and dreams or did everybody have different goals or dreams?

Maria:

When it comes to that kind of stuff, we were just grateful that we had what we had. It wasn't where, "Oh, I'm going to do this." No. I think our goal was to find a nice person to settle down with. That was the extent of our dreams. It wasn't until later on that you... once you have that, then you start thinking about yourself or, "What should I do?" In my situation, I hung out with my friends my whole life, up until I met my husband at work. Then once I met him, once we saw each other then we got married, but then after we got married, not that it wasn't enough for me, but I got a job on Wall Street and I just thought I could do better and I did. With his support and everybody else, I was able to get a couple of licenses, I got my 7, so I moved on from there. But that wasn't a dream that I had while I was with my friends, you know what I'm saying?

Maria:

I think if I would have married someone, maybe a Molfettese or something, then I would have been a little bit more, "Okay, this is it. This is what I'm supposed to do," but it just was not like that for me.

Researcher :

Where did you work? Did you work after high school, is this where you worked? What did you do?

Maria:

No. After high school, I worked at a dental lab. That's where I met my husband. Then he left, and then a few months later I got another job. I worked for Dean Witter, which then became Morgan Stanley. I stayed there, I was there for like 28 years. Then Smith Barney bought the part of Morgan Stanley that I was working for, and because of that, then I got laid off. I thought that was it, but I didn't really like staying home. So now I work at another bank in Fort Lee.

Researcher :

Okay. So mostly, your life has been in banking?

Maria:

Finance. Yeah.

Researcher :

Cool. Let's back up a little bit. When you were in school when you first got to Hoboken, were there any support services like English as a Second Language classes or something similar.

Maria:

None.

Researcher :

How did you learn English?

Maria:

Just talking. I remember there was a girl in my class when I first went to school and she spoke Italian. She was a Molfettese, but she spoke Italian. She used to explain to me what the teacher wanted and stuff like that. I just found spelling to be the easiest thing, because in Italian, what you hear is what you write. It's not like that when you read something in English. You really write it differently. That's where the bullying started, because people used to think I cheated, but I really didn't cheat. What you hear is what you write, and they didn't believe me, but eventually they got over it.

Researcher :

And then you transferred to Brant or Demarest?

Maria:

Well, no. That was sixth grade. When do you go to Demarest? Seventh, right? Yeah. Seventh was Demarest. So I went to Demarest one year, I didn't like it, so then I transferred to Brant.

Researcher :

Okay. Another thing I am studying is assimilation in Hoboken. Assimilation is when you become American, whatever that means. Part of what you saw in Hoboken as far as assimilation, did you see a lot of people just drop everything from Italy and become fully American or did you see a mix?

Maria:

No, I don't think I saw anybody drop out. I think once you're Molfettese, you're always Molfettese. No, you are. You are.

Researcher :

Do you think it's because you were in Hoboken? What if the boat just happened to go to North Carolina? They took a wrong turn and then you were dropped in North Carolina?

Maria:

I think then you would be much more Americanized.

Researcher :

Do you think Hoboken played a part in it?

Maria:

Oh, absolutely. 100%. I have friends that still live in Hoboken, and at this point I really have nothing in common with them, but they're like a family. But they're just so Italian sometimes and I can't deal with it. Not in a bad way, but it's like, "My God. It's the 21st century already." What are you going to do?

Researcher :

Okay, got it. Did you see any variations? Maybe some people, were they super, super Italian and then some people were a little bit more of a mix? In Hoboken before 1975.

Maria:

No. No, I don't think you were a mix at all.

Researcher :

You were just Molfettese, you weren't American at all?

Maria:

No.

Researcher :

Wow.

Maria:

No. After your meal, you had to clean up for like two hours. Now, it's crazy. Now, we just take shortcuts.

Researcher :

Did your parents learn English?

Maria:

Did mine? No, not at all.

There was no need.

Researcher :

You didn't have to.

Maria:

Right. Everywhere you went, your butcher spoke Italian, your fishmonger was Italian. Where you worked, even the bosses at all the factories, they were all Molfettese so you kind of gravitate to that.

Researcher :

There's another theory of assimilations called transnationalism. The third thing I need to do is study if Molfettese were more transnationalism versus assimilation. Transnationalism kind of means you keep both countries, you make room for both countries. For example, you said your sister went back and forth. My mom went back and forth a couple of times. Some people send money back and forth or you call them or you visit every summer or you send your kids every summer. Keeping the two countries really connected. Do you think that maybe Molfettese followed that more than assimilation?

Maria:

Yes. Yes.

Researcher :

Yeah.

Maria:

Yeah. A lot of my friends, it's the only place they vacationed. They don't travel throughout Italy, they just go right to Molfetta.

Researcher :

Right, right.

Maria:

And stay there

Researcher :

Two or three weeks or whatever.

Maria:

Right. That's their whole vacation, which is fine. I probably would do the same thing if my husband was Molfettese, but I don't think it'd be something that he likes. We went to Italy a couple of times, but we never went to Molfetta with him because I didn't think that that would be for him. And because we both worked when we did that kind of travel, our time there was limited. We just didn't want to waste it on Molfetta.

Researcher :

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Maria:

So we did more of the highlights. Eventually, that's definitely my dream, to just kind of go rent a place for like a month or so and then just travel. But I wouldn't stay there for too long. It just doesn't attract me anymore the way it used to, I guess. So much time has gone by.

Researcher :

Yeah. All right, so perhaps you're thinking Molfettese in Hoboken were more transnationalism. They kept both countries. They lived here, they kept Molfetta in their heart, they went back and forth. Things like that.

Maria:

Right. Yeah. Yeah, they loved it here because of the money situation, but they could never let go of that lifestyle, which they had in Italy. A lot of them moved back. They worked here. Once their kids were settled, they went back. But I know a couple of my friends that did that. It's nice. I would love for my boys to go there one day, but I don't think they'll ever have that because they never went back, you know what I'm saying?

Researcher :

Did your parents have any influence over your career or your marriage choices?

Maria:

Marriage choices, yes, 100%. My older sister had a boyfriend, which she always had, but she was like 14 when she had a boyfriend and he was from Naples. My father, especially, he just did not want any part of him at all. As a matter of fact, she ended up getting married without his consent. He didn't come, she just eloped basically.

Researcher :

With the guy from Naples?

Maria:

No, no. The guy from Naples, he was done because... My parents really never accepted him. I forgot what happened. Oh, and then my sister, she just wanted to get married and I really think she wanted to just get out of the house. He was like, "No, I need to get my career going first." In all fairness, he's probably the number one builder in Hoboken right now, but she just didn't want to wait so she just broke up with him and then she married her husband from Molfetta. Oh, and my dad didn't like that because he was a little older than my sister. I think they were like 11 years apart. He didn't like that. She ended up marrying him anyway. She was with him. He passed away now, but they have two kids together, so that was that.

Maria:

Then my younger sister got engaged. She started seeing someone that she met at work, and he was American, from Brooklyn, so my dad just didn't want to even hear about it. But she did come home one day, she says, "I have an engagement ring. I'm getting married in July with or without you." He was like, "I'm not giving you away." He just didn't want any part of it because he wasn't from Molfetta. But then what happened was he passed away in February and she was supposed to get married in July.

Researcher :

Your dad?

Maria:

Yes. But she went ahead with the wedding. She got divorced 10 years later.

Researcher :

What about as far as school? Were they supportive? Did they help you?

Maria:

No. I remember getting in trouble one time. The principal wanted my parents there before I could go back. I told my mother. I said, "Ma, I can't go back to school. You have to come." She goes, "No. You got yourself in, you get yourself out." So then I had to go to the school and say, "Listen, my mom has to work. She can't... I'm sorry for whatever I did," and then they let me back into school. But she wouldn't come. That was my support.

Researcher :

How about your friends or your cousins or whoever you hung out with? How were their parents as far as school or decisions or husbands or whatever? Or wives?

Maria:

I think they were a little bit more supportive. They went to Catholic school, so that was supportive. But from Italy to here, just going to school was like, "Wow, you're in the fifth grade?" I think my mom finished third grade. My dad finished fifth grade. So now, we're in high school, so for them it's like we're at the University of Notre Dame. I remember when I graduated high school. My father did get teary eyed because it was like, "Wow." I was the first one. My older sister, she wanted no part of school, and my younger sister, she was younger.

Researcher :

Was younger.

Maria:

Yeah. She was younger. She also graduated after, and she also got a job in Smith Barney, I think. It was Solomon Brothers at the time.

Researcher :

Well, the path of an immigrant, it is important to graduate high school. It's a big deal. It's even a big deal for non-immigrants.

Maria:

Yeah. They were very proud of us, don't get me wrong, but I don't think they had the resources. I think if they had the resources or if they had somebody telling them, "Hey, listen. Your kids can go to college," I think they would have gone for it, but they just didn't... I didn't either. I mean, I'm sorry I didn't go to college. Not that you needed college for what I was doing, but it would have benefited me so much, you know?

Researcher :

Yeah. Also the '70s were different. It was different then.

Maria:

Oh yeah. Oh yeah. They used to hold open houses for these jobs. It was crazy. Now, it’s different.

Researcher :

How about when there were feast events or the Madonna Dei Martiri and other things in Hoboken? What happened? How were those days?

Maria:

Okay, so you always had company. People that no longer lived in Hoboken or you would get in touch with them and they would spend the day with you. We would eat together and then we would go outside because the Madonna was going to pass by. That happened at Saint Ann's, Madonna Dei Martiri. Even if there was something going on in the town.

Researcher :

Back to the schooling for a second, did you ever get the feeling that when they lived in Molfetta, when your parents or grandparents, that they had a mistrust of the educational system in Italy? I've read about that, and I was just wondering if that was passed down maybe through stories, that they did not trust school in Italy?

Maria:

I can't say that. I don't think so, because even when we came to this country, we still kept in touch with my teacher. You had the same teacher throughout, from the first grade to the fifth. I still remember her name, Mrs. Renaldi. Yeah, she was wonderful. No, my parents trusted her 100%. They trusted the whole school system 100%. Yeah, and they were much more supportive. They used to come... It was a public school but it was more like a military school because you had to wear the uniform, and if the parents came in you would stand up. You just showed so much more respect than when a parent comes to school here. Kids don't even look, you know? And I remember when my mom used to come, or any of the parents, there would be the head of the class, they would nominate somebody to be the head of the class, and once she noticed that, she was like “attention” and then everybody used to get up and slap on the side. Just like the military. No, I think they trusted it more, more so.

Researcher :

Thank you for your help. If I need additional information, I will contact you.

**Interview #2**

**Interviewed Carl on 3/20/2021 virtually with Carl in Molfetta, Italy and researcher Researcher in Weehawken, NJ.**

**Born in 1948 in Molfetta, Italy**

**Arrived in Hoboken, NJ in 1968 at 21 years old with wife.**

Researcher :

Hello Carl. I am going to ask you some questions, and there are no right or wrong answers. Your answers can include what you remember and how you felt during the time. As you know I am doing research on your particular immigrant group and when this group came to the United States, how they felt, how they assimilated, etcetera. If you are ready, we can get started.

Researcher :

Perfect. So did you live in Hoboken between 1945 and 1975?

Carl:

Yes, I did from 1969 to 1974.

Researcher :

Perfect. Okay. So this paper is studying people who came from Molfetta, like you, and moved to Hoboken in that timeframe.

Carl:

Right.

Researcher :

So I'm basically studying two things. Number one, how was it to assimilate to Hoboken? Did you assimilate? Maybe some people did, some people didn't.

Carl:

All right.

Researcher :

I'm interviewing other people, too, so we're going to put it all together. The other thing I'm studying is the decisions. Did living in Hoboken at that time with all the other Molfettese people, did it influence decisions?

Researcher :

So first... We'll come back to that. So first tell me how it was when you moved there? How did you feel? You can tell me stories. Whatever you want to tell me about living there at that time.

Carl:

Okay. So when I came to the United States, Hoboken. That time, it was 1969. So Hoboken, then it was really nice. It was very cheap. That time you could buy a building for $7,000.

Carl:

Because a lot of the Molfettese move, because it was really bad and they sold out of the building. It was good. I mean, I find job. You can find job all over the place at that time. As a matter of fact as soon as I went there. I found a job in the shipyard and then I work maybe three, four years. That is how, my job, because my job, it was construction work. And then I grew my own business eventually. Then the company was Carl General Contractor. So my two daughters, they was putting in the mailbox all the business cards. They would go down the street and the parking lot.

Nancy (Carl’s wife jumps into virtual interview)

They used to put a business card in the mail box.

Carl:

In the mail box. You know? All over the place. Put a card. And then the people start to call me. I start work. That's what happened and how I started the business. And that did well.

I was young, I go back right away because I miss my job. In Italy, you no got no future, no work, no career. No job, no job. Nobody work over here. It's government pay.

Carl:

And that's what happened. Obviously, I buy the house. I was living at Ridgefield Park.

Researcher :

Yeah, tell me about the feast days and your cultural associations. Why did you participate in that? Tell me about that.

Carl:

Oh there was a Pugliese Club on First Street. There was a Pugliese club over there. Not anymore. They moved. And then there was Juventus Club. At 50th Street? 7th Street? Not sure.

Nancy:

6th Street.

Carl:

Up 6th Street, yeah. The last time I went over there was two years ago... after 40 years and I saw a lot of old people like me, it's not there no more. A lot people died.

Researcher :

So what did you do in the club? Why did you join the club?

Carl:

Talk with friends, you know. Once a month we'd make a party once a month with my wife, once a month we'd go together and... At night time it was get together sometimes. You know? But I don't go every night. Especially in summer time go every night. In the winter time go once in a while.

Researcher :

So Carl, do you think when you lived in Hoboken at that time, that it was easy to become American? Was it hard? Did you do everything like an American or did you do some things from Molfetta here also? Was it a mix? What do you think you did and people around you did?

Carl:

No. America was something new and I was hard time, but if you look for a job that asked you to speak English, the first thing they ask you is if you speak English.

Researcher :

Yep.

Carl:

If you no speak English they give no work at that time. Right now it's different, you know what I mean? So... I never been to school over there, to speak English. I watched television every day watching television speaking, to learn, that's where I speak. Not too well but I tried.

Researcher :

How about the people near you? Your neighbors? Your friends? Did they try to speak English or did they not try to become American?

Carl:

I know how to speak the language after 75 years in, nobody speak English, they speak Molfettese. Never learned English. Some people never tried to learn English in Hoboken. Some Molfettese still don’t speak any English after all these years. Sometimes I end up with Jamaican people because they didn't learn to speak English. American people you know? That's the way I learned to speak English.

Researcher :

So in Hoboken at the time, can you describe what it look liked? Who lived there? Who else lived there? Did other people live there? What do you remember?

Carl:

I go to the club. All my friends was American, you know? At that time I was young you know what I mean?

Researcher :

Yeah. Good. Perfect. Do you remember, in that time, how you kind of made decisions? Did you talk to your friends and family or did you just make decisions on your own? About what to do with your kids, your wife, et cetera, et cetera. Just daily decisions.

Carl:

Yes, we would check up with friends and family. You should go out sometime together and that's it you know? Because you know, I was mostly alone. It was just me, my wife and my kids and nobody else in my family was there. Everybody was in Italy.

Researcher :

So most of your family was in Italy still?

Carl:

Yes. At that time, everyone was in Molfetta my sister, my brother, they don't want to come, nobody wants to come. Of course they don't know, you go to United States what are we going to do?

I say listen, do what I did. You find job. We don't speak English, we don't know this, we don't know that. They never come.

Researcher :

So what made you leave? What made you try it? Move to America?

Carl:

Because at that time I was working in ships, at that time in Italy there weren't too many jobs, you know? So the first time I did, I was 16. I went to a ship in Louisiana, New Orleans. I jumped a boat and they catch me and sent me back to Italy.

Carl:

And then in Molfetta, I met my wife. She was there already because she lived four, five years before me in United States she moved.

And then we got married and she took me there. To United States.

Researcher :

Okay. And then you liked it?

Carl:

Yes. After five years she was an American citizen, I got the American citizen, too.

Nancy:

After five years I became American citizen. That's why when I marry he became a citizen.

Nancy:

He could get the American citizenship right away. But at that time it was easy. I mean not that easy.

Researcher :

In Hoboken do you remember like the delis and the businesses around? Were they all owned by other Molfettese?

Nancy:

Oh yes, they used to have a lot of mostly stores, pizzeria, so many stores and factories.

Nancy:

As a matter of fact down in Hoboken nobody spoke English. All Molfettese, no matter what place you go you speaking dialect.

Researcher :

Thank you for your help. If I need additional information, I will contact you.

**Interview #3**

**Interviewed Emily on 3/17/2021 virtually with Emily in Bergen County, NJ and researcher Researcher in Weehawken, NJ.**

**Born in 1958 in the US.**

**Father was 13 years old when he arrived in Hoboken, NJ in 1947 and mother was 21 years old when she arrived in 1956.**

Researcher :

Hello Emily. I am going to ask you some questions, and there are no right or wrong answers. Your answers can include what you remember and how you felt during the time. As you know I am doing research on your particular immigrant group and when this group came to the United States, how they felt, how they assimilated, etcetera. If you are ready, we can get started.

This will be a research study on immigrants who settled in Hoboken or lived in Hoboken for a few years, between 1945 and 1975. So did you live there for a little bit in that time?

Emily:

I was there since I was born until I was 19, I would say '63, till I was five.

Researcher :

So what did you ever go back Hoboken from where you moved to Jersey City, right? Did you ever go back and forth?

Emily:

Okay, we moved to Jersey City Heights and I was very much still connected to Hoboken because my father was in the Madonna Dei Martiri Association, he carried the Madonna during processions. And then I was also part of the girls that wore the capes in the parade. I don't even know what that was called back then. So I was involved in that way and I would go to mass like once a month. I think it was at St. Francis. They have the mass for the Madonna members. Yeah. I would say Hoboken is still a big part of my life as far as I had a cousin that lived there. Visiting, going to dinners. Even as a teen, going to the clubs in Hoboken Maxwell House. Yeah. I feel like I never abandoned Hoboken. I was still always a part of it in some way or another. And even the generation, my daughter's generation, that's where all they all go. The 20 somethings go there to the bar in Hoboken, so yeah. And I've gone to dinner in Helmers. I don't know if that's still there. That was a big German restaurant. Yeah. It's all coming back to, I mean, I was part of Hoboken culture throughout my life. Yeah.

Researcher :

So your dad was part of a Molfetesse association?

Emily:

Yeah, it was the Madonna Dei Martiri Association. It's like the club that he was a member. I don't think he ever held office or anything. But he, in the '70s, I would believe like late '60s to mid '70s, 1970s, he was part of the men that would carry the Madonna to the streets. And my uncle too was part of that. And I had cousins that were, also did the feast with me too. We were part of that association.

Researcher :

Part of my study is saying that Hoboken at the time was an ethnic enclave. Basically, it means like everybody from the same ethnicity lived together. They shop together. They went to church together, the same church, et cetera, things like that. Do you agree with that? Did you see a lot of that? People who lived in Hoboken, did they shop at the same place? Did they go to the same church? Where they all in the same association?

Emily:

I believe that it was a stronger bond with the culture. Probably in the '70s, '80s, there were a lot of Italian people there. We still had, my parents still had relatives or friends that lived in Hoboken. I had an aunt, her mom lived in Hoboken until she was about 90 and they would, Washington Street was where they shopped. And most of the Italians, of course they were Catholic, probably wasn't either Saint Ann's or St. Francis. My parents were married at Saint Ann's church. Even going back, now that I think about it, we would go to the feast of Saint Ann in the summer, every year. And you would see a lot of the same faces, a lot of the same people, whether they lived in Hoboken, I don't know, but everyone seemed to be drawn back to that. And there was a cultural connection of coming back and just being together to celebrate whatever the feast was. So it was not so Saint Ann's feast was another big one that we would go to. And I'm assuming they all shopped in the same places on Washington Street. My father worked in the city, Carlos Bakery, as we stopped to get cakes before he came home. I guess even when you leave Hoboken, you never really leave it. You'll seem to come back to it.

Researcher :

So I'm also studying how this group assimilated and if they assimilated. Or if they used different ways to adapt to America, American life. Do you think this group assimilated or did they hold on to Molfettese ways more?

Emily:

I know from experience my family, they did not lose their Molfettese ways to cook, speaking the language, gathering together, the traditions. I think that was probably a stronger bond in some ways. I have a good friend, her father was Molfettese, mother is Irish. He kind of lost things because he didn't marry a Molfettese woman. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but he became more Americanized. And my uncle too, his wife is Polish. So when your partner is not the same culture, a lot of things get lost. But in my family, it was very strong. It continued and in some ways I try to continue some of the things with my children. So yeah, I think it depends on the family and who they marry into is a big difference too.

Researcher :

Did you notice neighbors or other people that you knew, cousins from Molfetta experienced the same thing? Or would they have different opinion than you? Or how would they feel about assimilation?

Emily:

It all depends on who I think about. And I have a male cousin, he's very proud of his culture and seems to gear towards working with people from Molfetta. He's a builder. So he would use Molfetta construction. He's very, and I think it's maybe he's the oldest too. Maybe it's the oldest child. He feels the bond more than younger siblings. Yeah. So that's very strong. I have cousins that moved out of New Jersey and they were ashamed of their culture because they moved to Smithtown, Long Island where it was very white and Protestant. And she would go to school and feel ostracized and made fun of for what she had brought to eat. She's a little older than me. She removed herself from the culture because she was ashamed of it. Because she was made to feel like it wasn't good. So I think also living in New Jersey and living in the melting pot that we were in, I feel everybody embraced their heritage more. So I kind of feel sorry for her because she even like changed the spelling of her name to look more like Irish than Italian. So, yeah. What was the question the... about my generation. It all really depends, but to me I have my children learn about David say some of the his words that they know.

Researcher :

Good for them.

Emily:

Yeah. I mean, they don't, I never, and one of my regrets was never speaking Italian to them to make them learn both languages because my husband is half Italian. He doesn't, so I could speak with him about it. I think it all depends about like I said, birth mother might have something to do with the too.

Researcher :

That's really interesting that you say that. That's going to be, that'll be your next study. So what about your parents? How did they assimilate?

Emily:

When my father came and when he was 13 and my mother was about 21, her... I think my father, he just delved into working. Then he went into construction to earn a living. He got his high school equivalency. My mother came over and what did all the Italian women do? They worked in the coat factories and my mom's oldest brother was here first. And then it's like, they bring the family over. They assimilate, but in Hoboken, they were all together. You know? And then I don't know if my mother really assimilated. She spoke Italian all the time but she tried to learn how to read English. I think she even tried to, she was doing some kind of, it wasn't a high school equivalency.

Emily:

It was another grade school equivalency because it was war time in Italy. And their education was cut short. She would, I don't know. It's hard to say. I think my father assimilated to being an American, plus he was such a young boy. But my mom, she was more, she held strong to her heritage. But not in my father didn't, believe me. Because he's the one that carries on the traditions also. I think they did the best they could in the world they lived in.

Researcher :

On another note, another theory is called Transnationalism where Molfettese people would use transnationalism more than assimilation. Transnationalism is when you join associations, you send things to Italy, you go back and forth to Italy, you keep your traditions, you eat the food, you speak the language, etcetera. Do you think you saw more of that versus assimilation?

Emily:

If I had to generalize, I would say the transnationalism.

Emily:

I would say more of that. I have aunts and uncles that would go back to Molfetta. I have a cousin, that younger than me, that went back to Molfetta and has found her future husband there. They still carry the traditions of cooking, like my father joining the club. So I think they still held to their roots pretty strongly more than assimilation. But then I guess I have relatives that, again, did not marry a Molfettese partner. And that kind of what became an assimilation more now. So it's a little of both. It's a little of both. It depends on the family.

Researcher :

I know you didn't live in Hoboken when you went to high school and made those high school age decisions, but maybe you could talk about people you knew that lived in Hoboken. Do you think living in that enclave impacted your educational decisions? Or do you think because you moved out of it, it impacted your educational decisions?

Emily:

Well I went to Saint Michael's Regional in Union City. I went to school outside of Jersey City. At that point, I felt I had no connection to the Molfattese culture really in high school, except my best friend is half of Molfettese that I met in high school. But I felt like it really did not impact my educational decisions as far as who I was. I don't know if that makes any sense.

Researcher :

It does. Did your parents encourage you to continue school?

Emily:

Not really. I mean, my mother said, "Why you going to college? You're a woman. You going to have a family." That was her mentality because that's all she knew.

Emily:

My father felt that if I had a job somewhere in an office or a bank, I had arrived. He didn't feel like I needed to go and further my education. So I didn't have any guidance from them. I took it upon myself to continue my education and I was a psychology major. Probably trying to figure out why did they tell me to go to school? But it really depends, like they didn't push for it. And it's funny because a lot of us are, we further our education. My siblings, my cousins, we've all, for first-generation in America, we've all accomplished so much. So I always tell my kids that I'm proud of my generation of cousins and all of us and what we've done with having immigrant parents that really didn't push for us to further to become something.

Emily:

No, I'm just saying it was because that's the only world that they know. So they really, they really didn't push.

Researcher :

Yeah. So why did you decide to go to college?

Emily:

I was self motivated, self-driven. I knew that I didn't, I wanted to a better life. I don't know, I just was self motivated, I guess. My generation, I go to a school, go to the guidance counselor and say, "Oh, I don't know what to study because I had no guidance at home to gear me anywhere in any which way." "Oh, go be a secretary." It was the '70s, that's what women did. I went to two year college. I get out of there. I worked for a little bit. And then I said, "I'm not doing this the rest of my life. I'm out of here." I went back and got my degree.

Emily:

I just felt like we are smarter and we can achieve more. I wasn't just going to settle for that. So I would say I'm more self-motivated. And not that my parents didn't provide a good life. My mom stayed home, of course. My father was the provider. We didn't lack for anything we had but I just felt like I wanted more for my personal goals. And a lot of my siblings, cousins there, they've all done the same.

Researcher :

Interesting. So do you think that you all further your education because you we're supporting each other?

Emily:

Supporting each other? No...

Researcher :

Or influencing each other?

Emily:

... maybe subliminally, we were influencing each other. I don't know. It just was something everyone just did. I don't think there was never a discussion to say, "Oh, we're going to do better than our parents did." Everybody just did it. We just did it. Because we saw how hard they worked to provide. And we were of the generation, we were being educated, so we knew better. So I don't think it really came from anyone rooting on for each other. I think it was all just based on being educated in America.

Researcher :

So just for like demographics, you graduated from college with bachelor's?

Emily:

Oh, I went to, I ultimately graduated from Montclair State. Bachelor's in Psychology.

Emily:

I think we've pretty much covered just the influence of peers with each other. And I, the interesting pattern of the immigrants and how their children have taken it to another level. Because maybe the opportunities were there because we were born here. And the opportunities for occupation, which they didn't have because they were different generation growing up during the war. Immigrating to America, having to learn the language. So we are at an advantage.

Emily:

So I think that really sums up like why my generation is where it is and why they were, that was the hand they were dealt. But I have to just conclude and say that I'm very proud of that generation to come to another country, have to learn a language, have to learn a skill and work, hard work, and to raise families and still, even with my grandparents. My grandmother came, she was a seamstress. She used to walk from Jersey City to Union City, I think till she was about 75. My grandfather was, they used to go on the boats in Italy. I don't know what that was called. He was a fisherman. And he came to America and washed dishes in a restaurant. So they did anything and worked hard just to do anything to put food on the table and earn money. And that was my grandparents. So they were, in essence, good examples for us too. Just seeing the hard work and dedication that they had to earn an honest living.

Emily:

So I'm exceptionally proud of that generation. Because I know myself, I could never just move to Italy or any other country and say I'm leaving and start a new life. And my grandmother always reminded me. She came over when she was 50 and I'm like...

Emily:

... so I'm like, "Wow." When I turned 50, 12 years ago, I said, "I could never see myself doing what she did." So there's a lot of, they're very brave, very brave. And what they've accomplished. What they taught us without realizing what they taught us. And I always remind my kids of that's where they came from. Like work hard and you'll succeed. And so I think they left a big impact on us. I really do.

On my mother's side, my grandparents came and my mother came with them. A few of her brothers were here already. My father... His father was a pasta maker. He traveled back and forth to the States. And so my father said that when he was born in Italy in Molfetta, he was born a US citizen.

Emily:

So when he was ready to bring his family over my grandmother, my father's mom came with her and all the siblings came but he was young. So yeah, it's there, I'm proud of that generation with what they did and how they started over and came here and left their families behind for a better life. And they made it worth it. I know, I probably wouldn't have the courage to do what they did.

Researcher :

Thank you for your help. If I need additional information, I will contact you.

**Interview #4**

**Interviewed Sergio on 2/15/2021 virtually with Sergio in Bergen County, NJ and researcher Researcher in Weehawken, NJ.**

**Born in 1944 in Molfetta, Italy.**

**Arrived in Hoboken, NJ in 1961 at 16 years old mother and two sisters.**

Researcher :

Hello Sergio. I am going to ask you some questions, and there are no right or wrong answers. Your answers can include what you remember and how you felt during the time. As you know I am doing research on your particular immigrant group and when this group came to the United States, how they felt, how they assimilated, etcetera. If you are ready, we can get started.

Sergio:

Okay. First of all, I came to the United States in 1961. And I lived in Hoboken. Now, we came here, me, my mother and two sisters, and we lived in Hoboken on Willow Avenue. And I was about 16, 17, close to 17. And I was one of the very few exceptions of the boys in my generation because, I will say, 99% of the boys in that age-group, at that time, once they came to the United States, they went to work. Mostly, they worked at a factory for the sweatshops. I was one of the few exceptions, that I continued to go to school. I went to finish up high school. And I went to college. And I got my degree in engineering. So, my story is really different from most of the other immigrants even though I'm aware of what they did, because I've been involved with the Molfettese community since 1961. In fact, when we came, we had... In fact, over that period, hundreds of Molfettese families, I would say thousands of Molfettese families came to Hoboken. I mean, in the thousands, not in the hundred, the thousands. And of course, when the family comes, they come with the kids. And the kids in my age-group, we want to play our games. And our game in Italy was soccer. There was no other sport. They thought it was “calcio”, “u pallone” soccer. And we got together, all the kids, no, I don't think all, most of the kids, and we formed a soccer team: the Molfetta soccer team. And we were in Hoboken, and we start playing soccer. We signed up with the Italian American League of New Jersey. And we played soccer for about 10, 15 years. Now, when we came here, the major impact or the surprise, everything was new. Everything was different. The food was different. The people talked different. They act different than us. So, whilst we were in a process of being, either curious and confused or so. But there was no concept of Americanism or of patriotism or anything like that. It was just, "Let's see what happens. We are here." Every day was a new adventure. Like, I remember, when I first came in the first week, I had my cousin here, well, born in United States, were born in Hoboken. I didn't get out of my house for two days. And my father was already here. He came here 1960. So he told me, why don't you get out? And you go see." And so, I asked my cousins if they would take me around the block to see a little bit of the neighborhood. Well, they did. And they went around, and then went back home. And then, in the afternoon, I said, "I want to do it myself." Now, this is the Willow Avenue & 2nd Street. So, it was at the corner. So I got out. I went around about block or two, and then I got lost. I couldn't get back. I did not know where my house was. So I remember, it was very, very painful, scaring like hell. I did not know where I was going. Now, luckily in that period, there was a lot of Molfettese, even in the streets. So I heard some people talk in Molfetta. And I go to them and I said, "Hey, can you guys help me to get back home?" So, I told them, "I live in 132 Willow Avenue." And said, “Turn this way, turn that way." And I got home. But every day was a surprise, was something new to discover. We discover the food, the hotdog. What the hell is that? They don't have hotdog in Molfetta. Even the hamburger. But when we got together with the other Molfettese, because some of those Molfettese, they were here in the '50s, early '50s and late '50. So they were Americanized. So they would introduce us to the hotdogs and mustard. And things that probably we never heard of it. Let's see. What else? What can I tell you more? Oh, most of the kids, as I said before, they went to work. Now, the grown up, there was essentially two jobs that they were doing, the male grown ups. One was longshoreman. And the other one was Metro Street, in the street, the construction. If they were grown up. If they were kids, like 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, they all went to a factory shops. Now, there were 100s of shops in Hoboken. Just about, at one point, almost every corner or block, there was a shop. Yeah. There were 100s of shops in Hoboken in the '60s. Because they would do all these ladies coats for the New Yorkers shoppers, they called them. And it was cheap labor coat because they didn't pay much. But who care? We did not know. It was still much more than what we got when we were in Italy. And I never worked when I was in Italy. I went to school. And so, these shops, they kept the Molfettese busy. Now, many of the women too went to work for the first time. The women, the mothers and the adult women also work the factories. So, the Hoboken factories, they were essentially made up of two groups. One was Molfettese, and the other one, Yugoslavian. Because in Hoboken, there was another big group like the Molfettese, were the Yugoslavians. So, now, I myself, I went to a school too. So, what I did, during the day, I used to go to work in a factory. And then, in the evening, I went to get my high school diploma at New Jersey City. And then, once I got my high school diploma, I want to continue school. So I made an application at Newark College of Engineering, in Newark, to get into. And then I did the first semester in the evening. I was working during the day. Then, take a bus and go to Newark. Sometimes take a train and go to Newark. And then, go to school in the evening, the first semester.

Researcher :

How did you feel doing that? Because you must have been one of the only ones doing it. How did you feel?

Sergio:

Yeah. As I said before, I was an exception. Because, as I remember, we must have been in the thousands, as I said before, thousands of Molfettese. And believe me, I'm not saying I know them all, but because I was in the Molfetta Club, I was one of the founder of Molfetta Club, as well as the Federazione Molfettesi later on. So, I know a lot, a lot of Molfettese. And I think it must have been like four or five Molfettese in my age-group, that went to school, out of thousands. So you can see, now, that was in that generation. Of course, in today's generation, we have people like you. Everybody goes to college now. I have two sons. And they both graduated from college. But, I remember when I went to college in the evenings, I really struggled because of my English more than anything else. Once I understood what the question was, I managed to get by. That was the real problem because of the language barrier. So that was the first semester, I went in the evening. Then my father says, "Hey, how long it going to take you to graduate?" I said, "It's going to take 80 years." And he says, "Eight years?" And he says, "No, no, no, no." And he says, "Well, what's it going to take you?" I said, "Well, I got to change it during the day." Because I've got to take double now because it's in the... Well, he was making good money at the longshoreman. He was working on longshoreman, as I said before, 90% of the adult. Now, school, was again, was difficult. But not because of the technical subjects. I managed the problem once I understood what was the story. It was the English portion of it. Because sometimes the teacher would talk and I really did not understand what the hell he was talking about, because of the English. But anyway, somehow, I managed. And I graduated in four years, in mechanical engineering. Now, at that time, the Molfettese community was, as I said before, getting pretty involved in the things of Hoboken. A lot of stores were Molfettese. In fact, my mother and father, well, they both passed away obviously, they'd never learn a single word of English because there was no reason to.

Researcher :

They didn't need to.

Sergio:

Yeah. They could buy all the food. The grocery store was Molfettese. Go to the fish store, it was Molfettese. Go to the fruit store, it was also Molfettese. So, like my mother used to go downstairs and get the call cards from a deli, it was Molfettese, or the next one. And then get the fish from a Vito’s fish store. It was at the corner, also Molfettese. And so and so forth. So there was a big Molfettese community. And they all get involved. Now, let me talk a little bit about the Molfetta. As I said before, a lot of young guys, the young kids, the 16, 17, 18, 19, came from Molfetta, by the thousands. There was a big immigration in the '60s and the first quarter of the '70s. I think the big, mass immigration from Molfetta started in March '73. Why do I know that? Because I was on top of things. I was doing what you are doing now at that time, for myself. Because I like to collect all information and things like that. So, all these Molfettese, they would go to clubs. At one point, the Hoboken, which only in Hoboken, there were seven Molfettese Clubs, seven. There was Madonna Dei Martiri, Pugliese Club, Juventus Club, Savoia Club, Cascades Club. Then came the Federazione Molfettesi of America and Tommy Gallo club. There were all these clubs and the men used to go there and get connected with each other. Now, the role of these clubs was extremely important, not only because they were club, you all go there, you sit with a friend of yours, maybe you have a beer, you talk about, you have a game of cards. But also because they will solve a lot of problems that they have with jobs, with the family. Don't forget, there will be a lot of Molfettese that came here illegally, the jump-shippers. And once they go to Baltimore or Philadelphia, they would just abandon the ship and come to Hoboken. Once you're in Hoboken, then what do you do? You have no house, no apartment, no job, no nothing. So they will get connected with the Molfettese. I myself, I remember some Molfettese fishermen came to our club, they helped me out and we helped them out. We find them a job. We find them somebody to live with until they got some money to get their own apartment and things like that. But this is... because I remember, not only that, but we even helped them to find the wife. Some young men. Like young men, we're talking about men in their 20s, early 20s. He says, "You know what? If we get it together with an American girl, we don't have to be deported." Because they were all afraid that the Immigration would catch them and send them back, which sometimes, they did. So, they were looking for a girl, am American girl, somebody with an American citizenship. And a lot, a lot of Molfettese, I would say a good chunk, they did find a girl. And they even got married. My intuition, not intuition, but obviously, I don't know about much love had been between them, but it was convenient. It was convenient for the boys that now married... Marrying an American girl. And most of them were with Molfettese anyway, were here in the '40s, '50s. It was convenient for them. It was convenient for the girl too because some families over there, they do not want the girl to get married to the Irish or to the Puerto Ricans or somebody else. So they saw it conveniently to get another Molfettese onboard. Oh, let's see, what did I miss?

Researcher :

So, I have to prove in this paper, and I think you already said it, but I have to prove that, Hoboken, between those years, the '40s, '50s and '60s, even the '70s, there was a lot of Molfettese. And then they created a ethnic enclave. So, an ethnic enclave, you don't have to leave the area. Like you said, your parents didn't learn English. My grandparents never learned a word of English either. They didn't need to. They did all their shopping in Hoboken. And you said twice, thousands of Molfettese were in Hoboken.

Researcher :

Can you think of anything else proving that Hoboken was an ethic enclave?

Sergio:

Let me cover the... Even though we were in the thousands, we really did not represent a solidified group, communically or even socially. Everybody stays on his own. Especially now that we started seeing the money. There's a psychological thing, if somebody... Let me say, is relatively poor. And then he starts seeing money. Then he gets like, "Hey, stay away from me. I made it." Or, "I'm making it. Don't bother me," that kind of attitude. And it was unfortunate because when you have an ethnic group in Hoboken like the Germans and the Irish, were before us, well, they got together and they really were a consolidated group, even politically. In fact, they've been having mayors in Hoboken all Irish and German, before the '60s. Now, we never had the Molfettesi interested in politics. We had just one guy. His name was Tommy Gallo. He was half Molfettese because his mother was Molfetta, his mother was Italian, but not Molfetta, who was interested in politics. And in the '60s, he kind of want to run for mayor. And he was the president of the city council. And he said, "Wow, with all these Molfettese, I can definitely run for mayor and win." But what happened is that, when the election came, he lost. And very few Molfettese had voted. And there one reason. Because very few of them were a citizen. They did not want to get involved because, at that time, you'll have to realize that these people had a bigger priority in their life. Their priority was to their family, to get jobs and work. Form the family and stay home. Buy a bigger house, buy a car, send some of the money back to Molfetta for the people left. Because a lot of money went back to Molfetta. And Molfetta got bigger and better with the money from United States, as well as money from Venezuela, at the time. And Later, from Argentina. But essentially, it was Venezuela and United States. So, the Molfettese, we were, majority wise, I feel, in the '60s, we must have been. At least half of the population of Hoboken were Molfettese, if not more.

Sergio:

But we had no power. No-

Researcher :

Political power.

Sergio:

No political, or even social. We stayed in our own clubs. We never mingled with the German or the Irish. Or later on, with Puerto Ricans. They came. In the '70s, we had the problem with the Puerto Ricans, because... Well, what happened there is that, Hoboken had bigger factories on the 14th Street and their area there at the water. Tootsie Rolls and Maxwell House, all those companies, they needed labor. So they had advertised in Puerto Rico, that there's jobs for anybody who want to come to Hoboken, and they will help them out with the house. So, by the thousands, they came in the early '70s. And of course, they also went to the longshoreman jobs, the docks, and then they were competing with the Molfettese. So at the time, there was a big fight between Molfettese and the Puerto Ricans, for the jobs. Now, unfortunately the management of these companies, Maxwell House, Tootsie Rolls, and there were another couple, they decide to move out of Hoboken. So, they moved out of Hoboken and what happened to all these Puerto Rican? They stayed in Hoboken, now without a job. And there were big, big fights... I don't know. What can I add on that?

Researcher :

So, there's a lot of way immigrants become Americanized or adapt to their new country. The two ways I'm focusing on is assimilation, which is really becoming more American, and kind of letting go of Italian ways. And then there's another way called transnationalism, which is really like keeping both countries in your heart, still following Italian ways, but doing American things and mixing it together. So which do you think that the group in Hoboken, at the time, for Molfetta, which do you think they did more of?

Sergio:

Okay. Let me cover this. And pay attention because this is important. Okay. The Molfettese group can be divided in three groups. The Molfettese community. 10% are on one end. Another 10% at the other end. And then 80% in the middle. 10%, that 10% are the Molfettese that came here in Hoboken and they had very, very, serious problems to interfere with the local community. They hate everything which they saw. They couldn't stand the Hoboken and the life. There was no streets for walking like the Molfetta. They missed home. There was nothing. Everything was dragged. And one day could, they return back to Molfetta. But this is a minority. This is important, only 10%. Then at the other end of the spectrum, there was another 10%, also small of course. And these are the people that, as soon as they put their foot in Hoboken, they loved everything they saw. They loved the hotdogs and the cornmeal and the cheeseburger and the french fries and the American flag. They started reading the New York Times even though they do not know or read English. They started Americanize as much as they could. Start talking English, their English obviously. They said that together with the American. They started learning to go watch the baseball game, which was unknown. And, what the hell was that thing? In other words, they Americanized a 100%. And, at the same time, they say, "To hell with Molfetta. We don't care about it. Molfetta has not been able to keep us, give us a job. And we don't want to hear about it. And nothing." And since then, and is up today, they can care less to...

A lot of Molfettese, some of them, they mark the time, they go back to Molfetta, for the festival. Not these people. They care less about Madonna Dei Martiri. They care less about Molfetta. Now, these are the other 10%. The majority of the Molfettese, I will say, 80% of them, 70, 80%, are in between the two. They love that they have... They appreciate the American land because they give them an opportunity to go to work and get money. And with the money, they buy a house. With the house, they buy a car. And then, with a car, they get a better life, get their children to school. And then, try to get their children to college if they can. But at the same times, they still remember the good old days when they were poor, yes, but they loved the... No matter the their hometown of Molfetta, they love to go by the beach. They love it there. And that's the majority of the Molfettese that we have right now in Hoboken or in the other areas. Now, we have to remember that most of the Molfettese that came to the United States, they came to Hoboken because the jobs were there. They're longshoreman, the jobs were right there. When the docks closed, because the dock did close, with the invention of the containers, they were not unloading the stuff from the ships by hand. There were these containers. Now, they had to close because Hoboken did not have big space to lay out all the containers outside with the trucks and everything else. So, we lost the jobs. Now, that wasn't that bad because in the meantime, the grown up people became old. Their generation were now old. And their sons got other jobs in other places. They mingled more with the Americans or everything else. So, where are we?

Researcher :

That 80% liked both of it.

Sergio:

Yeah. These 80%, which is the majority in all the people. In the meantime, Hoboken... People, as they make money, they want to buy a house, they will not buy a house in Hoboken.

Sergio:

At least some, they did. But they moving out of... The nearby towns. And they exploded in towns like Union City, essentially. I remember when we used to write that, the Molfetta, that our aunt went to another town like Union City. And then Molfetta, they wrote to us back and said, "Make sure you're covered because it's cold." So people start buying houses in Union City, North Bergen, other places. And then, later on in Little Ferry and Secaucus. In the meantime, Hoboken became a disaster. Because, without jobs, was a place really ugly. In fact, my family, we had a house. We couldn't even sell it. I mean, I personally went to a realtor and say, "Look, we'll give you free." They said, "Nah, we don't want it." It was a house. It was a full family house. But this was in that period. Then, of course, we're talking about now in the '90s. In the 2000, things changed drastically. And you can see today, it's a complete different. But in those days, the bulk of the Molfettese that came in the '50s, '60s and early '70s, they stay in Hoboken. And Hoboken satisfy all their needs. And when they start making some money, they start moving out and go to, essentially, Union City, North Bergen and etcetera. And then, after that, a few years later, they started going to other places, everywhere.

Researcher :

Can we go backwards a little bit? And can you tell me, when you were in high school, did you go to Hoboken High?

Sergio:

Well, no. When I came to Italy, of course, I did not know where to go and I couldn't go. So somebody says, "Hey, at the Hoboken Demarest, they have some courses for the immigrants. They teach you how to learn English." So I went there. And even the teacher told me, he said, "You are too high for these kind of things. You need to get your high school diploma because I can that you're going to be a..." And she said that, "There is only one school in the area that will give you the accredited evening high school diploma." Was accredited, but it was in the evening. But then I said, "I got work in the day at the factory." So, she sent me to the Dickinson High School in Jersey City.

Sergio:

It was the only school that would give a high school diploma in the evening, in addition to working. So, I used to work in the day, the factory on Green Street. And then, in the evening, I used to go to Jersey City. So, Jersey City, when I went there, after six months, I got my degree. My diploma. Diploma of high school, which was an accredited. It was the same as the day time. That was in Jersey City. And then, after that, I made an application because I want to play soccer. Because I learned, my friend said in American they encourage a sport in school, which was unheard of in Italy. In Italy, if they heard that you were playing sport, they will actually punish you. Yeah, it was a completely different concept. So, I said, "Yeah. If that's the case, if the school encourage sport, I got to find a school that has soccer." Then a friend of mine, says, he graduated the year before, he said, "Sal, in Newark, they have the number one school in the country for soccer. They won the National Championship." That was Newark College of Engineering. They won, the year before, 1963, I think, '62, '63, they won the National Championship for soccer. He said, "Why don't you make an application there?" Which I did. And to my big surprise, they accepted me. So I went there. And as I said before, I study in the evening because I was working during the day. And then I moved to the day. And I played soccer for the NCE. Now it's called New Jersey Institute of Technology. Now it's called NJIT. But in my days, it was Newark College of Engineering. And so, I played soccer with them for four years. I was one of the good guys. They made me captain too. And one time, they want to push me to go to the US Olympic team. But, yeah. Which I didn't because I was playing soccer with the Molfetta at the same time. And we had that day that I was going to go for a tryout for the US Olympic team, there was a big soccer game over at Molfettese. They tell me, "I will kill you if you don't show up."

Researcher :

How about school in Italy? How was that? What do you remember from... What were the differences?

Sergio:

Well, the difference with the school in Italy and United States are drastic. The school in Italy are extremely theoretical. The theory is the basis of everything. In the United States, it's the practice, in the practical. Let me give you an example. First of all, I went to school in Italy. I did well in elementary school of course, then went to school high school. Then I had I two years of high school before coming here. And the school, in the example, physics, we had to the physics test. We had two hours to do two problems in physics. Two hours, two problems. When we came to the United States, in physics, we had one hour to do 10 problems. That's because over there, they want us to do the theory. But you could not use the equation. You had to derive the equation first, in Italy. You had to derive the equation, and then to plug in the numbers to then get the results. In the United States, the already gave you the equation, and you just have to plug in the number and get the results. So, the schools, at that time, I'm talking about now, today, I don't know because it changes. I know it's changed. But in those days, the school in Italy was good, was strong, was very, very... I mean, the basis of my schooling here that I stayed. We had Latin in high school. And that was mandatory. And then, Latin has helped me tremendously here in the United States, in English, believe it or not. Because a lot of the English words, not a lot of them, some of the English words, have the rules of Latin. And I recognize the Latin rules and it helps. Yeah. So, in general, the schools of Italy were more theoretical, more theory, more basic. In the United States, was more practical. Go directly to the answer.

Researcher :

How about your classmates in Italy? Did they like school? Did people work hard? Or were there a lot of dropouts?

Sergio:

Well, yeah. In Italy, school is very difficult. I mean, I will say that only 60 or 70% of the people graduated. And if you go to high school, forget about that. Even technical school, which is the lower, not everybody graduated. I will say about 60, 70% make it. And when you go to university, forget it. In fact, just to give you an example, when I came here and I graduated, I got my degree, I was 27 years old. When I told the people in Italy... And don't forget, I was very, I was late because I lost 3 or 4 years or 5 years from the regular American boy, to get a degree. Because I had to learn English and then I had to get out of the high school. And then I had started in the evening. But anyway, at 27, I got my degree in engineering. When I told them, they said, "It's impossible." That's somebody can't get a degree at 27 years old.

Researcher :

It's a different social structure.

Sergio:

Right. Here, it's a completely different setup. The philosophy is different. The thinking is different. We go here on the practical aspect. Now, I'm talking about technical stuff, because I went to an engineering school. So, I don't really know on the liberal arts, what is the situation.

Researcher :

I understand. So, in my paper, there's some research about parents supporting their children's education. And especially fathers, Italian fathers. If they supported the education of their children, most likely, the children took education more seriously.

Researcher :

So, did you see any of that? Do you agree?

Sergio:

Yeah. Well, the Molfettese who came here were obviously more middle to lower class, all Molfettese people, were people who did not have good jobs in Italy, people who did not have much money. So, their main concern is to make money.

Researcher :

To survive.

Sergio:

So, when they came here, they saw their sons in a working age. And obviously, they encouraged them to go to work. I mean, that was their basic thing. Get the kid to want to go to work, let him go to work, make money for the family and for himself. But I don't know that there have been fathers that prohibit their son to go to school. It was, I will say 90% or more, that some themselves did not want to go to school. Because school was very difficult obviously. It was a different language, different thing. And their mind was not on it. It was to make money. We came to America to make money. So, money was the big thing. So, my father was like anybody else. Yeah. If my son wants to go to school, let him go to school. However, if he doesn't want to go to school, yeah, forget it. That, I will say, was the attitude of them all. So, now we've got the other generation, the following generation was completely different.

Researcher :

Sure. Plus it was a different time.

Researcher :

Yeah. But also, it's different as far as the immigrant journey, the second generation has more opportunities of course.

Researcher :

In Hoboken, during those years, can you tell me a little bit about the feast days. How can you describe those days? Was it exciting? Were people happy?

Sergio:

Yeah. Okay. Well, in the '60s first of all, the Madonna Dei Martiri was done in Hoboken, in the city town, by Adams and 4th Street, in a corner where the Juventus Club is. That's where they had the feast. And was very well felt by the community. Don't forget, most of them Molfettese, they have lost power throughout the years. But Madonna Dei Martiri and *Pasqua* (Easter) is still very well felt. So, we also, when Madonna Dei Martiri came, the feast of Madonna Dei Martiri came, there was a procession, of course going through the city. And was very well felt by the Molfettese community. Was one of those things that the 80% group loved, in the 90%, because you got about 80% of the middle and then the 10%, the love Molfetta, they love the life here. So I will say over 90% of Molfettese that did follow the Madonna Dei Martiri. And because they brought them back their memories, as though the feast in Molfetta. And the organizers did a good job. They still do a good job in recreating, essentially duplicating what's going on in Molfetta, with the fireworks and with procession and now, with bringing the Madonna on a boat.

Sergio:

Now, let me talk to you a little bit about the Molfetta Association. Yeah. We have I would say, in the 1980s, the biggest feast, other than the Madonna Dei Martiri, was Santi Medici di Bitonto. They were having a feast in Clifton in the Holy Face Monastery, in Clifton. And then, before the feast itself, or after, depending on the year, they used to have a dinner dance. So, one year, it must have been 1988 or '87, one of those years, no, '88, I went with some other Molfettese to their dinner dance, was in New York. I think it was in Maestro Restaurant in Brooklyn. And then way over there, what they told me, and I saw it because I was there, about 600 people at this dinner dance. And most of those guys, about 400, were all Molfettese. So, at my table, I said, "Look, this is ridiculous." Here's the people from Bitonto and the Molfettese are so big, and we Molfettese, we don't have our own organization. Yeah, it's true that, and there's all those little clubs, but why can't we get together and make something? So I told them, I said, "Look, tomorrow night, I'm going to invite some people, my house, and we'll talk about this." Which I did. I called few people. They came to my house. And we started talking the possibility of putting together all the Molfettese clubs. So, in such a way we could make something for Molfettese community, a center or something like that. Well, we had, after the meeting, said, "Yes, sounds good. Let's explore the possibility." We started having meetings, on top of meetings, and then, one day he says, "Look, why don't we don't call all the presidents of the clubs?" And we had all the presidents of the clubs met in the oldest club which was in Hoboken at the time, was called the Societa di Muta Corso which was across from a pizzeria. Now, it does not exist anymore. So we are there with all the presidents of Madonna dei Martiri had a big bank account plus they had buildings. And we had clubs where they were with nothing. There was one club which didn't even have a bank book. So, the president would say, "Our club will never get together with you. You have nothing." We did not conclude anything. Okay. With that in mind, then we had other meetings and said, "Okay, forget about the thing of putting together all the clubs physically." Because that was the intent, to put all the clubs physically into one big organization. One big building or whatever. And, well, I was the guy pushing the whole thing, I said, "Why don't we gather anyway with moving together physically?" So, we decided to move on with that concept. And we found that the Federazione of the Molfettesi Association of America, Federazione Associazioni Molfettesi of America. So we had meetings where all the presidents of the clubs were vice presidents of the Federazione. And we last for about... This was in 1989. So we last about many, many years going like this, putting together programs for the community. And as the years went by, the old generation left, they died, obviously. The new generation were less... Because the new generation was more American. And was less attached. Don't forget, this concept of putting together, is not fueled by something like Madonna Dei Martiri, where there's a Madonna Dei Martiri, which is something that was like, "Let's get together. Let's do something, programs for the kids, for the young, for the old." And as of today, we're still there. So we had a place here, a couple of place in Hoboken. And we're still there, about 30 years now, over 30 years, 32 years. And we still try to perpetrate in the United States, the customs, the traditions of Molfettese. We'll get together Easter. We'll get together Christmas. We'll get together at Carnevale. We had courses teach Italian to the young kids to try to teach how to do Italian language and cook foods. This kind of thing, you know?

Researcher :

It's very important what you've done. It's very important because you have to, for me at least, I always look back on the sacrifices my parents and then people like you made to make my life better. And it's important to always go back and think about that. Because it wasn't easy for you. And it wasn't easy for my family. But they did it for me. So, I feel like we need to know that.

Sergio:

Yeah. We had a big group of women that loved the idea. And then, they actually are the one that are doing most of the work. So, that's about that.

Researcher :

Do you want to add anything else?

Sergio:

I think that’s it. If anything else, let me know.

Researcher :

Thank you so much.