Immigration and Identity: How, and to what extent, did Italian immigrants in South Wales retain a distinct national identity? 1870-1939

Emma Gibson

7674 Words
With massive thanks to all the tutors who have kindly and enthusiastically supported me throughout my Open University journey.

Thanks also go to my family and friends, for their patience and support, particularly my wonderful son, Charlie, who has inspired me every step of the way.
# Table of contents

List of Illustrations ........................................................................................................ p. 4  
Introduction ................................................................................................................... p. 5  
Chapter 1: Living, Working and ‘Companilismo’ ......................................................... p. 11  
Chapter 2: Family and Food ......................................................................................... p. 23  
Chapter 3: Faith and Language ................................................................................. p. 31  
Conclusion .................................................................................................................... p. 42  
Appendix 1: Italian-born people in Great Britain (1851-1911)................................. p. 47  
Appendix 2: Italian-born people in Wales and Monmouthshire (1871-1931).......... p. 48  
Bibliography ................................................................................................................ p. 50
List of Illustrations

Fig. 1: ‘The distribution of Italian cafés in South Wales’.

Fig. 2. : Extracts from 1939 Guida Generale Trade Directory.

Fig. 3. : ‘A View of Bardi castle and the Ceno Valley.’

Fig. 4 : ‘A Welsh-Italian Outing to Jersey Marine, Swansea, in the 1930’s’

Fig. 5: ‘Giovanni and Ettorino Emanuelli at 81 Bute Street Treorchy in 1922’

Fig. 6. ‘Luigi Conti’s twin establishments in Aberfan in the early 1930’s’

Fig. 7. ‘Italian School in the Rhondda.’
Introduction

Around the late 19th and early 20th centuries, significant numbers of Italians began arriving in Wales. They are generally considered a ‘success story,’ as almost every town in South Wales had an Italian café or shop by the 1920’s,¹ and Italians suffered relatively few incidents of hostility.² The key questions of this dissertation will be, despite their integration, how, and to what extent, were various facets of Italian identity either retained, modified in some way, or discarded³.

As the industries of the Industrial Revolution thundered across Wales, an influx of people from inside Wales, across Britain, and from abroad created a ‘melting-pot’ urban community, in the South Wales coalfield in particular.⁴ Italians immigrants capitalised on the miners’ newfound income by providing service-based businesses, such as the cafés for which they became well-known.⁵ The timescale of this dissertation begins around 1870 when the first influx arrived, concluding before the Second World War, when many Italians in Britain were interned as ‘enemy aliens.’⁶ This was ‘a breaking point in the life of the old community.’⁷

---

Subsequently, the limitations of this assignment prevent appropriate consideration of the impact of the War on Italian identity.

The historiography has a shortage of Italian migration studies, particularly within Europe. Generally, there was a lack of studies of white immigrant groups, as their integration was deemed ‘unproblematic’. The few historians who studied Italian migration tended to consider those who came to Britain overall. For instance, in 1991, Colpi produced ‘The Italian Factor: The Italian Community in Great Britain’. Similarly, from the 1980’s, Sponza produced several works, focusing on Italian migration to Britain from the 19th century until the First World War. He used passports, letters, official reports, and copious census enumerators’ data, which show the ‘official’ situation of Italians in Britain. This statistical information is taken from British and Italian records, and is a necessary starting point for any discussion about Italians immigrants in Britain, and as such this dissertation will draw upon the data Sponza compiled.

However, Sponza rarely mentions Wales, except to state ‘England and Wales’. Typically, historical accounts of Italians focused on large, dense settlements, such as Sponza’s focus on London’s ‘Little Italy’, and general conclusions about such groups are assumed to be

---

8 Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 18-19. Guidici provides a detailed overview of the extensive studies into Italians in America.
9 Linda McDowell in Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, pp. 19-20. McDowell suggests that, ‘there is another story about immigration to the UK – that of white migrants (…) overlooked (…), in part, I suggest, (…) because of their white skins, providing these migrants with a cloak of invisibility.’
12 Sponza, The Italian Poor, p. 13.
applicable across other ‘stateless’ nations such as Wales.\textsuperscript{13} An exception to this is local historian Colin Hughes’ wide-ranging monograph, providing a detailed history of Italian immigrants’ journeys to Wales, the café culture they created, and the impact of World War 2.\textsuperscript{14} However, rather than a comprehensive history of Italians in Wales, Hughes focuses on Italians from the Bardi region who came to South Wales, and this dissertation will have the same focus, as there is plentiful evidence for ‘Bardigiani’ Italians. Hughes utilises quantitative data from Sponza’s account, as well as photographs, maps, first person accounts, TV and radio documentaries and Parliamentary Papers, along with newspaper reports. Hughes’ blend of extensive quantitative and qualitative sources provides a highly effective historical overview of Italians in South Wales.

Both Sponza and Hughes’ traditional ‘historical’ accounts, written several decades ago, are useful in gaining a picture of how many Italians came to Britain, their work and where they lived. Nevertheless, they lack a sociological dimension about Italian identity. More recent studies have shown that historical studies benefit from sociological concepts, in order to create a more comprehensive overview when it comes to migration studies.

For example, Fortier’s approach in ‘Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity’\textsuperscript{15} is an exploration of Italians in London, so has a denser, more concentrated settlement than will be shown to be the case for Italians in Wales. She compiled extensive qualitative evidence from interviews with Italians to effectively draw out how Italians formed a distinct migrant identity, which she strengthened with sociological frameworks. This dissertation will draw upon

\textsuperscript{13} Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 18-19.
\textsuperscript{14} Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla.
\textsuperscript{15} Fortier, Migrant Belongings.
Fortier’s approach by utilising testimonies from early generations of Italians in Wales, and sociological concepts will be weaved through the analysis of available testimonies, to reveal how Italian immigrants formed their identities.

Chezzi\textsuperscript{16} draws upon Fortier’s work, and uses a cultural and literary approach to explore the perspective of Italians, with a particularly poignant consideration of the Arandora Star tragedy during World War 2. She primarily uses autobiographies, Anglo-Welsh fiction, as well as textual analysis of photographs. Her focus is on how Italian immigrants perceived their identities. The limitations of such qualitative sources is they cannot be relied upon alone, as the autobiographies, and novels, represent individual Italians feelings, although many of them agree upon similar ideas of Italian identity, so Chezzi also utilises trade directories and newspaper articles, as well as sociological concepts.

Similarly, in his thesis, Guidici draws extensively upon oral histories, utilising the ‘Italian Memories in Wales’ testimonies,\textsuperscript{17} along with an effective mixture of other sources, such as fiction. He claims Italians retained a distinct identity in Wales, despite their small numbers and their lack of a ‘Little Italy’ style settlement.\textsuperscript{18} He considers questions of Italian identity and how, and to what extent, Italians altered Welsh culture and society from 1940 until 2010, which is not something this dissertation will consider.

\textsuperscript{16} Chezzi, \textit{Italians in Wales}. Bruna Chezzi (MA PhD FHEA) has also contributed to the ongoing story of the Welsh Italian community with the website www.welshitalians.com.

\textsuperscript{17} Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 28.

\textsuperscript{18} Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. I.
This dissertation will contribute to the relatively small amount of studies regarding Italians in Wales by focusing on first and second generations, to explore how Italian identity was both maintained and transmitted between the first generations. It will build upon Chezzi’s\textsuperscript{19} approach of considering Italian immigrants own sense of ‘Italianness’, and the interviews conducted by Guidici, to emphasise the importance of the migrant voice. However, it will be important to supplement these with quantitative sources such as census data and other less ‘emotive’ evidence, such as newspaper articles. This dissertation will underpin this data with sociological concepts, and provide a distinctively thematic account of the first Italians in Wales, to gain understanding of Italian migrant identity.

The term ‘national identity’ will be used in this dissertation, and is inspired by Guidici’s approach, wherein he uses Smith’s definition as ‘an historic territory or homeland, common myths and historical memories’.\textsuperscript{20} Guidici explains that due to Italians’ own identification with their ‘homeland’, national identity is a more appropriate term than ‘ethnicity’.

It will consist of three chapters, firstly, where Italians lived in South Wales, and how links with their homeland impacted their identity, particularly utilising census data, trade directories and maps, to consider why living in a certain way might affect Italian identity. The second chapter will assess how two strongly recognisable markers of ‘Italian-ness’, family and food, impacted identity formation, and will draw primarily upon autobiographies and photographs, to show how Italians felt about their identity. The third chapter will take two other features, Catholicism and the Italian language and again consider their influence on national identity,

\textsuperscript{19} Chezzi, \textit{Italians in Wales}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{20} Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 11.
by drawing on first person accounts, and supplementing with newspaper reports to highlight incidents not recorded in the testimonies. Finally, I will summarise my findings about how, and the extent to which, Italians retained their identity in South Wales. A uniquely Italian migrant identity with a distinctive Welsh dimension is anticipated.
Chapter 1

This chapter is divided into two subsections. Firstly, an outline of how many, and where Italians settled in South Wales at the turn of the twentieth century, along with economic links between them. The second subsection will consider social links within the Italian ‘community’ in South Wales, along with links to Italy.

Part I

At the end of the 19th century, a combination of poor-quality land and complicated inheritance laws created the ‘push factors,’ as termed by Pryce and Drake, for an ‘exodus’ of Italian migrants. By 1901, 3.5 million Italians had left, 650,000 of whom went to Europe. Initially, many worked seasonally in itinerant trades as organ-grinders and ice-cream vendors being ‘pulled’ by economic opportunities. Appendix 1, is compiled from census data and shows increasing Italian migration to Britain, where approximately half the Italian population in Britain resided in London year on year. This created a ‘Little Italy’ style settlement in particular areas of London, where the Italian migrant ‘community’ began building their own hospitals, schools and church. However, census data must be treated cautiously. The British census is taken in springtime, thus not recording seasonal migrants, and there are disparities.

---

22 Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 16-20.
23 Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 20.
25 Appendix 1 is compiled from Sponza, The Italian Poor, p. 15. Sponza assembled the statistics from British census records to show Italian born people, but not their descendants if born in Britain or elsewhere. It is important to note that details from 1921 and 1931 are covered in Fortier, Migrant Belongings, p. 181. These show a general ‘levelling off’ of Italian migrants in the UK. For example, in 1921 26,055 Italian-born people were recorded in Britain, and by 1931, the number recorded was 24,008.
26 Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 22.
in Italian and British methods of recording migration. However, they do offer insights into general patterns.

By 1903, the Italian Vice-Consul in Cardiff noted that itinerant Italians in Wales "generally (came) from London". Census data for Wales (Appendix 2) shows a similar trend to Britain, with the biggest influx occurring between 1901 and 1921, before numbers began levelling off, then declining. A summary of the numbers of Italians in Wales is given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>243</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>1295</td>
<td>1533</td>
<td>1394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The discovery of high-quality steam coal in the South Wales ‘Valleys’, led to an explosion in economic growth, urbanisation and population in the last half of the 19th century. Consequently, as Appendix 2 shows, the main areas of settlement for Italians were Glamorgan and Monmouthshire, in other words, the ‘Valleys’, where distinctive ‘ribbon-style’ rows of ‘ill-built terraced houses’ were built.

---

28 Sponza, The Italian Poor, p. 21-22.
29 Appendix 2 is compiled from census data recorded in Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 136-137. Hughes gives the breakdown of Italian-born people in the various Welsh counties, and by gender.
30 Taken from Appendix 2.
31 Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 25-27.
32 Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 136-137.
33 Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 71.
34 Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 28.
The significance of the ‘fluidity’\textsuperscript{35} of the population in South Wales, and the relatively low numbers of Italian immigrants to Wales,\textsuperscript{36} facilitated Italians’ fairly unproblematic integration. In Scotland, where the native population was more static, the attitude towards ‘outsiders’ was less welcoming.\textsuperscript{37}

So, this first ‘wave’ of Italians who ventured from London to South Wales, came across a ‘frontier’ society, in a state of redefining itself. Apart from easier integration, another benefit was a lack of services in these new ‘towns’ which is where the ‘adaptability and creativity’\textsuperscript{38} of Italians flourished. As noted by Aldrich and Waldinger, ‘the presence of “underserved markets” represents one of the essential circumstances under which small ethnic enterprises can grow in the open market.’\textsuperscript{39} Some Italians in Wales worked in mining or as seamen.\textsuperscript{40} However, the vast majority worked within the food sector. By 1926, a report of Merthyr Tydfil claimed the Italians, ‘...come not to participate in industry, but to cater in the comestible luxuries of the working people. They almost monopolise the fish and chip industry.’\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{35} Hughes, \textit{Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla}, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{36} Hughes, \textit{Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla}, p. 117. The 1911 census of England and Wales showed 51.5\% of males and 61.2\% of females in Glamorgan were born in Glamorgan, the lowest levels of native-born people in England and Wales.
\textsuperscript{38} Sponza, \textit{The Italian Poor}, p. 334.
\textsuperscript{39} Howard E. Aldrich and Roger D. Waldinger [1990] in Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{40} Sponza, \textit{The Italian Poor}, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{41} J. Ronald Williams [1926] in Hughes, \textit{Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla}, p. 25.
Almost every Valleys town had at least one Italian establishment by the 1920’s.\textsuperscript{42} Fig. 1 shows the dispersal of the 336 Italian-run cafes and shops as recorded in the 1939 London-published trade directory ‘Guida Generale Degli Italiani in Gran Britagna.’\textsuperscript{43}

The general clustering in the coalfield shows its lucrative opportunities, as miners had more disposable income. They also indulged in the newly-emerging holiday sector as the establishments in the coastal areas illustrates.\textsuperscript{44} The lack of a ‘Little Italy’ in Wales is significant. Firstly, Italians spread out in order to capture more trade,\textsuperscript{45} as their customers were Welsh miners, which also explains why the majority of their fare were British products, at least initially.\textsuperscript{46} Also, in contrast with the Jewish community in South Wales, the Italians did

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map.png}
\caption{‘The distribution of Italian cafés in South Wales’ Colin Hughes, (Bridgend, 1991).}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{42} Hughes, \textit{Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla}, p. 45-47.
\textsuperscript{43} Hughes, \textit{Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla}, p. 47. Chezzi, \textit{Italians in Wales}, p. 5. gives a description of the \textit{Guida Generale}, in which she explains it as information about the Italian Royal family, Mussolini, and details of Italian consulates contained within its pages.
\textsuperscript{44} Chezzi, \textit{Italians in Wales}, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{45} Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{46} Colpi [1991] in Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 262.
not need to ‘cluster (...) as a defensive strategy’.47 Italians suffered less hostility than many other migrant groups such as the Jews, and the Irish, and this was partly because they were offering services, and not competing for Welsh jobs.48

However, although not ‘clustering’, there is evidence that Italians worked relatively near one another. For instance, the Guida Generale extracts (Fig.2)49 show several Italian businesses in the same area.

Fig. 2: Extracts from the Guida Generale Degli in Gran Britagna, 1939

| FULGONI BROS, Café Restaurant, 20, Commercial St., Pontypridd, Mon. |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| FULGONI, Fratelli, P. & R., Café, 1, Broad St., Aberystwyth. |
| FULGONI, G. & SONS, Café Conf., St. Peter’s Sq., Rhuha, Denbigshire, & Wilthchurch, Sleeping, | FULGONI, Café, Fish Rest., 14, Pontymoile, Mon. |
| FULGONI, Guida, café Conf., 34, Pontymoile, Monty. Tyddle, Glam. |
| FULGONI, Luigi, 25, Bedwyn Road, Ystrad, Glam. |

In fact, 10% of Italians in Wales owned more than one business, either in the same town, or nearby town.50 Clearly, the repeated family names, along with ‘and sons’ in the extracts shows the importance of family, which will be developed in Chapter 2. However, it is important to note the significance of Italians utilising their shared industry. For instance, Emanuelli described the situation in his autobiography, ‘my father rented this shop from fellow

---

47 Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 41-43.
49 Fig. 2 is taken from the London-published trade directory Guida Generale Degli Italiani in Gran Britagna, 1939. A copy of this document is available online at The Anglo-Italian Family History Society, anglo-italianfhs.org.uk where a wealth of other resources on Italian immigrants and their descendants in Britain are also available.
50 Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 40.
Italians,’ 51 and he goes on to list the different Italian families in Treorchy who were running several shops each, some only a street away from the others. This echoes Portes and Rumbaut’s claim that migrants working together creates ‘access to sources of working capital, protected markets and pools of labour’. 52 Colpi 53 and Guidici both claim this ‘occupational concentration’ 54 contributed to the retention of an Italian migrant identity, as their domination of niche businesses created a distinction from others. Associations were created, for instance ‘The South Wales Italian Traders’ Association’ which began in 1913, 55 and ‘The South Wales Italian Confectioners’ Association’, which show that Italians considered themselves as part of a ‘South Wales Italian’ group. 56

So far, it has been shown that a unique ‘frontier’ demographic in Wales, along with relatively low numbers of Italian immigrants, culminated in Italians living and working in certain areas, and created economic ties, at least. However, how this ‘community’, created social links within Wales, and retained connections to Italy, and to what extent these factors affected their own sense of ‘Italian-ness’ will now be explored.

52 Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut [1996] in Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 87.
54 Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 195.
56 Anon., ‘Caterers Repli To Grocers,’ Western Mail, (11 May 1927), p. 5. Available at https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000104/19270511/139/0005 Accessed 14th April 2021. This article notes the ‘400 Italian refreshment houses in South Wales.’
Part II

“We (...) have found a welcome in the hillsides, but Bardi is still the land of our fathers.”

80% of Italians in Wales came from the Northern area of Bardi. This was partly due to the *padrone* system, whereby Italians recruited apprentices from their home village. Firstly, this avoided the Aliens Act 1905, which restricted immigrants to those who had employment secured before their arrival in Britain. Secondly, it strengthened ties with Italy, in a concept known as *companilismo*, which Chezzi defines as, ‘an expression of collective identity and affiliation to a particular geographical area of origin in Italy.’ However, some academics consider the importance of *companilismo* overstated. For instance, Bottignolo claimed ‘the national myth (of the Italian state) overrides regionalisms’ and that ‘duty between fellow countrymen’ is more significant.

Nevertheless, several autobiographical accounts of Italians in Wales discuss Bardi fondly. It is important to note that autobiographies have their limitations. There is a general dearth of them, as first generation Italians were generally illiterate. The testimonies available were mainly written by men, second generation or child migrants who grew up in Wales, during their old age. Halbwachs claims that this could create a ‘retrospective mirage’ whereby the past is considered more fondly because the author is ‘detached’ from it. However, written

58 Chezzi, *Italians in Wales*, p. 3.
59 Chezzi, *Italians in Wales*, p. 3.
64 Chezzi, *Italians in Wales*, p.
testimonies have their uses, to ‘cobble together (...) an identity project’. Hall’s claim helps connect these testimonies with sociological concepts about identity and belonging, as he states ‘identity is (...) perceived within, not outside, representation.’ So, the way the migrants ‘represent’ their Italian identity creates Italian identity. Furthermore, Anderson considers ‘printed language as a site for the production of national identities.’

Emanuelli describes his parents ‘always’ talking about Bardi and a subsequent sense of a ‘fairy-tale land where ghosts haunted the medieval castle,’ for the young Emanuelli. He had been born in Abercarn, South Wales, to Italian parents in 1920. His parents presenting an affiliation for Bardi shows how cultural identity is transmitted to second generations, which will be explored further in Chapter 2. Similarly, Bardi castle became symbolic for some Bardigiani, as Servini, born in Bardi to Italian parents, also notes, ‘after 70 years in Wales, I get this gut feeling whenever I return to my roots (...) when Bardi castle comes into sight (...) I am home!’ Servini’s autobiography proudly displays Bardi castle (Fig. 3). Emanuelli also has a photo of the castle, but interestingly on the back cover, with a photo of his parents’ Welsh café on the front. This disparity of emphasis might be because Emanuelli was a child of migrant parents, rather than being a migrant child like Servini, so displays his ‘Welsh-ness’ on the front and his Italian identity on the back cover.

---

66 Fortier, Migrant Belongings, p. 38.
67 Hall [1993] in Chezzi, Italians in Wales, p. 88
70 Chezzi, Italians in Wales, p. 89.
71 Servini, A Boy From Bardi, p. 2.
72 Fig. 3. Is a photograph of Bardi castle from the website http://www.welshitalians.com/home
Overall, it seems clear that links to the home region are important to Italian migrants in Wales. This is also emphasised in Servini’s account, as he explains Welsh money has helped restore the ‘Capella’, or church, in Bardi.\textsuperscript{73}

There is some evidence which gives insight into the creation of a Bardigiani ‘community’ and how this helped foster maintenance of Italian identity. For instance, Emanuelli discusses his family’s links to the Carpanini family, as both were living in Wales but had ‘grown up together in Bardi.’\textsuperscript{74} He also notes the rare occasion when the Bardi ‘community’ in South Wales came

\textsuperscript{73} Servini, \textit{A Boy From Bardi}, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{74} Emanuelli, \textit{A Sense of Belonging}, p. 7-8.
together ‘just once a year’ for an outing. Shown is a photograph of a similar Italian outing (Fig. 4). Emanuelli’s testimony reflects a common theme among Italian immigrants; their fleeting social links with other Italians. This seems a particularly Welsh phenomenon, due perhaps to the lack of a ‘Little Italy,’ as no Italian migrant churches or schools were built. The significance of money being sent to Italy for church renovations rather than building a church in Wales could be two-fold. Firstly, Wales was a Nonconformist country at this time, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. Secondly, Colpi claimed that Italians generally desire to return

---

75 Emanuelli, A Sense of Belonging, p. 7.
76 Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 68.
77 Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 117-118.
78 Servini, A Boy From Bardi, p. 9.
79 Paul Chambers and Andrew Thompson, ‘Coming to Terms with the Past: Religion and Identity in Wales’ in Social Compass, Vol.52, no. 3, (2005), p. 339 Available at https://journals-sagepub-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/doi/pdf/10.1177/0037768805057879 Accessed 15th April 2021. This article cites the 1851 census of England and Wales, wherein 50% of Welsh claimed a faith, of whom 80% were
to Italy, so total assimilation into Welsh culture was ‘absurd.’

She also states the ‘nostalgia’ for Italy reached almost ‘mythological’ proportions, which ties in with Emanuelli’s feelings about Bardi being a ‘fairy-tale land.’

However, it seems that many Italians were simply too busy working for socialising. Many café’s opened at 6:00am and closed as late as 11:00pm. As Servini recalled, linking his Italian identity with the Italian ‘community’, ‘we did keep an Italian identity. We had social events, outings, rare dances. We had little part in these come to think of it, we never had time (...) we never closed.’ Of course, some Italians must have been attending these events. Some were organised by the Italian vice-consulate in Cardiff, established since 1903. Fortier describes such events as actively ‘creating’ a distinct migrant community. Indeed, it seems the Italian community in Wales supported one another, at least during weddings and funerals, as various newspaper announcements list several Italian family names. For instance, Mr. Servini’s funeral, attended by many ‘notable’ members of the Italian community, several different Italian families, along with ‘representatives of the Port Talbot Chamber of Trade,’ shows Mr. Servini’s reputation in the community, both Italian and Welsh. Another newspaper

Nonconformists. The article discusses the dominance of Nonconformity in Wales in the 19th Century, and its links with Welsh culture and identity.

Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 256.
Servini, A Boy From Bardi, p. 17.
Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 66.
Sponza, The Italian Poor, p. 22.
Fortier, Migrant Belongings, p. 106.
announcement also shows the Italian link with Catholicism,\textsuperscript{89} as Mr. Bracchi was buried in a Catholic ceremony, to be explored further in Chapter 3.

Therefore, it seems feasible to suggest that a loose-knit, Italian community was created in South Wales, based around economic pragmatism, yet also offering occasional social support. However, Italians worked long hours and were primarily focused on their businesses and family, which will be discussed in the next chapter. It would also seem that Italians considered themselves both Bardigiani and ‘Italian’, as Emanuelli noted ‘I remember feeling very much like an Italian among the Welsh.’\textsuperscript{90} This idea of a ‘national identity’ being based on nation and culture,\textsuperscript{91} along with their sometime affiliation to regions, does not seem to concern them, as Italians shift between the two in their testimonies. Guidici notes that the visibility of a specific nation as ‘homeland’ (Italy) fosters a sense of pride and national identity,\textsuperscript{92} so maintaining links with Italy helped retain Italian identity, to some extent.

\textsuperscript{89} Anon., ‘Late Mr. G. Bracchi, Porthcawl,’\textit{ Western Mail}, (11 Jan 1940), p. 3. Available at https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000104/19400111/105/0003 Accessed 20th April 2021.

\textsuperscript{90} Emanuelli, \textit{A Sense of Belonging}, p. foreword.

\textsuperscript{91} Fortier, \textit{Migrant Belongings}, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{92} Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 314.
Chapter 2

This Chapter will assess the importance of two related, and well-known markers of Italian identity: family and food.

Part I

*‘The Italian immigrant cares, almost exclusively, only for his own family.’*\(^93\)

The links to Italy, particularly Bardi, have been discussed, but it was not just the *padrone* system which facilitated the unique chain-migration of Italians to Wales.\(^94\) As Hughes stated, as Italian men settled into Welsh life, ‘they looked mainly to Bardi for their brides’.\(^95\) Spinetti, born in South Wales in 1933,\(^96\) notes that his Italian father choosing a Welsh wife was, ‘unusual (…) Other Italian boys in Wales courted Italian girls’.\(^97\) Not only did marrying other Italians foster links with the homeland and prevent assimilation,\(^98\) it simultaneously maintained Italian identity. It is prudent to note here Berry’s theory of ‘acculturation’,\(^99\) wherein he defines the concept of ‘assimilation’ as the ‘relinquishing of cultural identity and joining the dominant society’. Italians in South Wales arguably achieved ‘integration,’ however, which Berry defined as ‘the retention of cultural identity whilst joining the dominant society’.\(^100\)

---

\(^93\) Bottignolo [1985] in Fortier, Migrant Belongings, p. 60.

\(^94\) Guidici, *Migration, Memory and Identity*, p. 38.

\(^95\) Hughes, *Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla*, p. 46. Hughes states that by 1901, there were eight times as many Italian-born men in Wales as Italian-born women.

\(^96\) Chezzi, *Italians in Wales*, p. 89.


\(^98\) Guidici, *Migration, Memory and Identity*, p. 98.

\(^99\) Berry in Duty, ‘Cultural identity.’

\(^100\) Berry in Duty, ‘Cultural identity.’
Marrying other Italians retained Italian identity due to the ‘preservation of family norms and values’\(^1\) in other words, traditional Italian values. Fortier suggests that ‘\textit{la famiglia} (...) is the ultimate site and expression of Italian culture’.\(^2\) She argues that Italian migrants feel a stronger need to protect Italian culture within the family unit, as they are not living in Italy.\(^3\) Similarly, Guidici notes how Italians in Wales, being few in number and dispersed, could have been at risk of assimilation,\(^4\) but as Fortier also notes, ‘family appears as a protective space against adversities’,\(^5\) such as assimilation. This chimes with Orsí’s concept of \textit{domus}, or Italian values which incorporated ‘strict family order and discipline, (...) \textit{family loyalty} and mutual support.’\(^6\)

Furthermore, this ‘\textit{family loyalty} and mutual support,’\(^7\) transcended the links with other Italian families discussed in Chapter 1. For instance, a young Antonio Assirati travelled from Bardi to Merthyr Tydfil in 1902, to work for his \textit{padrone}, Mr. Berni.\(^8\) Antonio worked hard successfully building up several shops for the Berni’s, but was repeatedly ousted in favour of ‘the owners’ blood relatives.’\(^9\) As already noted by the \textit{Guida Generale}\(^10\) in the previous chapter, it was not just marrying Italians which fostered familial links, as cafés were ‘almost always family-owned and run,’\(^11\) meaning brothers and uncles for instance. As Hughes

---

\(^1\) Fortier, \textit{Migrant Belongings}, p. 59.
\(^2\) Fortier, \textit{Migrant Belongings}, p. 4.
\(^3\) Fortier, \textit{Migrant Belongings}, p. 63-64.
\(^4\) Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 98.
\(^7\) Orsi [1985] in Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 212.
\(^8\) Hughes, \textit{Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla}, p. 45.
\(^9\) Hughes, \textit{Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla}, p. 45.
\(^10\) As mentioned, the London-published trade directory \textit{Guida Generale Degli Italiani in Gran Britagna 1939} is available online at The Anglo-Italian Family History Society, anglo-italianfhs.org.uk.
explains, many Italian cafés were opened by, ‘individuals still in Bardi (...) Brothers would take it in turn year by year to manage a shop in Wales, and the profits were shared out back in Bardi.’  

These profits were used to open more businesses, and Italians settled in Wales to run them. Other family members then joined them. As Spinetti explains, after his grandfather walked to Wales from Italy, his two sons followed him later; ‘Francesco, the older brother would go first, and all being well, send word that the young brother should join him.’ Chezzi notes that Spinetti’s grandfather came ‘with no passport, no permit’ which could symbolise loss of his old identity, and the ‘search for a new identity’. This ‘new identity’ could be categorised as an Italian migrant identity. For example, Spinetti’s father, the ‘young brother’ in the above extract, ‘was adapting himself to his new life. What he didn’t like about Italy he dropped. What he liked about Wales, he took on.’

This idea of ‘cherry-picking’ from both cultures will also be explored further in Chapter 3. It comes up in the BBC documentary ‘The Welsh Italians’ where Francho Tambini describes being ‘very lucky’ to be able to take the best of both cultures. This chimes with Hall’s explanation that ‘cultural identity’ is a process of ‘constant transformation’, and is “not ‘who we are’ or “where we come from” so much as what we might become”. Similarly, this ongoing construction of identity echoes Harzig et. al.’s definition of ‘acculturation’ where migrants adjust by ‘retaining some elements of the culture of origin, modifying other and

---

112 Hughes, Lime Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 37.
114 Spinetti, Up Front, p. 4.
115 Chezzi, Italians in Wales, p. 92.
116 Spinetti, Up Front, p. 7.
117 The Welsh Italians, [TV Programme] (BBC One Wales, March, 2015).
discarding yet others’. As will be seen, the extent to which they retained, modified and discarded elements varies among Italians, although general trends can be proposed. Despite individual variations, Guidici claims that the majority of Italian migrants and their descendants in Wales are proud of their Italian heritage, ‘never denying it’ and showing a strong ‘emotional pull’ towards Italy. For example, it is important to note that Joe Spinetti considered himself Italian, despite adjusting and creating a new ‘migrant’ identity, stating categorically, ‘I was born an Italian, I’ll die an Italian’. Although as Mercer states, ‘identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis.’ The fact that Spinetti needed to claim his Italianness shows it was not inherent, but constructed.

The three autobiographical accounts analysed for this dissertation all recall the importance of every member of the family working in the business, reinforcing the ‘mutual support’ aspect of Orsi’s domus concept. This made sense from an economic viewpoint. For instance, most Italian families lived on the premises, giving them ‘cheap and flexible manpower’ to stay open for long hours, as noted in Chapter 1. Chezzi notes that living at work created a ‘blurring’ of the public and private spheres for Italian migrants, which it almost certainly did to an extent, and will be explored further in Chapter 3. However, as Emanuelli describes coming home from school, ‘Ma was behind the mahogany confectionary counter. (....) At the back of the shop, a door opened onto the buildings’ ‘private quarters.’

---

120 Harzig et. al. [2009] in Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 2.
121 Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 192, 198.
122 Spinetti, Up Front, p. 19.
124 Orsi [1985] in Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 212.
125 Chezzi, Italians in Wales, p. 30.
126 Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity p. 34.
127 Chezzi, Italians in Wales, p. 30.
Guidici considers the ‘counter’ a ‘symbolical ethnic boundary’ between the Italian family and their Welsh customers, retaining a distinct Italian identity behind it.¹²⁹

The ‘mutual support’¹³⁰ within the family contributed to a strong obligation to work in the family business. Emanuelli recalled, ‘I was torn between loyalty to the family and my own inclinations (...) It was a tacit assumption that Louis and I should work for the family business and one that neither of us dared challenge.’¹³¹ The photograph from the front cover of his autobiography, in a style typical of Italian photographs, shows the importance of every family member working in the business (Fig. 5)¹³²

*IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS*

¹²⁹ Guidici, *Migration, Memory and Identity*, p. 152.
¹³² Fig. 5: Emanuelli, *A Sense of Belonging*, front cover. Chezzi, *Italians in Wales*, Chapter 1, provides analysis of the typical portrayal of Italian families outside their establishments and the various reasons for this.
However, despite some tensions, traditional Italian values, as part of Italian identity, remained strong. As Guidici illustrates, testimonies of later generations describe Italian family values as their ‘unique and precious moral heritage’.\textsuperscript{133} Therefore, an important aspect of Italian identity was successfully retained and transmitted to subsequent generations. Similarly, Lackland Sam claims ‘for children and adolescents with immigrant backgrounds, family has an important role in transmitting the foundation values embodied in the heritage culture.’\textsuperscript{134} In fact, some second generations claim to possess a stronger sense of Italian identity than Italians in Italy. ‘The Welsh Italians’ documentary shows a gentleman claiming that, despite being born in Wales and considering himself Welsh, he had been ‘brought up by Italians’ and therefore had ‘more traditions than the Italians!’\textsuperscript{135} It could be that the ‘performative acts’\textsuperscript{136} of Italian traditions in Welsh society, even if ‘performed’ in the private domain as will be described in later chapters, crystallized a feeling of being Italian. Again, this shows how a distinct Italian migrant identity is created by individuals. As Servini also stated ‘often, emigrants are more patriotic than nationals who stay at home!’\textsuperscript{137}

Part II

Emanuelli’s mention of the ‘private quarters’\textsuperscript{138} of his family’s shop, and the ‘ethnic boundary’\textsuperscript{139} of the counter, highlight a distinctly Italian experience being lived in the private sphere. An important aspect of this was cooking traditional Italian food.\textsuperscript{140} Although Italians

\textsuperscript{133} Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 214.
\textsuperscript{135} \textit{The Welsh Italians}.
\textsuperscript{136} Fortier, \textit{Migrant Belongings}, p. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{137} Servini, \textit{A Boy From Bardi}, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{138} Emanuelli, \textit{A Sense of Belonging}, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{139} Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and identity}, p. 152.
\textsuperscript{140} Hughes, \textit{Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla}, p. 119.
brought coffee and ice-cream to Wales, they initially ‘gave the customers what they wanted’ and primarily stocked British products such as Bovril, Oxo, British confectionary and cigarettes. Importantly, they also refrained from serving alcohol, which will be discussed further in Chapter 3. However, an aspect of their Italian identity that they retained was Italian cuisine. All the available autobiographical accounts recall the importance of Italian food. Emanuelli recounts, ‘in the seven or so years she had been in Wales my mother had remained true to her culinary roots. So olive oil was a staple in our household’. The importance of Italian cooking for the family is also reflected in the testimony of Spinetti who had a Welsh mother, ‘Dad took Mam to Italy (...) she learned to cook in the style of the north. He was an example of preserving in Wales an Italian tradition that you really wouldn’t want to lose.’ So, in spite of some difficulty obtaining Mediterranean ingredients, Italians retained their cuisine, when it would have been easier to ‘assimilate’ by eating Welsh foods.

To what extent Italian food had on the maintenance and transmission of Italian identity will be explored hereafter. Edensor notes that food is ‘very important everyday form of national identity.’ Similarly, Guidici concluded that Italian migrants retained their identity ‘through banal and everyday behaviours and routines’. Italian migrants particularly held onto their cuisine as a way of ‘exercising control’ over the chaotic situation of adjusting to a new

---

142 Emanuelli, *A Sense of Belonging*, p. 3.
145 Guidici, *Migration, Memory and Identity*, p. 210-211. Guidici describes the testimonies of Italians in Wales growing their own Mediterranean vegetables and distilling wine, as ‘such products were not available when they first arrived,’ which is a practice common to Italian migrants abroad.
147 Guidici, *Migration, Memory and Identity*, p. 247.
society. Furthermore, the link between food and family is made explicit by Gans, ‘the durability of the ethnic tradition with respect to food is probably due to the close connection of food with family and group life. Indeed, food patterns are retained longer than others because they hold the group together with a minimum of strain.’\textsuperscript{149} This could, in part, explain the easy transmission of Italian identity through food to the second and subsequent generations. As Angela Pockley, a second generation Italian, recounts ‘it’s not a conscious decision to sort of do Italian things. It’s just that...My parents always cooked Italian food.’\textsuperscript{150}

Guidici concludes, ‘the majority of Italians have retained a strong Italian identity in their private sphere.’\textsuperscript{151} By marrying Italians rather than Welsh partners, and eating Italian food rather than Welsh food, the Italians resisted assimilation. Therefore, it would appear that Italian identity was retained through the Italian family unit, along with consumption of Italian cuisine, to a greater extent than the loose-knit community with other Italians in South Wales.

\textsuperscript{149} Herbert J. Gans [1962] in Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 212.
\textsuperscript{151} Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 96.
Chapter 3

This final chapter will analyse the factors of faith and language, in the maintenance, and transmission, of Italian migrant identity.

Part I

‘All they ever thought about was their family, their work and their church.’152

As already touched upon in Chapter 1, money from Italian immigrants in Wales was used to renovate a ‘Capella’ in Bardi.153 The BBC documentary ‘Ciao Charlie Rossi’154 also showed family ‘crypts’ in Bardi, for Italians living in Wales, which shows the twofold importance of faith and the homeland. However, the extent to which Italians retained their Roman Catholic faith within Wales, and its impact on identity formation, and transmission, will be explored.

As noted in Chapter 1, at the end of the 19th century Wales was dominated by Nonconformism, which was considered ‘a carrier of ‘Welsh culture and identity’.155 Therefore, tensions caused by the large, repeated waves of Irish Catholic immigrants to Wales during this period were caused by a perceived threat to the Welsh way of life.156 Italians, as Catholics, fared rather better than the Irish in terms of hostility, and one factor could be that many Italian establishments placated Nonconformists’ by marketed themselves as ‘Temperance

153 Servini, A Boy From Bardi, p. 9.
154 Ciao Charlie Rossi.
156 Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 223.
Bars’, shown in the photograph. (Fig. 6).\textsuperscript{157} As Spinetti states, ‘How convenient it was that the chapels approved of them. Only temperance beverages were served, you see.’\textsuperscript{158}

As touched upon briefly in Chapter 2, the cafés did not sell alcohol. This may have been a marketing technique targeting Welsh chapel-goers, because excluding a few places in Northern England, they were distinctive to Wales.\textsuperscript{159} However, despite this, some Italian establishments remained open on Sundays, risking both the fines and ‘wrath’ of the Nonconformists.\textsuperscript{160} The Sunday Closing (Wales) Act 1881, was heavily backed by Nonconformists.\textsuperscript{161} An article in the South Wales Echo reads, ‘chapel-goers regarded the

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{luigi-conti.jpg}
\caption{‘Luigi Conti’s twin establishments in Aberfan in the early 1930’s’ Hughes (Bridgend, 1991).}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{157} Fig. 6 : Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 58. \\
\textsuperscript{158} Spinetti, Up Front, p. 8. \\
\textsuperscript{159} Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 52. \\
\textsuperscript{160} Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 56-59. \\
\textsuperscript{161} Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 54-56.
commonplace practice of selling cigarettes or sweets on Sunday as the work of the Devil'.  

However, many ordinary Welsh people considered the cafes a positive influence, in that they tempted people away from the pubs during the week, so 'turned a blind eye,' to Sunday openings. 

So, how did the Italian immigrants feel about their Catholicism, and how did their faith intersect with their national and cultural identity? Vecoli, writing about Italian immigrants in America, argued that Catholicism was inextricably tied to the Irish national identity, but that this was not the case for Italians. It must be noted that he was writing about an earlier wave of Italians, beginning in 1820, before Italy was a unified state. 

He acknowledged that Italians were loyal to their family and village primarily, and therefore only attended church on special days, celebrating ‘local saints of the village’. As Parolin explains, the traditional Italian way of worshipping with the ‘social support’ of the village, is severed by the migrant experience, leading to a ‘familistic religion’, where faith is effectively ‘confined to a private sphere’ and this will also be explored with Italian language.

---

165 Guidici, *Migration, Memory and Identity*, p.32.  
Apart from practicing Catholicism more privately, perhaps partly due to the fact Italians were busy working on Sundays,\textsuperscript{169} Italians did attend local churches for their weddings and funerals, as the newspaper extracts in Chapter 1 show, although statistics of church attendance are hard to come by. As there were no Italian churches in Wales, as was the case in London, Italians used Catholic churches already in Wales,\textsuperscript{170} which had small, post-Reformation congregations,\textsuperscript{171} before being bolstered by Irish newcomers. Spinetti, describes the Welsh religious procession, ‘behind all this might, came a tiny Catholic contingent’.\textsuperscript{172} Similarly, Servini, ‘the Catholic one [procession] was the best (...), Canon Kelly, loved and feared by his Irish flock.’\textsuperscript{173} This hints at Italians lack of participation within the Catholic church in Wales, and also a possible reason for this; a dominance of Irish worshippers.\textsuperscript{174}

However, there is evidence that, by contrast to Verdi’s assessment, some Italian migrants consider Catholicism as connected with their Italian identity. For instance, second generation Joseph Parisella states, ‘My son has got three children, but they’ve been brought up in the Welsh mode (...) They’re not Catholics, they don’t go to Church and (...) so... they’re not Italian

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{169} Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 56-59. Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 80 shows the Sunday takings of a café, showing a higher amount than during mid-week, which illustrates why many Italians stayed open on Sundays.
\textsuperscript{170} Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{172} Spinetti, Up Front, pp. 13-14.
\textsuperscript{173} Servini, A Boy From Bardi, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{174} Vecoli, Prelates and Peasants, p. 227. Vecoli explains the ‘clash of religious cultures’ between Irish and Italian Catholics.
\end{flushright}
anymore.’\textsuperscript{175} This echoes Enloe claim that ‘many individuals behave as if their ethnic affiliation and professed religion are one and the same’.\textsuperscript{176}

The idea of Italian migrants ‘cherry-picking’ which aspects of their cultural identity to retain, modify of discard, as conceptualised by Harzig et. al.\textsuperscript{177} was noted in Chapter 2. For Spinetti’s father, ‘as for the whole business of being a Roman Catholic, that went right out the window’.\textsuperscript{178} However, this may be due to the rarity of ‘Joe’ Spinetti marrying a ‘non-Italian’. It seems from other testimonials that generally Italian migrants generally retained their Catholicism, especially by marrying other Italian Catholics.\textsuperscript{179}

Joseph Parisella’s\textsuperscript{180} claim shows the importance of transmission of Italian identity through Catholicism to subsequent generations. For instance, Spinetti’s father, despite discarding his own Catholicism, decided his son ‘ought to have [Catholic] religious instruction,’ showing the importance of Catholicisms’ role in transmitting Italian identity, even when only one parent was Italian.\textsuperscript{181} As Fortier claims, subsequent generations ‘are the living embodiment of continuity and change (...) charged with the responsibility of keeping some form of ethnic identity alive in the future.’\textsuperscript{182}

\textsuperscript{175} Joseph Parisella interviewed in Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 220.
\textsuperscript{176} C. Enloe [1996] in Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 220.
\textsuperscript{177} Harzig et. al. [2009] in Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{178} Spinetti, \textit{Up Front}, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{179} Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 218.
\textsuperscript{180} Joseph Parisella interviewed in Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 220.
\textsuperscript{181} Spinetti, \textit{Up Front}, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{182} Fortier, \textit{Migrant Belongings}, p. 150.
The difficulties faced by worshipping in a non-Catholic country, in Irish-dominated churches, along with the general increase of secularism as the 20th century went on, might go some way to explaining why subsequent generations attended Catholic churches only for weddings and funerals. Many Italians also sent their children to Catholic schools in Wales, in order to foster their Italian identity, and which will be explored in the next section.

Part II

When Italians did attend local Catholic churches, it was one of the few places they spoke Italian. Interestingly, most Italians spoke a local dialect. As Servini explains, ‘no one spoke proper Italian at home, we spoke a local dialect, the vowels are French with slight variations from valley to valley.’ Similarly, Emanuelli notes, ‘my parents spoke their local Italian dialect to each other at home, but curiously they would switch to standard Italian ‘il vero italiano’ – when fellow Italians from their hometown came to visit.’

How did the first generation Italians cope with living in a bi-lingual country? As with Nonconformism, so the Welsh language was also in decline. Emanuelli recalls speaking

184 Guidici, *Migration, Memory and Identity*, p.221.
185 Guidici, *Migration, Memory and Identity*, p. 221.
186 Guidici, *Migration, Memory and Identity*, p. 231.
189 Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales*, p. 184. Jenkins quotes a Nonconformist minister who feared English was ‘rushing in upon us like mighty irresistible torrents.’ He also explains how Welsh generally became bi-
English with his school-friends, but also learning Welsh at school.\(^{190}\) At the turn of the 20th century, due in large part to the influx of immigrants, the Welsh language was in decline.\(^{191}\) However, as Emanuelli recalls, ‘in the mid-twenties, around half the people in the Rhondda could still speak Welsh. All could speak English, and they did so with that wonderfully melodious South Wales accent.’\(^{192}\) Regarding accents, he also points out that his parents never lost their Italian accents, but Emanuelli and his brother had Welsh accents ‘like true little Welshmen.’\(^{193}\) This suggests Emanuelli places his identity partly within his accent. Spinetti’s Italian father developed a Welsh accent,\(^{194}\) but again this might be due to his marrying a Welsh woman.

O’Leary (cited in Guidici, 2012, p. 246) points out, ‘language – whether English or Welsh – was one of the skills migrants were compelled to acquire in order to obtain employment and to perform satisfactory the duties expected of them in the workplace’.\(^{195}\) Similarly, Hughes describes how Italians managed with the linguistic differences; ‘Mrs. Gambarini, the shops’ owners’ wife, spoke hardly any English, and never ventured beyond the counter for fear of being laughed at.’\(^{196}\) This shows again how the counter acted as an ‘ethnic boundary’\(^{197}\) of

\(^{190}\) Emanuelli, *A Sense of Belonging*, p. 5.
\(^{191}\) Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, p. 241. Morgan cites the 1901 and 1911 census’s which showed the decline of Welsh speakers.
\(^{192}\) Emanuelli, *A Sense of Belonging*, p. 32.
\(^{194}\) Spinetti, *Up Front*, p. 28.
\(^{197}\) Guidici, *Migration, Memory and Identity*, p. 152.
language in this instance. However, as Italian women came to Wales, ‘Go into the shop’ Mrs. Cordani was told by an Italian friend, ‘and speak what English you can. The customers will laugh and you should laugh with them’. And Mrs. Cordani, following this advice, soon became accepted.’\(^{198}\) So, Italian was still spoken, but modified to usage within the private space in a similar way to Catholicism. As Ugolini points out, regarding Italians in Scotland, ‘it became strictly “taboo” to speak Italian in the public arena of the shop.’\(^{199}\)

A key feature of personal identity is a given name,\(^{200}\) and yet a common theme among Italian migrants is the ‘Anglicisation’ of their names.\(^{201}\) For example, Spinetti recalling his father, ‘he didn’t stay Giuseppe for long. In no time it was Joe. (...) While we’re on names, I should tell you, I was christened Vittorio Giorgio Andrea, not that I was ever called that.’\(^{202}\) Similarly, Emanuelli remembers, ‘from now on I was known as Ettore and my brother Luigino was now Louis.’\(^{203}\) As Chezzi explains, there is a debate around whether the Anglicisation of names was indicative of the Welsh accepting Italians, or a way of denying their personal identities.\(^{204}\) However, by the third generation, some Italian descendants regretted being given Welsh names, as Pierino Algieri says, ‘when we had our children I said to my wife ‘just give them Welsh names’ so not to have the problems I had in school and (now) they say ‘why didn’t you


\(^{200}\) Rocco Quaglia et. al. ‘Names in Psychological Science: Investigating the Processes of Thought Development and the Construction of Personal Identities,’ *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, Vol. 50, no. 2, (2016) Available at https://go-gale-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=tou&id=GALE|A448726863&v=2.1&it=r Accessed 24th April 2021. This is one of many psychological studies into given names and their link with the construction of personal identity, although there is a distinct lack of this aspect in relation to migration studies.

\(^{201}\) Chezzi, *Italians in Wales*, p. 92.

\(^{202}\) Spinetti, *Up Front*, p. 5.


\(^{204}\) Chezzi, *Italians in Wales*, p. 92.
give us Italian names?’...Our children...They wanted to have Italian names, to be different.’

So, names, as well as language, are connected to how Italians feel about their identity, and having an Italian name, for some at least, may be part of the complex process of retaining, and transmitting, Italian national identity.

This leads onto an exploration of how the second and subsequent generations felt about the Italian language, and the complexity of the link between Italian language and Italian national identity. Algieri, a child of one Italian migrant parent and one Welsh, also mentioned that ‘his father was not able to pass the Italian language on to him because, ‘he spent so much time just working, working, working.’ However, the Italian language was considered by many to be an important aspect of Italian identity, as many second generations were sent to Italian classes, and as Hughes explains, the Italian vice-consulate in Cardiff often sponsored these.

Shown is a photograph of an Italian ‘school’ (Fig. 7), held in the local school building twice weekly, which also illustrates how the lack of a ‘Little Italy’ meant there was no purpose-built Italian school. The photo shows the mixture of Italian and Welsh culture - an Italian flag is displayed, but Welsh mining machinery can also be seen.

205 Algieri interview with Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 203.
206 Algieri, interview with Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 232.
207 Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 66.
208 Fig. 7 Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 67.
209 Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 117-118.
Spinetti recalls his father saying ‘I’m all for it, if you want to learn Italian.’\textsuperscript{210} Again, as Spinetti’s mother was Welsh, there was perhaps a greater desire to ensure the second generation retained the Italian language. As Bottignolo points out, ‘parents think they are in some way reproducing themselves and passing their culture and world to their children.’\textsuperscript{211} Fortier similarly claims ‘the Italian language is thus a vehicle of transmission of an original culture,’ and creates ‘children’s’ personal identity.’\textsuperscript{212} Being an Italian migrant meant speaking English or Welsh in public, and Italian at home. Importantly, language also links into family, even the

\textsuperscript{210} Spinetti, \textit{Up Front}, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{211} Bottignolo [1985] in Fortier, \textit{Migrant Belongings}, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{212} Fortier, \textit{Migrant Belongings}, p. 84.
term ‘mother-tongue’ emphasises this, and as Fortier argues, the Italian language learned by second generations is ‘re-imported not into the community, but into the family,’ in a similarly, specifically migrant, ‘modified’ way as Catholicism.

The importance of the Italian language being transmitted to the second generation is shown by the regret of those who do not speak it, and the feeling they have ‘been deprived of an important feature of their Italian identity’. For example, Spinetti states, ‘the language of the country of my birth. I didn’t understand a word of it.’ Fortier explains the ‘mother tongue (is) originary sources of identity that, if lost, signal the loss of some originary self.’ (Fortier, 83). It has been shown that potentially, Italians in Wales found it particularly difficult to continue speaking Italian, partly due to the lack of a ‘Little Italy’ and Welsh Italian schools, and also the need to make a living. However, in a similar way to Catholicism, the Italian language and Italian identity have a complex, yet not inextricable relationship. Just one example of many, is Joe Spinetti’s declaration of his Italian identity, in spite of the loss of his Italian accent and his rejection of his Catholicism.

---

213 Fortier, Migrant Belongings, p. 97.
214 Fortier, Migrant Belongings, p. 85.
215 Harzig. et. al. [2009] in Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 2.
216 Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 232.
217 Spinetti, Up Front, p. 45.
218 Fortier, Migrant Belongings, p. 83.
219 Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 238.
220 Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity. Guidici’s excellent thesis contains numerous examples of such ‘cherry-picking’ for Italians in Wales, using interviews he has conducted and/or utilised.
221 Spinetti, Up Front, p. 19.
222 Spinetti, Up Front, p. 28.
223 Spinetti, Up Front, p. 7.
Conclusion

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, the Industrial Revolution’s unique impact in the South Wales coalfield brought an influx of migrants.\textsuperscript{224} The comparatively small amount of Italian immigrants left their mark on Wales with their service-based businesses,\textsuperscript{225} and the impact on Italian immigrants’ identity has been the subject of this investigation.

Perusal of census data showed the amount of Italians in South Wales, and the \textit{Guida Generale} and associated map showed their dispersal, yet research showed there were small pockets of Italian ‘communities’ in the Valleys areas, linked by economic pragmatism. The development of Italian trade associations in Wales illustrated their desire to remain distinct in their niche businesses.\textsuperscript{226} Social links between the Italian community in Wales were occasional, but showed the ‘duty between fellow countrymen’\textsuperscript{227}. This loose-knit Italian community retained links with their home regions, by both the \textit{padrone} system of recruitment,\textsuperscript{228} and the connections between other Bardi families in Wales.\textsuperscript{229} The concept of \textit{companilismo}\textsuperscript{230} was

\begin{flushleft}
\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{224} Hughes, \textit{Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla}, p.
\textsuperscript{225} Hughes, \textit{Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{227} Bottignolo [1985] in Fortier, \textit{Migrant Belongings}, p. 54.
\textsuperscript{228} Chezzi, \textit{Italians in Wales}, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{229} Emanuelli, \textit{A Sense of Belonging}, p. 7-8.
\textsuperscript{230} Chezzi, \textit{Italians in Wales}, p. 4.
\end{footnotesize}
\end{flushleft}
shown to be important to Bardi Italians in Wales, by their own admission, yet their Italian national identity was greatly significant to them.

It was shown that the retention of an Italian migrant identity was, to a large extent, due to the fundamental importance of the Italian family unit. Significantly, living outside Italy meant a stronger need to preserve Italian family values, and this factor was shown as more important than ties to the Italian community in Wales. The protected space within the Italian migrant family incorporates the other themes deemed important to Italian migrants, such as the retention of Italian food, and both the Italian language and Catholicism rituals being ‘performed’ within the family unit. Family was also shown as intimately connected with the transmission of Italian identity to subsequent generations, as the testimonies showed the importance of the ‘continuity’ of Italian heritage and culture being passed down, which was more important as the family were living outside Italy.

Exploration of various factors showed a uniquely Italian migrant identity was constructed, by way of modifying certain aspects of their Italianness. What it meant to be Italian in South Wales was markedly different to being Italian in Italy. For example, the private use of the

---

231 Fortier, Migrant Belongings, p. 63-64.
232 Fortier, Migrant Belongings, p. 63-64.
233 Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 45.
235 Fortier, Migrant Belongings, p. 85.
237 Fortier, Migrant Belongings, p. 150.
238 Drawing upon Hall’s concept of ‘cultural identity’ being in process of ‘constant transformation’, so identity is constructed rather than an inherent concept. Hall [1993] in Chezzi, Italians in Wales, p. 88. Similarly, Harzig et. al. definition of ‘acculturation’ where migrants adjust by ‘retaining some elements of the culture of origin, modifying other and discarding yet others’. Harzig et. al. in Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 2.
Italian language\textsuperscript{239} and the lack of the ‘social support’ of the village church\textsuperscript{240} meant constraining their religion to the ‘private sphere’, \textsuperscript{241}or the occasional use of Welsh Catholic churches. It has been shown that an Italian identity was retained even when one or more of these factors was absent, for instance Catholicism or the Italian language, as for some immigrants these factors were linked with their Italian identity, for others not. This showed the complexity of the creation of Italian \textit{migrant} identity, as migrants ‘cherry-picked’ what remained important to them, or first-generations were too busy to keep certain elements going. It was also shown that this process even arguably created a ‘stronger’ feeling of being Italian, as being outside of Italy crystallized a desire to retain Italian identity, even in a \textit{migrant} format.\textsuperscript{242}

The limitations of this dissertation prevented a discussion of how later generations ‘created’ their dual Welsh-Italian identities, particularly with the added dimension of ‘British’ and/or Welsh-Italian identities.\textsuperscript{243} Another area of exploration could be the effects of migration on Italians remaining in Italy.\textsuperscript{244} As Victor Spinetti recalls about his ‘tourist’ trip to Italy, ‘Mrs. Spinetti! Your grandson’s here!’ the well-wishers shouted in Italian. A woman came out of the house clapping her hands together. ‘Vittorio! Vittori! Vittorio!’ she cried and throwing her

\textsuperscript{239}Fortier, Migrant Belongings, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{242}Servini, A Boy From Bardi, p. 75. Mercer, in Fortier, Migrant Belongings, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{243}Guidici, Migration, Memory and identity, p. 193, claims that ‘the majority of respondents seemed to feel comfortable with their dual background.’ Further exploration of the construction of a Welsh, or English/British, and Italian identity would be very interesting. Chezzi, Italians in Wales, p. 95, talks about balancing the ‘equation about hyphenated identity.’ The tension of the ‘hyphen’ would be a fascinating topic of research.
\textsuperscript{244}As Pryce and Drake, Studying Migration, p. 3, noted it needs to be acknowledged that there are ‘effects and consequences of migration on individuals, families or communities (whether ‘movers’ or ‘stayers.’

44
arms around my neck, smothered me in smacking kisses."²⁴⁵ It would be interesting to consider attitudes of those left behind, particularly as Italians traditionally lived near their elderly parents.²⁴⁶

The experience of being Italian in South Wales at the turn of the 20th century was shown to have several elements of Welsh exceptionalism, which showed Wales cannot be considered a microcosm of Britain.²⁴⁷ Italian migrant identity cannot be considered in a vacuum from the host country. For instance, the fluid nature of Welsh society at this time,²⁴⁸ the Italian’s ‘shrewd’²⁴⁹ use of the term Temperance Bars, along with the decline of both Nonconformism²⁵⁰ and the Welsh language,²⁵¹ all created unique conditions for Italians in Wales. Further comparisons between South Wales and North Wales, notably at the Frongoch lead mine,²⁵² or rural parts of Mid-Wales, and²⁵³ evaluations of Italians in different parts of Britain,²⁵⁴ building upon Ugolini’s work on Italians in Scotland, would be illuminating.²⁵⁵

²⁴⁵ Spinetti, Up Front, p. 255.
²⁴⁶ Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 97.
²⁴⁸ Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 22-23.
²⁴⁹ Hughes, Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla, p. 117.
²⁵⁰ O’Leary, When Was Anti-Catholicism, pp. 323-324.
²⁵¹ Morgan, Rebirth of a nation, pp. 241-271.
²⁵² Chezzi, Italians in Wales, p. 5.
²⁵³ Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 201. Guidici found evidence of Italians’ assimilation in comparison to South Wales Italians’ ‘integration’, although he explains the complexities of Italian identity in different areas of Wales.
²⁵⁴ Guidici, Migration, Memory and Identity, p. 6. Guidici explains that, particularly ‘in the context of devolution,’ migration scholars need to ‘acknowledge the fact that, in most cases, migrants end up in territories which are already divided along ethnic and national lines.’ The consequences of which for the migrants and the host country need to be addressed.
Furthermore, comparison between other migrant groups in Wales, such as the Spanish,\textsuperscript{256} would provide an interesting comparison with Italians, being non-English speaking Catholics.

It was found that Italians in South Wales retained a sense of distinct Italian identity to a great extent, despite some modification of, and discarding certain elements, such as Italian language or Catholicism.\textsuperscript{257} Italians integrated into Welsh society, yet retained their Italian identity, by \textit{creating} a unique Italian \textit{migrant} identity. To some extent this was by links within their Italian community in Wales, but was predominantly due to the strong, Italian family unit, and its transmission of Italian values and culture, including cuisine.


\textsuperscript{257} Harzig. et. al. [2009] in Guidici, \textit{Migration, Memory and Identity}, p. 2.
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Italian-born people in Great Britain (1851-1911)

Compiled from Sponza, *The Italian Poor*, p. 15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1851</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>England and Wales</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>3,794</td>
<td>4,138</td>
<td>5,344</td>
<td>7,333</td>
<td>15,356</td>
<td>14,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>1,160</td>
<td>2,576</td>
<td>4,976</td>
<td>5,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M+F</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>4,489</td>
<td>5,063</td>
<td>6,504</td>
<td>9,909</td>
<td>20,332</td>
<td>20,389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>1,604</td>
<td>2,041</td>
<td>2,553</td>
<td>3,504</td>
<td>5,138</td>
<td>10,889</td>
<td>11,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scotland</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>2,795</td>
<td>3,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>1,256</td>
<td>1,491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M+F</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>4,051</td>
<td>4,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Great Britain</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>3,903</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>5,625</td>
<td>7,874</td>
<td>18,151</td>
<td>17,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>1,207</td>
<td>2,784</td>
<td>6,232</td>
<td>7,413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M+F</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>4,608</td>
<td>5,331</td>
<td>6,832</td>
<td>1,658</td>
<td>24,383</td>
<td>24,983</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Italian-born people in Wales and Monmouthshire (1871-1931)

Compiled by Hughes, *Lime, Lemon and Sarsparilla*, p. 136-137 from Official Census data of England and Wales, and Scotland. Hughes explains that numbers in brackets are ‘naturalised British citizens’, and that no county breakdowns were recorded after 1921.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>Wales + Mon.</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S. Wales</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N. Wales</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monmouthshire</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Wales + Mon.</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glamorgan</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monmouthshire</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carmarthenshire</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Welsh counties</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Wales + Mon.</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glamorgan</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monmouthshire</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carmarthenshire</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Welsh counties</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Wales + Mon.</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glamorgan</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monmouthshire</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carmarthenshire</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Welsh counties</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Wales + Mon.</td>
<td>1295</td>
<td>1055 (30)</td>
<td>240 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glamorgan</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>675 (20)</td>
<td>158 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monmouthshire</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>246 (4)</td>
<td>57 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carmarthenshire</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Welsh counties</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>105 (7)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Wales + Mon.</td>
<td>1533</td>
<td>1105 (59)</td>
<td>426 (38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>1394</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glamorgan</td>
<td>995</td>
<td>703 (34)</td>
<td>294 (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monmouthshire</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>248 (18)</td>
<td>87 (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmarthenshire</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Welsh counties</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>108 (7)</td>
<td>29 (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography

Primary Sources


Newspapers and Trade Directories


**Video Footage**


**Secondary Sources**


Hughes. C., Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla: The Italian Community in South Wales, 1881-1945 (Bridgend, 1995).


Jenkins, G. H., A Concise History of Wales, (Cambridge, 2007).


Roberts, O., ‘Migrating into the Mainstream of Welsh History: The Irish and Others in Modern Wales,’ in *Llafur the Journal for the Society for the Study of Welsh Labour History*,
Vol. 9, no., 1 (2004) Available at
