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CHILD POVERTY IN INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES

CHILD POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION IN ITALY: 1950 TO THE PRESENT a/

by

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I. PREMISE

Trends and changes in child poverty and deprivation must be viewed within the context of the changes in the overall position of children in the family and society. The experience and social position of children were greatly affected by a diversified set of circumstances during the period under consideration: (1) changes in the economy and in overall social stratification, as well as in regional differences, (2) demographic changes, (3) changes in the structure of the family and in the cycle of family life, (4) legal changes, and (5) social policy changes. These did not interact in any direct way in setting the context of children's well being (or deprivation), nor in determining inequalities among children.

Moreover, while the collection of data concerning children is far from satisfactory in Italy, the social and political focus on the well-being of children became more marked during the period. Therefore, one must always exercise caution in using the data collected in various time periods, since they can easily reflect different ways of perceiving and reporting on particular issues. Child abuse and violence against children is a case in point: it is not at all clear if (1) child abuse has increased, (2) the reporting of child abuse has increased, or (3) the social definition of child abuse and violence against children has changed (for instance, it has recently become less socially acceptable for parents to severely punish their children by hitting or confining them). To a certain degree, the reverse is true for child labour, which may be more under-reported now than it was in the past because the law is now more clearly against it. As a matter of fact, the outlawing of labour for children under the age of 15 through Law 1325 of November 12, 1961, (reinforced by Law 977 of 1967 and by Regional Public Decree 432 of 1976) has had the paradoxical consequence that the National Institute for Statistical Research (ISTAT) has stopped collecting data on working children under the age of 14-15, since such children are not supposed to be working.

In other words, part of the general problem of child deprivation is the specific problem of the social and legal conceptualization of child deprivation and, therefore, its social (and statistical) visibility. Whenever possible in the following sections, this distinction will be kept clear in the presentation of data on the trends and changes of the period under consideration.

II. FROM THE 1950s TO THE MID-1970s

In the second half of the 1940s and well into the mid-1950s, Italy was not only a country whose human and material resources had been devastated by war, but also a country which was still mostly rural and suffered from high rates of internal and external emigration, high rates of unemployment among males, particularly in the least developed regions, and high rates of poverty as measured by such indicators as the amount of money the average family spent on food, the percentage of families living in inadequate housing without electricity, running water or sanitary facilities, the average level of education, and the rate of absolute or functional illiteracy. During the 1950s, forty-five percent of the average family's income was still being spent on food (and another 25 percent on housing and clothing); this had decreased to 40 percent by 1971 and to 38 percent by the end of the 1970s (D'Apice 1981). In 1958, just before the beginning of the so-called "economic miracle" (1959-1963), over 84 percent of families had no household appliances, such as refrigerators and washing machines, and many, even in cities such as Milan, had no inside running water.

However, the years of the economic miracle witnessed the highest rates of improvement ever recorded in all economic indicators, particularly in GNP, which increased an average 6.5 percentage points every year, income per inhabitant, which increased 5.8 percentage points every year, and overall consumerism, which increased by 6 percentage points every year.

Nonetheless, there were still great social, regional and urban-rural differences in rates of both income and consumption. In 1958, a Doxa survey indicated that 62 percent of the families of white-collar workers, 93.7 percent of the families of blue-collar workers and 98.8 percent of rural families did not have a washing machine, a refrigerator and a television set. Only 26.6 percent of the families of white-collar workers and 3.9 percent of the families of blue-collar workers had a refrigerator. Moreover, while a study in 1957 indicated that the family of the average blue-collar worker had a monthly income of between 50,000 and 60,000 liras, ISTAT data showed that the average family in the same year spent about 70,000 liras a month to reproduce the household. Although there was a general improvement in levels of consumption and asset ownership during the period of the economic miracle, a Banca d'Italia survey in 1966 indicated the persistence of great inequalities linked to income differentials: seventy-two percent of families had an annual income over 3.5 million liras, but only 1.8 percent of those families in the lowest income brackets owned a washing machine, a car and a

television set (D'Apice 1981: page 52). Differences were even greater at the regional level (ibidem: pages 135-142). In 1951, the post-tax per capita income was 43 percent higher than the national average in the regions of the Northwest, 9 percent higher in the Central regions, 1 percent lower in the Northeast, and 32 percent lower in the South. During the 1950s, there was a redistribution of relative advantage and disadvantage in the Centre and the Northeast, while the gap between the North and the South increased. The economic miracle aggravated this situation: following it, the per capita income of the Southern regions was 40 percent lower than the national average and 60 percent lower than that in the North. In 1970, although the differential had been slightly reduced (due also to migration), the standard of living in the South was similar to that in the North 20 years earlier, in 1952-1953.

These differences in access to and the distribution of resources were not only due to pre-existing conditions and to different rates of economic development and, thus, to a different employment configuration, but were also reinforced by specific labour market and wage policies. For instance, in order to foster industrialization in the Southern regions, a wage differential was legalized according to geographical location and was eliminated only in 1969. This meant that employees of the same company might earn more if they worked in Turin, in the North, rather than Naples, in the South. This wage differential was compounded by a differential (in the opposite direction) based on family size and due to higher fertility rates in the South. Moreover, the proportions of people working in the best protected jobs, with social security benefits, such as health insurance covering all family members, were different in the various geographical areas. This meant that, while a different proportion of families had some kind of coverage in the various regions, people having protected jobs in the less fortunate areas had to meet greater demands for support and assistance from family networks. Finally, while women in the industrialized regions, and partly also in the Central and Northwest regions, had the opportunity to add to family incomes through access either to the formal labour market, or, more often, to the informal, or black economy, the high male unemployment rates in the South were aggravated by the competition between adult men and youngsters in the black, informal economy, and family incomes had to be painstakingly put together piecemeal.

All these differences, which influenced the living standards of families according to class and geographical location, had a direct impact on the condition and experience of children. For instance, while food expenditures did not leave room in the budgets of poor families for other consumption in

the areas of leisure, culture, or even health and hygiene, they were also not always sufficient to provide even a good diet. In 1963-1964, the average consumption of animal proteins was 40 percent higher in the North than in the South, and the overall composition of the protein intake in the North was more balanced (50/50) than it was in the South, where vegetal proteins constituted 66 percent of the total intake (ibidem: pages 122-127). Similar reasoning can be developed for social differentials. The same study indicated that a member of the family of a typical white-collar worker consumed 12 percent less cereals (bread and pasta) and about 20 percent less eggs and meat (other than beef) than the blue-collar counterpart. At the same time, the white-collar family member consumed 25 percent more beef, 44 percent more fresh fish and milk, 20 percent more cheese, and 42 percent more fruit. Since the average blue-collar family had more children, this meant that, although there was an overall improvement, the number of children having a poorer diet was higher than is suggested by a comparison based only on family percentages.

In the following paragraphs trends will be examined, in absolute and differential terms, in selected areas related to the experience of children. Unfortunately, many data are lacking in statistics on Italy, and indicators are often generic. In particular, data on mortality and health are provided by region, but not by social class or the employment status of male heads-of-household (even less by female heads-of-household), or family size.

Birth and Survival

The 1950s to the mid-1970s - years of the most intense change in economic structure and development, migration, and consumer patterns - also witnessed an increase in marriage rates - which touched a high of 8.2 marriages per thousand inhabitants in 1963, stabilizing thereafter around 7.4 until the mid-1970s - and a substantial decrease in fertility rates. The latter trend persisted even during the apparent inversion of the mid-1960s, since the increased fertility rates of those years were only a consequence of changes in marriage rates and in the age of mothers bearing a first child. Table I shows this trend in the various geographical areas.

Given the age structure of the population at the beginning of the period (i.e. the percentage of the population in the fertile age brackets), the percentage and absolute number of children in the population increased up to the mid-1970s. There were 16.3 million children (about 33 percent of the population) in the 0-19 age group in 1958; there were 17.2 million children

TABLE I: THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER FEMALE BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA (1951-1976)

	Northwest	Northeast	Centre	South	Islands	Italy
1951	1.7	2.1	2.0	3.3	3.2	2.4
1956	1.7	1.9	2.0	3.0	3.0	2.3
1961	1.9	2.2	2.1	3.3	3.1	2.4
1966	2.3	2.4	2.3	3.3	3.1	2.7
1971	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.9	2.8	2.4
1976	1.8	1.8	1.9	2.7	2.5	2.1

Source: ISTAT (1989), Sonnino (1989): page 33.

TABLE II: INFANT MORTALITY BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA (1960-1962 and 1970-1972)

	Northwest	Northeast	Centre	South	Islands	Italy
1960-1962	36.1	31.6	32.0	55.2	46.5	42.3
1970-1972	24.9	21.8	22.5	36.3	32.8	28.2

Source: La Population de l'Italie. Cicred Series. World Population Year (1974). ISTAT in Sonnino (1989a).

(28.1 percent of the population) in the same age group in 1978 (CNR/IRP 1988).

During the same period, infant mortality decreased substantially. Still 42.3 per thousand in 1961-1962, it had fallen to 28.2 per thousand by 1970-1972. This trend involved all geographical areas, but was more evident in those areas where infant mortality had been higher to begin with, although the geographical differential in the chance for survival persisted, as Table II indicates. Improvements in the nutrition of pregnant women, the diffusion of health care and of services for pregnant mothers and their babies (with further development of the services which had been set up by the Fascist regime, such as ONMI: Opera nazionale per la protezione della maternità e dell'infanzia), the spread of the practice of giving birth in a hospital setting rather than at home, a growing availability of the means to sterilize formula, and so forth, may have been behind this advance. Another important cause, which had an even greater impact in the second period under consideration (see below), was the prolongation, in 1962, of compulsory schooling to the age of 14; this reduced the number of children born to

mothers who had, at most, completed only elementary school: a category of children that is at greater than average mortality risk (Pinnelli 1989: page 138).

Within infant mortality (deaths during the first year of life), the greatest improvements occurred in the chance of survival after the first month (post-neonatal mortality). There were fewer improvements in neonatal mortality, particularly in precocious neonatal mortality (Pinnelli 1989: pages 135-36). On the other hand, there was a substantial decrease in still births, which were 31 per thousand births in 1951 and 14.6 per thousand in 1971.

These differential advances may be imputed partly to the fact that there were rapid, or more diffuse improvements in the standards of living for individuals and families, and the impact of these improvements was therefore greater on the welfare of children in the months following birth; meanwhile, hospital conditions at the level of technical and personnel resources, and even of hygiene, were still far from adequate as late as the mid-1970s, as a study has domonstrated (Pinnelli 1989: page 145, Montanari et al 1979). Health care, including infrastructures, was still unable to cope adequately with birth and babies at risk.

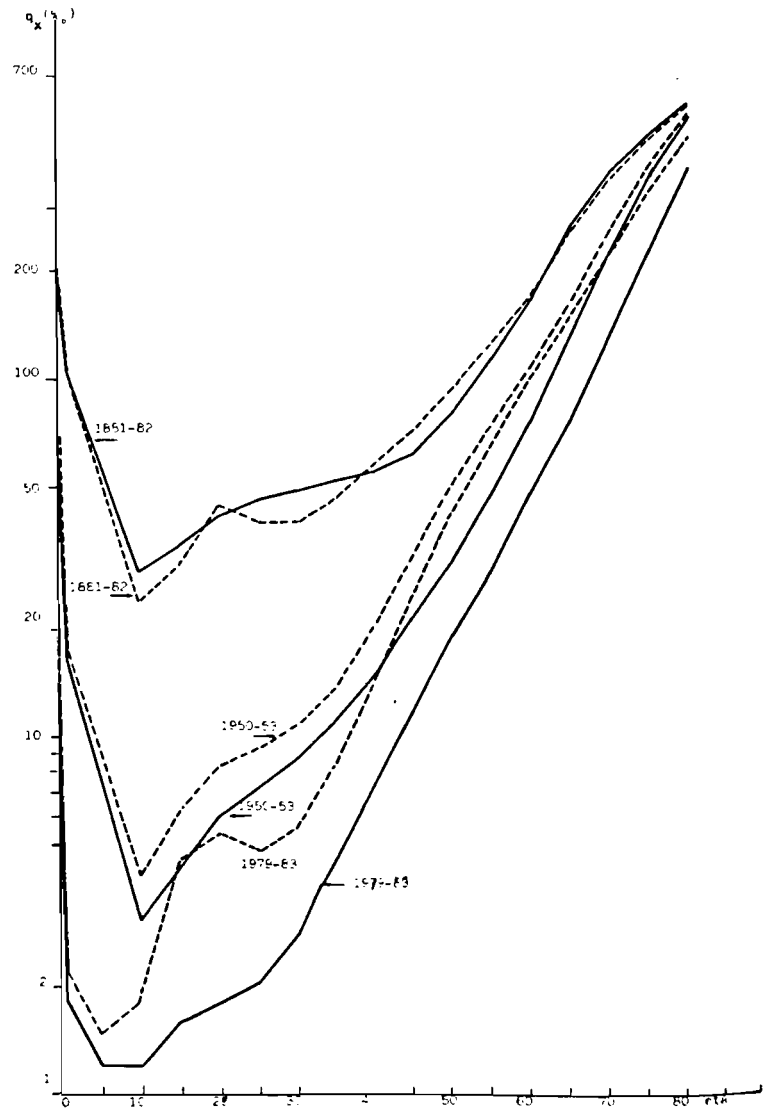
Trends in the incidence of different causes of death on various age groups during the period under consideration indicate the impact of changed hygienic and overall health conditions not only among children, but also in the population as a whole because of compulsory vaccination, the increasing availability of running water and household sanitary facilities, gas stoves (for sterilizing water and baby bottles, for instance), and so forth. Excluding congenital malformations, whose relative incidence as a cause of infant mortality increased, all the main causes of death for children and adolescents linked to a morbidity state tended to decrease, sometimes dramatically. Although data are not totally comparable due to a change in ISTAT age groupings after 1960, infectious and parasitic diseases (tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis, poliomyelitis, etc.), as well as intestinal diseases (hepatitis, gastroenteritis, etc.), that together in 1960 accounted for 14.4 percent, 17.2 percent, 22.9 percent, and 16.4 percent of deaths within, respectively, the 0, 0-4, 5-9, and 10-14 age groups, accounted in 1970 for, respectively, 11.4 percent, 12.5 percent, 14 percent, and 8.1 percent of deaths in the same age groups. No such improvement in percentages was detectable for deaths due to diseases of the breathing system (such as pneumonia and bronchitis), although the absolute numbers did diminish.

Despite a general improvement of mortality rates among all age groups, a new phenomenon appeared during the 1950s and became more pronounced in the

succeeding decades. This phenomenon has been called "the anticipation of critical ages" (Federici 1959, Caselli and Egidi 1989: page 155): a critical transition, in terms of the risk of death, was no longer that from youth to adulthood, but that from adolescence to youth and even from childhood to adolescence (see Figure 1). The new social environment of growing up - urbanization, the increasing freedom of children from family control well before coming of age, and other factors, such as the spread of the use of the automobile and the motorscooter and the consequent rise in traffic accidents especially after the late 1950s and early 1960s in Italy - increasingly exposed these ages to new risks. This was (and still is) particularly true for males, given that freedom was granted more readily to boys than to girls.

FIGURE 1: THE EVOLUTION OF MORTALITY IN ITALY BY AGE
(1881-1882, 1950-1953 and 1979-1983)

Source: Caselli and Egidi (1989): page 158
x-axis = age, y-axis = mortality (probabilities per 1,000)
broken lines = males, solid lines = females



The trends in morbidity (particularly with regard to illnesses which must be reported) are less clear. Poliomyelitis and diphtheria almost disappeared between 1960 and 1970; this phenomenon was particularly spectacular in the South and the Islands: 2,353 children under 18 suffered from poliomyelitis in 1960 in those regions (66 percent of all Italian children so affected); by 1970, the number had gone down to 36 (out of a total of 88). The incidence of diseases such as gastroenteritis, meningitis and pertussis remained fairly stable. However, for still other diseases, such as parotitis, measles and small pox, the figures are not consistent, suggesting possible differences in reporting. All together it appears that, except for poliomyelitis and diphtheria, progress in medicine has led to reductions in the lethal effects of infectious diseases rather than to reductions in the incidence of these diseases among children.

Child-Care Services and the Needs of Mothers

The increasing number of children, together with the diminishing number of children within the average family, favoured a society-wide focus on the needs, behaviour and chances of survival of children. Families and welfare agencies were therefore called upon to deal with these areas.

Part of this new concern derived from the changing standards of living and behaviour that arose with industrialization, urbanization and the resulting influx of people from rural areas to the cities, and part derived from the increasing appearance of women in factories and offices. During the 1950s, in fact, a debate developed around the concept of the working mother - an anomaly from the point of view of the ideal family model, but a visible and widespread, although minority, phenomenon, particularly within the industrial working class. This debate prompted policies aimed at "protecting" working mothers and their children, who were seen as being at risk, through legislation on the rights of the working mother and the development of child-care services as a means of providing assistance for disadvantaged families. The debate and its social-policy consequences were a logical, as well as ideological, result of the problems and concerns of the preceding period - a continuity which was also evident in the fact that the plight of rural working mothers and the difficulties and health risks for women and children of work at home were still ignored.

During the post-war years various categories of working women were gradually incorporated into existing laws governing paid maternity leave; furthermore, the period of coverage was extended, and the benefits were linked

to wages. Through reforms in 1977, all (formal) wage earners, including part-time and seasonal workers, were covered, compulsory leave was extended to two months before and three months after the birth of a child and an optional additional period was provided, although at reduced pay, but with seniority and job maintenance guaranteed (Ballestrero 1979). For various reasons, full-time homemakers, self-employed women, professional women, and women working in the irregular labour market (a large portion of all working women throughout the 1970s) were not covered.

Child-care services were also expanded during the period, although the two services which cared for the 0-3 and 3-6 age groups, respectively, were expanded at different rates. Through the 1960s, day-care services for the youngest age group were provided mainly by ONMI, an organization which had been founded under the Fascist regime and which catered to the needs of working-class working mothers. Employers were asked to organize or to contribute to the creation of such services, but only if they employed at least 40 women. If they employed fewer women, they had no similar financial responsibility, despite the fact that women often worked in small enterprises. Men (as potential fathers) were not taken into consideration. In 1971, Law 1044, backed by trade unions and women's organizations, changed this situation by giving the responsibility for financing and organizing such services, with the state's support, to regional and local governments. Social assistance was played down in these services in favour of a more focused educational approach. The plan was to have 5 percent of all children in the 0-3 age group covered within five years. This goal was reached only in a few selected areas, mainly in some towns of the Central regions, where it was even surpassed, and in the North. On the other hand, not even one public child-care service for this age group had been opened in Sicily by the beginning of the 1980s.

The success of the services for children in the 3-6 age group was a different story. For children in this group, there was a tradition of social assistance for poor families and working mothers, but there was also a tradition among the middle class for the provision of pre-school services. In 1968, a law was passed by which the state assumed direct responsibility, alongside local authorities and profit-making and nonprofit agencies, for the creation of kindergartens. As a consequence, by the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, around 60 percent of all children in this age group were attending kindergartens, and the figure had risen to 70.1 percent by the mid-1970s. Furthermore, the gap between the South and the Centre-North had been reduced, although the Islands were still behind (see Table III). This increase in enrolment, as well as the reduction of the geographical gap, was

TABLE III: KINDERGARTEN ENROLMENT RATES BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA (1971-1972 and 1975-1976)

	Northwest	Northeast	Centre	South	Islands	Italy
1971-1972	61.3	65.2	56.3	59.5	52.0	59.4
1975-1976	71.2	74.6	71.0	71.6	57.9	70.1

Source: Schizzerotto 1990.

due not only to a cultural change, but also to an increase in the number of kindergarten classes available. This in turn was favoured by the direct state intervention in the creation of kindergartens that before had been left to local governments and private initiative.

However, it must not be forgotten that the bulk of child care, both for children who did not benefit from any kind of formal service (the majority of whom were in the 0-3 age group) and for those who did, was provided by family members (mothers or grandmothers), irrespective of the family structure, as demonstrated by studies carried out in the early 1970s.

Schooling

During the period under consideration, particularly during the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was first a slow and then an accelerated increase in school attendance among the Italian population. Children began attending school in higher percentages and staying in school longer. This first became apparent in compulsory schooling, where playing hooky and early abandonment of school gradually diminished to phenomena of no statistical significance, although they never disappeared completely and among certain social-economic groups continued at quite consistent levels. For instance, five percent of children in the 6-10 age group were not attending elementary school in 1952, and the figure still stood at 3 percent in 1959 (Besozzi 1983). The percentage of those who did not attend any kind of post-elementary school was much higher, although the obligation to attend some kind of school had been extended to children up to 14 years of age. By the same token, the number of illiterate people over 14 years of age was 5.5 million in 1951, mostly in the South, and they still represented 5.2 percent of the population in 1971 (the figure for all Southern regions had risen to over 10 percent).

The slow diffusion of compulsory education reduced the differences among classes, as well as between the sexes. In 1962 (with the Law of December 31), this process was both acknowledged and reinforced through the unification into one system - the unified middle school - of the three years of compulsory post-elementary school that before had been spread out among academic and professional curricula.

If almost the totality of children in the 6-10 and 12-14 age groups were in elementary school and, to a lesser degree, in middle school in the 1960s, the rate of pupils being held back for a year was quite high even in first grade (Gattullo 1976, Schizzerotto 1975, Besozzi 1983). In 1972-1973, even after all the debates on social inequality in education and the duty of schools to provide for the most underprivileged, there was still a failure rate of 7.7 percent in first grade that decreased to 5.9 percent in 1974-1975 and to 4.5 percent in 1975-1976. Failures also continued in the other grades, although to a lesser degree, indicating that a substantial number of children were taking more than the usual five years to complete elementary school and were thus being subjected to the psychological problems resulting from being forced to study in classrooms with younger children who were at a different stage of physical development.

Failures were also evident in the first year of middle school: 10.1 percent in 1972-1973, decreasing slightly to 9.8 percent in 1974-1975 and to 8.1 percent in 1975-1976. Failures continued to occur throughout the usual three years of middle school, causing many children to drop out of school when they had reached the legal working age of 15 and even earlier. The drop-out rate was 6.9 percent for the first year of middle school in 1972-1973 and 5.3 percent in 1975-1976. It was 5.2 percent for the second year in 1972-1973 and 4 percent in 1975-1976. Finally, it was 3.7 percent for the third year in 1972-1973 and 3.2 percent in 1975-1976. These cumulative percentages indicate that a substantial number of children (about 15 percent) were not completing compulsory schooling and thus were not obtaining a middle-school degree, which was an important stepping stone to the formal labour market. When those children are added who had dropped out before being eligible to enter middle school, the figures increase by a factor of two. Reliable estimates (Censis 1976a, Besozzi 1983) indicate that the school enrolment rate for 14-year-olds in 1973-1974 was 70.8 percent, with strong geographical differentials which penalized the South and the Islands. Thirty percent of children had abandoned school not only before they had completed the prescribed curriculum, but also before they had reached the minimum age for leaving school. At least some of

them became part of the child labour problem, and many of the girls took over household and child-care duties so their mothers could work.

Children encountered difficulties in acquiring "normal" school certificates not only because of differential treatment by schools according to social class and learning capabilities, but also because of differences in the distribution of resources, including buildings, teachers and equipment. During the 1950s and most of the 1960s, schools in many neighborhoods, particularly those in working-class districts in the large industrial towns of the North, operated in shifts because of the lack of classrooms; this was still true of 10 percent of elementary schools and 3.3 percent of middle schools in 1976-1977. Moreover, there were often as many as 40 children per classroom during those two decades, although this percentage had been halved by the early 1970s. This imbalance in the distribution of resources affected schools in the South and on the Islands even longer, and children in rural areas often had to attend one-room schools, at which individual teachers taught all grades at once. In such circumstances, children who could not depend on strong encouragement or assistance from their families in order to meet the requirements for certificates were frequently marginalized or otherwise fell behind.

Table IV illustrates the trends in the percentage of children, adolescents and youths acquiring school certificates during the 1960s and 1970s. As the table indicates, the improvements in the educational level of the population also touched non-compulsory schooling, i.e. high schools. However, by the mid-1970s, more than 60 percent of youths still lacked high school certificates. This meant that the majority not only went to work early, but entered the labour market with few or no qualifications. Nonetheless, although social class continued to be a ready indicator of who would be able to finish high school and eventually go on to university, the proportion of working-class youths who graduated from university-preparatory high schools almost doubled, from 17 percent to 30 percent, between 1953-1954 and 1972-1973. A similar trend occurred among working-class students enrolled in university: thirteen percent in 1953-1954 and 25 percent in 1973-1974 (Gattullo 1989). Although 38.9 percent of the Italian population was estimated to belong to the "working class" in the early 1970s (Sylos Labini 1974), it should be pointed out that the few available data on the differences in fertility rates due to social class and education (De Sandre 1982) indicate that families in the higher and more educated classes have fewer children; therefore, the under-representation of the working class (and even more so the rural working class) in higher education is probably greater than appears from

TABLE IV: CHILDREN WITH SCHOOL CERTIFICATES
(In Percentages */, 1963-1975)

	Certificate		
	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
1963	87.3	45.8	14.8
1964	87.1	50.5	15.8
1965	88.2	55.9	16.7
1966	88.5	61.5	16.8
1967	92.0	59.3	19.6
1968	94.3	61.6	22.8
1969	95.3	63.4	24.7
1970	100.1	70.4	28.3
1971	100.3	75.5	30.9
1972	100.3	81.1	33.3
1973	100.7	87.8	35.3
1974	102.4	86.4	36.4
1975	107.2	88.8	37.2

Source: Fiorini (1981): page 43.

*/ Percentage of the average number of living contemporaries among three years: the year corresponding to the normal age for obtaining the certificate and the year before and the year after that year.

the data.

Analysts of social mobility have recently indicated that, aside from compulsory education, the Italian school system is not democratic at least to the extent that the relative opportunity of the most underprivileged children to gain access to higher education has not been improved. Only the opportunity of children of all classes to gain such access has been proportionally improved. In other words, there has been absolute improvement, but no differential improvement (see Schizzerotto 1988, Cobalti 1988 and 1989).

Child and Adolescent Labour

The first law to regulate child labour during the post-war years was Law 29.11.1961, which, with many exceptions, raised the legal minimum working age to 15. Following widespread debate - and scattered research - on child labour, a new law, approved in 1967, confirmed the legal minimum working age at 15 (which was reduced to 14 for jobs in agriculture and family services if they were compatible with compulsory school attendance) and introduced norms

governing the kinds of jobs open to adolescents (ages 15-18), the length of the work day, medical supervision, apprenticeship contracts and training classes.

Child labour, i.e. labour by children under 14 or 15, was widespread during the 1950s and persisted into the 1960s in agriculture, small workshops, retail shops, and family services. The employment of children in these areas was not only permitted under the many exceptions in the child labour laws, but was also considered appropriate because of economic conditions and the traditions of families which did not see the advantages of compulsory schooling. However, research on the issue was scattered and not totally reliable. The same was true of the statistical data which showed that child labour had diminished substantially from 1961 to 1964, since the illegality of child labour rendered it less common only officially: everybody could see children working mornings and afternoons in workshops, cafés and food shops (Berlinguer et al 1978).

Although statistically unreliable, studies such as the one carried out by the Associazioni cristiane lavoratori italiane (ACLI) in 1967 on a sample of 2,413 child workers in different geographical areas did offer insights into the phenomenon. In the ACLI sample, fifty-eight percent of the children were between 12 and 14 years old, while 11 percent in the South were under 10. The fathers of 40 percent were blue-collar workers and of 22 percent farmers or rural labourers. Forty percent declared that they were working because of the critical economic situation of their families. The fact that almost the same percentage declared that they were not inclined to study points to a failure of the school system to hold and encourage its "captive audience". The high percentage of children working in the service sector (in shops and in families) prompted the researchers to observe that the very expansion of this sector - considered an indicator of economic growth - was based on serious and unhealthy social imbalances (ACLI 1967).

A study by the Ministry of Labour in 1971 found 10,750 children (on the basis of which the total number in Italy was estimated at 130,000) under the age of 15 working in a sample of enterprises of various sizes in different geographical locations, but with a prevalence of small industries in the South and the Northeast. Both girls and boys were found in the sample, with a prevalence of girls in the Centre-North and of boys in the South.

A 1973 study in Lombardy found that child labour accounted for 1 percent of the total labour force in the region. In cities such as Milan, it had increased, rising from 1,150 children under 15 years of age working in 1951 to 12,669 in 1971. The researchers argued that, while 20 years earlier there

had been an inverse correlation between economic development and child labour, the correlation had become direct since then, and children were employed in industry and the tertiary sector.

Finally, a 1975 study by Censis estimated that child labour involved 106,000 children (31,000 of whom were girls) working totally or almost totally beyond the pale of legality. About 50 percent of these children were working year round. Only 51,000 were working and going to school (38,000 in compulsory education), which meant that over half were not getting compulsory schooling.

Data on accidents in the workplace, while not totally reliable (Berlinguer et al 1978), indirectly support the hypothesis that the phenomenon of child labour was increasing throughout the 1950s, although it later decreased, partly because of compulsory schooling. Nonetheless, some impressionistic data suggest that the illegality of child labour might favour under-reporting of accidents involving children at the workplace. In 1951, 1,823 children were involved in accidents; the figure was 4,648 by 1961. The number decreased to 800 in 1965 and to 445 in 1973.

Given the way data on participation in the labour force by age are collected and aggregated by ISTAT, notwithstanding the legal distinction between children under 15 and adolescents up to 18, it is almost impossible to furnish data relative only to this second age group. In fact, for the most part, ISTAT data lump together everyone in the 14-19 age group. With these limitations, Table V shows trends among males and females during the period under consideration.

For both sexes, activity rates (the percentages of those actually employed or actively seeking employment) more than halved during the period, and, by the end of the period, the rates by sex were more similar than they had been at the beginning of the period. The lower participation rates for girls in the 1950s were not due to the higher education of girls; on the contrary, they signalled the willingness of parents to keep daughters at home and away from both school and work. On the other hand, the reduced activity rates for both sexes in the mid-1970s signalled the impact of longer schooling, which, in turn, would have an effect on the activity rates for adult women, although there still remained a percentage of women who were both out of school and out of work.

The reduction in the "official" activity rates for adolescents, however, must not be imputed to an outright reduction in the number of working adolescents. Many studies in the late 1960s and the 1970s indicated that adolescents were working more or less full time in the informal economy (Paci 1981) and that a sizeable portion of high school students had some kind of

TABLE V: ACTIVITY RATES BY SEX
(Ages 14-19, 1959-1976)

	Males	Females
1959	69.2	47.6
1960	67.1	45.2
1961	64.4	43.7
1962	60.4	42.0
1963	56.5	39.2
1964	54.0	37.3
1965	51.6	35.7
1966	46.1	31.9
1967	46.2	31.5
1968	43.1	30.9
1969	41.3	30.9
1970	38.0	28.8
1971	36.6	27.3
1972	35.5	26.1
1973	32.8	25.5
1974	30.6	22.8
1975	28.9	22.2
1976	28.1	21.7

Source: ISTAT: "Rilevazioni delle forze di lavoro in Italia, vecchia e nuova serie"; Abburrà (1989): pages 65-66.

paid job in the informal, black economy either to add to the family income, or to pay for their individual needs as consumers (see the bibliography in Ricolfi and Sciolla 1980). Increasingly, the characteristices of the student-worker could not be clearly defined because of the long tradition of family economics as a strategic combination of multiple sources of income and multiple workers and because of the new individuality of youth being fostered by the expanding consumer society.

Data on accidents in the workplace indicate that there was also an increase (almost threefold) in accidents involving adolescents from 1950 to 1960, while the increase for all ages was substantially less than 100 percent (Berlinguer et al 1978). During the following years, accidents involving this age group decreased, although they remained well above the 1950 level notwithstanding the decrease in the activity rates of adolescents. While confirming that the economic development of the late 1950s implied some kind of heavy exploitation of the youngest workers, this also suggests that these workers were in any case the most at risk of becoming victims of accidents in the workplace due to their lack of training and experience.

Children in Institutions

Children are often put into institutions either because they have no parents, or because their parents cannot care for them. However, for a long time in Italy the practice was slightly different. Well-to-do families sometimes relied on institutions to give their children a better education. Emigrant families, either because they were forced to leave their children behind, or because they preferred to have them receive an Italian education, sometimes chose institutions. Especially in the South, poor families which did not have many resources also often adopted this strategy. Putting a child into an institution meant not only relieving the family budget, but also giving the child a chance to get some kind of education or training. Even public and private welfare assistance agencies offered this alternative to families as the best and sometimes the only kind of outside support. State and local governments subsidized institutions much more readily than they did poor families. Putting children in foster homes was not a very widespread practice and was mostly limited to the old rural family tradition of hosting an orphan in exchange for payment in order to subsidize the family budget.

Only in the late 1960s and the 1970s did a debate develop around the institutionalization of children, and some pointed to the practice as an example of abandonment. Legislation and welfare policy began to favour the family environment either by encouraging families to keep their children, or by offering support for the foster-home alternative. However, the number of children in various kinds of institutions (orphanages, social assistance institutes, etc.) started to decrease substantially only after 1970 and then even more in the 1980s. There were 192,995 healthy minors in social assistance institutes and 9,090 children in the 0-6 age group in orphanages between 1951 and 1960. For the period 1961-1970, the numbers for these same groups were 182,801 and 7,268, respectively. During the following decade, the number of children in orphanages fell almost threefold. This was due not only to declining fertility rates, more particularly declining non-marital fertility rates, but also to a different policy approach, which favoured the family environment as mentioned above. Moreover, a new adoption law was passed in 1965 that made the "child's interest" the primary criterion in adoption and stressed a child's right to be raised in a family. The chance of survival of abandoned normal infants improved as a consequence. The same was only partly true for older or handicapped children, who are adopted less readily, and for children who still had a legal parent.

The 1960s and 1970s: A Golden Age of the Rights of the Child?

If one considers the place of children's welfare not only in the discussions of policy-makers and experts, but also in the legislation and social policy measures of the late 1960s and the 1970s, one cannot but be impressed by its importance in both symbolic and practical terms. This period saw the development of a debate of unprecedented depth on children's needs and society's responsibility toward children. Laws were changed to accommodate these new perceptions: a new adoption law in 1965, a new family law in 1970 that emphasized parental responsibility over parental power and eliminated the legal distinction between "natural" (i.e. illegitimate) and legitimate children, new rules concerning the right of handicapped children to kindergarten and normal compulsory education, the so-called "equality law" of 1977 that partly acknowledged the importance of the care which could be offered children by working fathers, regulations restricting child labour even further, and so forth.

At the same time, this focus on children fostered changes in society. Experts on children, as well as teachers and families, became involved in a sort of social experiment. Thousands of elementary school teachers took part in pedagogical experiments aimed at evaluating the abilities of children and undermining the impact of class distinctions and prejudices. Kindergarten and nursery school teachers, particularly in the Centre-North, were redefining their roles and their goals and moving away from the purely social assistance approach. A demand arose among families for child-care services which would not only help working mothers, but also enrich the experience of children. Children began to have a better chance of survival and of leading healthy lives.

However, these very improvements and the attention on children in some areas of the country highlighted gaps which had not been filled and which threatened to become wider in others. Because many services aimed at children, particularly young children, like all welfare services for individuals, were left in the hands of local authorities, differing local resources and traditions could lead to distinctions in the services made available to children and their families. Moreover, while a great deal of attention and energy was devoted to analysing and changing formal services for children, much less was done concerning the condition of children within the family. Thus, little was known and nothing was done about children under the age of 3 who did not attend nursery schools, although they represented the vast majority in this age group; no assistance was offered to the mothers of these

children, nor were family day-care services designed to meet their needs. The same was true for older children to the extent that the older the child, the more likely it was that his needs, except for education, would be left to the family to fulfil. School age children and adolescents, as well as their families, usually became the focus of attention (and supervision) only if they exhibited some kind of deviant behaviour which prompted the intervention of welfare agencies. Leisure, sports and cultural interests were left to the private resources of families. Even sports facilities - swimming pools, gyms, safe and well-equipped playing fields and playgrounds - were scarce, unequally available, or slanted toward traditionally male sports such as soccer. From this point of view, the industrial cities of the North often offered less than the predominantly middle-class towns of the Centre-North.

There were other paradoxes as well that became apparent over the years.

First, decreasing fertility rates, which were both a cause and an effect of the greater focus on the needs and the rights of the child, threatened to become an excuse to divert resources from children to other age groups, e.g. the shift in the social-political focus toward old age.

Second, the various age groups, both above and below the age of 18, were increasingly seen as competing for social attention and public resources, the availability of which, at the same time, were perceived as shrinking. The age groups which probably suffered the most in the process were pre-adolescents and younger adolescents: those who were no longer little children and not quite potentially troublesome youths. Thus, the focus on youth unemployment that increasingly constituted the way the needs of young people were being addressed in the second half of the 1970s, by lumping together minors and adults (the Youth Labour Law aimed at those aged between 18 and 29, for example), obscured the needs and the problems, even in terms of jobs, of those between the ages of 15 and 18.

Third, the higher school attendance rates rendered more fragile the position of those who did not advance beyond, or even complete, compulsory schooling. At the same time, within the school system, the old inequalities remained and new ones appeared among the various kinds of high schools, vocational training institutes, and so forth, in a complex interplay among social class, sex and geographical location.

Fourth, despite the economic development of the early years of this period, the gap between North and South was only partly and unsystematically reduced. Whenever development slowed and recession reared its ugly head, the gap widened again.

Fifth, economic growth in the most industrialized and developed areas was creating new risks for children in an increasingly insecure environment characterized by pollution, traffic accidents, urban violence, and so forth.

Sixth, those changes in the family environment that were partly acknowledged in the legislation of this period (divorce was made legal in 1970, and the Family Law of 1975 guaranteed greater equality between husband and wife) revealed new problem areas for children in so far as they were being exposed more and more to the chinks in that institutional and family framework which, up to then, had been supposed to ensure their security.

III. FROM THE LATE 1970s TO THE LATE 1980s

Changes in the Social and Economic Environment

From the late 1970s and particularly during the early 1980s, a dichotomy between social policy development and economic development became apparent. During this period, the political and economic landscape became much less favourable to public welfare initiatives. As a consequence, at the beginning of the period, while legislative and social policy measures continued the trend toward more state and local government responsibility in many areas of economic and social activity and toward expanded rights for various groups in society, including children, stresses and risks in the budgets and security nets of families were being heightened by the economic situation. By the end of the period, also because of political changes, economic recovery was both strengthening old inequalities (e.g. among regions) and shaping new ones (between the workers covered by social security and those not covered, among workers in different sectors, etc.); at the same time, universal policies aimed at expanding the service coverage for individuals and families were being criticized or downplayed in favour of "targeted" policies and the recourse to private initiatives.

By the mid-1970s, the rate of economic growth had slowed remarkably, and, by the end of the decade, economic recession and industrial restructuring (e.g. in the automobile, iron and steel, chemical, and textile and garment industries) had reintroduced among working-class and lower middle-class families a kind of economic insecurity that had been thought to be a thing of the past. While workers in the most stable and well-protected jobs had an economic cushion against this kind of insecurity through such mechanisms as the Cassa Integrazione Guadagni (CIG), an unemployment compensation scheme,

workers in less well-protected jobs were not so fortunate. Moreover, the hidden stratification among workers in protected jobs became more apparent in that those who had recently moved from other regions, the unskilled, the very young, the middle aged, and females in general were at greater risk of being put into CIG. Middle-aged men whose children were completing school or had not yet found a job, women with low seniority, or young men who had just moved from the South might lose their jobs. (For instance, in the early 1980s, FIAT had just completed a new wave of hirings when it was forced by the economic downturn to put thousands of workers in CIG).

As two-digit inflation eroded real wages, families began to view working mothers and a second income as a self-protective measure (Negri et al 1986). It should be noted that female employment (which had started to rise again in the mid-1960s, continued to rise throughout the years of recession and is still rising) has involved all age groups (except the youngest and the oldest), but particularly those age groups in which women are most likely to be raising a family.

Although, because of the high levels of social protection, nothing like the mass unemployment of the 1930s occurred, uncertainty once more became a common experience among families and a feature of the environment in which children were growing up. This was coupled with an increasing perception that it was difficult for young people to find work. Only in recent years, because of economic recovery, has this insecurity started to disappear in most of the Centre-North, where unemployment has now virtually disappeared and CIG has been reduced to "physiological" dimensions. However, unemployment is again a common feature of the most economically marginalized areas, particularly the South and the Islands, where unemployment among the young (but not only the young) has become a dramatic structural phenomenon (Accornero and Carmignani 1986, Pugliese 1989).

In 1985, the average income of families in the North and Central regions was 24.7 percent higher than that of families in the South and the Islands. Although this difference was partly due to the prevalence of agricultural workers in the latter regions, it remained consistent even among families of which the heads-of-household worked in the same job category: between the two general areas, there was a maximum 48 percent difference for families of which the heads-of-household worked in agriculture, and a minimum 27.1 percent difference for families of which the heads-of-household were self-employed. Given the variance in the average size of families in the two general areas, the gaps between average per capita incomes were even greater. For instance, the difference in average family income between Piedmont and Sicily was 31.1

percent, but that in average per capita income was 60.4 percent (Moriani 1988).

Evidence of worsening economic conditions in the early 1980s is offered by trends in the percentage of families of varying sizes that were estimated (on the basis of consumer data) to be living in poverty each year from 1978 to 1983. As Table VI shows, these percentages for families of all sizes diminished until 1980, but rose thereafter. It is clear from the table that poverty was likely to be most concentrated in families with one or two members, i.e. where the presence of older people was highest, and in families with five or more members, i.e. where there were likely to be three or more children. While the percentage of poor families among families with one or two members was lower than the incidence of families of this size in the total

TABLE VI: FAMILIES LIVING IN POVERTY a/
(1978-1983)

Families By Number Of Members b/	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
			Thousands			
1	494.4	405.5	425.9	457.8	425.4	522.4
2	501.1	516.4	431.0	510.4	487.5	533.6
3	253.4	288.3	165.7	263.2	230.9	293.5
4	497.1	292.2	272.3	299.6	308.9	343.2
5		221.0	210.5	194.6	224.8	228.8
6 or more	173.5	196.1	174.7	166.0	226.4	192.6
	1,919.5	1,919.5	1,680.1	1,891.6	1,903.9	2,114.1
			Percentages			
1	18.1	12.8	13.3	14.1	12.9	15.5
2	12.1	12.3	10.1	11.8	11.1	12.5
3	6.6	7.4	4.2	6.6	5.7	7.0
4	9.2	7.7	7.1	7.7	7.8	8.4
5		13.1	12.3	11.3	12.8	12.6
6 or more	18.4	20.5	18.0	16.9	22.7	19.0
	11.0	10.8	9.4	10.4	10.3	11.3

Source: Commissione povertà 1985.

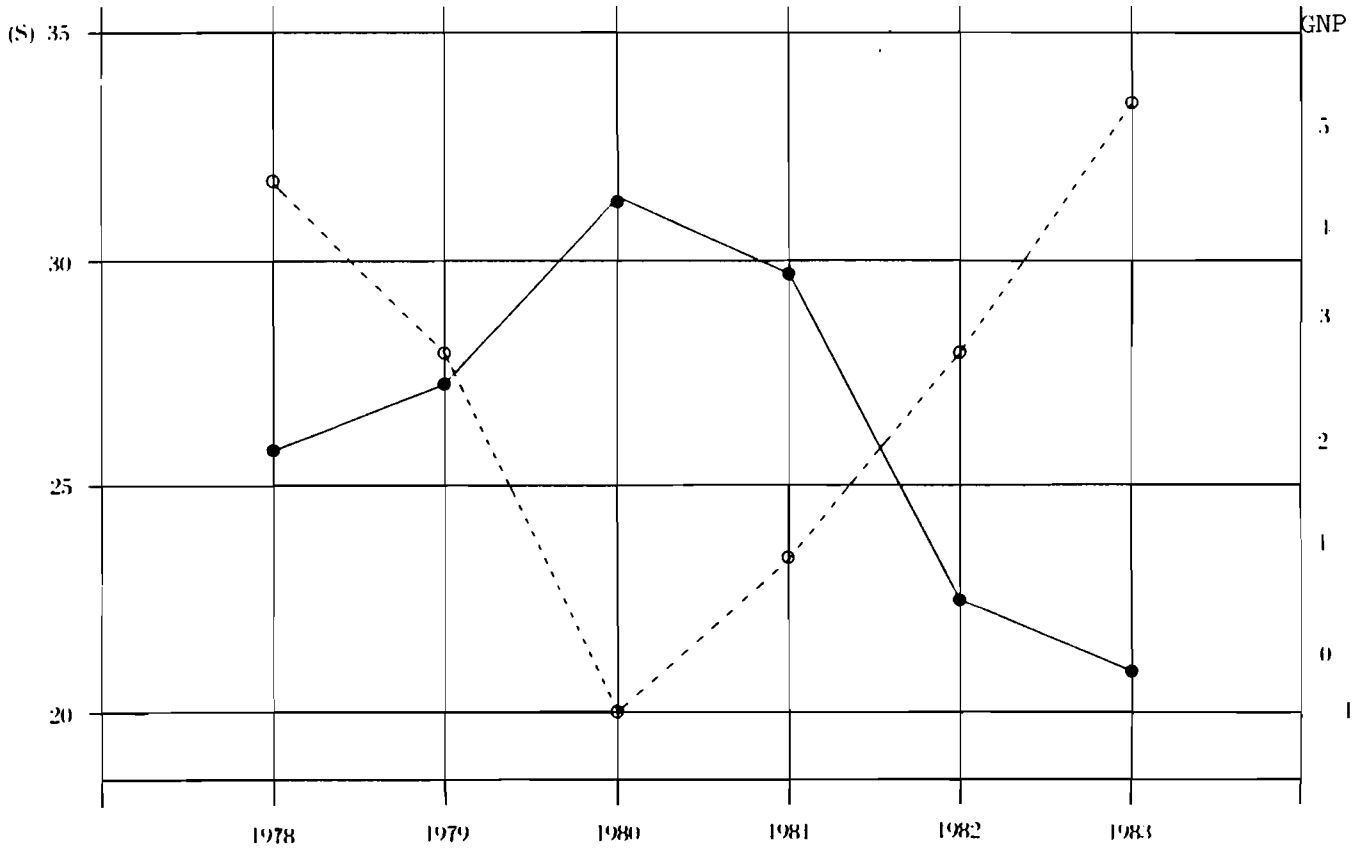
a/ Estimated on the basis of the annual ISTAT survey of family consumption.
b/ An equivalency scale was used to compensate for differences due to family size.

number of families (according to the 1981 census, one- and two-member families represented, respectively, 17.9 percent and 23.6 percent of all families), the percentage of poor families with five or more members was higher than the incidence of families of this size among all families (14.9 percent in 1981). With specific regard to children, 20.4 percent of all individuals living in poverty in 1983 were under 14 (and 38.7 percent were under 26). The corresponding figure for the South and the Islands was 24.2 percent (and 44.7 percent) - very near the incidence of this age group in the total population of these areas, about 25 percent. In other words, not only were there more children in the South and the Islands, and it was thus more likely that poor children would be found there, but the possibility of growing up poor was greater for children living in the South and the Islands than it was for children in the Centre-North.

Figure 2 shows a comparison between (a) the synthetic indicator of poverty (S), which measures both the percentage of the total population represented by people living in poverty each year and the degree to which the

FIGURE 2: REAL GNP AND THE SYNTHETIC INDICATOR OF POVERTY

Source: Commissione povertà 1985
x-axis = years (1978-1983)
y-axis (left) and broken line = synthetic indicator of poverty
y-axis (right) and solid line = % change in GNP in previous year



expenditures for consumption of these people are lower than the average, and (b) the percentage variation in GNP of the year preceding that which is referred to by the indicator. As is clear from Figure 2, the standard of living of the most economically disadvantaged groups was being directly affected one year later by the general economic trend.

During the 1980s, measures were taken that directly affected the cost of raising a child and that were, at the very least, of doubtful effectiveness (on general changes in the structure and output of social expenditure, see Artoni and Ranci Ortigosa 1989). On the one hand, the number of people eligible for tax exemptions because of a spouse and dependent children was raised. On the other hand, starting in 1984, family allowances, which had previously been paid to all wage workers and to certain categories of the self-employed, were paid only on the basis of income, thereby becoming a welfare assistance measure, albeit one which was a little more generous. For families just above the income threshold established for the allowance, this appeared to represent an economic loss, which was particularly hard on dual-income families since there was no consideration for their difficulties. In any case, many poor families either could not benefit from the exemptions, which took the form of tax rebates, since their incomes were below the taxable threshold anyway, or were not eligible for the family allowance, since no family member (i.e. the irregularly employed, small shopkeepers, artisans, and so forth) had a job to which the allowance could be attached. Moreover, while the tax rebate was granted to families with a child of up to 24 years of age who was in school, no rebate could be granted to a family with a child who was out of school, even if the child was also out of work.

Meanwhile, there is no national minimum standard of living or minimum wage for individuals or families in Italy, and, although most regions have passed some sort of welfare assistance legislation, the criteria for the provision of welfare services and the identification of those in need vary widely from region to region, thus exposing individuals and families to different treatment depending on the place of residence.

Smaller Households and the One-Parent Family

Two major changes involving children became evident in the make-up of the family unit during this period: a decrease in the average number of children per family and, to a lesser degree, an increase in the number of families in which one parent was no longer living with the offspring.

The sharp decline in birth rates made one-child and two-children families common, at least in the Centre-North regions. The nationwide fertility rate during the second half of the 1980s was 1.3: 1.1 in the Centre-North, 1.7 in the South and 1.6 in the Islands (Sonnino 1989b). While this might mean that parents could devote more attention to each child, it also meant that there was less chance that children could share experiences with siblings. From this point of view, the significance of child-care services and extracurricular school activities changed in so far as they addressed not only health care and tutoring needs, but also social awareness.

If families with three or more children represented fewer than one-fifth of all families with children between the ages of 0 and 17 (19.1 percent according to the 1983 ISTAT survey), the percentage of children who lived in families with three or more children was, of course, higher (34.9 percent according to the same survey). The current social and political focus on the "small" family might therefore closely correspond to the incidence of the small family among families of all sizes, but it does not correspond to the incidence of the children of small families among all children. Since the average number of children per family affects the allocation of resources (in housing and income compensation, for example), the distinction between the distribution of families of different sizes and the distribution of children within families of different sizes is crucial. In fact, the high incidence of children living in poverty is mostly due to the high concentration of children in larger poor families.

As to the increasing fragility of the two-parent family, given the comparatively low rates of separation and divorce in Italy, one-parent families are much less common there than they are in other Western countries and are much more likely to be due to the death of one parent. However, the rates of legal separation (a requirement for divorce) and divorce have been on the rise in recent years. The number of legal separations per year almost doubled from 1975 (19,132) to 1987 (35,205). The same was true of divorces: 2,041 in 1975 and 5,505 in 1987 (all data: Barbagli 1990). Given the lengthy legal procedure required for separation and divorce in Italy, the average age of the spouses involved is higher there than in other countries, and, for the same reason, the children of families which are breaking up are usually older. However, the average age of the spouses involved has recently gone down by about five years. As a consequence, both the number of childless marriages ending in separation and divorce and the number of separations and divorces involving the parents of minors has increased. Sixty-four percent of marriages which ended in separation in 1977 involved the parents of children under 18

years of age; the figure was 59 percent in 1987. The corresponding figures for divorce were 34 percent and 42 percent, respectively. Finally, the well-established practice of granting the mother custody of children was reinforced during this period: the frequency with which mothers were granted custody reached 90 percent of all custody cases in 1987.

The increasing diffusion of no-fault separation and divorce, while it has made the legal process easier for spouses, has eliminated certain forms of protection that used to be granted to the "weaker" party and thus indirectly to children. Although the current Family Law explicitly acknowledges the contribution of homemaking to family well-being, any eventual compensation in a separation or divorce proceeding can involve only shared assets, not the earnings of the employed spouse. Somewhat paradoxically, in fact, judges have increasingly tended to view alimony not as reimbursement for the spouse who has forfeited wages in order to devote herself to homemaking, but as a "minimum subsistence" allowance for a spouse (the wife) who has no other visible means of support (and often not even then); if a spouse has even a meager income, she is frequently not granted any alimony. Fifty-three percent of the cases of separation in Milan in 1968 involved a grant of alimony for the wife; the figure fell to 24 percent in 1974 and 18 percent in 1987. The corresponding figures for Catania were 56 percent in 1968, 48 percent in 1974 and 34 percent in 1987. The children in such cases have suffered as a consequence, since the alimony payments granted on their behalf have usually been inadequate to meet basic needs. The mean monthly child allowance in Milan in 1987 was around 250,000 liras for one child and 350,000 for two-to-three children. In Bologna, the totals were less. Furthermore, allowances are often the same irrespective of the age of the children involved. Finally, in many cases, allowances are not granted because the father cannot be found, and, in many more, even if granted, they are never paid, or are paid late or only in part.

It is not surprising then that separation and divorce are less frequent among the working class and in marriages in which the wife is not working and increasing in marriages in which the wife has a job. Of all separated wives, forty-nine percent had had jobs at the moment of separation in 1977 and 61 percent in 1987. The corresponding figures for divorced women were 40 percent in 1977 and 64 percent in 1987. Scattered research indicates that, after one year of separation, the great majority of women who had been unemployed have found a job. It should be added that, because of their higher average age at the moment of divorce, Italian divorcées are relatively more likely to have difficulty remarrying than are divorcées in other Western

countries. In turn, the higher average age of Italian divorcées affects their chances of improving their own and their children's economic situation, since the position of women in the labour market is worse than that of men in any case, but particularly if the women are older and have been out of the labour market for some years.

Children in one-parent families are usually at a disadvantage for two distinct reasons. First, one-parent families often represent emotionally and psychologically difficult environments, which can be improved the more the parents manage to control or ease their own conflicts. Second, one-parent families are often also impoverished families in absolute and relative terms. This impoverishment may in turn produce relational and psychological problems, which add to those same sorts of problems provoked by the break-up of the family.

While legislation and social policy may be able to do little to encourage parents to stay together or at least to separate and divorce in the most amicable and least disruptive fashion, existing laws and judicial procedures do seem capable of making the break-up of the family as difficult a situation as possible. On the one hand, the parent who is not granted custody has almost no rights over the children of the marriage and is perceived as an outsider by all agencies which deal with children, particularly schools; on the other hand, the legal procedures for custody, alimony and child allowance seem to depend on a nightmarish concentration of the worst prejudices concerning the place of women in the family and society. The past contributions of wives to their families and to the careers of their husbands are acknowledged only to the extent that the women are perceived as entitled or not entitled to support. Yet, as mothers, they are given total responsibility for the children, despite the fact that, as women, they experience great difficulty in finding work which will adequately meet their needs and still allow them time for their families. It might be said that the children in one-parent families suffer not only from the conflicts of their parents, but also from the gender division of labour in the family and in society in general.

Due to increasing rates of separation and divorce, improvements in overall levels of education, and social and cultural changes, more women are now entering and remaining in the formal labour force even when they are married and have children. Meanwhile, research indicates that dual-income families are better able to weather storms in the labour market and the economy. Low fertility rates and a fairly generous policy toward maternity leave have partly cushioned the demands on the time of working women.

Nonetheless, because little has changed in the gender division of labour within the family, and daily schedules and career agendas continue to revolve around the needs of the "traditional" male figure, working women are given "women's jobs" or are penalized because their "second job" (i.e. homemaking) makes inflexible demands on their time.

Birth and Survival

In 1978, a National Health System was established in Italy. Although it covers the entire population, it is financed mainly through automatic deductions from wage checks and, to a much more limited extent, through the income tax. This means that wage earners pay for a disproportionately large share of the system. In any case, differences in access to the health-care services offered through the system are due not only to differences in entitlement to coverage, but also to social inequalities and differences in the distribution and quality of the services available in the various regions.

Unfortunately, the available data yield information only on the regional differences in terms of health-care expenditures (Artoni and Ranci Ortigosa 1989) and health conditions. Little is known about the social class differentials in morbidity trends and health services usage.

Infant mortality rates continued to decrease during this period. The rate in 1987 was about one-third of that in 1971: 9.5 as against 28.5 (per thousand live births). Other indicators of infant survival also improved. The rate of still births more than halved (from 16.6 to 6.2), and the rate of pregnancies which terminated without a live birth decreased from 42.7 to 15.7. The neonatal mortality rate decreased from 20.5 to 7.5, and the post-natal mortality rate from 8.5 to 2.0. As Pinnelli (1989b) observes, the greatest success was achieved in helping infants survive the critical experience of delivery and the infectious diseases, such as pneumonia and gastroenteritis, that in the past had particularly affected children during the first year of life. There were 3,580 infant deaths due to pneumonia in 1970, but only 207 in 1984, and there were 1,745 deaths due to gastroenteritis in 1970, but only 35 in 1984.

However, regional differences persisted. While the situation in the Centre and the Northeast improved both in absolute terms and relative to the Northwest, the gap between these regions and the regions of the South and the Islands continued to be evident, as Table VII indicates. For the most part, regional differences were due to differences in general health and welfare, including hygiene and the availability and quality of health services and

TABLE VII: PERINATAL AND INFANT MORTALITY RATES BY REGION
(Per Thousand Live Births, 1980-1987)

	Still Births			Perinatal Mortality			Infant Mortality		
	1980	1985	1987	1980	1985	1987	1980	1985	1987
Northwest	7.4	5.9		16.1	12.6		12.4	8.4	
Northeast	6.7	5.4		14.6	11.6		12.0	7.9	
Centre	7.5	5.6		15.6	12.9		12.2	9.0	
South/Islands	9.3	7.8		19.9	15.7		16.5	12.4	
Italy	8.2	6.6	6.2	17.5	13.2	12.4	14.2	10.3	9.6

Source: ISTAT (various years): Annuari di Statistiche Sanitarie; Mattioli (1988a).

their use by the population, particularly pregnant women (Pinnelli 1989b). The persistently poor quality of drinking water and the frequent inadequacy of health services (family clinics, hospitals, etc.) were among the factors behind the higher infant mortality rates in many parts of the South and the Islands. In 1985, there were 0.13 family clinics per thousand inhabitants in the North and 0.09 in the Centre, but only 0.05 in the South and 0.03 in the Islands. These differences are the more striking given that in the South the average age of the population was lower, while the fertility rate was higher. Moreover, while 50 percent of the total number of family clinics were in the North and 20 percent in the South in 1983, by 1985, although the total number had increased by about one-third, 58 percent were in the North and only 15 percent in the South, indicating a differential development of this service in inverse relation to fertility rates by geographical area.

At the same time, the increase in the number of underweight births recently detected in the so-called "industrial triangle", the most highly industrialized area of the North (Pinnelli 1989b, Vittori et al 1987), points to an emerging risk for child survival and welfare. The increase is linked to pollution and health hazards, particularly for women, in the workplace.

Developments in mortality rates by age also indicate the emergence of new risks (see Table VIII). Mortality rates among pre-adolescents and adolescents in particular seem to be on the rise in the North and the Centre. Although mortality rates among girls in these age groups are generally lower, the phenomenon involves girls as well (Caselli and Egidi 1989). Somewhat paradoxically, girls are now starting to be affected by risks which can be linked to the increasing freedom of women, despite the improvements in hygiene and nutrition that have lowered previously high mortality rates for females

TABLE VIII: CHILD DEATHS BY AGE AND GEOGRAPHICAL AREA
(As % Of Total Deaths, 1975-1983) */

	Under 1		1-4		5-9		10-14		15-17	
	1975	1983	1975	1983	1975	1983	1975	1983	1975	1983
Northwest	21.6	19.1	19.6	20.9	21.5	22.8	21.4	22.0	24.0	26.4
Northeast	12.8	10.9	15.2	13.6	18.8	16.9	18.5	18.5	23.0	21.4
Centre	13.6	15.3	13.9	19.2	14.4	15.6	15.0	19.6	18.5	17.8
South/Islands	51.9	54.6	51.3	53.8	45.2	44.4	44.6	39.8	34.5	34.4

Source: ISTAT (Various years), Annuari di Statistiche Sanitarie; Mattioli (1988).

*/ Different percentages among regional areas in a single year are due not only to different mortality rates, but also to different age structures of the population.

from puberty to 30 years of age.

Adolescents are frequently victims of traffic accidents. Although there was a decline in the figures after 1978, traffic deaths still accounted in 1985 for 50.8 percent of all accidental deaths among 5-to-14-year-olds and 67 percent among 15-to-17-year-olds. The latter were also more likely to be driving at the time of the accident: 216 adolescent drivers were killed in accidents in 1985, and 11,157 were injured, whereas the corresponding figures for adolescent passengers were 128 and 5,522, respectively. The phenomenon was particularly serious in regions in the Northeast, such as the Veneto or Friuli-Venezia-Giulia. More generally, it was serious in those areas with few metropolitan areas and where adolescents were more likely to participate in leisure activities, or even go to school, outside their home communities. In such areas, adolescents spend more time on highways and depend more on private transportation than do adolescents in urban areas. If this interpretation is borne out by further research, it will indicate one paradoxical consequence of life in small "human-dimension" communities.

Another area of growing risk is drug abuse. So far, data indicate that adolescents are a small minority among drug abusers, who tend mostly to be between 18 and 25. Minors who have been identified as drug abusers to judicial authorities or health services represent only about 6 percent of the total number of individuals so identified. However, research and official estimates suggest that drug abuse is growing among adolescents. Often, it is as adolescents that young people are first exposed to drugs, either through

friends who use drugs or through casual contacts. The drug problem is particularly serious among minors in Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, Lazio, Campania, and Sicily, and minors involved in drugs as users or as dealers are more numerous in the main towns in each region (Faccioli 1988).

Care and Education

The development of pre-school services continued all through this period, which witnessed increasing enrolment notwithstanding the decreasing fertility rates. However, cuts in national expenditures on social services and changes in regulations, particularly in the form of limitations on new hiring and demands on users (i.e. families) to pay a higher share of the costs, put more pressure on local governments and on families. Unlike schools, pre-school services are not, in fact, considered universal services, but rather "services to be provided upon individual demand" and therefore optional and to be paid for, at least in part, by users. This is particularly true for nursery schools, which are targeted at the 0-3 age group.

Data on the number of and attendance at nursery schools are not totally reliable. Even public-sector sources offer different data, with ISTAT indicating that, in the entire country in 1986, there were 1,964 nursery schools, 1,903 of which had been organized by local authorities and the rest by private groups, while the Ministry of Health (which is responsible for the state funds allocated to nursery schools) estimated that there were 2,122 nursery schools (with attendance at 60,202 children in the regions of the North, 21,965 in the Centre and 18,556 in the South and the Islands).

Such administrative carelessness in monitoring is an indication of the scant importance attached at the national social policy level to services for this delicate age group. Moreover, since the original allocation of 20 billion liras for the development of this service in 1978, no further state funding has been planned. Thus, nursery schools are now financed only through the 0.10 percent of wages that is paid by employers to the National Social Security Institute (INPS) and through local funds. Table IX indicates the distribution of this service by geographical area and the percentage of children covered, according to the ISTAT data.

Despite the limitations in the data, it is apparent that the chance of children in the South to benefit from nursery schools has remained small and even decreased in comparison to the progress in other regions. Although it is true that the percentage of children covered is directly related to the percentage of women having regular jobs, nursery schools should not serve only

TABLE IX: NURSERY SCHOOLS BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA (1976-1986)

	North	Centre	South-Islands	Italy
	Number of Children 0-3 Years of Age			
1976	1,034,337	443,328	1,077,532	2,555,197
1979	850,403	377,049	1,002,934	2,230,386
1983	677,362	311,041	870,729	1,859,132
1986	628,194	293,010	851,925	1,773,129
	Number of Nursery Schools/Places			
1976	639/32,164	207/11,307	234/10,589	1,080/54,060
1979	910/44,765	275/13,019	235/11,079	1,420/68,863
1983	1,176/58,103	431/19,946	255/12,989	1,862/91,038
1986	1,192/56,434	461/20,390	311/15,402	1,964/92,226
	Percent Coverage of Age Group			
1976	3.2	2.6	1.0	2.1
1979	5.1	3.4	1.1	3.1
1983	8.5	6.5	1.5	5.0
1986	9.0	6.9	1.8	5.2

Source: Compiled on the basis of ISTAT data.

the needs of the children of working mothers, but also those of children in deprived families (while offering an opportunity to all children to develop social experience outside the family). Thus, the fewer number of nursery schools in the very regions where there are more children and where there is relative economic disadvantage is problematic. While an analysis of expenditure on social assistance (Artoni and Ranci Ortigosa 1989) indicates that the regions of the South tend to favour direct economic support for families rather than for services, the benefits are not the same. In particular, the lack of services to meet the specific needs of younger children may actually lead to the marginalization of these children.

Differences also exist among regions and municipalities. There may be enough nursery schools to cover the needs of as much as 30 percent of the children in some areas, in cities in Tuscany or Emilia Romagna, for example, while being totally absent in others. Furthermore, the cost to local authorities and to the families which benefit from nursery schools is not always the same: fees are usually determined according to a sliding scale

based on family incomes, but both the scale and the average fee may vary widely. Finally, target groups are often unable to take advantage of the fact that need is a priority criterion for entrance to nursery schools. Poor families, mothers who work at odd hours and disadvantaged groups, such as gypsies and the families of migrant workers, often find it inconvenient or cannot afford to use a service which implies some form of reglementation and control.

On the other hand, particularly in areas where nursery schools are most widespread, teacher training is being upgraded, and adjustments are being made in order to respond better to needs. In cities such as Milan, Reggio Emilia, Bologna, Pistoia, and others in the Centre-North, additional services are being created alongside "traditional" nursery schools to offer support to children (and parents) who do not or cannot benefit from these schools: counselling services, recreation facilities, children's museums, and so forth.

The situation is only somewhat different as regards kindergartens, whether they are run by the state, by local authorities, or by private nonprofit (state subsidized) groups. First, aside from a token registration fee and a lunch fee, kindergartens are free of charge for the families of all children. Second, the increasing number of public kindergartens has clearly favoured a more balanced distribution of this service at the national level. However, during the 1980s, there was a reversal of the expansion of the early 1970s. Between the 1979-1980 and 1987-1988 school years, the number of kindergartens fell by 2,081 units (and 2,940 classrooms), although the number of teachers continued to grow. While part of this decrease must be imputed to the decline in fertility rates (there were 314,999 fewer children of kindergarten age), regional differences persisted in kindergarten enrolment rates. Children living in the Islands remained at a disadvantage (Schizzerotto 1990), which was increasing relative to 10 years earlier, and, for the first time, enrolment rates were lower in the regions of the Northwest than they were in the regions not only of the Centre and the Northeast, but also of the South (see Tables X and XI).

The existence of direct state intervention appears to have been crucial, since the number of public kindergartens increased, particularly in the South, even though the number of children of kindergarten age was falling. The decline in the total number of kindergartens was due exclusively to the closing of private kindergartens and those operated by local authorities. The state should therefore strengthen its intervention in those areas, such as the Islands, the South and parts of the Northwest, where enrolment rates are falling and where the classroom-population ratio is smaller.

TABLE X: KINDERGARTEN ENROLMENT TRENDS
(1981-1988)

	Northwest	Northeast	Centre	South	Islands	Italy
1981-1982	82.6	86.7	86.4	81.6	70.8	81.9
1984-1985	87.0	90.3	91.2	87.1	76.5	86.7
1985-1986 */	88.6	92.1	93.3	87.4	76.5	87.7
1986-1987 */	89.5	93.5	92.1	87.3	78.1	88.4
1987-1988 */	90.3	93.5	93.7	87.8	74.7	87.1

Source: Schizzerotto (1990).

*/ Estimates based on provisional data.

TABLE XI: KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS AND THE 3-5 AGE GROUP
(Percentage Distribution, 1984-1985)

	Northwest	Northeast	Centre	South	Islands	Italy
Classrooms	21.8	16.0	18.0	31.6	12.6	100.0
3-5 Age Group	21.9	14.9	16.9	31.7	14.6	100.0

Source: Schizzerotto (1990).

Further regional differences were evident in the quality of kindergartens and in the scope of the services they furnished. Most half-day kindergartens were found in the South and the Islands (see Table XII), where there was also the highest relative number of kindergartens without cafeterias, even when children were present for as long as seven hours per day (Schizzerotto 1990). Not only did children at these kindergartens have to bring their own lunches, but the opportunity could not be taken to correct potential dietary deficiencies.

The number of children who enjoy free lunches through this service (where it exists) in the various regions is an indication of the importance of kindergarten cafeterias, although the amplitude of the differences among regions also suggests that the criteria applied in granting lunches free of charge are not the same. Of all children of kindergarten age in 1984-1985, 22.7 percent in the North, 54.5 percent in the Centre, 84.2 percent in the South, and 76.7 percent in the Islands benefitted from a cafeteria service.

TABLE XII: FULL-DAY KINDERGARTENS BY TYPE */
(As Percentages Of All Kindergartens By Type)

	Kindergartens			Pupils		
	State	Non-State	Total	State	Non-State	Total
North	91.0	60.1	70.8	75.1	48.5	57.0
Centre	82.6	56.2	70.4	73.4	43.5	58.7
South	78.9	38.2	60.8	72.9	30.2	56.0
Islands	68.8	25.3	45.2	63.9	22.0	45.1
Italy	81.3	49.2	63.9	72.2	40.4	55.5

Source: Schizzerotto (1990).

*/ Full-day kindergartens are open at least seven hours each school day.

Schooling

A 1983 ISTAT survey on families estimated that school attendance had reached 95 percent among 6-to-13-year-olds (who are subject to compulsory education). This meant that, in this age group, five percent of all children were not receiving basic schooling (certainly including children who were so handicapped that they were unable to attend despite the favourable ad-hoc policies and legislative measures in force). Moreover, by the second half of the 1970s, efforts undertaken in the late 1960s to offset the impact of economic and social differences on the ability of children to pass successfully from one grade to the next had lost momentum and had even been partially reversed. Although these efforts may have been based more on an unwillingness to flunk children than on active measures to eliminate social and cultural inequalities, selectivity and marginalization subsequently became common once more in schools. This reversal was evident even in compulsory education (see Table XIII), although to a lesser extent than in the higher grades. Research has also indicated that the reversal had a specific feature: children were more likely to flunk at the beginning of elementary school, middle school and high school (Besozzi 1983, Bentivegna 1988).

Only a slight majority of children (642 per 1,000 in 1979-1980) were completing all of compulsory schooling without having to repeat a grade. The figures for the regions of the South and the Islands were much worse than they were for the rest of Italy: in the Islands, 4.9 percent of all first graders had to repeat the grade in 1981-1982, and 3.6 percent in 1985-1986. The figures for the South were 3.4 percent and 2.4 percent, respectively. Of all

TABLE XIII: PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS HELD BACK IN SIX GRADES (1981-1986)

	Elementary					Middle
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	1st
1981-1982	2.0	1.5	1.1	1.1	1.3	13.1
1982-1983	1.9	1.3	1.0	1.0	1.3	13.4
1983-1984	1.8	1.3	0.9	0.9	1.2	13.0
1984-1985	1.6	---	---	---	---	13.0
1985-1986	1.5	---	---	---	---	11.6

Source: Based on Bentivegna (1988).

sixth graders in 1985-1986, 17.0 percent in the Islands and 13.1 percent in the South had to repeat the first year of middle school. In this case as well, particularly in regard to middle school, the Islands fell further behind the regions of the Centre-North. The drop-out rate in compulsory schooling was also higher in the regions of the South and the Islands: 7.3 percent of first-year and 7.1 percent of second-year middle-schoolers dropped out in these regions in 1983-1984, as compared to the respective national averages of 3.8 percent and 4.2 percent; this is another indication of the failure of schools to hold and support the most disadvantaged children. In 1986, more than 20 years after the introduction of compulsory schooling, 11.3 percent of the employed and 12.1 percent of the job seekers among teenagers had still had no more than a primary-school education.

In the very areas where marginalization is highest among school-age children, the availability of classtime is the furthest from being even adequate. School attendance in shifts, virtually eliminated in the rest of Italy by the 1985-1986 school year, still involved 13.7 percent and 10.4 percent of primary-school pupils and 5.3 percent and 3.5 percent of middle-schoolers in the Islands and the South, respectively. School attendance in shifts leads not only to shorter school days and greater difficulties in the organization of extracurricular activities, but also to disruption within families because more care and supervision, including more help with homework, is required of working parents.

For the period under consideration, Table XIV illustrates what might be called the "exclusion", or "tension" rate: the combination of the percentage of pupils who fail a grade and the percentage of pupils who drop out of school.

TABLE XIV: THE SCHOOL "TENSION" RATE
(In Percentages, 1975-1986)

	Failure Rate A			Drop-out Rate B		Tension Rate A + B	
	Elementary	Middle	High	Middle	High	Middle	High
1975-1976	3.0	5.6	5.6	4.2	8.1	9.8	13.7
1976-1977	2.5	5.8	5.9	4.4	8.1	10.2	14.0
1977-1978	2.2	6.9	7.1	4.0	9.5	10.9	16.6
1978-1979	1.3	7.5	7.2	3.8	10.0	11.3	17.2
1979-1980	1.3	8.3	7.7	4.1	10.1	12.4	17.8
1980-1981	1.2	8.8	8.0	4.1	10.7	12.9	18.7
1981-1982	1.3	9.2	8.1	4.3	10.4	13.5	18.5
1982-1983	1.2	9.4	8.1	4.0	9.3	13.4	17.4
1984-1985	1.0	8.8	8.2	3.3	8.7	12.1	16.9
1985-1986	1.0	7.9	8.4	3.0	8.8	10.9	17.2

Source: Corrado (1989).

Although enrolments in high school, which is not compulsory in Italy, increased during the period, there were persistent gaps among regions. In 1985-1986, ninety percent of compulsory-school students in the regions of the Centre went on to high school, while only 74 percent in the South did so (see Table XV). The reversing trend in grade-failures and in drop-out rates in the South in recent years may be interpreted not only as a sign that adolescents in these regions view high school as difficult, but also as a signal that these adolescents, especially those in working-class families, are disillusioned with education: they do not feel that it will help them get jobs

TABLE XV: MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADUATES ENTERING HIGH SCHOOL
(In Percentages, 1981-1986)

	North	Centre	South	Islands	Italy
1981-1982	65.4	80.3	73.8	74.3	71.4
1982-1983	67.5	82.1	74.3	75.9	72.9
1983-1984	72.3	86.4	77.1	77.2	77.0
1984-1985	72.9	85.1	75.1	76.2	76.2
1985-1986	75.1	90.1	74.1	77.2	77.8

Source: Bentivegna (1988).

because the labour market is tight, and the unemployment rate among young people is high, even among those with high school diplomas and university degrees.

Some progress has been made in education in Italy in reducing discrimination based on sex. In recent years, the figures for the rate and the length of school attendence for girls have equalled or surpassed those for boys (Dei 1988, Franchi et al 1987). However, this improvement conceals a persistent difference in the distribution of males and females within the well-articulated Italian school system, particularly in high schools which do not specialize in the humanities and the sciences. Girls are still more likely to be enrolled in professional high schools which prepare students for clerical careers, while boys are more likely to attend technical high schools. Similar divisions exist in the professional training programmes offered at the local level for teenagers who have not attended high school. Moreover, the new willingness of families, particularly poorer families, to keep their daughters in school longer may represent their response to the perception that it is more difficult for young women to find jobs.

Thus, the only social inequality which seems to have diminished, at least in relative terms, within the educational system in the past decades is gender inequality (Schizzerotto 1988). Even in that case, however, whether girls and boys with similar school certificates and degrees also find equal opportunity in the labour market remains an open question.

Children and Teenagers in the Labour Market

Recent research on child labour at the national level is scarce. However, this does not mean that child labour has disappeared. On the contrary, local area studies (Tagliaferri et al 1980, CREL 1980), occasional media inquiries (Baglivo 1980), photo exhibits, reports on accidents in the workplace, and statistics on compulsory school drop-out rates all attest to the persistence of the phenomenon. Although there are instances of children working full time, children in the labour market are often employed on an intermittent, seasonal, or part-time basis. In certain areas of the South, child labour involves between 20 percent and 50 percent of the 10-to-14-year-old age group at least on a more or less occasional basis. Children can be found working on farms, in construction, for small-shop owners and craftsmen, and throughout much of the informal economy. Because of a horrible illness provoked by glues, it has been discovered that children have been used as piece-workers in the leather industry in Naples. Children are employed

frequently as street sellers and, because they cannot be punished as adults before the law, as drugpushers.

The existence of child labour may be evidence that schools have been inadequate in providing supervision, but it may also be evidence of a strategy which has been adopted by families who do not have confidence in the school system and feel that getting a job and professional experience is more important for their children than are getting a school education and having a childhood free of the pressures of work. The children themselves may not be successful in school, nor interested in what they learn there and may prefer to dropout to work, perhaps after having tried to combine school and a job. This may suggest that the "work culture" and the "work ethic", which seemed almost to have disappeared by the late 1970s, have a stronghold in such families.

Among adolescents, the activity rate of teenage males in the formal labour market decreased from 33.6 percent in 1977 to 27.6 percent in 1986, while the rate for females fell from 29.6 percent to 24.8 percent. Both job-holders and unemployed job-seekers were involved in these decreases. Although the rise in the average number of years adolescents were spending in school was an important factor, some researchers have suggested that the evidence for these decreases is inaccurate because many adolescents were neither registered in school, nor working in the formal labour market.

Since, for the young, the difficulty in finding work in the formal labour market is inversely related to level of education, the 14-to-17-year-olds who have at most a two-year high school degree or a professional-training degree have the most difficulty finding jobs (Censis 1985, Accornero and Carmignani 1986, GIOC 1986, the various EVA studies Isfol 1988). Unemployment among this group increased between the late 1970s and mid-1980s along with the growing overall unemployment rate during this period (Table XVI). However, unemployment rates among adolescents varied widely according to geographical area. Despite the more recent reversal in overall unemployment, including unemployment among adolescents, 14-to-17-year-olds, particularly those in the South, continue to experience difficulty in finding jobs.

The most important of the measures which have been adopted in response to unemployment among adolescents is the law on job contracts and training that was introduced in 1983 and revised in 1986. The law was designed to encourage employers to hire 15-to-29-year-olds for definite periods of time (up to a maximum of 24 months), after which they could either offer them a new contract, or let them go, but at lower social security costs. However, the law has benefitted the 19-to-29-year-old age group more than it has adolescents,

TABLE XVI: 14-TO-17-YEAR-OLDS IN THE LABOUR MARKET
(As % Of All Active Members Of The Age Group, 1977-1986)

	Northwest		Northeast		Centre		South & Islands	
	Empl'd	Unempl'd	Empl'd	Unempl'd	Empl'd	Unempl'd	Empl'd	Unempl'd
1977	77.0	23.0	75.5	24.5	61.2	38.8	56.1	43.9
1979	66.9	33.1	75.6	24.4	68.3	31.7	54.5	45.5
1981	66.3	33.7	72.7	27.3	46.8	53.2	53.8	46.2
1983	56.1	43.9	62.5	37.5	56.9	43.1	48.6	51.4
1986	57.1	42.9	61.7	38.3	58.0	42.0	45.5	55.5

Source: Mattioli (1988b).

whose participation in work programmes under the law dropped from 18.8 percent in 1983 to 9.7 percent in 1987. Moreover, the law has been increasingly applied to favour those with a high school degree (Mattioli 1988b). Adolescents can now be more easily employed under apprenticeship contracts, which, however, have not been designed to create jobs.

If leaving school early represents a risk on the labour market, remaining in school is not perceived as an advantage by many adolescents, particularly by those who have the most difficulty in finding jobs (Censis 1985, GIOC 1986). Once again, schools appear to offer little support or motivation especially to those who could most benefit. Disillusionment with the ability of schools to prepare students to earn a livelihood, combined with the need to add to family incomes, or to become more self-sufficient, has led many adolescents in high school to work on a part-time, intermittent, or seasonal basis. In any case, usually only low-skilled jobs which rarely involve on-the-job training or skill upgrading are offered to adolescents, in both the formal and the informal labour market.

Institutions and the Family

Attention has been focused in recent years on child abuse and sexual violence against children. Private nonprofit associations have been created to deal with the problem. An example is the "Telefono Azzurro" initiative: a phone service in Bologna that anyone, including children, can call to report cases of violence or ask for help. In some cities, legal, psychiatric and other assistance services have been established to offer support to battered children and their families. Nonetheless, it is not clear if the increasing

use of these services and the increasing media coverage of individual cases are an indication that child abuse and sexual violence against children are on the rise, and a debate has emerged on the proper balance between the need to inform the public about dramatic cases and publicize the availability of these services in order to help victims and the need not to provoke a thoughtless reaction.

More serious is the debate over the boundaries among the responsibilities of the state, the community and the family. Since the majority of abused or abandoned children who come to the attention of social workers and judges belong to families in the most marginalized groups in society, it is easy to wonder to what degree the focus on these children conceals an attempt to exert control over these groups (while other problem families evade such scrutiny). On the other hand, if the strong tradition that the privacy of the family is sacred is not qualified, then society's most fragile and helpless members can be exposed to terrible violence. For example, according to Italian law, incest is punishable only if it occurs openly, that is, only if it is a cause of scandal. Thus, in this case, the public is better protected than is the (usually female) child.

More generally, the welfare of children and their right to protection and security lead to the uneasy problem of determining when it is appropriate for the community to assist parents in the task of raising children and when it is appropriate for the community to protect children from their parents and perhaps thereby endanger the very relationships which constitute the essence of the family unit.

Some indicators suggest the direction in which parents and society as a whole have been moving: the number of abandoned children and of children in institutions has fallen, and new forms of support, such as foster-care and social work with families, have been created, although this has not been without problems.

The number of children who for one reason or another could not be cared for by their families and had to be put into institutions continued to decrease throughout the late 1970s and the 1980s. The number of abandoned newborn babies fell appreciably, although the phenomenon did not disappear. Among all children in orphanages or other child-care institutions, the percentage of illegitimate children also diminished (from 68.6 percent in 1971 to 45 percent in 1981).

Abandoned babies are now more readily given to foster families even during the adoption procedure, and older children are more easily given over to the care of foster-homes or individual guardians. The reason is a new

adoption law which favours foster-homes over institutions for the care of children who still have families, on the theory that foster-care gives the natural parents time to resolve their difficulties while providing the children secure, albeit provisional homes. Nonetheless, the law is implemented very differently at local and regional levels (Sgritta 1988). While some regions have created ways to make the law function smoothly by organizing ad-hoc services to assist both the foster-families and the natural parents, in other regions, fosterhood is strictly a volunteer activity, which is sometimes resisted in favour of institutionalization.

The number of children in institutions fell by one-half between 1975 and 1983 (the last year for which there are complete data), although in that year the number was still 56,099. The majority of these children were in the 6-17 age group, and the decrease involved both "normal" and handicapped children. The decline was due not only to the drop in fertility rates (the number of children in orphanages per thousand children dropped from 3.9 in 1971 to 0.3 in 1986), but also to a reduction in the number of those who were in orphanages relative to the number of those who were cared for in other ways (e.g. through support for natural parents and foster-families). Meanwhile, the number of children in other types of institutions also diminished, from 49.4 per thousand in 1971 to 28.1 per thousand in 1981 (Lanzetti and Canu 1986).

In 1978, 48.3 percent of all children in institutions were in the South and the Islands; the figure rose to 52 percent by 1983 (Mattioli 1988). Because their families have relatively more difficulty in caring for them without assistance and because it is almost impossible to find foster-homes for them if they are put up for adoption or abandoned, severely handicapped children, including a new category, children with AIDS, remain the most likely to be institutionalized. It is also very difficult to place older children up for adoption or in foster-homes, frequently because they have already been scarred by the effects of institutionalization. Among abandoned and problem children (or children coming from problem families), older children appear the most disadvantaged.

More flexible institutions, including some which attempt to recreate the family environment, are being developed, and there are limited efforts in some localities to establish social services which address the needs of problem families without taking away the children. Overall, however, services which assist and support families in crisis are rare in Italy, and removing children from these families to put them in institutions or foster-homes is still the standard policy measure. Nonetheless, despite the increasing focus on the plight of children in problem families and a changing attitude in society

and before the law of child abandonment (which now can also involve children who are living at home, but whose families cannot provide sufficient care and education), the number of legal abandonment proceedings has dropped from 36.6 per 100,000 children in 1971 to 18.5 per 100,000 in 1982. Furthermore, there has been a significant shift from proceedings involving the children of parents who have died or disappeared to proceedings initiated for "other" (presumably social) reasons. There were 7.8 of the latter type of proceedings per 100,000 children in 1975, the year of their first appearance, and 8.3 per 100,000 in 1982. Meanwhile, proceedings involving unknown parents numbered 18.3 per 100,000 children in 1987, but only 2.5 per 100,000 in 1982. Finally, the increase in adoptions since 1984 may be due not so much to a rise in the relative number of abandoned children, but to a new statute which has opened the way for the adoption of foreign (Third World) children. In 1987, 46.2 percent of the children who were adopted were foreign-born (Di Nicola 1989).

More attention is also now being focused on the institutional mechanisms involved in the incarceration of minors and, more generally, on the way these mechanisms define deviant behaviour (Faccioli 1988, Palomba 1984). Nonetheless, little research has been carried out on the social environment and background of the minors involved. The data produced by the institutions themselves must therefore be used, in the awareness, however, that they tell us as much about how these institutions define deviant behaviour as they do about the children.

The data offer no very clear picture of trends. The number of minors who were reported for deviant behaviour to the authorities fell from 23,954 in 1975 to 20,126 in 1985, but, in terms of the percentage of deviant minors in the 14-17 age group, the figures remained fairly constant: 0.7 percent in 1975, and 0.6 percent in 1985. Although the overall number of minors brought to trial (usually for theft or robbery) dropped during the same 10-year period, there was an increase in the percentage of minors who received a sentence: from 16 percent of all minors brought to trial in 1976 to 19.5 percent in 1985. Therefore, the chance that a minor would be found guilty and sentenced was greater. However, minors are now less likely to serve their sentences and more likely to benefit from a judicial pardon because of the growing ambivalence, if not hostility, of public opinion toward the institutionalization and incarceration of children (Faccioli 1988).

From 1975 to 1985, a significant geographic redistribution occurred both in reported cases of deviant behaviour and in the sentencing of minors. Minors are now more likely to be accused of deviant behaviour and punished in the regions of the South. In 1975, more minors were accused of deviant

behaviour in Lombardy (20 percent of all reported cases) and Lazio (11 percent) than anywhere else; both of these regions are in the Centre-North. In the same year, minors were most likely to be sentenced in Campania (19 percent of those accused) and Puglia (17 percent); both of these regions are in the South. In 1985, the highest percentages of minors accused occurred in Puglia (15 percent), Campania (14 percent) and Lombardy (12.5 percent), and the highest percentages of minors sentenced were found in Campania (28.5 percent) and Sicily (19 percent). In 1987, the trend in sentencing toward the South and the Islands was confirmed, although the figures had dropped (20.8 percent in Campania, 15 percent in Sicily and 12 percent in Lazio). Sicily and Campania also registered the highest percentages of imprisoned minors: 17 percent and 16 percent of the national total in 1985, respectively, followed by Lombardy and Puglia with 14 percent each (Faccioli 1988). In the many regions of the South, economic and social instability, a pervasive environment of illegality and violence and the absence of reliable social services, including adequate schools, apparently encourage more deviant bahaviour among minors and cause judges to take a stricter attitude toward the use of the judicial pardon. In the regions of the Centre-North, such as Lombardy, other factors may help to explain the high percentages: the tensions which exist in a highly stratified, socially differentiated environment, the marginal character of life in the peripheral areas of large cities, and so forth.

Deviant behaviour is even less evident among the children of white-collar families than it is among the adults. The vast majority of minors in prison belong to the most disadvantaged groups in society. In 1985, seventy-five percent of all imprisoned minors were illiterate or had not completed compulsory schooling. By 1987, the figure had risen to 83 percent. Moreover, an increasing number of these imprisoned minors were foreign-born: first, mainly gypsies (86 percent of all foreign-born minors in prison) and, more recently, minors born in North Africa. These data must not be interpreted merely as an indication that poor, marginalized, or foreign-born minors are more prone to deviant behaviour; they can also be understood as a sign that such minors are more likely to be the focus of the attention of local and regional government agencies and are less likely to be pardoned by the judicial system.

Finally, among imprisoned minors, girls are a minority, although the percentages have been rising rapidly over the past few years. Girls represented 6.5 percent (373 individuals) of all imprisoned minors in 1985, and 13.9 percent (685) in 1987, although the total number of imprisoned minors was declining. The percentage of gypsies and other foreign-born minors was

even higher among girls than it was among all minors in prison: half of all the girls imprisoned in 1987 were foreign-born, and a little less than half of all foreign-born minors in prison were girls. Foreign-born girls therefore appear to be particularly vulnerable both to marginalization and strict enforcement of the law. Moreover, gypsy and foreign-born girls, although they are almost never sentenced for drug dealing or for causing bodily injury, are held in prison longer before trial and are pardoned more rarely than are girls born in Italy.

IV. SOCIAL POLICY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Child welfare indicators improved throughout the 1980s. However, old problems remain and, in some cases, have become more serious, while new problems are appearing:

- Infant mortality rates have improved in Italy, but the country as a whole and certain regions in particular are still well behind the trends in other developed countries, such as Canada, Denmark, France, and Sweden. Moreover, the gap between the regions of the Centre-North and the regions of the South and the Islands has increased.

- The gaps in income and economic development are also increasing once more between these same geographical areas. Unlike in the past, these gaps are having no direct consequences on consumption patterns; however, their impact is apparent in infrastructures, labour market resources and the delivery of services and, therefore, in the quality of life available to children.

- New risks for children are appearing in the more affluent regions of the Centre-North: air and water pollution, a rise in traffic accidents and the growing isolation and social marginalization in areas around large cities. The increasing number of accidental deaths among teenagers on Saturday evenings may well be an appropriate symbol for the new sorts of problems facing young people in an affluent society.

- Changes in the traditional role of women and mothers are becoming a crucial asset in helping families to resist periods of economic crisis. However, corresponding changes are not occurring in the gender division of labour within families and in the organization of social services and the work-day.

- Child-care services and the education system have expanded to address the needs of children under 3 years of age in particular, but also those of older children after school hours. However, they still only partially respond

to the new needs arising because of the growing number of dual-income families, one-parent families and one-child families. Moreover, the great diversity in the quality and type of services being offered from one local or regional area to the next is fostering variations in the rights and educational and social resources available to children and their families.

- Government intervention and the increased availability of education have led to improvements in the overall educational level of young people, particularly girls. However, relative inequalities according to social class and geographical location persist.

- Poor education and high rates of unemployment among young people have combined to marginalize disadvantaged adolescents from the labour force, with long-term effects on their lives. This is particularly true in the regions of the South and for girls.

- Adolescents in general tend to benefit less from measures designed to enhance training and employment opportunities and to be the most at risk in terms of school dropout rates and other negative social phenomena for which their families are ill prepared.

- The increasing number of Third World immigrant families in Italy is creating a new set of problems which traditional education and social institutions are not equipped to meet. Notwithstanding the small numbers, the high relative percentage of foreign-born children in prisons, despite the growing dissatisfaction of public opinion with the imprisonment of minors, is an indicator of just how poorly equipped these institutions are.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to layout a systematic policy to respond to this complex and contradictory picture. However, an examination of the data and of the existing policies they imply suggests several directions which it would be useful to explore:

- An analysis of child-care services and trends in the health of children seems to indicate that the regions and the national government should increase their investments in child-care and health-care services. Hospitals and family clinics are far from adequate in many areas, particularly in the South. Yet, health and welfare are not dependent only on more money and more good hospitals. Social services, while offering care and information, are also a means of reinforcing the social structure. An investment in social services for children and their mothers and families is an investment in bonding and social cohesion. This does not necessarily mean that all such services should

be run by the state, but that the local governments and the state should provide resources and a framework.

- A general reform of social assistance programmes and some kind of guaranteed minimum income should be developed in Italy in order to eliminate the favouritism and uneven application of many economic assistance measures and to help families better face their problems and meet sudden economic crises.

- More generally, a long-term approach should be developed in social policy so that individuals can be assisted in planning, meeting needs and overcoming obstacles during the course of their careers and their lives. Maternity leaves and longer paternity leaves should be part of this approach, as should measures designed to alleviate family emergencies (a child having health or emotional problems, for instance) through some kind of insurance, basic income-assistance, or special leave programme.

- Economic protection or guarantees should be instituted for one-parent families in order to eliminate the impoverishment which now often occurs because of insufficient alimony and child allowance payments. For example, as is done in several countries, local governments might assure child allowance payments by making the payments themselves directly to the parent who has won custody and, if possible, collecting the allowance from the other parent. At the same time, the practice of the courts to consider alimony as only a minimum subsistence allowance, rather than as rightful compensation for an economic contribution during marriage, should be changed.

- Cultural and human resources, as well as technological innovations, should be invested to help the most disadvantaged children complete compulsory schooling and enter high school. Learning-support programmes, extracurricular activities, counselling, and other measures should be initiated systematically (in collaboration with other agencies), particularly in areas where poverty is greater and the social environment less secure or more deprived. Such measures already exist, but they are less extended or totally absent in the areas where they are most needed, and they are often organized on a purely volunteer basis and without institutional support.

- Specific efforts should be developed to help adolescents who are having trouble in school or who have already dropped out. Policies which focus on training, encouragment for dropouts who may wish to return to school, work-study programmes, and so forth should be developed and implemented. A bill raising the compulsory-school age to 16, a change which would imply a transformation of the very complex and socially stratified high school system, has been in Parliament for many years now. The fact that the bill has been

presented and debated many times and yet has never been passed demonstrates the difficulty of addressing this problem in Italy. Nonetheless, the bill does not go far enough. In all the parliamentary debates, little is said about the need to help adolescents who are not interested in school, who are dropouts and who prefer to acquire work experience. Forcing them to remain in school, without offering them a support system or some professional training, might reduce unemployment among teenagers, but it does not address the needs of these individuals.

- It is difficult to develop effective programmes for adolescents outside the classroom. Youth centres exist in some cities, but they are usually directed at older (generally male) teenagers. In any case, such "institutional" approaches are frequently not very successful since they do not cater to the need of many adolescents to have a place to go where there are no adults. More experimental are programmes, such as one in Bologna, to send social workers onto the streets and into neighborhoods, or programmes, such as one in the region of Emilia-Romagna, to set aside special places where teenagers can go without the knowledge of their parents to seek advice or simply meet with friends their own age and talk among themselves. Meeting places, information and counsellors should be provided, but within a flexible framework which allows young people to choose (with whom they will speak, when, on what basis, under what circumstances, etc.).

- Although Italy must have an immigrant policy (in terms of permits, housing, employment, social security, health services, etc.), it must also address the problem of the children of immigrants. Specifically, child-care services and schools must strike a balance among the process of assimilation, the need to safeguard cultural and ethnic identity and the rights of individuals. These are new concerns for Italy, and it might learn from the experiences (and mistakes) of other countries which have already encountered them.

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