Review: [untitled]
Author(s): Gianfranco Poggi
Source: *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (May, 1975), pp. 252-254
Published by: American Sociological Association
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2063203
Accessed: 28/10/2010 18:12

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=asa.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

American Sociological Association is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Contemporary Sociology.*

http://www.jstor.org

a shift from a merit system of faculty evaluation to one which reduces differences within academic ranks, places greater emphasis upon seniority, and gives more attention to job protection. They also found that under collective bargaining a greater separation of interest tends to develop between faculty and administration and between faculty and students. While the former might be expected, the latter has numerous potential political and institutional consequences. In contrast to these more negative effects, the authors show that where it has been established collective bargaining has been a force in improving the economic position of some professors, particularly those in the junior ranks.

For sociologists concerned with modern higher education, the sociology of professions or complex organizations this book should prove valuable. Many of the generalizations made in the volume are not new, but the analysis is thorough and it underscores findings which to date have been reported only in research done in more limited contexts. In addition, as a part of the influential series of Carnegie Commission studies the book calls attention to a major movement not well examined in the other Commission sponsored reports on higher education.

Disoccupazione intellettuale e sistema scolastico in Italia (1859–1973), by MARZIO BARBAGLI. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1974. 481 pp.

GIANFRANCO POGGI
University of Edinburgh

The comeback of sociology in Italy since World War Two has not made as great a contribution to our knowledge of contemporary Italian society as might have been expected. The prevalence on the one hand of literature on the history of social thought and Grand-Theoretical questions, and on the other of mainly sociographic studies with a narrow and strictly local data base, has prevented a build-up of empirically based and theoretically inspired full-scale studies of the main features of the country's changing social structure (and, parenthetically, largely validated for contemporary sociology Gramsci's old charge that Italian intellectuals, wavering between cosmopolitanism and provincialism, have always failed to focus their scholarly and artistic production on distinctively *national* themes). This is a serious failure, particularly since the country's expensively run official statistical apparatus also does a poor job of producing economic and sociological intelligence, nor can many insights into the country's conditions and trends be drawn from journalistic sources. The joint result of these deficiencies is that there is a very poor stock of validated, up-dated knowledge about Italian society at large.

Things, however, are looking up. In 1974 two books which make a very positive and sizeable difference to that stock were published: Sylos-Labini, a well-known economist from Rome, published a book-version of an extensive and enlightening essay on the Italian class structure, previously available only in the form of articles; and Barbagli, a younger sociologist from Bologna (and previously the senior author of a clever and controversial book on high-school teachers) produced the book here under review, "Intellectual unemployment and the school system in Italy (1859–1973)."

The theme of the book is the employment situation of university graduates and of the holders of diplomas from vocational secondary schools for primary teachers, junior technicians and minor managerial personnel; the "school system" of the title is not a separate theme, being brought in mainly as an independent variable affecting the above problem. (It is in fact a major contention of Barbagli, fully substantiated in his study that all-too-often attempts to relate the size of certain categories in the work force *directly* to a society's economic system, err exactly because they do not allow some independent—or rather, intervening—significance to the structure of the educational system.) Barbagli's thematic range is thus considerably narrower than Sylos-Labini's; but his contribution is quite as substantial because it fully delivers on the title's promise of a longitudinal treatment, with a span of over a century, and more widely because of the size of his data base and the sophistication of his analysis.

In the space available for reviewing this well-written and exceedingly informative book, I can barely outline the main story it has to tell. In the late 19th century the recently constituted Kingdom of Italy possessed both the highest rate of illiteracy and the next-to-highest rate of university attendance (and percentage of graduates) among European countries. Naturally the economic system which its often illiterate working population operated could not suitably (and sometimes not at all) employ its abnormally high pro-

duction of graduates. Thus "intellectual unemployment" was endemic and massive. The data are scanty, but ably collated and interpreted as they are by the author their message is unmistakable.

It was unmistakable, in fact, both in the past century and in ours (before, during, and after Fascism) also for the ruling groups of the country, who persistently worried about its actual and potential disruptive consequences. Those groups repeatedly tried to counter the phenomenon both by expanding the demand for graduates (and similar "intellectuals") and by reducing their supply. They were more successful in the first policy (which amounted, basically, to a sustained and variously ruinous expansion of the public bureaucracies) than in the second. Here, in fact, they systematically failed, and graduate unemployment *remained* endemic and massive up to the second half of our century. The reasons for their failure are various. First, the ruling groups never managed to reduce the excessive number of universities in the country or even to limit their intake of students (Italian universities have always been "open-door" ones.) Second, their attempts to limit the supply by structuring the school system so as to reduce the numbers of pupils going beyond a primary education were always half-hearted because by better adjusting the system to its "selection" function they were afraid of interfering with its operations as a "socialization" mechanism (and one which, as they well knew, they could not spare). Third, their policies aimed at channelling a goodly section of the secondary student body away from the universities and into various low-grade schools with a marked vocational orientation were rather more wholehearted and successful (Italy maintained until the early 60s a highly discriminatory school system)—*but* never successful enough decisively to reduce the structural imbalance between supply and demand at diploma and degree levels. The best case in point, here, is Giovanni Gentile's "fascist" educational reform of 1923. As Barbagli shows in one of his best chapters, the Gentile reform, conservative and indeed reactionary as it was, was not as distinctively "fascist" as all that, since it largely enforced recommendations made over the previous two decades by the best qualified Italian educationists; and at any rate, its key policy (creation of a large, *cul-de-sac* post-primary school) duly went onto the statute books—but was utterly defeated by families in the millions voting with their feet, i.e., simply refusing to enroll their children in such a school. The point is, as Tom Burns might phrase it, that an educational system is in fact a plurality of systems: from the standpoint of families, that is of the component units of the social strata, it is unavoidably viewed as an arena for inter-generational social advance; consequently, they will do their best to compete in that arena no matter what the handicaps, and stay clear of early turn-off points. Part of the widely experienced difficulty in adjusting the output capacity of schools to the intake capacity of the economy lies in this stubborn fact, in which Barbagli sees a significant dimension of the struggle of subaltern groups for social promotion.

In the late 1950s the supply/demand imbalance we have been discussing began to be substantially corrected by the boost which industrial development was giving to the employment of graduates (the numbers of which had not much increased since World War Two). Industrial development, at the same time, by improving the immediate economic position of workers and strengthening their bargaining power, led the unions and the left-wing parties to engage in a largely successful campaign for educational reform (the story of which is told by Barbagli somewhat hurriedly, and without an adequate discussion of its significant implications for our understanding of the mysterious workings of the *real* Italian party system). In the 60s the Italian secondary school system was so modified as to become, in Barbagli's judgment, structurally the most "open" in Europe, and one with a decreasingly significant vocational orientation even in the less privileged branches of its senior secondary level. The resulting "educational explosion" (only since 1962 was the constitutional right of youngsters to three years of free and compulsory post-primary education enforced) would in any case, in the medium run, have led to pressures on the university system, and in the longer run to a sharp increase in its output of graduates which only sustained industrial development could continue to absorb.

This, unfortunately, is sheer speculation, since: *one,* a premature boom in university enrollment was engineered as part of public policy on the basis of a hasty, *hubris*-filled over-interpretation of the recent trends in supply/demand relations (and it should be noted that this boom was not accompanied by the requisite quantitative and qualitative changes in the university system itself); *two,*

from 1963 on industrial development failed to be sustained. Thus, the major changes in the Italian educational system during the sixties, however worthwhile in other terms and specifically with reference to the junior secondary level, simply spell disaster with reference to the university situation *and* to the employment prospects for graduates. "Intellectual unemployment," in other terms, is back with a vengeance—and in fact the sales success of Barbagli's book in Italy is probably due in part to the ominous public, contemporary resonance of its topic. It does look as if, on this ground as on so many others, the best years of the Italian "economic miracle" may turn out, in retrospect, to have been a flash-in-the-pan, all the more destructive in their ultimate significance for having caused so many people who should have known better to rush about greeting them as the dawn of a new era (*come fe' il merlo per poca bonaccia,* as Father Dante would say).

I should point out, however, that my pessimism here is rather more unrestrained than Barbagli's, who essentially prefers to keep his own counsel as to the implications of his own data and argument for the near future. In fact, this restraint has caused him to terminate his excellent book with a dry chapter of regional comparisons: interesting in its own terms, but not quite a fitting finale for a book of this quality.

Family and Kinship

Family Development in Three Generations, by REUBEN HILL in collaboration with NELSON FOOTE, JOAN ALDOUS, ROBERT CARLSON, and ROBERT MACDONALD. Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1970. 424 pp. $11.25.

WILLIAM T. LIU
Notre Dame

This book, known as the "three generation family study," has two dominant themes. The first deals with the patterns of consumership of three generations of the same family, asking such intriguing questions as: do families follow similar patterns in the acquisition of durable goods at comparable stages of the family cycle? do couples use similar rationale and decision-making strategy in acquiring children as they purchase expensive and durable goods? what are the predominant values and styles of problem-solving behavior for the generations, and do styles run similar from one generation to the next? do families plan their major consumer actions? if they do, who are the more or less effective planners?

The second theme deals with intergenerational relations, particularly patterns and conditions associated with "helping" relations between generational units of the same family. How do people of each generation view the ideal pattern of contacts for the best balance of minimum independence and mutual obligations in time of crisis? In reality, how much contact is there actually between generations? Who are the kinkeepers, and which of the three nuclear units is most likely to be the linkage point of the other two? What is the expected direction between older and younger generations with respect to assistance sought and assistance given? What are the major categories of assistance for which the younger generation provides help to the older generations?

In order to locate intact three generation families, the research team utilized a list of 3,000 households originally used for public opinion polls by a local newspaper drawn from the St. Paul-Minneapolis SMSA and based on an area probability sampling procedure. From this list, a total of 120 sets of three generation families (360 nuclear units), presumably all, or largely, white, native born, located within a 50-mile radius of the Twin Cities, were drawn for the study. Field workers were able to locate 336 from the original 360 families. These families were visited every three months for a period of one year. At least one visit was made to interview both the husband and the wife. Three hundred and twelve families' cooperations were secured during the one year period. Given the rigid sampling requirement for intact three generation families and a series of four interviews, a completion rate of 93% of the 336 units is in itself an achievement. Furthermore, the design offers a unique situation for investigators to collect data of an extremely complex nature which may be called the intergeneration-longitudinal-panel data. There are two valuable advantages for having data of this nature in family studies: (1) whatever continuity of family culture is transmitted can be held constant so that changes can be compared in the analyses across generations; and (2) the longitudinal-panel data on decision-making offer information on the process of change between waves of interview that panel data do not—the latter merely verify