

*Family interdependency and solidarity as a resource
and a constraint for intergenerational social
mobility. The Southern European case*

Chiara Saraceno

Three dimensions of interdependency and solidarity within families are relevant for the social transmission of inequality

- The obvious one of material resources when growing up (including place of living, neighbourhood and social context)
- The cultural capital dimension recently focused on in education and mobility studies (mostly in educational terms only)
- Intergenerational transfers in income and time at crucial points in the life course and particularly when entering the labour market and when forming a new family.

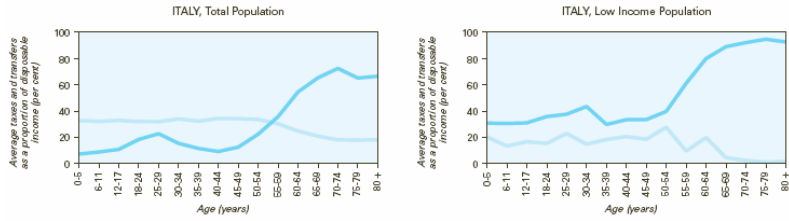
The intergenerational transmission of inequality is greater

- The higher the incidence of self employment
 - The less redistributive the welfare state, particularly with regard to education and social services, but also social security income support in transition phases (e.g. unemployment benefits)
- Therefore, the more important/exclusive is the – financial, cultural and social - capital provided by families and the supportive role of family solidarities.

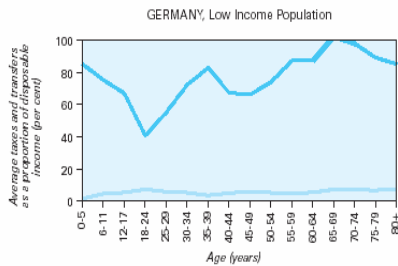
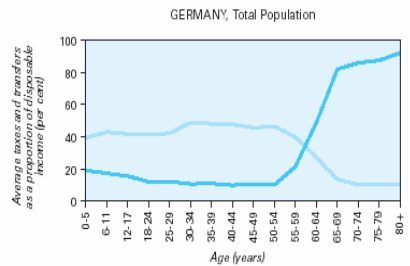
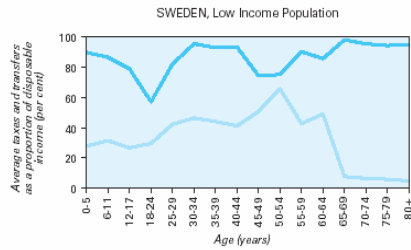
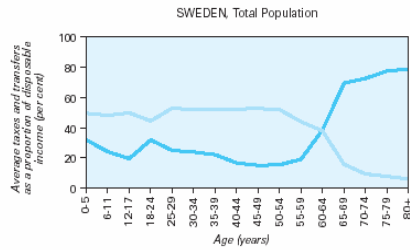
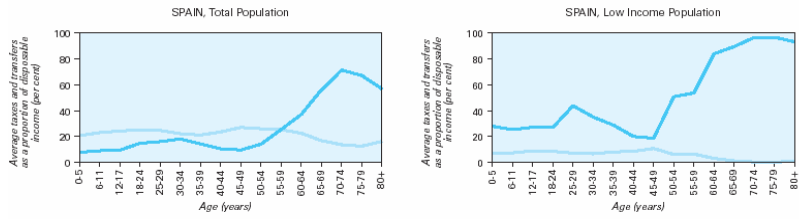
The Italian case as an extreme case within Southern Europe

- High incidence of self employed
- High incidence of “professional inheritance” (e.g. in medicine, law)
- High degree of economic inequalities (among the highest in Europe)
- Large regional disparities (among the highest in Europe)
- Weak redistributive impact of the welfare state (“pensioners’ state”, which strenghtnes the role of intergenerational redistribution) → see fig. from OECD/UNICEF 2005 for Italy and Spain, compared with e.g. Sweden and Germany

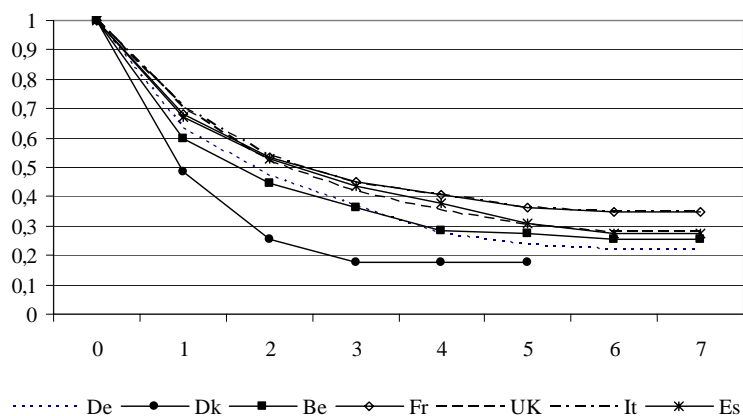
13c The distribution of taxes and transfers across age groups in countries with low levels of social spending



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Another example: together with Spain, the UK and also France, in Italy children's persistence in poverty is highest (lowest in Denmark) (Venturini forthcoming)



Also the deprivation index is highest in Italy (Venturini)

Deprivation index with regard to life style deprivation, means and deprivation ratio between poor and non poor children

	Rapporto di Deprivazione deprivazione tra i poveri media e i non poveri	
De	2,55	2,60
Dk	1,61	2,44
Be	2,15	3,46
Fr	2,64	3,58
UK	3,23	2,66
It	2,77	2,52
Es	3,17	2,77

Inequalities in schooling and career attainment are powerfully influenced by social origins – especially in early childhood (Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993)

- The crucial factor is not income, but parents', and particularly mothers' education
- Therefore, increasing women's education in the post-war cohorts, combined with homogamy, might increase inequality in cultural capital transmitted to children (although, on the contrary, a better educated mother could balance the impact of a low educated father)

Inequality in education

- In Italy the proportion of low educated/low skilled youth is well above average. still 22% of the 18-24 years old in 2004 had obtained only the lower (middle school) secondary degree, compared to the 15,7% European average. In enlarged Europe, only Malta, Spain and Portugal have a higher percentage. Also, dropping out of compulsory schooling is highly concentrated in the most marginal areas and groups.
- Consequently, in Italy the proportion of the 20-24 years old having an upper secondary degree, although increased from 68,8% in 2000, is lower than the European average: 73%, compared to 77% and to the 85% 2010 benchmark.
- Moreover, among the 15 years old, 23,9% of those who took the first level of the PISA test in 2003 showed difficulties in reading literacy (level one or lower), compared to the 19,8% average, with an overall worsening compared to 2000, when the percentage was 18,9%. Therefore Italy has even moved farther way from the 2010 EU objective of no more than 15% experiencing difficulty with reading literacy. Only the Greek and Slovakian kids fare worse than the Italian ones.
- Boys are greatly over-represented among those having this kind of difficulties. This is true throughout Europe. At the European level, in fact 25,6% of boys experience reading literacy problems, compared to 14% of girls. But in Italy the gender gap is higher than average in Europe: 31% of boys have some kind of reading problems, against 17,2% of girls.

- This indicator of inadequate school performance is the outcome of substantial internal differences, with a high concentration of difficulties in the South and in the less academic oriented curricula.
 - Educational streaming starts, in fact, fairly early in Italy, where the compulsory general schooling stops earlier than in most European countries, at completion of the middle school and the upper secondary system is quite diversified. Thus, there are whole areas and social groups that are far below in literacy than their European contemporaries.
 - the vocational-training system in Italy, as in other Mediterranean countries, is weakly developed. Therefore, on the one hand, those with low education are also not vocationally trained; on the other hand, children of the working class who now, differently from the past, go on to upper secondary education, are more likely to receive a general, not a vocational training as in most Northern and Continental European countries. As a consequence, they are more likely to be caught in a double bind situation: they need experience to be hired; but they cannot acquire experience because the lack of it weakens their employability (Müller and Wolbers 2003)
- thus, the Italian school system does not help to attenuate, and actually strengthens, the role of ascription and family inheritance

Intra-country inequalities: the results of the PISA study for Italy: persistent differences between regions and between types of families, with an overlapping of disadvantages (Checchi 2005)

- A student living in the Center-South has literacy skills 50 points lower than one living in the North
- A similar difference exists between the child of low educated parents and the child of parents with a university degree
- Thus the gap between a child of well educated parents living in the North and a child of low educated parents living in the Center-South is enormous (100 points difference), while the difference between the child of low educated parents in the North and the child of high educated parents in the South is minimal
- Whatever the region of residence, having educated parents produces better performances, but the region of residence has a strong impact on the relevance of this relationship

Tavola 1 – Competenze linguistiche (*reading ability*) – Italia (PISA) 2000
 prima riga: punteggio medio – seconda riga: scarto quadratico medio – terza riga: numero dei casi

Titolo di studio più elevato conseguito nella coppia dei genitori	Nord	Centro-Sud	Totale
licenza elementare o senza titolo	487.00	429.88	448.67
	85.18	79.69	85.68
	75	153	228
scuola media inferiore	499.60	449.95	467.58
	78.37	87.75	87.78
	435	790	1,225
scuola media superiore tecnico-professionale	517.12	458.00	484.54
	82.25	83.22	87.80
	268	329	597
scuola media superiore generalista	527.96	488.66	504.72
	81.99	84.95	85.93
	705	1,020	1,725
Università	545.13	496.43	516.22
	83.41	86.65	88.60
	404	590	994
Totale	521.93	473.02	492.37
	83.35	88.26	89.59
	1,887	2,882	4,769

Why is the impact of both family origin and territorial differentiation so strong? There may be more than one reason

- Highly segmented high school system, that streams children on the basis not of abilities but of social origin
- Different territorial performance of the school system
- Different rendimento of schooling in the various regional areas, due to the functioning of the labour market, which in turns impacts on schooling choices by parents and on school efforts by students

- Southern regions, where incomes are on average lower, have also a higher degree of income inequality and a closer, more immobile social structure. Therefore, family plays a stronger role in collocating individuals and the school is perceived as less efficacious (and students invest less)
- On the basis of Bank of Italy data, it appears that in the Center-South there is a percentage of income inequalities twice as high as in the North that may be attributed to social (family) origin. Moreover, even controlling for individual education, in the South the impact of the family background persists, while it disappears in the North (Checchi).

School-to-work transition: apparent paradoxes

- in Italy, as in other Mediterranean countries, the strong relationship between individual qualifications and unemployment observed in other EU countries and particularly in the Northern ones, does not seem to hold. The differential risk of being unemployed between the best and the lowest educated and particularly between those holding an upper secondary and a university degree is more reduced than in other countries. In 2003, for instance, considering the period immediately after the completing of education, over 34% of 15-19 years old with only a middle school degree, 25% of the 20-24 years old with a high school degree and still 20% of the 25-29 years old with a university degree are unemployed, compared to 3% in the UK and the US, 4% in Germany, 7% in Portugal and 9% in France for young people holding a university degree.
- But education has a strong impact over time, both on employment and on status/income.
- Education plays a specially important role for women. It enhances the likelihood that they are in the labour market at all. While only respectively 68% and 56% of young women with a higher secondary and lower secondary school degree are in the labour force, this is true for 84% of women holding a university degree. It strengthens the likelihood that women remain in the labour market even during the family formation life phase. (again, more in the North than in the South)
- Education mitigates also geographical differences
- → therefore, family-mediated access to education has a powerful, and gender specific, impact on inequality in the labour market later on.

The role of the family in a context of weak welfare state protection

- The life chances of children and the young are more strictly and enduringly linked to their family endowment.
- overall parents financial support plays a crucial role in each phase of the transition to adulthood and even well into adulthood: integrating inadequate incomes, cushioning periods of financial crisis, even helping to pay private pension contribution
- Not surprisingly, the possibility to stay longer in the parental household is a resource more available in the more affluent classes in the North
- family financial support has also a crucial role in the young's transition into the labour market. It concerns the possibility to "explore" the labour market, to wait for better opportunities instead of taking any job, or to take a little paid, but potentially interesting and curriculum enriching job.
- Also the atypical job market, in fact, is dualistic and shapes two different curricula in interdependence with (family and education) cultural capital
- Thus, the family plays a role twice: first, in determining the level of education, which in Italy is to a very high degree dependent on one's own family economic, cultural and regional circumstances; second, by allowing a longer or shorter period of exploration.
- Finally, the family – and particularly the alliance mother-daughter - has a gender specific impact on women's decision to remain in the labour market when they have a child, given the scarcity of childcare services for children under 3. As a consequence, whether gender models are shared or not within the intergenerational relationship is a crucial item in the intergenerational transmission and support package