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EDUCATION AND CLASS FORMATION IN AN ITALIAN FACTORY TOWN

by

PAOLA CIARDI

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degreee of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1995

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

EDUCATION AND CLASS FORMATION IN AN ITALIAN FACTORY TOWN

by

Paola Ciardi

Advisor: Professor Jane Schneider

This dissertation reconstructs the relationship between schooling and class formation in Piombino, a metallurgical center in Central Italy, since the beginning of the twentieth century. It focuses on the ways in which historical experience and local working-class political subculture, steeped in the pre-war socialist and anarcho-syndicalist and post-war communist traditions, shaped the "positive" attitude toward education prevalent among many working-class families. Oral accounts inform the reconstruction of school experience and environments, dispositions and the negotiation of educational trajectories within the shifting contexts of the postwar period. Interview excerpts evoke the conservatism of the 1950s, the self-doubt provoked by the encounter with the class smugness and elitism of the school milieus, the ferments brewing in the early 1960s, and the change brought about by the student movement and the activism of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The study argues that the choice made by many working-class families during the 1950s to send their children to secondary schools and university, at a time when post-elementary schooling was not compulsory and wages low, did not simply result from a desire for social advancement. Rather it was connected to a positive attitude toward "book knowledge" and education characteristic of the socialist subculture, the experience of oppressive and harsh working conditions which induced parents to look at education as a means of human

emancipation and an opportunity to spare their children the hard life of the factory, and, finally, to a "language of class" with a strong future-orientation, that spoke of revolution and stressed the need for "organic" intellectuals. However, in the end the "meaning" of education as class empowerment and the drive to appropriate "knowledge" and "cultural competencies" shared in part the terms of the power relations that it sought to overturn, as that drive was partly rooted in feelings of cultural inferiority that were the effect of the dominant hegemony.

The thesis addresses the theoretical literature on issues of reflexivity, class formation, and social reproduction in education. In particular, it draws on Raymond Williams concept of "structure of feeling" as well as Gramsci's understanding of cultural hegemony and Foucault's emphasis on discursive practices.

Preface

As I note in the Afterword, the scholarly process is about "meeting needs" but also about "pressures" and accountability. In the thesis I have acknowledged, as far as I could, how the historical boundedness of my biography and intellectual identity is connected to "pressures" and "desires" that ultimately informed the ways in which I have pursued the "leads" provided by the research material. Indeed, the situated pressures, desires and needs stemming from our historical sensibilities represent the silenced subtext of what we produce. My historical boundedness and the idiosyncrasies of my own biography are also largely responsible for a mindset that, at times, set me on a collision course with the experience of "academic socialization" in this US of A.

However, I must also acknowledge the freedom of intellectual pursuit that I was ultimately able to enjoy within the American academic system. Indeed, these years of learning, research and "school experience" in "America" have been a great intellectual and truly anthropological adventure. For this I want to thank faculty and fellow students whose path I have crossed. Of course, I must thank Professors Jane Schneider, Edward Hansen, and Vincent Crapanzano at the CUNY Graduate Center for serving on my dissertation committee and for bearing with me throughout the long gestation process of this thesis. Prof. Schneider should be singled out for the hours that she spent carefully editing earlier drafts and, especially, for trying to understand the sometimes "stubborn" course of my intellectual navigation through the CUNY graduate system. In addition, I owe Profs. Hansen and Crapanzano a debt of gratitude for the intellectual and moral support

that they provided at different junctures. Finally, I want especially to thank Prof. Ira Katznelson of Columbia University, whose work on education and class formation greatly informed my own, for generously agreeing to serve as my external reader.

I wish also to thank both the Council for European Studies and the Social Science Research Council for providing the critical funding for my fieldwork. In Italy, my research was facilitated by officials at the local schools and the Piombino town hall who granted me access to their archives (which, in one case, turned out to be a tiny windowless room full of dusty document binders). A number of Italian scholars (notably Paolo Giovannini, Franca Alacevich, Massimo Squillacciotti, and Leonardo Paggi) gave me the benefit of their insights as my research was taking shape. In particular, I want to single out Ivan Tognarini, whose openness and warmth made me wish that I had met him earlier on in the genesis of the thesis.

Above all, I owe a debt of gratitude to all the people who shared with me their memories and views, those whom I met only once and others whom I came to know fairly well, those who brokered for me, and those who became friends and hosts. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the help of Loretta Mazzinghi for her many introductions and the hospitality of Mario and Nada Saviozzi. In the dissertation, except in rare cases, I have used pseudonyms to protect the privacy of my informants: although they will thus not find their names, I hope that they will recognize their words (albeit translated into a foreign tongue).

On the home front, my dear friend Vittoria Baroncelli and my family have, at various junctures, mobilized to track down sometimes difficult to find bibliographic references and books that I needed while in the US writing up the thesis. As my "educational sojourn" in this

part of the world is finally coming to a close, my family may still be wondering whatever possessed me to spend the "best years of my life" studying so hard in the company of books.

On American soil, Audrey Korelstein provided friendship, humorous camaraderie and a sympathetic ear to all my brooding on the "reflexive stuff"; she has also labored with me through a crucial chapter of the dissertation when my spirits were flagging. At crucial junctures during the write-up, Audrey and her husband Neal Weinstock also provided me with a refuge (their "cabin in the woods") where, isolated from the rest of the world, I could make that last push toward completion. I also wish to acknowledge collectively the companionship, sociability and the insights provided by my fellow students at CUNY (Ligia, John, Seung-Kyung, David, Alessandro, Chris, and many others).

Finally, I could not have written the dissertation without the help of Richard Shryock, who provided financial support, research assistance, intellectual stimulation, critical input, companionship and encouragement with unbounded generosity of time and spirit. Rick also took on the onerous job of editing every draft of the thesis and putting the final version into the required format, a task completely foreign to my nature. For all the concrete and emotional support that he has given me over these past seventeen years, I truly feel indebted for life.

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INTRODUCTION

Drawing on field research carried out in a factory town in Central Italy, this thesis strives to improve upon our understanding of education as a situated historical process. As I retrace the relationship between schooling and class formation throughout this century, I focus on dispositions, school milieus and the negotiation of educational trajectories. Ultimately, this is a study about the interfacing of culture and class that examines the historically situated meanings and experience of education.

When I first formulated this research project, my primary objective was to retrace the process of social change in the postwar period, combining a historical reconstruction with a subject-centered account. The focus on the relationship between education and society was a strategic choice that I thought would allow me to look at the interlocking effects and interactions of processes that lent a distinctive character to social transformations. My discovery of a widespread appreciation for education among members of an important sector of the local working class compelled me to give center stage to the role of class experience and the influence of a distinct political working-class sub-culture in the shaping of dispositions toward education. Thus, the thesis reconstructs the historical experience of the original nucleus of the local working class throughout this century in order to unveil the influence of class formation that underpinned the pursuit of secondary and university education fairly common among members of the working-class cohort schooled during the 1950s and 1960s.

The relationship between education, local society, culture and economy within the shifting historical contexts of the postwar period is reconstructed analytically and evoked as lived experience through the testimonies of working-class people born during the 1940s and early 1950s. Hence, the principal group of interviewees belonged to the historical cohort whose members lived through the Cold War as children and young adolescents and through the socio-economic transformations of the 1960s and 1970s as young adults. With the help of the interviewees' recounted experience and "embodied memories," I attempt to reconstruct the "structures of feeling" of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s and show the impact of economic and political relations on school milieus and educational trajectories. The focus on experience and the lived context of social life is operationalized through a biographic approach that goes "back and forth from biography to social system, from social system to biography" (Ferrarotti, 1981a:22).

The Italian educational system and its underlying politics represent the structural-institutional context in which the school experience of working-class students unfolds. Italian education, with its roots in late 19th century state formation, was, until the 1962 comprehensive reform of the middle school (11-14 age bracket), a highly selective and socially discriminatory system based upon a tiered hierarchy of schools. Between 1945 and 1962 schooling in Italy reflected the conservative social agenda of the Christian Democrats and displayed considerable continuity with the prewar fascist educational set-up. Its inherent elite orientation and attendant class discrimination was reflected in the practice of tracking post-elementary students, whereby children at age 11 were sent on either to a 3-year vocational school or to an academic junior high school. Secondary education for the 14-19

age group comprised (and still does) different orders of schools with the classic humanist high school at the top, followed by a "modern" high school emphasizing scientific subjects, technical institutes, and, at the bottom, the upper cycle of vocational schools. During the 1960s, however, Italian education was transformed, through a series of reforms, into a more open and egalitarian system. The reform cycle that began in the early 1960s occurred in a changing political and institutional context, as the hegemony of the Christian Democrats ebbed and center-right governments gave way to center-left ruling coalitions.

The thesis is based on archival research (school and municipal records), secondary sources, and ethnographic material, i.e., biographic accounts and semi-structured interviews focusing on education and school experience. The bulk of the fieldwork was carried out in 1988-89 in the Italian town of Piombino, situated on the Tuscan coastline 40 km south of Leghorn.[1] Piombino (population 40,000) became a metallurgical center and a factory town as the result of the late 19th century development of heavy industry. Prior to the advent of fascism, the town, which was steeped in an older anarchist tradition, had developed into a center of socialism and syndicalism. After World War II the Communist Party emerged as the central political force and has maintained control over the local administration to the present day.[2]

With respect to the existing literature, this study follows in the wake of criticism of the "reproductionist approaches" to schooling in both history and sociology. During the 1980s, as the place of education came to be rethought and re-historicized, schools were no longer viewed as totally hegemonic apparatuses serving merely reproductive functions. The re-orientation of the field was guided by a new-found understanding of the complex nature of the interlocking processes of

social reproduction and social change and the prevalence of contradictions, conflict and resistance.

Educational sociologists, however, continue to follow two paths: very general social theory, on the one hand, and strictly synchronic ethnographies, on the other. According to one critic (Wexler, 1987), the linkage between education and social class "as a historical process of conflictual formation" has, by and large, still not been investigated by sociologists. Indeed, a collective history perspective is rarely brought to bear in sociological approaches nor is "conflict" generally understood "as an expression of an ascendant group's struggle to realize its own goals and identities" (Wexler, 1987:80). Finally, the attention given to social class in recent historical studies has been indirect, i.e., via a focus on the educational politics of municipalities, reform coalitions, and organizations that represent the working classes (such as parties and trade unions). As noted in a recent review (Silver, 1990), such an approach tends to divert attention from social class as a lived relationship as well as from social experience in schools.

The dissertation belongs with studies of class formation emphasizing the processual and experiential salience of class and the enduring influence of past historical experience upon people's behavior, which ultimately gives rise to the distinctive social character of a "place." It can also be grouped together with recent work that, in rejecting the functionalism inherent in systemic models of social reproduction and the one-sidedness of revisionist scholarship, has attempted to understand the complexities of class in relationship to schooling through a re-examination of the historical record (Hogan, 1985; Katznelson and Weir, 1985; Smith, 1982). However, by focusing more directly on the lived experience of class (as recounted by the actors)

and school milieus and on the role of the historical process of class formation in shaping both educational choices and the meanings that schooling came to acquire within a distinctive political sub-culture, this dissertation attempts to fill a gap in the literature on schooling and class formation.

Finally, as I will elaborate in the next chapter, in various respects my work provides a counterpoint to Paul Willis's ethnography Learning to Labor. This work is one of the most influential albeit controversial books on education and the working class, as well as an ethnographic "text" held up both for its theoretical ambition and its innovative strategies of representation (Foley, 1989 and 1990; Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Fischer, 1986). Learning to Labor is a refutation of the structuralist Marxist overdetermination of subjects, i.e., the view that subjectivity is an "ideologically determined imaginary relation to the relations of production" (Lave et al, 1992). Willis analyzes the counter-school culture of English working-class students who choose their working-class roots and identity over the bourgeois culture of the school and the illusory promise of mobility. He is concerned above all with "authentic" working-class cultural forms (in their separateness from bourgeois culture) and how they are used to construct oppositional meaning and subjectivity in "lived, sensuous practice" (Lave et al, 1992). The concept that Willis uses to refer to this process/activity is "cultural production" or "the cultural moment." The cultural level, so defined, is the "lived edge of praxis" (Lave et al, 1992): always emergent and never reducible to determining structures. His effort to demonstrate that subjective formation is accomplished in practice through self-styled involvement in group activities leads Willis to employ the ethnographic method. However, due to a purely ethnographic, synchronic approach and the author's

interest in the "given" of cultural forms but not in the process of their emergence, Learning to Labor comes close to reifying cultural forms and portraying his subjects as their products (Marcus, 1986).

As I argue in the next chapter where I discuss the merits and problems of this text at some length, Willis' omission of history (i.e., the lack of historical contextualization of English working-class cultural forms) lies at the root of much of the ambivalence that this book has provoked even among sympathetic readers. This dissertation shares with Learning to Labor the same subject matter, i.e., the relationship of the working class to education and the interface between agency, culture and class. However, my methodology, interests and analytical focus present a marked contrast to those of Willis, as I focus on the opposite phenomenon (the valorization of education instead of its rejection) and treat it as a historical problematic to be explained. Finally, I argue that the rejection of school culture and knowledge common among many English working-class youth, and, conversely, the widespread appreciation for and pursuit of education found in this Italian factory town are the products of contrasting processes of working-class formation. Thus, this dissertation attempts to contribute to a comparative understanding of the culture-class-education nexus, as it focuses on a working-class milieu in which a socialist discourse and politics permeate the lives of actors, in contrast to the working class worlds portrayed in works dealing with American and English class/ethnic subcultures, notably Willis (1981) and Foley (1990).

The Framework

The works of Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, Raymond Williams and Hermann Rebel have provided the main heuristic concepts and the analytical grounding of the dissertation. Specifically, I draw on Williams' concept of "structure of feeling," Gramsci's understanding of cultural hegemony and contradictory consciousness, and Hermann Rebel's suggestion that cultural hegemony is experientially apprehended as the "split self" of historical subjects (Williams, 1977; Rebel, 1989; Gramsci, 1971). I also take heed of Gramsci's idea that "language" or "available vocabulary" is the source of muddled consciousness, an idea which anticipated Foucault's emphasis on "discourse" as constitutive of subjects (Gramsci, 1971; Foucault, 1980). The class formation analysis is inspired by the social history approach pioneered by E. P. Thompson and Williams' brand of cultural Marxism as well as by American scholarship that has tried to improve on the "class-in itself/class-for-itself" model (Katznelson and Zohlberg, 1986).

The conceptualization of the study and writing of this thesis has been influenced both by the current anthropological debate on issues of reflexivity and representation and by a personal penchant for an approach that is at the same time historical and historicized, subject-centered and processual (or practice-oriented to use the current terminology). A historicized approach situates the relationship of the writer to the subject matter: indeed, the research agenda underlying this study is rooted in my own insights and "embodied memories" as an Italian coming of age during the 1960s. Thus, in order to situate in its proper historical context the writing of this dissertation and the choice of subject matter and "theory," this introduction includes a biographic and intellectual "map." Through such contextualization, I hope to

contribute to a reflexive social science that treats the researcher as an "instrument" that must be historicized and situated in order to make transparent the epistemological-experiential process underlying the research and the final writing--a move similar to what Bourdieu calls "participant objectivation" (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

A subject-centered, processual analytical strategy is operationalized by not burying the subjects in the field notes and by capturing the unfolding of contexts and the subjects' relationship with them (my subjects are however historical and not phenomenological). Two key concepts to be discussed in the next chapter--"structure of feeling" and "embodied, sensory memory"--have informed my conceptualization of the ties that bind the subjects to the world they inhabit, their "history," present and future.[3] The relationship of the subjects to the historical contexts in which their lives unfold is, after all, the source of historical agency and cultural identity. In the dissertation, this relationship is evoked through interview excerpts in an attempt to convey the deeply "emotive" hence "cultural" involvement permeating the subjects' connection to the social process. This is the way in which I have chosen to deal with what is currently referred to as "the bottom-up reformulation of classic questions" (Marcus, 1986:166), the link between structure and action (Giddens, 1984), or "practices" and "generative structures" (Bourdieu, 1977).

A major emphasis of the dissertation is on the role of "discursive fields" that are part of the subjects' relationship to the historical contexts. Indeed, dispositions toward education become intelligible in their process of emergence once we situate them squarely at the center of the relationship between subjects (with a "history," a past and an

imagined future) and the "discursive fields" they inhabit. In Piombino, the stimulations and the messages which permeated the socialist and communist sub-cultures are crucial to understanding the emergence of a marked appreciation for the instrumental value of education. Hence, "available discourse" must be understood as a material force that helps shape identities, mold dispositions and inspire action. In this respect, analysis of the nature of popular stakes and interests in education must also involve an understanding of the educational politics and discourse of the organizations with which working-class people identify.

With respect to the relationship between education, "class" and "culture," the dissertation underscores that a grounded understanding cannot be achieved unless we conjoin an analysis of the historical process of class formation with that of state formation. Furthermore, one must recognize that proletarian "languages of class" evolve in close contact with and as a reaction to the "languages of class" spoken by adversarial groups and institutions (e.g., factory managers, reactionary politicians, the state).

In the next two sections, I attempt to lay bare at least some aspects of the process that Vincent Crapanzano described as "the move from the initial foci of discovery to final theoretical formulation" (1992:1). In providing here some indicative passages from the interviews, I am trying to help the reader understand how the interviews drove the historical reconstruction undertaken in this thesis. Indeed, from the very beginning, I was interested in showing how schooling is implicated in processes of class formation and trans/formation both at a structural-political level and experientially. However, while this interest stems in part from my own experience, the interviews themselves guided my reconstruction and interpretation.

Class Formation: A Thread Running through the Interviews

When I began my fieldwork I did not have a framework for relating educational attitudes to "class formation." However, the need to retrace the process of class formation from the beginning of this century became apparent as I noticed recurrent emphases in the interviews and "discovered" the diffuse appreciation for education found among members of the original nucleus of Piombinese workers.

What appeared to make Piombino distinct in the educational arena was the spread of post-elementary schooling during the 1950s and the pursuit of academic high school education by significant numbers of working-class students. This appeared particularly striking, as during this period post-elementary education was not compulsory and working-class family incomes were depressed due to the low wage bill and massive waves of lay-offs. By 1962, when national enforcement of compulsory schooling to age 14 began in earnest, attendance of the middle cycle had already become the rule in Piombino, with the age 11-14 student body divided more or less equally between the vocational and the academic track. This meant that many working-class families planned to send their children on to the upper secondary cycle and even the university.

The accounts of the postwar historical cohort who attended school during the 1950s and 1960s underscored the influence of class formation in the shaping of instrumental attitudes toward education. Furthermore, in many cases, the impact of the socialist-communist culture and the experience of struggle and class antagonism that has marked the history of the Piombinese working class throughout this century are the crucial elements that need to be given prominence in the explanation of the relationship between education and society.

Sandro's family legacy in this arena is emblematic. Sandro (born 1947) attended the humanist high school (liceo classico) and then went on to the humanities faculty at the University of Pisa. His grandfather, a train conductor and anarchist-turned-socialist, often recounted tales of how, on different occasions, he had felt manipulated and falsely accused of wrong-doing by the engineer who supervised his work. In particular, Sandro remembers that his grandfather pointed out how the engineer used technical, high-brow verbiage to intimidate and confuse him. These episodes led Sandro's grandfather's to pledge that his son and grandsons would go to school and study so that "one day there would be workers' children teaching in the schools" (a dream that Sandro, now a secondary school teacher, helped fulfill). This vow and the episodes of abuse that had triggered it had entered the family lore and had become a "testament" passed on to successive generations.

Other interviews revealed the widely shared determination of many working-class parents to spare their children the harsh working life of the factory. Thus, Antonio, who went to the humanist high school and then on to the University of Pisa, reminisced about how his father--a furnace worker at the steel plant--would return from work with his camisole full of holes and his upper body covered with burns. Antonio remembers his father telling him--while pointing to these scars of factory life--that he should study so he would not end up having to subject his body to the abuse and hardships of such brutal work. Antonio's father was very conscious of his lack of formal schooling, which meant that on occasion he would have to enlist his son's help to keep track of the union dues that he collected as a union official. At the time of our interview, Antonio, also a secondary school teacher,

eventually became the union officer at the head of the local (communist) teachers' union.

The following testimony, excerpted from one of several interviews with Maurizia, a tailor's daughter born in Piombino in 1945, addresses another facet of the relationship between education and class formation, i.e., the influence of a socialist legacy centered around "book knowledge." Maurizia attended the scientific high school and subsequently enrolled in the political science faculty at the University of Pisa. Her father, a socialist, acted as her mentor and guide in learning, as she explained:

> My father pushed me to study not so much to improve my job prospects but rather to know more. . . . Right after [giving me] Cuore [a popular novel written by an author with socialist sympathies--ed.], he presented me with a selection of Gramsci's Letters from Prison: it must have been for my 10th or 11th birthday. . . . At 11 or 12, I read Balzac and Hugo. . . . My father had these books at home along with the [classic] Marxist texts.

Another woman, Marina, who attended the humanist high school and eventually graduated from the humanities' faculty in Pisa, explained the decision to attend the academic high school as follows:

> My brother insisted that I go to the liceo because it was a better school. . . . It was the school of the bourgeoisie, but he said (in a defiant tone, as I recall) that it was time for proletarians to go there too.

Finally, the following testimony of Pino is emblematic of working-class youth who attended the vocational school not by choice but as a result of financial constraints:

> I hated the industrial school. I did not like using my hands to make objects from blocks of iron. . . . And yet we were destined for the factory. You know there is a song that says in Piombino children become workers at the moment of birth (a Piombino i bambini nascevano operai); indeed, as children we suckled milk, communism and factory (succhiavi latte, comunismo e fabbrica).

Pino went on to be a belligerent worker at the steel plant. A political heretic who had read Baudelaire and Jack London on his own while he attended the vocational school, he eventually became a political photographer and a local intellectual who founded a political-cultural journal of anarchist inspiration. Pino's educational "destiny" reflects a common situation faced by many working-class families who, during the 1950s, could not afford to shoulder the burden of a protracted educational trajectory for their children. Indeed, due to the meager resources of many families during this period, their children were factory-bound.

However, his comment that Piombino's children "suckled milk, communism and factory" sums up the dimension that best helps us understand Piombinese working-class dispositions, and by extension, attitudes toward education. Indeed, to understand the forging of identities and dispositions among members of the original nucleus of the Piombinese proletariat, one has to appreciate the roles of a militant political sub-culture forged in struggle and a "language of class" exuding revolutionary pathos. Socialism and communism represented a moral and counter-hegemonic compass for many working-class families, as was forcefully stated by Maurizia:

> I think that what proved crucial for me, as for many others, was that our life experience, our experience of struggle, our experience within the family milieu was absorbed, almost internalized as "culture." [Consequently] we did not feel a sense of class inferiority but actively confronted a situation which [objectively] could have put us at a disadvantage from the point of view of class relations.

Taking up the cues from the oral testimonies I collected, I argue that the distinctiveness of popular attitudes toward education needs to be analyzed as a crystallization of the historical experience of families and generations over the course of this century. By piecing together at

least the essential elements of people's historical experience and by using oral-historical materials, I attempt to show that the "disposition" toward education prevailing among members the original nucleus of the local proletariat was shaped along three axes. First, in Piombino, underlying the appreciation for education was a positive attitude toward "book knowledge" that had emerged within the socialist sub-culture prior to fascism in connection with the diffusion of socialist texts and populist literature (hence the references in the interviews to naturalist/realist novels). One, however, cannot look at the diffusion of such publications in isolation from the persistent message that the socialist leadership in Italy tried to convey to the "masses." Indeed, socialist propaganda exhorted the "people" to acquire education for themselves and send their children to school. Schooling one's own children was portrayed as a duty and a venue of emancipation.

Second, an aggressive language of class that spoke of revolution (i.e., the anarcho-syndicalist discourse in the early part of the century and the communist Marxist-Leninist politics and ideology of the postwar period) predisposed many families to form a view of education as class empowerment. In deconstructing the "class-empowerment" view of education, one also must take into account the role played by the need to "produce" the political and administrative cadres to run the local working-class organizations and municipal administration. This conferred an immediate and salient urgency to the appropriation of "knowledge" and the various types of competencies that formal education could "deliver". In the end, the class-empowerment project shared, even if contentiously and perhaps only partially, the terms of the power relations it sought to overturn, as it was partly rooted in feelings of "cultural" inferiority that were the effect of the dominant hegemony.

Finally, the harshness of workers' experience in the factory played perhaps the most influential role. It was thus important to reconstruct in some detail the violence of factory life throughout this century, which may indeed be a distinguishing trait of Italian capitalism, at least in some industries. There can be little doubt that the appalling conditions and the taxing physical work characteristic of many job sites within Piombino's factories inculcated in the parents a desire to spare their children the brutality of such a work life. Moreover, the inhuman discipline and the repression endured by this industrial proletariat (described in chapters 2 and 3) cut both ways: on the one hand, the violence, exploitation and abuse made the Piombinese into a combative lot, while, on the other, the harshness of their "proletarian" experience drove them to seek a different life for their children.

Education and Society in the Post-war Period: Change and "Structures of Feeling" Through the Interviewees' Recollections.

For the postwar period, the class formation process is reconstructed analytically and evoked through the interviewees' testimonies. With the help of interview excerpts, I shed light on the structure of feeling that developed with the onset of the cold war, formed under conditions of duress, economic hardship and intolerable factory discipline. I document the political and pedagogic conservatism of schools during the 1950s and show how economic constraints and the intense social conflict of this period impacted on educational trajectories and the school experience of working-class kids.

Through biographic capsules, I show the multiple linkages connecting educational choices and trajectories to structural, conjunctural (such as economic conditions and family resources at the

time decisions are made) and cultural determinants, as well as to the process of socio-economic change. The accounts of former working-class students are complemented by interviews that I carried out with several teachers, which helped me reconstruct the social "moods" prevailing in the schools and the resistance among many teachers to the comprehensive school reform of the early 1960s.

The leitmotif running through the interviews is the experience of difference caused by the clear perception among these working-class youth that the school was an essentially bourgeois milieu in which they felt discriminated against. The political conservatism of teachers and the authoritarian character of the "pedagogic relation" also stood out in their recollections. The following excerpts from one interview illustrate the shared perceptions and experiences of working-class youth in Piombino's schools:

> At that time [late 1950/early 1960s--ed.], teachers tended to show a preference for children that came from other social milieus. This behavior was actually rather pronounced. I remember that the children of the employees of the steel plant, medical doctors and other professionals sat in the first row.
>
> I was among the top students when it came to taking math tests. But once when I finished a quiz before everybody else, the teacher thought that I had cheated.
>
> I went to the commercial middle school (and not to the academic track) because this teacher told my mother that it was not worth my while to take the entrance exam for the academic middle school.

The foregoing comments concerned elementary school. The perception of "difference" and discrimination was even more marked in the academic middle school, which was considered a quintessential bourgeois milieu. This is reflected in the following statement that reflects a sentiment expressed in some form by many of my interviewees:

> I was miserable throughout my years in the elementary and middle school. I felt very repressed. Yes, I was small for my age and a year younger . . . but most of all it was the school. You know the scuola media then was still the school of the bourgeoisie and haute bourgeoisie.

Through the recollections of the interviewees, the thesis tries to convey the quality of school experience in different types of schools (from elementary to high school).[4] In order to provide contrasting experiences, I focus on two different groups of working-class students, i.e., factory-bound youth enrolled in the vocational track and university-bound youth attending academic institutions. My intent is to articulate a "history" of school experience--elicited from "embodied memories"--set within processes of collective interaction and conflictual historical formation.

The experience of working-class students in the two academic high schools (i.e. the "scientific" and the humanist high schools) was very different. In the liceo scientifico, attended by a majority of working-class students, the perception of social difference does not appear to have been marked. In contrast, in the liceo classico, where working-class students constituted a minority throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the intellectually stifling climate combined with the ultra-conservatism of an authoritarian principal created an acute sense of psychological discomfort. The strong statements of my interviewees clearly convey the frustrations and the misery that they experienced:

> A police regime reigned in the school. The headmaster spied on teachers suspected of having left leanings [Roberto, who attended the humanist high school between 1956 and 1961].

> I was unhappy and angry; I wanted to drop out and go to school with my friends who were enrolled in the technical institute. . . . If you were from a working-class family you were made to feel ashamed. [Sandro, who attended the humanist high school between 1961 and 1966]

The accounts of former working-class students make it clear that their school experience was a difficult one. The pain and self-doubt provoked by the encounter with the class smugness and the elitism of the schools' bourgeois milieus represent a counterpoint to the dispositions that pushed these individuals to stay in school. In the last analysis, pressure from their families, their own drive, and an appreciation for education and knowledge were sufficiently strong to enable them to cope and fight any temptation that some felt to drop out.

The school scene changed dramatically in 1968 and 1969, as the student movement swept through Piombino's secondary schools. The most salient characteristic of the Italian student movement was its identification with the larger political mobilization and its class discourse. The Italian movement among secondary students was particularly strong compared to other European countries and lasted into the latter half of the 1970s. As the testimonies of the 1940-52 cohort show, one of the effects of 1968 in Piombino was to redraw and relax class boundaries. Moreover, for many working-class students, "1968" and its aftermath represented an outlet to combat the repression and overcome the contradictions that they had endured in the "bourgeois" school milieus.

A significant effect of "1968" was to change the political culture of secondary schools through a renewal of the teaching staff, as many of the old guard, unable to deal with a world that had turned upside down, retired or asked to be transferred to the middle school. During the 1970s, Piombino became a social laboratory, overflowing with grassroots initiatives which challenged the hegemony of the traditional left. In particular, the thesis discusses for this period the educational activism of local groups, the workers' education program ("the 150

hours"), the school reforms, and the expanded role of municipalities in educational provision.

Finally, their educational credentials allowed a large number of sons and daughters from Piombino's working-class families to eventually secure middle-class jobs. The structural opportunities that made it possible for these working-class young people to get middle-class jobs were the product of socio-economic change motored by the growth of the service sector, the development of the national welfare state, and the expansion of municipal bureaucracies during the 1970s. Many of those who received a vocational education and went to work in the factories became militant workers affected by the labor mobilizations of the late 1960s and early 1970s. A number even went back to evening school and in some cases became worker-intellectuals, such as: Pino who founded a political/literary journal; Piero and Massimo both of whom earned a degree from the University of Siena with a thesis in anthropology yet remained workers; or Carlo, a left activist and largely self-taught intellectual who went back to school for a while but eventually dropped out because he felt it had little more to offer him.

Foci and Silences of the Dissertation

As will be discussed in the next chapter, one problem with Paul Willis' book Learning to Labor is that he inadvertently gives some readers the impression that he is depicting the English working-class experience of education writ large. This problem arises in part because he employs an ahistorical framework and focuses exclusively on those white working-class males who reject schooling and drop out at 16 (effectively ignoring other working-class responses).[5]

In order to avoid any such misunderstandings with respect to this dissertation, I feel compelled to point out that my analysis of the relationship between class formation and education also does not capture every dimension of the working-class experience in this Italian town nor are all working-class groups equally included in my discussion. The following qualifications are intended to situate the contents of the dissertation in relation to the larger working-class universe that exists in Piombino.

First, I focused my efforts on what I call here "the historical nucleus" of the local working class, which consists of the descendants of families that came to Piombino at the turn of the century. However, the contemporary working class in Piombino is made up of a much more diversified array of groups and includes more recent migrants from both adjacent areas and the South who began arriving during the interwar period and increased in number after World War II. Indeed, once I discovered the particular disposition toward education with which I am principally concerned here (i.e., the positive value attributed to education), I decided to work primarily with the descendants of the families that had come to Piombino during the first two decades of the century, as they seemed to be the carriers of this attitude toward education.

Another "story" could be written that would focus on the contrasts between different dispositions toward education found among various sectors of Piombino's laboring population. This "other" story would have to reconstruct the milieus and the historical experience of first generation Piombinesi whose families emigrated from the surrounding rural or hilly hinterland or from the South beginning in the 1930s. In a few places the dissertation does touch upon the

educational destinies of these other groups, as when I discuss educational stratification in Piombino both before and after the 1962 reform. Moreover, subsequent to the fieldwork for the thesis itself, I undertook a project for the local school district in which I tried to uncover the sources of contemporary school failure in Piombino among kids from milieus affected by il disagio scolastico (educational disadvantage).[6] While the Conclusion does comment on the educational "careers" and problems of these groups, the latter nonetheless remain on the margins of this situated historical reconstruction.

Second, I do not want to give the reader the erroneous impression that all workers in this town identify with the socialist, anarcho-syndicalist or communist camps. Indeed, one must point out the existence of a relatively small sector of Catholic workers, on one side, and a modest number of workers who actively embraced fascism in the 1920s-30s, on the other. However, I did not concern myself here with either of these two groups, above all because of the dominance of the syndicalist-communist "tradition" in this town. Moreover, time constraints and the lack of any existing historical or sociological studies treating these groups also influenced my decision to focus my efforts elsewhere.[7]

Finally, my treatment of "gender" may be considered somewhat idiosyncratic, as I devote a large part of the discussion to one issue in particular (as I detail below). I do provide an overview of the "place" of women in Piombino, briefly discussing the limited employment opportunities in a local economy dominated by metal industries (until the spread of the tertiary sector in the 1970s) and both the dynamics of household economy and the tensions emanating from residential arrangements. I also outline both the trends in the educational trajectories of postwar female cohorts and family attitudes toward girls'

education. The most detailed section of the chapter on gender, however, focuses on what I perceived to be a troubling "silence" in the interviews with the working-class women who pursued an academic education, i.e., the lack of explicit references to the relationship between gender identities and educational aspirations.

This silence did not sit well with me given that in the interviews with women I systematically attempted to elicit their perceptions on this issue. My choice to focus on this "silence" derives from my understanding that this absence of discourse raises a host of interesting interpretive and methodological issues. The lack of references to the connection between educational aspirations and the desire to use educational achievement as a means to overcome a second-rate status or "female dependence" was particularly daunting given my own history and what came out in the interviews with older women on "woman's condition" in Piombino.

Clearly then, this dissertation is by no means an exhaustive rendering of the ethnographic material collected but rather the final product of a particular research process and strategic choices made along the way.[8] It neither develops all the issues that emerged from the fieldwork nor fully represents all the points of view encountered. Some interviews contain references to issues and "stories" that might have been pursued further and developed through follow-up interviews. For example, some male interviewees alluded to insecurities and trepidations linked to the process of sexual maturation and identification: not surprising given that the schools represented the main arena where sexually conscious boys and girls began to interact. As this did not seem at the time to have direct bearing on the themes that I wished to address, I did not pursue these types of sentiments. Admittedly, if I

had probed such issues further, I might have been able to uncover displacements or markers of class issues in the arena of sexual relations and gender identities as discussed in British sub-cultural studies (Willis, 1981; McRobbie, 1978 and 1980) and to which Ortner (1991) among others have since called attention.

The Biographic and Intellectual "Underground" of the Research

In this section I attempt to confront my own work and research agenda as a socially constituted "product" of historical, political, societal and biographic processes and "pressures." Implicit in the effort to show how this thesis is connected to my biography and historical situatedness is the acknowledgment that, as I focus on the experience of a historical cohort close to my age and retrace the transformation of the educational arena in the 1960s and 1970s, I am also talking about the "forces," the social "moods" and the processes that had an impact on my life and identity. At the same time, as I unveil the "biographic politics" underlying the dissertation, I am positioning myself socio-intellectually with respect to American anthropology in that half-conscious effort of self-definition that is never too far beneath the surface of our re/search (Crapanzano, 1992). Indeed, for those anthropologists who have been trained in the U.S. but are either foreigners themselves or "halfies" (i.e., individuals caught between American society and a foreign culture), the "marked" relationship of self-other with American anthropology represents one of the main foci of reflexivity (Narayan, 1993; Abu-Lughod, 1991; DeVita and Armstrong, 1993). The "academic encounter," like the "fieldwork encounter," is a transactional field with a cultural, economic, and political history. My position in this field is marked by my "otherness" as a non-American and as an Italian studying

her own society who, despite herself, was recast as a "native anthropologist" through an act of labelling deeply rooted in the discipline's politics of identity. As I discuss at greater length in the Afterword, I cannot gloss over the fact that, in some ways, this thesis and its subject matter is also connected to my "educational" experience at an American university within a discipline whose poignant politics of identity and "otherness"-orientation are bound to sharpen a foreigner's sense of difference.

However, in my straining for greater transparency and historicity, I am above all trying to point out the need for sharpening our cultural understanding of not only the situated historical sensibilities underpinning our work but also the "epistemological" effects of the social process upon it. Indeed, without a determined effort in this direction, we cannot rise above the "habitus" or the inescapable self-deception emanating from institutionally structured processes of intellectual productions. Nor can we hope to improve the quality of communication in an increasingly interconnected intellectual market where no one wants to be the "object-other" any longer.

The following biographic sketch underscores the obvious, i.e., that our intellectual identities have an underlying "politics," inextricably linked with the particulars of location and history. As Gramsci's emphasizes in his theory of organic intellectuals, the formation of intellectuals is a historically and socially situated phenomenon "mediated by the whole social fabric" (Gramsci, 1971:124). Ultimately, the emphasis here is on the interpenetration of the objective and subjective "moments" from which situated historical understandings arise--an issue at the forefront among anthropologists and social historians today (Medick, 1987; Rebel, 1989). While it is by no means easy to overcome the

inherent reluctance to reveal oneself, without explicit references to whom I am and from where I come (both geographically and historically)--for I am inseparable from the web of relationships that made me--the relation between the "objective" and "subjective" moment would remain opaque.

In 1983, when in my late twenties, I came to the US to enroll in a graduate department of anthropology. Born in 1954 (the eldest of three children) into the family of a small industrialist in Tuscany, I had grown up in what Americans refer to as a small town, but what we in Italy call paese. My father's family owned and operated a factory in the textile-producing district of Prato: this firm would become the most important business in the paese, employing between fifty and 100 workers and doling out piece-work to independent artisan-weavers. Being the eldest daughter of the town "capitalist" set me apart from the rest of the local population. I felt and was privileged relative to the people with whom I attended school. For example, none of my schoolmates took such long vacations during the summer nor did they frequent ski-resorts during the winter as my family did.

Although socio-economic status set me apart psychologically from most of the local people, I did mingle, play and make friends with children and youngsters from working-class families, including the daughters of workers employed in my father's factory. Such interactions, however, were always marked by a perception of difference. My social "self" developed through the contact with and the experience of difference. Class and socio-economic status were the markers of "otherness," which with time I came to see as a sense of non-belonging to a "community." Admittedly, this "community" (coterminous with the paese) was more imaginary than real: although I felt singled out because

I was "marked" by a socio-economic status that I did not share with other people in the paese, the latter was of course in reality not a seamless community. However, if I did not belong to this imagined community, neither did I belong to a solidly middle class network, as this did not exist in the paese. Moreover, the middle class, small industrialist background on my father's side was of recent making, and my maternal grandparents were from a more modest background.

From childhood through adulthood, most of the friends that I made and people to whom I emotionally connected came either from a working-class milieu or more modest socio-economic standing. The contacts and sustained face-to-face relationships with people from backgrounds different from my own were not only determined by the characteristics of the paese but also by the socio-economic and institutional change of the 1960s. Small towns such as the one where I grew up saw the establishment of a middle school just a few years before I enrolled in 1965. Before that time, few families could afford to send their children to school in the larger towns, and thus young people from different socio-economic backgrounds drifted apart at the end of elementary school. This had been the experience of my parents, both of whom, unlike most others of their generation, had been sent on to boarding schools after the elementary cycle. For my generation, it was different: public middle and secondary schools (11-19 age group) became meeting grounds for a more heterogeneous population of young people in the process of forging their own outlook on life.

In the central regions of Italy, such as Tuscany, it was not only the characteristics of localities (the small towns and the paesi) that made class transparent and prominent through the face-to-face nature of inter-class relations, but also the particular nature of Italian politics

and the idiom of a class-in-struggle (for which the Italian Communist Party was the mouthpiece). In the small towns of central Italy, even as a child, one had to come to terms with a public language that spoke to class issues directly with a sense of pride. The street marches and the red flags on International Workers' Day (il Primo Maggio), along with other public ceremonies in which the left asserted itself, made one aware of a universe of "power," emotions and experience that showcased the working-class' own historical legitimacy. The class idiom and the legacy of a collective experience for which the idiom stood found physical representation in the "built space," the Casa del Popolo being the best example of class markers in the typical urban socio-scapes of these regions. Finally, the entrenchment of the Communist Party in the local administrations of the "Red Belt" conferred high visibility and historical legitimacy on a diversified population of factory workers, independent artisans and sub-contractors who identified with the classe operaia (the working class).

Recently I have pondered whether, in researching a collective experience and the roots of social identities shaped by history, I was in some way trying to capture vicariously some sense of a "community in history" that I never experienced due to my perceived outsider status, i.e., not really a part of the paese. I do know that this sense of not belonging was in part a product of the process of class trans/formation underlying the ascendance of my paternal grandfather from middle manager/technician to small town industrialist. When the larger mills operated by outside capitalists had to close down after the war due to falling profits, a window of opportunity opened for enterprising people, like my grandfather, who had the knowledge and networks to start their own business and fill the market void. Yet, while my grandfather

elevated the class status of the family by becoming a successful mill owner, my parents' attempts to socialize their children into a more exclusive middle class milieu than our small town could provide proved too timid. Given the absence of a significant middle class in this town, they could ensure our integration into such a milieu only by moving out of the paese or sending us to boarding schools: they proved unwilling to undertake the former and gave up on the latter after an abortive effort with me.

The special fluidity of relations typical of a small town milieu and the economic development that prevailed in the light industrial districts of postwar central Italy contributed to the creation of a pattern of sociability marked not by class separation but rather by interaction and the formation of bonds between people from different strata and with different life-chances. This context--together with the ongoing process of social change, of which the advent of mass-schooling constituted an important dimension--helped shape the distinct historical sensibility of my generation in many ways. Both my biography and the intellectual identity forged through experience in this particular milieu exerted a significant effect upon the research undertaken for this thesis.

Class clearly represents an experiential sign-post and idiom that has centered my identity. However, my "femaleness" has also driven my choices and influenced my actions. While I felt privileged in class terms, I felt discriminated against and insufficiently appreciated in gender terms. As a female child competing for attention against a younger brother, I saw in the acceptance of authority and conventions the sacrifice of my "true" self and potential. I have a strong sense that, alongside with the above-depicted pattern of sociability characterized by close proximity and interaction with social "others," my reactions to the

bias which family and society had in store for me as a woman dovetailed with an instinctive, emotional understanding of the kind of social injustice that underlies class differentiation. Perhaps being the eldest daughter who at times served as confidante to both mother and grandmother predisposed me to develop an interest in people's stories. I often sensed that people told me more than what they said, that words came from emotions and experiences. As an adolescent, I developed a habit of analyzing people and their behavior. It was my way of dealing with relationships: trying to understand how people's "character" is formed and how we remain forever marked by "family."

As a girl coming of age, I knew that I did not want my mother's life, as this seemed to me too constricted in her roles of wife and parent. However, my parents never made any plans for me to go on to the university though I did well in school. They thought that a shorter and more practical education would do just fine for myself and my sister whose "careers" would consist of working in the family firm in a supporting role (at least until marriage). Moreover, as their own middle class status was secure, they did not need to consolidate it through their daughters' educational credentials (though they did want my brother to gain the prestige that a university education would bring). After middle school, my parents sent me to a private language school and from there--only because I insisted-- on to an interpreters' institute in Florence.

At age 22, despite lack of encouragement from my parents, I enrolled in the philosophy faculty at the University of Florence. However, I left shortly thereafter for Germany where I lived for two years, working as a teacher among Italian immigrants for German educational institutions. After I returned to Italy in 1979, I became

involved with a feminist group and developed a keen interest in gender studies and anthropology. Anthropology attracted me for two reasons: one was linked to the possibility of understanding gender inequality "at its roots"; the other was the interpretive potential entailed in an anthropological approach that seemed to downplay disciplinary boundaries and emphasize connections.

At age 29, after a three-year stint in the family business, I decided to leave in order to devote all my energies to furthering my education. In particular, I wanted to pursue my deep-seated interest in grasping "analytically" the products of multi-layered historical and social processes and the imprint they leave on people. The issues of class and gender were "naturally" dominant themes underlying this thirst for understanding why we are who we are.

As it is clear from the foregoing self-presentation, the class formation perspective utilized in this thesis is both theory and a "centering" in my own social identity and experience, one that I have in common with the people that shared their memories with me (Crapanzano, 1992). The attempt to historicize "the conditions of production" underlying this dissertation through a contextualization of the connections that tie the latter to my social identity fits into one of several "reflexive" projects that have emerged in the social sciences during the last two decades (Fox, 1991b; Vincent, 1990; Ortner, 1991; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Indeed, the unprecedented emphasis on critical self-awareness now authorized by the disciplines and associated with the implosion of empiricist epistemologies and the decline of the positivist paradigm makes it increasingly difficult not to see our work as a complex negotiated process, the product of multiple, criss-crossing

influences and pressures and the outcome of a type of "politics" (Clifford, 1986; Vincent, 1990; Crapanzano, 1992; Stocking, 1983).

The Process of Interviewing and Discovery

For this study, I conducted a total of 79 interviews. Of these, 31 (15 with women and 16 with men) were semi-structured interviews carried out with former working class students who went to school during the 1950s and 1960s.[9] I also interviewed parents, teachers, school principals and those local administrators who had been in charge of education over the years. Finally, I collected oral accounts and carried out biographic interviews with older Piombinesi whom I met through networking.[10]

I focused in particular on the historical cohort born during the 1940s and early 1950s because its members experienced secondary school at a time (i.e., 1950s and early 1960s) when a conservative climate still prevailed in the schools; moreover, some of them also witnessed the tumultuous changes brought about in the schools in the wake of the student movement of 1968. This was also the last historical cohort to live through the strong class polarization and intense class conflict that marked the Cold War years.

At first I located interviewees from this historical cohort by consulting elementary school rosters and tracking down the current addresses of individuals whose names I selected at random. Later on, I was referred or (less frequently) introduced to potential new interviewees by previous contacts. Thus, while in some cases I was a total stranger to the people I interviewed, in others I definitely benefitted from the introduction of a local acquaintance. Sometimes being introduced or having my way paved by a phone call from a mutual

acquaintance cleared the air and greatly facilitated my "work"; in fact, many interviewees met in this way ended up opening up to me the most.

My goal was to collect testimonies from individuals that had attended different types of secondary schools: vocational, technical and academic. In most cases, I arranged interviews over the phone and made an appointment to speak with prospective interviewees at their home. Only in a few cases did I conduct the interviews at my apartment, a restaurant or workplace. Interviews are of different "quality": their depth and length vary greatly. Some people I only spoke with for an hour or two and never met again; in other cases, I met individuals on several occasions, with the total interview time adding up to between four and six hours.

I introduced myself to people as someone conducting research on education and school experience during the postwar period. In conversation either before or after the interview, I would mention that I came from Prato but had been living and studying in the United States. A few interviewees seemed curious to know why an American university would take an interest in education in Piombino. However, almost no one asked me any questions about myself, my family and background, yet, with one or two exceptions, no one showed any reticence about sharing their experiences with me. Most of those interviewed showed interest in the subject. While a few spoke of their school experience matter-of-factly, most became emotional and self-reflexive as they tried to convey their experiences as working-class students during the 1950s and 1960s. It became quite clear that, for some people, the interview was not only an opportunity to reminisce but also an occasion to reflect aloud on how their school experience had marked them.

After having chosen Piombino as my fieldwork site, I at first felt rather hesitant about conducting the interviews, as I expected to have to explain myself--a middle class Italian woman studying in the US--to working-class people. However, I seldom found myself in this predicament, though I did end up talking about myself and my background with those people with whom I became closer. I cannot fully explain why my interviewees were not more inquisitive or aloof but would surmise that their self-images, on the one hand, and their perception of me, on the other, played a significant role. Being descendants of the historical nucleus of the Piombinese working class, coming from political families, and having been involved in partisan left politics, most of those interviewed seemed very secure in their own identities. They have a strong sense of history and their roots, which may explain in part why my family and social background seemed irrelevant to them. Moreover, many had become local "intellectuals"--teachers, political militants and administrators--precisely the type of people inclined to be introspective and self-reflexive. Finally, as Piombino since the early 1970s has often been the site of historical research (local scholars having produced several books on the Piombinese working class), people are not taken aback when researchers come along to study this town's working class milieu.

As to the way interviewees related to me personally, I sensed that my age facilitated rapport both with people of my own generation and with those older than I. Having myself been born in 1954, I shared many common referents with members of the 1940-52 historical cohort. Older people, in contrast, found it quite natural that I wanted to learn about times that I had not personally lived through. Finally, many interviewees must have sensed that politically I was in the right camp, i.e., "on the

left." Although I never said anything overtly that would identify my political sympathies, I feel certain my body language gave me away during the interviews when certain subjects came up.

Clearly I contributed to shaping/creating the context of interaction not only through the occasional use of a broker-guarantor who either introduced me or allowed me to use his/her name in the initial "rapprochement" but also through non-verbal self-presentation as well. I am sure that I dropped "cues" in order to negotiate a common "experiential world" and display shared cultural understandings. In many cases, I do believe that my interlocutors' perception that I shared with them a common stock of information predisposed them to touch on things and feelings that might otherwise have been left out. The "economy" of communication made possible by this common ground--above all with the people born after the war--produced "dense" interviews. Indeed, I believe that it was only because many interviews were so dense that I managed to gain critical insights into the historical experience that has shaped dispositions toward education in this town. Furthermore, people's willingness to dig into and share their "sensory, embodied memories" about the past made it possible to retrieve at least some elements of the "structures of feeling" that characterized the experience of an important sector of Piombino's population.

As a middle-class individual probing the lives and the memories of a working-class community, I also had to understand "otherness." I had to understand the quality of social relations in a particular socio-economic context--a metal-working company town--quite different from the one in which I had grown up. I had to be careful not to presume or assume too much, to appreciate milieus and experiences that I did not know first hand. Like any researcher, I had to understand and

recognize a "message" before I could appropriate, frame it and, eventually, make it "relevant" for academic audience(s) (Crapanzano, 1992).

In particular, I was faced with trying to understand what education had meant for women from working-class families. With respect to this problematic I was very self-conscious: I had to be very careful not to make any assumptions derived from my own experience. For me the pursuit of education had meant learning how to think for myself, how to understand relationships and behavior, and how to acquire competencies that would help me realize my "potential." This pursuit was based on an experience of conflict between my sense of self and a social world centered on and filtered through the family: in my case, the latter did not seem to care very much that I be given every chance to realize whatever intellectual potential I had. This conflict was rooted in the gender-specific bias I perceived as a girl coming of age rather than in class bias. Although I continually tried to bracket off my own experience concerning the relationship between education and my "femaleness," my own biography inevitably lurked behind the questions I asked female interviewees of my generation who went on to secondary school and the university. I knew that their overall experiences and "stories" would be substantially different from mine given our respective class backgrounds, yet I could not help expecting that I should find at least a trace of my own experience in their accounts.

It was because of my biographic bias that the "silence" I mentioned in the previous section became increasingly loud. Gradually I started to look at that absence of discourse as a problem of interpretation that touched upon the relationship between experience, consciousness and memory. This might be regarded as an example of how

a particular biographic positionality or bias actively intervenes "in the move from the initial foci of discovery to final theoretical formulation," perhaps even being responsible for locating that "initial focus of discovery" (Crapanzano, 1992:1).

Archival and Secondary Research

Primary and secondary research also played an essential role in this work. I consulted both local publications (such as a newsletter put out by the steel works) and the local press (the two major local newspapers) as well as a sizable body of existing historical and sociological literature, both published and unpublished (mainly dissertations). Primary sources included municipal archives (files on education and minutes of town council meetings) and the "archives" of five schools (fat binders containing various types of records that had long been gathering dust).

The primary sources utilized fall into various categories. As for municipal archives, I scanned all those files marked Scuola containing official correspondence bearing on the educational arena and read the minutes of town council meetings for various years. These two sets of documents provided both factual information that proved helpful in the reconstruction of the development of the school arena and, occasionally, provided insights into the political debate and partisan positions on education. As for school archives, I consulted not only the yearly statistical reports on enrollment, attendance and performance that I could find but also the teachers' "analytical" reports. The latter proved to be particularly revealing of the cultural and social attitudes held by teachers who, in their reports, dispensed their wisdom concerning the

social milieu of the student body, the students' performance and academic abilities and the "pedagogy" behind their teaching.

Chapter Summary

The main body of this dissertation is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 1 lays out the theoretical framework where I outline the class formation perspective embraced here, discuss the theoretical debates on the role of education in capitalist society, and define the basic concepts used throughout the thesis. Chapter 2 retraces the class formation process in Piombino from the beginning of the century to the advent of fascism and shows how that process is connected, in multiple ways, to the appreciation for education found within the original nucleus of the local "proletariat." Chapter 3 briefly discusses how fascism impacted on the local working class and depicts school environments and ideological indoctrination during this period. Chapter 4 discusses the postwar contexts from the Resistance to the Cold War, focusing on the impact of class experience and communism in the shaping of attitudes toward education. Chapter 5 looks at school milieus, educational choices and the negotiation of trajectories during the 1950s. Here I outline the development of schooling during this period, depict the segmented class-based character of the local school system and, through testimonies, evoke the quality of school experience in different types of educational institutions. Chapter 6 covers the transitional period from 1962 to 1968, one caught between change and the enduring political and pedagogical conservatism of school milieus. Chapter 7 deals with "1968," retracing the development of the student movement in Piombino's secondary schools. Chapter 8 reconstructs the educational activism of the 1970s, highlighting such militant educational initiatives as the doposcuola

movement and the "150 hours" courses. Chapter 9 focuses on the "place of women" within this working-class town and on female educational trajectories during the postwar period; in particular, I include here a discussion of the "work of memory" concerning the relationship between education and female identities. Finally, in chapter 10 I pull together the various hypotheses put forth in each chapter and re-position this study in relation to the various theories and debates bearing on the relationship between education and society. In the Afterword, I discuss "reflexively" academic writings on education (including this thesis) in relation to the historical-intellectual matrix from which they arise and attempt to address the subtle, understated relationship between the predicament of my "education" in an anthropology department at an American institution and the writing of this dissertation.

NOTES

1. On successive trips to Italy I managed on several occasions to spend more time in Piombino and was able to carry out additional interviews.

2. In the original research design, this dissertation was to be a comparative project focusing on the educational arena as a window on social change in two areas of Tuscany with distinct socio-economic configurations. I selected Piombino as one of the fieldwork sites because this mill town, with an economy centered on metalworks and a large factory "proletariat," provided a marked contrast to the more typical pattern of economic development associated with Tuscany (i.e., that characterized by the spread of small and micro-enterprises in light industrial sectors). The other fieldwork site proposed was the Prato textile-producing district near Florence where I had grown up. Three months into the fieldwork, I decided to drop the comparative perspective and stay on in Piombino, where I began my research, as I realized that the original project would be unmanageable. I had originally planned to juxtapose and compare, in each locality, the relationship between "education and society," and the life-experiences and educational trajectories of two successive historical cohorts (people born respectively in the 1940's and 1950s). The research was intended to unearth the contingent and differential ways in which educational trajectories, the "value" of education and the experience in schools are conditioned by the local system of social and class relations, local political "culture," gender-specific expectations and the characteristics of work-environment and labor market.

3. "Structure of feeling" is a term coined by the Marxist cultural critic Raymond Williams (Williams, 1977; O'Connor, 1989). "Embodied, sensory memory" is a concept employed by both anthropologists (Stoller, 1994) and oral historians interested in the "work of memory" (Fentress and Wickham, 1992). The notion of "embodied" memory--as a link between the past, the present and the future--is operationalized by Raymond Williams in his novels (Eldridge and Eldridge, 1994). As discussed at greater length in Chapter One, "structures of feeling" are articulated along class, (ethnic), gender and generational lines and refer to the "emotive" qualities of historical contexts and relations within "communities" (i.e., the subjects' experienced relations to the contexts of their lives). "Embodied, sensory memory" refers to memory as a repository of the emotive connections to one's own historically situated experience.

4. Alongside the academic track at the middle school level could be found a vocational track (consisting of a commercial and an industrial school) for youth aged 11-14. For secondary education (ages 14-19), the academic high schools (licei), which stood at the top of the educational pyramid, were also split into two tracks.

5. For example, McRobbie (1980) points out his silence on working-class girls. Marcus criticizes both his passing over of conformist working-class youth (who Willis' lads refer to as "ear'oles") and his failure to address "the larger class world beyond that of his working class subjects" (Marcus 1986:186). Willis responded to feminist critiques in his afterword to the 1981 American edition of his book.

6. In the Conclusion, I briefly report on the findings of a research project that I carried out for the local school district during the year following my dissertation fieldwork. This applied research, based on 63 structured interviews with drop-outs and underachievers (32 interviews), parents (18) and school teachers (13), looked at both the family context of these subjects and the school dynamics (scholastic difficulties and the "pedagogic relation"). The subjects of this study were young people born between 1972 and 1975.

7. "Actively" is the operative word here, as one cannot consider "fascist" all those workers forced to take the party card in order to keep their jobs in the two town plants whose managers also served as major officials of the Fascist Party.

8. For example, my original plan called for a comparison between two successive historical cohorts (i.e., individuals born from the early 1940s to approximately 1952 and those born during the second half of the 1950s and early 1960s) with regard to their school experience and educational trajectories. However, in the end I was not able to collect a sufficient sample of interviews with individuals belonging to the second cohort: thus, the dissertation is largely based on accounts provided by the first cohort and older Piombinesi. I dropped the comparison between the two cohorts because the material that I unearthed through the interviews led me to invest more time than anticipated in the collection of biographic accounts from older generations and in the study of certain aspects of the class formation process throughout this century. In retrospect, I believe that I became more interested in the accounts of the older cohort (people born between 1940 and 1952) because of the time-depth and biographic richness of their life-course as well as their direct experience of successive and dramatically different historical periods. I was captivated by the strong emotions that they still retain about the experience of the economic hardships of the 1950s and the climate of the Cold War era.

9. The contents of the semi-structured interviews carried out with the 1940-52 historical cohort focused on the following clusters of themes and accounts/memories:

   Family history profile: geographic provenance and work history of parents and grandparents; family composition at different points in time; formal education of parents and siblings; residential and household arrangements; family politics.

   Interviewees' educational trajectories and experience: negotiation of and influences upon educational choices; family attitudes toward education and family educational "resources"; school experience in the different types/grades of school from elementary to middle and secondary school (or university where applicable); "social climate" prevailing in the schools; relationships/interactions with teachers and schoolmates at different points in time and in different schools/grade levels; the recollections of different historical periods (e.g., the 1950s, the 1960s, "1968," the 1970s and 1980s); the relationship between school, family and social life in the town.

The interviewees' work and political histories: the transition from school to work; work/employment trajectories; the sources of politicization and history of political involvement; life cycle events.

10. The break-down of the 79 interviews is as follows: 14 biographic interviews with respectively 7 male and 7 female subjects born before 1930 (some were parents of interviewees that had gone to school in the 1950s and 1960s); 16 topical interviews with teachers, school principals and administrators; 3 topical interviews with factory managers at the metalworks; 16 biographic interviews focused on school experience with members of the 1940-1952 male cohort and 15 with members of the female cohort; 5 interviews with younger individuals (born between 1952 and 1958). Finally, I also conducted conversational interviews with about 25 people, some of whom I sought out, and others whom I happened to meet by chance during my stay.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

As mentioned in the Introduction, my research findings led me to focus on the interface between class formation and education. This chapter attempts to situate my work with respect to some of the relevant theoretical debates and discussions and lays out the methodological and analytical framework that has informed the writing of this thesis.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the "theories" of education and the historiographical debate. I focus on the shift away from the reproductive models of the 1970s toward more recent work that attempts to incorporate conflict and agency. In particular, I discuss at some length Paul Willis' ethnography Learning to Labor (1981), as the counterposition between this book and my thesis highlights some of the salient issues relevant to the study and conceptualization of "culture," class and education.

Next, I take up the larger debate on class formation and the historiography of the working class. Although this discussion focuses primarily on the debate that has developed among British and American social historians and social scientists, it also takes up the work of American anthropologists and Italian scholars. As I note here, the primary analytical axis for the study of education and class formation that underlies the thesis was provided by an understanding of the class formation process as the articulation between the structural level (the structuring specificity of economic activities and institutional contexts), ways of life, dispositions and collective action (Katznelson, 1986). This

analytical framework is briefly discussed in this section as is the related problematic of "working-class culture."

Finally, in the last section on methodology and analytical framework, I attempt to situate this work with respect to the debate on the "culture concept," define the key concepts employed here (such as "hegemony" and "structure of feeling"), and discuss my use of oral-historical accounts.

I. Education and Society: the Debate

As a study of the educational arena, this dissertation in its method, focus and concerns departs significantly from the "anthropology of education" that has evolved in the United States (Roberts and Akinsanya, 1976; Wax, Diamond and Gearing, 1971; Spindler, 1963, 1974 and 1982; Calhoun and Ianni, 1976; Sanday, 1976; Kimball, 1974). This anthropological subdiscipline, relying largely on synchronic ethnographies of schools, has failed to articulate the study of local-level and face-to-face relations with an historically informed analysis of shifting local contexts. A review of the literature in the early 1980s pointed out that anthropological-ethnographic studies generally have been entrapped in static structural-functionalist frameworks (Wilcox, 1982). Moreover, education has attracted little interest from anthropologists outside the sub-discipline, as reflected in the virtual absence of articles on the subject in the leading anthropological journals. In recent years, this situation may be changing, in part due to the influence that the field of "cultural studies," as pioneered by the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham, has exerted on a number of American anthropologists (Ortner, 1991; Foley, 1990).

With regard to the immediate subject matter, i.e. schooling as a social process embedded within a historically situated socio-political "matrix," the dissertation is situated within the debate on the role of education in social reproduction and the shaping of dispositions. It strives to improve upon our understanding of the power-hegemony-reproduction nexus and joins critical theoretical perspectives (Wexler, 1987; Apple, 1988; Willis, 1983) and historical reconstructions (Katznelson and Weir, 1985; Hogan, 1985) that have reacted to the mechanistic and overgeneralizing character of the prevailing literature based on the "reproductionist" paradigms of the 1970s.

The reproductionist paradigms were associated with Althusser's Marxist structuralism and Bourdieu's cultural-symbolic theory of social reproduction (Althusser, 1971; Bourdieu, 1973, 1974 and 1979; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). The major flaw of work inspired by the Althusserian model (such as the enormously influential Schooling in Capitalist America by Bowles and Gintis (1976)) was the absence of social, historical actors.[1] In this work, individuals were viewed as automatons devoid of any agency and schools as the handmaidens of capitalist development whose main function was to integrate children into the capitalist system both structurally and ideologically.[2]

Bourdieu viewed schools as cultural-symbolic institutions producing and distributing "cultural capital." The French sociologist's model assumed (at least tendentiously) that the popular classes "must" succumb to the dominant ideology due to the effects of "symbolic violence" which stigmatize them as "culturally deprived."[3] As a consequence, both the structuralist and the cultural-symbolic versions of this paradigm evoked a vision of the social process that effectively expunged conflict, contestation and diversity from history and the educational arena.

It should be clear, that, despite its flaws, the reproductive perspective cannot be abandoned altogether given the strong underlying tendencies of educational systems to reproduce the class structure. Indeed, work associated with this perspective exposed the fallacy of the prevailing liberal and social-democratic myth according to which universal schooling in Western democracies would inevitably help break down class barriers by compensating for the social inequities of birth.[4] The anti-establishment outlook characteristic of reproduction theorists permitted them to look at education in a way that reversed the liberal equation, arguing that "working class kids were supposed to fail" and that "education was not about equality but about inequality" (Willis, 1983:110).

The problem lies in the one-sidedness of "reproductionist" models and the studies they inspired. Social reproduction theorists were concerned with "presenting working models of large social totalities--hence a stress on the systemic logic or structure of social processes" (CCCS, 1981:18). In so doing, this scholarship replaced the "utopianism" of the meritocratic view of education with "a realism bordering on despair" (CCCS, 1981:18).

During the 1980s, educational sociologists identifying with a "critical pedagogy" emphasized resistance and contradictions, yet, according to Wexler, their methodological approach and the abstractness of their writings kept them welded to the "reproductionist" paradigm.[5] Thus, Wexler faults educational sociologists for reducing historic class conflict to individual contestation and resistance:

> The ideological aspect of reproductionism is the extent to which it ignores specific historical changes and reorganizations in education. Its theory is ideological to the degree that it remains caught with an ahistorical, organicist social view that unintentionally shares with the cultural

> restoration. . . . By an overarching imagery of systemic reproduction, a substitution of individual cultural resistance for collective interaction, and inattention to social class as an historical process of conflictual formation, theory in the new sociology occupies. . . the place of negation (Wexler, 1987:79).

In the field of historical studies, the revisionist scholarship that emerged in the United States during the 1960s (e.g., Katz, 1968) challenged the long prevailing view that the public school system was the offspring of progressive democracy. However, this literature, in its effort to document that free public schools functioned as an instrument of elite domination and co-optation imposed on a reluctant working class, also proved too one-sided. Subsequent re-examinations of the historical record have shown that the social reproduction achieved through schooling has not been as complete as had been portrayed and that education has always been a contested political arena (Katznelson and Weir, 1985; Wrigley, 1982; Hogan, 1985).[6] Thus, the revisionist historical scholarship too could be faulted for overemphasizing the way in which education provided capitalism with a suitably skilled, docile work force and for fostering an unproblematic view of the mechanisms of domination and social reproduction inherent in schooling in advanced capitalist democracies.[7]

In Europe the progressive versus revisionist debate among historians never took on the dimensions that it did in the US (Cunningham, 1989). Due to the different relationship between state, politics and civil society in Europe, a progressive discourse that interpreted public education as a natural by-product of the process of democratization never took root. The prevalence of a strong class discourse in many countries, the overtly elitist character of European educational systems, and the presence of a Marxist intellectual tradition

precluded the emergence of any model that depicted the schools as egalitarian. Moreover, a greater awareness of the conflictual nature of educational policy and the self-conscious class politics and dispositions of European working-classes prevented European historians of education from embracing the reproductionist and social control model to the degree that American academics did.

A "new history of education" would emerge during the 1980s in connection with the proliferation of analytical foci and the growth of the field in virtually every country (Baker and Harrigan, 1980; Silver, 1990; Bonetta, 1985; Soldani, 1989).[8] This new scholarship is informed by a strong social history perspective that "[attempts] to bring the people of education--children, teachers, policy activists, families--into the historical picture" (Silver, 1990:177).[9] This dissertation contributes to such a development, in particular with regard to the history of Italian education, long dominated by an institutional approach that has focused almost exclusively on the study of the policy process and the educational programs/politics of political parties.[10]

Finally, the field of British cultural studies with roots in cultural Marxism (identified with E. P. Thompson, Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall) has exerted increasing influence on educational scholarship since the early 1980s. Scholars associated with the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) have used the ethnographic method to analyze school sites as stages where class-bound youth cultures are produced and enacted. This work has focused on the intersection of culture and class with an emphasis on the creative potential of human agency and the inextinguishable capacity for resistance and contestation. However, the work produced at the Center has at times displayed an uneven understanding of "subcultures,"

particularly in terms of their historical constructedness (Turner, 1992:180-189). This is the main focus of the discussion in the next section in which I provide a critique of Paul Willis' ethnography Learning to Labor, a landmark CCCS study of a working-class counter-school culture.

Re-reading Learning To Labor: Culture, Structure and Agency without History

Learning to Labor is one of the most influential books of the last 15 years, often hailed for rescuing agency, resistance and struggle from the oblivion into which these had been relegated by mechanistic models of social reproduction (McLeod, 1987; Wexler, 1987, Connell, 1983). Willis shows how English working-class students, by resisting the authority and ideology of the school and rejecting the value of school knowledge and certification, set themselves up for the unskilled manual jobs in which they invariably end up.[11] However, as the author emphasizes, the "lads" are far from passive victims of "the system:" their rejection of the instrumental value of schooling (i.e., its "promise" of mobility) and their anti-school sentiments are rooted in a disillusioned, yet realistic assessment of their chances in class society.[12]

The "cultural themes" (such as the glorification of the masculinity associated with physical labor and the disdain for "mental labor" identified with clerical jobs and femininity) that undergird the counter-school culture of these "nonconformist" students are consistent with the larger working-class subculture they inhabit. In this regard, Willis clearly sees the lads' behavior and choices as a celebration of the resilience of working-class culture and as a truly antagonistic act. As Turner has noted, the lads' choice "is rewarded by the sense of

commonality with their workmates" and entails a choice of camps between the emotional roots of their working-class identity and the "cultural other" represented by the middle class (Turner, 1992:176).

The irony of the lads' oppositional saga is that, although they are able to recognize the hegemonic character of education and expose its false promises, they also inadvertently become active accomplices of the system. Indeed, through the unintended consequences of their resistance, they anchor themselves to the process of social reproduction both ideologically--since their counter-cultural response is fueled by sexism and racism--and structurally. Thus, Willis demonstrates that, while the reproductionist perspective needs to be retained in some form, it is only through the exploration of human agency embedded in "emergent" (undetermined) responses that we can understand how the process unfolds in the concreteness of life and "cultural forms."

Learning to Labor needs to be situated within the academic debates of the 1970s and understood as a critique of the determinism inherent in the prevailing reproductionist perspectives.[13] Willis' main point was that people cannot be reduced to "dummies, dupes or zombies freely drawn on in their innermost sensibilities" (Willis, 1983). Conversely, the cultural studies perspective that he embraces emphasizes a process of ongoing cultural production internal to the experience of working classes and oppressed groups. This perspective calls attention to "moments" of creativity and to the resistance-oriented behavior of groups without denying the effects of the dominant ideology.

The present thesis shares with Learning to Labor the same subject matter, i.e. the relationship of the working class to education, and some of the same analytical concerns, such as the interface between

agency, culture and class experience. However, this study provides a counterpoint to Willis in several important respects. While Willis is interested in the **given** of his lads' nonconformism, I approach the marked disposition toward the pursuit of education discovered among the original nucleus of the Piombinese working class as a **historical problematic.**

Willis' interest, as he states in his Introduction, lies "in the continuous regeneration of working-class cultural forms" (Willis, 1981:2).[14] Indeed, the lads' counter-school culture is viewed as the mechanism that reproduces the working class, both culturally and demographically. Through a purely synchronic ethnographic approach he proceeds to show how the regeneration of working-class "culture" is articulated across locales (home, shopfloor, school, pub) through shared "cultural themes." Yet, Willis is not interested in connecting these cultural forms to the process of their emergence.

Both Willis and I are concerned with letting our respective analysis emerge from and be guided by the "voices" of those we interview. However, because I started out with an interest in change and historical consciousness, our respective studies are very different as is our understanding of "cultural analysis." Although Willis recognizes different levels of cultural analysis (as he makes clear in a 1983 article) in Learning to Labor he does not operationalize a concept of class subculture "entailing its formation in its historic process" as George Marcus' reading of Willis assumes (Marcus, 1986:178).

Willis' analytical focus is the "cultural moment," which he defines as cultural production or "the active principle of the cultural level", i.e., the creative experiencing act and the meaning-making group activities at the core of the youth counter-school culture (Willis, 1983).

For Willis, "cultural production" is the indeterminate and undetermined creative use of meanings, materials, discourses, group practices: it represents a particular notion of the cultural level that, according to the author, cannot be reduced to "basic determining structures." However, largely because of his insistence on the "undetermined" and "indeterminate" character of the "cultural moment," the main problem in Willis' work lies in the reification of the lads' class sub-culture, as the latter is reduced to the themes and cultural forms that link together its various locales (home, shopfloor, pub).[15] In the end, the omission of history (i.e., the lack of historical contextualization of the cultural forms and themes that Willis analyses) lies at the root of the ambivalence that this book has engendered even among sympathetic readers.

George Marcus (1986), an anthropologist instrumental in bringing attention to Willis within the discipline, holds Willis' book up as a new genre of ethnography: theoretically-minded, integrating macro with micro-social analysis, meshing a political economy framework with an interpretive and action perspective. To be sure, Marcus also points out several limitations of the book as an ethnographic text but never explicitly connects the problems in Learning to Labor to the book's lack of historical contextualization (i.e., its silence on the historical constructedness of the sub-culture which the lads inhabit). At the same time, some of his criticisms hint at such an omission. For example, Marcus does see a "reifying bias" in Willis' "radical insistence" on the irreducibility of the "cultural level" to basic determining structures (Marcus, 1986:179). He even notes that Willis comes dangerously close to portraying the lads "as thorough products of the cultural form that is finally Willis' abstracted focus of analysis" (Marcus, 1986:183).

Marcus seems to indicate that the problem is only, or primarily, one of undocumented variation, i.e., Willis' exclusive focus on "nonconformism" and his failure to study the opposite phenomenon, i.e., the "conformism" of working-class achievers. However, it is equally important to understand why the cultural form that Willis refers to as "nonconformism" seems to be particularly widespread among certain sectors of the English working class. To assume, as Willis seems to do, that the cultural form represented by nonconformism is a totally undetermined, creative, oppositional response to the conditions of life in capitalist society without exploring the possibility of its historical determination is putting the cart before the horse.

In the end, although Learning to Labor effectively displaces the abstract structuralist account of reproduction, it does have a major flaw in that it essentializes the working class.[16] He does not need to state in so many words that "nonconformism is at the heart of working-class consciousness and culture" (Marcus, 1986:176): his ethnography exudes "essentialism" due to the omission of "history."

Thus, Marcus' statement that Learning to Labor "is meant to improve upon the quality of understanding of class formation processes" needs to be qualified somewhat (Marcus, 1986:174). In capturing the "lived edge of praxis," Willis does contribute to our understanding of class formation; yet, he only provides us with a snapshot of this process removed from the flow of history. In other words, he freezes out "a moment of activity" (admittedly captured with immediacy in its contradictoriness) in the articulation of the process of class formation.

In the concluding chapter, I will juxtapose and compare the process of class formation in Piombino with the process of class formation in England and show how contrasting trajectories produced

opposite effects with regard to the shaping of dispositions toward education. Furthermore, as I will attempt to show in the Afterword, the comparison can also provide some insights into how epistemological-experiential processes and the research agendas undergirding the construction of this dissertation and Willis's ethnography are rooted in the distinct historical processes of class formation in Central Italy and England.

II. Class Formation (and State Formation)

Class is undoubtedly the most contested concept in the social sciences. Katznelson argues that this stems from "the pivotal significance of class for understanding ties between the states, economies and civil societies" (Katznelson, 1986:5). While the concept has been the object of longstanding controversy between rival ideological/methodological camps (i.e., Marxist, Weberian and Liberal/Pluralist), the debate has raged most fiercely within Marxist intellectual circles. In particular, since the early 1970s structural Marxists (epitomized by such French theorists as Althusser, Balibar and Poulantzas) have confronted cultural Marxists (represented by such British scholars as E. P. Thompson) and vice-versa (E. Thompson, 1978; Anderson, 1984). While the former group stress that classes are determined in the last instance (to use Poulantzas' phrasing) by the economic structure, the later focuses on the historical context and experience in the process of class formation.[17]

To Balibar's (1972) definition that "classes are functions of the process of production," E. P. Thompson opposed his view that classes emerge out of a relationship of struggle with other classes. While the French structuralist approach to class formation can be faulted for

being overly deterministic (leaving little space for class actors), Thompson's model erred on the side of voluntarism. His definition that "class formations. . . arise at the intersection of determination [by a change in the relations of production] and self-activity" (E. Thompson, 1978:298) assumed that classes are necessarily in struggle with one another (Katznelson, 1986:8).[18]

Katznelson, in particular, argues that the essentialist assumption inherent in the Thompsonian "model" stems in large part from its single focus on the British case. This one-country focus "avoids the question of whether the movement from the experience of class society to class dispositions and activity is necessary, likely, or entirely contingent" (Katznelson, 1986:11). Indeed, a definition of class formation predicated on class-consciousness and struggle resurrects the class-in-itself/class-for-itself problematic that has been at the center of Marxist theoretical debates from the beginning.[19]

According to Katznelson, a "theory" of class formation needs to be more precisely articulated; indeed, the concept of class formation should be predicated on "four connected layers of theory and history" . These layers consist of: 1) the structural level, 2) ways of life, 3) dispositions, and 4) collective action. The structural level is represented by the economic development of capitalist production and relations and the attendant process of proletarianization. Ways of life are determined in part by the characteristics of economic development with variations depending on national, regional and industry-specific patterns. Ways of life also refer to the patterns and quality of experience in social and institutional arenas and at the workplace. Dispositions constitute a collective dimension, referring to a level where classes are already "formed groups." This is the level at which an analysis of class as a

social and cultural formation can be developed in the Thompsonian sense. The fourth level, that of collective action, is not an inevitable outcome of the presence of class dispositions. At this level, classes act through movements and organizations with the goal of bringing about change in society and in their own class situation (Katznelson, 1986:14-20).[20]

Some criticism has been voiced with regard to Katznelson's formulation. Kathleen Canning has pointed out what she sees as the "fragility or artificiality of the divisions among the various levels" (Canning, 1992: 752) and, along with Louise Tilly (1994), warned that the open-endness between levels, although an improvement on more deterministic "levels theories," poses potential problems itself. According to Canning, the model also tends to locate people's agency exclusively in levels three and four (dispositions and collective action), fails to acknowledge the difficulty involved in neatly separating the economic formation from politics, pays insufficient attention to the relationship between the state and the family as a motor of social class formation, and sets up an implicit dichotomy between family/woman, work-site/man. Louise Tilly (1994), who believes that the concept of class formation must be grounded in "some version of a class-for-itself," has criticized Katznelson's model for its lack of explicit attention to the articulation between the local and national arenas and to the issue of periodization (Tilly, 1994:74).

Although it is important to take heed of the above criticism, the specification of the four levels constitutes a heuristic grid that facilitates comparisons and the identification, in analytical terms, of the sources/causes of difference in class formation patterns. This thesis embraces the author's statement that "questions about the content of

each level and about the connections between the levels of class constitute the very heart of the analysis of class formation" (Katznelson, 1986:22).

Class Formation, State Formation and Education

However, the study of class formation also needs to address the question of "classness" in relation to the role of the state, as the latter actively intervenes as a motor of socio-cultural and economic development, albeit in contingent ways according to the particular nature and history of state formation. For example, the relationship of the working classes to the state is a historical variable that, in facilitating the emergence of certain "languages" of class, serves to preempt others. Historically, the nature of the state and the timing of the political incorporation of the laboring classes through the franchise have framed this relationship, exerting a determining influence on "classness."

This is best illustrated in comparing the European and the American experience. In the American case the state has limited prerogatives and is diffuse, unobtrusive and decentralized, while in the European case it is usually centralized, unitary and ever-present both in discourse and everyday life.[21] Moreover, in the American case, the early extension of the franchise to all (white) adult males (independent of income and education) removed a major point of contention between the working class and the state, i.e., the demand for political rights, that in Europe served as one of the focal points of the organized workers movement.[22] Indeed in Europe, the campaign for the right to vote was a class struggle as "the working class was excluded on explicit class criteria" (Katznelson, 1992:). For these reasons, class and state

formation need to be looked at as intersecting processes. Finally, with regard to education, the content and the institutional sites of educational politics and struggles have been largely determined by the characteristics of the state (its centralized or local character) and those of collective political actors (Katznelson and Weir, 1985; Maynes, 1985a and 1985b; Smith, 1982).

Lastly, the development of public schooling must be understood in conjunction with, and as an integral part of, epoch-setting structural and cultural changes that accompanied the formation of European nation-states. Starting with the late eighteenth century, the educational arena all over Europe was subjected to a massive overhaul and reorganization by the state, which began to take educational prerogatives out of the hands of local communities, families, parishes and clergy (Maynes, 1985a and 1985b; Mueller, 1977; Van Horn Melton, 1988). During the last quarter of the 19th century, full-fledged systems of state-provided education finally emerged and elementary schooling became free and compulsory. Despite marked differences in the timing of state intervention and the degree of state control over education, everywhere state action proved crucial to the shaping of educational systems, which, by the late 19th century, had evolved into a tiered hierarchy of class-bound school types and trajectories (Moody, 1978; Mueller, Ringer and Simon, 1987; Mueller, 1987; Simon, 1987;).

State interest and involvement in the "schooling of the people" was connected to the production of distinctive discourses promoting novel forms of "social management," embodied first and foremost by new institutions and institutional environments: hospitals, prisons, new school-room arrangements, and the like (Foucault, 1973 and 1977). Among the factors that contributed to the rise of modern "social engineering"

practices was the new "role" first assigned to populations by the early political economists. Indeed, by the late 18th century in England and somewhat later in other European countries, "the people" had come to be regarded as a labor pool in the service of economic development and the accumulation of "the wealth of the nation" (Smith, 1976).

The transformation of schooling, which was by no means a uniform, uncontested and even-paced process either cross-regionally or cross-nationally, displayed a number of common characteristics. Interventionist states such as Germany and France moved in to establish control over teachers' training and licensing so as to promote some level of pedagogic uniformity and standards. However, teachers' training was much more than this; it was the primary vehicle for transforming teachers into civil servants, loyal agents of the state who were trained to instill "morals," civic duty and a sense of national identity in their pupils. Since the last decades of the eighteenth century, the rapid proliferation of manuals and "expert knowledge" geared at instructing the lower classes in the proper hygiene and child-raising, among other matters, lay the foundation of a discursive grid and a cultural predicament that is perhaps the most characteristic trait of the contemporary world. Within the context of this development, schooling was conceived as compensating for the alleged deficient family socialization thought to characterize lower-class milieus (Maynes, 1985a and 1985b).

On the issue of public school provision, 18th and 19th century European elites and ruling classes were split into two factions. In one camp were those who opposed all school provision for the popular classes out of fear that education might facilitate the diffusion of subversive ideas and alienate the lower classes from the menial jobs for

which they were destined (Kaestle, 1976; Maynes, 1985a;). The other camp, instead, upheld an utilitarian view of state-sponsored educational provision, according to which a carefully administered and limited primary education would improve the "moral character" of popular classes and "channel children into appropriate roles" (Maynes, 1985a:44). Finally, the flurry of new pedagogical and psychological theories emanating from the Enlightenment that stressed the malleability of human minds and the improvability of human "character" functioned as catalysts in the development of schooling.

Despite notable differences, everywhere public education was charged with the dual task of controlling and integrating the popular classes into the work force and the nation-state, on the one hand, and producing elites, functionaries and managers, on the other: thus class-segregation was a structurally built-in element in all educational systems. Elementary schooling was thought of as the appropriate education for people of modest means, while secondary education served to prepare upper- and middle-class students for the university. The two were not conceived as two segments of a progressive trajectory but as two totally independent educational circuits (Mueller, Ringer and Simon, 1987).

The still rare comparative historical studies of school systems show how their development and characteristics are closely tied to political development, the nature of the state and its political institutions as well as the formation of the ruling classes (Maynes, 1985b; Green, 1990; Mueller, Ringer and Simon, 1987). Great Britain developed a minimal state apparatus in part as a consequence of the strong influence of the free trade doctrine, and, as a result, the British state was by far less interventionist in economic as well as educational

matters than either its German or French counterparts. In France and Germany, the dominant classes made recourse to state intervention to "modernize" the economy and catch up in economic development. In France, the Revolution inherited a pervasive and highly centralized state machinery from the absolutist monarchy: it was left to Napoleon to perfect the state apparatus and consolidate "the class rule of the bourgeoisie." In Germany, the autocratic state forged by the Junkers and consolidated by Bismarck, modernized civil society in authoritarian fashion and forced the process of industrialization by rationalizing institutional development. The development of public schooling reflected the different trajectories of state formation: marked by the strongest laissez-faire stance in Great Britain, by the legacy of the Revolution in France and by a more authoritarian character in Germany.

The Italian state, founded in 1861 and based on the centralized French model, was the product of a process of "colonization" whereby the French/Piedmontese Savoy dynasty exported its laws and modes of bureaucratic organization to other regions. Compared to France, Great Britain and Germany, the new Italian state was characterized by extreme economic backwardness. As in the German case, it was a major arbiter in the process of economic development not only through regulatory mechanisms and economic policies but also through direct involvement and the creation of publicly-owned industries.

In the final analysis, however, the effectiveness of schooling as an instrument of indoctrination and transformation, cannot be accurately measured. In Italy, where a delayed and feeble pattern of state formation was coupled with low school attendance, the cultural effects of the new regimentation and conditionings attempted through the schools do not compare with the German and French experience, at least not

until the advent of fascism. In France, the calculated attempt of cultural/linguistic homogenization through the schools was marked, but the idiosyncrasies of some regions proved to be resilient. Finally, the cultural transformative role attributed to the schools in England had less of a sense of urgency compared to France, Italy and Germany. Especially the latter two countries, due to the protracted and late attainment of national unity, "needed to use education to form nationalist sentiments." In contrast, in England "the sense of national identity was complacently secure and national superiority more often assumed than stridently asserted" (Green, 1990:110).

Historiography of the Working Class and the Issue of Working-Class Culture

The historiography of the working class is marked by a tension between studies centered on the politics and political institutions of the working class and those focused on work routines, the domestic sphere and popular leisure. Indeed, beginning in the late 1960s, social historians turned away from the study of politics in reaction to the previous historiographical tradition of "labor history" that equated the study of the "working class" with that of the politically conscious working-class movement (e.g., labor unions and left parties). This political over-determination of the laboring classes led scholars to ignore politically indifferent sectors of the working class and all those working-class milieus in which workers displayed values and behaviors that converged with those of the petite bourgeoisie (Steedman, 1987; Savage and Miles, 1994). Yet, the partial eclipse of the study of working-class politics, political institutions and ideologies, which followed the condemnation of the "old" labor history, proved problematic as well,

as did the growing dichotomization between "the social" and "the political." As Mary Nolan noted in her study of working-class radicalism in Dusseldorf, it was unfortunate that "class as a political category [was] supplanted by class as an economic and cultural one" (Nolan, 1981:ix).

Feminist historians, for their part, have criticized the male-centeredness underlying accounts and theories of class formation that tend to focus on the factory experience of male workers and thus marginalize household dynamics along with women's reproductive labor and work trajectories. Indeed, the male-centeredness (implicit or explicit) of much of the literature precluded until recently any understanding of the internal demographic and occupational articulations and the gender-based cultural tensions that exist within working-class "cultures" (Savage and Miles, 1994:ch.2).

The issue of periodization, in turn, became paramount in the British case in the wake of the tremendous popularity of E. P. Thompson's 1963 classic The Making of the English Working Class. In this seminal work on class formation, the British historian argued that the essential features of English working-class "culture" became "set" by 1832. However, other British historians would subsequently criticize Thompson for having mistaken a still largely artisanal world for an emerging working class (since a factory-based proletariat did not arise in England until the second half of the 19th century).

Subsequent studies have then shown that, during the second half of the 19th century, the British working class underwent such a profound transformation that by 1900 it bore little resemblance (in demographic, political and cultural terms) to the world described by Thompson (Stedman Jones, 1983:179-238; Hobsbawm, 1984:176-193; Savage

and Miles, 1994). Such issues of periodization call attention to the discontinuities, disruptions, demobilization and recomposition that affect the character of a working class. The results of these processes, in turn, alert us to the necessity to speak not just of class formation but of transformation.

As regards the representation of the "cultural level," social historians are divided into different camps. Those who strive to achieve a synthetic materialist perspective grounded in the reconstruction of economic structures and forms of political organization tend to represent "culture" in "demographic terms." For example, as Tim Mason (1987) has noted, the demographic-quantitative referencing of cultural phenomena is typical of Eric Hobsbawm's work (1984:176-93) where the emphasis is in on the degree of distance that divided the working class from religion, the extent of the diffusion of rituals, the growth of membership in trade unions, and the disappearance of certain icons. However, this way of representing "the cultural" tells us little about the subjective meanings experienced by people in connection with the phenomena described.

Such a view of "culture" clashes with the more experience-centered approach favored by those social historians influenced by Thompsonian social-historical cultural analysis, including some anthropologists who have explored the interface between culture and class discussed below (e.g. Sider, 1986). The other approaches to "culture" are, respectively, a symbolic analysis à la Geertz that focuses on the expressed aesthetics of the self (but ignores the experiencing self) and what is referred to as the "linguistic turn" (Rebel, 1989; Palmer, 1990).

Although much recent criticism has been directed against the "descent into discourse," we still need to pay attention to language and

the power of discourse in the shaping of dispositions. However, as Palmer (1990) has recently shown, many social historians who embraced the linguistic turn often read texts manipulatively and paid little attention to context. They even tended to attribute to "texts" the power of determining people's consciousness, action and identities in an exceedingly linear fashion or to look upon the contents of particular "texts," uncritically postulating a correspondence between the specific written discourses analyzed by historians and the concrete situation that they are supposed to reflect. Much of this work has paid insufficient attention to the politics and the conditions of production of "texts" and the ways in which given "discourses" articulated (contradictorily or in mutually reinforced fashion) with the processes and experiences in which people's lives are caught up (Palmer, 1990).

The very concept of "working-class culture," like the anthropological concept of culture, is controversial. Indeed, it is neither a residual category nor does it refer to a bounded, self-contained world. It should be used in the plural (as in any geographic location, "the working class" is comprised of groups not united by shared traditions, experiences and consciousness), with great attention paid to internal articulations (such as those along generational and gender lines) and issues of periodization. Thus, "working-class cultures" are dynamic formations contingent on local and/or regional characteristics and processes, linked to the specific character of industrialization and proletarianization patterns as well as the diffusion of distinct sets of ideas, ideologies and discourses.

Finally, as Tim Mason has noted, the analysis of working-class culture should be marked by "flags" and develop an understanding of a few strategic issues. First, we ought to consider the ways in which a

given working class (or to be more precise, the women and men of a working-class segment) "lives and interprets its own work activities and relates to various aspects of life and the social world on the basis of the nature and conditions of work" [my emphasis] (Mason, 1987:108). Here, this German historian places at the center of "cultural analysis" the self-understandings of actors that arise from the "nature" and the "conditions of work": his emphasis is thus on experience and reflective activity of working-class actors.

Second, in order to understand the distinctiveness of "a working-class culture," one needs to touch on salient aspects of working-class ways of life (such as forms of solidarity) that set these groups apart from the middle classes. Forms of solidarity, for example, can be regarded as both coping strategies and experiences with affective meanings. They entail the recognition of bonds forged through a shared lot and are implicit expressions of conflict and antagonism, although they may not be thematized as such. Lastly, forms of solidarity are of different kinds, ranging from the informal mutual help that families provide each other in close-knit neighborhoods to the initiatives organized by the working class as a collective actor.

Third, it is crucial to look for and recognize markers of group identities so as to understand the distinctiveness of situated working-class cultures both in their own right and in comparative perspective. Before they can be identified, such markers may first need to be "decoded." Political ideologies, on one side, and "culturally marked" behavior, on the other, may become, in different situations, the principal signifiers of classness. For example, in the case of the British working class, "culturally marked" behavior has been recognized as extremely salient to class identity while, among the Italian working class, "cultural

signifiers" (speech, "style," dress, etc) and class separateness (in cultural, social and physical terms) appear to be relatively weak (Andreucci, 1990:201-202).

Fourth, one cannot gain a sense of what a working-class culture entails if one does not connect it to a "structure of feeling" that is shaped by suffering, sacrifice, hardship as well as the forms of power in which these groups are caught up (i.e., a societal "matrix" where structurally, ideologically and psychologically people inhabit "lower" and "higher" social spaces). In particular, with respect to the forms of "power" nested within the interstices of class relations and institutional processes, one needs to come to terms with the ways in which class and culture interface as for example, through the "prism" of concrete, situated experiences of "cultural hegemony."

Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Formation in Italy

In Italy, the study of working-class culture is relatively recent. The dominant tradition in the field of class formation until the 1970s focused on the economic-structural underpinnings of proletarianization, the advent of the factory system, the forms of class struggle, and the history of the workers movement (Manacorda, 1963; Del Carria, 1966; Merli, 1976). This scholarship was rooted in the dominant debate of the 1960s that revolved around "the eternal riddle of which came first, the working class, or the organized labor movement" (Andreucci, 1990:198).[23] In brief, the historiography of the 1960s and early 1970s was concerned above all with establishing a "necessary" relationship between the working class and the workers movement. It also assumed the existence of working-class consciousness and the cultural autonomy of the

proletariat and turned a blind eye to the ways in which the "cultures" of different classes interfaced.

The almost exclusive focus on working-class parties and labor unions (and their leadership), which effectively marginalized any "bottom up" approach to the study of the working class, had its origins in the political identification of Italian scholars with the workers movement.[24] Although this was not a trait that was exclusive to Italian Marxist historiography, here this "tradition" proved particularly resilient. As Andreucci among others has pointed out, this stemmed in large part from the intellectual, political culture of a generation of Marxist historians who rejected studying the "working class" as such since this vitiated the "necessary" relationship that they believed existed between the class and the party and union organizations that represent its interests (Andreucci, 1990:197).

During the 1970s a few Italian scholars began to trace the origin and the complex dynamic underlying the genesis of political working-class cultures over time, i.e. since before the take-off of factory-based industrialization (Procacci, 1970; Barbadoro, 1973; Hunecke, 1978). However, until the late 1970s this scholarship still suffered from a tendency to generalize the process for the country as a whole: this despite the acute awareness of profound regional variations concerning the incidence and timing of industrialization, the historical heritage of different areas and the specific regional character of communities and the peasantry. The tendency to generalize was finally set aside with the proliferation of local and regional studies in the mid to late 1970s (Marmo, 1978; Agosti and Bravo, 1979; Spriano, 1972; Hunecke, 1978).

In the 1980s, in conjunction with the emergence of a new generation of historians, the focus and the methodology of historical

scholarship shifted in two important ways. First, the past 15 years witnessed the development of an indigenous social history approach. This new historiography embraced the concept of the "making and remaking" of the working class, turned to the study of the less overtly political aspects of working-class culture, and exposed historical realities in which socialism was inconsequential to the lives of working-class people (Fondazione Basso-Issoco, 1984 and 1985; Gribaudi, 1987; Salvati, 1982).

Second, a number of authors set out to reconstruct the "culture of socialism" by researching the diffusion of socialist ideas, the nature of educational initiatives supported by the Socialist Party, and rhetoric, messages and "cultural politics" of the socialist press (Dominici, 1992). This second generation of studies is more sensitive to the issue of "cultural inter-classism" and the aspects of bourgeois culture that infiltrate the socialist universe through, for example, the paternalism and the cultural "values" of the Socialist's middle-class leadership (Turi, 1980 and 1980a).

The re-orientation of Italian historiography, as often happens in such cases, unfortunately may mean that the questions previously asked by Italian labor historians are no longer being addressed. However, as Andreucci asks, can the issue of "the lateness and the uniqueness of the development of the Italian working class" be reframed and studied in new ways? Are the questions relating to the "unique nature and identity of the Italian working class, its relations with the socialist world around it, and with the institutions of the organized labor movement" still worth investigating? This dissertation at least does attempt to address some of these issues in pointed fashion (as discussed in the conclusion).

Finally, mention must be made of the available historical literature on Piombino on which I have drawn to construct "my story" about the relationship between education and class formation. Indeed, reflecting the dominant Marxist tradition discussed above, the historical scholarship on Piombino has focused on the capital formation underlying the development of the local industrial complex, the geographic provenance of the early industrial labor force, the labor struggles and development of the local labor movement, the political history of fascism and anti-fascism, and the efforts of the local Resistance movement (Favilli, 1974; Bianconi, 1970; Tognarini, 1980 and 1988; Chiaramonte, 1983; Carignani, Luchetti, and Poli, 1985). An overall interpretive framework articulating the various levels of class formation (as suggested by Katznelson) in this town has not yet emerged as too much of the town's cultural and social history still remains in the shadows. This dissertation may represent a starting point to think through and flesh out the important issue of how different levels "interface," come together or move apart.

However, a book on the local Resistance by Ivan Tognarini (1988), a historian from a Piombinese working-class family, bears the intriguing title Là dove impera il ribellismo ("Where Rebelliousness Reigns"). This title does capture an essential feature of life in this town and an underlying theme that runs through the town's history. The part of this dissertation bearing on the dispositions toward education found within the original nucleus of the Piombinese working class sheds some light on the effects of such rebellious impulses on the social process through their impact on the nexus between class formation and education.

Italian Anthropological "Disciplines" and Working-class Culture

The relationship between Italian anthropological disciplines and working- class culture is a complicated issue.[25] Due to its roots in the study of folklore and popular traditions in peripheral subaltern populations, Italian practitioners by and large have steered clear from research among the urban proletariat.[26] Pietro Clemente (1980), in a discussion centered on the disciplinary identity and developments in the field of "popular traditions," underscored that the modern, urban working class has been a taboo subject among scholars who identified with the Italian tradition of folklore studies influenced by De Martino and Gramsci.[27]

However, one group of non-academic researchers--associated with the Institute Ernesto De Martino, founded in 1965 by Gianni Bosio--did take up the study of contemporary urban working classes (Bosio, 1975; Portelli, 1980). Initially, this group coalesced around a program of inter-disciplinary, militant research centered on the collection of oral histories, political protest songs and oral texts of folk poets. These scholars initially concentrated on documenting the expressions of an antagonistic culture; however, gradually they turned increasing attention to the internal contradictions and tensions present within a partially autonomous proletarian culture and documented the coexistence of non-political popular traditions with class-conscious outlook and cultural forms (Portelli, 1980).[28] Out of this "school" has emerged some of the best oral history work in Italy, which has earned both national and international recognition (Portelli, 1985; 1991). Alessandro Portelli's Biografia di una Città (1985) deserves a special mention here because it shares a thematic affinity with this dissertation. This oral history of the

working-class population of Terni, a metallurgical center in Umbria, is referenced on several occasions throughout the thesis.

Class Formation in American Anthropology

In American anthropology the concept of social class has been controversial and insufficiently articulated, largely due to the fact, at least ostensibly, that the people studied by anthropologists often themselves do not employ an explicit idiom of class (Smith, 1984; Davis, 1977). However, the tide may be turning, in part because an increasing number of American anthropologists have in recent years turned to the study of their own society (Ortner, 1991; Marcus, 1986). In particular, the influence of British cultural Marxism (e.g., E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, and Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies) has left its mark on American anthropology, as is discernable in the work of such scholars as Sherry Ortner (1991), Douglas Foley (1990), and Gerald Sider (1986). Sider, in particular, has emphasized the heuristic advantages of the concept as formulated in British cultural Marxism due to its emphasis on the relational and processual character of class.

During the 1980s, the prominent anthropological work on class formation largely focused on this process outside of the core capitalist regions, either in the Third World (Wolf, 1982; Vincent, 1982; Nash, 1979; Taussig, 1980) or semi-peripheral regions, with an emphasis on merchant capitalism (Sider, 1986) or on elites (e.g. Marcus, 1983). This scholarship by and large did not make use of an experience-centered analysis with a focus on dispositions and agency. However, the work by Taussig (1980) and Nash (1979) on the impact of capitalism on Latin American laboring classes, with a focus respectively on the cultural articulation between indigenous beliefs and imagery and capitalist forms of

production and exploitation did begin to bridge "the gap between interpretive and political-economy traditions in anthropological research" (Marcus and Fischer, 1986:88).

In Europe (and especially the Southern tier), the work on social class conducted by American anthropologists (carried out predominantly in Spain) has focused on rural settings with an emphasis on the polarization of rural class structures and the idioms of honor and shame (e.g. Gilmore, 1980; Davis, 1977).[29] The published work on Italy has touched indirectly upon class and class relations when discussing such phenomena as patronage, and a few anthropologists have dealt with family and class in urban settings (e.g. Kertzer, 1980). American anthropological work in Western Europe is also characterized by a striking absence of analytical reconstructions of how historical contexts are embedded in the lives and identities of particular generations and historical cohorts; in fact, the only widely known work taking this approach is by a Spanish anthropologist (Lison-Tolsana, 1966).

This thesis seeks to contribute to the debate within American anthropology on class formation by underscoring the complementarity of the political economy and interpretive frameworks. It also attempts to re-direct the study of class within the Europeanist literature away from a focus on rural settings. Moreover, the analysis of an institutional process such as education should further the long overdue integration of analytical levels in the anthropology of Europe, which until now has tended to underplay the relevance of institutional sites (Cole, 1977; Gilmore, 1982).

III. Methodology and Analytical Framework: Culture, Agency and Class Experience

Methodologically and analytically, the dissertation zeroes in the articulation between structuring contexts, experience and agency so as to promote an understanding of "society" as a situated and shifting nexus of relationships, processes, "pressures" and contingencies which people inhabit, act upon, and react or succumb to.[30] The subject-centered perspective that underlies the thesis is rooted in an attempt to grasp the constitution and agency of historical subjects and a concern with "the ways in which forms of consciousness arise, with the ways in which human beings understand and transform their social world" (CCCS, 1981).[31] A major effort has been made to represent lived historical experience as a source of meanings and bring to life the connection between a lived past and the shaping of the future.

The research has also led me to address the concept of culture within the context of class relations and take stock of the cross-fertilization of the last two decades between anthropology and social history. A number of anthropologists have pointed out that the exchange between the two disciplines has often led historians to borrow from anthropology those concepts of culture either rooted in a structuralist-functionalist paradigm or associated with a symbolic perspective (e.g., Geertz).[32] However, neither the outdated structuralist-functionalist nor most "symbolic" perspectives can significantly contribute to a historical hermeneutical project or to the problematic of the "historical subject" (Sider, 1986; Rebel, 1989).[33]

Rather than foregoing the use of the anthropological concept of culture altogether given the problems inherent in most formulations,[34] I have chosen to define the "cultural" level as "the quality of social

experience. . . affective elements of consciousness and relationships." This is adopted from Raymond Williams' understanding of the concept of a "structure of feeling," which is discussed in more detail below (Williams, 1977).

Some recent anthropological work on culture and class has also moved in this direction in suggesting that the core of "culture" resides in the way people perceive, articulate, feel and act out their relationships with others (Sider, 1986). Along the same line, Michelle Rosaldo, in a 1984 article entitled "Toward an anthropology of self and feeling," pointed out certain trends in the recent reformulations of the "culture concept" which suggested that people's actions and behaviors are grounded in a self-understanding emanating "from experience in a world of meanings, images and social bonds, in which all persons are inevitably involved" (Rosaldo, 1984:139). Yet any such reformulation must also incorporate an understanding of social class, power and hegemony, along with some notion of the "historical subject" whose identity is forged through memory and "inner conflicts," so as to guard against a deceptively benign and seamless notion of the "cultural level."

Indeed, here I also try to build upon a particular notion of the "experiencing self" of historical subjects, built on the recognition that we connect to ourselves, others and the contingencies of life through the experience of inner conflicts (Rebel, 1989).[35] As Rebel underscores, the historical hermeneutical project strives to "perceive the historical dimensions of the culturally divided self struggling to create a livable life in the midst of contingencies" (Rebel, 1989:126). Ultimately, the complexity of the experience of the subject in history requires that we assume the experience of inner conflicts and cultural hegemony as one of the central problematics.

Key Heuristic Concepts and Frameworks

Structure of Feeling.

The dissertation pays particular attention to historical and social forces and "moods" that have shaped educational processes in schools and attitudes toward education. The term "structure of feeling" is used to refer to the "affective" qualities of historical contexts from the working-class point of view. This concept is operationalized in the thesis through analytical descriptions of historical contexts in combination with people's oral accounts and "capsules" from biographic interviews. "Structure of feeling" was coined by Raymond Williams who elaborated on Thompson's "structure of experience" (Williams, 1977; O'Connor, 1989). Here, the two phrases are sometimes used interchangeably, but "structure of feeling" better conveys a dynamic, participatory process. Its heuristic value for anthropological narratives and analytical strategies has been advocated by Marcus and Fischer in their influential Anthropology as Cultural Critique (1986:78); however, in failing to define the concept, they may leave the door open to misinterpretation. This is unfortunate as there are sufficient references in Williams' work to provide a more rigorous understanding of the term.[36]

Structures of feeling are differentiated and articulated along class, gender and generational lines. Distinct structures of feeling emanate from individuals' personal relationship to a given "community." Although embedded in the social process, i.e. in changing institutional and productive contexts, "structures of feeling" cannot be analytically derived from or read into that process; rather, they only become intelligible through the production of meanings and social identities occurring out of people's encounters with the historical context. "Structure of feeling" does not refer to the inner space of

consciousness or to a structuring principle of the self but to the act of experiencing or feeling. The latter involves both emotional/sensory and evaluative dimensions structured by a pre-existing consciousness rooted in past experience and by the contingent quality/characteristics of the social process at a particular moment.[37]

For Raymond Williams, structure of feeling emerges out of the relationship between the individual and the social and describes the socio-emotive quality of experience in a "community" from a particular class or gender location. Williams, however, does not emphasize that the use of the concept must also recognize the existence of a plurality of locations within the "popular classes." Such an "articulation" is crucial: indeed, the most recurrent criticism leveled at the foundational work in British cultural Marxism (from Richard Hoggart's The Uses of Literacy (1971) to E. P. Thompson's work) is its tendency to essentialize the "working class" (Steedman, 1987).

Structure of feeling--though differentiated according to locations--remains a collective term because it is grounded in the experience in of a social world that a group of people share. In the narratives where Williams operationalizes the concept (such as in his novels), his focus is always on a group of people tied to a place by an experience of continuity and an interconnectedness between past, present and future (Williams, 1960). It is through the felt connection between past, present and future and the ties which bind people to a familiar landscape that the actors are able to experience an inner coherence. Memory constructs the connection between the past and the present and is the repository of feelings out of which a project for the future can be built. It is against these understandings, largely derived from his lived experience, that one must appreciate Williams's idea of a theory of culture as "the

study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life" (Eldridge and Eldridge, 1994:161).

Hegemony, Contradictory Consciousness and Discourse.

During the last 15 years or so, Gramsci's concept of hegemony has gained wide currency among Anglo-Saxon social scientists and historians as a useful theoretical construct for understanding those power relations not based on the use of violence or coercion. The narrow definition of hegemony is that of the "spontaneous consent" given by subordinated groups to the "general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group" (Gramsci in Lears, 1985:568).[38] On the basis of this definition, cultural hegemony has been all too often equated with the internalization of domination. As several scholars have noted (Lears, 1985; Hall, 1986a), this misreading of the Gramscian notion of hegemony probably derives from the earlier work of such Marxists as Herbert Marcuse (1964).

I would further argue that the concept can be fully understood only with reference to other concepts, in particular the notion of "contradictory consciousness".[39] For Gramsci, "contradictory consciousness" represents the merging of two separate consciousnesses rooted in two different worlds of experience: one consciousness formed through the experiences that bind people "to their fellow workers in the practical transformation of the real world" (Gramsci, 1971:326), the other, "verbal" in nature, formed through available vocabulary, concepts and discourses. Lears conveys very eloquently Gramsci's point about the framing power of language:

> The available vocabulary helps mark the boundaries of permissible discourse, discourages the clarification of social alternatives, and makes it difficult for the dispossessed to locate the source of their unease, let alone remedy it (Lears, 1985:569-70).

This passage depicts a scenario where the "dispossessed" do not have access to a "vocabulary" that provides an alternative to the dominant discourse. If only the latter is available, it is difficult for "the dispossessed" to come together as a class. Indeed, as the chapter on class formation discusses, classes may be formed at the structural level but not "subjectively" through dispositions if a language of class does not develop. On the other hand, a language of class may develop which contains significant gaps and limitations that leave individuals exposed to the influence of the only "available vocabulary."

Gramsci's recognition that "language" or "available vocabulary" is largely the source of a muddled consciousness anticipates Foucault's emphasis on "discursive practices" that produce "effects of truth." However, Foucault is mostly interested in reconstructing the constitution of discourses (i.e. their "genealogy") and not as much in the structural (class) position of different historical subjects in relation to them. The Foucault knowledge/power nexus--discourses being at least in part worked up forms of power--makes sense and is less abstract if understood <u>also</u> in relation to the structural locations of social actors. Indeed, one cannot wish away the historical marginality of working classes in relation to the levers of power, institutions (such as schools), or public rhetoric.

My understanding of cultural hegemony, which is very close to the original Gramscian formulation, leads me to take issue with readings that (implicitly or explicitly) equate "cultural hegemony" with total domination through the internalization of the dominant ideology. Such readings flatten the conflicted experiential process for which the concept of cultural hegemony stands. Indeed, as Hermann Rebel implies, cultural hegemony would be a truncated concept if not grounded in a

sensory--if muddled--experiential process for, as he states, cultural hegemony nests in the inner conflicts of a culturally divided self (Rebel, 1989:129). As should have become apparent through a discussion of the Gramscian framework, this is also one of Gramsci's formulations of cultural hegemony, best captured by his concept of "contradictory consciousness." Indeed, the experiential embeddedness and the dynamics of cultural hegemony is best understood in relation to this concept. As we have seen, Gramsci's definition of this concept puts at center stage the inner conflicts and the "split self of the historical subject" that Hermann Rebel sees as being at the junction where the historical experiences of class and culture interface and take shape (Rebel, 1989:126).

The concept of cultural hegemony adopted in this thesis, although mirroring Gramsci's own understanding, also resonates to some extent with the Foucault's "theme." Thus, cultural hegemony refers to ideological "determinations" that constitute ubiquitous forms of "domestication" from which even the oppositional, class confrontational stance of a militant and highly politicized working class cannot completely extricate itself. These determinations enter human consciousness through an available dominant discourse (for instance, the discourse on education) against which people may be disarmed because a critical popular language counteracting a particular dominant discourse is not sufficiently "formed" or available. Such determinations emanate from embodied power relationships and from more diffuse circuits of authority and power that envelope people's lives.[40] These "determinations" do not necessarily eliminate, but rather, coexist with critical, confrontational and counter-hegemonic dispositions.

Gramsci's formulation of cultural hegemony does not (necessarily) imply incorporation but rather containment (Hall, 1986a:22). Cultural hegemonies are situated historical processes, always susceptible to counter-hegemonic challenges. As historical formations, one should think of them as belonging to "anywhere on a continuum from 'closed' to 'open'-- or from 'strong' to 'weak'" (Lears, 1985:573). In a situation of "open" or "weak" cultural hegemony, an alternative world view and a language exists through which resistance and opposition can be articulated. In a situation of "closed" or "strong" cultural hegemony, "subordinate groups lack the language necessary even to conceive concerted resistance" (Lears, 1985:574). This formulation also suggests that "the line between dominant and subordinate cultures is a permeable membrane, not an impenetrable barrier" (ibid.).

In the case of Piombino, the historical nucleus of the local working class was formed during the first 20 years of this century, on the one hand, through the encounter with syndicalism, and, on the other, both the harsh, exploitative conditions of factory work and the violence of labor repressions. In Piombino, syndicalism and revolutionary socialism embodied a culture of conflict and antagonism that survived fascism. With the fall of the fascist regime, communism emerged as the dominant ideology of the Piombinese working class. This scenario thus cries out for a fully articulated understanding of cultural hegemony: in this case, it is clear how inappropriate it would be to understand cultural hegemony as domination. Yet the cultural hegemony construct retains its heuristic utility in all historical situations, as even the strongest class antagonism and the most resilient working-class subcultures are part of a larger world and, to use Foucault's imagery, a net-like matrix that reaches into people's lives and consciousness

through institutional and discursive effects. Even within a highly antagonistic and self-conscious working-class culture, arenas of experience and contacts exist through which the culture and ideology of the dominant classes will always exert its hegemony, albeit only partially. Institutional sites, such as schools, especially when under the direct control of a conservative central state, are the main conduits of a hegemonic culture. Even working-class organizations and the views of the leadership of a political movement with which the working classes identify can serve as conduits of ideological incorporation (as is argued in this thesis).

Biographic Interviews and Oral Accounts: Past and Present, Memory and History

Adopting a sociological approach close to that developed in Europe during the last fifteen years (Bertaux, 1981; Bertaux and Kohli, 1984; Ferrarotti, 1981a and 1981b; Thompson, 1981), I have used life-historical material to document life trajectories in social contexts "in order to uncover the patterns of social relations and the special processes that shaped them" (Bertaux and Kohli, 1984:215).[41] Moreover, the biographic interviews conducted with various generations of Piombinesi have elicited the ways in which salient aspects of social identities and self-understandings were forged in the encounter with a particular historical context and its development.[42] In particular, I utilize excerpts from interviews to illuminate the influence of a long-term process and "the strength of transgenerational family culture" (Thompson, 1993:15). Ultimately, oral accounts have helped me locate the traces of the past in the present and the sources of agency. Finally, one must note that oral testimonies are not just about "directly remembered experience" but

"draw on information and stories transmitted across the generations." At the same time, while family and personal story intermingle, a "sense of a more public history" comes through the interviews (Thompson, 1993:13).

During the last 15 years, the formidable growth of oral history and its increasing methodological and interpretive sophistication owes a debt to the study of the role of "memory" in identity formation, the interface between social memory and subjectivity, and what is referred to as "the work of memory" (its emphasis and selectivity, silences, slippage, and the like). The constitution of the "subject" through oral performance within the context of "encounters" is another prominent problematic shared by oral historians and anthropologists.[43] Here, I briefly discuss memory as a source of meanings (Portelli, 1981 and 1985:18), its function in relation to identity formation (Halbwachs, 1950), and its constitution in relation to publicly articulated "discourse" (Bodnar, 1989; Frisch, 1990; Bourguet, Valensi, and Wachtel, 1990).

It is through memories that the identity of a social subject pieces itself together (Halbwachs, 1950; Ricoeur, 1983; Nora, 1984). As Halbwachs (1976) first argued in 1925, memory is social, as it does not exist abstracted from context. Yet, as Luisa Passerini (1987a) has underscored, memory is also the expression of an "individual specificity" that marks the relationship between the subject and the context. Finally, its "production" and constructedness is influenced by "social discourse," i.e., positions and interpretations stated in public (Bodnar, 1989). Thus, recollections of events are "refracted through layer upon layer of subsequent experience and through the influence of the dominant and/or local and specific ideology" (History Workshop Journal, 1979:iii). Punctuated by silences, gaps and shadows, the "words and tales" that

memory produces are situated "scenarios" in need of interpretation (Perrot, 1981:45).[44]

I am especially interested in memory as a mental place where the sensations that are connected to past experiences are stored. Indeed, although some of the information we remember and recount entail a kind of knowledge that is detached from us, the knowledge that is part of personal memory is wrapped up in emotions and feelings that are both subjective and social (Fentress and Wickham, 1992:3-8). Even though difficult to articulate and communicate, the memories of feelings and the emotive quality of personal experiences nonetheless pervade oral testimonies and biographic accounts. Here, I refer to this type of recollections as "embodied, sensory memories."

Some version of this concept, rooted in anti-Cartesian epistemologies, is employed by disparate authors from Raymond Williams (Eldridge and Eldridge, 1994:ch.7) to, most recently, Paul Stoller (1994) in an article on spirit possession among the Songhay of West Africa. I use "embodied, sensory memories" to mean those personal memories inscribed in emotions that come back to us in powerful flashes of the senses, often repeatedly throughout our lifetime. These are memories born out of direct experience, defined through their sensuous quality (of joy, pain, shame, rancor, confusion, and the like), which we re-live because they represent moments of awareness that have remained inscribed within our consciousness in a unity of mind and body. Embodied memories are relived as such many times, and, even though they are seldom verbalized, they are part of a person's emotional core and socio-cultural identity.

Finally, oral historians have pointed out the existence of patterned memories, i.e. memories whose emphasis and form vary by social group.

For example, in Western Europe, peasants, working classes, national communities (such as intellectuals) and women display distinct patterns in their "remembering." Research shows that working-class memory has distinctive patterns differentiated according to location and history. Working-class organizations have been shown to play a determinant role in the shaping of social memory through public discourse and commemorations. The "remembering" of workers may be centered on the community (as is the case among British miners) or on the workplace (as noted among factory workers in France and Italy). There are also working-class groups (as in the U.S.) who have a tenuous relationship to the past and a weak sense of "the validity of their experience (individual or collective) as part of history" (Fentress and Wickam, 1992; Grele, 1985).

The literature also distinguishes between the memory of militants and labor leaders, which displays a strong linear pattern (with an emphasis on historical change, "heroic struggles" and mythic signposts) and that of regular working-class "folk" which emphasizes cyclical events such as weekly festivities and daily meals (Fentress and Wickham, 1992; Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame, 1980). Yet, ultimately, probing the presence and "forms" of historical consciousness has proven to be a complex task, as its traces may be buried in sub-texts of oral accounts not easily identifiable (Passerini, 1987b and 1989).[45]

The existing research has started to map out recurrent themes that emerge from biographic interviews and the grey areas of memory.[46] For example, oral-historical research among French workers has shown that "the alienation of industrial work and its de-humanizing effects shape the past/ present relationship in workers' consciousness" (Debouzy, 1990: 63). Next to memories of the "intolerable brutality of

working conditions" (Debouzy, 1990: 62), struggles represent the other landmark around which the memory of militant working-class groups is articulated. Most importantly, in working-class communities (such as Piombino) memories are shared from childhood: children hear stories and witness events like adults.

The unconscious or intentional manipulation of memory is a typical defense mechanism. During difficult times, there are things and circumstances people would rather forget. For example, repression during the 1950s made it difficult almost impossible for many to speak up: yet, workers do not like to admit that the crude social hegemony of those years almost completely silenced them. There are many examples of how self-censorship has erased memories from periods which, with hindsight and from the perspective of working-class history, would be considered "periods of shame" (Debouzy, 1990:70).

Finally, patterned differences exist within working-class groups between women's and men's recollections, discernible, for example, in the imagery and stories through which memories of war are conveyed. Family history, "the home" and the experience of factory work are other domains that are remembered with varying emphasis and articulateness by women and men. In particular, with regard to women's memories, one needs to acknowledge a special problem, as Fentress and Wickam have stated:

> The essential problem for anyone wishing to identify a distinctively female view of the past is hegemony: that of a dominant ideology and a dominance over narration, as expressed through the male-female relationship (Fentress and Wickam, 1992: 138)

Indeed, families and especially social groups speak, most of the time, through "male voices." Decoding women's memories is a difficult task. Anthropologists, feminist theorists and oral historians have all

pointed out that women are often forced to use a male language or a male "register" (Ardener, 1972; Young, 1983; Keesing, 1985; Bravo and Scaraffia, 1979). Moreover, in most cases women's voices and spaces are connected to the informal relations in the domestic arena and the neighborhood and to the bonds and tensions between the sexes, relatives and friends, i.e., a world not legitimated by a social discourse articulated in public.

NOTES

1. It should be noted that the work by Bowles and Gintis has also been criticized for its tendency to generalize from the American experience, thus overemphasizing the common characteristics of capitalist economies while downplaying differences in political "cultures," national and regional formations and the institutional framework of educational systems (Katznelson and Weir, 1985).

2. Echoing Althusser's claim that schools represent the dominant ideological apparatus in capitalist societies, Bowles and Gintis stated:

> "The educational system helps integrate youth into the economic system. . . through a structural correspondence between its social relations and those of production. The structure of social relations in education not only inures the student to the discipline of the workplace, but develops the types of personal demeanor, modes of self-presentation, self-image and social class identifications which are the crucial ingredients of job adequacy (1976:131)."

The authors employed the concept of "hidden curriculum" to refer to the ideology (social behavior, "demeanor") transmitted to students in the school. As they later emphasized, the "correspondence principle" refers to the forms of social relations (based on hierarchy, authority and competition) and not so much to the content of the curriculum (Gintis and Bowles, 1988). To be fair, their work does depart from Althusserian Marxism in several respects. For example, Aronowitz and Giroux (1985:ch.5) have called attention to the difference in the way Bowles and Gintis and Althusser utilize the concepts of ideology and "hidden curriculum." Finally, the notion of the "hidden curriculum" as formulated in Schooling in Capitalist America has provided a theoretical basis for subsequent ethnographic work and remains and important concept for understanding the dynamics underlying the construction of self-images among children and adolescents.

3. In his many writings on education, Bourdieu has argued that schooling is biased in favor of the upper classes because, thanks to a process of cultural osmosis, their members possess the appropriate dispositions (the "habitus") and the language competencies that facilitate educational success. Indeed, since it is the hegemonic classes which establish what it means to be educated, the "culture" of the subordinate classes becomes "cultural deprivation." Economic capital is thus translated into cultural, symbolic capital and the culture of the dominant classes becomes culture tout court. This process is referred to by Bourdieu as "symbolic violence," which is his version of cultural hegemony (Bourdieu, 1973, 1974, and 1979; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu's theoretical edifice is built upon the idea that symbolic systems act as instruments of class domination by structuring knowledge and communication and thus "producing" reality. In other words, symbolic systems legitimize relations of inequality by making such relations appear fair.

4. The inadequacy of the liberal meritocratic model was first exposed by scholars who carried out quantitative studies that correlated educational failures and school trajectories with class and ethnic background.

Sociologists such as Jencks (1972) and Boudon (1973) showed the systematic inequality between groups. This literature affirmed that schools were "processing units" and that the effects of education were reproductive of social structure rather than transformative.

5. It should also be noted that during the 1980s and 1990s American sociologists have produced a number of case studies focusing on the interaction between schooling, neighborhood/community, class and ethnicity (Steinitz and Solomon, 1986; Brantlinger, 1993). This work, based on extended interviews with students and participant observation, has looked into the variable construction of aspirations, self-images, perceptions and school experiences of students from different backgrounds. Perlmann (1988) and Hogan (1985), among others, have taken up many of the same issues within a historical perspective.

6. In his The Irony of Early School Reform, Katz (1968) argued that the labor movement did not agitate for free public schools; rather, these were imposed on a reluctant working class and used as a tool of elite domination. In contrast, Wrigley in her Class Politics and Public Schools: Chicago 1900-1959 attempted to show that in Chicago the labor movement "played strong and highly class-conscious roles in regard to the schools during period of labor militancy" (Wrigley, 1982:17). She criticized the revisionist scholarship as follows:

> [T]he domination of the upper classes is perceived as being so complete that working class resistance is described as occurring only through such individualistic actions as simply not sending their children to school or expressing sporadic and undirected opposition to school programs (Wrigley, 1982:9).

Other critical work, such as that of Hogan (1985), disentangled the multiple origins and the different languages of reform.

7. By the late 1970s this had become a common criticism levelled at the revisionist scholarship (Sarup, 1978:175; Arnot and Whitty, 1982:98; Apple, 1988; Cole, 1988).

8. As in the United States, in Europe the historiography of education has expanded considerably during the last quarter of a century, primarily as a function of the growth and proliferation of teachers' colleges and educational departments. The historiography of education is a particularly lively field in Great Britain where the works of E.P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm and the History Workshop have exerted a major influence. Indeed, British historians have a long tradition in the study of popular education, which since the 1980s has generated stimulating work on such issues as literacy, Sunday schools and independent working-class schools, regional variations of schooling and self-education among the popular classes (Stephens, 1987; Reay, 1991; Vincent, 1981; Johnson, 1979; Laqueur, 1976; Dick, 1980). In France, too, educational history has emerged as a prolific arena of historical scholarship (Baker and Harrigan, 1980).

9. Methodologically the new scholarship has been characterized by a focus on multiple "relationships," "practices" and "discourses" linking education to various arenas of social life (families, work environments, politics). To accomplish the goal of moving "the people of education" to

the center of the historical study of schooling, some "new historians" have advocated the use of personal records and biography together with case histories of motivation and behavior. Some of the newer work has utilized life histories of educational activists and reformers to show their embeddedness in the conceptual and ideological processes of the time period (Tyack and Hansock, 1983) or has otherwise conveyed a sense of the people involved in educational politics (Cremin, 1980). The focus on "actors" served as an antidote to linear and monolithic portrayals of education. At the same time, a more articulated approach to the history of individual educational institutions was able "to account for the dissonance between policy and experience" (Silver, 1990:178-9).

10. In Italy an effort has been made in recent years to articulate the history of education with a social history perspective, as various reviews of the literature have discussed (Bonetta, 1985; Soldani, 1989). However, the social history approach has been less prominent in Italy than in other Western countries (Ragazzini, 1983; Ambrosoli, 1991). Here, the study of the policy process that focused on parliamentary acts and discussions, reforms and government decrees, the curriculum and the positions of political parties reflected the dominant tradition in Italian scholarship, i.e., that identified with institutional and political history. Until the early 1980s, one of the few notable exceptions in this panorama was the work of the sociologist Marzio Barbagli (1974) who examined the growth of secondary education for each of the three phases of economic development at the end of the last century (1881-88, the take-off stage; 1888-95, the crisis period; and 1896-1913, the growth phase).

11. The full title of this work is Learning to Labor: How Working-class Kids Get Working-class Jobs. The book focuses on the counter-school culture and oppositional, "non-conformist" behavior of 12 working class "lads" who drop out of school at age 16 (the statutory minimum) to begin their lives as unskilled workers (following in the footsteps of their working-class fathers). Willis tracked these students, all of whom had close ties to one another, between 1972 and 1975 as they attended a solidly working-class school in a typical urban working-class community of 60,000 in the Midlands. The study is based on participant observation and in-depth interviews: the author studied the lads' behavior in and around the school, spent time with them during their leisure activities and followed them into their jobs when they left school. Although in the book Willis presents ethnographic material relating only to this particular group, he also conducted control studies of five other groups of conformist and non-conformist students in the same and other schools. The book focuses on the lads' oppositional behavior which manifests itself in the pride they take in skipping classes and avoiding academic work, living "the real life," making-out with girls, and having "a laugh" at the expense of authority. The ethnography documents the youths' entrenched anti-intellectual, chauvinist disposition and shows how the counter-school culture comes alive and is constructed through the meaning-making activities of this particular group. Willis shows that his lads pick up the "values" and the symbolic elements undergirding their counter-school culture from the working-class milieu which they inhabit, in particular through exposure to working-class "talk." The latter glorifies the "manliness" associated with hard, physical work and the small, but real gratifications of shop-floor "culture." As Willis emphasizes, it is the prerogative of informal groups (both that of the

lads and that of workers on the shopfloor) to devise "strategies for wresting control of symbolic and real space from official authority" (Willis, 1981:54). Furthermore, the counter-school culture and the working-class culture of the shopfloor have in common a rejection of mental labor and a valorization of "practice" against the "idiocy of purely theoretical knowledge" (Willis, 1981:56).

12. As Graeme Turner put somewhat more emphatically: "Accurately enough, they see the carrot of credentialism offered to them as a giant con; rather than chase the chimera of middle class upward mobility, they opt to withdraw from the race and seek unskilled employment. The choice is rewarded by the sense of commonality with their workmates and by their access to the adult male working class culture that the ability to earn a wage provides" (Turner, 1992:176).

13. When the book appeared in 1977, it was above all an indictment of Althusserian Marxism, which treated the experience and agency of real people as the reflex of structural determination. In a 1983 article Willis faulted this literature because it lacked a "sense of structure as a contested medium" and conceptualized reproduction as a "mechanical inevitability" (Willis, 1983:116). Willis found Bourdieu's reproduction model somewhat more credible at least as far as the dominant classes were concerned; however, he still felt that "we are left with the traditional socialization model--the Bourgeoisie transmits, quite unproblematically, their culture to their offspring" (ibid.). Willis rejected Bourdieu's implication that the subordinate classes must inevitably bow to the dominance of cultural capital or that acceptance of cultural inferiority constitutes the basis for their submission to exploitation (ibid.). It should be noted that, according to Bourdieu, such criticism misrepresents his work, though he concedes that some of his theoretical formulations may have contributed to this misconception (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:79-82).

14. The full citation reads as follows: "My original research interest was, indeed, in working-class culture in general and I was led to look at young non-academic disaffected males and their adaption to work as a crucial and privileged moment <u>in the continuous regeneration of working class cultural forms</u> in relation to the most essential structure of society-its working relations" [my emphasis] (Willis, 1981:2).

15. In this respect, some of the same problems can be found in other ethnographic analysis and sub-cultural studies produced by scholars associated with the Birmingham Center (Turner, 1992:169-89).

16. Although one cannot fault the author for not doing that in which he was not interested, the omission of any reference to the historical context of English working-class formation has implications for the ways in which <u>Learning to Labor</u> has been read and for the reservations which have characterized its reception in the scholarly community.

17. By and large, this division parallels that between the sociological study of class concerned with the development of a theoretical systemic framework and the social-history approach concerned with recovering historical dimensions of social life and experience and their structuring contexts. This debate has figured prominently within British Marxism, as

various publications illustrate (Thompson, 1978; Anderson, 1980 and 1984). In addition to E. P. Thompson, the culturalist position is associated with Raymond Williams as well the Cultural Studies scholars affiliated with the Birmingham Center.

18. As students of class formation (such as Katznelson) have pointed out, the Thompsonian model seems to assume that "once a working class is 'made' by the impact of external conditions, people sharing a fate will inevitably 'make themselves' into a class capable of affecting history" (Katznelson, 1986:11).

19. According to Katznelson, even though the "essentialist assumption that classes 'in themselves' will, indeed must, act 'for themselves' is no longer asserted explicitly, it still underlies much of the work on class formation" (Katznelson, 1986). The implication is that classes do not exist if they do not act for themselves as classes and that "class formation is defined by the emergence of a relatively cohesive working class, self-conscious of its position in the social structure and willing and capable of acting to affect it." (Katznelson, 1986:11).

20. Katznelson emphasizes that this formulation builds upon Thompson's insight that "class is a "junction term" that lies at the intersection of structure and process, social being and social consciousness" (Katznelson, 1986:20).

21. However, significant differences do exist in Europe, especially between the British and continental patterns (Katznelson and Zohlberg, 1986).

22. In the United States, "classness" (i.e. the assumption of a unitary class identity at both the workplace and in residential communities) did not develop. In its place, American workers assumed a labor identity at the workplace and an ethnic identity in their communities. Labor organizations and political parties were by and large independent of each other. Workers participated in politics as members of particular neighborhoods and (non-class) groups, while the process of voting was concentrated on local issues, as distributive decisions were made mostly by local governments. Educational politics, too, was a local matter, as the structure of governance of education overlapped with the county, city or borough limits. In contrast, parliaments and central governments in Europe have been by far the main political arenas that affected working-class life as social policy decisions and regulations were made at this level. The most distinctive feature of European education is the centralized system of governance that underlies it (though the degree of centralization varies from country to country). In turn, the central governance of schooling has enormous implications for the ways in which the battles over education occur. Indeed, in contrast to the United States (and partially Great Britain), education is an arena of institutionalized struggle occurring almost exclusively at the central level because local administrations have marginal prerogatives if any. This is true especially for France and Italy where centralism is particularly accentuated.

23. Most historians seemed to agree that the Italian situation was an anomaly because "political and union organizations and a working class culture seemed to have preceded industrial capitalism" (Andreucci,

1990:196). Among the dissenters was Stefano Merli who asserted that a self-conscious working class emerged in the 1880s with the establishment of the factory system in textile-producing districts, leading to the creation of the workers' and socialist parties (Merli, 1976). Other historians seem to have accepted the proposition that in Italy the role of socialist intellectuals and the influence of the international socialist movement proved paramount given the weak development of industrialization and the working classes until around 1900 (Andreucci, 1990). It must be noted that until the late 1970s the historiographical debate going on in Italy has been markedly insular. For example, it did not take heed of E. P. Thompson's work (1963) on the emergence of a radical, antagonistic working-class culture in Britain prior to the advent of factory-based industrialization and the development of the modern labor movement.

24. However, a few noteworthy local studies of working-class formation appeared in the early 1950s. Some of the more influential work focused on the emergence of "municipal socialism" in Tuscany (e.g., Ragionieri, 1953).

25. For an overview of the various currents that make up ethnological disciplines in Italy (which include the study of folklore/popular traditions, cultural anthropology and ethnology), see Saunders (1984).

26. The "subaltern" populations studied by Italian ethnologists include peasants and mountaineers in rural areas, especially the South, the two islands of Sicily and Sardinia and, to a lesser extent, alpine regions. Thus, for example, the review of Italian anthropology by Saunders (1984) does not mention one single study of working-class culture.

27. As born out in the work that retraces the history of ethnological disciplines in Italy (e.g., Tentori, 1983; Saunders, 1984), Italian scholars have concentrated on the study of religion, symbolism and ideology with an emphasis on the relationship between hegemonic and subaltern peripheral cultures. Although this work reflects the deep-seated influence of Gramscian concepts, their use of Gramsci has, in many cases, been vitiated by the problematic conceptualizations that undergird the study of "popular traditions" (e.g., a tendency to regard "folklore" as a residual phenomenon), as noted, for example, by Clemente (1980) and Portelli (1980). For these reasons and given the thematic restrictions of this thesis, a discussion of this literature would not be very germane.

28. This research, which has produced important archives of "popular" and working-class oral memory, has at times been criticized for being overly ideological and tending to overemphasize the autonomous "culture" and antagonistic nature of the working class. The researchers associated with this institute have been repeatedly attacked for their lack of objectivity and for confusing the roles of researchers and cultural/political organizers (e.g., Clemente, 1980). In turn, they have criticized "mainstream" Italian academic ethnological disciplines for their tendency to depict "popular traditions" as a residual phenomenon and for an intellectual practice that privileged the philosophical, "armchair" rather than a fieldwork-centered approach to research (Portelli, 1980).

29. Edward Hansen's book (1976) is one of the few exceptions in this literature.

30. Within anthropology, there has always existed a particular historical sensibility that has insisted on understanding society as a nexus of relationships and as a process (e.g. Wolf, 1988). A passage from Wolf's work is illustrative: "societies emerge as changing alignments of social groups, segments and classes, without ever fixed boundaries or stable internal constitutions" (1982:387). The shift toward processual approaches and away from systemic views was retraced by Vincent in a 1986 article. This "paradigm shift" is not restricted to anthropology but has characterized the social sciences in general.

31. A historical-phenomenological "layer" could be added to the analysis by focusing on the ways in which subjects reconstitute themselves through the work of memory and "telling." Although it would have undoubtedly had enriched this work, I have not gone down this path, as the dissertation would have become unmanageable.

32. The displacement of various structural-functionalist idioms that occurred in anthropology during the 1960s did not bring about a new consensus. Instead, it left the discipline roughly divided between, on the one side, a heterogeneous camp of symbolic and phenomenological anthropologists (the "hermeneuticists" to use Rebel's categories), and, on the other, a materialist-historical camp of practitioners ("the political economy school"). The latter remain suspicious of symbolic interpretations whose connections to the immediate actors' experience of living seem very volatile. As to historians' use of a normative, functionalist concept of culture, Rebel cites the example of the Freiburg Project, launched in the 1970s, built around the notion of the "modal personality" and a normative view of culture as "a shaping and regulating element." Such an approach is not concerned in the least with "any expressed sense of cultural experience" but solely with enculturation, a "dated anthropological agenda." The Cambridge Group's family-reconstruction and demographic research project is another example, as it too borrowed from anthropology a normative view of culture (Rebel, 1989).

33. According to Gerald Sider, the greatest problem of anthropological models borrowed by historians (kinship analysis, the study of rituals, and such "phrases" as Geertz's "thick description") lies in their static character, which makes them of little use in efforts to understand the dynamics of historical change because they do not address differences and contradictions. According to Sider, "the problem is that what is taken from anthropology is used not to do history but to evade doing history" (Sider, 1986:4). He also points out that, when anthropologists focus on change, the concept of culture becomes irrelevant, whereas when they embark on cultural analysis, they never succeed in framing the latter in dynamic terms. In turn, the most serious shortcoming of Geertzian hermeneutics is, as Rebel points out, its exclusive concern with the "exteriority of the self." Geertz's focus on the "expressed" aesthetics of the self (as illustrated in his famous work on the symbolism of cockfights and the history of the theater in Bali) ignores the "experiencing self" (the internal world of the self) as a topic of investigation. Geertz's historical relativism with its attendant emphasis on alterity and the ineffability of cultures is problematic precisely

because it evades the question of a historically "experiencing self." Indeed, the anthropologist's claim that it is impossible to know "the Other" as an experiencing self in history negates any possibility of understanding how "experience enters historical-cultural processes" (Rebel, 1989:123).

34. Since the 1960s, i.e., with the demise of structural-functionalism, some anthropologists have even questioned the utility of the foundational concept of the discipline (Sider, 1986; Wolf, 1984). As stated by Sider, "the problem begins (but only begins) with the anthropological concept of culture itself, which is ahistorical, non-processual, and totalizing" (Sider, 1986:5).

35. Hermann Rebel contrasts the notion of the "experiencing self" to that of the "centered self" assumed in a normative view of culture. As he puts it: "[a view of culture as a normative mold that shapes] goal-directed action by an integrated and centered self. . . [does] not hold out much promise for the study of the less-than-conscious aspects of culture and of those double-binding, pathogenic moments when social actors are required by 'necessity' to act and to work against themselves, knowing that the culture has different reasons to punish them for doing or not doing so" (Rebel, 1989:121). At the same time, if normative approaches are too simplistic in their tendency to ignore contradictions and inner conflicts, phenomenological approaches, "remain incapable of seeing that self in historical action" (Rebel, 1989:126).

36. The potential misunderstanding that may result from failing to define "structure of feeling" was brought home to me, when in reviewing one of my early research proposals for this dissertation, one reader expressed grave doubts as to the utility of the concept, which he understood to refer to the inner structuring of affective identity. This incident forced me to go back to Williams's work (and the associated secondary literature) and come up with a more precise definition of the term.

37. My formulation of Williams' concept coincides with that put forward by the Eldridges based on their reading of William's trilogy of historical novels (Eldridge and Eldridge, 1994: ch.7).

38. What follows is a schematic discussion of the concept of hegemony in Gramsci that is limited to those contexts where he uses the term to think about how a social class (in this case the capitalist class) that becomes dominant economically and through its exercise of state power also establishes an ideological hold over other classes. However, Gramsci discusses the notion of hegemony within different contexts and with respect to different questions. For instance, one of Gramsci's main concern as a political strategist and organizer was the construction of the hegemony of the proletariat. Hence, some discussions of the concept have revolved around how he has used the concept in this sense. For the different ways in which hegemony is discussed in Gramsci, see, for example, Chantal Mouffe (1979).

39. Indeed, although misunderstanding of Gramsci's concept of hegemony stems in part from the fragmentary nature of his work; the migration of the concept from Europe to America also led scholars to remove it from

its political context and hence alter its meaning.

40. Educational institutions, social welfare agencies and dominant discourses are part of such circuits. The control exerted through these circuits of authority is different from the way in which other, more coercive forms of control are experienced. For example, the alienation and exploitation more immediately associated with capitalist production and the workplace are more easily identified with the structure of inequality. Against the less coercive and more insidious forms of authority, people are often disarmed.

41. As to anthropology, the life-historical approach inaugurated by Radin (1926) and widely used by the Culture and Personality school to highlight mechanisms of cultural transmission and test "theories" about personality (Simmons, 1942; DuBois, 1944) was refashioned within a more sociological perspective by Lewis (1961) and Mintz (1962).

42. The category of "historical cohort" is central to the conceptual framework of this study as it emphasizes the link between specific historical conditions/processes, life-cycle and the formation of cultural identities and historical subjectivities (Elder, 1975; Kertzer, 1983).

43. My use of life-historical material is by and large unconcerned with processes of identity-negotiation and self-representations in which actors are engaged as they tell their stories and experiences to the researcher. These issues are, however, raised tangentially in the Introduction and in the chapter on gender where I discuss methodological questions with regard to the "work" and the "construction" of memory.

44. In order to avoid reification, we need to remind ourselves that, when discussing the "roles" and patterns of memory and their inscription in functional and social differences, we always confront the problem of attributing to memory "an object-like consistency that it does not really possess," as is the case for all mental experience (Fentress and Wickham, 1992).

45. In France and Italy "working-class memory" has emerged as a subject of research and political debate (Debouzy, 1990; Passerini, 1987b; Portelli, 1985 and 1991). One side in the debate has warned against editorializing the memory of workers' cadres and militants and ignoring working-class people whose involvement in politics may have been marginal. In Italy, for instance, this debate has surfaced in the oral-historical literature on fascism (Passerini, 1987b).

46. In France, for example, research conducted among male factory workers shows that "the central themes of workers' memories appear to be work, struggles and the public aspects of daily life" (Debouzy, 1990:61). Inversely, "drinking, private life, personal problems, sex" are topics that do not surface in interviews. The most vivid recollections concern the "callousness of hierarchical relationships [and] the intolerable brutality of working conditions" (Debouzy, 1990:62). The characteristics of working conditions and work discipline thus appear to be more often present in recollections than do, for example, the transformations of the work process.

CHAPTER TWO

EDUCATION AND THE MAKING OF THE PIOMBINESE WORKING CLASS 1900-22

> Yes, Maheude said it well with her common sense. It would be great to be able to organize ourselves, get to know each other, band together in unions permitted by law. Then one morning, linking arms with millions of workers against a few thousand loafers, taking power, being the masters.
>
> —Emile Zola, Germinal

Toward the end of my stay in Piombino, I came across several items that led me to believe there was something distinct about the educational pattern of this working-class town. For example, I learned that, in certain intellectual circles (above all among some Italian and foreign historians working in Italy), Piombino had acquired a reputation for having produced a disproportionate number of intellectuals and historians (for a town of 40,000).[1] I also came across a sociological inquiry on attitudes toward education carried out in different parts of Tuscany during the early 1980s indicating that the families and young people interviewed in Piombino displayed a higher appreciation for formal education than did those in other areas.

This trend was confirmed by the councilman for education (assessore alla Pubblica Istruzione) who pointed out to me that, since the 1960s, Piombino's academic high schools (the licei) have recorded higher attendance rates than the same schools in other areas. He saw the local preference for educating children in the licei as stemming from a strong aspiration for status and social mobility. In contrast, this study seeks to show the multi-dimensionality of the linkages that

connect the local working-class appreciation for schooling with the historical experience in this particular context.

In this chapter, I set out to show how the influence exerted by the process of class formation (in its various dimensions) on working-class families helps explain this town's distinct educational pattern during the post-war period (i.e., the general appreciation for education, overall high level of school enrollment, and a relatively large student population in the academic track).[2] The historical reconstruction undertaken here covers the first two decades of the century: this formative stage in the historical experience of the "original" Piombinese working-class represents the legacy within which one must contextualize the shaping of dispositions toward education. It is a legacy inscribed in the lives and biographic trajectories of my interviewees' parent and grandparent generations, a legacy kept alive through public commemorations, family memories, and the telling of stories. Finally, in the last part of the chapter I discuss aspects of the socialist subculture and the process of "social communication" that most directly shaped the working-class appreciation for education in this urban milieu.

The chapter opens with three short biographic accounts bearing upon the educational trajectories of working-class men who came of age during fascism. These illustrate the great odds families were up against as they supported children through secondary and university education.

I. The Pursuit of Education: Interviews with Two Historical Cohorts

The Pre-War Generation: Education at Any Cost

During the 1920s and 1930s, available post-elementary schooling in Piombino consisted of a commercial school (established in 1922-23) for the 11-14 age-bracket and the Gymnasium (established in 1931), a five-

year academic school serving as the lower cycle in the prestigious humanist track. A two-year "industrial school" for factory-bound youth aged 11 to 14 was not created until 1938 (ASMSB/AI-AV). A private humanist high school (liceo classico) catering to the graduates of the Gymnasium was instituted at some point in the 1930s (probably 1933 or 1934) but, after a troubled existence, was eliminated in 1940 and replaced by a liceo scientifico (ASMSF).

As early as the 1930s, working-class families began enrolling their children in the Gymnasium: in 1931-32, 13 of its 24 male students came from the popular classes. Their numbers increased over the next few years, reaching 143 by the 1939-40 school year (ASMSF). However, in this middle-sized working-class town (with a population in the late 1940s and early 1950s of about 35,000), no technical education would be made available until the late 1950s, despite the fact that working-class families tended to view the technical track as the most sensible choice for their children.[3]

The following accounts concern three working-class individuals born respectively in 1924, 1929 and 1931: Sergio who was sent by his family to another town to attend a technical institute for accountants, and Giacomo and Mario who went to the scientific high school in Piombino.

Sergio was born in Piombino in 1924. In 1944, at the age of 20, he joined the underground communist organization, and in June of that year helped found the communist cell in a nearby mining town. After the war the PCI called upon him to serve in various political posts in the local administration and public institutions.[4] His grandfather had emigrated to France where he worked in the mines for a few years; after returning to Piombino, he got a job in the tin plant as a founder

but was laid after just two years after losing the sight in one eye in a work-related accident. His father ran a barbershop that catered to workers and served as a meeting place for socialists and communists during fascism.

Sergio grew up in a family whose adherence to socialism could be traced back to the anarchist movement that had spread throughout mining areas during his grandfather's lifetime. His political socialization was rooted in the animated discussions on social and political issues that took place among family and friends. A small family library, which consisted for the most part of the work by French and Russian naturalists, did the rest. Even during fascism, his father's barbershop witnessed animated political discussion and some of its patrons engaged in various resistance activities.

After elementary school, Sergio attended the three-year commercial school that constituted the lower cycle of the vocational track.[5] When he graduated in 1938 at age 14, despite his family's modest resources, the decision was made to send him to a boarding school in Lucca where he would attend a technical institute specializing in accounting (istituto commerciale, also known as ragioneria).[6] As he explained during the interview, this represented the most reasonable choice, as a diploma from this school would allow him to enter a profession at age 19. In order to be admitted to the technical institute, he had to pass a qualifying exam, for which he studied on his own with some help from a private tutor during the summer.

In the fall of 1938, Sergio went off to Lucca, along with five other students from Piombino. He had mixed feelings about his time there:

> This school had the advantage of being very inexpensive. . . This, on the other hand, was reflected in the insufficient quantity and poor quality of the food we received:

> sometimes our lunch consisted of just two pieces of lettuce and three dried figs. However, I told my father that everything was all right and that I was fine. What else could I say? My father was working himself to death to enable me to get an education and to support me in the boarding school. After working all day in the barbershop, he even hired himself out in the evening on fishing boats to make extra money.

The next biographic capsule, like the one just related, underscores the willingness of Piombino's families to stretch their budgets to the breaking point and make sacrifices in order to support their children through school. Giacomo was born in Piombino in 1931. He earned a university degree in chemistry and since 1960 has worked as a teacher in one of Piombino's secondary schools. When asked what his educational achievements had represented for him and his family, his immediate answer was that a school diploma or a university degree represented first of all a "monument to the family's sacrifices." It took Giacomo over 10 years to complete his university education: he explained that it was a difficult course of study and that he often had to take exams more than once. On several occasions, he despaired of ever being able to finish but persevered because his family had sacrificed so much to support him in school and would have been a major blow to them had he not graduated.

Giacomo's father was a worker in the steel mill and his paternal grandfather, who came from a nearby village, had been a wagoner. The maternal grandfather, who came from Livorno, had encountered great difficulty finding work, due in large part to his anarchist leanings. His family, especially his mother, was determined that Giacomo would continue his studies and eventually go on to university. After elementary school they enrolled him in the Gymnasium, the most prestigious school; however, after completing two years there, he

transferred in 1944 to the scientific high school, which had just been set up in 1940. Here he found himself in a class of 16 students (10 boys, 6 girls), most of whom came from working-class families. After graduating from this school in 1949, he enrolled in the chemistry faculty at the University of Pisa, from which he received a degree in 1961.

From the time he was very young, Giacomo's mother never stopped insisting that he go to school and study hard, that education should be his first priority. She never relented and never gave up hope of seeing him graduate from the university. Even in the worst of times--when family resources were stretched so thin that coming up with the money to support his education would engender a major family crisis--his mother's determination to see her son educated remained unshaken. In this regard, he recalled:

> When I enrolled at the university, I had to move to Pisa. The financial burden for my family was great, as they had to pay my room and board along with the university fees and books. Every weekend, I would come home by train. I was the only child, but three grandparents lived with us; my father was the only family member who worked. Thus, from an economic point of view, the situation was pretty tragic. Every Monday morning, when my mother had to hand me the money for that week, it was always a tragedy.

Finally, Mario's story involves a family strategy for educating two sons. Mario too was born in Piombino, in 1929. His father, whose family had lived in Piombino since the 1500s, worked at the tin plant. After elementary school, he and his brother attended the Gymnasium. Upon completion of the five-year course of study, his brother went to a boarding school in Livorno to attend the humanist high school while Mario enrolled in Piombino's scientific high school, then the town's only secondary institution. He was in a class with 19 other students, mostly children of workers and modest white-collar employees though a few were from well-off professional families. After he graduated from the

scientific high school in 1948, Mario went to work as his family could not maintain two sons at the university at the same time. Between 1948 and 1952, he worked in the tin-plant at a job where close contact with line-workers politicized him. In the factory, he experienced the iron-clad discipline imposed by management during the most confrontational years of the Cold War. In 1952, following his brother's example (who eventually became an MD), Mario enrolled in the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the University of Pisa, earning his degree in 1959. Whereas his family supported him while he attended the university, during the years that he worked he contributed his entire wage to the family and some of his earnings had gone to support his brother's education. Between 1959 and 1969, he taught in various schools and, in 1969, became a school principal.

The foregoing snapshots illustrate eloquently the strong drive to acquire secondary education that was present among segments of the local working class. It must be noted that, in two cases, the grandfathers of the interviewees had come from an urban milieu where they had been exposed to anarchist and socialist ideas. However, these accounts do not tell us anything about the range of motivations and the concrète experiences that prompted these working-class families to be so determined concerning the educational future of the next generation. It was in the interviews conducted with the cohort of students born between 1940 and the early 1950s that I found the most explicit and illuminating references to the role of the Piombinese political subculture and the historical experience of struggle, abuse and hardship. The next section presents "stories" and interview excerpts from this group.

Accounts of the Postwar Generation: The Pursuit of Education Historicized

Sandro, a teacher in a secondary school, was born in 1947 into a socialist family. His grandfather had been an anarchist before joining the socialist party after World War I. He worked for the railway company as a conductor but lost his job when in 1921 he uncoupled a railway car loaded with fascists and royal militia on their way to La Spezia to break a strike. From then on, Sandro's grandfather was never able to find a stable, full-time work. Another episode in his grandfather's life also entered the family lore and became a sort of "testament" passed on to succeeding generations. In this instance, an engineer had faulted him for something for which he was not responsible. However, his grandfather had found himself disarmed in the face of these accusations because he could not effectively contradict someone who knew how to manipulate the situation to his own advantage by intimidating him with technical, high-brow language. After this episode, Sandro's grandfather pledged that his son and grandson would go to school and study hard so that one day there would be "workers' children teaching in the schools." Despite the fact that this former anarchist never had a full-time regular job again after being fired for the above-mentioned sabotage, he did manage to put his son through the commercial school even though he did not always have the money to pay the tuition. Moreover, his two grandsons, who would become a doctor and secondary school teacher, both attended Piombino's humanist high school and the University of Pisa.

This story, although it does not contradict the view of education as a mechanism of socio-economic promotion, points to a more interesting feature in working-class attitudes toward schooling in Piombino, i.e. a

politically-driven yearning for education. Such an aspiration typically stemmed from the belief that the appropriation of cultural competencies would put an end to the abuses inflicted on the laboring classes by the elites. Thus, segments of the local working class saw the appropriation of "culture," "knowledge" and the education that comes with formal schooling as a strategic political choice, a means to stand up to the traditional upper-class elites (capitalist entrepreneurs, political bosses, town notables) who so often used their educational capital to confuse and cheat the "simple folk."

The following biographic sketch and interview excerpt points to yet another facet of the historical working-class experience that has impacted on dispositions toward education. As alluded to in the Introduction, the access to and familiarity with a certain types of books played a role in molding young people's readiness to appreciate the value of education. In some cases (as appears clearly in the passage cited in the Introduction and from the following capsule), the family's encouragement and cultivation of reading was directly "political."

Loriana (b. 1949) attended the humanist high school between 1963 and 1968. From a working-class family (her father worked in the steel mill), her first impression of the town's class politics was shaped by her uncle's family forced emigration to Switzerland after her uncle had been fired by the tin plant for being a party and union militant. During the first eight years of her life, she grew up in a multiple family household (with her maternal grandparents and aunt's family) in which, except for her father, all the family members were communist militants. The following excerpt from a long three-part interview illustrates her precocious familiarity with books and her eagerness to learn:

> Ever since I was very young I have always read a lot. I read everything. . . all the books in my uncle's library. I remember the novels of Zola, Sue, Hugo. . . When I was just seven or eight, my father took me to the municipal library, and, from that day on, I became a regular patron. My parents bought me cheap editions of the classics (Jack London, Salgari and the like) at the weekly market. I still have some of those books. I liked going to school and have always known that I wanted to continue my studies. . . . My family did not discourage me. As far as our education was concerned, they did not differentiate between my brother and me. [Loriana's brother, who is two years younger, attended the liceo scientifico].

Finally, as emerged quite clearly in many of my interviews with members of my principal cohort (i.e., people born in the 1940s and early 1950s) as well as in my informal interactions with older Piombinesi, parents often pressured their children to remain in school and study because they wanted to spare them the hardships and drudgery of factory life which they had experienced. This is borne out by Antonio's recollection of his father (cited in the Introduction), who, upon returning home from work covered with bruises and with holes burned in his undershirt, would insist that he study hard so that he would never have to endure such physical abuse. The fact that workers took pride in their work and craftsmanship, as an ethnography of Piombino's shopfloor culture shows (Mosci, 1982), does not negate that factory work has also been a source of alienation. Hence, the desire to give one's own children the chance to have a more fulfilling worklife still today lies at the root of working-class parents' determination to see to it that their kids succeed in school and continue their studies beyond the middle school. On this point, Sandro's experience as a teacher in one of Piombino's middle schools provides the most explicit illustration:

> I have been a teacher for 20 years, 15 of which were spent in a middle school here in Piombino where I still work. During this time, I have talked with my share of parents who hoped that their children do well in school and get a secondary education and even continue on to the university.

> Just the other day, I had a parent telling me that what he wanted above all was for his son to get a good education. As he put it, he did not want his son to be just a number in a factory like he was. And he was not the only parent I have listened to in these years; in their own different ways, many of them told me the same story.

These biographic capsules and testimonies indicate that the distinctiveness of popular attitudes toward schooling and the pursuit of secondary and tertiary education need to be analyzed as a crystallization of the historical experience of families and generations over the course of this century. Indeed, the "agency" and "dispositions" of the historical nucleus of the Piombinese working class in the field of education can be understood only in relation to the specific ways in which this particular working class made itself. Hence, the analysis of attitudes, choices and behavior in this arena becomes an exercise in historical/ethnographic interpretation: the only way to proceed is by piecing together at least the essential elements of the people's historical experience and subjectivity. In order to lay out the contours of this experience, the remainder of this chapter reconstructs the class formation process from the beginning of the century.

II. The Making of the Piombinese Working Class

From Miners and Rural Laborers into Factory Workers

Conveniently situated on the top of a promontory facing the mineral-rich Island of Elba, with a natural gulf to the south and a strip of mining towns in the hinterland, Piombino at the end of the 19th century possessed the required attributes to become a metallurgical center. Industrial development began in earnest only toward the end of the century after a tin plant and a metalworks commenced operations in 1893 and 1897 respectively.[7] By 1908, Piombino's metalworks would

become the first Italian iron and steel complex to execute the entire production cycle from mineral ore to finished steel products (Favilli, 1974:ch.1 and ch.2).[8] Throughout the first decade of the century, the process of industrial formation led to the constitution of large holdings and, finally, to the intervention of the state. Indeed, the intertwining of state interests with private capital and political with economic management would remain a constant throughout the century. It proved crucial to the process of class formation as it colored the relationship of the working class to the state.[9]

In 1871, at the beginning of the industrial era, the town's population stood at 3,999 inhabitants: 70.4% of the active population worked in agriculture and a mere 6.6% in industry.[10] By 1901 the population had more than doubled to 8,309. During the first three decades of industrialization (1870-1900), working-class "development" in Piombino remained very weak. Segmentation of the work force was aggravated by the heavy reliance on convicts serving life sentences in the local penitentiary.[11] Most of the "free" work force consisted of unskilled immigrant workers who lived under conditions of endemic economic insecurity and deprivation. These workers were hired and fired with impunity due to the intermittent nature of production in this industry, which was so totally dependent on state orders. Alongside these unskilled laborers lived a large number of the unemployed, who constituted Piombino's labor reserve (Favilli, 1974; Carignani, 1985).

The real demographic explosion occurred during the first decade of the century as increasing numbers of people immigrated to Piombino in search of jobs in the mills. By 1911 Piombino--with a population of 19,660 and an industrial work force of 4,500--had become a proto-typical factory town, with 52% of the active population engaged in industry and

only 20.1% in agriculture (Favilli, 1974: 75-82). Indeed, the formation of the Piombinese working class, as detailed in this chapter, occurred during the first two decades of the 20th century.[12]

During the period of maximum growth (1900-1910), the big factories and a sprawling subsidiary industrial sector (workshops, maintenance and construction firms, and the like) attracted massive numbers of job-seekers. Some came from the island of Elba, separated from Piombino by just a few miles of water; others came from elsewhere in the province of Pisa or from the nearby provinces of Siena, Grosseto and Florence.[13] Most of the newcomers were of peasant background from nearby rural areas (Favilli, 1974). A large number (if not the majority) had worked as day-laborers: colliers, wood-cutters and braccianti, i.e., they were individuals whose occupations had already turned them into semi-proletarians (Carignani, 1985).[14] A number of job-seekers did come from the urban milieus typical of Tuscan small towns. Those who came from Florence were workers brought to Piombino by the managers of the tin plant, which was owned by Florentine industrialists. A few foreigners (German and English) had even been recruited by the factories for highly skilled jobs (probably as mechanics and machine/furnace operators). Thus, in the formative stage of the Piombinese working class, only the figure of the proletarianized craftsman was absent (Favilli, 1974; Carignani, 1985).

Among those workers who came to Piombino between 1890 and 1910, two groups stand out due to the crucial influence they exerted on the process of class formation. Those from mining towns and those few who had worked in factories elsewhere brought with them to Piombino a set of political ideas and visions rooted in the anarchist or socialist traditions. Anarchism, in particular, had spread in Italy from the 1870s

on among middle-class individuals and artisans in major urban centers. From there, it had subsequently taken root in small towns and the mining areas of the region, often interacting with older millenarian or simply anti-clerical and anti-statist traditions (Tognarini, 1984; Hobsbawm, 1959).[15]

Due to the industrial mono-culture of the town, Piombino's laboring classes did not present the degree of heterogeneity common to other localities and the larger urban areas.[16] Yet, the factories found here did produce a highly segmented labor force, in part due to the high degree of specialization in the production process and the fragmentation of work tasks.[17] At the same time, this segmentation of the labor force was not just the "natural" by-product of the production process but rather the planned objective of management which sought to prevent the development of a strong united workers front (Tilly, 1992: 157-68; Carignani, 1985).[18] Finally, the influx of job-seekers in excess of available jobs, the periodic lay-offs and plant shut-downs, and the hiring ban on political trouble-makers created conditions of chronic unemployment and underemployment.[19] Those able-bodied males who did not find employment in the industrial sector or on the docks had to make do with more marginal and seasonal jobs (in construction or small fishing operations). Sometimes, if they could scrap together enough starting capital, they could try to set up a small store.

By all accounts, work in the town's factories was hellish. The overwhelming importance of piecework in wage determination enhanced the rate of exploitation. Work accidents, often fatal, occurred at an alarming rate as a result of the fatigue brought about by the progressive intensification of the work pace and exceedingly long hours.[20] During the first two months of 1913, industrial fatalities at the

blast furnaces averaged nearly one per week, earning this factory the local nickname of "the great slaughterhouse" (il grande macello) (Favilli, 1974:88).

Except for the very skilled, stable minority who received an adequate wage, workers had to struggle to make ends meet, even in the best of times.[21] Lodgings were woefully sub-standard, unsanitary, and overcrowded: most had neither latrines nor hearths. Yet workers paid unduly high rents due to the shortage of building stock and profiteering by landlords. Between 1902 and 1904, the death rate in Piombino due to lung ailments (which were connected to such poor living conditions) reached 6.3%, nearly triple the national average of 2.41% (Favilli, 1974:95). In subsequent years, when the influx of immigrants reached its zenith, the situation would deteriorate even further.

In 1914 a worker described the situation in the local socialist newspaper:

> For us workers, the end of the month is a real nightmare: we do not know where to turn to find the money to bring to the landlord. We have to make recourse to loans and pawn-brokers; often, we have to sell some of our linens to pay the rent. . . . How many sorrows, how much fasting, how many sacrifices in order to put together, coin after coin, a sum that comes close to [paying] the rent. A visit to the various workers neighborhoods would leave the impression of entering a human beehive, where hygiene, decency, morals are words that have no meaning. One would see entire families crammed in one room serving as kitchen, bedroom, living and dining room. Parents and children sleep in the same space. Ask yourself where, among these families, [one can expect to find] health, morals or decency (Favilli, 1974:96).

As already pointed out, some degree of economic differentiation existed in Piombino, as was reflected in the spatial distribution of working-class neighborhoods and housing.[22] The mill-owned dormitory-style housing projects built at the edge of the factory walls constituted the center of a working-class neighborhood known as "il Cotone." This

area, physically isolated from the town center, was considered a sufficiently respectable if undignified residential neighborhood. In the old town center, inside the medieval walls, can be found an elongated cluster of century-old decrepit houses with inadequate plumbing and sanitation that has been long identified with the more marginal sector of the laboring classes. This old sea-front section of the medieval center has been home, for most of this century, to various "generations" and sectors of the Piombinese sub-proletariat. It includes the three sub-sections known as "il Castello," "Marina" and "Corea" (Cresti and Orefice, 1978; Ghelardoni, 1977).

The Making of a Militant Political Subculture: Labor Conflict and the Inflammatory Language of Class

Prior to 1902, when the Socialists first won control of the municipal government, Piombino had been little more than a conservative backwater. Its administration and political life had been the exclusive domain of local notables and land-owning families who reaped the benefits of industrialization through land and real estate speculation.[23] In 1896, after a period of fierce repression directed against working-class organizations (sanctioned by the "exceptional" laws of 1894), the Socialist Party opened a local branch in Piombino (Favilli, 1974: ch.7).[24] The Piombinese factory proletariat, however, by and large did not embrace the reformist socialist ideology put forth by the predominantly middle-class socialist notables.[25] Indeed, the greatest shortcoming of the Socialist Party in Piombino in these early years, when it was primarily focused on capturing the local administration, was its lack of commitment to organizing workers within the factories.[26]

The first industrial strikes that broke out at the turn of the century (in 1899, 1901 and 1903) were purely defensive, as workers protested the inhuman exploitation, appalling working conditions and indiscriminate layoffs and wage reductions that characterized the local industrial concerns. These strikes failed due to insufficient organization within the factories and the separation that existed between these labor struggles and the efforts of the Socialist Party. The first successful strike would be waged in 1906: by this time, Piombino's workers had organized into 12 "resistance leagues" (including some 500 of the 1,000 workers at the tin plant) (Favilli, 1974:chs 7 and 8; Carignani, 1985).

Anarchism and syndicalism proved to be the two most influential ideologies in shaping the political subculture of the original nucleus of the Piombinese working class. Anarchism began to spread among Piombino's workers in the 1890s, as attested to by the correspondence between the administration and the police and by the confiscation of anarchist literature. The local socialist-anarchist group founded in 1891 was in contact with and received publications from Milan, Florence and Barcelona.[27] Indeed, Piombino proved to be one of the areas where anarchist tendencies maintained their hold on the popular classes long after the dominance of anarchism had been challenged nationally by the emergence of socialist organizations.

Syndicalism had begun to make inroads among Piombino's workers by 1904. In 1907, a Labor Chamber was established (with the participation of 26 resistance leagues) under syndicalist leadership. By November, the majority syndicalist faction in the local Socialist Party would renounce electoral politics and expel the reformists.[28]

In contrast to the experience of other areas where the Labor Chamber originated with mutual aid societies and only gradually evolved

into an instrument of class struggle, Piombino's Labor Chamber was created as a political and economic expression of the factory proletariat whose purpose was to overcome the existing organizational void in the arena of industrial conflict. Between 1907 and 1911, the Labor Chamber served as a catalyst for working-class development. It promoted a number of cooperatives and a mutual aid society, appointed a consultant on industrial accidents, and provided a medical assistance service at its headquarters (Carignani, 1985).[29]

In 1906 Il Martello (The Hammer), the most important socialist paper in the electoral district, transferred its offices to Piombino and became the organ of the syndicalist-controlled Chamber of Labor.[30] Il Martello would play a central role in the making of the Piombinese working class. With its reporting on exploitative working conditions, abuses and work accidents in the factories, the paper (with a circulation of 3,000) became a familiar fixture in many workers' homes. The editorial statement that appeared when the paper first fell under the control of Piombino's syndicalists read:

> Out with the sportsmen of politics, out with the slick defenders of those who sweat and suffer, out with the fugitives from the bourgeoisie disguised as socialists, out with the eternal chameleons and deceivers of the working populace. All these people with gloved hands and weak nerve in taking up The Hammer could do little more than merely chip away at the capitalist edifice that we want to demolish. Workers: this paper is a tool of labor: it belongs only to you. Seize it [for yourselves]. (Favilli, 1974:128).

This editorial used a language and conveyed a message with which the workers could easily identify. It reflected the distrust of the majority of workers for the bourgeois "notables" in the Socialist Party who did not share and understand their class experience. It also reflected the workers' alienation from the gradual reformism which the socialist notables championed: reformism did not make much sense in a

situation marked by hostility toward labor on the part of an autocratic management and the extreme exploitation that permeated the daily experience of workers. In Piombino, as in so many other places in Italy, the exasperation felt by workers, which stemmed from the high job insecurity and subsistence wages, was not reflected in the Socialists' reformist discourse (Favilli, 1974; Roveri, 1972; Fatica, 1971; Evangelisti, 1982). The intransigent class antagonism and the workerist ideology of syndicalism appeared to be more in tune with the factory experience of the toiling masses and with pre-existing anarchist impulses than did the generic rhetoric of the socialism of the notables. The Socialist Party could not lay claim to the political leadership of Piombino's working classes as long as reformism prevailed within its ranks. Indeed, large numbers of workers joined the PSI only when it adopted a more militant language following the ascension of its revolutionary wing in 1912.[31]

Between 1907 and 1911, working conditions at the Societa Altiforni deteriorated at an alarming pace. Abuses, extreme exploitation, wage cuts and management's refusal to pay wages corresponding to the qualifications workers had acquired on the job fostered rising discontent. In 1808-1909 a version of the truck system was instituted (whereby wage advances were paid in script redeemable only in factory stores) that intensified the exploitation of workers and increased their dependency on the mill. After the plant built some worker tenements, although the housing situation improved for some families, the threat of eviction left the workers even more exposed and vulnerable to the company's dictates.

Class formation in Piombino must also be understood in relation to the particular character that the regional capitalist class imparted to the development of heavy industry in Tuscany. The creation of a trust in

1911, of which Piombino's metalworks became part, furthered a program of technological rationalization which sought to lower production costs through wage cut-backs, work force reduction and intensification of the workpace.[32] The development of the holdings belonging to the trust was guided by the financial priorities of a new class of self-absorbed industrial tycoons who built a regional industrial empire almost overnight through fraudulent operations and risky speculations on the financial market. The vulnerability of the group to competition in times of crisis--due to the structural deficiencies of the industry and the overextended finances of the holdings--probably fueled the natural hostility toward labor of these autocratic captains of industry.

The point to be made here is that class formation is also a reactive process: the working class is locked in struggle with a historically situated capitalist class.[33] The labor hostility and the violent repression of labor conflict (through recourse to the police and the military) by the Tuscan industrial elite thus played a significant role in the making of the Piombinese working class. In the end the violent tactics of management and the revolutionary language of syndicalism reinforced one another.

The historic strikes/lockouts of 1910, 1911 and 1912, which have remained part of the collective memory of the Piombinese working class, marked the lives of many Piombinese families because of their highly confrontational nature and their life-altering consequences. They also became a test of force and a showcase of proletarian solidarity. In 1910, when the first strike broke out, a 500-man contingent of carabinieri, police and soldiers occupied the town (Chiaramonte, 1983:151). Management, refusing to negotiate with the syndicalists, proclaimed a lock out and closed the mill for over two months. After the first 30

days, the mill's 3,000 workers could barely feed their families. Many had to return to their home towns and villages in search of temporary employment. The Socialist administration provided limited economic relief for a few families by hiring some of the unemployed for public work projects. Shop-keepers and merchants were also severely affected by the lock-out--as they could not afford to give out food and necessities on credit indefinitely--and many stores had to shut down.

In 1911, in response to a strike provoked by management, a second factory lock-out was proclaimed, this one lasting 5 months. The conflict ended in massive lay-offs, bankruptcies of family-run stores, and increased out-migration. This proved to be only a prelude to the most devastating lock-out in the history of Piombino's labor movement. On July 8th, 1912, when another labor dispute broke out, the factory was immediately occupied by carabinieri and military troops dispatched to Piombino on management's request. Strike-breakers were brought in by rail and by sea. Soldiers, machinists and stokers from the Navy were utilized in the factories to contain the damage to machinery that would have derived from a complete shut-down (Chiaramonte, 1983:80-90). In turn, socialist, anarchist and syndicalist leaders flocked to the area to participate in public hearings and to show solidarity with local workers. Piombino's labor conflict would be followed and discussed by workers in other areas of the country.

On August 19th, eighty children from working-class families left for Terni (a metallurgical center in Umbria) whose socialist administration had offered to care for them during this difficult time.[34] A month later another 80 would leave bound for other destinations with sympathetic local governments. The concrete support of socialist administrations and workers in other areas (as far away as Parma,

Padova, Forli and Ferrara) and the demonstrations of solidarity that the "children's train" encountered in every station where it stopped along its route were a source of pride for the local labor movement. Pride and solidarity, however, were not an adequate defense against the repression imposed by the military and police siege of the town (Chiaramonte, 1983; Carignani, 1985; Favilli, 1974).

All the mediation efforts undertaken by the socialist mayor to put an end to the lock-out failed, as management proved intransigent in its determination to crush the local syndicalist movement and teach the population a lesson through economic strangulation. By mid-November--four and a half months into the lock-out--it had become clear that the population could no longer go another day without work. On November 25th, the local conservative newspaper (which supported the industrialists' interests) proclaimed triumphantly:

> Piombino has surrendered, been starved out, as could have easily been anticipated and as we had predicted. Some 1572 selected workers (out of 2300) will be taken back. . . . [But] about 400 will have irrevocably to find their means of subsistence somewhere else [my emphasis] (Chiaramonte, 1983:129).

When the metalworks reopened, management proceeded with its "rationalization plans," intensifying the workpace, shedding part of the work force and replacing experienced, politicized workers with inexperienced immigrant laborers in order to inflict a fatal blow to the labor movement. However, management could not have accomplished its objectives without the complicity of the police and the judicial system. Arrested and convicted for fomenting revolution, most of the syndicalist leaders were imprisoned, except for a few cadres who managed to flee. Individuals who had been even marginally connected to the street clashes with the police were also arrested. Finally, the municipal council

was dissolved by royal decree on the pretext that the socialist administration had failed to secure proper authorization for the public works program instituted to provide jobs for strikers. Despite these blows, the election of October 1912 put the Socialists back in power at the head of the local administration. The syndicalist leaders, having served their sentences, would also come back, welcomed by a jubilant crowd of 10,000 supporters (Chiaramonte, 1983).

Following the expulsion of many experienced workers from the metalworks, Piombino's work force became even more diversified (progressively more ruralized in the steelplant and more stable, older, and skilled in the tin plant). Between 1911 and 1915, labor was reorganized into industry-wide unions to prevent the development of corporatism. This period saw the ascendancy of anarchist organizers within the union movement and the emergence of socialist labor cadres (following the Socialist Party's shift toward revolutionary socialism). At the same time, these years witnessed the first rifts within the syndicalist camp, when some prominent members supported Italy's entry into World War I.

The war years led to expansion of the work force (through recruitment in the countryside and the absorption of the urban unemployed) and to the radicalization of new generations of workers. As a consequence of the militarization of production, control over workers intensified, strikes were banned and the workpace accelerated. Workers had to work more and more just to earn subsistence wages. The labor movement began to recover in 1917 when organizing recommenced, with the syndicalists still playing the dominant role.

The years 1919-20, known as Il Biennio Rosso ("The Red Years"), would be marked by factory occupations and a revolutionary atmosphere.

In Piombino, in 1919 the crisis in iron and steel, brought on by reconversion problems, led to the first wave of layoffs and the announcement that thousands of workers would lose their jobs. In June 1919 a popular insurrection headed by the anarchists broke out, culminating in the erection of street barricades and the raiding of foodstores: two persons died, 18 were injured and 40 arrested. On September 4th, the workers of the metalworks reacted to the management's announcement of a lock-out by occupying the factory. Some technicians and employees joined the occupation, and administrative, railway and maritime workers demonstrated in solidarity. In 1920, a new wave of factory occupations instituted workers' control in all the major industrial centers of the region--Florence, Livorno, Piombino, Portoferraio, Pistoia, Viareggio, Pisa, Arezzo and San Giovanni Valdarno.

With the factory occupations of 1919 and 1920 and the development of the council movement (started in Turin under the leadership of Antonio Gramsci and the Ordine Nuovo group), the character of workers' struggles changed dramatically. No longer did they limit their demands to wage increases or improved working conditions. The capitalist class felt especially threatened by this new movement, which raised the specter of a Bolshevik-style revolution (Snowden, 1989; Carignani, 1985).

In October 1921, the management of the metalworks engineered a crisis and shut down the plant, announcing that the mill would have to lay off some 300 workers and cut wages by 25%. Once again, scores of workers, including some of the most militant cadre, were forced by economic necessity to emigrate to industrial centers in Northern Italy. After six months, the steelworks reopened in May 1922. By then, the violence of fascist squads had reached Piombino, and the fascist

movement had established itself in town. Thus, the crisis of the steelworks coincided with the escalation of fascist violence and the active, at times enthusiastic, support that Tuscan industrialists lent to fascism from its beginning (Carignani, 1985; Snowden, 1989).

The enthusiasm with which Tuscan industrialists embraced the fascist movement early on as an instrument to crush working-class organization derived in part from the autocratic and socially ultraconservative leanings of the region's aristocratic agrarian and industrial elites. Tuscan industrialists and factory managers embraced fascism with a vengeance out of nostalgia for the militarized discipline that had reigned in the factories during the war (enabling them to turn out quick profits). The Tuscan Industrial Association had been very dismayed at the strength and unity of the occupation movement as well as the resourcefulness and the solidarity of the workers, especially the metallurgical workers. Moreover, the attempted creation of a united front linking the workers' struggle and agrarian protests convinced the regional bourgeoisie that the time had come to root out subversion once and for all.

Dismayed at the inability of Giolitti's government to defend the interests of the propertied classes (as it had proven reluctant to use force to expel workers from the factories during the wave of occupations), industrialists turned to the militia organized by the fasci.[35] In Piombino, the local fascio, although generously supported by the two factories (Altiforni and La Magona), at first encountered some difficulty establishing itself. Anti-fascist sentiment would provide an effective barrier against the violence and consolidation of the fascist movement in Piombino until 1922, whereas nearby areas would be terrorized by

fascist squads sent from Florence beginning in the Winter of 1920-21 (Snowden, 1989; Tognarini, 1980).

In Piombino, although a group of fascist militants had first formed in 1920, an official section of the Fascio was not founded until 1921. As elsewhere, the rank and file of the movement consisted of individuals most affected by the socio-economic dislocations that followed in the wake of World War I: in the beginning, particularly students and young demobilized officers without work. Fascism in Piombino also attracted a few syndicalist organizers (those who had become interventionists during the war) and even some workers.

At first Piombino's workers organized a "proletarian defense" against the threat of fascist squads by setting up paramilitary formations. After just two months of existence, however, these would fall apart due to internal feuding between communists, syndicalists and anarchists.[36] Piombino's capitulation to the fascist squads in June 1922 (when the Socialist administration was forced to resign) followed terrorist attacks in the surrounding countryside in the early months of 1922 and raids on the headquarters of the Labor Chamber.[37]

One of the first acts of Piombino's fascists was to blacklist about 125 anarchist, syndicalist, socialist and communist cadres: these men were banned from the town and warned that their lives would be at risk if they ever attempted to return. This act effectively decapitated Piombino's worker organizations and marked the beginning of a long political exile for the most militant workers and their families (who, in most cases, emigrated to Turin or France). In July 1922 two black-listed communist workers were killed in a locality near Piombino by fascist squads led by Garbaglia, a high ranking manager at the Altiforni, after

a bounty had been put on their heads by the Director of La Magona himself (Poli, 1985).

III. Education, the "Culture of Socialism" and the Piombinese Working Class

In this section, I discuss the "culture" of Italian socialism, i.e. the stock of ideas and discourses to which the politicized working classes were exposed through the literature circulated in those areas where socialism took root at the beginning of the century. This outline will serve as a base for the contextual understanding of various references throughout the dissertation to the religious character of socialism as "lived" experience and to the special significance attributed to the utopian-revolutionary impulse present in the socialist-communist subcultures of some regions. I will also attempt to show that the Piombinese working-class appreciation for education stemmed both from a class-empowerment, oppositional project and feelings of cultural inferiority. Indeed, both elements can be located within the internal articulation of the political subculture in which many families became immersed during the first two decades of the century.

Specifically, I argue that although the political working-class subculture that developed in Piombino during this period harbored definite counter-cultural and counter-educational elements, it could not escape the influence of the hegemonic bourgeois culture. I call attention to the socialist "discourse" on education (dominated by reformism) that, while extolling the intrinsic "goodness" and emancipatory value of schooling, remained silent on the forms of class discrimination and bourgeois ideology embedded in the very structure of the school system and the content of knowledge conveyed in the classroom. In the end,

the local working class could not escape the allure exerted by bourgeois culture through various types of contacts workers and militants had with the socialist notables, intellectuals, middle-class professionals.[38]

The "Culture" of Italian Socialism

Research on the "culture" of Italian socialism has emphasized its eclectic character and strong evolutionary and positivist underpinnings, on the one hand, and its anarchist influences and moralistic, sentimental, utopian overtones, on the other (Turi, 1980b; Dominici, 1992). In particular, the strong ethical-emotive dimension of Italian socialism caught the attention of such early social critics as Robert Michels (1910).

Reflecting the influence of positivism and Darwinian evolutionary theory, socialist propaganda often employed metaphors comparing society to a growing organism, with socialism representing the inevitable endpoint of progress. Science and technological advance were held up by socialist notables and intellectuals as the twin pillars of progress. Indeed, socialism derived much of its acceptance and prestige from its association with the very idea of progress (Viroli, 1981).

Most importantly, the "discursive practices" that marked the tone of socialist proselytism exuded pedagogic intent and paternalistic attitudes. In particular, the pedagogic zeal with which socialist intellectuals brought "high culture" to the popular classes was probably carried over from the 19th century democratic movement (Dominici, 1992:241). Scholars who have studied the "culture" of Italian socialism seem to agree that the lay progressive philosophy of the Risorgimento influenced certain sectors of the popular classes due to sustained attempts by the enlightened lay elite to "educate" the people and "save"

them from the obscurantist influence of the Church. Through the medium of highly effective emotional "texts" (such as the works of Edmondo De Amicis), a mix of national and socialist sentiments were communicated to a vast popular audience at which this literature was directed (Giovannini, 1984; Dominici, 1992:242).[39]

Finally, the literature that can be classified as "socialist propaganda" (e.g., pamphlets, booklets, newspapers, and books published by the Socialist Party itself or various small independent publishers) had a strong ethical orientation. Imbued with an utopian spirit, it conjured up visions of a socialist future that offered comfort and reassurance to its working-class readers who every day faced the prospect of illness or injury, job loss, and economic hardship. This utopian dimension and the attendant belief in class redemption brings into focus the "religious" aspect inherent in the experience and "lived" culture of socialism.

Among the popular classes, socialism often came alive as a system of ethical principles, ideas, beliefs and faith anchored in the quest for collective salvation and happiness: a form of socialist religion that displaced the Christian belief system. In this respect, the Italian tradition of the "socialist Christ" and the attendant "religious anti-clericalism" show how socialism was reinterpreted as the true legacy of Christ's teachings (Pivato, 1984; Nesti, 1974).[40] Indeed, echoes of this belief system can be found in Piombino today where a few people still recount the legend of an "anarchist Christ."

Ultimately, it is the articulation of various the "discursive" influences (including the subversive "traditions" that in various areas predated both industrialization and the diffusion of socialism) that shaped working-class dispositions. Only by focusing on the nexus of

discourses, ideologies, and historical experience can we come to understand the action, agency and behavior of the original nucleus of the Piombinese working class.

Experience, "Discursive Fields" and the Shaping of Dispositions

Recent Italian scholarship has emphasized the subversive, rebellious tendencies that constitute a major undercurrent in the process of working-class formation in many parts of Tuscany (Andreucci and Pescarolo, 1989). Symptomatic of the heretical and insurgent character that pervaded Tuscany's popular culture is the high rate of crimes against religion recorded in 1880, representing 70% of such crimes nationwide. Moreover, Livorno (situated 40 km to the north of Piombino) registered between 1870 and 1915 the highest number of crimes against authority (Andreucci and Pescarolo, 1989:132-33).

In the "social space" characteristic of towns such as Piombino that became centers of socialism and/or anarcho-syndicalism around the turn of the century, "the figures of the cultured glassworker and the anarchist shoemaker who urge their comrades to read Jack London and Kropotkin [served] a primal political function" (Andreucci and Pescarolo, 1989:131). Indeed, the novels of French and Russian naturalist and realist writers--diffused by the Socialist Party press and independent left publishers--cultivated and helped reproduce a distinctly working-class sensibility and promoted the diffusion and consolidation of socialist ideology and subversive impulses.[41]

As David Vincent (1990) noted in his study of English working-class autobiographies, working men could derive from the reading of such books a vision of an alternative way of life and the knowledge that their condition was shared by men and women in faraway places. Thus,

one should not under-estimate the import of such literature in the transmission of a working-class psychological universe and political culture nor the impact of the "socialist" novel on the appreciation for education. The reading of this realist/naturalist literature predisposed people to look at "book-knowledge" as "useful knowledge" and to make a connection between the pursuit of book-knowledge and the pursuit of freedom. As Vincent has emphasized, with the help of books working-class readers "could demystify the social, economic and political forces that controlled their existence," which in turn put them "in a position to mount a real attack on the power of 'the Class'" [i.e., employers, capitalists] (Vincent, 1990:175).

Until recently the historical assessment of the role of such literature has been extremely circumspect, as scholars tended to minimize the political-pedagogical impact that it had on its readers (Asor Rosa, 1966; Brunori, 1978). Gabriele Turi (1980a, 1980b) has been among the few who have attempted to re-assess the role of such popular literature in Italy, but his work has been hampered by the scarcity of material on the subject.[42] Yet, as the following citation illustrates, Italian historians have increasingly come to appreciate the role played by realist literature (as epitomized by the work of Emile Zola and Jack London) in the political education of the working class:

> In those areas where the PSI was very strongly rooted in the first fifteen years of the century, there were two typical working- class figures, representing two important trends of working-class culture. The first was the productive worker, the reformist, an example to his comrades, the first to arrive at the factory and the first to organize a strike, with a strong taste for technical literature, the history of inventions, science, and a believer in human progress and knowledge. The second was the worker with subversive tendencies, a reader of Zola and later Jack London, with something of the anarchist, efficient and active as a small town leadership figure, an educator for rebellion and politically primitive (Andreucci, 1990: 207).

Andreucci's assessment that the subversive worker "with something of the anarchist" was politically primitive (a characterization probably modeled on Hobsbawm's "primitive rebel") need not concern us here (Hobsbawm, 1959; Maddox, 1995). However, his reference to "two typical working-class figures" does have some import. The contrast between the reformist worker, attracted by the idea of progress and a more fair and rational world (associated with technological development), and the subversive worker, driven by moral outrage and a longing for social justice and "revolution," embodies the tension long recognized between the two "souls" within the workers movement. Indeed the contrast described by Andreucci reflects both different types of working-class experiences and forms of consciousness and the counter-position between the two major intellectual currents of the late 19th and early 20th century.[43]

In Piombino, reformist ideology did not easily take root both because anarchism preceded it and continued to exert its hold and, more significantly, because reformism did not make sense in a context marked by unrelenting violent conflict between the local work force and the industrial elites. The oppositional character of working-class "culture" was rooted in the harsh experience of factory life as well as in the class consciousness that grew out of working-class organizing and the confrontational nature of its struggles with the local bourgeoisie. Class antagonism in Piombino was "physical," as working-class families experienced during the lock-outs of 1910, 1911 and 1912 when it became clear to the local populace that the management of the steel plant was determined to starve them into submission. It was also articulated in stark tones in the language employed by the local syndicalist paper. In a world where work was highly exploitative and extremely dangerous

and labor conflict unrelenting, the reading of realist works depicting the wretched life of the toiling masses and the oppression and injustices that they had to endure both nurtured longings for social justice and indulged the subversive, rebellious impulses present in working-class "culture."

However, the existence of these two modes of class experience should not lead us to dichotomize the "reformist" and the "revolutionary" discourse into two mutually exclusive "fields." Rather, this thesis calls attention to the tensions and disparate "messages" coexisting within a complex articulated "discursive field" of communication that exposes people to various discourses.

Indeed, the Piombinese working class was exposed to the reformist ideology and discourse through the socialist administration and local socialist intellectuals. As analysis of socialist propaganda and initiatives shows, the party press exhorted the "people" to educate themselves, acquire basic notions and competencies, and send their children to school. Schooling oneself and one's own children was portrayed as a duty and as a means of emancipation. Socialist propaganda contained little if any criticism of the type of education provided by public schools (Tomasi et al, 1982; Lacaita, 1983; Cambi, 1991). The emphasis on the emancipatory function of education that so pervaded Italian socialism undoubtedly nurtured a popular appreciation for schooling in those areas where socialism had taken root in the social fabric.

Moreover, the Piombinese working class did not exist in total isolation from "bourgeois" culture. Indeed, the urban "working-class culture" found in Piombino was by no means sealed off from contact or involvement with certain arenas of "high" culture (the Opera being one of the best examples). In the socialist sub-culture, the contact between

socialist workers and their middle class fellow travellers, even if more limited than in those areas where socialist reformism gained greater acceptance, proved conducive to the diffusion of "bourgeois" values. Furthermore, socialism itself (and Italian socialism in particular) was an amalgam of diverse ideas and values propagated by largely middle-class intellectuals who had interiorized much of the culture of the educated class. Hence, both the eclecticism of socialist ideology and the paternalistic attitudes of socialist notables and intellectuals served in part as vehicles for the infiltration of bourgeois values and cultural mannerisms (Turi, 1980b; Rosada, 1977).[44]

Perhaps the best way to understand the Piombinese socialist-syndicalist subculture is to see it as simultaneously separate and antagonistic yet encapsulated in a social system of interconnected "fields," "networks" and "communications." Undoubtedly, Piombino's working class and socialist culture, prior to fascism, harbored a definite counter-cultural and hence counter-educational component. The militant working class had its own "schools" in the Chamber of Labor, the Casa del Popolo and the socialist-syndicalist press. Socialism represented an ethic and ideology that moved people to struggle.[45] Although the culture of socialism was entangled in the dominant culture and did not constitute a solid barrier to the penetration of "cultural hegemony," the moral universe of the working class organized in the socialist movement did represent the locus for a high degree of separateness (Turi, 1980b).

Italian Socialism and Education: A Tentative Appraisal

When in 1902 the socialists took control of Piombino's municipal government, the Italian Socialist Party was dominated by its reformist wing whose educational activism was then at its peak. Piombino's new

socialist administration thus put the improvement of elementary schooling as one of its top priorities. At this time, although the population residing within the municipal boundaries had surpassed 8,000, a mere 196 children (20% of the school-age population) were enrolled in the lone elementary school. Both the lack of adequate school facilities and the low enrollment stemmed from the previous conservative administration's unwillingness to enforce the 1877 law instituting compulsory elementary schooling. The most pressing problem facing the socialists would be the construction of school facilities to house the school-age population of approximately 1000 children (a figure that would double in the next ten years as the town's population grew to 20,000).

In Piombino, the Socialist's educational program included a commitment to pre-school and post-elementary education and adult literacy. The new elementary school building would be inaugurated in 1907 and a municipally funded secular kindergarten (providing free meals to children from poor families) established in 1908 (Favilli, 1974:240-1). Literacy classes would also be instituted around this time. The provision of post-elementary schooling proved to be a more intractable problem, as the administration was strapped for funds having committed its financial resources to a costly program of public works (revitalization of the harbor along with the construction of public housing and the new elementary school). A compromise solution was reached in 1909 with the institution of a one-year commercial school (the scuola tecnica) operating as an annex of a Florentine school. At the same time a municipal industrial school was set up although it did not provide any type of certificate to those who attended it.[46] In any case, for the better part of this century, the vocational/technical preparation of

workers would be provided solely by means of an apprenticeship system within the factory itself (Favilli, 1974; Tognarini, 1980: Ulivieri, 1991).

The commitment of Piombino's socialists to public school provision for the working class reflected the political orientation of the national leadership. The party's reformist wing set the tone of the debate on education due to the attention that it devoted to the educational question and its relative position within the party hierarchy and parliamentary group.[47] As emphasized above, Italian socialists promoted education as the single most powerful weapon of class empowerment. Local studies have amply demonstrated that, during the last quarter of the 19th century and in the early 20th century, where socialists or radical coalitions controlled municipal governments in Northern and Central Italy, vigorous action was undertaken to make education truly accessible to the "people" (Pivato, 1983 and 1986; Ulivieri, 1991; Punzo, 1991; Cavazzoli, 1991; Balduzzi, 1991).

The emphasis which Italian socialists placed on education and the "educative" fervor that pervaded the "discourse" of Italian socialism (through the party press and propaganda) has become a central theme in the recent historiography of the Italian socialist movement. Understanding the import of this emphasis on education, which scholars now consider part of the original, national character of Italian socialism (Cambi, 1991:348), can help us address the crucial issue of the "social" impact of socialism. Italian scholars have pointed out that this pervasive pedagogic zeal stemmed in large part from recognition on the part of socialist leaders of the comparative backwardness of Italy's educational and political development. The socialist leadership perceived that the lack of educational resources (above all the widespread illiteracy) severely impeded the spread of socialist ideas, and thus for them

"education for emancipation" had to take precedence over "education for revolution." Since effective propaganda required that the masses be literate, political education and "the school problem" appeared inextricably connected. Unfortunately, casting the question of education in these terms inevitably entailed an uncritical, poorly articulated vision of schooling (Cambi, 1991:353-4). Most Italian scholars would thus agree that:

> The school, as a place of instruction, is exalted, leaving in the shadow its real conditions and its structure. . . . A class critique of education is absent as is any understanding of bourgeois educational ideology. These are failings clearly inscribed within the horizons of reformism, which, in its alliance with the "democratic" forces, legitimates and incorporates the principles and the models of the antagonistic class (Cambi, 1991:353).

The Italian Socialist Party probably succeeded in what it viewed as its primary educational mission, i.e. raising people's consciousness and promoting socialism as a higher ethical universe. Yet the Socialist Party's approach to public schooling and educational provision for the popular classes was ambiguous at best. For example. the whole concept of "popular education" was never fully spelled out and little concern was given to issues of equity and access with respect to post-elementary schooling. Italian socialists seem to have accepted that secondary education should remain the domain and training ground of the middle classes for the foreseeable future and thus felt justified in limiting their efforts to improving and extending elementary education.

Theirs was thus a truly minimalist approach to the education of and for the popular classes. In the end, the limitations underlying the educational and cultural politics of Italian socialism could be said to have been rooted in the condescension and paternalism of its middle-class leadership toward their working-class clientele (Tomasi et al, 1982;

Santoni Rugiu, 1980; Ragazzini, 1983). The obsession with remedying the lack of basic competencies led them to underestimate the need to set up and control independent and alternative educational resources--an attitude consistent with the very nature of reformism (Lacaita, 1983).

Indeed, the Italian Socialist Party played at best a marginal role as a direct provider of alternative education, in marked contrast to its socialist counterparts in Germany or England that operated an extended network of well-attended Socialist Sunday schools and Trade Union colleges.[48] This failing was in part due to the organizational and financial weakness of the party at the turn of the century and to the priority that the socialist leadership accorded to raising the "cultural standards" through collaborative efforts which avoided a strictly class perspective (Degli Innocenti, 1983).[49] Indeed, at the turn of the century, when the PSI was most active in the educational arena, the reformist leadership was simultaneously pursuing a strategic alliance with other democratic forces.[50] Reflecting this political orientation, the flurry of educational initiatives focused on collaborative efforts with liberals and democrats (Lacaita, 1983). For example, popular universities, created at the beginning of the century on the French model, remained under the effective control of liberal philanthropy. The Socialist Party never made any serious effort to influence their programs or the ideological contents of their courses and activities (Rosada, 1975).[51]

This does not mean that in Italy the laboring classes were without their own "schools" or completely lacked independent resources. Quite to the contrary, the Leagues, Chambers of Labor, anarchist centers, and left Community Centers (the Case del Popolo) can be credited with remarkable contributions to the advances of literacy and political education (De Sanctis, 1978; Procacci, 1979).[52] Yet, despite the place

accorded to education by municipal socialism and the dynamic character of local working-class movements, the independent educational resources on which the latter could count would seem to be much scarcer than in other industrialized countries.[53]

To conclude on a comparative note, independent working-class educational "resources" in Italy were less developed than in other countries due in large part to the weaker institutional bases of Italian workers, which in turn stemmed from the relatively late onset of industrialization and uneven process of working-class formation. Thus, the Italian working-class movement could not support the range of independent popular educational initiatives characterizing the cultural and social life of popular classes elsewhere in Europe (notably England but also Germany and, to a lesser extent, France). Furthermore, literacy was a much scarcer resource among the Italian laboring classes. This meant that the Italian working-class movement could not capitalize on prior institutional development or accumulated material, human and intellectual resources.[54]

The formidable growth of the socialist movement occurred in the years immediately following World War I, a period when a revolutionary situation would develop in several areas in Northern and Central Italy (DeGrand, 1989b:9-12). It was at this time that the independent institutional and cultural organization of the Italian laboring classes might have developed to a level sufficient for the leap to be made to some sort of popular education directly controlled by the working class and its organizations. However, any development in this direction that might have been unfolding (for example, the Council movement) would be brought to a halt by the advent of fascism.

To recapitulate, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that the basic historical dispositions that led many working-class families in Piombino to develop a keen appreciation for education were shaped during the first two decades of the century when the historical nucleus of the Piombinese working class made itself. The chapter opened with passages from interviews underscoring the sacrifices which working-class families were willing to make to support children's schooling through secondary and university education and the "meanings" that they attributed to formal schooling. These included working-class views of education as both class empowerment/emancipation and as a means to spare children the harshness of factory life experienced by previous generations. The interview excerpts also make reference to a certain type of "populist" literature to which the interviewees had been exposed as children and young adolescents that seemed to be part of a socialist legacy shared by many families. In the middle section of the chapter, I have attempted to reconstruct and evoke the experience of working-class families during the first two decades of the century: an experience that bears directly on the "educational habitus" that would emerge after World War II. This historical experience depicted in this chapter was "centered" in a proletarian consciousness of economic exploitation, hellish working conditions, job insecurity, violent confrontations with management, and a "language of class" that reinforced class antagonism and revolutionary impulses.

Finally, in the last part of the chapter, I call attention to the eclectic "culture" of Italian socialism, the role played by the reading of the "socialist novel" in the shaping of a distinct working-class sensibility, and the double bind that characterizes the working-class appreciation for schooling (both rooted in a truly counter-hegemonic

"project" and partaking of the "cultural hegemony" of the middle classes). The view of education as class empowerment was rooted in "lived" class antagonism and sustained by the political language of class articulated by syndicalism and revolutionary socialism during the first two decades of the century. At the same time, the seeds of a bourgeois cultural-educational hegemony were present in the uncritical, paternalistic view of education adopted and propagated by the Italian Socialist Party. The argument laid out here emphasizes the notion of a "discursive field" in which disparate elements and orientations may produce inter-connected effects at odds with each other. In the case of Piombino, the prevalence of the subversive, revolutionary impulse did not eclipse the influence of reformism whose discourse on education was hegemonic within Italian socialism.

Admittedly, the "minimalist" approach to the educational question embraced by the PSI during the first two decades of the century was rooted in the tremendous backwardness of political development and social conditions and in the appalling dimensions of illiteracy prevailing in the country (which made Italy appear to be at least a half century behind Northern and Central Europe). Given these conditions, the Party found itself perennially waging rear-guard actions especially in the educational arena. However, the failings of its politics of education also reflect the middle class and petite bourgeois "culture" and the elitism of the socialist leadership.

NOTES

1. Indeed, at least three Piombinese historians from working-class backgrounds teach at major universities (in Siena, Pisa and Switzerland) and a significant number of Piombinese have gone onto academic careers. A conversation with a British historian first led me to appreciate Piombino's peculiarity as a "production center" of academics from working-class backgrounds. I can only hope that my research may contribute some insights on this issue.

2. Clearly, the high level of schooling was due in part to the nature of the local labor market, where the demand for child and adolescent labor was limited. Moreover, in an economy where niches for small entrepreneurship were absent, education objectively represented the principal means for socio-economic advancement. These factors, however, do not sufficiently explain the propensity of many working-class parents to push their children toward higher levels of educational achievement.

3. Whereas graduates from the technical institutes could at age 19 take up any number of white-collar professions (e.g., becoming surveyors or certified accountants), children enrolled in the academic high school would have to be supported by their families an additional four to six years while they attended the university.

4. For the first few years (until 1948), he acted as Director of a war-refugee camp. From 1956 to 1964 he served as the PCI city administrator responsible for education (Assessore alla Pubblica Istruzione); from 1964 to 1975 as the head of urban planning (Assessore all'Urbanistica); and from 1975 to 1980 as president of the local public hospital (also a political post). This largely self-educated man (notwithstanding his accounting diploma) became one of Piombino's intellectuals. His large library is a treasure trove of local documents and includes the major historiographic works of this century, from Marxist texts to works coming out of the Annales tradition. He serves on the editorial board of at least two history journals (one of which started as a local initiative) and over the years (especially during the 1950s-60s) has been involved in all the major cultural events in this town, either as a party representative or as a private citizen. Sergio's daughter, who attended the humanist high school and went on to receive a university degree in history, is now a secondary school teacher and the co-author of a historical study of Piombino's Chamber of Labor.

5. With regard to his elementary school years (1930-35), Sergio recalls his third-grade teacher as someone who helped shape his character. He remembers him very vividly because he had nothing in common with the other elementary school teachers whose "pedagogy" and general outlook were molded by fascist ideology and a strong authoritarian style. This teacher was somehow different: he was not a disciplinarian and knew how to stimulate his students and enter into real dialogue with them. As Sergio would later discover, this teacher was a communist militant who had been a member of the resistance underground.

6. At the time he graduated from this school in 1938, the liceo classico (which he could not attend after having gone to the vocational school) was Piombino's only secondary institution.

7. Piombino's industrial development began with the construction of an ironworks in 1860. The latter, which closed down after only a few years of operation due to technical difficulties, was eventually acquired and renovated by a British holding company. In 1892, on the site of the old ironworks, this holding company established a tin plant, which commenced operations a year later. This concern, which still bears the original name, La Magona d'Italia, has dominated the local labor market throughout this century, along with the other metalworks established in 1897. The latter, which bore the name Società degli Altiforni e Fonderie di Piombino for most of this century, started out with a traditional wood-fired furnace but underwent accelerated expansion and a complete technological overhaul during the early 1900s. Within a few years, under the aggressive leadership of a Ligurian family-controlled banking group, the holding company that owned the metalworks transformed the plant into one of the most modern and important iron and steel complexes in Italy. Piombino's original industries included a third factory dating to 1867 that ceased operations in 1908 (Favilli, 1974:ch.2). This was the second factory established in Piombino; it started out as a foundry (ferriera) and was operational by 1867. In 1875 it was acquired by a financial holding company and overhauled. During the 1890s the plant, which had achieved national prominence in the sector, went into decline as a result of a financial setback (1890-94) affecting the holding company as well as the general crisis of the Italian iron industry (due to foreign competition). By the end of the century, the work force in this plant had declined to about 100, 60 of whom were convicts provided by the local penitentiary. In 1908, as the crisis of Italian iron and steel became acute and the contract with the penitentiary was cancelled, this factory was forced to shut down (Favilli, 1974:ch.2).

8. The holding company that owned the metalworks sought to establish a metallurgical complex that would be competitive with the most modern European concerns. For this reason the industrial plant design was entrusted to German engineers and technicians and the most important machinery imported from Germany.

9. In 1905 a holding company (Società Ilva) was set up that included five metalworks and controlled either in whole or in part a number of other ventures: it thus became the nation's largest financial and technological concentration in the metallurgical sector. Piombino's blast furnaces were at first excluded from this cartel. The metalworks (the Società Altiforni), however, joined the industrial trust that was established in 1911 with the participation of a pool of publicly controlled banks. (Chiaramonte, 1983:18; Carignani, 1985:25).

10. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Piombino's population, which stood at about 1400, consisted primarily of peasants, fishermen, merchants, shopkeepers and artisans together with a few notables and professionals. As late as 1859 the population had reached only 3,263, with 700 residing in the surrounding countryside; from 1859 to 1871 the demographic increase was modest (rising only to 3,999). Indeed, until 1893 when the tin plant started production, between 50 and 80% of the

work force in the local industries consisted of convicts from the town penitentiary. The situation changed only around the turn of the century, at which time 600 "free" workers were employed in the two factories (Favilli, 1974:ch.5).

11. The weak working-class development during this period is largely portrayed to be the result of the relative geographic isolation of the town together with the immigrant and mostly rural origin of its work force. The lack of proto-industrial forms of production and craft-based organizations, on one side, and the absence of a local nucleus of middle-class radicals capable of providing leadership, on the other, are the other factors that contributed to the relatively late development of working-class organization (Carignani, 1985; Favilli, 1974:ch.5). Moreover, the segmentation of the work force that generally characterized the metal industry (i.e., the presence of a few skilled workers and a relatively large number of unskilled laborers) made organization difficult, even in areas with an older industrial tradition where the circulation of ideas and political movements was not constrained by geographic isolation (Tilly, 1992). Finally, Piombino was hardly at the center of national organizing efforts, as the labor movement concentrated its efforts in the North and major cities. Thus, the relatively late emergence of a labor movement in Piombino is ultimately a product of Italy's delayed and limited industrialization, which produced a trade union movement with a weaker organizational base and more limited resources than in the German, English or French case (Kemp, 1985; Mori, 1981; Andreucci, 1990). The only significant working-class development in Italy prior to the 1900s was concentrated in the North (Davis, 1989; Tilly, 1992). Undoubtedly, the regions in Central Italy witnessed working-class development only at the end of the nineteenth century. This development was centered first around mutual aid societies and subsequently the Chambers of Labor and the Case del Popolo (Procacci, 1970). For an overview of the debate on working-class formation in Italy, see Andreucci (1990).

12. As outlined in the first section, the transformation of Piombino into a factory town and the emergence of a local proletariat date to the turn of the century.

13. Until the 1930s Piombino and the other areas that today are part of the province of Livorno lay within the administrative boundaries of the province of Pisa. The province of Livorno was instituted during Fascism.

14. In contrast, sharecroppers took up factory jobs only much later, as they tended to leave the land only as a last resort, given their ambiguous social standing between land-owning peasants and day-laborers (Carignani, 1985).

15. The role of this segment of the Piombinese working class is documented through some interview excerpts and summary reconstructions of family histories included in several chapters.

16. Other areas and larger conurbations were characterized by prior proto-industrial development and the coexistence of a variety of craft specializations upon which, in some localities, industrial development would be grafted.

17. Fragmentation and specialization was reflected in the organization of work by workshop as well as in the existence of different wage scales. Wages varied substantially and were calculated in different ways depending on where in the factory a man worked and to what machinery or equipment he was assigned (Carignani, 1985). As a consequence, the crucial divides between foremen and workers, specialists, skilled generalists and the rest, and between skilled and unskilled workers became quickly established despite the rural origin of most of the work force and the absence of local labor hierarchies based on craft specializations.

18. In a context where older craft divisions were absent, the fragmentation of the work process and the ensuing parcelling of work tasks and specializations as well as attendant wage hierarchy and wage scaling were the main mechanisms through which differentiation was created and crystallized (Carignani, 1985). As Tilly has noted, the cyclical nature of production--whereby periods of full employment would be followed by lay-offs after a work order was completed--necessitated a two-tiered work force. One tier consisted of a stable core of skilled workers; the other was made up of specialists and less skilled workers that were hired and fired as required by the cycles of production and the need to replace seasoned workers with more inexperienced and vulnerable laborers (Tilly, 1992).

19. The exploitative practices of the plants, which fired physically exhausted workers and replaced them with fresh bodies, led to the emergence of a reserve army of labor and the formation of a more marginal proletariat. Working conditions in the smaller operations (carpentry, construction, etc.) that subcontracted with the mills were often as bad as those in the mills and the earnings of these workers meager.

20. For example, between 1900 and 1914 the 12-hour work day was often exceeded due to frequent imposition of overtime and failure to grant a weekly day off. A bi-weekly 24-hour shift was forced upon workers in continuous process production operations (Favilli, 1974:88).

21. A calculation of prices of foodstuffs and other necessities together with housing costs (based on 1912-1914 data) showed that wages for most workers did not even meet subsistence needs (Favilli, 1974:95).

22. As a caveat, it must be noted that, in outlining the living and working conditions of the "Piombinese working class," it is difficult to do justice to both the shared destinies of a proletarian population and to the degree of internal differentiation that accompanied the process of class formation.

23. Those few Piombinesi eligible to vote (just 86 in 1865 and 561 in 1890) invariably cast their ballot for candidates backed by the liberal-monarchic association based in Volterra, the most important urban center in the voting district that encompassed Piombino (Favilli, 1974; Piazza, 1966). With regard to activities directed to the laboring population, a Mutual Aid Society was founded in 1870 but remained an exclusively philanthropic association confined to charity and initiatives of little significance under the control of the town's notables. Workers never participated actively in its development or activities (Piazza, 1966).

24. A change in municipal politics came about in 1890 when the Socialist candidate obtained 66 votes. In 1901 Piombino's Socialist section (founded in 1896) counted 47 members; by 1910 it had grown to 130 and in 1914 to almost 200. Given the make-up of the town's population, the majority of the members were probably workers, though about 30 were municipal employees. Before the war, the Socialist Party's electoral share hovered between 55-60% (Favilli, 1974:208).

25. The local party leadership was typically middle class; three physicians and three teachers occupied official posts in the party hierarchy. However, most of the town's Socialist councilmen were industrial workers: nine of 13 in 1902 (the others were two small merchants and two sharecroppers) and 11 out of 15 in 1904 (Favilli, 1974:208).

26. The organization of workers was accorded low priority, due in part to the nature of the local Socialist leadership: most were enlightened middle-class men in the liberal professions (many of whom were masons). Local Socialist leaders and organizers (who came from middle class professional strata) had cut their teeth organizing peasants and were not up to the challenge of assuming the leadership and articulating the demands of mill workers (Favilli, 1974:ch.7; Carignani, 1985).

27. Anarchism began to spread in Tuscany in the 1860s following the stay of Bakunin in Florence and the influence of a number of anarchist thinkers and agitators who helped diffuse anarchist ideas among artisans and workers in central Italy.

28. In November 1907 socialists and syndicalists--who until then had coexisted in the Socialist Party and local administration--went their separate ways. The syndicalist group that constituted the majority in the local section of the Socialist Party expelled the socialist reformist minority. At this point Piombino's syndicalist cadres made a final break with electoral politics and resigned their posts on the town council. At the national level, a similar schism had taken place three months earlier (Carignani, 1985; Roberts, 1979; Favilli, 1974:ch.9).

29. The Labor Chamber's organizational efforts were not confined to Piombino's industrial workers, as it reached out to workers in the mining towns of the hinterland, the island of Elba, and the nearby countryside. Syndicalists and reformists had their respective areas of influence, with the former entrenched in Piombino and the mining areas and the latter exerting greater influence among the rural population and some of the non-mining towns (Carignani, 1985). On the establishment of the Labor Chamber, see also Favilli (1974:ch.9).

30. After the scission in November 1907, the "official" socialist group began publishing its own organ, La Fiamma, which championed a gradualist and reformist course in an attempt to counterbalance the influence of syndicalism (Favilli, 1974:ch.9).

31. Until 1912, when the socialist revolutionaries captured the leadership of the PSI, the overwhelming majority of workers in Piombino stayed away from the party. Yet, when its language and its messages acquired more radical class overtones both at the national and local level, working-class cadres joined the party and a number of socialist-led leagues were

established in the factories, thus posing a challenge to the formerly monopolistic position of syndicalism.

32. During the first decade of the century, the metal concerns contracted major financial debt as they modernized and expanded. This operation injected new capital into the sector and amortized the liabilities of participating concerns.

33. Tuscan industrialization in sectors of high capital concentration (mining, electricity, metallurgy, chemicals, shipbuilding and precision instruments) was characterized by marked interpenetration of agrarian and financial-industrial capital, a tendency toward monopoly (with one concern dominating each individual sector), and concentration of control in the hands of a few families. Indeed, the regional landowning elite, represented by a handful of aristocratic families, was over-represented in the board rooms of the holding companies, while the directorships of leading companies displayed considerable overlap (Snowden, 1989:ch.3; Mori, 1986b).

34. Terni is the subject of Alessandro Portelli's 1985 book Biografia d'una città.

35. Fascism in Tuscany began as an industrial movement with Florence as its epicenter and organizational base, although it was soon to be overshadowed by the development of agrarian mobilization. Funding of the Florence fascio by Tuscan employers started in late 1920. As already indicated, Tuscan industrialists and aristocrats did not merely fund the fascist movement, as many put themselves at the head of its action squads or occupied official posts in the upper echelons of the movement's hierarchy. Sections of the fasci would be established in most Tuscan centers and provincial cities during the course of 1921 (Snowden, 1989; Palla, 1986).

36. According to a prefectorial report, in August 1921 the paramilitary formation Gli Arditi del Popolo was present in Piombino with a 500-man contingent consisting of communists, syndicalists and anarchists. However, while the authorities let the fascist squads sow terror with impunity, the "proletarian defense" faced police persecution and repression. Two arditi were killed near Piombino, one by the police and the other by fascist squads. This paramilitary formation lasted less than two months and faltered in September as a result of internal divisions within the Left (Poli, 1985). It is well-known that the Left's internal divisions severely undermined the organization of anti-fascist resistance, even though all of Piombino's political forces of the Left had rallied to form a proletarian defense committee during August (Poli, 1985).

37. In early 1922 fascist squads conducted their first successful campaigns of terror in the town's immediate vicinity. In June a fascist plot masterminded by the director of La Magona resulted in the murder of a young fascist. The murder, falsely blamed on a local anarchist, was designed as a pretext for unleashing the violence of the squads. The day after the killing, fascist mobs attacked and wrecked the Socialist section, the headquarters of the Labor Chambers (one affiliated to the CGIL and the other with the syndicalist movement), a printing shop and a small theater.

38. Indeed, the "field of social communication" typical of small and medium towns was conducive to contact and intermingling between individuals from different classes, even in places like Piombino that were characterized by residential segregation along class lines.

39. Edmondo De Amicis, a socialist intellectual, is widely considered the greatest popularizer of the Risorgimento among the popular classes. Among his popular "classics," Cuore is probably the most well known. At least as late as my generation, every elementary school pupil was assigned this book. Reference to this book is found in one of the interviews excerpted in Chapter Eight. A sizable critical literature exists which offers varying interpretations of the influence and the ideological messages in De Amicis' work (Timpanaro, 1983; Bertone, 1980; Scaraffia and Tobia, 1988).

40. In some regions (such as certain areas of Emilia-Romagna), "socialist evangelism" was the distinctive form of socialist proselytism among peasants (Morini, 1957).

41. Alongside the work of French and Russian realists and naturalists could be found popular works by such Italian authors as Paolo Valera. Many of these were inspired by such foreign novelists as Sue and Zola. The work of Italian socialist authors such as DeAmicis was also widely circulated and read (Turi, 1981).

42. The scenario depicted here confirms the antagonistic "structure of feeling" that underpinned the pursuit of knowledge and education, at least for a number of Piombinese families. However, one cannot presume that, in those homes of the 1950s cohort where a certain type of populist literature was to be found, families did not also harbor a desire for social elevation through the appropriation of "culture." For such families a longing for "culture" did not seem to be a betrayal of their class origins, as they wanted it above all to empower themselves as workers and communists. However, this conception of culture (which is not used here in the anthropological sense) as a "disinterested good" concealed the ways in which (bourgeois) culture could ensnare the working class.

43. The two "souls" of socialism, often contemporaneously present in the work of its key political theorists, are rooted respectively in the romantic, libertarian tradition, on one side, and in the rationalistic, evolutionary currents of the 19th century, on the other. Rationalistic philosophies and evolutionary ideas, a direct product of the Enlightenment tradition, eventually gave rise to positivism and a rather mechanistic belief that socialism (in its reformist incarnation) represented a scientifically superior form of socio-economic organization that would inevitably supersede the capitalist system. In contrast, the romantic, libertarian tradition, which came to be associated with the anarchist, insurrectionary tendencies of the workers' movement, was rooted in the emotive impulse to destroy a system characterized by exploitation and injustice. In some situations, the contrast between reformism and revolutionary socialism corresponds to the division within the working class between the so-called "the aristocracy of labor" (mostly skilled workers) and the mass of less skilled workers who enjoy lower job security.

44. The literature on the different strands of Italian socialism is too vast to be summarized here (Della Perruta, 1965; Manacorda, 1963 and 1975; Valiani, 1975; Roselli, 1967; Ragionieri, 1961; Andreucci and Detti, 1975-79; Detti, 1981; Barbadoro, 1973; Andreucci, 1986). Analysis of eclectic aspects of Italian socialism more directly relevant to the argument developed here are provided by studies that have examined socialist propaganda and the literature diffused by the Socialist Party press and independent publishers with socialist leanings. Among these, one can cite Pisano's "Editoria Popolare e Propaganda Socialista in Italia fra Otto e Novecento" (1984) and Il Paradiso Socialista in Italia alla Fine dell'Ottocento attraverso gli Opuscoli di "Critica Sociale" (1986), Turi's "Editoria e Cultura Socialista (1890-1910) (1981)," Fedi's Cultura Letteraria e Società Civile nell'Italia Unita (1984) (especially chapter 5), and Audenino's "Fra Arte e Pedagogia" (1985).

45. Several authors, including the social theorist Robert Michels (1908), have emphasized the strong ethical system underlying Italian socialism.

46. Neither the existing secondary literature nor the local school archives specify exactly when this "industrial school" came into existence.

47. Italian socialism was an amalgam of different ideological currents, strategies and theoretical stances and thus important differences existed with regard to educational issues. However, for the purposes of this discussion, the reference is to the reformist program that dominated the socialist discourse on education.

48. This conclusion can be drawn from the relevant literature although perhaps in not such clear terms. The scholarship dealing with the educational politics of the Italian Socialist Party has grown in recent years; in particular, see the introduction in Pivato's Movimento Operaio e istruzione Popolare nell'Italia Liberale (1986), the collected volume Scuola e Societa nel Socialismo Riformista (Tomasi et al, 1982), and Lacaita's "Politica e Istruzione Popolare nel Movimento Socialista" (1983). A vast literature exists on the educational programs and views of the British labor movement, socialist groups, and Communist Party; for a recent study of the relationship between state-provided education and the educational work/politics of small socialist groups, see Hilda Kean's Challenging the State? The Socialist and Feminist Educational Experience, 1900-1930 (1990) This work provides bibliographic references to earlier studies dealing with the educational politics of the Labor Party and the union movement, popular Marxism, teachers' unions, and the like. The book includes a chapter on the "Activities of Socialist Organizations with Children of Socialists," (Kean, 1990:54-77). In Great Britain, the socialist Sunday schools operated within an arena of socialist educational activism alongside several other groups; in 1923, at the peak of their diffusion, these socialist Sunday schools enrolled 5,268 (Kean, 1990: 55).

49. For a brief statement of this problem, see in particular the Introduction to Degl'Innocenti's Geografia e Istituzioni del Socialismo Italiano 1892-1914 (1983).

50. Prior to this period, the attention devoted to the educational question had varied. For example, the years preceding the foundation of the Socialist Party in 1892 witnessed a stronger emphasis and a more

articulated stance on education than did the 1890s when the socialist movement was forced on the defensive by government repression.

51. On the programs and role of popular universities in Italy, see Rosada's Le Università Popolari in Italia 1900-1918 (1975) One should also recall that in Italy the beginnings of popular education were associated with mutual aid societies established during the 1860s and 1870s and solidly under the control of bourgeois democrats (Pivato, 1983: ch.3). In contrast, popular universities in France were more firmly rooted in the working-class movement (Mercier, 1986).

52. The shaping of a genuinely distinctive popular education from a working-class partisan perspective was contingent on the strength and characteristics of local socialist traditions. On the significance of such territorial organizations/institutions for the formation of a militant working-class consciousness and the political education that these imparted, see Procacci's The Italian Working Class From the Risorgimento to Fascism (1979). However, it must be noted that, given the great geographic variation in working-class formation and the localistic character of socialism, on one hand, and insufficiency of the research to date, on the other, our knowledge of this phenomenon remains limited.

53. On municipal socialism and education, see Pivato (1986:20). The concept of "class development" is adopted from E. P. Thompson. According to David Hogan, Thompson uses it to connotate "the number and strength of typical working-class institutions--trade unions, political parties, voluntary associations--intellectual traditions, community patterns, and working class 'structures of feeling.'" As Hogan states, "class development is the key index to differences in class formation between different countries" (Hogan, 1982:36).

54. In Italy, working-class development had been delayed until the end of the nineteenth century (except in a few textile-producing areas and in the agricultural regions of Emilia Romagna) by a retarded process of industrialization and proletarianization. In most places, the last two decades of the century constituted the first stage in the formation of a largely illiterate working class. However, in Italy the spread of socialist ideas, imported from other countries, either predated industrialization or accompanied it (Manacorda, 1975:168-9). Thus, although Italian class development was a few steps behind that of other countries, the new workers could often draw upon a political legacy. Indeed, segments of the new urban proletariat did sometimes bring into the factories a politicized vision of the world along with militant ideas and spirit acquired in their places of origin, as is the case of miners who became factory workers in Piombino's industrial plants. The nascent industrial proletariat gathered around the Italian Workers Party, which as founded in 1882 and replaced by the Italian Socialist Party in 1892; the anarchist movement, although it declined after 1878, also continued to be influential. The General Confederation of Labor (CGIL), created in 1906, had by 1911 recruited only about 400,000 of the estimated 2.3 million industrial workers (DeGrand, 1989b:10-11).

CHAPTER THREE

EDUCATION AND SOCIETY IN PIOMBINO UNDER FASCISM

> Through readings and written assignments, the teacher showed how any type of work, even the most modest, makes man noble and makes him the pride of Homeland and Family. The teacher's duty is not only to mold a good pupil but above all, forge a honest and hardworking citizen who can serve his country with his heart and his arm.
>
> —Teacher's Report (1938-39)

> This Vocational School enters into its second year and has already a fair number of female students who, tomorrow, will be the future housewives of Italy... This Office has decided to build a hen-house and a rabbit-hutch with a limited number of animals so that the girls can acquire some experience raising farm animals.
>
> —School Principal, Letter to Agriculture Inspectorate, 1939

One cannot understand the school milieus of the postwar period without acknowledging the elements of continuity that connected schooling in the 1950s to the fascist period. Furthermore, the harsh character of the working-class experience during the fascist regime helps explain the "structure of feeling" and the communist hegemony that so marked the history of this town in the postwar period.

I. Fascism in Piombino

All the political organizations of the left disbanded between 1922 and 1923 while cultural and recreational associations, the town's mutual aid societies and three masonic lodges fell under the control of fascist loyalists. As mentioned in the previous chapter, ex-syndicalists constituted an important component of the early fascist movement in Piombino; however, the most prominent figure of this group (which

represented the left wing within fascism), was quickly marginalized and most of the remaining fascist ex-syndicalists became lackeys of the director of the tin factory, a high profile fascist boss. In addition, a manager of the metal-works, an authoritarian and violent man, became the secretary of the town fascio (Tognarini, 1980).

In the early years, fascism was an internally divided, rather heterogenous "movement." In 1924, various factions engaged in internecine struggles and vented their anger in violent ways against the town's population; that same year, the liberal-fascist slate won the election and a Fascist ex-syndicalist became the new Podestà (which under fascism replaced the post of mayor). In 1928, the municipal council was replaced by a twelve-member consulta comunale consisting of 6 employers and 6 persons in manual and "intellectual" occupations. In the early 1930s, the town's fascist leadership underwent an internal upheaval: in 1935, the personnel chief of the steel plant became the new fascio secretary and a year later a landowner was made podestà (Ibid.).

The active participation in the fascist movement of the managers of the two local industries proved paramount, as they had absolute control over the livelihood of the population and accumulated in their hands considerable political power/authority as well as the use of "legitimate" violence. As was to be expected, the managers of the two plants made it their business to intimidate and terrorize workers who were known socialists.

Working conditions under fascism, especially (but not only) during the war when the plants were militarized, were appalling. Workers were spied upon and controlled by factory security guards, mostly ex-carabinieri and fascist thugs. Within the plants, discipline was enforced in a military style: for example, nobody was allowed to move

around within the plant without written permission. Oral accounts of this period are punctuated by bitter memories and profound feelings of resentment.[1]

Scores of workers joined the Fascist Party because they feared losing their jobs if they did not; many became card-carrying fascists only after having been threatened with dismissal. In danger of losing their only means of support, at least one male in many socialist families would give in and sign a membership card.[2] In turn, many who were forced into acts they considered dishonorable secretly harbored great resentment toward the regime. Even so, a fair number of individuals and even some entire families refused to bow to the pressure. One socialist old-timer watched as his sons joined the party because otherwise they would not be hired by the factories, but he adamantly refused to take the membership card himself. Ultimately, most people had to put food on the table and survive by any means possible: adapting became a "necessity." Many people's lives under fascism were entangled in a complex web of contingencies and pressures and a mixture of feelings, including (at least for many), apathy and resignation. Yet, other possibilities were also present.

Well-known socialists and anarchists who refused to acquiesce or submit to threats and blackmail eventually left when the political climate became too dangerous. Throughout the 1930's some people were arrested and tortured in fascist prisons, while others pretended to renounce their old socialist or anarchist ideas. In quite a few cases family members kept up the pretense in front of their sons, daughters or younger siblings, who were being indoctrinated in fascist schools, for fear that the children might inadvertently put the family in jeopardy. Behind closed doors many of these people would meet to listen to allied

broadcasts of Radio Moscow or Radio London or to sing anti-fascist songs. Anti-fascist sentiments were widespread, and acts of defiance/resistance against the regime commonplace. One interviewee recalled that his father's barbershop served as a meeting place for socialists and critics of the regime. Moreover, his father was known to refuse to serve customers who might praise il duce.

Despite the repression, until the early 1930's a number of socialist and communist militants continued meeting and networking in an organized fashion. For example, a socialist group reconstituted itself in 1924 with 20 members, and in 1926-27 a group of anarchists hid behind the facade of a sports association. A third anti-fascist group calling itself Italia Libera ("Free Italy") was established in 1924 and survived until 1926. Moreover, whereas in 1921 Piombino's Communist Party had probably between 300 and 400 members, in 1925 Piombino's clandestine communist cell still had 20 members. These groups would meet clandestinely to discuss the political situation, share information and maintain contacts with groups in other areas (Favilli and Tognarini, 1982; Tognarini, 1980).

A significant group of anti-fascists cut their teeth on Marxist and socialist texts and on the literature of the second and third international, part of a 1764-volume donation by a prominent local socialist pioneer to the municipal library. Only in 1939 did the local Fascist authorities get around to purging this literature from the library (Tognarini, 1980). Many workers continued to read "socialist novels" clandestinely: one interviewee's father recalled how his older brother tried to keep this literature hidden from him but he would sometimes see his brother leave the house with a book to go off and read somewhere. After the fall of fascism, his brother confessed that he

often went to some isolated spot along the rocky coast that surrounds Piombino where he met with others who had formed a political reading group.

II. Schooling Under Fascism

The Fascistization of Education

Fascism inherited from the liberal period a vision of education centered on the function of schools as bulwarks of the status quo and instruments of class reproduction, which, by means of tracking, supplied the nation with both its workers and its managerial and administrative elites. The "Gentile reform" carried through in 1923 during the first Mussolini government exacerbated the elitist and segmented character of the school system by abolishing the technical school and replacing it with two terminal post elementary schools, a dumping ground for those who were destined to remain, in this philosopher's own words, "modest citizens" (Koon, 1985:50).[3] The reform established a liceo scientifico and a liceo femminile (which never really took off) and also further restricted access to university for the graduates of technical institutes. Furthermore, academic education became more selective, many high schools eliminated, state examinations at the end of secondary schools introduced and religious instruction in elementary school made obligatory.[4]

The fascistization of school life was pushed through with the establishment of a fascist youth organization (ONB) in 1926 and the requirement that students participate in the ceremonies of the regime. By the late 1920s/early 1930s, the recreational activities provided by the fascist youth organizations were often the only game in town, and physical education in schools was entrusted to the ONB.[5]

In turn, political control of teachers was achieved through extensive purges starting in 1925; by 1929, both teachers and professors had to take a loyalty oath.[6] By 1934, elementary teachers were required to wear the uniform of the Fascist Party. Meanwhile, control of school knowledge became tighter and political indoctrination escalated. The teaching of history became a mere pretext for singing the praises of fascism and Mussolini and instilling a nationalistic ethos.[7] Although elementary education was more fascistized than other schools, classical studies in secondary schools were also recast so as to propagate Italy's civilizing mission and reading lists purged of foreign authors and writers who were deemed insufficiently "fascist." Between 1929 and 1931 new subjects were introduced: fascist corporate law and fascist culture. Starting in the mid-1930s, "military arts" (cultura militare) were taught in secondary institutions by military officers. During this period, any remaining trace of administrative autonomy and freedom of freedom of expression in teaching was eliminated. By 1935 all elementary schools were placed under the direct authority of the central government (Koon, 1985; Ostenc, 1981).

During the second half of the 1930's the regime stepped up the political socialization and indoctrination of youth: the GIL (Gioventù Italiana del Littorio), established in 1937 under the direct control of the Fascist Party,

was put in charge of physical education, sports and pre-military instruction of youth. After 1939, the GIL controlled the patronati scolastici (charitable educational agencies), a national scholarship competition and courses in fascist culture (attended by 4 million members in 1939) (ibid.).[8]

A school reform plan formulated in 1939 (Bottai's "School Charter") which, as had the Gentile reform in 1923, sought to "freeze social classes," was intended to modernize the school system by bringing it more into line with the needs of an industrial labor market. The main provision of the School Charter to actually be implemented was the institution in 1940 of a single three-year middle school which combined the lower cycles of the academic, teacher education and technical tracks (the Ginnasi, istituti magistrali and istituti tecnici). Next to the scuola media, Bottai created a three-year artisan school (scuola artigiana) to be set up in rural communities and a three-year vocational school (scuola di avviamento professionale) divided into a commercial and industrial track. The graduates of the vocational school could then go on to a terminal two-year technical school (ibid.).

Education in Piombino under Fascism

As mentioned in chapter 1, a commercial school for the 11-14 age bracket had existed in Piombino since the early 1920s; a Gymnasium and humanist high school were established in the early and mid-1930s as a result of concerted efforts by the fascist administration and the local bourgeoisie. In contrast, a vocational industrial school was created only in 1938 as an experimental two-year course: in 1940 it became a three-year scuola di avviamento industriale in compliance with Bottai's School Charter.

In 1931-32, when the Gymnasium was established, 24 of the 35 students were male and 11 female. Of the 24 male students, 14 came from the popular classes; their fathers' occupations were listed respectively as shoemaker (in two cases), worker (two cases), foreman (three cases), caretaker, street-sweeper, war veteran, electrician, warehouse keeper,

municipal worker. The other 11 male students were the sons of shopkeepers, merchants and white-collar employees. The 11 female students were the daughters of white-collar employees or came from professional and propertied families. The Gymnasium was a selective school: less than half the students who attended the first grade in 1931-32 made it through to the 5th grade five years later. In 1939-40, the five grades of this academic school enrolled 143 students (ASMSF). The Liceo classico (the three-year humanist high school which followed the Gymnasium), although private, was publicly accredited; it had a troubled existence as often Italian, Greek and Latin teachers could not be found (Tognarini, 1980). The humanist track was discontinued in 1940 when a scientific high school was established, which from the beginning had a strong working-class student population.

The commercial school, originally a two-year course, was by 1936-37 a three-year post-elementary cycle with a student population of 222 (148 boys and 74 girls) which increased to 330 in 1940-41 (ASMSB/AC-CB, Anno Scolastico 1940-41). This school provided students with basic accounting and record-keeping skills and some training in commercial correspondence. All students came from working class and lower middle class backgrounds. It is noteworthy that, at a time when post-elementary schooling was not compulsory, a significant number of workers' families sent their children (both boys and girls) to school. Commercial schools provided a practical education and access to clerical jobs. This meant no dirty work or back-breaking physical labor and perhaps better wages and more respectability. However, a mere three-year post-elementary vocational schooling was totally insufficient as a ticket for upward mobility since it could only provide access to low clerical jobs.

There is little doubt that the vocational schools in Piombino fell under the tight grip of the local fascist organizations and that a number of their teachers counted themselves among the enthusiasts of the regime.[9] As I gathered from interviews and archival documents, the principals of the commercial and industrial schools were well integrated in the social networks which swirled around the town fascist officialdom and industrial elite. A cursory examination of Piombino's teachers' reports addressed to the Provincial School Authorities (Provveditorato) unearthed the extent to which fascist rhetoric penetrated the vocational middle schools. The following extracts eloquently illustrate the "pedagogical" farce perpetrated in these schools.

> Concerning the teaching of history, geography and fascist culture, I have followed the spirit of the new government programs and have particularly emphasized the period of Roman history, stressing the immortal splendor of Rome, the glorious events of our Risorgimento and the new high destinies of Imperial Rome. . . . In this exceptional year, filled with glorious events, the teaching has unfolded in an atmosphere of ardent patriotism. Every morning, I read to my students the reports from East Africa explaining and illustrating the most significant moments (Teacher's report, ASMSB/AC-CB, Anno Scolastico 1935-36).

In her report for the school year 1940-41, the French teacher wrote:

> The fortnightly class papers were often inspired by patriotic themes and often referred to war events, which, on the school principal's explicit order, I had to discuss every week. If, on one hand, the words were those of a foreign language, on the other, the content was always steeped in love of country, admiration for our soldiers and in the understanding that the conditions induced by the war require sacrifices of adults and children (Teacher's report, ASMSB/AC-CB, Anno Scolastico 1940-41).

The following sections provide an overview of attendance and the kind of "schooling" imparted to boys and girls in the industrial school which was established in Piombino in 1938.

The Vocational Industrial School for Boys and Girls

When the industrial school (Scuola di Avviamento Industriale) opened in 1938 its initial enrollment consisted of 112 students (70 boys and 42 girls) (ASMSB/AI-AV, Anno Scolastico 1938-39). As reflected in various documents, collaboration between fascist organizations and this school was very tight. For the 112 students enrolled in the first grade of the Industrial School in 1938-39 a record listed, next to the names, the students' membership in the various age-grade and gender-appropriate fascist youth organizations. The correspondence between the school and the GIL (the umbrella fascist youth organization) shows that the latter cross-checked with the school to verify that all those enrolled had a membership card in one of the fascist youth groups. Starting with 1940, the Industrial School also housed pre-military courses for young men and evening specialization courses for workers. In this school, boys spent at least half the time in the shop acquiring familiarity with tools and manual work. The rest of the teaching was merely an extension of elementary education. A minimal "academic" curriculum included Italian, basic history and geography, arithmetic and natural sciences. Teachers' reports for 1938 indicated that the students spent much of their time re-learning what they had forgotten or poorly learned in elementary school. The entire student body consisted of children from workers' and artisans' families, and, at least during the initial years, many who enrolled in this vocational course had been out of school for up to three years and had worked at some petty trade.

This school's mission was to prepare youngsters for manual work: in this case, if they were lucky, they would get a job in the steel mills. It did and could not, however, endow them with the level of skills necessary to give them a competitive edge over other candidates for a

skilled job. Nevertheless those youngsters who had attended this school might for political reasons have had a greater likelihood of being hired by the mills as they had been subjected to a process of "socialization" that had psychologically prepared them not only for manual work but also for the discipline, the authority system and the hierarchical organization of the factory.

The regime's motives in establishing the avviamento industriale were overtly political. The teaching staff, which in this type of schools had often embraced fascism enthusiastically, carried out its "mission" with zeal. In her report for the school year 1938-39, addressed to the provincial school authorities, a teacher of Piombino's Industrial School wrote:

> The teacher made the students read and study poems and passages of prose bearing on the iron industry and work in general. She has often spoken of work in glorified terms, in an attempt to instill love for [work] in their hearts. Through readings and written assignments, the teacher showed how any type of work, even the most modest, makes man noble and makes him the pride of Homeland and Family. The teacher's duty is not only to mold a good pupil but above all, forge a honest and hardworking citizen who can serve his country with his heart and his arm (ASMSB/AI-AV, Anno Scolastico 1938-39).

The question that cannot be satisfactorily answered concerns the motives of the families for sending children and youngsters to this school, especially as post-elementary education would not be enforced until 1962. Perhaps they felt that their children would learn something useful in the school and would be better off there than on the street. When the school opened, the elementary teachers may have been instructed to lean on parents so as to convince them to enroll factory-bound children in the new school. Fascist notables and officials might have aggressively extolled the advantages of the school. It might have been made known that it would be easier for young people to get a job

at the mill if they had attended this school. Alternatively, the market for child-labor might have become very limited or the nature of the child-labor market in Piombino was such so as to permit combining schooling in the morning hours with a petty occupation in the afternoons. Any of these factors might have been present, though some more determinant than others.

Of the 70 boys enrolled in the first grade when the vocational school opened in 1938, only 38 were still in school the following year. One can only guess what contributed to such a high attrition. Apart from a few drop-outs during the course of the school year, a substantial number must not have been admitted to the second grade because of irregular attendance and poor performance. Some students and their families must have thought that the "ordeal" was not worthwhile, especially if the employment prospects at the end of the course entailed a manual job anyway. Some families may have enrolled their children when the school first opened but when they were still unclear as to the nature of this course of study. Thus, the high attrition may have reflected both the families' lukewarm attitude toward this school together with the restlessness of children and youngsters who, already accustomed to working and earning a little money, did not feel cut out for school. Some of the reasons for not continuing with the course might have been political, as fascist indoctrination, which seems to have been heavy in this school, may have alienated some families, given their political orientation. In any case, in the following years, both the attrition and selectivity remained high, as attested to by the admission rates for the 1941-42 school-year when 46 out of 71 boys were admitted into 2nd grade and 49 out of 64 into 3rd grade: only 19

graduated of the 49 admitted into the 3rd grade (ASMSB/AI-AV, Anno Scolastico 1941-42).

As to the girls' course, this "industrial" school seemed to be designed only to prepare fascist housewives, unlike the commercial school where female students were given some basic vocational training in accounting and office work. The curriculum core was "domestic economy," consisting of hygiene instruction, garment making (from model drawing to cutting and sewing), embroidery and cooking. The industrial school for girls was separate from that for boys and housed in the elementary school building. As to the "curricular" preoccupations that set the tone for the overall "mission" of the school, the following letter addressed by the school principal to the Provincial Agriculture Administration (Inspectorate) is more eloquent than any commentary:

> This Vocational School enters into its second year and has already a fair number of female students who, tomorrow, will be the future housewives of Italy. Our laboratories for Domestic Economy exercises, however, are still not equipped with didactic materials. This Office has decided to build a hen-house and a rabbit-hutch with a limited number of animals so that the girls can acquire some experience raising farm animals. For this reason, I am making inquiries with the Agriculture Inspectorate so that we can receive all relevant instructions. We would also very much appreciate if you could assist us with a donation of some hens and rabbits (School Principal, Letter to the Agriculture Inspectorate, ASMSB/AI-AV, 1939).

From the families' point of view, the reasons for sending a girl to such a school were perhaps not obvious. Girls could be socialized into housewives at home, and in some cases represented valuable domestic labor.[10] Moreover, just out of elementary school, girls were often placed for one to three years as young apprentices in a tailor's shop or with a dressmaker. Hence, it is difficult to see how this type of school could attract a sizable student population, although some families might have hoped that the school could contribute something to the education and

respectability of their daughters. This was the school with the lowest fees and the girls sent here were not expected to take up a full time occupation after completion of the course.

Some 42 girls enrolled during the first year of operation, but the second year registered a mere 23 new enrollments (ASMSB/AI-AV, Anno Scolastico 1938-39 and 1939-40). This drop-off poses some questions as to the expectations of the parents and possible misunderstandings regarding the quality of education and the prospects that this "industrial school for girls" opened. Again, it would be interesting to research the role of elementary teachers in steering girls toward this school and the publicity mounted by the "education notables" of the town when the school opened in 1938. As in the course for boys, the attrition rate was high: of the 42 girls in the first grade in 1938, only 18 enrolled in the second grade the following year. In the 1941-42 school-year, enrollments were down to 26 in first grade, 16 in second grade and 15 in third. The rate of school failure, however, was far less accentuated than for the boys: 19 of 26 girls were admitted to the second grade, 14 of 16 to the third, and 13 of 15 graduated (ASMSB/AI-AV, Anni Scolastici 1938-42).

In this short chapter, I have outlined how the fascist educational blueprint had exacerbated the class-segregated character of Italian education and showed the extent to which fascist ideology pervaded school milieus, as many teachers turned into the loyal watchdogs of the regime. Indeed, as the historiography of fascism has emphasized, the petite bourgeoisie represented the largest reservoir of "true believers": teachers, especially elementary teachers, were one of the groups which responded most enthusiastically to the appeal of fascist ideology. This is relevant for the contextualization of the accounts which emerged from

the interviews (presented in later chapters), as the majority of those who were teaching in Italian schools during the 1940's and 1950's had been formed under fascism. For many it was too difficult to shed the "values" and the beliefs that had shaped their behavior and their action until then. Finally, in the first part of this chapter, I have briefly discussed both the existence of a limited number of workers (mostly ex-syndicalists) who went over to fascism and the diffusion of "adaptive" behavior dictated by necessity. Alongside these phenomena was a wide-spread resentment of the fascist regime and the survival of a socialist-communist "sub-culture" into to the postwar period.

NOTES

1. Several interviewees who lived through this period recalled the harshness of working conditions as briefly described in this paragraph.

2. Oral testimonies of socialist and communist militants often emphasize the "necessity" that compelled many workers to acquiesce during fascism (see, for example, Boarelli, 1991). In Piombino, a few interviewees underscored that the need to survive and to keep one's job lay behind many workers' formal (yet passive) membership in the Fascist Party.

3. The reform furthered the effort to match social class with "appropriate" education: technical institutes were to serve the urban proletariat and the petite bourgeoisie, while the corsi integrativi and the scuola complementare were conceived to cater to peasants and the urban lumpenproletariat. The 1923 reform was not designed to support and rationalize social and economic development but rather to help consolidate existing social hierarchies. Thus, the reform flew in the face of many family's aspirations, as reflected in the drop of enrollment in the scuola complementare that replaced the technical school (Ragazzini, 1983).

4. The 1923 reform drastically reduced the number of public licei and teacher schools, leading to a proliferation of private Catholic schools. Teacher training became a Catholic reserve. The reduced number of academic high schools were to serve as exemplary models to enhance the quality of instruction in the classical track. The selective public schools would ensure a first class crop of managers and political leaders. Finally, Gentile introduced state examinations at the end of the five-year course of study: the exams were meant as a quality control on private education. The reform also made religious instruction the "foundation and capstone of elementary education," a principle that was to be sanctioned by the 1929 Concordat between the Church and Mussolini (Ostenc, 1981; Ragazzini, 1983).

5. By the late 1920s and early 1930s, a network of youth organizations devoted to educational and recreational activities--sport associations, summer camps and film clubs--were solidly in place and often the only game in town. Enveloping the young in the rituals and activities of such organizations had the objective of directing and organizing all formative experience toward the same political, ideological ends. In 1929, the ONB was placed under the authority of the Ministry of Education, reflecting the overlap between the fascist party and the state. In the same year, the ONB assumed the management of rural schools and educational charity institutions (patronati scolastici). In rural areas, where the schools were run by the ONB, teachers also served as officers of the youth groups (Ostenc, 1981; Koon, 1985).

6. The regime viewed tight control over teachers as critical; as Mussolini stated, "the teacher has a political office and must be a fascist" (quoted in Koon, 1985:64).

7. The textbooks carried the message that Italy was at the center of the world and that being Italian and being fascist was one and the same. The Duce was portrayed as a saint around whom fascism and the nation as a whole revolved. Children learned that Mussolini had built new cities in formerly desolate swampland and that fascism had brought social justice, erasing the difference between the haves and the have-nots. Popular stories told of boys whose greatest desire was to put on the fascist uniform and fight for their country; young readers were mesmerized by heroic epics of both young and old who kept a steady indestructible faith in fascist credo. Textbooks designed for rural schools featured stories with a populist appeal (Koon, 1985:74-83).

8. The GIL also had its own schools where GIL instructors were trained; they came closest to realizing the ideal of a "total fascist education." By 1939, an extensive network of GIL libraries was in place, and GIL headquarters in the larger towns had projectors and viewing rooms. GIL journals, manuals and textbooks were distributed to the schools. This literature was extremely simplistic, the mythologization of Mussolini's character and life grotesque, the anti-communism virulent. It was laced with anti-British, anti-French and racist tirades, identified fascism with religion, and included various versions of the fascist ten commandments. During the 1930s, the regime made ample use of radio for propaganda purposes, producing educational programming specifically targeted at different age groups. Such productions were more successful in rural areas (rural schools were targeted as a separate category) and in primary schools than in urban centers and secondary schools (Koon, 1985:148-64).

9. This statement should not be taken to mean that only vocational schools were "fascistized." Indeed, due to accessibility and time constraints, I carried out archival research only in the vocational schools.

10. However, the utilization of young girls as domestic help must not be overestimated as nuclear families in Piombino were not very large and extended family households often included more than one adult woman. Thus, there was only limited need for girls' domestic help.

CHAPTER FOUR

STRUCTURE OF FEELING AND DISPOSITIONS: FROM THE ELAN OF THE RESISTANCE TO THE OPPRESSION OF THE COLD WAR

> It is necessary to clean out the Reds from the factories. . . . If they come back. . . it will be with their tails between their legs.
>
> —M. Togni, Christian Democratic Minister, 1951.

> The communist faith entailed loyalty to an ideal with an important religious component: the revolution as an act of redemption for the poor . . . justified by something that had been suffered. From this emerged the critique of society as presently structured. All this led me personally to immerse myself in the reading of various books.
>
> —Giuseppe (b. 1948, Piombino)

I. Piombino from Reconstruction to the Cold War

1944-1948: Hard Times and New Possibilities

The fall of fascism and the establishment of a pro-Ally government in the Summer/Fall of 1943 cut the country in two, with the south under the rule of the King and Allied Forces and the North under German control. In early September 1943, the National Committee of Liberation, established in Rome by anti-fascist parties, sanctioned the birth of a Resistance movement in the German-occupied zone. By Spring 1944, between 20,000 and 30,000 partisans were active in Italy; by the Summer at least 80,000 people were involved in the Resistance (Ginsborg, 1990:70).[1] The Liberation unleashed a bloody settling of scores with the fascists: according to some estimates, between 12,000 and 15,000 may have been shot in the first weeks after Liberation (Bocca, 1977). Many industrialists feared an imminent revolution: armed workers controlled

the factories and the Allies only arrived in the major industrial cities more than a week after these had been liberated by the partisans. However, the Communist Party chose not to risk a confrontation with the Allies and ordered the workers to disarm. Nonetheless, many weapons were not handed over to the Allies but rather hidden away by local cadres (Ginsborg, 1990:ch.2).

In Piombino, an anti-fascist committee had been established after the forced resignation of Mussolini was announced on July 26th, 1943. The committee put itself at the head of a popular insurrection against German army units that began disembarking from war ships in Piombino's harbor on September 9th.[2] September 10th 1943 marked the beginning of the local Resistance, memorialized in local historical lore as the Battaglia di Piombino.[3] The German army occupied the town on September 13th only after a two-day battle with civilians and Italian army and navy units.[4] A year later on June 25th 1944, partisans liberated the town as the Allies closed in on retreating German troops (Comune di Piombino, 1975; Tognarini, 1980).

The war destroyed 40% of the town and 70% of the industrial infrastructure forcing many families to take refuge in the countryside and depopulating the town: only about 20% of the resident population remained in the town at the war's end. As families and former combatants trickled back over the next several months, the ranks of the unemployed swelled to 5,000 and 8,000 people found themselves homeless (Tognarini, 1980; Luchetti, 1985). Shortly after Liberation (25th April 1944), various political organizations, such as the Union of Italian Women (UDI) and citizens' groups, such as a tenants' association were founded or revived. Ad hoc committees were also established to provide

assistance to war refugees and individuals victimized by the fascists (Luchetti, 1985).

In the 1945 national elections, Piombino's left bloc of socialists and communists received roughly 80% of the local vote. After the March 1946 administrative elections, the left won 85% of the local vote and a communist-led coalition took control of the municipal government.[5] The local communist leadership that emerged in 1945 consisted of militants who had been active clandestinely in the 1930s and most of whom had joined the party during fascism (Favilli and Tognarini, 1982).

In August 1944 some 400 workers seized the initiative to begin rebuilding the Ilva plant (severely damaged by the war) and soon restored one of the furnaces to working condition.[6] Some brought tools from home, while others traveled to Northern Italy to procure pieces of machinery and other material needed for repairs (Mosci, 1982:70-71). The direct involvement of the workers in the reconstruction of the steel-works was spearheaded by the communists but opposed by the anarchist group on the grounds that reconstruction should be the responsibility of capitalists and the state. One communist militant, reminiscing about this time, stated: "we could not accept the anarchists' point of view; the mill was our bread, our life for us and Piombino" (Mosci, 1982:72).[7] Such sentiments were common among those metal workers who felt tied to the factories not only as wage-earners, but also as workers-producers who took pride in their craft (mestiere).[8] After pouring the first cast in January 1946, without the aid of a single engineer, the workers sent a telegram to the PCI leadership in Rome, read at the party congress, expressing their sense of class achievement and pride: "fatto la prima colata: senza manco un ingegnere"[9]

The communist-controlled Chamber of Labor, formed right after the Liberation, had a major say over hiring at the Ilva plant. Thus, the first contingent of workers to enter the factory were the more militant and experienced communist cadres who were to become the vanguard of the workers' movement for some years to come. It was their job to win the mass of the workers over to the PCI. During the initial phase, the communist workers dedicated themselves to reconstruction, even forming a disciplinary committee to ensure workers' full commitment to the process of economic recovery. Later on, such exceptional measures would be recalled with self-criticism by communist old-timers. At the time, however, militants were caught up in the elation of the moment and believed themselves on the verge of exerting their collective control on the productive process. Their behavior complied with the directives of the party which was eager to demonstrate the workers' sense of responsibility and to attract attention to the contributions of workers' organizations to national recovery (Mosci, 1982).

When the plant first reopened, those employees and workers who had actively supported the fascist regime were locked out and managers put in who were sympathetic to the workers. Reminiscing about this, an elderly militant recalled:

> The bourgeoisie. . . sent a Director who was appropriate for the times, Mr. S, who deigned to eat bread and tomatoes for breakfast with us (Mosci, 1982).

Between 1944 and 1948, the steel plant, like other major mills, had a management council with workers' participation (consiglio di gestione). Management councils (which included both employees and wage-earners) had been created by the Liberation Committees not as instruments to assert workers' control but as mechanisms to facilitate cooperation between management and the work force.[10] Indeed, the councils took on

highy controversial tasks, enforcing discipline, making appeals for higher productivity in the name of national reconstruction, and, after the ban on lay-offs was reversed, even deciding which workers would be laid off.[11] Yet, despite their ambivalent tasks, management councils, as long as they existed, boosted the legitimacy and the protagonist role of the labor movement (Ginsborg, 1990:96-7). Even after 1947, when the left was expelled from the national government, and until 1950, management councils in Piombino continued to be viewed by local workers as an important asset (Luchetti, 1985:232).

With respect to the national economy during this period, the participation of left parties in the coalition governments did not assure them a major say. Industrialists felt threatened by and strenuously objected to the type of workers' control that sprang up in the factories during the Resistance and the early phase of economic reconstruction. They progressively restored management control over the work place and insisted on their right to dismiss as many workers as deemed necessary. They opposed economic state planning (after having made fortunes under the fascist controlled economy) and embraced neo-liberalism. For its part, the PCI failed to press for nationalizations or a national economic plan.[12]

One can best portray the years between 1944 and 1948 as a period of hard times and new possibilities. In most parts of the country and especially in urban areas, life for most families was a struggle due to the extent of war damage, the increasing cost of living, and the shortages of food and medicines. Housing, too, remained a major social problem for a long time. During the Summer/Fall of 1946, widespread discontent often gave way to social unrest. In Northern Italy, ex-partisans took to the hills in protest, demanding the revocation of the

amnesty granted to former fascists, an end to lay-offs and the creation of new jobs. Shops were sacked in Venice and elsewhere workers and the unemployed, ignoring trade union calls for restraint, went out on strike and took to the streets in protest. In the South, peasants set up cooperatives and demanded access to land, while in Central Italy, sharecroppers struggled to modify their relationship with the landlords.

In Piombino, the local administration had to make sure that everybody had a roof over their heads: for several years, rooms in private houses were requisitioned and allocated to homeless families. The employment situation improved, thanks to the pressure exerted by the local labor movement on the factories: by 1946, 7,000 had been rehired. However, as born out in the local press, the union and workers distrusted the central management of the ILVA group, as the latter seemed hesitant to reconstruct the plant.[13]

The short but high stakes period between 1944 and 1947 left a lasting imprint on the psyche of communist militants. Indeed, one cannot under-estimate how tremendously empowering the new situation felt to Piombino's workers who had suffered through the political repression and the semi-militarized factory system of the fascist era. During these years, working-class political cadres had a taste of real power: times were hard but also rich with new possibilities. In places like Piombino, the insurrectionary impulse remained very much alive; revolutionary sentiments and visions were often at the very core of the identities of communist militants. Finally, despite the tough economic conditions, Piombino's working class displayed impressive acts of solidarity that reinforced a popular sense of belonging to a movement that took care of its own. For example, in 1946, one hundred children from Naples where poor families were going hungry, were placed for six months with

Piombinese families;[14] in 1948, Piombino's families took in children from a mining area where violent repression of protest had led to the arrest of miners.[15]

Yet, it is also important to understand that a high degree of continuity with the fascist state apparatus was maintained, due in part to the compromises that the left made so as not to jeopardize the alliance with the Christian Democrats. Attempts to purge functionaries who had been active fascists from the bureaucracy met with little success. The judiciary, which went untouched, proceeded to dismiss most cases brought against former fascists; 62 out of 64 prefects active in 1960 had once been fascist functionaries as had all 135 police chiefs and their 139 deputies. The courts also acquitted leading fascists on dubious grounds (Pavone, 1974:282). In June 1946, Togliatti, then Minister of Justice, finally drafted an amnesty that put an end to the purge.

At the end of May 1947, Communists and Socialists were forced out of the government. The police and the carabinieri, now purged of former partisans, received orders to intervene aggressively against working-class and peasants' protests. In the Fall of 1947, employers laid off large numbers of workers. In September 1947, the Soviet Union set up a new International whose first act was to condemn collaboration with bourgeois parties and announce the beginning of a new era of frontal opposition. Thus, the 1948 national election unfolded in a climate of extreme polarization and ushered in the beginning of the Christian Democratic rule (Gambino, 1975).[16]

Faced with the turn of events, socialist and communist militants became increasingly agitated. The insurrectionary impulse during the immediate postwar period was fueled by accumulating frustrations--the demobilization (accepted only reluctantly by partisans), mass

unemployment and the electoral defeat. Finally, frustration turned into anger when, in July 1948, a fanatic shot Togliatti, the PCI general secretary. As news of this attempted assassination spread, workers went out on strike, shops closed and crowds poured into the streets. For many of the rank and file, this was a signal that the uprising of the left was beginning (Ginsborg, 1990:ch.3).[17] In Piombino, militants retrieved arms hidden away at war's end; they disarmed police and carabinieri and blocked access roads leading into town. For three days Piombino was effectively isolated from the rest of the country and under the control of a self-proclaimed "government of the soviets." According to the oral account of a local PCI official, this was a spontaneous popular insurrection in part provoked by the climate of political repression. According to local lore, PCI and administration officials put themselves at the head of the popular uprising so as to make sure that the situation would not get out of hand. One PCI official told me of a minor episode that gives some idea of the intensity of that time:

> It was late in the evening, I was standing guard in the locales of one of the PCI sections when two boys came in; they were short of breath. When I asked them what they wanted, they answered somewhat uneasily: we are patrolling the coast to make sure that nobody arrives from the sea. I asked them how many they were, and they replied that there was a dozen of them or more.[18]

On the third day, a high-ranking PCI official (a senator) arrived from Rome and spoke to the 7,000 people gathered in Piombino's main square. He had been sent to convince the town's people that the time was not right for such actions, as elsewhere in the country the population was not ready to support a revolution. Backed by local PCI officials, he pleaded with the locals not to persist in their insurrectionary attempt and insisted that all arms must be surrendered to the authorities. Thus, the three days of the "soviet republic of

Piombino" came to an end but not without consequences: 70 people would be charged with insurrectionary acts and 63 held in jail for almost two years before being brought to trial in 1950 on charges of armed insurrection against the state and usurpation of public power.[19] Their families received assistance from a solidarity fund into which Piombino's workers deposited a percentage of their wages every month until all those arrested had been freed and found employment again (Luchetti, 1985:238-39).

The years from 1949 to 1952 were ones of protest and violence throughout the country.[20] In 1951-52, the D.C. lost electoral ground and subsequently pushed through an electoral law designed to ensure them control of parliament.[21] Most significantly, during the 1950s, D.C. control of the Italian state facilitated this party's "colonization" of the bureaucracy and the development of clientelistic politics favoring the ceti medi (artisans, shopkeepers, small peasant proprietors, small businessmen and public employees).

"Gli Anni Duri"

The years between 1949 and 1955 have become known as gli anni duri ("the hard years"). For workers, this was a period of repressive state action, political persecution and supersfruttamento (extreme exploitation). As industries were reorganized and technologically overhauled, employers lashed out at the labor movement, marginalizing or sacking leading trade union militants and cadres.[22] In the factories, discipline was enforced mercilessly by guards who were often ex-carabinieri, and labor activists were forbidden to move around inside. The economic hardships of these years, reflected in low wages and

massive unemployment, represented the other face of this period of conservative hegemony.[23]

In Piombino, however, the revolutionary elan and enduring hope that a major transformation was not only possible but imminent did not vanish with the expulsion of the left parties from the national government. Here, the election of April 1948 in which the communists and socialists were defeated at the national level, reconfirmed the political hegemony of the PCI.[24] Many communist militants, as an old timer recalled in 1978, were still confident that "the factories were going to be ours, or at least, that they would be largely run by us" (Pinelli, Sonetti and Taccola, 1982:45).

Yet, as elsewhere, restoration of discipline in the factories and fierce political repression proved inescapable. Workers were spied upon by guards (who reported especially on the "politicals") and often fined for various infractions. Cadres of the communist-controlled union (CGIL-FIOM) were constantly harassed and assigned to the least desirable jobs; a few were either fired or transferred to other plants and others left on their own after management made life impossible for them. Through separate deals, favoritism and the political screening of new hires, management tried hard to foster division and hostility between the communist/socialist union and the other two labor organizations (i.e., the social democratic UIL and the christian democratic CISL) in order to break the hegemony of the CGIL-FIOM.[25] As a result of harassment and intimidation in the course of the 1950s, the membership share of the communist-led union at the steel plant plummeted from 90 to about 60% (Pavolini, 1957). Nonetheless the CGIL continued to represent over 50% of the work force in Piombino's plants and never surrendered its leadership of the local labor movement.

From 1948 until the early 1960s, social and political life in Piombino was marked by constant confrontation at various levels: between factory management and workers; workers and the police; the municipal administration and the national government. After the events of 1948, a special army unit was stationed in town to safeguard public order as Piombino had earned a reputation as a dangerous nest of subversives. Processions of strikers and demonstrators periodically filled the streets of Piombino and often ended in clashes with the police. All the interviewees who were children and adolescents at the time have such events imprinted in their memory as an indelible testament left to them by the past.

After the war and for most of the 1950s, the wage bill in Italy was kept low to subsidize the economy, ensure the competitiveness of Italian products on the international market, and fuel the process of capital accumulation. Consequently, real wages remained stagnant between 1948 and 1954 (Sassoon, 1986:126; Graziani, 1971). In Piombino, many working-class families with only one adult male wage-earner struggled to make ends meet. One interviewee recalled with some embarrassment that their clothes were often hand-downs from a neighbor's family which her mother mended for her and later for her brother. Those families that could count on more than one income were better off. Housing proved particularly difficult for workers. For example, those families living in apartments owned by the factories were forced to leave if the wage-earner lost his job, thus exerting pressure on employees to conform to plant discipline. The shortage of affordable accommodations also forced most newly-weds to live with their in-laws. As testified by my interviewees, this situation created households with multiple family units which, while providing a buffer during short-term

unemployment (as when one of the men was laid off), also produced tensions and conflicts.

The years between 1949 and 1954 were a period of union militancy both nation-wide and locally, as both the work pace and the repression of union activities intensified.[26] In October 1951, workers at the Ilva plant went on strike to protest excessive exploitation in the factories (supersfruttamento). Safety measures at this plant were very rudimentary and industrial accidents frequent: between 1952 and 1956, 1,370 accidents/injuries were recorded and nine workers died (Luchetti, 1985:259). In the boiler room at La Magona one man had to do the work of three at considerable risk to his safety and that of the equipment; in another workshop young men under 18 were forced to work 16- hours days (Luchetti, 1985:280).

The "diplomatic incident" that occurred in 1951 on the occasion of the inauguration of the new ILVA plant blast furnace illustrates the strong sentiments that animated this town and its working-class population. This particular incident was provoked when the workers and the trade union representatives boycotted the inauguration ceremonies attended by the Christian Democratic Minister of Industry and various American personalities. They did so to protest the Marshall Plan and the heavy-handed attempt to "Americanize" the event. This provocation, which embarrassed the state authorities in front of their American allies, culminated in a public meeting where the mayor made anti-American remarks. The infuriated Christian Democratic Minister leapt to his feet in the middle of the mayor's speech and marched out along with the Americans. The mayor was subsequently removed by the central government on grounds of interfering with Italian foreign policy (Luchetti, 1985:256).[27]

The political nature of workers' protests was again at the center of a strike in November 1952 called to condemn the passage of the so-called Legge Truffa.[28] At the steel mill, the strike resulted in the firing of six workers; all political and union cadres. The work force responded to this lay-off with an additional 48-hour strike.

1953: 2,500 workers lose their jobs

In 1952, 2,100 people were registered as unemployed out of a population of 33,008. Between March and August 1953, the tin plant, suffering from a year-long financial crisis, laid off its entire work force of over 2,500.[29] In April 1953, when management announced its decision to close the plant, the workers' occupied the factory. During the occupation, solidarity strikes were waged by agricultural laborers and sharecroppers in the surrounding area and by workers at the ILVA plant. These mobilizations met with virulent reprisals on the part of the employers. For example, in February eight workers were fired by the ILVA plant for their leading role in the solidarity strike;[30] however, the eight regarded their dismissal as illegal and continued going to work. The whole population supported this act of defiance by mounting solidarity demonstrations at the factory gates. Clashes with the police followed. A week later, the eight defiant workers were arrested and were sentenced to serve several months in prison for unlawful entry (violazione di domicilio) (Pavolini, 1957).

In April, after 10 days of factory occupation, the police smashed through the secondary gates and assaulted the workers inside with clubs. Eighty-four workers were charged with unlawful entry and six immediately arrested. During the following months, desperation and turmoil reigned in town. In the streets, the police aggressively broke up

any attempt to organize demonstrations. The Christian Democratic Minister who had been present at the infamous incident described above wrote in an open letter to his "Piombinese friends":

> It is necessary to clean out the reds from the factories. . . . If they come back. . . it will be with their tails between their legs (quoted in Luchetti, 1985:274).

When the factory resumed production in early of 1954, it was with a largely new work force heavily recruited from the surrounding areas with the help of the Christian Democrats, the neo-fascist MSI, the carabinieri and the parish priests. In 1956 the firm plunged into a new crisis and had to shut down one of its production lines: the work force, which had grown back to one thousand since the factory reopened in 1954, was cut to 400 (Pavolini, 1957; Luchetti and Poli, 1982).

The consequences of such drastic downsizing and massive lay-offs were grim for the whole town. The "subversives" were the first to lose their jobs. Many workers moved to other towns within the province or to Livorno; others emigrated to Turin and Milan, or even Switzerland, France and Belgium. Those who remained settled for more precarious, poorly paying jobs often after months of being unemployed and depending on the help of their relatives. Many tried their hands at small commerce and opened a small store, which led to a proliferation of small undercapitalized shops that in many cases did not survive more than one year. Ultimately, the crisis of La Magona affected the whole town, as it deeply cut into the overall income level and purchasing power of the population. By 1957, Piombino's unemployed numbered 3,000, about 10% of the total population (Pavolini, 1957).

II. Understanding the Structure of Feeling in Piombino in the 1950s

The working class and its political representatives, thus experienced considerable hardship and repression during the 1950s. Industrial relations was perhaps the most embattled front of this confrontational era, though not the only one. On the political-administrative front, the communist-led municipality ran into significant problems and clashed frequently with the Christian Democratic-controlled central state. The municipal administration received "special" treatment at the hands of the national government. The state supervisory agency that controlled the deliberations of the town council seized upon every opportunity to reject its decisions on the grounds of procedural irregularities.[31]

A number of important considerations must be put forward when attempting the difficult task of capturing in analytical and descriptive fashion the quality of social experience in Piombino during the 1950s. First of all, historical periodization is essential, i.e. the "quality" of social experience of those years can only be understood within a larger time frame that includes the historical experience of fascism and that of the 1944-48 period.

In Italy, where a conservative party held monopoly power over state institutions, the harsh rhetoric and government repression of the cold-war period pushed the workers' movement and its vanguard political representative, i.e. the Communist Party, to the brink of illegality. During those years, the workers organizations not only had to combat the management of capitalist firms and the conservative political parties but also had to put up with the regime's pervasive propaganda channeled through the increasingly influential mass media. As television was a state monopoly, programs had to pass Christian Democratic and

Church approval; religion and preachers became a regular staple on the TV screen, while news and political commentaries were wrapped in anti-communist clichés. The virulent anti-communism of the judiciary also enabled state agencies to crack down on labor and the left.

Furthermore, employers entered a "social pact" with the state wherein they renounced demands for protectionism in exchange for the state's assistance in maintaining social order and low wages (Pizzorno, 1980) . Repression was facilitated by the absence of a new legal framework for industrial relations. Thus, the DC governments, by leaving in place the anti-strike regulations of the fascist penal code, made sure that a compliant and unreformed judiciary could prosecute anyone who attempted to "instigate class hatred," "organize a general strike," "hold a seditious demonstration," or "insult the forces of law and order or the government." In July 1947, just a few months after the expulsion of the PCI and the PSI from the government, the Interior Minister declared any assembly of workers within the factory gates for which a prior police permission had not been requested and obtained to be illegal (Sassoon, 1986; Romagnoli and Treu, 1977).

For Piombino in particular, the state and the capitalist class were the same thing, as the main employer was a state holding company. As one municipal administrator recalled, Piombino had the state in its own backyard, for the steel-works were not just any big industry nor was its management just any management. Moreover, the frequent collisions with the police and the presence in town of a special military unit (the infamous celere) were constant reminders to the workers that their employers and political rivals had the full support of the state's repressive apparatus.

Harassment of communist militants by local management (both at the ILVA plant and at La Magona), the intimidation to which workers were subject, and the dismissal of over two thousand people between 1953 and 1956, fostered a climate of apprehension and anxiety. Anger over the abuse of power and the political persecution coexisted with a fear of losing one's means of support. In this respect, the following account is emblematic of the situation:

> At the end of the war, my father was hired by the ILVA as an [white collar] employee; he had been a worker there between 1935 and 1938 when he was called up by the military. After the war, the Chamber of Labor had forced the steel-works to promote a certain number of communists and socialists to white collar jobs. However, from a social point of view, my father was treated like a worker: he never advanced, was given the worst jobs, was snubbed by his supervisors and colleagues. . . .
>
> I came from a family of old socialists and communist militants. . . . My grandfather was a socialist. . . . My mother was also socialist: during the Resistance, she was a courier. My father became a communist during the war. In 1943, he returned to Piombino to find the town half destroyed. At that point, he went to U. on the Gothic Line where he joined the partisans. . . .
>
> I was born in 1947 and for a long time my parents kept their political ideas from me and my brother. We did not know that my grandfather was a socialist and my father was a communist. My father too did not know that my grandfather was a socialist: because of fascism my grandfather had preferred to keep his socialist past to himself. My parents did the same with us: this time it was because of the 1950s and the cold-war; my mother was afraid that fascism would somehow come back. . . .
>
> Something else I did not know until a few years ago: in 1956 my father did not renew his party membership. He had been harassed and threatened with s transfer to an ILVA factory somewhere else. Recently, I learned that he had been ashamed and embarrassed for a long time. Vis-à-vis his comrades he had justified the failure to renew his membership by claiming dissent with the party's forgiveness of the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary.

Attempting a synthetic evaluation of historical experience during this decade means keeping in mind the two faces of that experience. The

representatives of the working class were solidly entrenched in the municipal administration: undoubtedly an experience of empowerment, albeit laced with ambiguous repercussions. Equally important in contributing to the resilience and transmission of a political working-class subculture was the network of organizations--at both the local and national level--which the PCI had created. In effect, communists and socialists (the latter at least through the 1950s) lived within a socio-cultural enclave of their own, comprised of party recreational, cultural and sporting associations, a press, schools and research institutes. In a place like Piombino, where the influence of communism was so overwhelming and the majority of the population from solidly working-class backgrounds, a certain force and reassurance emanated from the common denominators shared by so many people. As an employee of the steel-works who had been a communist militant put it: "In Piombino we were all reds. The climate was one of firm opposition (opposizione dura), but it was not dangerous. The whole town was like that."

Yet the intimidation and the repression of those years did generate anxiety, fears and victims (as the account of harassment and intimidation reported above illustrates). This climate had a familiar feel to it. Commenting on his mother's apprehension at the time, the interviewee quoted above suggested that the Christian Democratic regime of the 1950s was seen by many socialists and communists as only marginally better than fascism. After all, many familiar faces were still around from the fascist era. In 1948, management reinstated those employees of the steel-works who had been active fascists (Pavolini, 1957). Likewise, in other crucial institutions, such as schools, educators and other personnel who had actively supported the fascist regime were still in charge.

By and large, Piombino's experience in the 1950s was that of a besieged majority. Communists controlled the local government but had to play by the rules and were subject to the sanctions of a reactionary state. They retained the leadership of organized labor, but the repression was real and had its victims. In the end, they had little choice but to use the reactionary state institutions for their own ends. They had to use the schools with all the attendant risks of incorporation which were quite high, given the PCI's lack of preparedness and ambivalence in this arena (an issue which I will address in a later chapter).

Last but not least, class segregation and a deeply felt social distance between the families of workers and those of professionals and white collar employees was paramount. Class segregation was rooted in the residential geography of the town characterized by strictly working-class quarters and the neighborhoods where the middle and lower middle classes lived. This residential segregation along class lines had largely come about as a result of the construction of workers' tenements by the factories between 1900 and 1914. Some tenements were near the town center, others almost attached to the factories. Most of the old workers' tenements were three story-buildings occupying a long block with a large courtyard in back. The courtyard contained the lavatories and represented a collective space where workers' families socialized. The separation between white collar and manual workers was fairly clear-cut and intentionally reproduced by factory management which built housing quarters for their employees isolated from the outlying neighborhood by gates. Until the 1960s, the steel-works maintained a recreational, cultural club for its employees where workers were not allowed.

Casual conversations and interviews with working-class individuals have confirmed the experience of social distance between classes. The social and emotional separation was reflected in the use of the "we" and "them" that punctuated people's reminiscences. In no uncertain terms, most people of working-class background stated that such distance was an inescapable marker of social life in Piombino during the 1950s and 1960s. According to the educated sons and daughters of working-class parents of the 1945-52 cohort, these rigid class barriers were only relaxed after 1968.

The following testimony by one interviewee who grew up in the 1950s and early 1960s illustrates this experience of class difference and separation:

> Here in Piombino there were in particular two social strata with the working class on one side and the white-collar workers on the other. The latter lived very close to the factory, in a residential section which we call i villini. I had ties with this social group. My aunt lived there [i villini] and since my cousins [two girls] had more or less my age, after my grandmother died, they took me along to the beach with them. I was in fifth grade [1959]. The beach where they went was frequented exclusively by the employees and the managers of the steel plant. I remember that milieu. I was accepted [io ero accettato abbastanza] because I was a "good child." I did not even dare to go swimming. My cousins always advised me not to volunteer information about my family.

The quality of the social process which I have attempted to evoke here (i.e., the "structure of feeling" determined by the working class's own historical experience and legacy of struggle, on the one hand, and the class relations and the political and economic conditions of the period, on the other) represents the background against which working-class students experienced school milieus, which is the subject of the next chapter. In the meanwhile we should note the type of historical experiences through which during the Resistance and the postwar period

the dispositions toward education shaped during the first two decades of the century were reinforced.

As mentioned above, anarchist and communist militants had continued to read "socialist authors" clandestinely during fascism. Moreover, militants who spent time in jail during the regime and those who became partisans often participated in study groups. In particular, with respect to the educational impact and legacy of the Resistance, it was not only the formal or official pronouncements of organizations and groups connected to the movement that proved crucial but also the actual educational experiences of men and women who participated in the collective learning ventures of the partisan schools. Many of these men and women remember their identities as combatants and as learners as part of the same historical experience.[32] There is little doubt, that at this level, the educational legacy of the Resistance has had a far-reaching impact and significance which have hitherto remained largely unexamined and unassessed.[33]

The following section focuses on the demands and requirements of political and administrative posts and the consequent need for "educational competencies." A "language of class" addressed these new opportunities, emphasizing seizure of state power and calling attention to the need to form future cadre and "organic intellectuals." I then reconstitute the kind of family legacy and experiences that gave meaning to the pursuit of education for empowerment purposes and underscore the role that a political subculture infused with a revolutionary impulse and "discourse" played in keeping the souls and minds of people occupied with the possibilities of the future.

The Post-War Period: Governing and the Language of Class

No analysis of education in a communist stronghold would be complete without considering the impact of the new found responsibilities and roles which workers' cadres were called upon to assume in the municipal administration and in the union in the postwar period. Given the nature of the party and the town, the militants who filled administrative and political posts were necessarily workers with very limited formal schooling who often felt overwhelmed by the requirements of their posts. Indeed, time after time, interviewees made reference to the fact that for a long time Piombino's communist administrators had to make do with the little education they had received and carry out their duties amidst great odds.[34] One of the greatest challenges was meeting face to face with management to negotiate on behalf of the workers and municipal administration. On these occasions, political cadres often became painfully self-conscious of what they perceived as their "cultural" inadequacy. Talking about workers' participation in the management council in the immediate postwar period, an old militant who had been a delegate elected to represent the workers reminisced:

> On these councils, workers' representatives were people with some political experience; yet when we went to the meetings at the [Genoa] headquarters of the concern. . . management put in front of us technical data and examples which we were not able to counter. When we went to these meetings, our task was to always reject whatever management suggested (Mosci, 1982).

Throughout the late 1940s and the 1950s, more and more working-class people came to perceive access to higher education as a key to the effective exercise of political power. In their view only the appropriation of technical and cultural competencies through schooling could ensure the formation of sufficiently qualified party cadres to staff municipal

and union positions. Simply put, workers' representatives needed education in order to stand up more effectively to capitalist elites.

Finally, with respect to the shaping of attitudes toward education, a significant role was played by the political "language" of class, which in the post-war communist-dominated left was steeped in the Marxist-Leninist tradition.[35] Two aspects of this political language are important here. First of all, the Leninist discourse stressed the need for a party led by intellectuals who could provide the working class with the necessary guidance in its revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie (as workers left to themselves would fall prey to reformism). Second, the Leninist emphasis on the seizure of state power mandated the formation of sufficient cadres to staff a post-revolutionary regime. This discourse, by emphasizing the need for a communist intellectual elite and the formation of "organic intellectuals," may have further bolstered the importance given to acquiring formal education.

Education as Empowerment and Political Commitment: Vicissitudes of A Family

The interviews conducted for this project revealed several key factors in the shaping of a view of education as empowerment: the legacy of a socialist literary tradition and the role of the "socialist novel" in the shaping of "sensibilities", the yearning for "cultural competencies" for self validation and empowerment (the by-product of various influences, discourses and "encounters"), the Marxist-Leninist ideology (as the dominant language of class after the war), and the need for intellectual cadres. The contention here is that these factors helped shape orientations and that a mix of ideology, reactions, faith and hope were entangled in working-class views of education. Of course, a view of

education as empowerment did not characterize the entire original nucleus of the local working class to the same degree, although many working-class families most likely adhered to elements of such a view. As an illustration of the empowerment-view of education in its relation to specific life experiences and family legacies passed down through the generations, I have reconstituted below the vicissitudes of one family as recounted by Siria (born 1916):

> My father [b. 1884] and my mother [b. 1886] were from Campiglia [a hill town some 15 km from Piombino] but came to Piombino when they were very young. As a boy my father had worked in the coal mines. After he came to Piombino, he worked at the Ilva plant where he became a furnace master (capoforno). . . . My father had become a socialist at 14 when he worked in the mines, however, it was my older brother who went on to become the family's guiding light as far as politics was concerned.
>
> We were six siblings; the first, Federigo, was born in 1908; the youngest, Amulio, was born in 1925; I was born in 1916 and have a twin. . . . We all attended school until the 5th grade except Amulio, the youngest, who continued and got a technical education. The two older siblings went to work at a very young age; one was hired by the Ilva plant, the other went to work at La Magona.
>
> Federigo, the oldest, joined the Communist Party during its clandestine period [an uncle had been a communist militant since the party's foundation in 1921]. In 1932, when he was getting ready to leave for the Soviet Union, Federigo was arrested and given a 5-year jail sentence, though he served only four thanks to an amnesty. In jail, he was tortured, and when he came out he was ill. Once out, the local fascist authorities told him that he could not stay in Piombino. . . . Thus, during 1936-37, he took up residence in Saline di Volterra where he opened a small mechanic's workshop. In 1937 he went to work for the Solvay factory in San Vincenzo [15 km from Piombino] where he remained until 1970. . . .
>
> During the war we all moved to the countryside, between Venturina and Campiglia. I participated in the partisan struggle: I was a member of the women's defense groups and served as a courier. My three older brothers were partisans. . . .As to the rest of us, we all lived together in a store-room: my father, my mother, my brothers' wives and their two children, my sister, her little girl and myself. In the evening, our prayer was the partisan's song [la canzone del partigiano]. . . .

> Right after the war, I worked at the party's provincial federation in Livorno; my task was to organize women. In 1946, the federation sent me to Lucca for one month to organize women's meetings and enlist women to join. Between 1947 and 1949, I spent 6 months at one point on the island of Elba; subsequently I would return there for repeated visits, each time staying for one month. In 1950, I was sent to a mining area in Sardinia for three months. Of that time, I remember that Zola's Germinal came in handy for understanding the miners' world. I would have never thought that the reading of a book would be useful in my political work. . . .
>
> Altogether, I have been a party functionary for 20 years. During this time, I have worked for the party and UDI. . . . After the war, my sister, too, was politically active for a while. My older brother, Federigo was always a militant and a cadre. . . . Both the anti-fascist attitudes for which our family was known and the political militancy of the post-war period had consequences, but ours was a choice that entailed awareness of the possible costs involved. . . . One brother was arrested in connection with the situation that developed in Piombino after the attempt's on Togliatti's life; in 1953, Amulio [the youngest of the siblings], was arrested and remained in jail for some months as a result of his participating in a strike and unauthorized demonstration to protest the legge truffa. At the time, my parents, myself, Amulio and his wife and daughter lived in an apartment owned by the factory. Three days after he was arrested, management sent us an eviction notice . . . and eventually we all had to leave.

I have reproduced here excerpts Siria's account to illustrate the sorts of experiences and backgrounds of the families who wanted their sons to acquire the competencies, the knowledge and the "culture" that had been denied to them so that their offspring would be able to struggle more effectively for socialism and social justice. These families realized that the school would attempt to indoctrinate their children in the dominant ideology, yet they were confident that the family could provide the children with a strong sense of identity and an alternative vision and legacy. I have chosen to focus on this particular family because one of the local historians mentioned in chapter 5 is the son of Siria's brother, Federigo.

Siria herself had struggled in her political career to overcome the limitations that went with her lack of formal schooling. She spoke of the long hours spent writing the speeches that she had to deliver to assemblies and gatherings of various sorts, trying to find the right words and the correct grammatical forms. She also recalled the time in Rome when she attended a seminar/training session for the functionaries of UDI, and the great effort she had to make to listen and take notes at the same time. Yet, there can be no mistake as to what this meant to working-class families and people such as Siria. The efforts made by working-class individuals in these situations were enormous, yet so was their passion. As Vincent put it, "in the pursuit of knowledge they had discovered a deeply satisfying area of freedom. . . [which] was an achievement worthy of some celebration" (Vincent, 1990:195).

Finally, what transpired from the above interview passage was also the exceptional character of the war, the Resistance and the Reconstruction as times of suffering, struggle and hope which enhanced people's need for self-expression. The exceptional historical conjuncture that spanned from the war years to the early 1950s was responsible for creating a new intellectual climate and, among other things, establishing a cultural legitimacy for new forms of writing such as the witness' accounts and the autobiographies of uneducated militants (Abruzzese, 1983).

Conclusion: "Revolutionary Discourse" in the Shaping of Dispositions

In this chapter, I have treated "the political" as an arena and an aspect of social life and "social being" in which the "religious" impulse is a constitutive element of politics and political identification.[36] When political affiliation is understood in this way, we cannot treat politics as

a realm separate from "the social." A large sector of the Piombinese working class lived within and acted according to the moral-discursive universe of the socialist and communist subcultures which they made and by which they were made (although not in isolation from the larger society). The political sentiments and sensibilities forged in the ways outlined in this and previous chapters were constitutive of "common sense," i.e., they oriented decisions and choices. In particular, a significant feature of the political subculture that shaped "dispositions" was a language of class that spoke of and for the future: indeed, the revolutionary vision and impulse that characterized "politics" in this and other areas in Italy kept people's focus on the possibilities of tomorrow.

Much has been said about the revolutionary potential at the end of the war when half of the country was controlled by the Resistance movement and many workers had taken up arms. Although the consensus among historians and communist leaders alike is that the situation was not truly revolutionary, an insurrectionary impulse was very much alive among scores of militants. Many, perhaps most, of those who fought in the Resistance assumed that the latter would inevitably end in a socialist insurrection. After all, during the 1930s and throughout the war years, communist militants had developed an almost messianic belief in an imminent and necessary insurrection against capitalism. In the heady days following the Resistance, most communists believed that the party was in a position to push for fundamental changes that could conceivably engender the overthrow of capitalism. After the demobilization of partisan groups, this revolutionary tone did not disappear from the political language of rank and file militants. Indeed, with the complicity of the party, a <u>double entendre</u> developed whereby the emphasis on structural reforms remained somehow inscribed within

and connected to a revolutionary vision. As many personal testimonies emphatically stress, many people continued to hold on to the idea of revolution. As a militant from La Spezia recalled, it was common for the rank and file to go to the evening meetings and "talk of how to construct the socialist society, of communism and nothing else" (Ginsborg, 1990:81).

The point of this discussion is to convey an understanding of the revolutionary discourse and impulse as part of the "common sense" which shaped a strong future-orientation and an instinctive confidence, indeed faith, in possibilities. The determination to appropriate educational competencies was to a large extent the result of this future-orientation. Such a contention is echoed in the statement volunteered by one of the interviewees who, without any probing on my part, called attention to the centrality of the "revolutionary impulse" within the communist sub-culture and its connection to the pursuit of "knowledge:"

> In processes of politicization, you embrace values that you do not fully understand because from the beginning these values are wrapped up in an air of ambiguity. If we take the PCI and its history from the beginning of the postwar period, you have this oscillation between the myth of the revolution and the exaltation of democracy, the Italian road to socialism. People did not really understand Togliatti's politics. The communist faith entailed loyalty to an ideal with an important religious component: the revolution as an act of redemption for the poor . . . justified by something that had been suffered. From this emerged the critique of society as presently structured. All this led me personally to immerse myself in the reading of various books.

NOTES

1. Excluding those who joined at the last minute, the Italian resistance movement between 1943 and 1945 numbered about 100,000 active members. Several thousand more aided the partisans in one way or another. Of the some 100,000 active members, about 35,000 died, 21,000 were injured or mutilated, and 9,000 deported to Germany (Ginsborg, 1990:70). Organized anti-fascism was numerically and strategically dominated by the Communists.

2. On September 8th an armistice between the Italian government and the Allied Forces was announced.

3. The Piombinese militants who fled the town after it was occupied by German troops formed the core of partisan groups which became active in January 1944.

4. Italian army and navy units stationed in and around town were incited by the population to organize an armed defense of Piombino in disregard of the initial surrender order issued by the Italian High Military Command. On the important role of the anti-fascist committee in the summer of 1943 and that of the civilian population in the two-day battle with German troops that started on September 10, see Tognarini (1980). See also the testimonies collected in a publication put out by the municipality to celebrate the 31st anniversary of the beginning of the Resistance in Piombino (Comune di Piombino, 1975).

5. In June of that year 90% of the population voted for the Republic.

6. Officially, the Ilva factory reopened in September with 240 workers. The other plant (La Magona), which unlike the ILVA factory was privately owned, reopened in October 1944 (Luchetti, 1985).

7. Local histories and several interviewees stressed the role of the workers in the process of reconstruction: this episode is part of Piombino's collective memory. Oral testimonies are included in the unpublished dissertation cited in the text (Mosci, 1982) and scattered throughout local publications (e.g., Luchetti 1985:225).

8. Although I do not discuss this aspect much throughout the dissertation, Piombino's metal workers did display pride in workmanship and in the physical endurance which their mestiere (craft) required. They also did not shy away from engaging in competition with each other (Mosci, 1982). These aspects of "workers' culture," which coexisted with the Communist identities of the workers and their antagonism to the "system," have been discussed by various authors. Most relevant to this dissertation is Portelli's research on Terni's metal workers (Portelli, 1991:138-42).

9. The story about the telegram was related to me by Sergio Carignani during an interview. "Manco un ingegnere" is a colloquial expression meaning "without any engineer."

10. It was not the councils but rather the Internal Commissions (Commissioni Interne) also established in 1944 that represented workers' interests at the factory level.

11. Although the councils were not the product of a revolutionary strategy, employers feared that they might become a threat to the owners' decision-making power. Thus, employers opposed and undermined them until, in the end, the councils became purely symbolic organs with only consultative functions.

12. In a famous 1945 speech, Togliatti announced that "the struggle is not against capitalism in general but against particular forms of theft, of speculation and of corruption". As one critic has pointed out, these words convey an image of economic reconstruction as "the prudent democratic administration of the economy on nineteenth century liberal lines" (Daneo, 1975).

13. At Piombino's Ilva plant, the slow pace of repairs and reconstruction fueled workers' anxieties, even though by 1947 about 3,000 workers had been rehired by the factory (Luchetti, 1985). Indeed, the management councils of all the factories belonging to IRI (the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction, which administered the state holdings) pressed for reform of the sector and substantial injection of state funds.

14. The operation was organized and coordinated by the local UDI (Union of Italian Women), an organization of socialist and communist women formed in 1944 (see chapter 9 on women and education).

15. The mining area is the Monte Amiata in the southern Tuscan province of Grosseto. The boarding of children from Naples with Piombinese workers' families was often mentioned in interviews as an episode that typified the climate of solidarity of the immediate postwar period.

16. The Catholic church attempted to use all its political and moral influence to sway this election. Bishops warned that voting for the Communists or Socialists was a sin, and parish priests incited people to vote for the Christian Democrats during the sermons that they delivered from the pulpit. The DC campaign was virulent, featuring posters depicting Communists as wolves attacking mothers and children. The rallies of the Popular Front, in turn, which attracted large enthusiastic crowds of followers and believers, frightened many people outside the working class that the Left needed to win over if it was to score an electoral victory. The results of the elections proved disastrous for the Left: the DC won 48.5% of the vote and 305 out of 574 parliamentary seats while the Popular Front obtained only 31%. The election also underscored the declining support for the Socialists, whose parliamentary share fell from 115 seats in 1946 to 41, and confirmed the hegemony of the PCI, which increased its parliamentary representation from 106 in 1946 to 140 (Gambino, 1975; Ginsborg, 1990:ch.3).

17. A 48-hour national strike was declared and in several areas (both in Northern and Central Italy) the situation quickly got out of hand. In one locality in southern Tuscany, not far from Piombino, a police officer and a carabinieri were killed; in Turin the workers occupied the factories and even took hostages (including the director of Fiat); in

Venice workers erected road blocks at the entrance of the city and posted mounted guards at the plants in the industrial zone; in Genoa, the protest movement neutralized the police and the carabinieri and effectively seized power, an incident in which two people were killed (Ginsborg, 1990).

18. This quote and account of the events that unfolded in the wake of the attempt at Togliatti's life come from an interview with Sergio Carignani who exercise some organizational responsibilities during those three days. However, several other interviewees also brought up this episode in our conversations.

19. References to the repression which followed the 1948 insurrection in various localities are found in recent work (e.g. Portelli, 1991:146; Alessandrini and Politi, 1990; Orlandini, 1976; Serafini, 1981).

20. Most notably, the years 1949-1950 witnessed the spread of agrarian protest with repeated clashes between the police and peasant demonstrators throughout the South, often ending in bloodshed (Ginsborg, 1990:ch.4).

21. In the local elections of 1951-52, the DC lost significant sections of its electorate to the Monarchists and the neo-fascists: from that time on the DC had to find suitable coalition partners in order to hold onto power. In an attempt to avoid this eventuality, in 1953 De Gasperi, the DC leader, managed, despite the strenuous left opposition, to push a new electoral law through parliament. The latter, dubbed legge truffa (the fraudulent law) by the Left, would have allocated two thirds of the seats to any coalition that obtained 51% of the vote. However, in the election of 1953, fought again in a chilly Cold War climate, the Christian Democrats lost additional votes to the Right and thus, with 49.85% of the vote, fell short of the 51% that would have permitted them to grab two thirds of the seats. The legge truffa was eventually annulled in 1954 (Ginsborg, 1990:ch.5).

22. For example, between 1948 and 1954, in the province of Bologna alone, 773 people were injured and two killed in clashes with the police. In addition, 13,935 people were tried for offenses against the public order and 7,531 convicted; 670 people were tried for selling the Communist daily l'Unità, 1,086 for putting up posters, 338 for attending political meetings, and 61 for factory occupations (Casali and Gagliani, 1980).

23. Unemployment in 1951 officially stood at two million, but an additional four million were only marginally employed. A parliamentary inquest on poverty revealed that in 1952 93,054 people in Rome were living in shacks, caves or cellars (Ginsborg, 1990:187; Braghin, 1978).

24. This election had quite a different outcome locally where the Popular Front won 15,115 votes as against only 3,216 for the DC, 108 for neo-fascists, 96 for the Republicans and 895 for the Socialist Union.

25. The local situation mirrored the national strategy of the employers' association; in this sense there was no real difference between the management of private companies and the state-holding sector (Romagnoli and Treu, 1977).

26. During these years, metalworkers railed against the threat of industrial dismantling, which according to the unions would be the inevitable consequence of the adopted national plan for the development of metal industry and the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (Luchetti, 1985).

27. This incident has also been mentioned in several interviews and is reported in a 1957 article about Piombino in the communist periodical Rinascita (Pavolini, 1957) as well as in Luchetti (1985:256) cited in the text.

28. On this law, see note 21.

29. The crisis came about in part as a result of the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in April 1952. However, the outmoded production methods, faulty marketing strategies and obsolete machinery were the main culprits in this firm's decline in competitiveness.

30. Also in February, after a demonstration, 15 agricultural laborers were sacked by the Ente Maremma for having struck in solidarity with the workers (Luchetti, 1985:269-70).

31. This information has been gleaned from a number of interviews and from informal conversations with an earlier generation of former communist administrators. The most extensive interview on the subject is that with Sergio Carignani, who over the years, headed different sectors of the municipal administration.

32. Insight into the significance of the experiences and the educational "values" (the word has a double meaning) of those days is provided by several testimonies at a conference in 1977 in the city of Parma (Emilia Romagna) collected in the proceedings under the title Scuola e Resistenza (Raponi, 1978). Other similarly revealing accounts or memories are scattered throughout the vast literature on the Resistance, some of which have already been mentioned. However, there seems to have been no attempt to deal with the issue in systematic fashion so as to give full weight to the promise of educational elation originating during the Resistance.

33. In fact, analysis of the educational "programs" of the resistance movement has been limited to evaluation of those formalized educational proposals put forth by local CLN (National Liberation Committees) in areas where these held effective power for a few months before the arrival of Allied occupation forces.

34. Alessandro Portelli also has called attention to the felt need for education expressed by the working-class cadre of Terni. During one conversation, a former leader of Terni's partisan brigade told the oral historian: "When we took over the city administration after the war, we had no intellectuals, and we had to do everything ourselves, with the little schooling we had" (Portelli, 1991:39).

35. Gareth Stedman Jones, in an article on the Chartist movement included in his book Languages of Class, called attention to the role played by the political language that, at any historical time, shapes the

consciousness and informs the political project of the working class (Stedman Jones, 1983). With respect to the debate on the role of language and "discursive practices" that has developed among historians as a response to this article and in connection to the relationship between what is now called "the old social history" and the "new" or revisionist social history, we need to get past the sterile argument that class/political consciousness is either the product of class location and interests or of the ideology conveyed by language/discourse (Mayfield and Thorne, 1992; Lawrence and Taylor, 1993). Certainly, in order to understand working-class attitudes toward education/schooling and to develop meaningful analysis within a comparative cross-national perspective, one should investigate the connection between the role of politics in working-class life, the nature of distinctive patterns of politicization, the prevailing political language of class and the emergent trends/patterns in working-class education. This issue will be taken up in the concluding chapter.

36. IN this regard, an experience-centered history of European politics bears out the inter-penetration of the political and the "religious" moments.

CHAPTER FIVE

EDUCATIONAL CHOICES, TRAJECTORIES AND SCHOOL MILIEUS 1945-62

> My brother insisted that I go to the Liceo classico because it was a better school. . . . It was the school of the bourgeoisie, but he said (in a defiant tone as I recall) that it was time for proletarians to go there too.
>
> —Marina (b. 1950, Piombino) atttended the humanist high school
>
> I was unhappy and angry; I wanted to drop out and go to school with my friends enrolled in the technical institute, but my mother would not hear of it. Later, I understood why I was so angry, sometimes even violent. That school was an assault on my identity, my family origin.
>
> —Sandro (b. 1947, Piombino) atttended the humanist high school
>
> You know the middle school then was still the school of the bourgeoisie and haute bourgeoisie. However, social differences and the discrimination which I discovered at school were a stimulus to do more, to learn, to affirm myself. Nonetheless, I was miserable.
>
> —Maurizia (b. 1945, Piombino) attended first the middle school and then the scientific high school

I. Italian Education from 1945 through the 1950s

In 1945, no political party was yet ready to embrace the idea of mass education beyond the middle school level nor did they undertake a thorough, systematic analysis of the educational ills produced by fascism.[1] No intellectual, educator or politician seemed to be aware that the educational system needed to be radically rethought and overhauled. The DC blueprint for education called for a highly selective school system and emphasized the need for developing vocational education and company schools (i.e., the dead-end track for which the lower classes were destined). No mention was made of "a school for all," only the acknowledgment that vocational and technical institutes were going to train the brightest and most deserving children of the working classes.[2]

The primary objective of the Christian Democrats was to ensure that religious schools retain equal status in relation to public schools, as had been accorded under fascism. Indeed, this issue, which polarized the Catholic and lay camps, dominated the debate on education in the Constitutional Assembly.[3] As to the place of religion in the curriculum, the Christian Democrats prevailed, as the PCI, to avoid alienating the Catholic camp, voted to maintain religious instruction in both elementary and secondary schools.[4] Mandatory schooling was set at eight years (a five-year elementary cycle and a three-year middle cycle), although it would not be enforced until the early 1960s.[5] Finally, although the new Constitution did mandate that the state provide financial support for "intellectually capable and deserving" students from low-income families, this very formulation betrayed the acceptance of a blindly meritocratic and paternalistic vision. Indeed, the new Constitution failed to provide any concrete direction for a progressive transformation of Italian education (Ambrosoli, 1982; Tomasi, 1976).

Between 1946 and 1951, a Christian Democratic minister attempted to establish a clerical (or, at least, a clerically-inspired) control over public schooling while at the same time virtually eliminating state control over the private (mostly religious) educational sector. This process -- referred to in the literature as the "clericalization" of Italian schools-- was largely implemented, and left its mark on the school system throughout the 1950s.[6] Moreover, strict centralized control, often of a repressive and highly ideological nature, was exercised through inspectors and provincial superintendents (provveditori) appointed by the Ministry on the basis of political loyalty.

Large sectors of the bourgeoisie and the capitalist class tolerated or even welcomed clerical control over education as long as it served to

keep at bay the threat of soviet-inspired communism. According to one author, the northern bourgeoisie that guided political and economic development in postwar Italy promoted a cautious educational "program" so as to continue exploiting a labor force, that, lacking qualifications, could not demand wage increases (Ambrosoli, 1982:42-44).

The extreme educational conservatism of the Christian Democratic ministries was matched by the narrow-minded focus of the left and lay opposition on the principle of the "laicism" of education and the demand that more schools be built.[7] Moreover, as the majority of elementary and secondary teachers were Catholics identified with the D.C., the sizable minority of lay-oriented teachers devoted their efforts to the struggle against clericalization. Thus, in a situation where educational concerns were reduced to a single stake, fundamental issues of educational equity and access largely disappeared (Ricuperati, 1975:437-38; Ambrosoli, 1982:58-59).

During the 1950s, various Christian Democratic Ministers proposed reforms that would have maintained or even increased the segmented character of post-elementary education. However, the educational policies of the Christian Democrats, were very sensitive to the corporate interests of teachers, the majority of whom traditionally voted for them. For this reason, proposed structural changes were often not pursued and reform plans discarded before reaching the floor of parliament out of fear that some aspect of the reform might jeopardize the electoral support of large numbers of teachers (Ambrosoli, 1982:66).[8]

Although the structure of Italian education did not change during the 1950s, the Christian Democratic ministries implemented their agenda through ordinances, provisional measures and "experimentation." For example, they instituted a number of "post-elementary" classes as

alternatives to the schools of the middle cycle (comprising the scuola media and the scuole di avviamento). These so-called "post-elementary" classes made no pedagogic sense, as they merely reiterated the elementary school curriculum. However, they served the DC electoral interests as they provided more jobs for elementary teachers to whom such "post-elementary" classes were entrusted (Ambrosoli, 1982).

In 1950, the elementary school curriculum introduced in 1945 following the recommendations issued by the Allied Commission on Education was judged to be insufficiently inspired by Christian values, and plans were made to revise it. In 1955 an educational law introduced a new curriculum that bolstered the centrality of religious instruction (following guidelines laid out by a clerical commission) and sanctioned the selective character of elementary education (Canestri and Ricuperati, 1976:239-41).[9]

The extreme educational conservatism of the Christian Democrats was reflected in abysmal educational levels, among the lowest in Europe during the 1950s. A Parliamentary inquiry on unemployment and poverty conducted during 1951-53 revealed a direct relationship between unemployment and illiteracy: the majority of the unemployed were either completely illiterate or had never finished elementary school. Some 74% of workers did not possess an elementary school certificate (Ambrosoli, 1982:60-61).[10] During these years, a large number of children did not complete their elementary education. This situation could partly be blamed on the highly selective elementary school system, as it inevitably marginalized many children from poor families.[11]

The situation was no better in the schools of the middle cycle (scuola media e scuole di avviamento), which in 1955 enrolled less than half of the children who graduated from elementary school. Several

obstacles kept low-income families from sending their children to the scuola media. First of all, elementary education and secondary education were disconnected, in that access to the middle school was conditional upon passing an entry exam. Since instruction received in elementary school did not cover all the subject matter that candidates were required to know to pass such an exam, this meant that children had to be privately tutored, which, of course, many families could not afford. Those children who either failed or skipped the exam, could enroll in the vocational schools (scuole di avviamento) from where they could continue on to technical schools or to the newly established vocational institutes (Ambrosoli, 1982:71-72).[12]

School failure (as measured by grade-repetition) was considerably higher in the academic middle schools (scuole medie). However, the latter had a much lower drop-out rate than the vocational schools, where, at the first hint of academic problems, children were taken out of school and sent to work. The vocational track required a heavy time commitment (37-39 hours per week) and was selective despite its designation as a "popular" form of schooling (Ambrosoli, 1982:72).

A significant shortage of classroom space and inadequate school facilities persisted into the 1960s. For several years after the war, the state of emergency hindered the reallocation of many school buildings to education, as they were needed to house large numbers of homeless, displaced people or to serve as public offices. This use of schools as shelters, the toll of war destruction, and the pre-war shortage of school facilities all combined to create a major shortfall in classroom space. As a consequence, in most areas, in order to maximize the use of inadequate facilities, school attendance had to be limited to half-time and students sent to school in shifts.[13]

The expansion of the educational system thus did not coincide with the phase of economic recovery (1945-1951). Indeed, the "reconstruction" of the educational sector, lagging behind economic reconstruction, extended into the 1960s. Economic development did not produce sufficient financial resources to fund public infrastructure and services, especially as the centrist national governments of the 1950s under-taxed capital profits and municipal administrations failed to pass along the costs of rapid urbanization to profiteering real estate developers. Among the infra-structural costs assumed by financially overextended municipalities, school construction took a back seat to the building of roads, sports facilities and the like (Ambrosoli, 1982: 55-57).

Finally, the second half of the 1950s marked the development of an educational debate in which some new departures from the past can clearly be discerned.[14] Christian Democratic governments continued on an educationally conservative course and protected the interests and privileges of religious educational institutions. Yet, the low literacy rates of the general population, the sub-standard educational levels of young people and the inadequacy of school facilities in many areas became pressing educational concerns. The educational question began to take center stage partly as a consequence of the public debate surrounding the findings of the parliamentary inquiry on unemployment and poverty. A series of initiatives and public forums on education held in 1955 and 1956 signaled a qualitative shift in the discussion.

The involvement of the left, in particular the Communist Party, in this debate took on new dimensions, a development that several scholars credit to the diffusion of Gramsci's work. The founding in 1955 of the party journal La Riforma della Scuola demonstrated the new salience that educational issues acquired within the PCI. Nonetheless, the leading

figures in the educational sciences would not be associated with the Marxist left but rather the liberal intelligentsia.[15]

Between 1954 and 1957, the educational debate, centered around reform plans concerning the middle school (scuola media), was, in the view of a leading historian of education, a thinly disguised clash between political and ideological differences over the issue of class stratification (Ambrosoli, 1982:64-65). Christian Democratic governments, determined to hold fast to the status quo, failed to present a reform project for several more years.

II. The Evolution of Schooling in Piombino from 1945 to the Late 1950s

In 1945, Piombino's post-elementary education consisted of the academic middle school for the 11-14 age bracket and the vocational schools for industry and commerce (avviamento industriale e commerciale) for the same age-group. There also existed a two-year technical school (scuola tecnica) in which graduates from the avviamento commerciale could enroll. In 1947, a two-year secondary-level vocational school (called scuola tecnica industriale) was established for the graduates of the avviamento industriale. During the course of the 1950s, the upper level vocational schools (both the commercial and the industrial tracks) went from a two- to a three-year cycle. At the same time, they were transformed from municipal schools into state vocational institutes (Istituti Professionali di Stato).

The academic secondary sector was comprised of the lower cycle of the humanist track (i.e., the Gymnasium) and the scientific high school. The upper cycle of the humanist track (the liceo classico) would be re-established only in 1950 (it had been discontinued in 1940 and

replaced by the liceo scientifico). Finally, the technical institutes (for industry and commerce, respectively) would be established only in 1958.

The Abysmal State of Educational Facilities

Between the end of the war and the early 1950s, as was common elsewhere, a number of school buildings remained occupied for prolonged periods of time by homeless families or war-refugees; in two cases, they were used by the carabinieri. Moreover, the overstretched resources of the municipal administration were insufficient to adequately repair or maintain school buildings. For example, correspondence between the provincial school authority and the administration (found in the municipal archives) shows that in 1949, the elementary school continued to be occupied by five families who had lost their house in a flood. In the same year, in a different locality, a homeless family occupied the one-classroom school (AMP, Categoria 9, Cartella 1166). In Piombino proper, a facility had been built in 1945 to house the vocational industrial school (scuola di avviamento industriale); as late as 1951, however, the building was still occupied by a motorized unit of the carabinieri. Another school building (the Istituto Pacinotti) that housed war-refugees right after the war was subsequently requisitioned to serve as this unit's headquarters (AMP, Categoria 9, Cartella 1118 Bis). Between 1951 and 1953, an exchange of letters between the municipal administration and one of Livorno's secondary vocational institutes, which planned to open an annex in Piombino, revealed that a number of students had not been admitted because the local administration had not been financially able to construct the simple makeshift quarters needed to house the workshop (ibid).

The communist councilman (assessore) in charge of education between 1956 and 1964 recalls that, when he joined the administration (1956), the phase of reconstruction had not yet been completed. A survey of the small rural schools of the municipality undertaken in 1956 exposed the poor physical stock of the school buildings: in one locality, school was held in a barn. The local government's options were limited by its meager budget, as its only revenue source was a family tax.

Local Initiatives Right after the War

In 1946, the need to provide a more advanced technical/vocational training to the graduates of the avviamento industriale led the municipal administration to institute a two-year technical-industrial school. A committee raised money to cover the operating costs for the years 1947 to 1949.[16] The school started with a mechanics' course enrolling 14 students. In 1950, when it encountered a financial shortfall and could not cover that year's expenses, the local government tried to obtain provincial and state funding. When its request was rejected, the administration turned to the Director of La Magona for a loan of 700,000 lire (AMP, Categoria 9, Cartella 1118, 1948-51). During the 1949/50 school year this school was legally recognized by the state: by that time, 17 students were enrolled in the first grade and 10 in the second (ASMSB/STI-AV, Cartella 1949-50). In 1952, this municipal industrial school was absorbed by a three-year state vocational institute (Istituto Professionale per l'Industria) based in Livorno, which opened an annex in Piombino and offered a course for mechanics and one in electrical engineering (AMP, Categoria 9, Cartella 1118 Bis).

The year 1946 also witnessed a group of communist intellectuals petition the municipality to institute a liceo classico but without success.

It is difficult to know for sure what prompted this group of local intellectuals and PCI sympathizers to ask for a semi-private, municipally funded humanist high school. Perhaps their plan was to provide a humanist education to bright working- class youngsters in a situation where the municipality and not the central state would be responsible for hiring teachers and would control the ideological content. At any rate, the provincial school authority did not support this initiative since during the 1930s significant problems had arisen in operating such a school. The socialist party (PSIUP), for its part, did not favor this initiative on the grounds that only few families would be able to send their children to this school and then on to the university. According to this party's spokesman, priority should be given to the technical school.[17]

The Bifurcation Between Academic and Vocational Education

The bifurcation between academic and vocational education at the middle school level, inherited from the fascist regime, would be maintained until the comprehensive reform of 1962. If they had not had to repeat any grade in elementary school, children at age 11 were either withdrawn from school or went on to the academic or vocational middle school (both of which were a three-year cycle). Given that many families suffered from hard times in the 1950s, the decision whether or not to send a son or daughter on to the academic middle school could not be taken lightly. Indeed, many young people ended up being sent to the vocational middle school because this was all their families' tight budgets allowed. If the times had not been so hard, some would have gone instead to the academic middle school; however, maintaining a child in the academic middle school was more expensive and the course of

study longer than the vocational track. Moreover, an entrance examination was required for admission to the academic middle school, for which children needed tutoring. Thus, the system made it difficult for families on tight budgets to steer their children to the academic track. Nonetheless, in 1951-52, a total of 288 students were enrolled in the academic middle school (160 boys and 128 girls). By 1954-55, the number had climbed to 331 (192 boys and 139 girls) (ASMSF, Protocollo 1951-52 and 1954-55). The fact that girls constituted 42% of the total enrollment indicates a slight preference for investing in the education of boys since the students attending the academic high school were expected to continue with their studies at the university level.

Secondary Education

Until 1950, the academic secondary sector was comprised of the scientific high school (a 5 year cycle following the academic middle school) and the Gymnasium. The latter is still today a two-year cycle that is attended by students entering the humanist track after graduating from the academic middle school; from there they go on to a three-year humanist high school. Between 1947-8 and 1951, enrollment in the Gymnasium was low (10 or less students in each grade). Finishing at the Gymnasium, students would have to move to other towns in order to attend the liceo classico: clearly only a few families could afford to maintain a son far from home. After the establishment in 1950 of a Liceo Classico in Piombino, enrollment in the Gymnasium picked up (20 new students enrolled in the first grade-level in 1951-52) (ASMSF, Protocollo 1951-52 and 1954-55).

That a humanist high school was established in Piombino in 1950 in response to a request by a number of families confirms the

significance attached by a sector of the Piombinese working class to gaining access to humanist education. Initially, the liceo classico in Piombino was operated as an annex of one of Livorno's high schools. When in 1953 the provincial authority announced that the high school would be closed down, the students' families and the local administration mobilized to keep the school open. The mayor wrote to the district's senators and deputies requesting their intermediation with the Education Ministry, which met with success. In 1954, the mayor wrote to the provincial authorities (prefettura), persuading them that an autonomous humanist high school be established in Piombino: starting in 1954, Piombino's Liceo Classico ceased operating as an annex of the Livorno institution (AMP, Categoria 9, 1954). Yearly enrollment increased steadily, averaging 97 students from 1952-55 and 130 from 1956-60 (Benesperi, [1972]).

The scientific high school, established in 1940, was well attended by working-class students according to all the interviewees who graduated from this institution. This academic high school, although less prestigious than its humanist counterpart, was also a university-preparatory institution: thus its students planned to continue their education once they graduated at age 19. This meant that working-class families had to be prepared financially to support their children over a protracted course of study. By 1949, 144 students were enrolled in the five grades of the Liceo Scientifico. Enrollment averaged 142 students over the next 5 years (1950-1955), increasing to 171 and 183 in 1955 and 1956 respectively. From 1958-1966 the level of enrollment (averaging 148) fell off somewhat as some students turned toward the technical institutes that opened in 1958 (Benesperi, [1972]).[18]

Technical institutes, which historically represented the most viable and realistic avenue of social mobility for lower middle-class and working-class kids, did not get established in Piombino until 1958. Nineteen-year-olds graduating from these schools acquired the kind of professional and technical grounding that permitted them to get middle management jobs of various sorts and white-collar work. Moreover, graduates from the technical institutes had access to a number of university faculties.

In 1958, the communist councilman for education took the initiative and managed to convince the provincial school authority that Piombino, at this point of its development, needed two technical institutes: one for industry and one for commerce. Both were five-year schools: the former would train the intermediate technical cadres for local industry, while the latter would provide students with a proficiency in accounting. The industrial technical institute, an all-male school, enrolled 116 in its second year of operation (1959) and the commercial institute 89 students (when both schools still had only two grades) (Benesperi, [1972]).

III. Contextualizing Educational Choices During the 1950s

The remainder of this chapter presents interviewees' stories about their lives and educational trajectories and analyzes the attitudes shaping educational choices. The first two "capsules" best help us understand the multiple linkages connecting educational choices and attitudes, constraints and aspirations to structural, conjunctural and "cultural" determinants, as well as to the process of socio-economic change. This mode of presentation has the advantage of capturing the articulation between schooling and the historical context and unveiling

the relation of educational themes and trajectories to the texture and historical specificity of people's lives.[19]

Specifically, the following interview excerpts and biographic sketches focus on constraints, dispositions and the way educational trajectories/choices are negotiated. The first two "capsules" concern two working-class youth who were railroaded into the vocational track as a result of their family's insufficient resources. These accounts illustrate how economic constraints and conjunctural events, such as the shut-down of the tin plant in 1953-54, impacted on the educational destinies of working-class youth. The third section investigates the factors that prompted working-class students to choose the scientific high school over the liceo classico (where they would have felt more isolated, at least until the early 1960s). The fourth returns to the question of why many families were so adamantly determined that their children acquire educational competencies and in many cases preferred their pursuing an academic rather than a technical education. Here, I take issue with the way in which Bourdieu characterizes the "working class" habitus and emphasize the complex articulation of motivations behind the Piombinese appreciation for education.

Economic Constraints and Frustrated Educational Aspirations

Roberto (b.1942) is an employee in the personnel office of the steel-works. Both his mother's and father's families had been sharecroppers working on a local count's estate near Piombino. Both his parents had earned an elementary school certificate, which, as Roberto underscored, was in itself quite an accomplishment in their time as many, especially in the countryside, dropped out of school after the third grade. After his parents got married, they took up residence in

Piombino. His father would travel the surrounding countryside with his wagon to buy meat and produce from the peasants to resell in town.

Roberto's immediate family (which included one brother) kept in close contact with both the paternal and maternal grandparents' families, with whom they spent all the major holidays and Roberto and his brother spent their summers. Reflecting on his education, Roberto recounted:

> I always had high grades in elementary school and was considered one of the brightest students by the teacher. [This teacher] told my mother that I really should continue, that I should go to the liceo and the university. . . . But we did not have enough money. The academic middle school was out of the question. At that time, there was no technical institute in Piombino; thus, if I attended the middle school, I would I have to go on to the liceo and then to the university. My mother realized that I would have had to wait too long before I could start working and earning some money. For this reason, I enrolled in the avviamento industriale (vocational industrial school). Some years later, both my mother and I realized that it had been a mistake.
>
> Be that as it may, I attended the industrial school, which could pave the way for a job at the ILVA steel-works. After the avviamento [in 1956], I attended the professionali [the upper level vocational school]. At 17, I had my diploma from the vocational school. At that point [1959], I decided to enroll in the technical institute. I had to take an exam to be admitted to the first level because you needed the middle school certificate to be admitted to the technical institute, whereas I had attended the vocational school (avviamento). I could have tried to take an exam to be admitted directly to the third level, but since most who did so flunked, I did not want to risk it. Thus, I chose the longer route that was safer and started from first level. In the mean time my brother, who was 2 years my senior, had finished the professionali and, at 17, was hired by the steel-works.
>
> In those 2-3 years (1957-59) the family financial situation had improved considerably. It had been a while since my father had stopped reselling produce. My parents had opened a polleria [a butcher shop that sells chickens]. The whole family worked there; I went there with my brother after 5:0.0 in the afternoons and again early in the morning to clean and get things ready. Thus, between 1959 and 1964 I attended the technical institute in Livorno.

This account shows that education was far from some people's reach during the 1950s. Indeed, economic constraints and practical considerations forced gifted working-class children to opt for the vocational track. Moreover, the town's lack of a technical institute further constrained choices, as this type of secondary school, represented a feasible alternative to the academic track. The account also reveals both the cautious, practical nature of many families' educational choices as well as their readiness to invest in furthering a son's education once the financial situation improved. Pride also seems to have motivated Roberto to enroll in the technical institute at age 17 even though he already had the diploma from the upper level vocational school. His fiancee was studying to become an elementary teacher: he thus wanted to attain an educational level equivalent to that of his girlfriend so he would not feel inferior.

However, Roberto's trajectory, is not particularly representative, as most students who went to the industrial school quit after three years (at age 14 if they had not had to repeat). Moreover, further educational aspirations, although common, were not pervasive: plenty of working-class families viewed a factory job in the local mills as a good enough prospect for their sons. As one interviewee pointed out, according to a popular saying, "a Piombino, i bambini nascevano operai" (i.e., Piombino's children became workers at the moment of birth).

Impact of the Economic Down-turns of the Local Labor Market

A worker, a political photographer and founder of an anarchist/literary journal, Pino (b.1944) has led an interesting life, albeit somewhat out of the ordinary. His father was by and large apolitical, although, like many others in this town, he probably voted for

the PCI during the 1950s and 1960s. His family lived comfortably until his parents lost their grocery store in the wake of the economic crisis that followed the 1953 closure of the tin plant. An avid reader, Pino would have liked to pursue his studies but his family's near destitution left him no other choice but to attend the industrial school, which he hated. The following account bearing on the circumstances that led to his enrollment in the avviamento industriale highlights the devastating effect that the lay-offs connected to the restructuring and scaling down of the tin plant had on families. The vicissitudes of his immediate family parallel those of his grandparents who lost their livelihood (in both cases, a grocery store) in the wake of the 1911 lock-out.

> My paternal grandfather and great-grandfather were from Piombino. My grandfather had anarchist inclinations but was not a militant. He was a small merchant [piccolo commerciante]: he had a food store but lost it in 1911. In 1911 there was a strike that lasted six months; during this time, people bought food on credit with coupons, but those were never redeemed. Thus he went bankrupt. . . . My father was 27 years old when he came back from the war. Right after the war, he made his living as a bombarolo [a fisherman who used explosives]; he lost an arm in an accident sometime around 1945. Afterwards, my parents ran a food store, but, like my grandfather in 1911, they went bankrupt. This was in 1954 when La Magona closed down and laid off hundreds and hundreds of people. At the time, my father gave away food, down to the last sack of flour.
>
> I attended elementary school in a private institute run by nuns here, in Piombino, in the old section of town. The children that went to school there were from families who could afford to pay; some of the children stayed on in the afternoon as well. In my case, I was a small boy and often ill; I needed to be sheltered but my parents were busy with the store and could not look after me properly. . . . There were children from middle class families and children from working-class families like me, that could afford to pay the fees. . . . I remember that they called me "red" even though I did not have red hair. . . .
>
> The nuns were kind and caring toward the children. Still, they put me out the door when my parents could no longer pay once they lost the store. I stayed there until the fourth grade, then attended the 5th grade in the public elementary school. My parents had to depend on government school

> subsidies for indigent children (patronato scolastico). . . . Thus, my family went from a comfortable economic status to near destitution. I remember that for some time we depended on UNRRA food packages distributed to the poor by the Americans and that we went to eat at the hospital. At that time, after the fatti della Magona, a lot of people went to take their meals at the hospital. The bread was in the shape of braids and that they often fed us minestrone.
>
> I completed elementary school. I was a bright kid but also a little bit of a pest. I would have liked to continue on to the academic middle school, but this was not possible. I attended the avviamento industriale for three years. In the summer, I used to go into the countryside with my bicycle with other kids to sell soap and some other necessities. At 14, I started working full time at precarious jobs but mostly as a construction worker. My father received a minimum social security payment and hired himself out to unload trucks of fruits and vegetables. My mother later worked as an attendant at the public wash-house.

Liceo Classico or Liceo Scientifico?

As mentioned above, only a few working-class students enrolled in the humanist high school during the 1950s whereas scores of them entered the liceo scientitico. Many respondents who attended the modern/scientific high school during the 1950s and early 1960s reported that they had chosen this school over the humanist one because of the unease they would have felt as classmates of the "elites." This feeling needs to be understood not only against the backdrop of social relations marked by a strong emotional separation between "them" and "us" (as discussed in the last chapter) but also as a consequence of the "malaise" experienced in the academic middle school. Maurizia, who attended the liceo scientifico between 1958 and 1963, explained in the following way how the decision was made against her enrolling in the liceo classico:

> The liceo classico was out of the question, as I had been so miserable in the middle school because of the social dynamic and the whole school environment where I could not make any friends. Thus the liceo classico, which was the school of the elites, was not even considered because I did not want

> to find myself in the same type of environment. . . . I liked literature and history; thus the liceo scientifico represented a compromise. Yet, compared to a technical institute, this school was more mixed and [the curriculum] not as narrow.

A number of students probably enrolled in the liceo scientifico by default, as the technical track did not exist in Piombino until 1958. Moreover, many families regarded vocational education as unsuitable since it would not really help their children get ahead in life. The scientific high school was attractive as it was perceived as both less selective and more modern than the humanist high school. Indeed, some parents equated the liceo classico with an "antiquarian" obsession with "dead" languages (given the importance of Latin and Greek in its curriculum). In short, the scientific high school seemed to match the industrial "culture" of this metallurgical center: certainly, some working-class parents wanted to see their sons become engineers and even managers in the local factories. Such an orientation was confirmed by a teacher who taught at this high school during the 1950s:

> Except in those cases when families had definite cultural predilections, in my experience, the prevailing tendency was to subordinate the course of study to the job prospects determined by local industries.

The phrase "cultural predilections" is somewhat cryptic yet evokes a constellation of dispositions connected to the pursuit of "knowledge" whereby the latter is understood in broad emancipatory terms rather than in strictly utilitarian terms (i.e., as a means to a good middle class job). For example, while the practical and industrial mentality of some workers induced them to steer their children toward a career in engineering or the applied sciences, the cultural-political sensibility of others (probably those who had "educated" themselves on the classics of French and Russian realism) fostered in their children a predisposition for intellectual careers.

The Class-Empowerment Project: Tensions, Possibilities and Entanglement

The politically-driven yearning for education present in Piombino was typically based on the perceived need for "organic intellectuals" and the belief that appropriation of cultural competencies would put an end to the abuses leaped upon the laboring classes. Furthermore, as argued in the previous chapter, the effects of revolutionary discourse played an important role, as it drove socialists and communists to focus on the possibilities of the future. The Piombinese determination to appropriate "culture" contradicts the "habitus" that Bourdieu attributes to an essentialized, statistically constructed "working class" characterized by adaptation and resignation to "necessity" (i.e., material deprivation) and the interiorization of "cultural deprivation" (Bourdieu, 1984:372-86). In Bourdieu's sociology, the working-class "habitus" distinguishes itself by its "extraordinary realism:"

> In this domain, as elsewhere, the form and content of aspirations and demands are defined by the objective conditions, which exclude the possibility of a desire for the impossible. For example, to say about classical studies in the lycée "it isn't for us," is to say more than "it's beyond our means." It is, rather, an expression of internalized necessity, couched one might say in the imperative-indicative, since it expresses both an impossibility and a prohibition (Bourdieu, 1966:398).

As reflected in the first two sections of this chapter which emphasized the effect of economic constraints on educational trajectories, "material deprivation" clearly imposes "choices," and yet the "habitus" that Bourdieu attributes to the working class negates the kind of reality found in Piombino. The following statement by one interviewee, which flatly contradicts the "it isn't for us" (referring to classical studies) in the preceding quote, flies in the face of a working-class "habitus" shaped by "submission to necessity" (Bourdieu, 1984:376):

> My brother insisted that I go to the Liceo classico because it was a better school. . . . It was the school of the bourgeoisie, but he said (in a defiant tone as I recall) that it was time for proletarians to go there too.

It was 1964 when Marina's brother (b.1939) steered her toward classical studies: he had attended Piombino's vocational school and was then politically active in the communist party (later joining a New Left group). He had experienced the polarization of the 1950s as an adolescent and a young worker. He was heir to a political legacy of struggle and antagonism which, next to the "material deprivation" of his working-class existence, were part of the "objective conditions" that "defined the form and content of aspirations and demands."

Within a context where a revolutionary vision never completely disappeared and communists were in charge of the local administration, "objective conditions" need to be understood in terms that differ from Bourdieu's formulation. In Piombino, throughout the postwar period, the appropriation of educational competencies for class empowerment came to represent the link between the past, the present and the future in more ways than one. Indeed, was not the anarchist old-timer's pledge that "one day our children will be the school teachers" the expression of a disposition that linked the past with the present and the present with the future? Surely, Marina's brother's decision that she go to "the school of the bourgeoisie" can be seen as a gesture that reflected "an ascendant group's struggle to realize its own goals and identities" (Wexler, 1987:80). Finally, working-class cadres, administrators and militants had to make do with limited formal schooling when they had to face the demands and challenges of their various posts: as they looked to the future, they saw clearly the "necessity" that their children get the kind of schooling required to continue "the struggle." One cannot

overemphasize the strong future-orientation embedded in the class-formation process outlined here and the important role which the "discursive field" has had in shaping historical "agency" among the original nucleus of the Piombinese working class.

However, I do not wish to convey the romantic notion that the view of education-as-empowerment was an "uncontaminated" project for it was certainly also a by-product of the effect of the dominant cultural hegemony and the "symbolic violence" that induces people to believe that their lack of "cultivation" renders them inferior. Clearly, the appreciation for education was also linked to a desire for "respectability" and socio-economic promotion. Yet, an important sector of the local working class was so deeply identified with socialism and communism that those desires (for respectability and socio-economic promotion) were not a betrayal of one's own working-class origin. Indeed, the legacy and vision of the political sub-culture were the bases of "cultural identities" and shaped the disposition toward education.

The way Marina put it, when I asked her to talk about her family's attitude toward education, conveys the complex articulation of different motivations underlying the pressure that many families exerted on their children:

> One reason why they [my parents] wanted me to study was that education could help me get a better job than my father had. The idea was that education improved your prospects not so much in terms of social promotion in a strict sense but rather in terms of a better life. . . so you would not have to work in the factory, breathe that horrible dust, and, yes, also earn more. . . . Those were times when people earned little money. . . . In essence, the attitude was that you just needed to study, to know things. One must learn because knowing things is useful in life and because you should not be a dullard. . . . For my mother, getting an education meant being able to speak more graciously and being better able to make yourself understood. For my father, the objectives were also political. You went to school and studied to be able to combat the dominant politics and

> overcome the [working-class] condition. For my father, education clearly represented an instrument of class emancipation.

IV. School Milieus and School Experience during the 1950S

The school memories of former working-class students helped me draw the contours of school environments and gain some insight into the profoundly social and class character of the "educational" experience in Piombino. The salient issues that stood out in the interviews include students' experiences of marginality and "otherness," and teachers' perceived preference for middle-class children, authoritarian behavior and role in directing working-class students to the vocational track. This chapter touches on not just the "historical nucleus" of the Piombinese working class but also children from more marginal groups.

The following discussion and interview excerpts indicate that school "socialization" was an ordeal or uncomfortable experience for many lower class students. As mentioned in the Introduction, the pain and self-doubt provoked by the encounter with the class smugness and the elitism emanating from the schools' bourgeois milieus contrast with the dispositions that compelled many working-class students to pursue secondary education. The fragments of "stories" and the glimpses of experiences captured by the interviewees' re-evocations are important moments in the process through which self-images and identities are produced in specific contexts and sites. As Sherri Ortner has noted (referring to her own experience) schools are one of those sites in which we are socially produced through complex processes of reaction, stigmatization, self-confirmation and effacement (Ortner, 1991:164).

Elementary Education: Social Stigma, Authoritarianism and Teachers' Bias

Throughout the 1950s, elementary classes were segregated by sex and, for most of the decade, repeaters separated from the rest.[20] Thus, the process of educational stratification began in elementary school with the tracking of repeaters into separate courses. Furthermore, the working-class neighborhood il Cotone, situated alongside the walls of the steel mill and physically separated from the town center, had its own elementary school. The condition of the classrooms and furnishings as well as the hygiene were considerably worse here than at the main school facility located in the town center.[21] Workers' children attending this neighborhood school found themselves in an environment that was socially more homogeneous than at the main school.

During the 1950s, Piombino's working-class population, far from being homogeneous as portrayed in some of the literature, was clearly segmented and differentiated according to income levels as well as the job-security and type of employment held by the main provider. Indeed, the presence of internal class differentiation explains the marginality and inferiority that some children experienced within a school milieu where the overwhelming majority of students came from working-class families. The Piombinese working class was not coterminous with the metal-workers employed in the two major factories. There also existed a marginal "popular stratum," largely made up of immigrant families from the South that had come to Piombino during the inter-war years and especially after the war. Although some Southerners did get employed in the metal-works, many often held marginal jobs in the construction industry, in the small fishing operations and in the sub-contracting firms that serviced the big factories. After the war some people from the surrounding countryside and the smaller towns of the hinterland

had also settled in Piombino and there also existed a small nucleus of second and third generation Piombinesi engaged in precarious or semi-illegal activities.[22] Metal-workers' families referred to the town's more marginal groups as Piombino's sub-proletariat, a popular stratum they viewed as "less respectable." In some cases, the families that belonged to this "less respectable" popular class did not send their children to school: during the 1950s local administrators regarded this as the town's greatest educational problem.

The children who experienced the greatest discomfort in elementary school came from families whose extreme poverty set them apart from the rest. This is illustrated by the account of a female interviewee who came from a large family living in precarious conditions, financially and health-wise. Silvia (b.1941) was the 11th of 15 children (3 of whom had died). Her parents came from the countryside some thirty km north of Piombino. Her father was a wagoner; her mother sold fruit and later fish from a hand-cart and subsequently from a stall in the market. Some of Silvia's brothers helped their mother and did not go to school at all. Silvia herself was seven or eight when she first set foot in school. She never finished all five grades and repeated first and third grade twice. She attended only until third grade then quit at age 14. Silvia recalled that she did not like to go to school because she was humiliated having to wear worn out shoes and mended clothes. Reflecting on her elementary school experience, she opined:

> I did not like to be in school. . . . My brothers took me there but I ran away as soon as they left at least half of the times. . . . I felt that my situation was different from that of the other kids. We did not have a uniform, our shoes had holes and the other kids made fun of us.

A more common type of discomfort, however, was associated with teachers who employed corporal punishment and/or resorted to verbal

abuse. Several interviewees had negative things to say about their teachers and their "methods." Rinaldo, who attended elementary school from 1948 to 1953, had this to say:

> I attended elementary school at Dante Alighieri [the central school]. The first three years were negative; the teacher, a woman, was authoritarian and used to administering beatings. It was depressing. . . some parents did not mind: actually, they told her "let him have it." . . . In the 4th and 5th grade, I had a very different teacher; I still remember him with affection..

Strong disciplinarian teachers with fascist leanings could still be found in the teaching ranks as late as the early 1960s, as the story told by Bruno bears witness.

> I remember one elementary school teacher who was a fascist. 1961, when I was in the fourth grade, was the 100-year anniversary of the Italian State. I could not afford to buy a particular magazine (Epoca, as I remember) that on this special occasion came with a little national flag. When I arrived at school without the flag, the teacher put me in the last row in the classroom so that the school master would not notice that I was not waving the little flag when he came in for inspection.
>
> This teacher beat children on occasion; she was a fascist and a visceral anti-communist. . . . I know this for a fact: I still remember a statement that she once made in reaction to a disparaging remark that Khrushchev had made about Italy which had appeared in the press. Khrushchev had referred to Italy as the country that produced salami. The next day the teacher remarked in front of the class: "If we still had Mussolini and his legions, we could have answered him: we do not have salami, we have the legions."
>
> My resentment toward this teacher has not diminished with time. She expected a present from the class both at Christmas and at the end of the school year. But my family was dirt poor. In 1961, my father died and my mother had to resort to welfare. It was a tragedy because we lived this with shame. In the months following my father's death, I had to eat at the canteen of the school aid agency (patronato scolastico). . . . My mother was never able to come up with her share for the teacher's present. This was traumatic for me because twice a year (in the 4th and 5th grade) the teacher would announce in front of the whole class that everybody had contributed but me.

Finally, the following account constitutes a strong indictment of the class bias shown by teachers in the tracking of working-class kids. When Giuseppe reached school age, his family was in dire economic shape. His father was gravely ill and his mother had to support a family of five. Giuseppe's account of social relations in the school emphasizes the teacher's "natural" preference for children from middle class professional families:

> At that time, teachers tended to show a preference for children that came from other social milieus. This behavior was actually rather accentuated. I remember that in the first row were the children of the employees of the steel plant, medical doctors and other professionals.

In his account, Giuseppe made it a point to stress that he had attended the vocational middle school largely because of the teacher's low assessment of his academic ability. Both the tone of his voice and the references to specific episodes in the account clearly indicate that Giuseppe is convinced that the teacher's assessment was biased by his/her class prejudice.

> At the very beginning of elementary school, I had problems due to my lack of social skills. I had difficulty relating to other kids. I was not used to be around other children, as I spent all my time with my elderly grandmother. By the time I reached 4th and 5th grade, however, I was doing all right in school. Therefore, I was surprised at my teacher's appraisal of my abilities at the end of elementary school. He advised my mother to enroll me in the vocational industrial school as he said that I had good "manual potentialities." This seemed odd, as I was among the top students when it came to arithmetic quizzes. Once, I finished the quiz before everyone else, but the teacher thought that I had cheated. He did not accuse me of cheating, but the next time made me move to another seat in the class. Yet, that time too, I finished first. Thus, I went to the commercial school because this teacher told my mother that it was not worthwhile that I take the entrance exam for the academic middle school. He recommended the industrial school but I enrolled in the commercial track of the vocational school as it was not true that I had manual skills.

The Industrial Middle School: "I Ragazzi della Vita" (Willis' Lads in Piombino) After 1945, the industrial middle school (scuola di avviamento industriale) continued unchanged in character as a transitional site between the world of the school and that of the factory. As we have seen, during fascism this school was closely tied to officialdom and local industry. In the post-war period, the school administrator in charge during fascism continued to serve as principal. During the 1940s and 1950s, when in need of materials, equipment and funds, he enlisted the help of the directors of the two factories. Since it was he who recommended the most diligent graduates for employment in local industrial firms, he certainly had clout, which no doubt led some families to plead with him to put their sons on the list he passed on to the directors. During the 1950s, state-organized specialized courses for workers were held at the school which reinforced the close relationship with the two mills.

The vocational industrial middle school (11-14 age group) constituted the bottom of the educational pyramid. Those who enrolled were clearly destined for work in the factories. For some this school did represent a sensible choice, but for others it was the only option, given their families' financial constraints.

A teacher's final report for the school year 1953-54 described the school population as consisting of male students from poor families: a milieu depicted as lacking "the minimal necessary conditions for learning." The students were considered mediocre; although the academic curriculum was very basic, some students nonetheless flunked the non-vocational subjects. Even this school was selective: in 1953-54, out of 124 students enrolled in the first grade, 34 (27%) were not admitted to the next grade (ASMSB/AI-AV, Cartella 1953-54, Atti e Corrispondenza).

The remainder of this section focuses on the way in which this school was experienced and on the counter-school culture developed by a group of factory-bound boys who attended this school in the 1950s. Pino, whose parents could not afford to send him to the academic middle school and who thus had attended this school between 1954 and 1957, voiced his strong distaste for this educational institution:

> I hated the industrial school. I did not like using my hands to make objects from blocks of iron; I hated all that was associated with "industry." I do not have pleasant memories of that school. It was considered as an inferior school, almost a school for handicapped [minorati]. We used to compare ourselves with the students of the high school located next door. We hated those guys. We lived in a working-class town where the social separation was marked. We knew we were destined for the factory. I remember the attitude of the teachers: they basically left us alone since we were factory-bound anyway. The situation was clearly class-discriminatory.

At this school for factory-bound boys, inevitably a student culture developed that resembled in some respects the behavior and "cultural production" displayed by Willis' lads. Although more pointed research is necessary to document the forms of resistance and transgression through which some factory-bound "lads" were trying to forge an identity, the interview with Pino paints, with vivid strokes, the colorful contours of such a school counter-culture. The following account of 1950s adolescent transgression provides suggestive glimpses:

> It was four or five of us from the avviamento industriale: we were a group, we would do things together, transgressive actions. . . . . We were what you could call ragazzi della vita. . . . For us it was important to study only the minimum or not to study at all. Our socialization did not happen in the school but in the streets, playing soccer. . . some of us were good at soccer and became professional soccer players. . . . Quite a few of us who attended the industrial school lived, how shall I say, . . on the edge and some even fell off the edge. . . .
>
> Living was all that counted. . . still now I can feel it. For example, it was important to have a montgomery [type of coat], to have jeans. . . . At this time, rock and roll was a

> great influence, now it may seem no big deal but then it was incredible; the person who had a radio was lucky. . . . At the time, all of this was life; today, these things may be regarded as consumerism, but it was different then. . . . And yet, we were destined for the factory. You know there is a song that says in Piombino children were workers from the moment of birth ("a Piombino i bambini nascevano operai"); indeed, as children we suckled milk, communism and factory ("succhiavi latte, comunismo e fabbrica"). . . .
>
> When I attended the industrial school, there were four or five of us; we started meeting frequently, started fantasizing about things. . . . We were somewhat particular, we were very poor but we procured ourselves money in different ways: we stole, fished out unexploded artillery shells from the sea, unscrewed the shells and took the powder which we sold to people who made firecrackers. . . We had a special relationship with the sea. . . . We did not have any contact with the various parts of the town, we spent all our time in the quarter called "Marina" and had all our experiences there. Even our first love and it came early, very early. . . . All four of us in this group have been profoundly marked by this time in our lives.

As emerges from this account, if a "school scene" in Piombino with strong similarities to the "culture of resistance" depicted by Willis was to be found, this developed among Piombino's factory-bound youth. Pino's recollection of the counter-culture in which he was involved with some of his classmates is an eloquent illustration of Willis' notion of cultural production. Indeed, Pino's phrase "living was all that counted. . . still now I can feel it" captures the essence of the "cultural moment" as "the lived edge of praxis" (Lave et al, 1992). Furthermore, some of the themes embedded in Willis' lads counter-school scene surface in Pino's account as well: "for us it was important to study the minimum or not to study at all"; "our socialization did not happen in the school but in the streets"; "we procured ourselves money in different ways. . . we stole, we fished out unexploded artillery from the sea." There is even a reference to the salience of early sexual experience.

Yet, the rejection of school knowledge and the rules that governed school socialization cannot be equated with the rejection of intellectual activities and mental labor counterposed to a glorification of manual labor. Indeed, as it emerges from the previous excerpt, Pino "did not like using [his] hands to make objects from blocks of iron" and "hated all that was associated with industry." For example, between the age of 11 and 14 while in the vocational school, Pino read Baudelaire and Jack London among others. Indeed, quite a few students who had ended up in the vocational track because of their families' precarious financial situation, would have rather been in the academic middle school. While the majority of students in the avviamento may not have had much use for "book-knowledge," the culture of transgression and rebellion did not necessarily rest on a wholesale anti-intellectual posture. Moreover, we do not know how representative the behavior of Pino's group was of the students who attended the vocational school.

In a relatively small town like Piombino, where the majority of the population came from a working-class background, the pyramidal structure of the school system produced differentiation among working-class youth. Those in the factory-bound track felt stigmatized. Despite Pino's quoting of the popular saying that Piombino's children were workers as soon as they were born, the situation was changing in these very years, as the numbers of children in the academic middle schools and in secondary institutions increased rapidly during the 1950s.

With respect to the cultural scenario in which Willis has situated his "lads," two significant features make working-class education in Piombino very different from the pattern described in Learning to Labor: 1) as noted above, a culture of transgression among factory-bound youth was not necessarily predicated on rationalized anti-

intellectual attitudes; 2) while political ideology had no place in the world of the British "lads," for Piombinese working-class students, it was an aspect of "living and being." Thus, in Piombino, political ideology constitutes an inescapable link in the shaping of adolescent identities among factory-bound youth. As Pino recalled, "as infants, we suckled milk, communism and factory."

Academic Middle School: Experience of Difference in a Bourgeois Milieu.

Looking back at education during the 1950s, a female teacher with more than 40 years experience in the academic middle school (then about 70, from middle class background and politically conservative) without hesitation admitted that, from a pedagogical point of view, the decade was marked by total lack of progress, especially if contrasted with the changes evident in the 1960s and 1970s.

The selective character of the academic middle school was marked, as reflected in the number of students who had to repeat a grade. In 1953-54, 14 of the 66 boys (21%) and ten of the 46 girls (21%) were not admitted to second grade; 12 of the 50 boys (24%) and seven of the 41 girls (17%) were not admitted to third grade; five of the 54 boys and four of the 47 girls did not graduate (ASMSF, Protocollo 1951-52 and 1954-55). All-boy and all-girl classes were the rule during the 1950s; in fact, gender-segregated courses were not completely abolished until 1970. The school had various tracks identified by a letter of the alphabet (A, B, C, etc), whose composition was largely socially determined. When the teachers put together the tracks, one would end up being almost exclusively comprised of boys or girls from middle class backgrounds.[23] The few working-class youth who ended up in this "bourgeois" track were those who would feel their "difference" the most,

as they found themselves surrounded by the sons and daughters of teachers, doctors, lawyers, managers and engineers.

The "hidden curriculum"--the cultural continuity between the school milieu and that of the middle class--as reflected in the teachers' identification and affiliation with that class, was in fact rather blatant. Most of my working-class interviewees commented on the discomfort they felt in realizing the social nature of the school and the dynamics to which it gave rise. Given the characteristics of the town, most of the middle school teachers came from other areas; some were the wives of engineers and managers who held jobs in the local plants.[24]

The milieu of the academic middle school did not allow working-class kids to easily blend in. They perceived the "culture" as middle class and felt that the teachers were more drawn to the children from middle class families. These perceptions would be shared by subsequent working-class cohorts, reflecting a marked continuity over time.

Rinaldo attended the academic middle school between 1953 and 1956 and continued on to the ginnasio-liceo classico. He was from a family of modest means. His father worked for one of the small sub-contracting companies, but for a while during the 1950s was unemployed. Rinaldo was much younger than his three siblings: 13 years separated him from his oldest brother. The family lived in an old house outside town. He thinks that even as a very young child he had a desire for social advancement. However, when he entered the academic middle school at age 11, he had problems fitting in socially. He felt that studying was a duty and remembers that, as an 11 and 12-year old he would often study until the wee hours, accompanied by the silent, vigil-like presence of his mother who stayed up with him.

Maurizia (b.1945) was the daughter of a tailor. She attended the academic middle school from 1955-58 and the scientific high school from 1958-63. Talking about her experience in the middle school between the ages of 10 and 13 (where she was one year ahead of her classmates), she recalled her malaise in no uncertain terms:

> I felt miserable throughout the years in the elementary and middle school. I felt very repressed. Yes, I was small for my age and a year younger. . . but most of all it was the school. You know the middle school then was still the school of the bourgeoisie and haute bourgeoisie. However, social differences and the discrimination which I discovered at school were a stimulus to do more, to learn, to affirm myself. Nonetheless, I was miserable.

Loriana (b.1949), the daughter of a worker at the ILVA plant, attended the academic middle school from 1960-63 and then enrolled in the ginnasio-liceo classico. Her words leave little doubt as to the salience of social difference in the school socialization of her cohort:

> In the middle school, social difference was experienced as matter-of-fact, not as a conflict. This is at least how I remember it. My class was made up, for the most part, of the daughters of Piombino's professionals and the managers of the local industries. Thus, I found myself in a class where all the other girls were of higher social standing than I. In this sense, I was jinxed because I have always ended up in classes with this type of social mix where I inevitably was very isolated. Meritocracy has done this to me.

Academic High Schools: Liceo Classico, a "Citadel" of Bourgeois Culture and Conservatism

During the 1950s and early 1960s, the academic track at the secondary level consisted of both the liceo classico and the liceo scientifico, but only the latter attracted an unusually high number of working-class students during the 1950s; at the humanist high school, working-class enrollment remained low until 1963-64. During the 1950s, the liceo classico catered almost exclusively to the sons and daughters

of professionals, public officials, local property owners, factory managers, and, to a lesser extent, the petite bourgeoisie. The more poignant testimonies bearing on "school experience" were rendered by students enrolled in the liceo classico during the 1950s and early 1960s. This school was portrayed as a citadel of bourgeois styles and world view within the communist stronghold of Piombino.

From the interviews, it emerged that a number of working-class students who attended the humanist high school had been pushed to do so by one or both their parents as this school supposedly provided the best education available. In some cases, this had to do with the prestige associated with this type of education, in others with the desire that their children appropriate the cultural competencies considered politically necessary in order to beat the system. In quite a few cases, these two motivations were intertwined. In turn, as shown in the preceding section, a family milieu fostering familiarity with books gave rise in some children to a predisposition for an education "of letters." In many cases, such a "predisposition" was developed as a result of early exposure to political works and "socialist" novels, available in the home or accessible through relatives or neighbors.

The experience of working-class students in the two high schools was contrasting given the differences in their social composition. While both schools belonged to the academic track, only the liceo classico had a strong reputation as an elite school. The climate prevailing in the humanist high school may have become even more stifling after 1954, when this school terminated its dependance on the high school in the provincial seat. When the school became independent, the Ministry of Education appointed as school principal a woman who, by all accounts, had strong authoritarian and patriotic leanings. With few exceptions, a

mix of authoritarianism, paternalism and an ultra-conservative world-view prevailed among the teachers. The working-class students who attended the liceo classico in this period (i.e., the 1950s and early 1960s) perceived themselves to be outsiders in this solidly bourgeois milieu. On countless occasions, they felt on the verge of a severe identity crisis and deep emotional turmoil. During the interviews, they recalled the resentment and great unease experienced each time the school principal, in one of her recurrent displays of patriotism and elitism, reminded the student body that they constituted a select group (la crème de la crème) being trained and groomed by means of the great humanist tradition to become the country's future political and economic managerial class. The sense of difference deeply felt by the working-class students on such occasions often proved traumatic, as they well understood that this school culture exerted pressure on them to renounce and feel ashamed of their working-class origins and identities.

The sense of difference and discomfort was accentuated by the hierarchical layering of the schools, which set the liceo classico apart from all the others (the vocational secondary schools, the technical institutes after 1958 and even the liceo scientifico). Not only were there no common activities or occasions for the students of these different schools to mingle, but the director of the humanist high school made sure that the students of the vocational school and those of the licei entered the building in which both schools were housed at a different time (10 minutes apart) so as to limit contact between the two groups. The obsession with the elite status of the humanist course went so far as to discourage the intermingling of the students of the two licei, though they were separated by just a corridor.

The interviews show that the stifling, reactionary atmosphere remained constant throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s, even after the general political climate had changed. The following statements by students enrolled in this school in successive periods illustrate this continuity.

Rinaldo, who attended the ginnasio-liceo classico between 1956 and 1961, recounted:

> A police regime (regime poliziesco) reigned in the school. The headmaster spied on teachers suspected of having left leanings. However, the latter --one or two--kept their opinion mostly to themselves. . . . The headmaster referred to the school as the training ground of the "classe dirigente." In the end it was the teachers who made the school what it was: a few of them conveyed the same message, i.e. that this was the school for the classe dirigente.

Sergio attended the liceo classico between 1961 and 1966 and remembers this period as being very difficult for him.

> I was unhappy and angry; I wanted to drop out and go to school with my friends enrolled in the technical institute, but my mother would not hear of it. Later, I understood why I was so angry, sometimes even violent. That school was an assault on my identity, my family origin. . . . Every year, the headmaster, who was a fascist, gave an inauguration speech in which she reminded the students that school was going to forge the future leaders and managers (i dirigenti) of the country. . . . If you were from a working-class family you were made to feel ashamed. I think that some succumbed, but I was always angry.

Finally, Loriana, who attended the humanist track between 1963 and 1968, had this to say:

> At the Liceo, I was once again the only workers' daughter. At that time, there were two tracks, and I was with the "elite" in track A. The overwhelming majority were women, with only few male students. I was completely isolated. During the first three years, I lived my social difference and my family's socio-economic condition as a personal inferiority. I was so isolated in my class that I looked for friendship and contact with the students in the other classes. . . . The climate in the school was very authoritarian. The school principal was a close-minded, parochial woman. She was ridiculously patriotic, harboring a

nostalgia for fascism. We had to listen continuously to her preaching and reprimands. Her favorite sermon was: behave yourselves and remember that you will be tomorrow's ruling class (classe dirigente). . . . Girls had to wear a black uniform and their appearance was inspected.

NOTES

1. Various studies have documented the inadequate response and lack of truly progressive thinking on educational problem of parties across the political spectrum in the postwar period. The various political parties viewed educational issues through the particular lenses that informed their larger political agenda and the prejudices emanating from their cultural-ideological milieus and backgrounds. The political sub-cultures that produced distinctive discourses in the realm of education can be grouped into three camps: 1) the left (socialists and communists, closely allied up until the mid-1950s); 2) the lay parties; and 3) the confessional Christian Democrats (Ragazzini, 1987; Ambrosoli, 1982; Tomasi, 1976).

2. In brief, these measures constituted the DC's educational blueprint, as articulated in three documents dating to 1942-43. For more detail, see Ambrosoli, 1982:20-21.

3. The Italian Constitution of 1947, drafted with the participation of all democratic parties after two years of debate in the Constituent Assembly, was the product of lengthy negotiations and compromise, with the Christian Democrats often prevailing (sometimes with the help of the PCI). In the arena of education, the main confrontation during the constitutional debates was between the lay parties (including the socialists) and the DC over issues of freedom of education, the place of religious instruction in schools, and state funding of private (i.e. religious) schools. Freedom of education (in Italian, usually referred to as libertà di insegnamento), recognized by the 1948 Constitution, concerned the relationship between the state and private Catholic schools, i.e., the right of private entities to operate schools and of families to send their children to private schools. The lay parties managed to block overt state funding of religious schools, but the provision that "schools could be opened and operated provided that the state incurred no financial burden" left the door open. The Constitution also sanctioned the equivalency of private school certificates at state-approved institutions (mostly religious) and kept in place the system of state exams at the end of secondary schools and university (Ambrosoli, 1982; Tomasi, 1976).

4. The PCI voted in favor of incorporating into the Constitution the Lateran Treaty, also known as the Concordat, signed by Mussolini and the Vatican in 1929. Among other things, this treaty introduced religious instruction into the secondary schools and ratified religious instruction in elementary schools (which had been put in place by the Gentile reform of 1923). As already noted, this was but one of the bitter pills that the PCI had to swallow in order to avoid alienating Catholics.

5. The Gentile reform of 1923 had called for eight years of mandatory schooling, but this provision had not been enforced.

6. Education Minister Gonella, a Christian Democrat, attempted to do this not through structural reforms, which would never have passed due to communist and socialist opposition, but rather through administrative channels by use of ordinances (circolari). During his tenure, Gonella

transferred numerous public educational competencies to Catholic associations and institutions--all at that time flanking organizations of the DC--and to private schools. Literacy and vocational courses for the adult population were among the most important of the educational activities so transferred (Tomasi, 1976:136-38). Clerical control over pre-school education was exercised directly, as most nursery schools were run or staffed by nuns, or indirectly through public service and charity institutions on whose boards parish influence carried considerable weight. The secondary schools that trained nursery school teachers were mostly operated by religious orders as well (Genovesi, 1978; Tomasi, 1978a). According to Luigi Russo (1979:219), a scholar and publicist, Gonella's educational plan represented "the most systematic and determinate attempt. . . since the end of the 18th century designed to bring back clerical control; it is the attempt to reverse the situation which had been instituted with the revolutionary rulings of 1789, when the idea was established that the State had the right to teach." This Christian Democrat take-over of public education did stir up considerable opposition among enlightened intellectuals: in 1947 a number of intellectuals signed a petition demanding that the post of Education Minister be given to a lay politician, which would not occur until February 1954 with the appointment of a Liberal (Ambrosoli, 1982:44-50; Tomasi, 1976). This Liberal Minister attempted to restore the legitimate control of the state over the educational arena. One area in which some restructuring was attempted were the Didactic and Pedagogic Centers which had been under DC control as its personnel was neither elected nor selected through open public competition but rather appointed by the Education Ministry (Ambrosoli, 1982:63-64),

7. In fact, the educational debate during the 1940s and much of the 1950s in general was disproportionately focused on the issue of secular education and the state supervision of schooling as opposed to "freedom of education," a cause championed by Catholics and the DC who relentlessly tried to secure privileges and funding for the private (i.e., religious) educational sector. This focus is reflected in parliamentary debates of the time and in the media. A number of essays which appeared at the time in the national press, published as collected volumes, attest to this (e.g., Calogero, 1957; Russo, 1979).

8. The DC was especially responsive to the interests of elementary teachers, who constituted an important electorate. The debate on the reform of the middle schools often pitted the corporate interests of elementary teachers against those of secondary teachers (Barbagli, 1974:424-27). Concerning reform plans drafted by DC governments that never reached the Parliament's floor, the reference is to a blueprint authored by Gonella included in a 1951 official document of the Education Ministry (Ambrosoli, 1982:59-60) and to a 1959 proposal by Education Minister Aldo Moro (Canestri, 1977:117; Tomasi, 1977:183).

9. This 1955 educational law reversed the organization of the elementary cycle from a 3-year lower and a 2-year upper segments to a 2-year lower and a 3-year upper segments; it also introduced an exam at the end of the lower segment (in second grade) which made elementary schooling even more selective.

10. The parliamentary inquiry referred to here is the Inchiesta Parlamentare sulla Miseria, a valuable source of information on the social conditions in the targeted areas (Camera dei Deputati, 1953; Braghin, 1978).

11. The first half of the 1950s also marked the beginning of internal South-North migration and the development of immigrant slums in the outskirts of the major northern cities. "Special classes" were set up to cope with the problems of academically disadvantaged and culturally maladjusted southern children, a development which was accepted by progressives and the left in the misguided belief that such children had a better chance to catch up academically in such segregated arrangements (Ambrosoli, 1982:70-71).

12. The first vocational institutes (istituti professionali) were established in 1951 and administered by the Division for Vocational Education (instituted in 1947). Previously, vocational education had fallen under the authority of the Economic Ministry. Vocational institutes replaced the scuole tecniche (technical schools). On vocational education, see Tonelli (1964), Lombardi (1978).

13. A 1953 investigation--conducted by a leading weekly magazine and based on the official statistics of the Education Ministry--revealed the shortfall of classroom space in the major cities and in the North, Center, South and the Islands. In the country as a whole the shortfall reached 40.6% (63,848 classroom units); regionally, it amounted to 46% in Rome, 22% in Northern Italy, 46% in the central regions, 40% in the South, and 58% in the Islands (Garofalo, 1953). As late as 1959, official data still showed a 27% classroom shortage at the elementary and secondary levels (Ambrosoli, 1982:85). Moreover, in many cases children were taught in warehouses, cellars, attics and stables. School facilities continued to be woefully inadequate well into the 1960s.

14. The developments that took place in the educational arena between the mid-1950s and the 1962 reform, must be placed in context, i.e. in relation to the gradually shifting political settlement. Between 1957 and 1959, the political formula known as "centrism" showed signs of crisis; the PSI was struggling to find its autonomy from the PCI and some Christian Democrats (notably Aldo Moro) were considering the possibility of letting the Socialists into the government. The Cold War was not over though the worst had passed; the "Italian economic miracle" (1958-63) was accompanied by the resurgence of trade union militancy and the first substantial wage increases won by workers.

15. The pivotal publication of the progressive camp, which hosted some of the most meaningful debates on school reforms, was the review Scuola e Città, founded in 1950 by Ernesto Codignola, a leading liberal educator. Very few of the Marxist scholars who participated in the debate with the liberals and non-Marxist socialists were educators themselves. For instance, Dina Bertoni Jovine was the only educational scholar on the editorial board of La Riforma della Scuola (Ragazzini, 1987).

16. In the committee the following organizations were represented: PCI, PSI, PRI, PSU, Internal Commissions of the ILVA and La Magona plants, the Communist youth federation, and the metal workers' union FIOM (AMP, Categoria 9, Cartella 1118, 1948-51).

17. In the municipal archives I found records bearing upon this initiative, including a letter from a group of Communist intellectuals (who did not identify themselves by name) and negative response of the provincial school authorities to an inquiry initiated by the administration (AMP, Categoria 9, Cartella 1118). The PSIUP's opposition to the initiative is reflected in the minutes of the municipal council meetings.

18. Overall enrollment (i.e., the Liceo classico and the liceo scientifico taken together) stood at 292 in 1955; between 1953 and 1960, the average enrollment was 278 (Benesperi, [1972]).

19. This mode of representation entails a certain manipulation on my part, as I have pieced together the following accounts by removing my questions. Moreover, in some cases, I have cut out passages (as indicated with the use of ellipses) and repetitions that interrupted the flow of the narrative. Not all the biographic interviews were taped and some passages, although faithful renditions, should not be taken as literal translations.

20. It would appear that all-repeater classes were instituted in 1948-49 as surmised from an examination of elementary school rosters for the year 1950-51. The two all-repeater classes numbered 22; the other four had between 31-34 pupils.

21. In this neighborhood, the factory prior to World War II had built a kindergarten, which also housed three elementary school classrooms; four more classrooms were in a different building also owned by the company. This information is included in a 1939 report by the town's health official and reproduced in Tognarini (1980:273-8).

22. It should be recalled that the composition of Piombino's working-class population underwent significant change throughout the century, starting in 1911-1913 when many of the original workers were replaced by laborers from Sardinia and Naples (see chapter 2). Furthermore, the crisis of the 1950s had created a pool of chronically underemployed.

23. This practice was very common until the early 1970s and is by no means confined to Piombino. Here the term "track" is used as a translation of the Italian term "corso." In most schools, middle-class students populated the A track; here, turnover in teaching staff tended to be less than that in other tracks.

24. Of 14 tenured teachers, only one was born in Piombino; her father (who did not come from Piombino) had held the post of municipal secretary during fascism. Of 20 younger teachers (some of whom were substitute teachers and all of whom were untenured), only nine were from Piombino. This information was included in a teachers' roster for the year 1958-59 (ASMSF, Protocollo 1958-59).

CHAPTER SIX

"AMERICANIZATION," SOCIAL ENGINEERING AND THE ENDURING CONSERVATISM OF SCHOOL MILIEUS 1945-62

> It was a very peculiar vocational school. . . . . You were admitted only if you passed a battery of difficult psychological and attitudinal tests. . . . . Two psychologists probed my ideas and attitudes about hierarchical relations. . . The factory had complete control over the school and therefore over the students. . . . The message conveyed to us in school was that we were to become the workers' elite.
>
> Management's main reason for hiring people from the countryside was to get workers who had some other income source [besides the wage]. . . There was a definite attempt to prevent [the worker's] total identification with the factory and exclusive dependence on the industrial wage. . . . If your livelihood is totally dependent on the wage, if the factory is all you know, you have almost no choice but [to engage in] struggle.
>
> —Carlo (b. 1951, Piombino), who attended the scuola siderurgica, has worked at the steel-works since 1971.
>
> I remember the early 1960s as the "dark years" of Italian education. . . . A kind of "terrorism" [reigned] in the middle school: an exorbitant number of students flunked. Teachers had no awareness of the social conditioning of learning resulting from socio-economic conditions of students' families.
>
> —Mario, born in 1929 in Piombino. a teacher since 1959

This chapter reconstructs the "structural" change of the early 1960s and attempts to capture the ferment characterizing the period between 1962 (the advent of center-left governments) and 1967 (the prelude to the widespread student protest of 1968). The first part of the chapter focuses on the transformation of the work force in Piombino's factories as it became more ruralized due to a conscious recruitment strategy and discusses the change in labor relations as a new generation of industrial managers abandoned confrontation for co-optation. Both the ruralization of the work force and the "social"

approach to labor relations went hand in hand with a technological overhaul of the plants and modernization of the production process, resulting in a re-alignment of the work force and a rather sudden expansion in the number of technical personnel and skilled workers.

In turn, this modernization of production and the "Americanization" of labor relations laid the groundwork for a qualitatively new involvement of local industry (especially the steel-works) in the educational sector. In 1961, the steel mill would create, in partnership with the local vocational institute (established the previous year), a de facto company school whose objective would be to train a loyal workers' elite. In 1964, special classes for workers would be set up at the technical institute (ITI) with funding from the municipal administration, the Chamber of Commerce and the steel-works.

This first part also relates the experience of former students who attended the company school (known in Piombino as la scuola siderurgica) and presents their analysis of what was going on in this school. Thus, I underscore the dynamic connecting developments in the sphere of production and labor organization, on one side, and the activism of the capitalist management elite in the educational-vocational sector, on the other side.

The second part focuses on the modernization of the school system that began in 1962 with the establishment of a comprehensive middle cycle and the abolishment of the avviamento (the vocational middle school for the 11-14 age bracket). This hard-won reform, given the ultra-conservative and strongly segmented character of Italian education up to this time, represented a revolutionary change. Yet, implementation encountered formidable obstacles including stiff opposition from the

majority of Piombino's teachers who were not prepared to renounce the values they had interiorized during previous decades.

In the latter sections, I attempt to convey how, on one side, in these years school milieus were still imbued with political and pedagogic conservatism and authoritarianism, and on the other, the ferment of new generational sensibilities and an emergent structure of feeling were beginning to find expression through the first episodes of student defiance.

I. Education, Americanization and Social Engineering

Change in the Early 1960s

The reconstruction of the Italian economy (1945-51) was followed by a phase of accelerated economic growth that peaked between 1958 and 1962: a period known as "the Italian economic miracle."[1] Workers did not participate at first in the benefits of the economic growth, which entailed high social costs, such as heavy migration, unbridled real estate speculation, and low wages. Expenditure in the public service sector (schools, hospitals, transport) lagged behind the growth of the private sector. Moreover, the North-South dualism became more accentuated and internal migration caused major dislocations. A process of modernization in company organization and personnel management, known as "Americanization," set in, while rapid economic growth brought about a transformation of the class structure. Finally, a rising living standard came about as a consequence of the first notable wage-increases during the early 1960s.[2]

The early 1960s also witnessed a change in the political settlement. Following the Cuban missile crisis the most confrontational period of the Cold War came to an end, which opened up political space domestically

(Ginsborg, 1990:ch.8). As, since the late 1950s the Christian Democrats had not been able to put together stable centrist governments, in 1962, after much internal strife, the DC acquiesced to a center-left coalition as the only way to stabilize parliamentary support for DC-led governments.[3] The Socialist Party in turn, led by Nenni's majority faction (the PSI's moderate core) opted to enter the "control room" in order to gain access to state resources for economic planning and "structural reforms."[4] Indeed, the issue of reform dominated the Italian political scene over the next few years. However, the space for true structural reforms proved very limited since the strongest faction of the Christian Democrats embraced a "minimalist" position, subordinating reforms to the strategic objective of strengthening DC hegemony through domesticating the PSI to split the Left.[5]

The first center-left coalition, formed in March 1962, passed an educational law making schooling compulsory to age 14 and abolishing separate vocational and academic tracks for the 11-14 age group.[6] In addition, next to the institution of this "unified middle school" (the scuola media unica as the reformed middle cycle was called), the other significant educational law passed during the 1960s concerned the institution of a state system of kindergartens. During the 1950s, the Christian Democrats had vehemently opposed such a move as they were dedicated to preserving the Church's virtual monopoly in this field.[7] One government even fell in 1966 over this proposed legislation in 1966 when a number of Christian Democrats defected; only in 1968 were state nursery schools instituted (Ragazzini, 1983: 68-70; Ambrosoli, 1982: ch.8).[8]

The 1960s witnessed a significant expansion of secondary education, with the highest enrollment increases coming in the academic high schools and the technical institutes. According to the literature,

this reflected a popular perception of education as a vehicle of social promotion that became particularly striking from the early 1960s on. Certainly, the improved living standards arising out of the first substantial wage raises won during the late 1950s contributed to this educational expansion. The introduction of the comprehensive middle school (to be discussed below) and the new political climate inaugurated by the center-left governments of the early and mid-1960s played a role as well. The interaction of these various factors produced a historical conjuncture that encouraged many families to send their children to the technical institutes or the academic high schools, as these were considered more prestigious and respectable than the vocational schools and entailed better career prospects (Ambrosoli, 1982:ch.7).

The vocational education provided by public schools was characterized by a proliferation of specializations and their rather rigid separation even though in principle it should have had a general orientation. In Italy, vocational training was provided not only by public schools but also by various other organizations, some of which were state-supported and part of the DC patronage network. In some cases, vocational training fell under the control of companies or business associations (such as, for example, the Chamber of Commerce) (Ambrosoli, 1982:ch.7).[9]

Piombino in the Early 1960s: The Direction of Change

In 1957-58 most metal-workers in Piombino earned only subsistence wages, barely sufficient to provide children with new shoes much less the school supplies demanded by teachers. As late as 1960, the economic situation of working-class families, even when all the adult men and boys worked, could hardly be described as "comfortable."

Indeed, Italy at that time still had the lowest hourly wage and the longest work week among ECSC countries (Luchetti, 1985:338).[10] Given this situation, workers could not afford to refuse overtime, and many wives had to supplement family income by accepting piecework in the home.[11] Many families suffered due the "crisis" at the tin plant, and those laid-off workers who tried to set up their own shop often ended up bankrupt. No significant reabsorption of the unemployed occurred until 1963-64: as of 1960 Piombino's unemployed still numbered some 1,159, about half of whom were under the age of 21 (CECA, 1963).

However, between 1959 and 1962, the situation on the labor front gradually changed as the unions abandoned their defensive posture and went on the offensive. The 1962 strike wave resulted in substantial wage increases, in turn bringing to an end the "economic miracle" predicated on low wages. Perhaps most significantly, with industrial modernization and managerial reorganization underway in a number of sectors (including steel) by 1960, employers began to move gradually away from confrontation with labor toward a more "social" approach (Sassoon, 1986:127-9; Romagnoli and Treu, 1977).

In the early 1960s, Piombino's steel-works underwent a personnel reorganization consisting of a renewal of top managers and creation of new middle-management, supervisory and clerical positions. This reorganization, coupled with the new pattern of labor relations, came to be known as "Americanization," according to some Piombinesi interviewed. This strategy included a new emphasis on community-oriented, philanthropic recreational and cultural activities. The newly founded personnel and public relations office of the steel-works sought to project a "social" and enlightened image of the factory. In short, the confrontational stance of an old-style management gave way to co-optive

strategies whereby the adversarial relationship between labor and management was attenuated by the adoption of "social" initiatives. The era of social engineering thus began.

Urban Development, Social Engineering and Educational Expansion

In the early 1960s, urban development completely changed the map and the physiognomy of Piombino. As of 1960, the housing crisis had still not been remedied. The number of housing units were still insufficient--making multiple family residences common-- and the quality of existing housing was often poor. The first postwar public housing projects got under way in 1961; the first apartment blocks for working-class families were built by the steelworks with subsidies from the state and the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

In the early 1960s, Piombino started expanding on the slopes of the hills between the old town center, the factories and the promontory situated across from the plants. The hill that one encounters on the right when approaching the town center was gradually built up, and today two of the town's new neighborhoods are located here. A little further on toward the center is the section of town with the highest rents and real estate values, a section also built between the late 1950s and the mid-1960s. For some of my working-class interviewees who were born in the historical part of town near the sea, this area was alien territory, a world inhabited by another breed of people and a physical environment that they detested. Finally, proceeding three km north from the town center along a winding coastal road, one reaches the beautiful small promontory known as Salivoli. Today one finds there a sprawling modern community, but in the 1950s this was an expanse of sloping

fields with a few farmhouses dotting the hillside and a couple of villas along the coastal road.

One of the steel-works's social initiatives was a "community outreach program" designed to bridge the gap between the factory and surrounding communities. For example, the plant commissioned publications on local history and the recording of local folk songs: copies were often distributed as gifts to employees on festive occasions, such as Christmas. In 1961 the office of external relations started publishing a monthly bulletin reporting local news and organized cultural activities including a film-club and occasional art exhibits. Furthermore, the steelworks founded two recreational clubs: one for workers and one for clerical staff and management.

The factory also initiated or expanded philanthropic support for the education of workers' children: scholarships based on merit were distributed and wage bonuses doled out for the purchase of school books. The monthly bulletin Piombino Notizie, which the steelworks began publishing in 1960, regularly reported on deadlines and application procedures for scholarships and announced special contributions to the education of workers' children. Scholarships were given out to students at all levels: the middle cycle, secondary and university. Indeed, several of my interviewees reported having received these scholarships.

Piombinesi had mixed reactions to the steelworks' cultural outreach activities. As I gathered from interviews with former working-class students of the academic high schools, the response toward cultural initiatives, such as the film-club, was generally positive. Activities such as the film-club were appreciated by students because they were often of good quality and, more importantly, "the only game in town." Other people condemned and boycotted these cultural and recreational

initiatives organized by the plant, denouncing them as attempts at "Americanization."

At times, the social engineering initiatives of the plant encountered stiff opposition from the local communist administration. In one notable case, the municipal government vetoed a planned housing project because the design, which called for the construction of individual houses with little gardens, seemed to promote atomization and embourgeoisement among the prospective working-class tenants. In the eyes of communist administrators, apartment blocks constituted the only residential formula embodying the working-class collective ethos. In rejecting the plan, the administration insisted that utility and practicality should prevail over aesthetics. Still, with the new housing projects, the steelworks introduced and promoted home ownership since after a period of continuous occupancy (25-30 years)--during which time they would have monthly installment payments deducted from their paychecks--workers received title to the property.

In the educational arena, the most significant development of these years was the expansion of secondary schooling, in particular in the technical and upper-level vocational tracks. As will be discussed in the second part of this chapter, the early 1960s witnessed an increase in enrollment in the academic middle school, and conversely, a contraction of enrollment in the avviamento (i.e. the vocational track of the middle cycle). This trend clearly meant that more and more families intended to send their children to on secondary schools.

During the early 1960s, the two technical institutes (a commercial and an industrial five-year school respectively), established in 1958 on the initiative of the communist councilman for education, saw a steady increase in their student population. The ITI (Istituto Tecnico

Industriale) catered to an all-male student population, the ITC (Istituto Tecnico Commerciale) to a predominantly female one. By 1962 enrollment at the Industrial Technical Institute (ITI) stood at 236 and at the Commercial Technical Institute (ITC) at 248 (Benesperi, [1972]).[12] The students who graduated from these schools could either enter the labor market or enroll at a number of university faculties. Graduates from the technical institutes could aspire to middle-management careers in administration, banking, tourism and in various other private or public sectors. Alternatively, if they passed the licensing examination, they could also open their own office and become independent consultants.

In the secondary vocational sector, an independent Istituto Professionale per l'Industria e l'Artigianato (IPSIA) catering to an all-male student population was founded in 1960 (replacing a course operated by an institute from Livorno); an Istituto Professionale per il Commercio catering mostly to female students followed in 1962. At the IPSIA (the all-male school) enrollment nearly doubled from 132 in 1960 to 255 in 1968; enrollment in the IPC stood at 155 by 1968 (Benesperi, [1972]). These were upper-level three-year vocational schools that "produced" skilled workers, electricians, craftsmen, secretaries, clerks and the like.[13] Whereas graduates from the technical institutes could enroll in a number of faculties, until 1968 those who attended the vocational schools could not.[14]

The development of vocational education during the 1960s coincided with an influx of students from the surrounding countryside, which, albeit limited at first, increased steadily during the 1970s. This development reflected a two-pronged expansion of secondary education as students from Piombino flooded the technical schools and the licei,

while a high percentage of students from the countryside enrolled in the vocational institutes--indicating a new level of stratification.

The Transformation of the Work Force

Beginning in 1960 the steelworks entered an unprecedented expansion phase that would last until the early 1970s. One consequence was a substantial increase in the work force: while between 1955 and 1959 the number of workers had increased by only 339 (from 2765 to 3104), in just over one year between 1960-61, the plant hired 798 new workers and in 1962 another 898 (Benesperi, [1972].).

However, the new recruitment did not necessarily benefit native Piombinesi. In 1959-60 the plant adopted a new hiring strategy that discriminated against Piombinesi in favor of people from the rural areas and smaller towns in the surrounding region. The steelworks even entered into service contracts with the local bus companies to ensure transportation of the new workers to and from their local community. Most new hires commuted from a 20-km radius, but some came from farther away. The company was known for its discriminatory criteria in hiring: for example, those from Catholic backgrounds had the best chance. Indeed, native Piombinesi related in the interviews that one could land a job at the steelworks at this time only upon the recommendation of a priest or a carabiniere. In addition, the Christian Democratic Party and the Catholic Labor Union (CISL) also served as intermediaries in the recruitment process.

As the expansion of the steelworks continued during the early 1970s, the "ruralization" of the work force meant that second and third generation workers got replaced by less experienced laborers who management hoped would be more compliant.[15] One interviewee--a former

student of the company school and later a trade union cadre whose trajectory is traced below--volunteered the following comment as to the most important reason underlying the recruitment strategy inaugurated in these years:

> During the early 1960s, the active recruitment from adjacent areas had started (era cominciata la chiamata dal comprensorio). I believe that management's main reason for hiring people from the countryside was to get workers who had some other income source [besides the wage]. This might be a piece of land, a small store or a seasonal income from tourism. In any case, what mattered was hiring people who would not be so totally dependent on industrial wages, people whose lives were not be so totally linked to the factory. There was a definite attempt to prevent [the worker's] total identification with the factory and exclusive dependence on the industrial wage, as the latter has the effect of radicalizing workers' struggles. If your livelihood is totally dependent on the wage, if the factory is all you know, you have almost no choice but to [engage in] struggle.

Looking back on this phenomenon, most observers agree that the recruitment of non-native workers did not bring about the fragmentation of the labor force that management had hoped. Gradually the "old" workers and union cadres socialized the new recruits into the prevailing workers' culture of the factory. This process was facilitated by the nationwide increase in the bargaining power of unions during the 1959-62 period when workers won significant wage increases. A veteran metalworker described the situation:

> It was not easy to explain to people who had never seen a factory before and did not have parents who had spent their lives there that wages and job security had a cost. . . They did not know that after a life spent in a steel plant, by the time you get to retirement (if you live long enough), you will be suffering from silicosis, arthritis, and a ruined stomach. We have all seen our fathers or a neighbor--go through this: we knew what was in store for us. Thus, we struggled to improve our working conditions, reduce work hours, organize the work in a different way. . . . We discussed all of this [with them], we tried to explain our positions, we tried to transmit to them not just our work experience but also our political experience. Of course, there

were disagreements, but only during the most highly charged political periods (Mosci, 1982:226-7).

The Involvement of the Steelworks in the Educational Sector

During the early 1960s, local industry, and especially the steelworks, intervened aggressively in the local educational arena. As already discussed, the industrial plants and local vocational schools had collaborated previously both under fascism and during the 1950s.[16] However, the relationship became even closer with the founding in 1960 of the Istituto Professionale. The director of the new school had headed the vocational middle school since 1939 and since that time had skillfully maintained good ties with both the management of the local plants and the town's conservative notables. Although the Istituto Professionale was a public school, it operated with considerable autonomy under a special statute. It was run by a school board (consiglio di amministrazione) whose chairman was the managing director of the steelworks; other firms and economic institutions (such as the Chamber of Commerce) as well as the municipal administration were also represented. The school's board of directors, because of the special autonomy enjoyed by such vocational schools, had extensive powers both over the teaching staff and in shaping the curriculum.

The most significant and direct involvement of local industry (especially the steelworks) in vocational education stemmed in large part from the rise of a new managerial class that was interested in social engineering and the "modernizing" spirit characteristic of the early 1960s. This new thinking emanated from such business think-tanks as the Fondazione Olivetti and the Fondazione Agnelli. Moreover, Piombino's steelworks fell under the authority of IRI, the state holding corporation where a particular type of managerial mentality flourished. The social-

engineering spirit that marked IRI managers was a byproduct of their position as members of the capitalist elite and political class.

Collaboration between the management of the steelworks and the Istituto Professionale was assured by the close personal relation that existed between the plant's managing director and the school principal. The latter managed to secure state funds for a canteen and transportation, both important services given that the school catchment area was not confined to the town but rather extended to the surrounding countryside and adjacent villages. Thus, as this school catered to a significant extent to the population of adjacent areas, its role in producing future specialized cadres for the factories complemented the hiring practices instituted in 1959-1960 by the steelworks. In 1964 the Institute began offering a few classes in the largest neighboring community in an area from which the steelworks drew many new workers. Between 1964 and 1974 the steelworks would hire 270 graduates of the Istituto Professionale, many of whom were not native to Piombino.[17]

The other intervention dates to 1964 when evening classes were established at the technical institute (ITI) with funding from the steelworks, the municipality and the local Chamber of Commerce.[18] In the beginning, the steelworks may have had a strong interest in having its workers attend these evening classes in the hopes of training technical personnel who already knew the plant. Therefore, the financial support provided for these courses and the special dispensation that these worker-students received in order to attend the school may have appeared to be a good investment.[19]

The Establishment of a Company School

The initiative that best typified the social engineering role undertaken by the steelworks at this time was the establishment of a de facto company school ostensibly run in partnership with the Istituto Professionale. Although the school began operations in 1960 or 1961, the scuola siderurgica was given official status only in 1962 under a convention signed by the Provincial School Superintendent, the Istituto Professionale and the steelworks.[20] The document stipulated the prerogatives, role and functions of the parties involved.

This school was a hybrid being neither like any other public vocational institution nor a company school. It admitted students at age 14 or 15 (upon completion of the middle school cycle) and guaranteed them employment with the steelworks subsequent to the three years of training they would receive in the school. The vocational curriculum was designed to suit the particular needs of the production process of Piombino's plant. The school was housed in a building owned by the steelworks and situated in the immediate vicinity of the plant. The mill provided the necessary equipment, paid all school fees and gave the students a stipend; it also appointed its personnel to serve as instructors. The full cooperation of the regular teachers, who as employees of the Istituto Professionale were paid by the state, was ensured by granting them a monthly supplement to their salary (not insignificant given teacher salaries at the time).[21]

The establishment of this de facto company school came in response to the need for trained workers with specific skills in a period marked by economic modernization and the new belief in social engineering. The school also constituted a political investment, as it was conceived as a greenhouse designed to "raise" workers with the proper

attitude, loyalty to management and keen appreciation for the rules of hierarchical organization. The school selected its students very carefully based on both political and attitudinal criteria and had a large pool of candidates to draw from, as many applicants were attracted by the promise of a job in the "big factory" and by the awarding of stipends.

A number of interviewees suspected that the school checked up on the applicant's family background in order to keep out "reds"; a factory official candidly admitted that such checks played a regular part in the selection process. The plant gathered information about prospective students through a variety of channels: for example, it was common to make inquiries with the carabinieri who had a network of regular and occasional informants. Those prospective students with strong ties to the church had a clear advantage: this was reflected in the fact that many of the local Catholic trade unionists (affiliated with the CISL) active in the 1970s graduated from this school. Moreover, the majority of applicants eventually admitted came not from Piombino but from adjacent localities. Between 1964 and 1973, the school graduated 169 students (averaging 17 years of age) all of whom would be hired by the steelworks.[22]

Although two of the three officials (middle managers) interviewed at the steelworks denied any political screening of prospective students, the following two testimonies of former students from working-class origins leave little doubt as to the type and extent of control exercised by the plant over the school's clientele and operations.[23] The two accounts complement each other in that they have somewhat different emphases. The first comes from an individual admitted during the first year of the school's operation, the second from someone who attended the school between 1965 and 1968.[24]

"La Scuola Siderurgica" 1961-63: Ettore's Account

Ettore, who turned sixteen in 1961, was already two years behind in school (having lost one year to illness during middle school) and on the verge of being held back after his first year at the technical institute because of poor performance. Although his father had reconciled himself to having his son quit school to work with him as an independent carpenter, he feared for his son's future as at the time self-employed artisans did not receive social security. When both father and son saw the posters (that the steelworks had plastered on town walls) announcing the opening of the metallurgical school, it seemed a perfect opportunity since the graduates were promised a job at the plant after just three years of training. At the end of July, all the applicants were summoned to the steelworks where they were interviewed and given attitudinal tests. Of 32 applicants, 24-25 were to be admitted. Ettore recalls that most of the applicants accepted were not from Piombino but rather from adjacent areas, whereas nearly all those rejected came from the town. Ettore is positive that at least some were rejected because of their family's political background. He personally knew one rejected boy who came from a family known to be communist and heavily involved in the party. He was therefore convinced that the selection process was based at least in part on political criteria. In fact, after learning that he had been admitted, Ettore's family found out that the carabinieri had approached a well-respected member of the community to solicit information on the family for the plant. Ettore also believed that, because of the initial "political screening," those admitted were not predisposed to becoming politicized.

According to Ettore, he and others who attended the metallurgical school felt privileged vis-a-vis the students of the Istituto

Professionale. They had a new and fully equipped school, a chemistry laboratory, their own personal lockers, new bathrooms and showers; moreover, they were convinced that the Institute had assigned the best teachers to the metallurgical school. Here is Ettore's account:

> The promise that at the end of the three years we would be hired, the insistent reminder that we were trained for jobs that entailed responsibilities--our teachers told us continually that this school prepared us to become "foremen" [in English in the original]--and the stipend we received induced us to work hard. It was not only the teachers who told us that we had to apply ourselves and give everything we had to this school because the jobs that would be waiting for us entailed major responsibility: the factory personnel conveyed the same message. I recall one engineer who taught Administration and Business Law telling us the same thing. Therefore, we were convinced that we would become foremen and supervisors (capi-turno or capi-squadra) as soon as we entered the factory. Thinking back, it was stupid of us to believe that at age 18 we would be handed jobs that carried such responsibility and entailed ordering around workers with 20 years experience. However, we were literally pumped up by all those "you will become foremen" speeches.
>
> The students received a stipend--200 or 300 lire a day--based on attendance and performance.[25] The best students also got a scholarship: for two years, I also got one. . . . The teachers like us were accountable to the factory: after all, we were in "their house" (in fondo, eravamo a casa sua). [The teachers] also received money from [the factory]. It was, in essence, a company school. When a manager came into the classroom, it was as if the boss had arrived ("era come se arrivasse il padrone"): we felt that as did the teachers. . . . Periodically--I think two or three times every year--we had to take the usual attitudinal tests and [someone from plant management] interviewed us.

According to one teacher who taught at the school from the very beginning, the interviews Ettore refers to were with a psychologist; the tests served as a type of control (to see if the "right" attitudes were forming) and kept up the pressure to perform. The teaching staff included a social worker employed by the steelworks to whom the students could turn if they had problems. The social worker acted as an

intermediary between the students, the teaching staff, the school director and management.

Within the factory, the students had contacts with workers, many of whom, according to Ettore, were antagonistic toward them. The workers often told the students that they should expect to be handed a broom or shovel upon being hired by the plant. Yet the students believed the teachers and the managers not the workers. Eventually, upon completion of the three-year training, they did get hired: some of them were assigned to a new section of the plant not yet in operation, where they discovered that the workers prediction had been more accurate than the promises of their teachers and management.

> During the first month, as the workers had told us, we were handed brooms and shovels and sent here and there to sweep the floors and clean machinery. We were all taken aback by this, as we all believed that from the start we would be given important jobs. We went to the teachers and the director of the school and protested this treatment. They told us to be patient and assured us that we were at the top of the list for important jobs once this part of the plant began operation.
>
> Meanwhile, just a few days or at most two weeks after we started working, the plant went on strike and the other workers convinced us to join in. All of us who had graduated from the school went on strike. That very day the Italian teacher summoned us to his home. When we got to his place, he really gave it to us for joining the strike and told us that the head engineer had called him up to complain about our irresponsible behavior. Apparently, [the head engineer] had been furious and demanded to know what kind of students the school had sent them, calling us "wretched human beings" and warning that we were at serious risk of being fired. The teacher scared the hell out of us and convinced us to go talk to the engineer and offer contrite apologies. We went all together, in a group, with our tails between our legs. The engineer rebuked us some more and then, in order to conceal the fact that we had gone on strike that day, re-assigned us to the third shift (which was the night shift).
>
> I think that, from that day on, all of us kept a low profile. The teacher's reprimand and the engineer's threats had scared us: we did not want to put our jobs at risk. Furthermore, we still hoped that they would promote us.

> However, we realized that it was not going to be easy and that certainly we would not just be automatically handed posts of responsibility as we had naively expected. We would have to rise from the ranks.
>
> Perhaps this was fair, but at the time we did not reason like this. It was unthinkable to expect that the older workers and the unions would accept eighteen-year-olds jumping over workers with experience and seniority. However, I do not think that this was the main reason why nearly all of us had to work for a couple years as manual workers (operai semplici) despite our school diploma. It was a combination of things: the complexity of the organizational structure at the plant and the fact that we were assigned to this particular part of the plant that was new [referring to the "tubificio"]. Management had sent some forty or fifty workers to Pittsburgh to be trained on the new machinery: it was clear that it was these people who would be given the more important jobs. For these reasons, we had to start low and rise from the ranks. Of course, we were greatly disappointed.

This important testimony illustrates very effectively the types of control which management attempted to exert to ensure that, at the conclusion of the training period, the company would get skilled workers with the "right" attitudes. The political screening of applicants and the pressure applied to these students through the promise of important jobs, together with the monetary inducements, were part of a strategy devised to "produce" workers more interested in their own careers than in improving the collective conditions of the work force. Management could not have predicted the massive labor mobilizations just a few years in the future in which almost every worker would participate; nor could it control every aspect of these future workers' lives or completely mold their consciousness. Every person to whom I spoke about this agreed that the factory got its skilled workers. However, during the first couple of years of their employment, these students had to come to terms with the frustration they felt in ungratifying jobs. As I will argue in the next chapter, this situation predisposed them to turn

to union militancy in the 1970s to vent their restlessness and discontent.

"La Scuola Siderurgica": Carlo's Account, 1965-68

Carlo (b.1951) attended the metallurgical school between 1965 and 1968. His account focuses on the admission process, the internal division of the work force, and what it meant to be trained to become "the elite of the working class." He belongs to a cohort different from that of Ettore, as he witnessed and took part in the early stages of the student movement in Piombino while in his third year (1968).

> After the middle school, my family's economic situation necessitated that I go to work. However, my teacher leaned on my mother and insisted that I go on to secondary school. When I graduated from the middle cycle [in 1965], the metallurgical school had just recently opened [in actuality it opened in 1961]. . . . It was a very peculiar vocational school, with a selective process bordering on the absurd. The reward [for admittance] was guaranteed employment after three years of schooling. You were admitted only if you passed a battery of difficult psychological and attitudinal tests. Of 180 applicants, only 20 were admitted. The selection process, which lasted several days, consisted not only of tests but interviews as well. . . . In particular, I remember two psychologists who probed my ideas and attitudes about hierarchical relations. I remember this because at that point I still believed that the principle of hierarchy had some role to play, so I did not need to fake my answers and suppose that I told them what they wanted to hear.
>
> The factory had complete control over the school and therefore over the students. During our second and third year, we spent every afternoon in the plant, that is four hours in the classroom and four hours in the factory. On-site training in the plant [called pratica] was an essential part of the curriculum, and for this we had two instructors. Everything we did in the school centered around that particular plant: the technical subjects were narrowly geared to the particular production of that factory; we trained on modules based on that plant's blast furnaces, machinery and the like. We had contact with the workers and familiarized ourselves with the work process and the products [produced by the plant]. You could call it a sort of long apprenticeship that lasted three years. We were divided into small groups of two or three and rotated among

the various job sites of a given department. Every year, management designated a department in which they wanted the new cohort of students to be trained. For example, my cohort was apprenticed at the blast furnaces, but the next class would be trained elsewhere.

Work organization within the plant at that time [mid-1960s] was different from what it is now. At the time, there were as many as 24 wage categories that corresponded to levels of responsibility and knowledge of the production cycle. We trained at job-sites that corresponded to the 16-17th level and up. We had contact primarily with workers, although occasionally we also talked to middle managers (capi-turno) who checked up upon us and asked us whether or not we understood everything. It was clear, however, that we were being trained to become workers and nothing more.

The message conveyed to us in school was that we were to become the workers' elite (l'elite della classe operaia). This message must be understood in relation to the wage- and task-structure existing at the time. In other words, those who had jobs at levels 16 to 24 were considered the workers' aristocracy. Within the plant, the working class was divided into three basic levels--manovale (unskilled), qualificato (skilled), specializzato (specialized)--and each level further segmented. Those of us who passed through that school were destined to become furnace masters (capi forni) and the like. The message was explicit: we were told that the factory had invested in us and subsidized us (we had a school stipend) so that after graduation we could be assigned responsible positions and become the elite of the working class. . . . This however also meant that we would be forever locked into the workers' condition (la condizione operaia), that is, we would always be workers and indeed could never aspire to become staff.

We did not have any contacts with students from other schools. The [regular] students at the Istituto Professionale clearly saw us as a bunch of raccomandati [those who got in through contacts]. It was as if we were outside the school system. We did not even have contacts with other schools like ours, I mean company schools. I believe this school was unique. Indeed, the school was often presented to us as an experiment. I remember references to the Olivetti and the Agnelli Foundations, as if somehow this school was the result of some theoretical blueprint that originated in those institutions. There certainly were company schools elsewhere in Italy: those at Olivetti were famous. But our school was a hybrid because it was linked to the public school system and in the end we received a public school leaving certificate.

The language utilized by Carlo comes across as "social sciencese" and reflects the level of articulateness and intellectual sophistication of several workers whom I interviewed. Some had received a vocational education in this de-facto company school and had subsequently lived through the politicization of the late 1960s and 1970s. As I will discuss in chapter 8, Carlo was one of several students who attended this school and later enrolled in the evening courses of the Industrial Technical Institute (ITI). Indeed, as it will become clear through the interview excerpts in the next chapters, the historical process of these years produced a generation of worker-intellectuals who cut their teeth on Marx and Gramsci and who would be profoundly influenced by the revolutionary impulse of the late 1960s and 1970s.

On another level, Carlo's testimony is interesting because he still had vivid memories about the contents of the admission interviews designed to elicit the views of applicants about hierarchical relations. His comments about the message that was conveyed to the students concerning the types of jobs for which they were being prepared is intriguing, as he emphasized what he perceived as the dual nature of the message. On the one hand, there was an attempt to convey to the students the idea of a segmented work force and instill in them a sense of self-worth and pride derived from knowing that they would occupy the higher echelons of the workers' hierarchy. Yet, on the other, the students were also made to understand that they could never aspire to be more than workers.

The different emphases in the two accounts may be due either to the psychological predispositions of the respective students (their "individual specificity") and/or to a change in strategy on the part of management. Carlo may have been especially predisposed to pick up any

reference to the fact that they would be "just" workers, as at the time he did not want to remain a worker but felt he had few alternatives given his economic situation. Indeed, when he applied to the metallurgical school, he had already made up his mind that he would attend the evening course of the technical institute once he started working in the factory (see section below). Ettore, on the other hand, did not have any such plans or aspirations but did firmly believed at the time that he was entitled to a "foreman"'s position as he had been promised.[26] Finally, management may have been trying to fine-tune its message during this period so as to encourage the students to work hard while at the same time dampening "unreasonable" expectations that might have fostered discontent if unfulfilled.

II. 1962-1968: The Slow Pace of Educational Reform

A heated debate on the need to reform the middle cycle (age bracket 11-14) developed in the latter half of the 1950s. The Left (PCI and PSI) called for a truly comprehensive middle school and elimination of the scuole di avviamento (the middle cycle vocational track).[27] The left's most compelling argument was that channelling children at age 11 into either an academic or a vocational track after a mere five years of elementary schooling forced families and students to make premature choices regarding their future, ones that were not be easily reversible. The conservative camp, headed by the majority faction of the Christian Democrats, wanted to keep the middle cycle vocational schools, arguing that their elimination would hurt most of all workers' children who needed a short and effective practical training. An intermediate position in this debate supported the establishment of single middle school

organized into an academic and a vocational track (Ambrosoli, 1982:64-65).

The reform plans for the middle cycle and the ensuing debate were intimately bound up with the controversy about the role and place of Latin instruction in the curriculum. Traditional educators and those who championed the superior values of classical training were determined to retain Latin as part of the middle school curriculum and firm in their resolve to limit access to the licei to those students who had received Latin instruction. While Christian Democratic governments were extremely wary of introducing legislation that might alter in substantive ways the existing school system, they had to respond to the mounting controversy on educational issues and to the calls for action emanating from public opinion leaders and influential intellectuals. In 1956, a parliamentary commission called for the establishment of a middle school that would have optional tracks, but various D.C. governments failed to introduce any legislative proposal (Ambrosoli, 1982:73-74; Tomasi,1977:160-61). In 1958, the D.C. presented a plan for the expansion of schooling that came under heavy criticism as it left unchanged the segmented, discriminatory set-up of the Italian school system.[28]

In 1959 the D.C., reacting to a communist reform proposal, put forth a counter-plan that was so conservative and backward that even many Catholic educators rejected it.[29] Two successive proposals (both drafted in 1960) were decidedly less conservative but still retained the "options"--that is Latin versus the industrial arts--which the Communist Party opposed on the grounds that compulsory education should be equal for all.[30] Eventually, the educational law passed in 1962 under a social democratic education minister treated Latin as an elective subject

(although students intending to enroll in the academic high schools had to take it).

The new legislation confirmed a mandatory school age of 14 and provided a mechanism for enforcing the compulsory school requirement. However, students were not obligated to graduate from the middle school but only to stay in school until their 15th birthday. The new law required that middle schools be established by 1966 in all municipalities with a population of at least 3,000 and in smaller towns if necessary (Ambrosoli, 1982:ch.4).[31]

Implementation of the reform was problematic. Teachers, who for the most part did not believe in the merits of mass education and thus opposed the reform, were the greatest obstacle. Through the early 1960s, most active teachers had been formed under fascism and practiced their profession in a conservative, largely authoritarian and selective school system; many espoused the "values," objectives and spirit of a longstanding educational conservatism. Moreover, as Italian secondary school teachers did not (and still do not) receive a pedagogical and didactic training as part of their university formation, this problem took on added dimensions. That teachers were ill-equipped to face the challenge represented by the reform was borne out by an evaluation of some experimental middle schools established between 1960 and 1963 in conformity with the anticipated reform guidelines. Clearly, teachers needed extensive re-training if the reform was to have any real chance at taking hold. Instead, the "new unified middle school" (in Italian, nuova scuola media unificata) started its life on the basis of general improvisation (Ambrosoli, 1982: ch.4; Barbagli, 1982). Overall, the majority of teachers resisted the reform continuing to assess students on the basis of the old criteria and using traditional textbooks. For

years, the teaching profession was split down the middle between innovators and conservatives, an antagonism which sometimes took on dramatic overtones.

The Situation in Piombino's Middle Cycle

During the 1950s enrollment in the academic middle cycle had progressively increased, prompting the opening in 1961 of a second academic middle school. In contrast, enrollment in the vocational track, especially in industrial school for boys, decreased, especially in the two years preceding the reform. In 1960-61, 428 factory-bound youth were enrolled in the industrial school; however, in 1962-63, the year before reform implementation, enrollment fell to 251. Similarly, in the same two-year period, enrollment in the commercial middle school, attended by a majority of girls, decreased from 389 to 257. These trends indicate that increasing numbers of families were steering children toward the academic and technical tracks and away from vocational education.

Meanwhile, in the avviamento (the vocational middle school), things seemed to go on as usual. School failure and the drop-out rate remained high. For example, in 1960-61 the combined drop-out rate (i.e. students who had been officially withdrawn from school) for the three classes in the commercial middle school was 15% (59 of 389 students) (ASMSB/AC-CB, Raccoglitore, Anno Scolastico 1960-61). In 1962-63, repeaters constituted 23% of the students enrolled in the industrial school (ASMSB/AI-AV, Raccoglitore, Anno Scolastico 1962-63). In the industrial school (Avviamento Industriale), teachers in their reports continued to be very disparaging in their characterization of the school clientele: the students were labeled "mediocre" and the school milieu "lower class". The tone of the comments and the choice of phrases

echoed the language used in the 1940s and 1950s. The Italian teacher usually underscored that he/she intended to do a lot of dictation exercises and carry out the program "comprehensively but also as plainly as possible" ("svolgere il programma nella forma più ampia, ma più piana possibile") (ibid). Such comments reflected a total lack of pedagogic sensibility on the part of the teachers who, instead of seeking ways to arouse student interest and stimulate them to work harder, conducted their teaching in an elementary and arid way. As some of my interviewees remarked, quite a few teachers let it be known that they considered their students to be second rate as the intelligent ones were to be found in the academic middle school.

The overwhelming majority of Piombino's teachers opposed the reform. According to a school principal who taught in Piombino's middle schools all her life, in 1962 no middle school teacher (or, at least, anyone she knew) defended the new comprehensive model. She attributed the strong opposition to the reform to the government lack of foresight and preparation: in her view, the Education Ministry did a poor job explaining to teachers the reasons behind the reform. According to my interviewee, they (i.e. the government) should have emphasized matter-of-factly that Italy had one of the lowest level of schooling in Europe and therefore had to catch up with other countries. Instead, the way in which the change was presented tended to heighten teachers' fears about the possible negative consequences of the reform. For most, the only thing that the reform would be sure to bring about was a lowering of academic standards. Clearly, as the following statement illustrates, they were also ill-disposed to a comprehensive school because a lowering of academic standards diminished their professional identities.

> I remember that [the government] had a special TV program on the reform for teachers: seven or eight afternoon segments. Here, in Piombino, middle school teachers and some teachers from the avviamento watched these TV lessons all together here in this school. The school principal tried to explain the reasons for the reform to us, but without success. I still remember the comment of one teacher from the vocational school: "just wait and see what kind of students you will get." She meant of course those students who would normally have attended the avviamento.

Another teacher remembered the alarm that the reform caused among his colleagues from the vocational track who feared the establishment of a comprehensive middle school would threaten their job security. Indeed, following the abolition of the vocational schools, some teachers would lose their jobs or have to work really hard to upgrade their teaching skills: they would have to go through a re-certification process, take training courses and pass examinations.

"New School, Old Segmentation"

The establishment of a comprehensive middle cycle beginning in the school year 1963-64 meant that Piombino now had three "new" middle schools, purportedly of equal standing. The school that previously housed the avviamento would cater to the same student clientele for whom it had previously provided a vocational education. In his report for 1963-64, the new principal of this school wrote:

> Many teachers do not have an adequate preparation to teach with the new methods required by the new middle school. . . The students enrolled in the first grade have a cultural level that is insufficient: these are boys and girls who would have attended the avviamento if the reform had not abolished it. . . . Clearly, the new middle schools that have formed by fusion with the former vocational schools are bound to cater to these students.

What this meant is clear: in the absence of institutional provisions geared to achieving an effective integration of different school clienteles, the middle school cycle remained informally stratified even if the three middle schools utilized the same curriculum. In Piombino, as

elsewhere, tracking was abolished but schooling remained segmented: while the "old" academic middle school continued to cater to the middle classes and the "respectable" working classes, the school that had previously housed the avviamento enrolled the "rejects," i.e. those students educationally most disadvantaged.

As we have seen, this educational segmentation corresponded to Piombino's urban subdivisions. The two academic middle schools (the "old" one and the new one founded in 1961) were surrounded by both working and middle class neighborhoods. In contrast, the former vocational school was located in the sea-front district where the low-rent housing often lacked adequate plumbing and sanitation. This was also the neighborhood with the highest concentration of new immigrant families from southern Italy.

As the "proletarian" middle school located in the medieval part of town had a poor academic reputation, working class families that were planning to send their children to secondary school balked at enrolling them there since they believed that they would then receive substandard schooling. As a consequence, for several years following the reform, family members, on the day preceding enrollment, would start lining up in front of the "good" school to ensure that their child would secure a place there.

Education, Culture and Society: Change or Transition?

The opposition to the comprehensive reform among Piombino's teachers and the school experience recounted by those who were students during these years attest to the enduring conservatism and elitism that characterized the educational arena in the early and mid-1960s. As mentioned above, this can be explained at least in part by the

fact that the generation of teachers formed under fascism was still in charge and set the ideological tone prevailing in educational institutions.

One teacher who began his career in 1959 in the "old" academic middle school painted the early 1960s as "dark years," an era when younger teachers dared not freely express their opinions or be perceived as on the side of change. As he put it, teachers had a narrow tunnel vision and evidenced no understanding of how family situations could affect the performance of children in school. He also remembered these as the years of "terrorism," when the schools routinely failed large numbers of children and teaching methods were still excessively authoritarian. Indeed, the personal account of this teacher echoes the findings of the Parliamentary Commission entrusted with setting the guidelines for the development of Italian education in the period 1962-65. The Commission's report intimated that the cultural models perpetuated by the schools were designed to mold subordinates not citizens (Ambrosoli, 1982:ch.7).

Thus, while the social and political processes in the larger society were producing visible changes in life-styles and in the "social mood" of the period, the experience in the educational arena clearly lagged behind. Certainly in the schools, the years between 1962 and 1967 were more a period of transition than change. However, the conservatism of old guard teaching staff was often rejected by younger teachers and by those in the teaching profession who were ex-partisans or close to the Communist and Socialist Parties. After all, it was during these years that a significant number of Italian intellectuals joined the Communist Party. Moreover, starting with 1962-63, unionization of teachers (especially secondary school teachers) began to increase, reflecting the growing influence of the Left.[32]

The years between 1960 and 1966 represented a key period in the vast process of socio-economic change which, by the mid-1970s, would profoundly transform the country. When reflecting on these years, commentators without fail mention the growing influence of television, the spreading availability and affordability of durable consumer goods, increasing urbanization and the unprecedented impact of leisure activities.[33] They ask whether or not a new model of social integration, based on atomization and consumerism, first became established on a mass scale in these years. For those in the communist camp, this model represented the spread of "the insidious values of neo-capitalism," while Catholics sounded the alarm that urbanization and the materialistic spirit of a rising consumer culture would bring about the break-down of family values and sexual mores. 1960 was, after all, the year of Fellini's La Dolce Vita and Visconti's Rocco e i Suoi Fratelli, unforgettable cinematic documents that captured two faces of a society in the throes of change.[34]

As far as the new patterns of consumption are concerned, only the ceti medi and the best paid categories of specialized workers in the northern industrial districts could afford to buy the new consumer durables or take Sunday outings in a FIAT "600." Working-class families in Piombino by 1962-63 still did not have enough money to afford domestic appliances or a car. When a one-man wage had to support a family of four (with two children in school), little money was left to spend on new consumer items.[35] However, by the mid-1960s standards of living were rising and the time when workers would afford consumer goods was not far off. By 1964 several hundred families would be allocated apartments in the new housing projects, which for many, meant

leaving behind the cramped quarters which they had long shared with relatives or another family.

In terms of "mentality" and behavior, one marked change at this time in Piombino, came about with the hiring of a significant number of female clerical employees (about 150) by the steelworks between 1961 and 1964. As the following testimony emphasizes, this new phenomenon of working women was recognizable on the streets by their clothes and posture.

> Between 1961 and 1964, the steelworks hired a significant number of secretaries -- the increase of staff and managers had created a demand for them. The about 150 young secretaries represented a new breed of women who began assuming distinctive behaviors. At the time, I was particularly struck by the fact that these young women, shortly after being hired, would do three things: take up smoking, get a driver's license and buy a suede jacket.

As the consumer culture spread among workers, it did not bring about "profound mutations," but rather, as one scholar put it, "this process was as much one of superimposition, grafting new habits and practices on pre-existing forms of consciousness" (Gundle, 1985:121). Politically, according to the testimonies collected for this study, the local climate also changed slowly; the impression one gets from these interviews is that, for most people, little happened prior to 1962. For example, the police commissioner who had implemented the repressive laws in force during the 1950s, routinely denied permission for demonstrations, and overzealously policed processions of strikers, remained in office until 1962. His replacement was a new man for a new task and new circumstances. By then, the two army divisions that were permanently stationed in Piombino during the 1950s, were also gone.

Young people were clearly being influenced, and even galvanized, by the ferment of a youth culture epitomized by rock-and-roll and blue

jeans. Between the late 1950s and early 1960s, young people had founded a rock and roll club (il Circolino del Rock): Roberto recalls that he kept his jeans and his leather jacket there because his father had forbid his wearing them.

In 1960 or 1961, a small group of politically engaged high school students founded a student cultural association (Circolo Culturale Studentesco Piombinese). In the eyes of some of its founders, the association was a student union; for others, it was more of a cultural club born as a reaction to the political apathy characteristic of the "goliardic culture" of university students. The Circolo Culturale was politically on the Left but not officially connected to any party: some of its members identified with the PCI but others leaned toward a more moderate social-democratic position.[36]

The 1960s in the Humanist High School: Ferment Amidst Enduring Conservatism

As discussed above, the ambience of the two academic high schools (the liceo classico and the liceo scientifico) and the respective experience of working-class students attending these two institutions differed considerably. Only in the classico, the school for the "elites," was the atmosphere particularly stifling and repressive. The authoritarianism and the ultra-conservative ideology promoted by the school principal, a woman whom everyone viewed as a "fascist," were no less unrelenting during the 1960s than they had been in the 1950s.

The early 1960s, however, were also marked by the first ferment among students. Most of my interviewees mentioned in particular one episode which showed the students' desire to express a political sensibility that the school did its best to repress. In 1962, during the

Cuban missile crisis, about fifty students from the humanist high schools, on the initiative of the Student Cultural Center, decided to strike and hold a peace demonstration to protest the US naval blockade and the escalation of the US/Cuban conflict. When the principal of the school learned of the students' plans, she scoured the streets around the school, managed to track down a number of "demonstrators," harangued and threatened them with disciplinary action and thus intimidated them into returning to school. She reached others at home by phone and coerced them into coming back to school too. Despite the outcome, the demonstration represented a significant act of defiance on the part of the students: it was the very first time left politics had penetrated the school, creating significant disruption and confusion among the teachers.

With respect to the attitudes of teachers during this period, several former students recalled that teachers did not dare openly contest the authoritarianism and the ultra-conservative views of the school principal--even those who were socialists or communists. At the time school principals still exercised real power over teachers and could ruin their careers. One teacher interviewed for this study underscored the conservative, authoritarian personality of the school principal who viewed the school as her personal domain. Indeed, when the principal "suggested" some course of action to the teachers, she did so almost in dictatorial fashion. This interviewee confirmed that most of the teachers either agreed with the principal or tried to ignore her; nonetheless, she made life difficult for some and in a few cases heated confrontations could not been avoided.

Although former students remembered that their favorite teachers were generally very careful not to reveal their political leanings if they

were on the left, a few teachers refused to bow to all the rules and wishes of the school principal. Indeed, episodes of teacher defiance inspired a great respect among working-class students.

> I remember what I considered at the time a great act of courage on the part of this Greek teacher, who, as I learnt later, was a communist. Every year, at the beginning of school, the principal took us to Mass. At the time, you could not even think of refusing to go; we all went even those of us -- and we were many-- who had not been confirmed or received first communion. We all lined up and walked to the church. But one teacher did not go in. Emboldened by seeing him remain outside, about twenty of us did not enter. The others, even some who were atheists, went in.

The years 1964-65 were marked by ferment and initiatives in which a number of students were involved. Some recent graduates of the humanist high school intensified their critique of "goliardic student culture," utilizing, for example, a local magazine (Costa Etrusca) to expose the egotistical purposes behind the occasional satirical pamphlets which the "goliards" wrote to raise money for their parties. In 1964, a group of communist students launched a rivista studentesca di politica e cultura (a student review of politics and culture) called Il Rovescio (The Flip Side). Among the editors we find the same people who had founded the Circolo Studentesco in 1960-61, who were now first-year university students. A curiosity worth noting concerns the use of a pseudonym to protect the name of one of the editors, a student in the humanist high school who, if found out, could become targeted for reprisals by the autocratic headmaster.

At the end of 1965, the Student Association, which had recently passed under the leadership of the "hardline" Communist group, organized a series of conferences on the Risorgimento with the participation of mostly Marxist scholars. In 1966, a series of conferences on "Problems on the History of the Working Class" followed: among the

speakers was Toni Negri (later convicted for involvement in left terrorism). That same year the Circolo Culturale Studentesco organized a debate on "workers' liberties" (le libertà operaie) (Tognarini, personal communication, 1995).

The Limited Possibility of "Resistance" and the Cost of Defiance

Listening to my interviewees recount their experiences, I wanted to ask (but frequently hesitated doing so) what kind of "resistance" and defiance was possible in the school environment of the "classico". Did students see through the myths they were offered by the school, particularly those touting the superiority of a classicist education (the notion that Greco-Roman civilization represented the highest form of "culture") that constituted the very foundation of this type of schooling?[37] Did they recognize the ideological bias of particular canons of historical and literary interpretation? What I learned through the interviews indicated that only a few were critical. The following was the most explicit statement on this issue:

> "Resistance" is a big word. The "resistance" of which we may have been capable was feeble. We did not have the instruments. There was only that school. You had to conform somehow. There was no alternative. Those were the dominant values and that school embodied them. There were very few students who had the instruments to be critical. Take myself, for example. Even though my family was politically on the left, I did not read many other books besides those that the school required. I did not have a sufficient alternative "culture". There were some others who did, but only a few. Take Elio for example: he not only came from a politicized family, but [his family] had him read a certain type of literature.
>
> Only two of us in my class were members of the Communist youth organization [FGIC], even though we seldom participated in its activities. I joined the FGIC when I was 16, in 1963. Not even Francesco was a member: he hid himself at the time.[38]

> Certainly we did not consider school and "culture" neutral, but we lacked the instruments to do a critique. Some who read "alternative" literature on their own initiative contested the dominant lines of historical and literary interpretation, although always very politely. Myself, like others, made that political leap at the university; in 1968, I would be in my second year at the university.

A teacher who taught in both the scientific and the humanist high schools during the 1950s and 1960s confirmed that critical attitudes surfaced among the cohort of students who went to school in the 1960s. However, although he remembered that Francesco insistently used Marxist categories, few students were able and willing to challenge established knowledge and interpretations. Referring to the "value" of education and "culture," this teacher recalled that in the 1950s there was a "generic receptivity" among the students, whereas political ideologies did not seem to play a role. In contrast, by the 1960s some students, especially those in the humanist track, began to see themselves as future intellectuals belonging to a partisan political camp.

An episode of "school lore" recounted by former students of the liceo classico illustrates the high cost of defiance in the face of the authoritarian, oppressive climate characterizing that particular school just two years prior to the onset of the student revolt. In response to a student openly criticizing the school in a local publication, the school authorities imposed an 8 day suspension. This disciplinary action seemed so excessive that the local paper ran an article about it prompting an out-of-town journalist to travel to Piombino to look into the story. In response to the journalist's question as to why the student was so harshly punished for merely asking that books about politics be included in the school library, the school principal offered this explanation:

> The teachers' council made this decision in response to a letter which the student published in the Piombinese periodical "Costa Etrusca." In the letter, he criticized the institute for not having a library adequate to the course of study, specifically that [we have] no volumes on politics, or political history which [he said] stems from a "retrograde mentality." This is a lie, as the library has 1750 volumes, including political texts. The teachers' council has even been too soft in just suspending him for 8 days. Article two of Law # 753 (May 1935) specifically states that students must at all times respect and honor the good name of the school. Not only through their behavior: they must also stop others from speaking about the school without full knowledge of the facts. You see, the student lied, so the teachers would have been totally within their rights if they had decided not to allow him to graduate by not letting him sit for the final exam.
>
> **Journalist:** Can you tell me what book he wanted?
>
> **School Principal:** He wanted Marx's "Capital."
>
> **Journalist:** Naturally, your library does not have it.
>
> **School Principal:** We do not have the work itself, but he could have found enough on "Capital" in the encyclopedia that we do have.

During the rest of the interview, the journalist raised the question as to whether it had been appropriate to apply a law passed 30 years earlier (i.e., under fascism, though he did not explicitly mention this) and suggested that maybe the school might have interpreted the law in a more flexible fashion. The school principal answered that she had been teaching for 30 years (since 1936): she only applied the rules and did not make them. She repeated that, in her opinion, the teachers had been too lenient. She then was very eager to show the journalist a letter written by the student in question wherein he recanted his criticism of the school, stating: "I was wrong. I did not know that the school also has a library for the teachers. It is not true that the Institute has very few books. . . ." Prompted by the journalist, the principal swore that the books in the teachers' library were at the students' disposal if they asked. She added that, if they had known

that he was looking for "Capital," the school would have tried to obtain it for him. They did not have that particular text only because funds were limited and choices had to be made in the purchase of books (Il Telegrafo, Jan. 25, 1966).

According to one teacher, a few days after the incident, one of Piombino's communist organizations donated the complete set of Marx's "Capital" to the school. He confirmed that the school library (at least the student section) was very poor and expressed his opinion that this student's criticism had been an act of defiance directed against the principal and the humanities teacher, both known for their conservative ideology.

III. Conclusions

This chapter has described some of the characteristics of the social process and the structural transformations that marked the first half of the 1960s. In these years, urban development and the construction of both public and company housing redrew the physical contours of the town as it expanded into new neighborhoods. The steelworks launched its community outreach programs, emphasized philanthropic activities (including support for the education of workers' children) and intervened in the provision of vocational education through the establishment of a special school that was created to train the new workers' aristocracy.

The efforts of the industrial elite converged on a design that sought to dilute the collective class consciousness of the work force and clip the wings of labor militancy in the plant. The factory's strategy relied on bringing in massive numbers of new workers from the surrounding countryside and areas as far 50 km from Piombino. Thus, as

had occurred between 1911 and 1913, management effected a ruralization of the work force so as to secure a mass of more pliable laborers. However, these new workers were not migrants who settled in Piombino but rather commuters from adjacent areas often carrying with them a letter of introduction from the carabinieri or a priest.

At this juncture of capitalist development, the plant also needed additional skilled workers and technical personnel for its production lines. Thus, the aforementioned process of ruralization was accompanied by interventions in support of education, in particular vocational and technical schooling. While both the vocational institute and the company school (scuola siderurgica) enrolled a disproportionate number of students from outside Piombino, administrators at the company school used a variety of means to screen out candidates from Piombino proper (for political reasons) in favor of those from the surrounding countryside.

The second part of the chapter focused on the transitional character of these years. The stifling authoritarianism of the past still pervaded school milieus, which, however, brewed with new ferment. 1962 was a year marked by concrete and symbolic "gestures" signaling the changes underway. In that year, the police commissioner who had presided over the repression of the past decade was replaced and the army unit stationed in town to safeguard public order against the threat of insurrection was withdrawn. That year also witnessed the first student strike staged by Piombino's secondary students to protest the US naval blockade during the Cuban missile crisis. At the national level, the first center-left government was formed and a comprehensive middle school reform finally passed; labor won its largest wage increase ever, marking the end of the Italian economic miracle made possible by low

wages and migrant remittances. Although the 1950s, especially the second half, had not been entirely static, in the early 1960s change was more noticeable than ever before. For example, as one interviewee reminisced, a new "breed" of working women--the secretaries and female clerks employed by the plant between 1961 and 1964--became a new "fixture" in Piombino's "street life" attracting the attention of passers-by to their clothes and posture .

Yet, school milieus and "pedagogy" resisted change: the overwhelming majority of Piombino's teachers opposed the comprehensive reform while young teachers (still a powerless minority) did not dare protest the elitism of the old guard, as their careers hung in the balance. The implementation of the school reform encountered significant obstacles; in the end, the middle school cycle, although no longer segmented into a vocational and an academic track, remained characterized by class stratification, as the middle classes and the respectable working class stayed away from the school located in the old part of town, which had previously housed the avviamento. Thus, this school continued to cater predominantly to a student population that was the most disadvantaged from both a social and an educational standpoint.

Finally, two "themes" emerge quite vividly in this chapter: the attempted "domestication" and control exercised over the students by both the company school and the humanist high school, and the "small" episodes of resistance and defiance. Management clearly went to considerable lengths to ensure that the scuola siderurgica would produce the desired result as evidenced by the system of rewards, penalties and pressure imposed on students and teachers. Yet there were countervailing forces (such as the student movement and the long

wave of labor agitations of the late 1960s and early 1970s) and contradictions (the unrealistic expectations that the school raised in these students) that undercut management's "dream" that the school would produce a loyal workers' aristocracy.

All told, the overriding and still entrenched authoritarianism was not seriously challenged by sporadic acts of defiance, which were indeed successfully repressed. The admission by one interviewee that students lacked the critical "instruments" to counteract "ideological incorporation" suggests the limited possibility for "resistance." As this particular interviewee emphasized, the "resistance" which the students could master vis-à-vis "the culture" and the knowledge they received in the humanist high school, should not be overestimated. As he put it "resistance is a big word." This account also points out that overt resistance by **individual** students who have a stake in the outcome of schooling (because they have decided that their future depends on the attainment of educational credentials) was exceedingly difficult. Indeed, whereas Willis' lads' acts of defiance represented their validation, for Piombino's achievers defiance was a luxury they could not afford

NOTES

1. The London Financial Times in January 1960 proclaimed that the Italian lira had been the West's most stable currency during 1959. Italian GDP grew at an impressive rate (6.3% per annum) between 1958 and 1963 as the economy experienced an export-led expansion: the share of Italian goods sold in the Common Market rose from 23% in 1955 to 29.8% in 1960 and reached 40.2% in 1965. Manufacturers of domestic appliances (by 1967 Italy was the third largest world producer of refrigerators after the U.S. and Japan), office equipment (dominated by Olivetti) and automobiles (led by FIAT) led the way during the boom years (Ginsborg, 1990:ch.7).

2. "Americanization" refers in part to the adoption of American models of marketing and industrial organization. At this time the numbers of managers employed in private and public firms increased significantly: many of the new managers had graduated from Harvard's or MIT's business schools. The class structure also underwent changes during this period, with the greatest increase in employment occurring in the white-collar sector. The latter, which had accounted for 9.8% of the work force in 1951, rose to 17.1% by 1971 (however, the percentage of white-collar workers in the private sector still remained well below that found in France or Great Britain). As for the traditional middle class, between 1951-71 the number of artisans remained stable and the number of shopkeepers continued to be relatively high, partly as a consequence of state support (e.g., restrictions on the spread of supermarkets and subsidies to family shops). Industrial workers (including construction workers) grew from 22.9% of the work force in 1951 to 29% in 1961 and 33% in 1971. Finally, a sizeable sub-proletariat developed that consisted of "casual laborers" together with the under- and unemployed (by 1970 unemployment was estimated at four million out of a total work force of 54 million). By and large, these marginal groups were no longer found in rural areas but in the shanty towns found on the outskirts of major cities (Ginsborg, 1990:ch.7).

3. In 1960 a center-right government managed to obtain the necessary parliamentary vote of confidence thanks to support from the neo-fascists and monarchists. Anti-fascist and anti-government demonstrations and clashes with the police broke out in Genoa after the MSI (the neo-fascists) announced that its national congress would be held there and that a former fascist prefect responsible for the deportation of many Genovese during the war would speak. The unrest spread to other cities. The police, which had received orders to open fire "in emergency situations," killed and wounded several demonstrators in Sicily and Reggio Emilia. Preoccupied by the escalation of violence, the DC had to force Prime Minister Tambroni to step down and recognized that they could no longer accept the support of the far right. Negotiations over the next two years paved the way to the formation of the first center-left coalition in 1962 and to the incorporation of the Socialist Party into the government in 1963.

4. In the immediate postwar period, the PSI allied itself with the PCI in a left bloc in which it played a subordinate role. However, in 1956 the anti-Stalin speech by Khrushchev and the Soviet invasion of Hungary led the PSI to distance itself from the PCI and move closer to the Social Democrats who had elected to participate in DC-led governments. In 1963, the PSI joined the center-left government coalition headed by the DC, prompting the PSI's left wing to break off to form the PSIUP (Partito Socialista di Unità Proletaria). About 40% of the Socialist Party was opposed to any governmental coalition with the DC on the grounds that the PSI would be integrated into the existing power structure and stymied in its attempts to realize its program of "structural reforms." It could be argued that this analysis proved correct.

5. Three visions of reform emerged in the early 1960s: corrective/moderate, structural, and minimalist. The Republican Party and some Christian Democrats supported the moderate position: although staunch defenders of capitalism, they nonetheless accepted that some state interventions should be undertaken to correct imbalances and the distortions present in the Italian model of economic development (i.e., the backwardness of agriculture and the underdevelopment and poverty of the South). The program of corrective reforms included the building new houses and schools, modernizing the education system, and introducing national social insurance and a public health system. Socialists and Communists, in contrast, supported a program of structural reforms in which each reform was conceived as "a stepping stone on the way to socialism" (Ginsborg, 1990:266). The PSI's major theoretician even envisaged "conquering the state from the inside" and spoke of the program of structural reform initiatives as a type of "revolutionary reformism" that "continually destroys the equilibrium of the system and creates a series of counter-powers" (Ginsborg, 1990:264-66). With hindsight, such a perspective appears utopian, as any center-left government controlled by the DC would at best accept minimalist reforms. Finally, the minimalist position was associated with a Christian Democratic faction known as i Dorotei and Aldo Moro.

6. The first center-left government included the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats (PSDI) and the Republicans with the Socialists providing parliamentary support without entering the government. The 1962 government nationalized electricity (previously controlled by five trusts) and imposed withholding tax on stock dividends. However, after the establishment of a national economic planning commission in August 1962, the reform initiative ground to a halt as a result of rising inflation. Thus, establishment of regional governments and introduction of town planning were put off. In April 1963 the fourth election since the war seemed to penalize the DC for "opening to the Left," as the Christian Democratic share of the vote dropped from 42.4% to 38.3%. The PCI made significant gains (increasing its vote from 22.7% to 25.3%), as the party picked up the vote of Southern workers' employed in the North and abroad (Ginsborg, 1990:272-3). The drop in the Center-Right's share and the increase in the PCI vote forced the DC leadership to solicit PSI participation in the government, and in December 1963 (after fierce infighting) the PSI entered the "control room."

7. A Presidential Decree issued in 1958 sought to preclude state intervention in this sector. Shortly thereafter the PCI and PSI drafted their own legislative proposals on the subject, which were however never introduced in Parliament for debate due to the strong opposition of the government (Tomasi, 1978a:150-1; Genovesi, 1978:53).

8. It must be noted that alongside the nursery schools run by parishes and religious orders (which did receive state funds) could be found municipal kindergartens in several areas, especially in regions administered by the Left. Between the late 1950s and the early 1960s the controversy over the establishment of a state system of nursery schools gradually shifted to a debate over the modalities of state intervention and over the aspects of the legislation (Ragazzini, 1983:68-70; Ambrosoli, 1982:ch.8).

9. According to Ambrosoli (1982:ch.7), educational policy in the area of vocational training never produced well-defined guidelines due to the lobbying by business.

10. In 1960 the average yearly income in Piombino was 330,000 Lire: higher than the national average of 280-290,000 Lire but significantly lower than the 545,000 Lire average income in Turin (CECA, 1963).

11. The putting-out system has always been an intrinsic part of Italy's "hidden economy" both in agricultural and industrial areas.

12. During this period, the expansion of technical education became a national development: the number of technical institutes rose from 438 in 1960 to 778 in 1970, with enrollment increasing from 280,000 to 635,000 (Lombardi, 1978).

13. Beginning in 1961, students had the option of attending for an additional two years in order to obtain the licenza di maturita granted at the end of a five-year secondary school upon passing a final exam.

14. Although these schools did not grant access to the university, students could take an admission exam to transfer to a technical institute (which did). By 1969, however, as a result of calls for democratization of the school system, students who attended the full five-year course in vocational institutes were allowed entry into the university.

15. For some of these new workers, this represented the first stable job after years of marginal employment. Many were former agricultural laborers; some had some land or a small store that they left other family members to look after when they went off to work "in the big factory" (nella grande fabbrica).

16. For example, during the 1950s the vocational middle school housed specialization courses funded by the ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community) and the Italian Industrial Training Institute (INAPLI).

17. This information was included in a report prepared in February 1974 by an official of the steelworks.

18. Evening students had to attend such courses for a period of six years in order to be admitted to the final certification exam.

19. However, opinions differ as to the value which the personnel office of the steelworks attributed to these evening courses. Whereas the school director underscored the advantages of this "formula," one official whom I interviewed at the plant expressed skepticism. He suggested that management never really saw much merit in these evening courses and that it had merely acquiesced to a demand emanating from the workers. Thus, this issue needs further investigation.

20. According to a former member of the teaching staff, the first course of study was discontinued prematurely. Moreover, some uncertainty exists as to the year in which the school opened. The monthly bulletin Piombino Notizie (1962, vol 2:11-12) put out by the steelworks reports that the school started in 1960. While one interviewee admitted to the first course of study recalled that the school opened in 1960, all the teachers and steelworks personnel interviewed put the date at 1961. A report prepared by an official of the steelworks in February 1974 (which I consulted) mentions that the convention between the Italsider (the name of the steelworks at the time) and the Istituto Professionale (known by the acronym IPSIA) was signed on October 1, 1961. Yet, I found a photocopy of what appeared to be an official (albeit unsigned) agreement between the steelworks and the Institute that dated to 1962. Perhaps two separate documents were drawn up, with the first (referring to the aborted courses run in 1961) being superseded by a second in 1962. The 1974 report does state clearly that the first students graduated at the end of the 1963-64 school year.

21. Teachers received a differential supplement according to the subject they taught. One teacher reported receiving a 35,000 lire supplement to his 80,000 lire salary in 1961.

22. In 1974 the steelworks terminated the partnership with the Istituto Professionale and rescinded its commitment to hire its graduates. Thus, the 65 students then enrolled in the first, second and third grades were not assured a job at the plant after graduation. This information was included in the above-mentioned report dated February 1974.

23. One teacher interviewed who had taught at the school since its inception and later became its director denied that political criteria were used to screen applicants (as an official of the steelworks interviewed in 1988 had claimed). Yet, in 1992, during a brief return visit to Piombino, I interviewed yet another official who admitted that such a screening was a built-in feature of the selection process. I do not know whether those who denied the use of political criteria did so out a genuine belief that candidates were indeed not so screened (since selection based on attitudinal tests might be perceived as politically neutral) or were attempting to cover up information considered too "delicate" to divulge.

24. This is the same worker whose comments on the "real" reasons underlying the steelworks' "ruralization" strategy are cited above.

25. A teacher whom I interviewed confirmed that the stipends ranged from a minimum of 200 to a maximum of 600 lire a day.

26. As Luisa Passerini (1987a) has emphasized, although memory is "social," it is also the expression of "individual specificity": the latter leads actors to process events, discourses and experiences through subjective filters, to pick up on certain things and pass over others.

27. Communists criticized the scuole di avviamento not only because they viewed it as a dead-end for the boys and girls who came from families of modest means but also because such schools failed to provide what they promised, i.e. an effective vocational training

28. In 1958, the Ministry of Education, headed by Aldo Moro, presented a Ten-Year School Development Plan known as Piano Fanfani (Fanfani being Prime Minister at the time). This plan detailed the appropriation of funds for the construction of new school facilities, the purchase of didactic aid and equipment, and teachers' salaries. It was approved in 1959 by the Senate but never passed in the Chamber of Deputies. This plan was the first attempt to deal in a systematic fashion with the fiscal requirements of a projected expansion. After being subjected to lengthy parliamentary debates, the plan was finally discarded in 1961. In order to provide a "scientific" basis for its plan, the government in 1959 commissioned a study whose widely publicized forecasts proved wrong: subsequent critiques of this study pointed out that it had overestimated the demand for graduates, technical and support staff in industries. Indeed, these forecasts have been repeatedly faulted for the excess output of secondary school and university graduates and the ensuing intellectual unemployment of the early to mid-1960s (Ambrosoli, 1982: ch.4).

29. The Communist proposal supported elimination of grade-repetition, establishment of remedial classes, and provision of school financial assistance and free transportation for low-income students in compulsory schooling (Ambrosoli, 1982:110-111). The opposition to comprehensive reform was such that the PCI proposal never reached the floor of parliament. The government's ultra-conservative counter-proposal called for a middle school segmented into 4 hierarchical tracks, as follows: a "normal" dead-end track which would have been a mere extension of elementary education, a technical track modeled after the existing avviamento, and artistic and humanist tracks.

30. The opposition of the Left to this proposal also stemmed from a provision that would have ended parliament's prerogative to make decisions about curriculum and guidelines. This was not acceptable to the Left, as cultural content and pedagogic guidelines were considered crucial to democratization of the school system.

31. It also called for the institution of "special classes" for students with learning disabilities; enrollment in these classes had to be supervised by a committee of experts (a neuro-psychiatrist and an educator). In reality, the institution of such classes was improvised, and, although at first they seemed a progressive solution, they were subsequently eliminated and replaced with experimental classes (Ambrosoli, 1982: ch.4).

32. In 1963, the apolitical national union of middle school teachers (SNSM) split into political currents: the ballot taken in that year resulted in 66.7% of the votes going to the Catholic slate, 16.2% to the centrist lay

groups, and 17.1 to the Left. The Catholic teachers split off and joined the Christian Democratic Union (CISL); the left teachers left the "autonomous" union in 1967 to join the CGIL (the socialist/communist union) (Ambrosoli, 1982:ch. 11).

33. Television was introduced in Italy in 1954 and by all accounts became a mass phenomenon by the late 1950s.

34. The film La dolce Vita was an indictment of the life style of Rome's new strata of social climbers, e.g. speculators, middlemen and social parasites. In contrast, Rocco portrayed the vicissitudes of a southern family in Milan, a dramatic story of violence and uprooting which condemned the social conditions experienced by southern immigrants in Northern Italy.

35. In the steelworks, a worker in the 15th wage category (of 24 categories) earned about 100,000 lire (net) in 1964. This was probably somewhat higher than the average wage at the plant, as most workers were concentrated at the 12-15 levels.

36. This information is based on an interview with Ivan Tognarini who, along with Paolo Favilli, was one of the founders of this student association. Tognarini and Favilli, both Communists, would later become Piombino's local historians.

37. Here I make the distinction between a "humanist education" as an educational approach aimed at developing critical skills and "classicist education" as a "canon" which can, and often was, based on dogmatism and clichés.

38. For the last ten years or so, Francesco has served as a high-ranking official in the PCI's national organization.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"1968:" EDUCATION AND SOCIETY IN UPHEAVAL

> Even though all visible traces of 1968 are gone, it profoundly changed the ways all of us, at least in Europe, behave and relate to one another. Relations between bosses and workers, students and teachers, even children and parents, have opened up. They'll never be the same again.
>
> —Umberto Eco (Newsweek, 22 December 1986)

Although many Western countries witnessed heightened student agitation in 1968, the sustained militancy of secondary students over several years proved unique to the Italian situation, reflecting the wide diffusion and intensity of the protest. By the time the mobilization ebbed in 1978, the schools had been profoundly changed even if the educational system itself had not been substantially reformed. As a teacher from Piombino stated, "the student revolt revealed the limits of our school system [and]. . . the criticism renovated the schools."

Historical accounts of "1968" tend to focus on the tumultuous character of the "event" rather than place it in historical context.[1] Thus, the debate on the issue of periodization is currently wide open (Santomassimo, 1988 & 1989; Grispigni, 1991). For many, "1968" is a turning point marking a "before" and an "after;" for others it is rather a "high point" within a political cycle of mobilization and reform (Tarrow, 1989). In some sense, "1968" is itself a misnomer, as, in many places (including Piombino), the student protest began in 1967 and the movement can be traced back to 1964-65 at some Italian universities. In the historical research on "1968," major analytical "knots" must still be disentangled with regard "to the relationship between subjectivity and

community [and] the political and/or generational character of the movement" (Grispigni, 1991:340). The literature on "new" social movements (Melucci, 1977, 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1985; Alberoni, 1977; Touraine, 1977, 1981 and 1985) has so far merely scratched the surface.

This dissertation develops an historical understanding of "1968" principally in terms of the "lived" experience that came "before" (as evoked in previous chapters). Indeed, the historical experience of the Piombinese working-class students and the social context of schooling during the 1950s and early 1960s help us understand the conflicts, anger and frustration that were to a large extent at the root of the 1968 mobilizations. Thus, the thesis provides a perspective on "1968" from the standpoint of working-class students' situated historical identities and experience. "1968" is both looked at as "event" (the development of the movement) and historicized (understood from within a longer term perspective). The time frame adopted here should also contribute to an understanding of 1968 as an aspect of an "organic crisis" (Lumley, 1990:9). This chapter takes up the events of "1968," discussing the influences exerted on the student movement by Catholic dissenters, the emergence of the New Left, and the development of the student protest in Piombino's secondary schools.

The Failure of the Center Left, Catholic Dissent and the New Left

The failure of the Center Left to deliver on its promises of social reform set the stage for the rise of new social movements in Italy.[2] The few reforms that the center-left governments did manage to enact could be characterized at best as "incremental," due in large part to the opposition emanating from the DC, afraid of losing its grip on state power.[3] Several factors were responsible for the triumph of a minimalist

vision of reform.[4] However, one event that crushed any hopes of moving forward with a major reform program was the uncovering of a 1965 planned coup d'etat engineered by a general in charge of the Carabinieri. Although the details of the plot only came out later (during a parliamentary inquiry initiated in 1969), the prospect of a right-wing coup proved sufficient to induce the Socialist leadership to remain in the government rather than rejoin the opposition so as to safeguard democracy. This, however, meant that the PSI acquiesced to one compromise after another and as the left of the party had feared, this sealed its incorporation into the existing power structure and a descent into socialist clientelism.

However, it was not only the undelivered promises of the Center Left that set the stage for the rise of the "new" social movements. Rather, a new political atmosphere developed in the late 1950s/early 1960s that was marked by the ferment brewing in the Catholic world and the events out of which the New Left would emerge. The seeds that would determine the trajectory and characteristics of the Italian student movement were planted in this period.

The Pontificate of John XXIII, which implored Catholics to take up the cause of social justice and distanced the Church from the crude anti-communism of previous decades, gave legitimacy to new social Catholic initiatives and to groups siding with the poor and downtrodden. Moreover, a number of critical Catholic intellectuals (both lay and religious) began to reach out to the Communists and even in some cases collaborate with them. Some parish priests began to reinterpret the New Testament in political and social terms, promote community-oriented social initiatives, and encourage critical reflection on what it meant to be Christian. Such experiences took place in popular, working-class

neighborhoods and came to be known as comunità di base: the Comunità dell'Isolotto in Florence being one of the most famous (Verucci, 1989).

At the same time, within the Left, the PCI lost its ideological monopoly as young intellectuals and former PCI members who had quit or been expelled from the party spearheaded a revival of Marxist thought.[5] Marxist categories were used to analyze the changes in the Italian working class brought about during the early 1960s by the entry of disgruntled, uprooted southern laborers into the factories of Northern Italy. These intellectuals, known as the operaisti, would have a profound influence on the New Left formations and the student movement that went well beyond the strength of their numbers (Degli Incerti, 1976; Hellman, 1976; Lumley, 1990).[6]

By the time of Togliatti's death in 1964, hope began to fade both within and outside the PCI that the so-called "Italian road to socialism" (i.e., a gradual, peaceful transition during which the working classes would become the "hegemonic" element of Italian society) would ever come to pass. The Left, which could count on only about a third of the electorate, certainly stood a long way from achieving power through the ballot box. In contrast, the traditional conservative "hegemonic bloc" had demonstrated its ability to block even those reforms that were far more modest than what the PCI had promised to deliver to its constituency. Moreover, "the PCI capacity to maintain indefinitely an alternative political vision" began to wane; indeed, "as the years passed, so the integration of the PCI into the political system became more evident, and its aims and language more limited" (Ginsborg, 1990:292).

The Local Scene: Connections

In 1963, young workers in Piombino came together with former members of the PCI to found a small political group with "workerist" connotations, known as "Workers' Power" (Il Potere Operaio).[7] Some former members characterized this new organization as anarchist in nature: indeed it did have ties to the informal anarchist subculture which had never completely died out in Piombino (Pino even so characterized it when describing his first political activity in 1964). In any case, the creation of Il Potere Operaio sent shock waves through the local PCI since some of its organizers were young people from communist families. Its emergence marked the first clear generational rift within the local PCI: by 1967-68, Il Potere Operaio had recruited a sizable number of secondary school and even some university students. Departing from the official line of the PCI, the new organization rejected the parliamentary system and representative democracy, campaigning during the 1968 elections in favor of casting null ballots (schede bianche) as a form of protest.

Meanwhile, in 1965 another group of young people (workers and students) began to put their commitment to community-based Christian practice into action. They launched a program centered around recreational and educational activities in which several hundred children and youth would eventually participate. The core group of "animators" consisted of some twenty young people loosely affiliated with a parish that provided the space to hold meetings and stage activities; however, neither the parish nor its priests became directly involved in the group's activities. Significantly, one of the young organizers had been in contact since the late 1950s with Catholic intellectuals from Florence who had spearheaded Catholic dissent.[8]

Local and International Contexts in the Shaping of Political Identities

While schools and politics constituted two separate worlds until 1967-68, the local context and the family background of many working-class youth had forged sensibilities, created predispositions and prepared the terrain for "moods" that would find expression during subsequent years. The following comment by Maurizia (b.1945), who attended the Liceo scientifico between 1958 and 1963, is the most explicit statement as to the role that the political culture played in the forging of their identities:

> Political socialization did not come from the school. Politics did not enter in the schools. The school was deaf. Our political socialization was external . . . I think that what proved crucial for me, as for many others, was that our life experience, our experience of struggle, our experience within the family milieu was absorbed, almost internalized, as "culture" [i.e., something having a positive value, something to cherish]. [As a result], we did not feel a sense of class inferiority but actively confronted a situation which [objectively] could have put us at a disadvantage from the point of view of class relations.

By the age of 15, Maurizia was reading the communist daily L'Unita regularly. She became a member of the FGIC while in high school and joined the PCI in 1968. After high school, Maurizia attended the University of Pisa at a time when conditions were developing that would eventually culminate in the 1967 occupation of the university. She remained in the PCI until 1971, at which time she was expelled for associating too closely with the Il Manifesto group, a dissident organization formed in 1968 by former PCI members expelled from the party for their criticism of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Insight into the role played by the turbulent world events of the early 1960s and by the echoes of human injustice and struggles in far away places comes from my interview with Giuseppe.[9] In his testimony, Giuseppe also connected the political sentiments present among the

Piombinese working class with the anti-imperialist struggles in the Third World. From 1963 to 1968, he attended a secondary commercial institute (Istituto Professionale per il Commercio) and represented his school in the Coordinating Committee of the Student Movement that formed in January 1968.

> I was attending the second grade at the IPC in 1965 when I joined the FGIC [the PCI youth organization]. My father was a Stalinist, but while he was alive I was not interested in politics. . . . I became politicized when I started reading about colored people (i popoli di colore) and colonial exploitation. I recall one night, as I was watching the evening news, being profoundly touched by the murder of Patrice Lumumba. . . . I underwent then a metamorphosis that many people experienced in 1968.

As discussed in chapter 4, Giuseppe then addressed the fact that people do not fully or clearly understand the terms of their politicization and that contrasting discourses often constitute the "uneven" terrain upon which political sentiments are grafted. He mentioned the PCI's "oscillation between the myth of the revolution and the exaltation of democracy." Yet, what seemed more "real" to militants was the "revolutionary" core of communism. Talking in the same breadth of the anti-colonial movements of the early and mid-1960s and the "communist faith in revolution" that pervaded the Piombinese working class, he revealed the connection between the salient aspect of the "structure of feeling" of the Piombinese working class and some of the epochal struggles of that period. Giuseppe's statement (already cited in chapter 4) is truly powerfully suggestive of how connections are forged between different yet similar experiences:

> The communist faith entailed loyalty to an ideal with an important religious component: the revolution as an act of redemption for the poor. . . justified by something that had been suffered. From this emerged the critique of society as presently structured. All this led me personally to immerse myself in the reading of various books.

The Beginnings of the Student Movement

The birth of the student movement in Italy is usually traced either to the 1966 student occupation at the University of Trento (in Northern Italy) or that of the University of Pisa in February 1967, which, in turn, were followed in November by protests and occupations at the Catholic university in Milan and the University of Turin (Hellman, 1976; Gramaglia, 1976). However, the history of the movement's various phases and local manifestations remains to be written: such an account is needed as the movement ebbed and flowed at different times and had different characteristics in various parts of the country. For example, it could be argued that in Naples the movement began as early as 1965, while in Pisa the February 1967 events had precursors dating back to 1964 (Barbagallo, 1989; personal communication).

Between December 1967 and February 1968, universities in every city erupted in protest and student assemblies seized control of the institution. In major urban areas, the protest spread almost immediately to secondary schools. The high point came in February 1968 in Rome when the students tried to re-capture the faculty of Architecture from which they had been expelled by the police. This effort ended in violent clashes between students and police in the Gardens of Villa Borghese during which cars were set ablaze and numerous students and police injured--an event that became known as "the battle of Valle Giulia."

Although a comprehensive reconstruction and interpretation of the Italian student movement remains beyond the scope of this thesis, the major characteristics of the Italian case will be outlined in order to provide the framework for analyzing its local manifestation in Piombino. From the very beginning, the Italian student movement was marked by the uneasy coexistence between the anti-authoritarian, libertarian

character of the generational rebellion and the political radicalization of the class struggle spearheaded by the New Left. Such radicalization found its language in the ideologies of Marxism, Leninism and Maoism. In some cities, the second aspect overshadowed the first, as in Rome and Pisa. Indeed, in some places the creation of New Left formations coincided or even preceded the development of the student movement.[10]

The identity of the movement was built around its staunch anti-institutional character and the rejection of the principio della delega (the principle of delegation) in favor of direct participation. The movement considered the "historical left" parties as irremediably compromised and integrated into the "system." It rejected the idea of intellectual vanguards and a notion of politics as the realm of professional politicians, criticizing intellectuals for being primarily interested in hedonistic gratifications. The students took from the Frankfurt School the critique of the authoritarian family and programmed society. Yet, they were not spared from contradiction and abstraction: as many of them joined Marxist-Leninist formations they resuscitated the practices of "external vanguards," while their analysis of the family and "programmed" society remained vague. The movement also elaborated a critique of modernization, rationality and consumer culture and yet the movement made elements of dress and lifestyle into a cultural fetish.

Students refused to conceptualize work as a value (which was instead a tenet of the workers' movement) and understood themselves to be the "labor force in its phase of qualification" within a process of capitalist development that tends to homogenize intellectual and manual work. Finally, students discovered self-analysis in some of their

alternative seminars and used it to reflect on leadership practices and practices of exclusion within the movement (Gramaglia, 1976).

A recitation of the values embraced and rejected, of ideas and ideologies attacked and celebrated, does not begin to capture what about the experience of these years so profoundly marked the identity of a generation. As several of my interviewees stated, "68" proved to be the most profound experience of their lives. Undeniably, the sudden protagonist role which they were allowed to take on, the heightened sense of purpose and meaning, the "doing" of the protest and the struggle and the sense of being part of something "in the making" was what made "68" so memorable. Furthermore, with the movement, an unprecedented space for "reflexivity" opened up: it was a moment when all the dimensions of "subjectivity" --the personal, political, sexual and social dimensions--were explored, reflected upon, perhaps also abused. This dimension must be appreciated in the backdrop of the stifling climate that prevailed at least in some secondary schools, even though perhaps the experience in Piombino's Liceo Classico may have been somewhat extreme.

Beyond the many myths, the naiveté and the unrealistic expectations surrounding the student movement was a profound malaise rooted in the experience of conflict and abuse which had permeated institutional sites during previous years. It was both a generational and a political phenomenon: as the experience of former working-class students in Piombino shows, the class dimension was not just rhetorical, it was their life. Meanwhile, the internationalist inspirations of the movement provided strong emotional undercurrents, as it had in the previous period. The main external influences were the Vietnamese, the American anti-war movement, the Black Panthers, the counter-culture of

American communes, the Red Guard of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (interpreted as a spontaneous mass movement), and the Latin American liberation groups.

The relationship with the PCI was very rocky during the initial phase of the movement, when it was profoundly marked by an anti-authoritarian and libertarian elan. The students viewed the PCI as integrated within the existing political system and thus no longer a force for change. For their part, many PCI leaders and intellectuals regarded the students with contempt: Amendola, a prominent PCI parliamentarian, labeled the movement "infantile" and Pasolini called the students "spoiled rich brats" (Ginsborg, 1990:307-8).

The French general strike of May 1968 had a profound impact on the development of the Italian student movement: the students abandoned the universities as the terrain of struggle and began to picket at the factory gates. While the first embryonic New Left formations emerged in 1967, the real take-off came in Fall 1968 after the Maggio francese (French May). With one notable exception, all these formations embraced the rigid organizational principles of Leninism. Although hopelessly divided along sectarian lines, these groups together constituted the largest New Left in Europe, capable of mobilizing thousands of militants.

Italian Education and the Student Movement

Between 1960 and 1968, university enrollment had swelled from 268,000 to 450,000, largely due to self-recruitment among the ceti medi, the working classes and women. Changes in the system regulating access to the university (in 1961 and 1965) also facilitated this enrollment surge.[11]

The university system, however, was woefully unprepared to absorb such a huge increase in the student population. The universities of Rome, Bari and Naples had been designed to accommodate a student population of approximately 5,000 each: by 1968, Rome would have 60,000 students, Naples 50,000, and Bari 30,000 (Rossanda, 1968). The number of university professors, many of whom were absentee-teachers, was woefully inadequate for handling such a huge student population. By the terms of their contracts, university professors were only obliged to hold class 52 hours a year. Beyond that, their duties were minimal; there were no tutorials or seminars and contact between students and faculty was extremely rare.

Since the last university reform in 1923 during the early days of Fascism, the curriculum had been only minimally revised. The inadequacies of the system were particularly acute for the new generation of recruits, which included large numbers of working students (Levi Arian et al, 1969; Martinotti, 1973).[12] The rigidity of course schedules and the limited offering of courses meant that many students could not maintain a course of study and repeatedly failed the oral exams. Consequently, the number of drop-outs was high.

Since the early 1960s university reform had been a continuing subject of debate, touching upon complex and explosive issues such as urban planning, internal re-organization to create departments, realignment of research along inter-disciplinary lines, and the like. These hot issues had sparked confrontations and led to student occupations well before 1968, pitching the Left against the university establishment and the "barons" of such key faculties as medicine.[13]

Once the protests exploded in 1967, the unifying issues were democratization of the university, rejection of research subordinated to

economic interests, and the inherent right to higher education--all of which entailed a reorganization of the curriculum so that all students could attend class and a reduction in the power of university barons. In 1967, a proposal by the Education Minister to restrict access to the university and offer various degrees (i.e., one-year, two-year and full term certificates) encountered fierce opposition from a student population that by that time was reacting viscerally to any attempts to restore or reinforce hierarchy and selectivity.

"Letter to a Teacher": The School of Barbiana

While university students were developing their radical analysis of academic power and organization from occupied universities, sit-ins and seminars, others turned their attention to what was happening in the middle and secondary schools. The most devastating indictment of the elite orientation of the Italian school system was penned not by an Old or New Left intellectual but rather by a Catholic priest, writing together with a group of 13 to 17 year olds from a mountain village near Florence.[14] The booklet, written between July 1966 and May 1967 and entitled "Letter to a Teacher" (Lettera a una Professoressa), became one of the sacred texts of the student movement and was subsequently translated into several languages.[15]

The teenagers (all of peasant origin) who collaborated on the text with the Catholic priest Don Milani were rejects from the middle school, having either dropped out or had to repeat several grades. Since the early 1950s, Don Milani had run a number of "popular schools" where he taught the children from working-class and peasant backgrounds who could not make it in the public schools. He undertook his educational "action" in response to what he considered the root of oppression and

powerlessness, i.e., "the lack of the word." Without "the word" there could also be no genuine religious consciousness either. Through his popular schools he hoped to lay the foundation upon which both faith and freedom could develop. The most famous of these popular schools was the one in Barbiana, a mountain village in the Mugello.

The "Letter," a landmark in the historiography of the Italian school system, was written four years after the comprehensive democratizing reform of the middle cycle. The book denounced in compelling fashion the continuing marginalization of children from a peasant background, who had the greatest difficulty adapting to the type of cognitive learning demanded by the middle school. It lambasted teachers for their total lack of understanding of these children's situation and for their failure to appreciate the particular intellectual abilities and special intelligence that these rural children possessed. Moreover, it chastised teachers for their overt favoritism toward middle-class children whose family background predisposed them for success. The book reinforced these points through the testimonies of embittered drop-outs and students who had repeatedly failed in school.

The "Letter," addressed to a hypothetical teacher, is written in the first person for stylistic purposes; yet, the document, as the narrator explains, is a collective endeavor by a group of eight youngsters who attended the scuola di Barbiana. The book was really issued as a call to arms for the parents of such students, inciting them to protest the perpetuation of such a biased and unfair schooling. What first strikes one about this document is that the victims of the system can be as clear-sighted about the nature and mechanisms of oppression and marginalization as "the intellectuals" who study them. The book opens with the following passage:

> Two years ago, you intimidated me. Shyness has been with me all my life. As a boy I used not to raise my eyes from the ground. I crept along the walls to avoid being seen. At the beginning, I thought that [shyness] was a disease I had or that may be my family had. My mother is one of those persons who froze when confronted with a telegram form. My father observes and listens, but does not speak. Later, I came to believe that shyness was an ailment that affected mountain people. It seemed to me that peasants who lived in the valley were self-confident; workers seemed even more so. Now, I have seen that workers leave to the sons of the well-off all posts of responsibility in the parties and all the seats in parliament. Thus, they are like us. The shyness of the poor is a more ancient mystery. I myself, who am steeped in it, cannot explain it. Perhaps, it is neither cowardice nor heroism. It is only absence of arrogance.

This document and the action of militant populist priests during the 1960s and early 1970s highlight the sensitivity, within radical Catholicism, to certain forms of oppression. This sensitivity was characterized by:

> an attention to "culture" as a political problem which required specific forms of action and analysis and by its focus on experience and the personal dimensions of oppression (Lumley, 1990:83).

Finally, Letter to a Teacher "showed the power of a religious culture to generate and activate moral standards of condemnation" (ibid.). Indeed, a certain radical religiosity was critical to "the making of 68."

The Beginning of Student Protest in Piombino's Secondary Schools

The news of university occupations along with images of clashes between university students and police reached secondary students in Piombino through the media. However, other informal channels were also at work, chief among which those Piombino's students enrolled at the University of Pisa, one of the hotbeds of student radicalism. Moreover, as discussed above, the predisposition toward protest was certainly present among some Piombinese: thus, a nucleus of student activists

already existed willing to seize the initiative if an opportunity presented itself.

The first protest was organized jointly by the students from all the town's secondary schools in 1967--relatively early. with respect to the engagement of secondary schools in other parts of the country. Students from the humanist high school, the classico, contacted those from other schools in an effort to mount a demonstration protesting a recent episode of police brutality. In some instances communication passed through overtly political channels, i.e., students from the communist youth organization in one school contacted "comrades" at other schools.

Coordination of the student strike and demonstration often proved difficult: previously, no regular contact had existed between the different student bodies of the town and considerable friction could be found between various populations. Above all, students from the vocational secondary institutes mistrusted those from the academic high schools out of a sense of inferiority or class hostility (classico students, in particular, were perceived as all coming from the middle class). This attitude is reflected in the testimony of one interviewee who at the time was student coordinator for the strike for the vocational commercial institute (Istituto Professionale per il Commercio, IPC):

> At the time, class difference divided youth too. Thus, I encountered considerable resistance when I told the students at my school that I wanted to invite some liceali [students from the academic high school] to our meeting to discuss the strike and demonstration. In any case, we managed to bridge the distance between the different schools and large numbers of students joined the strike and demonstration. After two or three days, we organized a meeting at the municipal library to which we invited teachers and the municipal councilman for education.

During the last semester of 1967 and the first of 1968, the actions taken by Piombino students were by and large sporadic responses to external events, usually acts of solidarity with university students. Sometime in January or February 1968, an inter-school coordinating committee (Comitato Interstudentesco) was founded, with two representatives for each school thus giving birth to Piombino's own student movement. Examination of local newspaper articles and letters to the editor published in 1968 and 1969 reveals a division of students into political camps: apolitical moderates, communists, New Left sympathizers, and critical Catholics.[16] In response to the left orientation that prevailed among most Piombinese students and within the Coordinating Committee, in March 1968 a group of moderate students (presumably close to the Christian Democrats) attempted to set up an "independent" committee in counter-position to the official one, which they attacked for being under the firm control of the Left.[17]

The Demands of the Student Movement

Beginning in 1968, the students began to vent a number of demands that struck directly at the heart of the educational system. As reflected in one of the early documents of the Student Coordinating Committee, these included the demand for the right to education through the removal of any socio-economic barriers which hampered many students from attending the secondary schools of their choice (Il Telegrafo, 15 March 1968). To achieve this objective, the students demanded that the wages of family breadwinners include an educational allowance to support their children's schooling and that every student attending university be awarded a stipend. The document also criticized the fragmentation of school trajectories and the class-based character of

education associated with the various tracks, the total disregard for the interests of students, and the inadequacies of the curriculum, in particular the silences in the teaching of history. Other targets of criticism included the imposition of a certain type of knowledge "dispensed by teachers from their pulpits" and the negative consequences of grades which fostered competition. The student proposal was summarized as follows:

> We propose the abolition of grades, student participation in decisions concerning study programs [i.e., curriculum], and the elimination of lectures. The teacher should function as a coordinator, organizing the work for students to carry out in study groups. Exams should be abolished in their present forms and replaced by discussion that would serve as a verification not of erudition but of the instruments that the school has provided to the student, i.e., methodology, critical and research skills, the capacity to organize their work . . . The inadequacies of schools are a direct reflection of the structure of society in which we live; therefore, the struggle must be carried on not only against the school but also against this type of society; it must be carried on by the students themselves because they are most directly concerned. It is they who go to school and who must put forth their needs . . . They must work in connection with all other forces that want to change society.

From the very beginning the students struggled for the right to hold assemblies during school hours: indeed, a number of Piombino's schools did grant this right well before it was officially sanctioned by the Ministry of Education in 1970.

At the beginning of the student movement, the most militant student population was that enrolled in the Industrial Technical Institute (ITI), an all-male school where nearly all students came from working-class families. From the very beginning, among the "structured" groups active at the Institute was a nucleus of socially committed Catholic students who drew their inspiration from the social activism launched by Pope John XXIII.[18] The other "heretical" formation with quite a few followers among "ITI" students was the above mentioned group Il Potere

Operaio. In this as in all other schools, the student body was split between the "core" groups of militants and the majority involved only marginally in the movement.

Teachers in the Eye of the Storm

Right from the start divisions emerged as well among teachers who split between those (generally younger) who tried to enter into dialogue with the students and introduce constructive change without succumbing to all their demands, old-timers who opposed any change or dialogue, and those who overtly sided with the student radicals. One interviewee--a young teacher at the time--recalled acquiescing to student demands for more relevant readings by taking up Don Milani, Che Guevara, Gramsci and Marx in class.

One incident involved three teachers at the Industrial Technical Institute who tried to do away with grades, replacing them with an analytical commentary on student performance, an action supported by the school principal. Sometime in 1969 an inspector from the Education Ministry suddenly materialized at the Institute to assess the situation in this "troubled" school. When the three teachers approached him hoping to have an honest discussion on the grade issue, he coldly informed them that they had broken the law by not assigning grades. He told them that, according to a 1929 law, teachers were held to "judge students with a congruous number of grades" and that, as long as the law remained on the books, it had to be applied. He refused to listen to their reasons for abolishing grades and turned on them when asked to "please" look at the situation as a teacher rather than as a bureaucrat, saying "Just know that you are violating the law and can be fired tomorrow." His visit ended with the removal of the school principal on

the pretext of administrative irregularity: he took responsibility for the three teachers conduct and was known for being too understanding vis-à-vis the students.

As this episode illustrates, the state in this initial phase tried to crack down on student protests and dismiss their demands; it also discouraged teachers from taking any initiatives in response to the new situation. However, the clock could not be turned back, as students refused to cave in under threats and disciplinary retaliation. Rather, they kept up the pressure on teachers and administrators. Students frequently disrupted teachers during regular lessons and launched into discussion of whatever hot political issues were in the headlines. Political strikes were frequent, usually pushed by a militant minority: the mass of the students joined in (with various degrees of conviction), while a minority of conservative students dissented.

Many teachers could not deal with a world that had turned upside down. As one teacher stated:

> 1968 was a complex, distressing period, difficult to define in clear terms. Many teachers and school principals abandoned the secondary schools for the middle schools in search of more peace and quiet. In effect, you had to put yourself in question every day; teachers who were less prepared were also those who were the most contested.

The Dynamics and Politics of the Movement

There is no denying that at some point the students began to engage in protest for its own sake: acts of defiance and exemplary actions took on meaning apart from the objectives ostensibly being pursued. As some interviewees stated, the feeling among the militant students at the time was that "ruptures" had to be forced if things were to be changed.

By the end of 1968, the militant core of the students had organized into well-defined political formations. Many of those associated with the group known as "Il Potere Operaio" joined the new "Lotta Continua" (Permanent Struggle), a spontaneous revolutionary organization with a significant national following. In Piombino, "Lotta Continua" often clashed with the communist youth organization, which in this initial phase struggled to seize control of the movement. Generally speaking, the more extremist positions and groups seemed to prevail from the start due to the dedication and energies of the militants of the extra-parliamentary Left. Their activism was unrelenting, their language fiery. Testimonies of those who had been communist youths at the time reveal the bewilderment they felt in this new situation: accustomed to seeing themselves as the only true revolutionary organization, they were now playing the role of moderates. One former FGCI member recalled that "we communists put the emphasis on reforms but we were afraid of not being revolutionary enough."

One of the early student demonstrations that showed the mobilizing capacity of the extra-parliamentary formations in Piombino (Lotta Continua in particular) took place on January 4th, 1969, when a protest was organized in response to a New Year's Eve police assault on a group of demonstrators in which one student was left paralyzed.[19] Of the 1364 students enrolled in Piombino's secondary institutes, 872 joined in the strike and many marched down the city streets shouting slogans and hurling insults at the local offices of the newspapers Il Telegrafo and La Nazione. The high point of the demonstration came when the march stopped in front of the police station, where the students began to shout such things as "policemen: murderers, fascists, murderers." Some students were later turned into the police and arrests made.[20]

In 1969, reflecting a more general trend, Piombino's students began to take up the cause of workers, whose struggles later became known as the "hot Autumn." The most common slogan at the time would be "Workers! Students! United in Struggle!"

The movement of secondary school students continued until about 1977. Historical reconstruction of the local movement's various phases and appraisal of their significance is a difficult task. Clearly internal differentiation existed among various student cohorts. For example, those that entered secondary schools after 1968 had different historical referents from those who preceded them. Most of my interviewees had experienced the school scene of the 1950s and early 1960s: they either left high school before the onset of the movement or they were in their last year when the student protest erupted.

Opinions differ as to what years could be considered the high point of the student movement in Piombino's secondary schools: for some teachers, the years between 1969 and 1971 were the most crucial, but the most common interpretation is that the movement did not really permeate the secondary school scene until 1970. At any rate, the high point of the first "historic" phase came in January 1971 with the student occupation of the schools. The students of the Licei and two technical institutes sought by this means to attract attention to the condition of Piombino's school facilities (particularly at the academic high schools whose structures were old) as well as voice their demand for new teaching methods. The ITI students also demanded a canteen, free transportation for commuter students, abolition of school fees, and free textbooks.

In January 1971, the high school students first occupied the building then vacated it the same evening when warned that the police

were coming. Two days later they occupied the school again; this time, the students from the two technical institutes followed their lead. Again, in the evening, the students received warning of the imminent arrival of the police and fled just in time. According to an interviewee who had some inside knowledge of the events, on both occasions the police leaked information about their imminent intervention to a group of administrators meeting to discuss the events so as to avoid confrontation with the students. Nonetheless, the second time around the police put together a strike force that many characterized as excessive. The local paper described the police intervention as follows:

> 10:10 pm. Carabinieri and policemen enter the licei. After a few minutes, a large police contingent surrounds the ITI and the ITC [Industrial and Commercial Technical Institutes]. Police agents enter the two schools, search the buildings and scout the courtyards. A crowd of onlookers watches these operations with curiosity. More police contingents are stationed at the town gates.

The next day the agitation continued as a procession of students marched through town in protest. The students announced that regular lessons would be suspended. In their place, they set up study groups on the following issues: 1) the role of students in society; 2) the relationship between "culture" and work; 3) teaching methods; 4) the condition of school facilities in Piombino. They also instituted an inter-school technical committee entrusted with drawing up a document outlining the objectives and the proposals of the students. Such a document was to be submitted to the mayor, whom the student identified as the intermediary between the students, municipality and school authorities.

Teachers, the Student Protest and The State

Through an analysis of the testimony of one teacher, this section offers an interpretation of state action during the crucial period of student protest and of the profound malaise which prevailed among many old-guard teachers faced with their world being turned upside down.

> At first the state attempted to deal with the student revolt with repression but lost also because [the state authorities'] own daughters and sons were among the protesters. Attorneys, magistrates, and both the chief and commissioner of police saw their sons and daughters among the students who marched in the streets and occupied school buildings. The sons and daughters of teachers and school principals were also among the students who protested. Thus, after the initial period, repressive efforts were abandoned, in my view largely because the authorities responsible for enforcing law and order ended up battling against their children.
>
> Therefore, the initial repression was replaced by what has been called the strategy of the "rubber wall." The state withdrew and allowed things which the students would have done anyway. In some cases, they were already doing them; for example, at the beginning, assemblies held in the schools were illegal, but students went ahead with them anyway. Initially, they tried to take disciplinary actions against the students who attended these unauthorized assemblies but eventually had to give up. The repression lasted until 1970. After that, the authorities realized that they were not going to win: their sons and daughters were among the protesters. For this reason, the repressive stance that at the beginning had seemed resolute dissolved into nothing.
>
> Afterwards, everything was tolerated; the state could not intervene; it became impotent. It used this technique of the "rubber wall," giving in to all demands. The right to hold assemblies was granted though certain regulations set out: the students merely ignored them. However, once the protest wave ebbed, the "rubber wall" went back to its original position. The students wanted reform: the state made a few adjustments, but the government was never serious about any reform that would have overhauled the school system. . . . The government restored the status quo as soon as conditions permitted it. . . .
>
> As for the teachers, they felt at the time that the state had abandoned them; the state had become a "fugitive." Many teachers of the old guard left secondary schools for the middle schools or, if close to retirement, often opted to retire a few years sooner than they had to. They did not

> have the "instruments" to deal with that situation. Nobody gave them any guidelines. If you took a hard line vis-a-vis the students, you were unrelentingly challenged and would become very unpopular. This situation led teachers, even good ones, to adopt a laissez-faire attitude and lose interest in their work . . I participated in student assemblies: when a teacher took the floor, he was not "the authority" but just like any other person who spoke. I myself was the target of harsh words: I remember being called a "red fascist" because [to the students] the PCI was on the right and at the time I was a Communist.

This very situation pushed the teachers of the old-guard to retire early, request a transfer or feel impotent and lose interest; in contrast, for younger teachers it represented an opportunity to experiment with teaching aids, change the nature of the pedagogic relationship with students, and introduce new curricular contents in the schools.

> The student revolt revealed the limits of our school system, which was paternalistic, authoritarian, selective and socially discriminatory, culturally out of touch, and laden with conformism. The criticism renovated the schools. If today Italian education is different, it is also because many teachers of the old-guard retired and a new generation of teachers entered the schools. The majority of the new teachers lived through the period while at the university either as students or as new teachers just beginning their career.

Many new teachers used the media as a teaching aid (film and newspapers in particular), introduced an inter-disciplinary approach, encouraged students to conduct "original research" in groups or individually, and welcomed discussion of topical and political issues. In essence, "modernization" of teaching and school knowledge was achieved not through parliamentary reform but through changes at the grassroots level, brought about by the student mobilization and the generational change in the teaching staff. Indeed, several of my interviewees were by the early 1970s teaching in Piombino's secondary schools.

The following testimony by an interviewee who attended the humanist high school between 1971 and 1976 attests to the crucial role

that these new teachers played in the schools in this period. Indeed, they represented a sort of trait-d'union between the "historic" 1968 generation who experienced the student movement in the universities, and a younger cohort of students who came of age during the 1970s, i.e., the most turbulent and politicized period in recent Italian history.

> I became politicized as soon as I began attending the humanist high school. My politicization did not have its roots in my family background. In my class, some of my friends had fathers who were communists, but this was not my situation. Politics was in the air and you were immersed in it. You felt part of it; it was the social climate that really got to you. There was also an intellectual development that went along with that politicization
>
> For me the relationship with a certain teacher proved crucial: a young humanities teacher from Livorno that I had in the Gymnasium. About 30 years old, he was an assistant professor at the university. He was a white elephant next to the old-time teachers who had been at the liceo for years and years. That year they had to "import" new teachers because they had two courses of study instead of just one.
>
> This teacher brought a lot of disruption. He was very intelligent and very sarcastic [in his comments]. He would arrive in class and just hand out a book, saying: "Hey guys, I have this book on China, somebody read it and tomorrow we will discuss it." He did not manipulate us politically. He had great pedagogic skills and was an incredible communicator. Thus, my politicization went hand in hand with my intellectual maturation. In this two-year period, I read about 100 books. With him, we studied everything from economics to pedagogy and philosophy; usually the humanities teachers at the Gymnasium made you study Latin and Greek 6-7 hours every day. When in the third year, we changed teachers, the gap between the way we had become accustomed to working and learning and what the old-time teachers now required of us could not have been clearer and proved unbridgeable. We had to find a way not to flunk their tests and exams, but our relationship with these teachers remained openly conflictual and tense for all three years of the Liceo.

Interpretations of "1968": Significance and Characteristics

While an extensive review of the literature on 1968, not to mention an independent interpretation, remains beyond the purview of this thesis, it may be fruitful to underscore some of the salient issues that

have emerged from historical analysis. First of all, it is important to emphasize the particularities of the Italian "1968." The international character of the student and social movements of the mid- to late 1960s prompted many sociologists to interpret them as a generational revolt in the "oedipal" sense. However, rather than looking at "1968" as a worldwide phenomenon with certain national variations, it might be more fruitful to examine it from the opposite angle. As one Italian historian has recently suggested, one should think in terms of "different national patterns modulated according to particular historical and cultural legacies and discourses that in turn display some parallels or convergence" (Passerini, 1989:28). One might add that even "national" patterns are not internally uniform, as local manifestations of these events present distinct configurations. Finally, any social history of this period will have to deal with the respective experience of working-class and middle-class students, as filtered by the specific milieus and historical legacies that distinguish different geographic areas.

For Italy, in particular, the issue of periodization is controversial especially with regard to the relationship between the 1968 events and the emergence of terrorism in the 1970s. Scholars are divided into two camps: those who argue that the armed struggle advocated and practiced by various terrorist groups during the 1970s is the direct legacy of 1968 and those who deny any direct link. Though this issue falls outside the boundaries of this study, nonetheless it is important to recognize that its very existence (and visibility) colors any interpretation of the 1968 events. However, while recognizing the link between 1968 and subsequent events, we should not lose of sight the relationship of "1968" and what came before.

The reconstructions pieced together in this dissertation illustrate at least two things: "1968" represented a radical break with what went on before, and in this respect the educational arena constitutes a privileged observation point. At the same time, it is also clear that the conditions that produced "1968" had been brewing during the preceding three or four years. As can be gathered from the testimonies bearing on school experience, the incubation period was probably longer. Indeed, with respect to the working-class students whom I interviewed, the dominant hegemony, the level of repression, and continual assault on their identities, created levels of frustration or self-doubt that in 1968 finally found an outlet. For example, in response to the question as to what "1968" meant for her, one interviewee answered: "it was a liberation because the social milieu (l'ambiente sociale) and the dominant discourse (il discorso dominante) in the humanist high school had made me doubt myself and my self-worth." Others said that "1968" helped them define and give shape to feelings and perceptions they had had for some time. There was a diffuse restlessness waiting to find expression. In Piombino, however, it did not seem to be primarily a generational malaise in the way 1968 is often interpreted. It was the encounter of a historical cohort with the process of class formation: an encounter mediated by family and community, on one hand, and by school, on the other. The kinds of statements reported above bring us to the next issue in the interpretation of 1968 in Italy: the dichotomy often made between "1968" as a revolutionary political movement and as the "oedipal" rebellion of the first generation to experience la scolarizzazione di massa (mass schooling).

One recent article exposed the problem inherent in any attempt to separate the generational from the political character of the movement

(Grispigni, 1989). Notably, those interpretations that attribute the development of the youth revolt to the frustrated career and social mobility aspirations of a well-educated generation miss the mark in a very macroscopic way. These interpretations see not "revolution" but rather the search for new social mobility channels as the real objective of the movement. This rather simplistic view can be criticized for, among other things, totally ignoring the concrete historical experiences that shaped the sensibilities of the protagonists. In part this can be attributed to the ahistorical (mis)use of the concept of "generation."

However, even the authors, such as Grispigni (1989), who attempt to employ a historicized concept of generation (i.e., historical cohort) continue to attribute undue importance to those elements that appear to be more postulates of pre-existing sociological explanatory models than historically grounded and verifiable realities. In particular, over-emphasis is given to the gap between educational qualifications and inadequate job opportunities, on the one hand, and on the role played by the diffuse, general effects of the "economic boom," on the other. This problem is reflected in the following passage:

> The generation that we are talking about in relation to 1968 needs to be specified historically. It is the generation which experienced the reality of the first wave of mass schooling within the framework of a generalized economic boom. These students rebel because they are conscious of the fact that society does not seem to be capable of guaranteeing [them] a job commensurate to their educational and cultural level. These are also students who, at the same time, express, through their egalitarian ideals, their rejection of an affluent society that seems to aggravate social and economic differences.

This analysis is flawed because the ferment and initial development of the rebellion preceded any awareness or felt concern that society could not offer most young people the possibility of finding fulfilling jobs and careers corresponding to their level of education.

Intellectual employment in Italy of the mid-1960s had not yet become the problem that it would be in the 1970s. Such an interpretation is even more incredulous with respect to high school students. Furthermore, the direct relationship postulated in this passage between the "economic boom" of the 1960s and the student revolt is also questionable because the working classes did not benefit from the effects of economic growth in the same way as the ceti medi did. Indeed, during the 1950s, they made few gains at all, while during the early 1960s whatever progress occurred varied considerably from one region to another. Although by 1968 the income levels and living standards of working-class families had improved considerably over those of the 1950s, the experience of this working-class generation was not marked by the effects of the economic boom but rather, at least until the early 1960s, by economic hardship. In turn, as is clear from my reconstruction of the Piombinese student movement, "1968" cannot be explained as a movement of middle and lower middle class students. Working-class students too were protagonists of 1968 although they displayed patterns of politicization different from middle-class youth, their "dispositions" being grounded in different sensibilities and experiences.

In conclusion, I wish to make three points concerning the particularities of "1968" in Italy, its connection to class formation and to the students' experience of school milieus as described in the previous chapter. First, one of the effects of the mobilization was to re-draw and relax class-boundaries, at least as far as the principal cohort of this study is concerned. Several interviewees characterized the time before "68" as one marked by rigid class boundaries, both in material and psychological terms, and concurred that after "68" the "structure of feeling" changed. Initially, the relaxation of class boundaries came as a

result of the process of political radicalization, which threw together working-class and middle-class students. Although the accounts of former working-class students bearing on this period reveal reservations and ambivalence toward the new bourgeois radicals who swelled the ranks of New Left groups, the mingling between individuals of different classes was truly unprecedented. "1968" was connected to the class-formation process also in terms of what went on before: the oppression, malaise and contradictions of the school experience described in the previous chapters imparted a class-specific meaning to the participation of working-class youth in the student movement and the general mobilization of the late 1960s/early 1970s.

Indeed, no other country saw the emergence of a comparable movement of secondary students. Italian students were largely reacting to what they had witnessed and experienced in the 1950s and early 1960s: as a comparative "narrative" of the student movement in five Western nations has noted, nowhere was anti-communism and polarization so accentuated as in Italy and the United States (Fraser, 1988).[21] In Italy, the witnessing of class inequality by the youth growing up in the 1950s and early 1960s, on one hand, and the presence of a language of class protest, on the other, animated the mobilizations eventually leading to profound change.

One must also acknowledge the role played by the realignment of the political forces that came with the advent of the Center-Left. The latter, by relieving the ever present threat of repression, impacted on the quality of social life. A new political climate began to emerge that allowed an increasing number of people to air their concerns without constant fear of reprisal.

Lastly, the distinctiveness of 1968 in Italy must be underscored.[22] Here the social mobilization that began with 1968 proved to be more extensive, intensive, and sustained than in other Western countries. It was characterized by the presence in the country of an influential intellectual arena of Marxist thought that pre-dated the protest and, subsequently, by the persistence and diffusion of radical neo-Marxist orientations that set the tone of the student movement and the general mobilization of the 1970s. Finally, the inadequacies and the unreformed character of the school system (at both the secondary and university levels) contributed to the radicalness and intensity of the student protest. The intense mobilization of Italian secondary school students emanated, at least in part, from a long-simmering discontent and malaise connected to the type of schooling to which they had been subjected. In this respect, this dissertation has shown that the extreme conservatism that pervaded at least a large part of the school milieus was clearly a legacy of the fascist regime.

NOTES

1. As has been noted, historical contextualization in discussions of 1968 is often minimal: most accounts make the obligatory references to the impact of the economic boom of the early 1960s on "mass scholarization" and to the problems left unsolved by the center-left governments (Grispigni, 1991).

2. The roots of political radicalism and revolutionary fervor of course go deeper, as they can be traced back to anarcho-syndicalism or to the frustration felt by some resistance fighters that the revolution had been cut short following Liberation.

3. The 1963 center-left government headed by Moro had promised a number of major reforms such as the creation of regional governments, economic development for the South, educational, fiscal and agricultural reform, establishment of social insurance, public housing, town planning and anti-monopoly legislation. However, the various center-left governments between 1962 and 1968 (all headed by the DC's Aldo Moro) produced little in the way of social change (Ginsborg, 1990:281).

4. The pro-reform forces included a faction of the PSI, the Republicans, the Social Democrats and the minority wing of the Christian Democrats. The largest faction within the DC was committed to preserving the status quo, whereas the Communists were unwilling to support anything short of major structural reform, which they believed could not be implemented as long as the DC headed the government.

5. A new political space opened to the left of the PCI and PSI in the late 1950s-early 1960s when the established left parties underwent a crisis due to a number of factors: 1) the destalinization of the PCI in the wake of Khrushchev's 1956 anti-Stalin speech, which engendered both the expulsion of hard-line PCI militants and the desertion of disillusioned members; 2) the split in the PSI, leading to the formation of the PSIUP, provoked by the party's participation in the center-left government; and 3) controversy within both parties of the Left as to the character and future development of Italian neo-capitalism (Hellman, 1976).

6. The greatest intellectual influence was exerted by a number of small leftist reviews such as Quaderni Rossi, Quaderni Piacentini, Classe e Stato, Classe Operaia, Contropiano, and Nuovo Impegno.

7. This small local organization should not be confused with the national-level New Left group bearing the same name: the Piombinese group called itself Il Potere Operaio while the more famous national New Left formation is known as Potere Operaio (i.e., without the article).

8. These popular Catholic intellectuals included such people as Giorgio La Pira, Don Lorenzo Milani, Don Mazzi and Padre Balducci (for a succinct account of the role they played with respect to the 1968 events, see Verucci, 1989).

9. Giuseppe is the former working-class student mentioned earlier who had attended the vocational commercial school (avviamento commerciale) because his teacher had told his mother in no uncertain terms that he had "manual talents" and should not waste his time taking the entry exam for admittance into the academic middle school (see chapter 5).

10. As mentioned above, the movement varied in character from one university milieu to another. The "autonomous" student movement--as distinct from the new political formations--survived the longest at the Catholic University of Milan. In contrast, the protest at the University of Trento (an institution founded in 1962 by intellectuals associated with the DC's left wing) was marked by the marriage between radical Catholicism and Marxism. In Rome, after the first few months, the movement took on a revolutionary, workerist character with an emphasis on the Leninist vanguard model. In Naples, political formations preceded the development of the student movement: here, members of the traditional Left parties participated more actively and with greater success than in other places (Barbagallo, 1989; Grispigni, 1989). In its more autonomous manifestations (at Trento in 1966-67 and at the Catholic University of Milan), the student movement was characterized by pronounced anti-institutional, anti-organizational discourse: it developed a critique of the family, historical parties and intellectuals, and the role of the university in capitalist society.

11. Beginning in 1961, graduates from technical institutes were allowed access to science faculties. This measure had significant repercussions, as the graduates from technical institutes came predominantly from lower middle class and working-class backgrounds and unprecedented numbers of them had entered these schools during the 1950s and early 1960s. Access was further relaxed in 1965 when university entry examinations were abolished.

12. In 1968, a third of the students at Milan's state university worked part- or full-time (Martinotti, 1973).

13. Major economic interests and power were at stake in these "battles": real estate speculation, political kickbacks, and vast economic and political fortunes were involved in the construction of large university clinics, the siting of new university campuses, and the like. Of course, these battles had a different character depending in large part on the political and economic configurations of urban areas in various regions.

14. The book was translated into English in 1970: School of Barbiana, Letter to a Teacher, London).

15. Outside Italy, Lettera a Una Professoressa influenced the Faure Report commissioned by UNESCO and published in 1972: this report echoed the pamphlet's call for democratizing schools.

16. The local press referred to here are the two daily newspapers La Nazione and Il Telegrafo.

17. These developments were reported in the local press (La Nazione, March 6th and 8th, 1968).

18. This group of students gathered around a young teacher at the Institute who presumably started holding regular meetings sometime in 1966-67.

19. This New Year's Eve incident, known as "i fatti della Bussola," became a cause celebre. On the night in question the police charged a group of demonstrators who had rallied in front of an exclusive night-club near Viareggio, a popular resort on the Tuscan coast, to denounce the life-style of the rich. The demonstrators had been shouting insults and launching rotten tomatoes at the patrons of this exclusive nightclub. Numerous demonstrators were arrested, among whom was a girl from Piombino.

20. The episode was reported in the local chronicle of the papers La Nazione and Il Telegrafo (January 5, 1969). Several interviewees had vivid memories of this event.

21. This work (Fraser, 1988), based on oral testimonies of former student militants from several countries (Italy, Great Britain, Germany, France and the U.S.), suggests that the sensibilities of those who joined the protest are rooted in the experiences of the 1950s.

22. Recent cross-national studies of 1968 (Santomassimo et al, 1989; Lumley, 1990; Ortoleva, 1988; Fraser, 1988) have furthered our understanding of the variations in national patterns, though more comparative analysis needs to be done.

CHAPTER EIGHT

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVISM IN THE WAKE OF 1968

> In fact, an aspiration, albeit a long-term one, still exists to close the gap between manual and intellectual work. The demand for a single category for shop-floor and office staff must entail developing an overall vision of school and educational reform which is itself unified and all-embracing. Fundamentally this would mean a re-thinking of the relationship between education and technological development, between schooling and job preparation.
>
> —Enrico Taliani (1977:191-2).

"1968" produced a wave of educational activism and a series of reforms passed in response to the grassroots mobilization. In this chapter I focus in particular on alternative after-school socialization and group tutoring that grassroots groups provided to disadvantaged children in these years. I also analyze the workers' education program (the "150 hours courses") for which the labor unions secured state funding. Finally, I discuss the back-to-school movement and the new role of municipal governments in the provision of education.

I. The Experience of the Early 1970s

The 1970s saw a high level of diffuse social mobilization across the country. These years also witnessed a wave of working-class struggles characterized by broad participation, new forms of strike action, and new types of shopfloor organization. As more workers entered directly into the fray, traditional trade union organizations often found themselves outstripped. Outside the workplace, political mobilization spearheaded by various New Left organizations brought in new groups (such as army conscripts and prisoners) from arenas that previously had remained outside the realm of politics. A grassroots squatter's

movement which arose in response to the chronic housing shortages, put forward the demand for adequate living quarters as a basic social right.

Meanwhile, the university scene changed quite dramatically. Militants covered the walls of university buildings and hallways with colorful graffiti; students organized a myriad of political activities and seminars; sympathetic professors offered evening courses to accommodate the schedules of worker-students, and seminars were added to lectures on a regular basis. Yet, the focus of mobilization moved from the university per se to society at large. The educational arena remained in the eye of the storm, with militancy shifting to the secondary schools. Although the Italian movement did not experience a moment quite as dramatic as May 1968 in France (when state power seemed on the verge of collapse), nowhere else was mobilization sustained with the same intensity and for such a protracted period. Indeed, the period of prolonged protest and diffuse mobilization would come to be known as il Maggio strisciante (the "creeping May") (Santomassimo et al, 1989).

This wave of protest posed a considerable challenge to Italy's traditional parties. The following statement made to the DC National Council in January 1969 by Emilio Colombo (who would become Prime Minister a year and a half later) is particularly telling:

> Where have we fallen short? It seems to me that . . . action in favor of reform has been marking time so that the structures of civil society have aged badly and the whole fabric has deteriorated. Social forces have not found suitable channels for the expression of their freedom. That is why pluralism . . . is actually turning into disorder, with a wave of unrest and sometimes irrationality (Ginsborg, 1990:326).[1]

The governing parties hastily enacted some partial reforms in an effort to contain the impetus of the social movements. For its part, the PCI also seemed overwhelmed in such a highly charged, socially

explosive situation characterized by forms of mobilization which it neither understood nor controlled. During the initial phase, the party's traditional organizational structures and leadership proved incapable of constructive action. Moreover, the party hierarchy lost effective control over its own youth organization.

From 1969 on, a series of legislative actions and ministerial decrees initiated the long overdue modernization of the school system. However, many of the measures taken were mere stopgaps that ultimately failed to pave the way for more comprehensive reform. Yet, the 1970s did witness a process of broader institutional and social change whose effects should not be underestimated. In 1970 the administrative and legislative decentralization of the state, long in the works, was finally achieved with the establishment of regional governments. That same year, parliament also approved a Workers' Charter (Statuto dei Lavoratori) guaranteeing workers' basic rights, such as safeguards against dangerous working conditions, the right of assembly, the right to organize unions at the workplace, and the right to file grievances in the courts. The Labor Charter marked a turning point in Italian industrial relations, as for the first time the country had on the books labor legislation not biased in favor of employers. On the social front, the passage of a divorce bill in December 1970 sealed a victory for the lay parties over the Church and the Christian Democrats. In other arenas, such as public housing and health, reform efforts during the early 1970s proved less successful (Ginsborg, 1990)

In the educational arena, in order to contain student protest, successive ministerial decrees were issued in 1968, 1969 and 1970 authorizing school assemblies. In 1969, the certification exam at the end of the secondary cycle was made less demanding and restrictions

concerning access to the university abolished. Hence, from this time on, any student who graduated from a five-year secondary school (academic, technical or vocational) could enroll in any faculty. In the universities, a 1973 decree officially instituted evening courses for worker-students and stipulated students' right to sit on administrative and faculty councils (Corradini, 1987). Finally, legislation passed in 1973-74 provided for the establishment of elected bodies--at the level of individual classes, schools and districts--through which participation of teachers, parents and students was to be channeled.

In the early 1970s, the extra-parliamentary Left developed its own analysis of education. Its proposals departed from traditional left thinking and eventually exerted an important influence on the trade unions. Prior to 1973, most New Left Marxist-Leninist organizations viewed the schools as mechanisms that served to reproduce inequality and hence were functional to capitalist society. Groups such a Lotta Continua and Avanguardia Operaia until about 1972-73 even advocated abandoning the schools in favor of the factory as terrains of struggle (Chiosso, 1977).

The Manifesto Group provided the most intelligent and articulated analysis of the school and the roots of the student revolt.[2] According to the Manifesto's Thesis on Schooling, the student revolt had been provoked by the nature of the school itself, which existed as a "separate body" from society and as "a society of unequals" (Chiosso, 1977). The testimonies collected in Piombino for this thesis lend support to such an argument, at least in the case of working-class students. Furthermore, the group's document called attention to the ambiguity, never resolved in popular struggles for education, between egalitarian aspirations and acquiescence to the reality of social promotion fostered

by schools within a society characterized by a technical and social division of labor (ibid.).[3]

Around 1972-73, New Left intellectuals who had previously abandoned the schools as sites of contestation woke up to the need to link struggles around school issues to those affecting workers. The lack of day-care centers and kindergartens, the cost of school books, and the high school failure in the compulsory cycles were problems that affected the working class. Furthermore, workers' right to continuous education (discussed below) became a major issue within the unions.

In 1970, the communist-led labor organization CGIL set up its own teachers' union, CGIL-Scuola. However, given the political orientation of many of the new generation of young teachers, this organization would be dominated by the extra-parliamentary Left until 1974.

By far the most interesting developments in the educational arena during the 1970s were the Doposcuola movement, the involvement of trade unions in the educational sector through the so-called "150 Hours" courses, and the return to school of massive numbers of people in their 20s and 30s. The other significant development was the new role played by local governments in education through the provision of services (such as school busing and canteens) and schooling itself (in the pre-school and elementary sectors).

The "Doposcuola" Movement: The Example of Florence

As discussed above, the book Letter to a Teacher served as a major source of inspiration for the social activism of the later 1960s and early 1970s. The political manifestos of the student movement clearly reflect its influence: indeed, the effectiveness of its message is undisputed. In Florence, where the message of Lettera a una

Professoressa reached just about every student who participated in the occupation of the university, groups began providing after-school education to disadvantaged children as early as 1968. The movement known as Scuola e Quartiere (i.e., School and Neighborhood) emerged in late 1969, though the groups that would be active in Doposcuola activities had met and networked since December 1968 (Incatasciato, 1975).[4]

In Florence the majority of the original Doposcuola groups were Catholic, although a variety of political orientations could be found among their members. All had been influenced by the popular schools established during the late 1950s and 1960s by three populist priests (one of whom was Don Milani) engaged in the social promotion of their neighborhoods. Later on, the groups adopted more defined political connotations.

The after-school educational activities organized by the groups represented a compromise between an experiment in alternative education and the provision of remedial schooling. The core of alternative education consisted of group work, discussions, and reading newspapers. In many cases, however, the Doposcuola ended up becoming a place where underprivileged children came to get help with homework. According to one analysis of these experiences in Florence, Catholics tended to conduct the Doposcuola as an integrative, assistance-oriented activity in support of regular (morning) schooling. In contrast, Marxist students attempted to ground the doposcuola in a counter-educational experience. Physically, these activities were housed in the locales of parishes or associations (such as the ACLI, the Catholic Workers Association), but groups moved to other locations when priests tried to exert control over their activities (Incatasciato, 1975).

The Doposcuola movement had two goals: the promotion of an alternative pedagogy, and political agitation. As the groups clarified their goals and philosophy, it became clear that the unifying objective underlying different experiences was the refutation of the authoritarian teaching style prevalent in Italian schools. As the documents of the movement reflect, the groups were determined that they not provide a service for official schools, i.e., by acting as tutors or making sure that homework got done. The pedagogical-political blueprint of the Doposcuola movement was in part also connected to the frustrations of Doposcuola teachers, mostly university students disappointed by the abortive transformation of curricula and educational "practices" in the universities (ibid.).

The Doposcuola, however, was also conceived as an instrument for mobilizing parents and getting them involved in the schools, in particular inducing them to stand up to school principals and teachers and combat the selective character of the school. Yet the groups found themselves in a double bind because most parents would agree to send their children to the Doposcuola only if the latter provided remedial education for their children. This turned them into a support service for the morning school, precisely what the Doposcuola leaders sought to avoid. Parents did not prove after all particularly interested in the innovative activities launched in the Doposcuola.

This dilemma induced Doposcuola organizers to divide activities into a two-hour period dedicated to homework and remedial tutoring and a one-hour period of alternative pedagogy. For the doposcuola teachers, the second was clearly the most important. The pursuit of alternative pedagogy entailed a process of trial and error, in which the student-teachers (who had little pedagogical training) had to improvise and

invent "what worked." In the end, the multiple demands and the contradictory character of the initiative made this an almost impossible task. The experience also showed the obstacles posed in effecting a transformation in the schools through involving parents, who proved generally unwilling and ill-equipped to challenge either the mode in which the regular schools operated or the contents of school knowledge.

Between 1969 and 1971, the growth of the Doposcuola movement was accompanied by new didactic experiences, such as theater productions, that encouraged children's creativity and critical thinking.[5] The groups used theater productions as a medium of "social communication" and the self-discovery of the child's social class location. However, this positive experience proved to be of short duration, as the objectives of various doposcuola groups were primarily political and only secondarily pedagogic or didactic. They wanted their activities to become the catalyst for a struggle around school services and for democratic reform of education, an objective that proved difficult to realize.[6]

In the end, these groups came to realize that they could never successfully introduce didactic innovations into the schools from the outside, nor could they foster a more participatory and critical "pedagogic relationship" in their fight against teachers and school principals. Change had to come from within the school system, through the work of a new generation of teachers. Eventually, the groups abandoned their activities and channeled their energies elsewhere. Nonetheless, these efforts may have had a lasting impact, which has to date not been fully appreciated, as quite a few individuals who taught in the Doposcuola later became licensed teachers working in the "regular" schools.

Doposcuola Experiences in Piombino

In the early 1970s, two Doposcuola experiments were under way in Piombino. Although both animating groups were originally associated with Catholic dissent, one subsequently underwent a rapid transformation and took on a strong Marxist character (not an unusual trajectory at the time). One of the groups had in the late 1960s organized children and adolescents around recreational-educational activities (see the previous chapter); the other originated among a group of students at the Industrial Technical Institute.

The first group was forced to suspend its educational-social activities with children and adolescents in 1969 when the parish priest bluntly informed them that the parish would no longer permit the use of its locales. Although the priest gave no explanation, one can surmise that the parish authorities feared that the group's activities, involving almost 500 youth, might become a liability and a source of controversy, especially given the ferment of the times. An incident that occurred on Christmas eve (during Holy Mass) in 1968 may have fueled Church authorities' already simmering distrust of young Catholic activists. On that occasion, a group of young people took control of the pulpit following the religious ceremony and began reading a statement outlining some of the main theses of Catholic dissent. The episode caused an uproar in the parish: the young Catholic "dissenters" were accused of "disturbing the public peace" and tried in court.

Although the group suspended its activities with children in 1969, it did not disband. It would become active once again in 1971 in the sea-front neighborhood where a high concentration of economically destitute families (including some squatters housed in makeshift barracks) lived. The group obtained two rooms from the local parish to

which it paid a nominal rent (in order to establish some autonomy from the church). They then immersed themselves in the problems of the neighborhood's most marginal and disadvantaged groups, ultimately focusing their attention on the appalling rates of school failure found among middle school children.

Setting out to ensure that children would no longer fail in school, the group organized after-school remedial classes. In this neighborhood doposcuola, the first class period was devoted to helping the children with homework and explaining anything they had not understood in school; the second period was devoted to "alternative," creative activities. During the early years, about 70 children became involved, most from the middle school, some from the elementary school. The group experimented with theater productions and educational games and networked with other groups in the Doposcuola movement, with whom it exchanged didactic materials.

This experiment lasted until 1978, attracting the attention of young public sector professionals (e.g., doctors and social workers) who collaborated with the group on a number of public initiatives. During the first few years, the Doposcuola experience became the catalyst for public debates on various issues. The group did not shy away from taking positions in conflict with the official stance of the church hierarchy. For example, they opposed the 1974 referendum supported by the church to repeal the divorce law; for this, they were expelled from the parish locale and had to move to a new site. During this time, the group, which had no prior links with any outside organization or movement, began to view itself as a comunità di base. The high points of the group's communal life came during two to three-day retreats organized periodically, and a two-week working vacation at which time

the members discussed their ongoing efforts and made plans for the future. In time, the group forged ties with a loose association of others known as "Christians for Socialism" and came increasingly into contact with the major public figures associated with Catholic dissent. Around 1975-76 they joined the movement known as Comunità Cristiane di Base.

The other group active in after-school activities in 1970 went by the name "Communist Initiative" (Iniziativa Comunista). The core group, known in 1967 as the Gruppo di Comunità, consisted of several students of the Industrial Technical Institute who were originally influenced by left social Catholicism; however, most of the original members converted to Marxism between 1968 and 1970. In 1970-71 Iniziativa Comunista prepared for a meeting at which the outlines of the doposcuola project in the Salivoli neighborhood (one of the satellite neighborhoods that had developed in the 1960s) would be decided. Most of the members had been inspired by Letter to a Teacher and the experience of Don Milani.

The group, consisting of about 30 individuals (both workers and students) took on a definite political identity, calling itself Il Doposcuola di Salivoli. Their goal was to use after-school work with children to reach out to and politicize the working-class families that lived in this relatively new neighborhood. These were the years when the movement for neighborhood-based participation was underway across the country and neighborhood councils were being set up; thus, the Doposcuola was part of a larger strategy to approach and win the trust of local families. In its first two years, this Doposcuola reached between 30 and 40 children in the elementary and middle schools.

From an educational standpoint, this experience did not go much beyond the provision of the remedial and integrative education requested by the families. The lack of originality and of sustained

efforts to pursue a counter-pedagogical objective clearly stemmed from the fact that the ultimate goal was political and the educational aspects only secondary. In the case of Piombino, it would seem that the "Marxist" orientation of the second group imparted to the Doposcuola more of a service-orientation than did the critical Catholic orientation of the first. This pattern contrasts sharply with the experience of the Doposcuola movement in Florence--as reported by Incatasciato (1975)--though a detailed reconstruction of the latter has yet to be written.

In the Spring of 1972, the political orientation of the Marxist group began to change as contacts increased with the Communist League, a Maoist organization with chapters throughout the country. In the Summer the group founded and ran a Proletarian Cultural Center and in 1973 it had merged with the League. However, the Doposcuola of Salivoli would survive until 1975-76.

The Trade Unions and the "150 Hours" Courses

From the late 1960s to the early 1970s, the established trade unions found themselves both challenged and reinforced by labor militancy expressed through new forms of direct participation and spontaneous actions. These new types of militancy stemmed in large part from the political work and influence of New Left groups. Despite the fact that unions were not at the forefront of the labor movement during these years, they managed to "ride the tiger" of worker militancy and use it to increase their bargaining power vis-a-vis employers and the state.[7]

During the early 1970s, capitalizing on their new muscle, the unions saw an opportunity to play a political role by exerting pressure on the state and political parties to implement the long-delayed social

reforms. In 1973 labor won a major victory as the unions prevailed in their primary demand for a reduction of wage differentials between white and blue collar workers and between the skilled and unskilled; the forty-hour week was also introduced in this period. Labor agitation spread for the first time to workers in the service and the public sectors. Everyone seemed to be joining the union: membership in the CGIL and CISL (the two major confederations) taken together grew from 4,083,000 in 1968 to 6,475,000 in 1975. With respect to the educational sector, while in 1968 the CGIL could only claim to have organized some 4,000 teachers, by early 1975 the number had climbed to 90,000 (Regalia, Regini, and Reyneri, 1978).

Prior to 1962, the positions of the unions with respect to education were neither particularly original nor critical. In general, the view of vocational education embraced by Italian labor was essentially in line with the developmental vision of Italian neo-capitalism. In 1962, the union's position began to shift as a result of the revival of Marxism spearheaded by intellectuals grouped around two small but influential journals (Quaderni Rossi and Quaderni Piacentini). Among Catholics, the publication in 1967 of Letter to a Teacher had a major impact: it was even adopted as the official text for courses organized by the Catholic metalworkers (FIM).

In Italy, the relationship between the student and the labor movements, although at times conflictual, proved to be much deeper and more sustained than in other European countries. In part, this may have occurred because the student movement dissolved very rapidly into a myriad of Marxist formations that understood the crucial position of labor. Without a doubt the student movement helped impart to workers' struggles a strong egalitarian thrust in contradistinction to the

corporatist orientation long associated with some unions. Students rejected indirect representation (il rifiuto della delega) that characterized workplace organization at the time and challenged the existing union structures. Moreover, the student movement and the first New Left formations exposed the narrowness of previous labor struggles centered exclusively around wage demands. Apparently, many workers felt culturally marginalized by union officials and warmed to arguments urging them to take direct charge of their working lives rather than delegating that responsibility to the union representatives. In addition, the growing number of worker-students in Italian universities (who had their own organizations) criticized the unions for ignoring their particular problems and not understanding the significance of education and the working class's right to study (Chiosso, 1978). These trends paved the way for the struggle to win for workers the right to study, which in turn would give rise to the "150 hours" courses.

Between 1967 and 1972, various educational experiments supported or directly organized by the unions were undertaken. Some were inspired by ideas of "alternative culture" or "proletarian culture" and tried to grapple with the dichotomy between intellectual and manual work. In 1972, a number of conferences on the relationship between school and work and on the common ideals and goals of progressive teachers, students and workers would be organized. For example, the Bologna metalworker union (FLM) held a seminar on "Democracy in the factory and in the school" (Taliani, 1977)

The 1973 metalworkers' contract sanctioned workers' right to 150 hours of paid educational leave over a three-year period, thus giving birth to the la scuola delle 150 ore. The "150 hours" courses were of two types: supplementary or remedial courses for compulsory schooling

held at middle schools and short thematic courses conducted at the university and in secondary schools. The "150 hours" school was conceived as a political endeavor with two basic goals: educational emancipation for the thousands of workers with no educational qualification and "alternative" education to facilitate the further politicization of workers through original intellectual work and discussion.[8] During the initial years, the remedial courses leading to the middle school certificate were regularly attended and successfully completed by those enrolled. The number of courses grew exponentially--from 922 in 1974 to 2,250 in 1975--though more so in the North and Center than in the South. Teachers for these courses were paid by the Ministry of Education and, during the first few years, received special training (ibid).

Perhaps the most significant and immediate intellectual background of the "150 hours" courses was the process of critical reflection that accompanied the struggles of the early 1970s. For the first time, workers started questioning the nature of the production process itself. A union delegate from a Turin factory interviewed in 1972 put it this way:

> Little by little we began to ask ourselves why? Why assembly lines? Why time limits? Why piece work? Why the organization on which the production is based? And it wasn't particularly difficult to find out why: everything had been made to measure to suit the boss.

Therefore the political-educational project expressed through the "150 hours" courses was at least initially inextricably linked to that phase of the workers struggle in which qualitative demands questioning the very organization of production came to the fore. The main objectives of the labor struggle of these years (i.e., the early 1970s)

included reversing the fragmentation of labor into job-categories and achieving working-class unity at the factory level to create a "new collective dimension for work and re-emphasize the essential contradiction that exists between those who make decisions and those who have to carry them out" (Taliani, 1977:191). The ultimate (albeit utopian) goal was to establish a single job category for the shopfloor and office staff, thus closing the gap between manual and intellectual work. This vision necessitated a rethinking of "the work of schools" and educational reform.[9]

The attainment of the workers' right to study and the political framework of the learning process of the "150 hours" represented an opportunity to examine the role and curricular content of technical and training schools and propose how the two might be changed within a reformed secondary school system. Indeed, it has been suggested that the Italian experience was distinctive precisely because it put forward the long-term objective of changing the structure of the educational system (even if this goal was never achieved). However, what was probably most significant in this experience was that it was based on the recognition that workers needed to demonstrate to employers that they understand the "mechanism, methods and instruments [the employer] uses to oppress, deceive, humiliate and finally exploit the worker at his workplace." (Taliani, 1977:193). Workers must understand the role of technology and the concepts which employers use each time new demands are made which threaten their power. Here, it is appropriate to recall the frustration of the elderly communist worker from Piombino who commented on the difficulty in counter-acting the manipulative language with which management justified its decisions during the time of management councils in the immediate postwar period:

> Management put in front of us technical data and examples which we were not able to counter. When we went to these meetings, our task was always to reject whatever management suggested.

This was exactly the type of situation that workers wanted to avoid in the future: one of the principal objectives of the "150 Hours" was to make sure of this.

The "150 Hours" Experience in Piombino

In Piombino, the "old" academic middle school was selected by the Ministry of Education to take on the "150 Hours" courses. The school principal recalled in an interview how poorly the Ministry had prepared her for this new task. Shortly before the courses were to begin in October 1973, she was summoned by the provincial superintendent and told that her school would be one of the 100 in Italy where these courses would be held in the first year. The very next morning she had to travel to Rome to receive her instructions from the Ministry for Industry, where a bureaucrat assured her that she need not worry as these courses were only mere foolishness (una cazzata).[10]

Relations between school authorities and union representatives proved to be highly conflictual, as the latter strove to assert their authority over the courses and the teachers. During the first three years (1973 to 1975-76), workers constituted the overwhelming majority of those enrolled; during the first year many were also trade union activists. Beginning in 1976-77, some housewives and a number of unemployed youth (most of whom had dropped out of regular school) attended the courses as well. During the first year (1973), the union's suspicion of the school authorities was so great that it appointed its own teacher to work in a consulting capacity with the rest of the staff

to ensure that the content of the courses and pedagogic methods utilized were ideologically correct. The course offered in that first year centered on the history of industrialization in Piombino.

The four teachers interviewed who taught in these courses agreed that they had on balance a positive, enriching character. However, difficulties were encountered in selecting didactic materials (due to the worker-student rejection of book-learning) and designing a realistic course of study that could be implemented over a six-month period (with classes being held four hours a day for four days per week).

The relationship between the teachers and the worker-students would prove problematic. Politicized workers, who constituted the majority of worker-students in the initial period, expressed considerable resentment toward the school and tended to reject the use of books as well as anything that seemed too abstract or too far removed from their life as workers. However, a few wanted to follow the conventional curriculum that they remembered being exposed to some 20 years earlier during their initial schooling; thus, they rejected the "alternative culture" that left-leaning teachers tried to promote. For example, many preferred reading Manzoni to Brecht because the former represented "real culture": they all knew of Manzoni's I Promessi Sposi, while few had heard of Brecht. These worker-students often displayed what seemed to be contradictory attitudes: the same individual might refuse book-learning yet want a "remedial" type of course or want to read Manzoni. Some workers attended the courses primarily to obtain the middle school certificate that would enable them to enroll in the evening courses offered by the Industrial Technical Institute. They hoped that a secondary school diploma would open up a career in middle management.[11]

The "Back-to-School" Movement

One of the salient characteristics of the 1970s was a "back-to-school" movement among people in their 20s and 30s. These were young people of artisanal or working-class origin who, for a variety of reasons, dropped out of school early on, often at the end of elementary school. Sometimes economic constraints had forced them to abandon school for the workplace; in other cases, usually in small towns, there was no local school to attend beyond the elementary level and families were often reluctant to allow their 11-year old children to take buses to the next major town where more advanced schooling was available.

The ferment of the late 1960s/early 1970s was conducive to the emergence of a back-to-school movement among young productive adults who could now afford to pay their way through school. For many, resuming one's education took on political connotations. Scores of private schools opened in these years offering evening courses (usually over a three-year period) that prepared worker-students for the certification exams of secondary schools (mostly technical and teacher-training schools). During these years it was not uncommon for motivated young people with only an elementary education to obtain a middle school certificate and then go on to get a secondary school diploma; some even went on to the university. In some cases, these educational trajectories were motivated by the desire for occupational advancement or career aspirations, as the educational requirements for certain jobs (particularly in the public sector) had gone up since the mid-1960s. However, many also went back to school out of a desire for personal intellectual development and self-emancipation.

Piombino and the Back-to-School Movement: Massimo's Experience

By 1970 in Piombino the majority of young people in their early and late 20s had already received a middle cycle education (vocational or academic): thus the town's young workers enrolled in the evening courses of the Technical Industrial School. For example, most of those who had graduated from the company school went on to attend these evening courses. Motivations varied: for many it was clear that the prospects for improving their lives were linked to the mill and a technical diploma might then make it easier to get a better-paying and more satisfying factory job. However, some were driven by the pursuit of less tangible rewards.

In this respect, the trajectory and motivations of one of these workers are illustrative. Massimo, the son of a security guard who worked in the metal-works, was born in Piombino in 1950. He attended the company school between 1965 and 1968 and after graduation was immediately hired by the mill. In 1971, after his military service, he enrolled in the evening courses at the Industrial Technical Institute and graduated in 1975. That same year he enrolled in the humanities faculty at the University of Siena from which he graduated in 1983 after writing a thesis in cultural anthropology.

The choice to enroll in the university and write an anthropology thesis was rooted in Massimo's politicization process and his fascination with the "culture" of the workplace, which in turn grew out of his own contact with the workers' world in the factory. He was especially drawn to the ethical vision and cultural baggage that had shaped the relationship of an older generation of workers to the factory and their work. This was the generation that had entered the mill either before or during the war. He was intrigued by, on the one hand, their strong

sense of rights as workers, and, on the other, their sense of responsibility toward the exigencies of production. These were men who clung to their identities as militant communist workers yet also took pride in their labor. Massimo's thesis, based on interviews with this older generation, reconstructed the articulation of this "culture" in Piombino's largest mill (Mosci, 1982). One of his friends, who had a similar personal trajectory, wrote his thesis on the ritual aspects of workers' gestures and movements as they carry out their work.

With regard to Massimo's work and political trajectory, in 1968 he joined the Catholic Union (CISL) and in 1973, after receiving special training, was promoted to furnace master. He felt somewhat uneasy about this promotion to a white-collar job, as it was then common practice among "good communists" to refuse any promotion to a staff position: although he felt torn up inside, he nonetheless accepted the promotion. In 1974 he left the CISL to join the communist union (CGIL-FIOM) and a year later joined the PCI. By 1980 he had become first a union representative (delegato) and then a union official. Between 1985 and 1989, he served as town councilman (assessore) for the PCI in charge of Public Works.

This kind of trajectory shows a particular pattern of social mobility connected to union and political work common to a significant number of people during these years. This kind of trajectory provided a middle way between utilizing education strictly as a mechanism of individual mobility and as a means of political self-discovery and intellectual development. Massimo's trajectory is a product of the 1960s and 1970s: although he has a university degree, he still works in the mill in a working-class job and wears worker's overalls rather than a suit (though his salary is commensurate with that of a white-collar

worker). There can be little doubt that this kind of trajectory and situation is unique to his generational cohort: for those who came later it would be unthinkable to earn a university degree and remain in factory work.

II. Epilogue

Truncated Participation and the Role of Local Government

Spurred into action by the social mobilization in the wake of 1968, and responding to the criticism that the school constituted a "separate body" of society, Parliament in 1973 passed a law introducing a system of participation in school management. The decrees (known as decreti delegati) that translated the general provision of this legislation into specific guidelines dealt with such issues as the norms regulating the collective work of teachers, the attribution of competencies to various collective organs, the creation of pedagogic research and information centers, and the establishment of a new national council. These decrees also specified the procedures to be followed in the nomination and election of teacher, student and parent representatives to class, school and district councils.[12]

In principle, the new system of participation called upon parents, teachers, students and local "social forces" (associations, the local administration, economic institutions, trade unions and the like) to collaborate in harmonizing the relationship between the "community" and schooling. It is interesting to note, however, that the "social management" of schools was included in the important contract agreement between the government and the teachers' unions of 1973 (at a time when the latter were under the influence of the New Left). The first school election took place in 1975. This highly charged and largely

partisan affair, which pitted slates of candidates drawn up along party lines against each other (essentially Christian Democrats versus the Left), received a great deal of public and media attention. The politicization of the election and the high turnout demonstrated that education was no longer a sector left to professionals.

The new participatory scheme proved ineffectual, however, as the newly elected bodies were not given any real decision-making power but rather had only "advisory," and "consultative" functions. In addition, the new system failed to function effectively because it was tacked on to a pre-existing bureaucratic structure whose competencies had not been modified and whose power outweighed that of any participatory bodies. Nonetheless, even this limited effort represented a real change in the way in which education was run: a significant step away from the authoritarianism that characterized school administration in previous decades. We need only recall the 1966 incident in Piombino reported above in which a student was suspended for pointing out the inadequacies of a school library (a decision based on a fascist law made by a teachers' council and authoritarian principal) to see how far Italian education had come.

The other major development of the 1970s affecting education was the role played by regional and municipal governments. Although the new regional framework had been instituted in 1970, local and regional administrations were given no clear responsibilities until 1975. In fact, only in 1977, after a struggle waged by the Left against the vested interests controlling the central state, did regional governments gain effective financial autonomy and clear responsibilities in the domains of health care provision and environmental planning. In the educational arena, they began to assert some authority starting in 1975: here, their

responsibilities include support services (assistenza scolastica), public assistance, health care and vocational education. Regional administrations can also take a variety of initiatives in sectors such as adult education, sports and recreational activities. They have their own educational programs, which vary from region to region depending on socio-economic characteristics and the political parties heading the regional government. In 1975 and 1977, some responsibilities were transferred from regional to municipal governments.

With respect to local administrations, prior to 1970 their role was basically confined to the construction and maintenance of facilities (for the schools of the elementary and middle cycles) and ad hoc interventions in response to insufficient action on the part of the central state. The 1970s witnessed a new activism on the part of local governments, which now provided integrative educational activities, pre-school education (kindergartens), school transportation and canteen services. For example, the law instituting day-care centers attributed responsibility for the provision of this service to municipal governments.

At times, one could distinguish differing "educational philosophies" underlying the efforts of municipal administrations depending upon whether the DC or the Left controlled the local government. While a few PCI-headed municipal administrations (especially in the region of Emilia-Romagna) were pioneers in the provision of pre-school education, day-care and after-school activities even during the 1960s, in most areas communist administrations only became active in this domain in the 1970s, following the changes described above. In Piombino, the new competencies and roles of local administrations developed at the very time that a younger generation of local administrators replaced the older cadre of communist officials. It was during these years that the 1942-54

historical cohort assumed positions (such as those of councilmen) in the local government.

In 1973, Piombino's municipal administration began providing free bus transportation for kindergartens and the schools of the mandatory cycle. In that same year, it also instituted after-school activities for some elementary schools of the surrounding countryside and for the school in the working-class neighborhood (Il Cotone) adjacent to the factories. In designing alternative educational activities for young children, the local administration looked to the program that had been undertaken in Bologna since 1968. Young teachers, hired by the municipality to animate after-school activities, were given special training in innovative didactic methods (printing, photographic language, theater productions). Collaboration with the regular teachers, however, proved difficult, as the latter viewed the after-school activities to be in conflict with the schooling provided during regular school hours; they criticized the municipal doposcuola as being highly politicized. In any case, these after-school activities anticipated the introduction of the full-school day (Il Tempo Pieno) that was to follow a few years later (Rosselli, 1986). Since 1970-71 the local administration has also been responsible for introducing the teaching of a foreign language in elementary schools, an initiative that predated the Ministerial directive issued a few years later.

With regard to pre-school education, by 1976 Piombino had four private kindergartens run by nuns (two of which had special arrangements with the factories) and three municipal schools (the latter, all in the surrounding countryside, instituted in 1973). Meanwhile, given the antagonism between a conservative state and communist administrations, the municipal governments headed by the PCI often

preferred to run their own kindergartens even though, according to a 1968 law, they could apply for the institution of state pre-school education. Illustrative of this climate is a debate that took place in 1976 in a Piombino's town council. On this occasion, Christian Democratic councilmen castigated the local (PCI-dominated) administration for failing to request the establishment of local state-run kindergartens. One DC councilman cited the PCI administrator in charge of education as saying that he had no desire to see the kindergartens fall into the hands of "the representative of coercion," i.e., the teachers of state schools. A second DC councilman lamented that "apart from purely nominal pronouncements to the contrary, all previous administrations in Piombino have demonstrated their anti-state fury [my emphasis]" (AMP, Registri delle Deliberazioni Consiliari, Delibera #85, 23 January 1976). As this reconstruction and the above statement reveal, the 1970s were years of change and a particular type of activism that often pitted a conservative state against communist municipalities.

The Turmoil of the 1970s and the PCI in the "Area of Government"

In the latter half of the 1970s, Italy's economy, like others in Europe, plunged into recession which gave rise both to inflation and mass unemployment. Public spending, both in response to the social needs created by the recession and as a consequence of the expansion of the welfare state initiated in the early 1970s, increased massively, however.

The announcement of the PCI's "historic compromise" with the governing parties, a strategy first put forward in 1973, brought the Communists to the foreground of Italian politics after decades of relative eclipse.[13] The labor movement in turn was forced on the defensive from

1973-76 as a result of the economic crisis and the PCI's new accommodationist stance. Direct participation by workers in the elaboration of labor strategies, which had characterized the late 1960s and early 1970s, gave way to increasingly centralized decision-making. Nonetheless, despite some retrenchment, labor remained strong, especially in the Center and the North.

The social and political situation became less volatile, though the social movements were not yet in retreat. The New Left lost some of its originality, as organizational structures became more rigid and leader-centered. Meanwhile, some new formations, such as the Red Brigades (founded in 1970) rejected the accommodationist position symbolized by the "historic compromise" and ultimately turned to armed struggle. The mid-70s saw the emergence of a growing network of clandestine groups. Although vigorous police action resulted in the imprisonment of most Red Brigade leaders by 1974, the organization was rebuilt by new cadres who contributed, with the kidnaping of DC leader Aldo Moro in 1978, to derailing the "historic compromise."[14]

The rise of Euro-communism signaled the possibility for a socialist project in the Mediterranean, a possibility that generated international disquiet. In the administrative elections of 1975, the Italian Left polled 47% of the vote while the government of six Italian regions fell into the hands of PCI-PSI coalitions. The United States and some of its Western allies, alarmed at the prospect of PCI participation in the Italian government and access to NATO secrets, warned Italy's other political leaders in no uncertain terms of possible US reprisals.[15] The 1976 political elections thus took place in an atmosphere that resembled that of the 1948: the voters gave the DC 38.7% and the PCI 34.4%.[16]

After the 1976 election, the PCI pushed the "historic compromise" with renewed vigor, despite the reservations held by many on the Left of cooperating with the DC. Between August 1976 and January 1979, during the period of "national solidarity," Italian communists entered "the area of government" by supporting the government from the outside. However, the period between 1976 and 1978 was marked by the organizational growth and escalation of red terrorism, which found an easy terrain for recruitment following the dissolution of most New Left formations in these years.[17] The most notorious terrorist act was of course the March 1978 kidnaping and subsequent murder of Aldo Moro. More killing followed in 1979 and 1980.

During the period of "national solidarity," the PCI became a staunch defender of the state, firmly on the side of law and order. Such behavior was considered necessary by the leadership and some rank and file in order to establish the PCI's "credentials" as a party of government; however, many militants became disillusioned with the party's new role on the side of "order." Meanwhile, it was becoming evident that the historic compromise, which many rank and file had criticized all along, had brought the party few benefits, as the DC used collaboration with the PCI to govern "as usual."

During the same years (1976-79), the trade union leadership contributed to the demobilization of the labor movement by entering into a neo-corporatist pact with the employers' association and the government in order to salvage what they could of prior gains and stem the decline of the national economy.[18] In 1980, after it had become apparent that the neo-corporatist strategy had not paid off, a showdown between the unions and FIAT caused by the company's announcement of mass lay-offs led to 34 days of strike, leaving the labor movement

wounded and badly divided. For militant workers an era had come to a close. One FIAT worker and union delegate, an immigrant from the South who had come to Turin in the 1960s, summarized this epoch of struggle in an October 1980 speech to hundreds of workers:

> Back in '69 it was the beginning, now it's the end . . . I was an immigrant who came from the South, from the countryside like so many others. I couldn't have put two words together if you'd paid me. . . . I wouldn't have dreamed of being able to make a political speech. Do you think FIAT's going to keep somebody like me in the factory? . . . But at least I've got the satisfaction of going out in style, and I'm proud of all the struggles that I've taken part in, quite apart from the fact that the bosses will never take me back. (Ginsborg, 1990:405).

By the time the PCI leadership backed away from the "historic compromise" and launched "the alternative of the Left" in Spring 1979, it was too late. The PSI was now going its own way, gaining momentum and preparing a new version of the center-left strategy. New trends had set in, as an era came to a close. It had been a decade during which so many people had given their time and energies to politics and collective action. Now the disruption created by terrorism and the disillusionment with the "historic compromise" led to a retreat into private life, known in Italian as il riflusso.

Finally, Italian secondary schools in the second part of the 1970s were undergoing a process of transition. According to the teachers interviewed for this study, the last cohort of politicized students left the schools through graduation around 1975. Many consider this to be a time during which teaching standards and the educational process degenerated. Students' identities were no longer shaped by the experiences and sensibilities that had left such an imprint on previous cohorts. The students beginning their secondary education in 1975 had been born in 1961 and thus had no memories of the hard life and

political polarization of the 1950s. By the time they reached maturity at the end of the 1970s, the social and political climate was one in which social movements had ebbed while the ravages of terrorism had transformed the PCI into a self-proclaimed "party of law and order." Consumerism and higher incomes, even among the working classes, had become a reality: their impact was incomparably greater than the early consumerism of the 1960s. Furthermore, since the mid-1970s, the diffusion of illegal drugs had become a serious problem that reached down into the secondary schools.

The Italy of the 1980s would be very different, a world in which Italian business flourished in a period of rapid economic recovery. In the new decade, political stability would be assured by a series of socialist-led governments and effective repression of terrorism. The 1980s are heralded as an era of upward mobility and new prosperity, dual income families, second and third jobs, and an accelerated spread of consumerism. For many, this represented a "second economic miracle."

In concluding this chapter, I wish to reiterate two points. The first goes back to the origin of the student movement and the intellectual influences and inspirations that shaped it. In particular, I wish to emphasize the role played by Catholic dissent and "Christian socialism" in the mobilization of the 1970s and the radicalization of youth not immersed in the socialist and communist political subcultures. Indeed, one needs to recognize the convergence of similar impulses for greater social justice that emanated from a socially engaged Catholicism and the communist-socialist world. While, American anthropologists such as David Kertzer (1980) have focused attention on the parallel yet separate ritual universes of "Comrades" and "Christians," the common attributes of these two worlds--the "religious," emotive visions rooted in

the quest for social justice and "redemption" of both radical Catholicism and Communism--have been neglected. As my reconstruction of events in Piombino bears out, this convergence is crucial to an understanding of the social process during these years in its internal articulation. For that matter, this convergence also influenced Italian left terrorism, some of whose leaders came from milieus deeply influenced by the missionary zeal ingrained in Catholic "populism".

The second point concerns the 1970s as a time marked by conflict and educational fervor. During these years "education" was a socialized experience, while the pursuit of "knowledge" by workers, women and students was considered a weapon that could be used to gain more freedom. Yet, militant educational initiatives were also beset by difficulties and contradiction. The doposcuola movement did not manage to mobilize parents or democratize the school. Furthermore, both the experience of the doposcuola groups and the "150 hours" worker education program were marked by the tension between two visions of education: one a remedial approach, the other a class empowerment strategy. This dynamic, which resembles the swing of a pendulum, speaks to the heart of the dilemma, precluding facile idealism but also hyper-realistic resignation.

NOTES

1. This statement was made by the Christian Democrat Emilio Colombo at the DC National Council in January 1969.

2. As mentioned earlier, this political formation was founded in 1968 by Communist parliamentarians expelled from the PCI following their criticism of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

3. The solution proposed by the Group--both anti-reformist and utopian--was to abolish schooling as we know it, i.e., as a body separate from society that slots people into hierarchical roles (Chiosso, 1977).

4. Groups, such as those which had sprung up in Florence, that identified the "school problem" as an integral part of working-class struggle mushroomed throughout the country in these years.

5. In Fall 1969 the Doposcuola groups active in Florence put together a book with didactic aids and discussions of their experiences: these materials were distributed both throughout Tuscany and in other regions in an effort to solicit the involvement of new activists in the Doposcuola movement. This resulted in the establishment of some 15 new Doposcuola groups during the 1969-70 school year within the municipal boundaries of Florence alone. By the end of 1969, the movement called Scuola e Quartiere was putting out a bulletin and had established a didactic center to publicize its activities. Similar groups formed in several other cities, such as Rome, Naples, Milan and Turin. The period 1970-71 was marked by the discovery and adoption of theater children's productions wherein children served as script writers and performers. This experience proved to be a valuable didactic instrument that helped the doposcuola escape the straightjacket in which they had placed themselves (Incatasciato, 1975).

6. However, in Florence these groups could claim partial success when in 1970 a grassroots initiative in one of the working-class neighborhoods involving the active participation of many parents demanded the construction of new school facilities and asserted the right of citizens to have a say concerning school services. In order to cut short this act of protest, the municipal government gave in to these demands and mobilization subsequently ebbed (Incatasciato, 1975).

7. Following the 1968-69 strike wave, labor organizations became more autonomous from the parties with which they were affiliated: this facilitated the federation in 1972 of some sectors of ideologically opposed union confederations. A notable development during this time was the radicalization of the Catholic labor confederation (CISL), which at times seemed more revolutionary than its communist counterpart (CGIL). Indeed, the Catholic metalworkers' union (FIM) even began to espouse a version of revolutionary syndicalism. A similar phenomenon occurred in France in the wake of May 1968 when the recently deconfessionalized CFDT (Confederation Française Democratique du Travail) moved progressively away from positions held by the centrist Christian Democrats and toward those advocated by the New Left (Shryock, 1983).

8. In 1973, 24.3% of the industrial workers in the North had a middle school certificate as did 19.3% of those in the Center but only 14.3% in the South.

9. It is worth citing from an article that deals specifically with this issue:

> The owners' and managers' concept of production and organization--"aimed at separating duties in order to create gaps between the different jobs"--is met with a strategy of struggle aimed not only at improving working conditions and creating ways to ensure that such improvements are carried out but above all at making the maximum effort to re-establish working-class unity at the factory level. The strike actions of 1972-73 began a tendency to reject the contradictory effects of the technological evolution of the production process and the division into categories of labor and, at the same time, to call into question management criteria for promotion based on criteria taking only the interests of productivity into account. At this time a new series of struggles began [which were] aimed at getting a single job category introduced in the factory. The purpose [was]. . . to create a new collective dimension for work and re-emphasize the essential contradiction that exists between those who make the decisions and those who have to carry them out. . . . In fact, an aspiration, albeit a long-term one, still exists to close the gap between manual and intellectual work. The demand for a single category for shop-floor and office staff entails developing an overall vision of school and educational reform which is itself unified and all-embracing. Fundamentally this would mean a re-thinking of the relationship between education and technological development, between schooling and job preparation (Taliani, 1977:191-2).

10. An informal agreement had been reached in May 1973 between the unions and the government with respect to the workers' right to study; discussions soon followed on how best to utilize state schools for the courses. Both the Ministry of Education and the employer association tried to derail the reform from the outset. The Ministry wanted to limit the number of courses offered and dictate rules about the type of materials that could be used, while the employers wanted to limit workers' right to draw on the pool of study hours at their own discretion. One major point of contention concerned who would have the right to enroll in these courses: the government wanted to limit access to these courses only to employed workers whereas the unions insisted that "weaker" social categories--housewives, the unemployed and artisans--must also be given access. Opening up these courses to marginal groups was of crucial importance to the unions, as they wanted to use the courses to help bridge the gap between occupational and hierarchical categories and to politicize those groups normally outside politics (Taliani, 1977: 179-180).

11. The information included here is based on interviews with four teachers who, at different times, taught in the "150 hours" courses. Not having interviewed any participants in these courses, I cannot render a definitive assessment of the role played by this educational experience

in the lives of workers-students. For one thing, we need to know how many of those who participated were native to Piombino and how many were recent immigrants. Preliminary examination of enrollment rosters indeed indicates that many participants were not born and raised in Piombino. Yet even cursory analysis reveals that this experience displayed many contradictory elements that echoed an age-old problematic in workers' education programs. Historically, workers education program have been beset by the type of ambiguities and problems described here: in the latter part of the 19th century, for example, the German Social Democratic Party was compelled to set up remedial education for workers in response to the existing demand even though German socialists viewed this as neither a priority nor their responsibility (Fraulenbach, 1987). Furthermore, the debate around "popular versus workers education" shows the gap between theory and practice and the difficulty of keeping workers (political) education totally separate from "popular" (remedial) education (ibid.).

12. School districts, which did not exist prior to this law, represent a new geographic sub-division that encompasses a number of contiguous areas sharing certain socio-economic characteristics. They sometimes overlap with the economic-geographic subdivision known as comprensorio created by a 1976 Regional law (constituted by a consortium of contiguous municipalities).

13. The "historic compromise" was predicated on the idea that the three major democratic parties--the PCI, DC and PSI--had to find common ground in order to confront the country's pressing socio-economic needs and counter threats to democracy emanating from the far left and far right. The PCI took seriously the possibility of a right-wing coup given the reactionary nature of part of the Italian establishment and the connivance that existed between the latter, the secret services and fascist terrorist organizations. The historic compromise was also inspired by an ethical vision of austere collectivism and solidarity on which the Catholic and communist morality could converge.

14. The kidnaping of a Genoa judge in 1974 brought the Red Brigades national notoriety and new recruits. Some former New Left militants (such as those from Potere Operaio) also passed into clandestinity about this time.

15. As Ginsborg recalls, "on June 14, Time magazine put Berlinguer on its cover under the title: 'Italy, the Red Menace'" (1990:375).

16. The election demonstrated clearly that: 1) fearing the advance of the Left, the ceti medi rallied behind the DC so that this party might maintain its grip on the state; 2) the PCI benefited from the 1968-76 mobilizations even though the party had not been actively involved in propelling them forward. The increased vote for the PCI also seemed to indicate that it was beginning to win the legitimacy it so strongly desired from a broader sector of the population.

17. With the dissolution of New Left formations, the highly politicized youth of the late 1970s found themselves in a political vacuum. In the major cities of the North as well as in Rome and Naples, a loose federation of collectives (known as Autonomia Operaia) advocating violent action

stepped in to fill this vacuum: joining the Autonomia was often just one step away from recruitment into a terrorist group. Meanwhile, the Red Brigades recovered from the police repression that had almost destroyed their organization in 1974. By 1976, the Red Brigades had operative "columns" in Milan, Turin, Genoa, Rome and the Veneto. In 1976, the Red Brigades and other terrorist groups killed eight people and wounded 16; in 1977, they killed seven and wounded 40. Police officers, magistrates and journalists were their main targets (Ginsborg, 1990:ch.10).

18. In these years, known in Italian labor history as la svolta dell'EUR, the union leadership accepted a curb on wage-increases and acquiesced to the principle of flexibility in exchange for safeguards against layoffs and promises of increased investment in the South. In this case, too, the meager benefits resulting from this bargain did not seem to justify the labor acquiescence and demobilization that the unions' actions help bring about.

CHAPTER NINE

INTERPRETING SILENCE: CLASS AND GENDER IN THE EDUCATIONAL MEMORIES OF WORKING-CLASS WOMEN

> I have often reflected [on the problem of sexual differentiation] although I did so only late in life, when feminism was almost over. I have often felt that it was odd [that I came to this only late in life], yet, after all, during 1968, which was certainly [our] most fundamental experience from a political standpoint, the awareness of sexual difference did not really manifest itself [my emphasis].
>
> —Maurizia (b. 1945, Piombino), attended the scientific high school

In Piombino, women's economic activities were essentially confined to reproductive labor due to a local industrial economy so overwhelmingly based on the work of male wage earners. Here, I discuss the "place" of women in the local economy and society and trace the development of working-class women's schooling from fascism to the 1970s. I also briefly discuss the political role and activities of communist women, essentially directed at flanking the struggles of their husbands, fathers and brothers who worked in the factories. In particular, I emphasize the lack of a discourse underscoring women's gendered, separate identities, noting that such a discourse only clearly emerged with feminism during the 1970s.

In order to frame the memories of a few former female working-class students who pursued an academic education during the 1950s and 1960s, I consider several interpretative and methodological issues surrounding biographic interviews and oral accounts. In particular, I address the "construction of memory," the consciousness-shaping power of "discourse," and the dynamic relationship between education, class and politics in working- class Piombino. In this particular instance, the

object of interpretation is an absence of discourse, i.e. the failed thematization of the connection between educational aspirations and the desire to use educational achievement as a means to overcome female dependence and second-rate status, i.e. to avoid being trapped in a life characterized by frustration and "malaise" that evidently was rather common among older working-class women in this community.

Lastly, some of the pieces that make up my own identity and memory are shown to have intervened in the research process.

I. The Place of Women in Piombino

Piombino's industrial mono-culture provided almost no job opportunities for women. In the latter part of the 19th century some women and children worked in the steel plant under very exploitative conditions, and in the interwar period a limited number of women were employed in the tin plant in jobs that required precision and dexterity (believed to female attributes). Overall, however, the local economy created a population of working-class families supported by male wage-earners. Until the expansion of the service sector in the 1970s, very few occupations were open to working-class women: they could only find work as salesgirls in local stores, as seamstresses in an artisanal workshop, or as domestic help for middle-class families. Moreover, this kind of employment was usually a mere stopgap before marriage. Back-breaking factory work was resented by the handful of women who engaged in it and whose respectability as women was in jeopardy in a working-class community where the normal female role was that of housewife.[1]

Family routines, well-being and financial security revolved around the men's factory jobs; moreover, tension and anxieties within the family

were generated by the difficult working conditions the male wage-earners had to endure in the steel and tin plants and the ever-present threat of dismissal. Thus, factory work was the emotional center of families, and workers' struggles became family struggles.[2]

Women's lives inside the household were spent performing domestic chores, taking care of husbands, children and older relatives. Working-class households were not immune to family strife especially since, until the 1960s, the shortage of affordable accommodations forced most newlyweds to live with their in-laws (and sometimes with strangers). Relationships between the female members of the co-resident family units were often strained; muted or overt clashes between mothers and daughters-in-law over family decisions and day-to-day routines were pervasive.[3] Women's confinement to the role of housewife, their total reliance on men for economic support, and the tensions present in multiple-family households could have been responsible for many of the cases of anxiety and nervous breakdowns which I encountered among older women. All in all, the female interviewees born in the late 1940s and early 1950s conveyed problematic and potentially disquieting messages about growing up. The relationship with their mothers seemed laced with ambivalence: to me, it suggested the problematic nature of the "messages" that the roles and lives of an older generation of women communicated to a younger generation.

Piombino's Economy, Life Course and Education: The Mothers' Generation

Until after World War II, working-class girls rarely stayed in school past the elementary cycle.[4] As discussed in chapter 3, their trajectory was to be taken out of school and sent to learn embroidery and sewing. Nonetheless, some attended the commercial school established

in the early 1920s. At the time this was transformed into the Avviamento Commerciale in 1936-37, 74 girls (although not all from working-class families) were enrolled in this post-elementary three-year school (ASMSB/AC-CB, Anno Scolastico 1936-37). Moreover, by 1941-42, some 57 working-class girls were attending the industrial school established in 1938 (ASMSB/AI-AV, Anno Scolastico 1941-42). During the 1930s no girls from working-class families enrolled in the Gymnasium, even though about half of the male students came from the popular classes (ASMSF), reflecting a gender bias. Indeed, working-class girls would not attend either of the academic high schools until the 1950s.

The generation of women born in the 1920s and early 1930s are the mothers of the female interviewees born between 1942 and 1952. In their adolescent years, many working-class girls of this generation worked as apprentices with a tailor or a seamstress and hoped to marry a good provider, i.e., a worker with a skilled job employed in one of the two larger factories. During the inter-war period, a kind of "aristocracy of labor" had formed at the tin plant where a number of workers with backbreaking but highly specialized jobs earned a good wage. Thus, it had become customary for relatives to tell girls that they should marry someone employed at the tinworks; the "ritual" advice extended to young women was prendilo di Magona (literally, "take someone from the Magona plant").

The following accounts present the testimonies of two women (born in 1929 and 1926 respectively), and a cursory reconstruction of their life trajectories. Nara was born in 1929 in Piombino, the only girl and the third of four children. Her father, a socialist, worked in the tin plant. She attended elementary school at the height of fascism between

1935 and 1940. Her memories of school are filled with a sense of anxiety and malaise:

> I think we were repressed and terrorized. . . . The image I have of the teacher-pupil relationship is that of master and slave. . . . But of course, there were always some of the kids, "the earoles" who were the teachers' pets.

Nara remembered teachers being extremely authoritarian and unreasonable: for example, she recalled mistreatment and teachers' insensitive tirades with regard to children's clothes and school uniforms. In her own judgement, she was not a bright student; thus, she was happy when she did not have to go to school anymore after completing elementary education.

When Nara turned thirteen, her family apprenticed her to a dressmaker to learn sewing. Several young girls were at this shop to learn the trade and after a while were given "real" work to do. When after a few months she brought home "miserable" earnings, her older brother became so incensed at the thought of her being paid practically nothing for long hours of hard work that he convinced the family to stop sending her there.

In 1949, at the age of twenty, Nara married a worker employed at the steel-works and moved in with her in-laws. In 1952 she had a son. Her married life until 1964 was fraught with tensions and for a while she suffered from depression. At the root of her problems was her total lack of autonomy, privacy and authority within the household where all major decisions were made by her mother-in-law. Only in 1964, when her husband was assigned an apartment in the new housing built by the steel-works could she finally become her own "boss."

Not all women of this generation were reconciled with the minimal schooling they received. Some regretted having to quit school at the

end of the elementary cycle. The following account underscores the frustrations of working-class girls denied the chance to further their education due to the widespread parental view that any kind of post-elementary schooling was superfluous as far as girls were concerned.

Pina was born In Piombino in 1926. Her father, a socialist, worked in the tin plant. Her grandfather had come from Florence where he worked in another factory owned by the same company that held majority interest in the tin plant. She attended elementary school between 1932 and 1937 and made it through the fifth grade. Her strongest memory about school is one of regret. She was a bright student, "always one of the first of the class," who really loved to study and would have liked to continue. Her family, however, especially her father, did not deem it necessary. In the interview, Pina commented on this decision in the following way:

> When I asked them to enroll me in the commercial school, my father said that it would not be fair to favor me over my sister who was 2 years older and had quit school after the five years of elementary schooling. This, however, was an excuse, and not the real reason. My sister did not do too well at school; she did not like going to school and learning as I did. She did not care one way or the other, but I did; so it was not fair. The reason why they did not let me continue was not economic either. My father worked at the tin plant and for those times he had a good wage: besides, it was just my sister and me. . . . I think that the reason is that they did not care too much about educating us more than necessary [my emphasis] because we were girls.

Besides going to school, between the ages of seven and thirteen, Pina and her sister went every afternoon for three hours of "embroidery school" (scuola di ricamo). Her parents paid an embroidery teacher (maestra di ricamo) five lire a month to teach them this time-honored feminine craft. Pina and her sister were two of some 30 young girls and adolescents who, between two and five in the afternoon, learned all the various stitches while seated in a large room in the

instructor's house. At age fifteen Pina's sister went to work as a salesgirl in a bar. At fourteen Pina earned money wrapping candies for her sister's employer who owned several bars in town. After only a few months, her employer, impressed by Pina's dexterity and good disposition, offered her a job in his most exclusive establishment. Thus from 1940 until 1943, between the ages of 14 and 17, she worked from nine in the morning until eleven at night doing whatever tasks needed doing: working at the counter, cleaning and sweeping the floors, washing glasses and cups, and helping in the adjoining storage room where bottles, candies, and boxes of sweets were kept.

Pina, however, felt miserable at her job. The bar was frequented by engineers, factory managers and professionals. The fatigue associated with the long hours and the exceedingly bourgeois ambience (no doubt replete with fascist overtones) made the experience very disagreeable. She recalled that during the day she had to splash her face with cold water in order to snap out of the fatigue that often overcame her.

> I hated working there. . . . The only satisfaction was that the proprietor trusted me completely. I was so young, yet I had his total confidence. I had all the keys. . . . Only his wife and I had the keys. . . . I had a big responsibility, like an adult. . . it was even too much. I trusted them too: he told me that he was going to get me a work card and pay social security. . . . At that time, you took people's word so I thought he had insured me, only after I had worked there three years, did I discover that he had not done anything. . . . In 1945, after we came back to town (during the war, we had moved to the countryside), he would have taken me back. My parents wanted me to go back and work for him, but I begged them so much not to make me that in the end they gave in and I did not have to go back there. I resented so much having to work those many hours in an environment I so disliked that, afterwards, I often told myself that I would not want my children to have to work in similar conditions. I would do whatever I could to keep them away from that type of work.

Pina got married in 1948 and in 1949 and 1951 had two children whom I interviewed. All lived together with her parents and her sister's

family in a house that belonged to the tin factory until 1958. Both her father and brother-in-law worked at the tin plant, while her husband worked at the steel-works. In 1956, her sister's family migrated to Switzerland because her brother-in-law, a political militant, could not find work after he had lost his job in the shut-down of the tin plant in 1953. In 1958, the rest of the family (i.e. Pina's family and her parents) was evicted: for one year, Pina along with her husband and two children had to share a house with strangers before managing to find their own place.

Pina's daughter (b. 1949) attended the humanist high school from 1963 to 1968, went on to the university, and became a secondary school teacher. Her son (b. 1951) attended the scientific high school, studied medicine at the university, and became a well-respected doctor.

The Development of Girls' Education in the Post-war Period

During the postwar period, the enrollment of male students in the academic track was, as expected, higher than that of girls. By 1954-55, 192 boys attended the academic middle school as opposed to 139 girls: female enrollment thus represented 72% of male enrollment. However, as the enrollment figures for 1962 show, approximately the same number of boys and girls were in the vocational middle track, with girls concentrated in the avviamento commerciale and boys in the avviamento industriale.

During the 1950s, the available secondary schooling (14-19 age bracket) was limited to the upper-level commercial school (i.e., the scuola tecnica, a vocational two-year school "producing" low-level clerical personnel) and the two academic high schools. As gleaned from the interviews, working-class families proved more willing to invest in

the academic education of sons: a girl's opportunity for secondary schooling was often sacrificed without much thought so as to allow her brother to stay in school. However, in some cases, when girls demonstrated academic skills, families did support them financially and psychologically through school.

As to the roles that mothers and fathers respectively played in orienting the educational choices and trajectories of female children, the interviews revealed divergent scenarios. In some cases, mothers proved very supportive of their daughters' education: often, this attitude was connected to their own frustrated educational aspirations (as the previous account indicates). In other cases, fathers seemed more supportive of female children's education. Finally, sometimes girls got a chance to continue in their studies because teachers leaned hard on the parents, convincing them that their daughters' academic skills warranted the family sacrifice required to keep them in school.

However, as was the case for boys, the lack of secondary technical schools (which would not be established until 1958) hurt girls' chances of receiving any secondary education. Attending the academic high schools made sense only if one intended to go on to the university. Yet such a protracted trajectory was, for the majority of working-class girls, an unrealistic prospect. Alternatively, some working-class girls attended high school but either did not go on to the university or interrupted their university study after one or two years. For example, Carla (b.1942) had to sacrifice her university education when her family encountered financial trouble, requiring her to help out in the family bar. Nonetheless, a number of working-class women born between 1945 and 1952 attended the academic high schools and managed to complete their university studies.

By the early 1960s, Piombino would have a sufficient number of young women (some from working-class families) with a certificate from the upper-level commercial school (scuola tecnica) to fill the various clerical positions newly created by the re-organization of the steel-works. In 1958, with the establishment of the Technical Institute for Commerce (ITC), an additional educational option became available to women who wanted more than a brief vocational training preparing them for low-level clerical jobs. The local market for female labor, however, remained extremely limited until the 1970s. In 1962, out of an active population of 12,660, only 1,657 were women (13%): of these, 1207 (73%) were employed in the tertiary sector. Women holding a regular job constituted only 10% of the female working-age population, which meant Piombino had one of the lowest rates of female employment in Italy (CECA, 1963). Only with the accelerated expansion of the public and private tertiary sector in the 1970s did female employment opportunities increase significantly.

Communist Women in Piombino: Self-Images and Politics

When analyzing women's roles and self-images in Piombino, one must acknowledge the cultural-ideological influence exerted by the local economy within which women were essentially home-makers, a condition referred to in Piombino as casalingato (literally "the house-wife condition"). In some cases, women viewed their confinement to home-making favorably and considered their condition to be less exploitative or alienating than working for a boss. Yet, as mentioned, the lives and identities of working-class women in Piombino were fraught with tensions and discomfort.

The casalingato had an ideological corollary in the working-class respectability "syndrome," according to which in a respectable working-class family the wife did not have to perform menial work outside her home (such as domestic service) or work in one of the few factory jobs open to women. Indeed, the ideology of "working-class respectability" played a significant role in the shaping of dispositions, as underscored by some of the female interviewees born in the 1940s and 1950s who pointed to their mothers' ambivalence about women's work outside the home. As one stated: "for the women in my mother's generation, quitting work upon marriage was a sign of dignity and family prestige." In some cases this influenced the younger generations, but by the 1970s it would be effectively counterbalanced by the expansion of employment opportunities for women and by the new prominence that the media and political discourse accorded to women's demands for autonomy, independence and equality.

With regard to the role that Piombino's working-class women played in local politics, one has to underscore that even communist women failed to hold political office either in the local administration or the party, although they did play important ancillary roles. Not all women in communist families became involved in political activities nor did all the wives of PCI members join the party. Indeed, I encountered a few women (especially among the older generation), in which the wives of socialist or communist male militants (who in Piombino tended to be atheists) were churchgoers and totally uninvolved in politics. However, in most cases women's loyalty was to the class struggle: after all, their lives and livelihoods were tied to the factories and the wage-system.

Most communist women in Piombino were not only members of the PCI but also of UDI (the Union of Italian Women).[5] UDI, an organization

of socialist and communist women founded in 1944 evolved into what was effectively a PCI-flanking organization during the 1950s. In Piombino, it always remained under the firm control of male party officials.

Through the years, the activities of the local UDI included running a "communist" kindergarten during the 1950s; mobilizing important contingents of wives, sisters and daughters to demonstrate side by side with the workers; carrying out the various campaigns that were periodically launched by the national headquarters in Rome; and distributing the organization's magazine Noi Donne. Piombino's UDI also mounted its own local campaigns: for example, in 1954 the organization issued a special membership card following the shut-down of the tin plant and the lay-off of hundreds of people. Stamped on the back of the card were the objectives being pushed in that year, i.e. the re-hiring of all male and female workers, the establishment of permanent embroidery and sewing classes, and the institution of medical dispensaries, day-care and doposcuola in the surrounding rural areas and the more peripheral sections of Piombino.

Throughout the 1950s, "women's emancipation" for UDI essentially meant women's participation in politics but "did not involve potentially divisive sex-related issues" (Repetto Alaia, 1985:5). Although the 1953 UDI Congress called for women's "right to work," abolition of discriminatory legislation and the revision of the family code, only in 1959 did the issue of women's emancipation clearly emerge as UDI's political line. Between 1959 and 1963 the organization contributed to the push for new anti-discriminatory labor legislation. In 1963-64, it asserted the autonomous character of the "woman's question" (as distinct from class analysis). However, during the rest of the 1960s, effective action and further analytical elaboration along a "feminist"

emancipatory line was impeded by the divisions that raged within the Left (with the socialists in the government and the PCI at the opposition). Thus, UDI failed to develop a critique of patriarchy; instead, it focused on the need for social reforms in a piece-meal, issue-by-issue approach that obscured the fundamental question of gender inequality and sexual antagonism (Repetto Alaia, 1985).

If, on the one hand, it proved impossible for UDI to come up with a convincing platform of objectives and demands based on a gender analysis of society, on the other hand, the shift toward asserting the autonomy of the "woman's question" with respect to the class issue alarmed the PCI and caused leadership realignments within the organization. At the local level, Piombino's UDI seems to have been very conservative, closely allied with the PCI and serving as a "transmission belt" for the party.[6] This meant deflecting attention from the "autonomous character of the woman's question," insisting instead that emancipation meant women's participation in the class struggle. The situation would eventually change in the 1970s when UDI, both at the national and local level, collided with the emerging feminist movement and underwent a sea-change.

The 1970s: The New Gendered Discourse

The first feminist collectives that grew out of the student movement attempted to combine a class analysis with a critique of patriarchy, resulting in an anti-capitalist critique of the family. Some groups focused on sexuality; others mounted a campaign demanding "wages for housework." The demand for free contraception and liberalization of abortion became the major rallying cry for the myriad of groups mushrooming across the country in 1974-1975. Women from

New Left organizations began to join the feminist movement en masse. The first major feminist demonstration took place in Rome in December 1975 when 20,000 women marched in the streets of the capital.

Italian feminism was closely connected to the Left, as the overwhelming majority of feminists were either members or sympathizers of left parties and New Left formations. At the same time, the movement was criss-crossed by division and differences, both ideological and geographical. The issues that mobilized feminists everywhere included abortion, women's health and self-help: centers were established in every city and town at which militants provided information and help on matters of contraception and sexuality as well as gynecological exams and instruction in self-help techniques. In 1975, a feminist organization affiliated with the libertarian Radical Party gathered 800,000 signatures for a referendum to repeal the existing punitive abortion legislation. Some 50,000 women demanding decriminalization of abortion demonstrated in Rome in April 1976: a (somewhat restrictive) abortion law passed two years later, despite heated opposition from the Church.[7]

Feminist collectives became active within the unions, and feminist teachers used the "150 hours" as vehicles of communication. In these years, Italian women of all ages would discover the needs and contradictions, discrimination, moralism and frustrations that had previously been unarticulated because women lacked a "language" through which they could be expressed.[8] This was the time of women, a phase in Italian history during which institutional frameworks were modified in the pursuit of female emancipation. The institutional overhaul reflected women's changing roles in Italian society and the forging of new female identities. Female employment rose steadily during the 1970s, especially in the expanding service sector. In the period between 1970

and 1985 the number of female employees registered a 50% increase. The changing place of women in Italian society and the new spirit were reflected in the 1975 passage of a new family law promoting equality between spouses and moving substantially away from the traditional conservative family ideology based on the husband's authority.

As in other industrial societies, "feminism" became an "issue" within the New Left formations that sprang up in the early 1970s. In Piombino, two feminist collectives formed between 1974 and 1975: most of their members were militants of the extra-parliamentary Left. As elsewhere, in these collectives, the discussions and consciousness-raising focused on sexuality and the relationship with men, with activities centered on making birth control and abortion more accessible. From the very beginning, these new feminist groups clashed with the local UDI, as they were separated by a generational, social and political gap. Most feminist militants were students or young women with at least a secondary education; politically, they identified with the New Left and looked at the PCI with some disdain.

II. Interpreting Silence

The remainder of this chapter takes up the interviewees' "silence" with respect to the ways in which female students educational aspirations were connected to their gendered self-images and "desires." The attitudes underlying the relationship to learning among the women of this generation, their school socialization and the motivations informing the pursuit of an academic education seemed overwhelmingly shaped by their identities as members of the working class.[9] As mentioned above, the "silence" concerning the connection between the gendered identities of the interviewees and education became

increasingly apparent to me as I reviewed my study. Indeed, while I had expected the experience of class to be the dominant theme, I also anticipated that female students would talk about the kind of women that they wanted to become and the kind of lives that they wanted to have as women. When these "themes" failed to surface, I began to ask myself what this meant.

I contend that this silence be approached as a problem of interpretation. We need to ask what it tells us about the relationship between experience, consciousness and memory. In substantive terms, this part of the chapter touches on the larger question of the reciprocal relationship between class and gender identities. A close reading of the interviews discussed here suggests that the respective salience of class and gender shifts in relation to the frame of reference (education in this case). The "silence" in the women's autobiographic accounts can be understood and interpreted only by piecing together the context in which these women lived--a context made up of practices and material conditions as well as discourse.

The interviews with three women from working-class families who attended the middle school (scuola media) and academic high school (liceo) during the 1950s and the 1960s eloquently highlight the forces that shaped the attitudes of women and their families toward education. Indeed, the excerpts (parts of which are cited elsewhere in the thesis) leave little doubt as to the central role that the experience of class difference played in their school socialization. The salience of the class issue is such that it seems to overwhelm the memory circuit, at least as far as the relationship to education and schooling is concerned.

1. Marina

Marina (b.1950) attended the humanist high school (liceo classico) in 1964-69. Her father, a worker, held jobs in the tin plant and in a number of smaller firms; her mother, a housewife, worked intermittently as a cleaning woman; her brother (b.1939) and sister (b.1945) attended technical/vocational schools. Both her father and brother have been long-time communist militants. During the course of the interview, Marina talked about her family's attitudes toward education:

> One reason why they wanted me to study was that education could help me get a better job than my father had. The idea was that education improved your prospects not so much in terms of social promotion in a strict sense but rather in terms of a better life. . . so you would not have to work in the factory, breathe that horrible dust, and, yes, could also earn more. . . . .Those were times when people earned little money. . . . In essence, the attitude was that you just needed to study, to know things. One must learn because knowing things is useful in life and because you should not be a dullard. . . . For my mother, getting an education meant being able to speak more graciously and being better able to make yourself understood. For my father, the objectives were also political. You went to school and studied to be able to combat the dominant politics and overcome the [working-class] condition. For my father, education clearly represented an instrument of class emancipation.

Asked how she and her family decided what secondary school she would attend, she explained:

> In my specific case, I did not myself choose to go to the liceo classico. It was my brother who decided that I should attend. My parents were more inclined to send me to a technical institute, but my brother insisted that I go to the liceo because it was a better school. . . . It was the school of the bourgeoisie, but he said it was time for proletarians to go there too.

Marina characterized the experience in high school as follows:

> The principal of the liceo was an extremely authoritarian woman; her authoritarianism was rooted in her fascist sentiments, everybody knew it. . . . She pampered the children of the rich and the professionals. In my time, there were two tracks at the liceo. In track A they put the children of the bourgeoisie and white-collar workers and for

> two years they hammered home to those of us who were in the other track that they [those in track A] were clever, more diligent. . . . As a result, we hated those poor devils.

2. Loriana

Loriana (b. 1949), the daughter of Pina whose life trajectory is retraced above, attended the humanist high school between 1963-68. Her first-hand experience of the town's class politics was brought home by the circumstances that led to her uncle's family emigrating to Switzerland after being fired by the tin plant because of his party and union militancy. During the first eight years of her life, she grew up in a multiple family household (with her maternal grandparents and her aunt's family) in which, except for her father, all the family members were communist militants. The following excerpt from a long three-part interview illustrates her precocious familiarity with books and her eagerness to learn:

> Since I was very young I have always read a lot. I read everything. . . . I read all the books in my uncle's house library: I remember the novels of Zola, Sue, Hugo. . . . When I was 7 or 8 my father took me to the municipal library, and from that day on I became a regular patron. My parents bought me the cheap editions of the classics (Jack London, Salgari,. . . .) at the weekly market. I still have some of those books. I liked going to school and I have always known that I wanted to continue studying. . . . My family did not discourage me. As far as our education was concerned, they did not differentiate between my brother and me. [Loriana's brother, who is two years younger, attended the liceo scientifico].

An account of her experience in the middle school, which she attended between 1960-63, leaves little doubt as to the salience of social difference in the school socialization of this cohort:

> In the middle school, social difference was experienced as matter-of-fact, not as a conflict. This is at least how I remember it. My class was made up, for the most part, of the daughters of Piombino's professionals and managers of the local industries. Thus, I found myself in a class where all the other girls were of higher social standing than I. In this sense, I was plagued because I have always found

> myself in classes where I inevitably was very isolated. Meritocracy has done this to me.

When it was time to decide what kind of studies to pursue, Loriana did not have any doubt: she knew she wanted to go to the humanist high school. She knew that this was the best and the most prestigious school, though choosing it had certain costs:

> At the liceo, I was once again the only worker's daughter. At that time, there were two tracks, and I was with the elites in track A. The overwhelming majority were women, with only a few male students. I was completely isolated. During the first three years, I lived my social difference and my family's socio-economic condition as a personal inferiority. I felt so isolated in my class that I looked for friendship and contact with the students in the other classes. . . . The climate in the school was very authoritarian. The school principal was a closed-minded and parochial woman. She was ridiculously patriotic, harboring a nostalgia for fascism. We had to listen continuously to her preaching and reprimands. Her favorite sermon was: behave yourself and remember that you will be tomorrow's ruling class [classe dirigente]. Girls had to wear a black uniform and their appearance was subject to her scrutiny.

3. Maurizia

Maurizia (b. 1945) attended the scientific high school (liceo scientifico) between 1958 and 1963. Her father was a tailor who had been a member of the communist party since before the war. The social cleavages and the hardships of the 1950s, constituting the backdrop of her formative years, left a mark on her life and memory. The wave of massive layoffs in the 1950s, which dramatically reduced working-class purchasing power, combined with the advance of the garment industry put her father out of business. In 1955 he was forced to move his family to the nearby island of Elba for a year, where he hired himself out to a clothing store as an alterer.

Maurizia recalled that her father acted as mentor and guide in learning:

> My father pushed me to study not so much to improve my job prospects but rather to know more. . . . Right after the book Cuore, he gave me a selection of Gramsci's Letters from Prison: it must have been for my 10th or 11th birthday. . . . At 11 or 12, I was reading Balzac and Hugo. . . . My father had these books at home along with the various [classic] Marxist texts.

Talking about her experience in the middle school between the ages of 10 and 13 (where she was one year ahead of her classmates), she recounted her malaise in no uncertain terms:

> I felt miserable throughout the years in the elementary and middle school [age 5-13]. I felt very repressed. Yes, I was small for my age and a year younger. . . but most of all it was the school. You know, the middle school then [1955-58] was still the school of the bourgeoisie and haute bourgeoisie. On the other hand, social differences and the discrimination which I discovered at school were a stimulus to do more, to learn, to affirm myself. Nonetheless, I felt miserable.

When it came to deciding what secondary school to attend, she explained:

> The liceo classico was out of the question as I had been so miserable in the middle school because of the social dynamic and the whole school environment where I could not make any friends. Thus, the liceo classico which was the school of the elites was not even considered because I did not want to find myself in the same type of environment. . . . I liked literature and history; thus the liceo scientifico represented a compromise: the social milieu of this school was more mixed and [the curriculum] was not as narrow as that of a technical institute.

As to the impact of the town's political culture on this cohort's outlook, when asked what had been determinant in the formation of her political identity, Maurizia answered:

> I think that what proved crucial for me, as for many others, was that our life experience, our experience of struggle, and our experience within the family was absorbed, almost internalized as culture. [As a result] we did not feel a sense of class inferiority but actively confronted a situation which [objectively] could have put us at a disadvantage from the point of view of class relations. [my emphasis][10]

The Puzzle of Silence

In these interview excerpts, class issues and the experience of social difference constitute the central leitmotif. On the surface, the motivations, structure of feeling and forces that lay behind the pursuit of an academic education were the same for these women as for men. As I have already underscored, I was puzzled when the interviewees did not thematize the relationship between gender and education. It was clear that the younger women had witnessed the frustrations of their mothers' experience; in some cases, in serving as their mothers' and grandmothers' confidants, they had been initiated into a world of female tribulation and resentment. Why then this "discursive" reaction on the part of my female working-class interviewees? I expected their accounts to indicate that at some point they turned to education as a way to avoid being trapped in a mold of "womanhood" in which self-pity and frustration were so often a part of the "package." When this theme did not emerge, I asked myself what this "silence" meant. Could it be that, contrary to what I had surmised, these women did <u>not</u> experience "tensions" in their gender identities or was it rather that their class experience was so overwhelming as to overload their conscious memory?

This puzzle proved to be a major stumbling block for me, particularly as a female researcher: on the surface, everything and anything in the way these women related to schooling and learning seemed to be about class, while gender remained inconsequential. I was troubled because such a finding seemed extremely superficial and simplistic; as I grew more and more uncomfortable, I started to think that there had to be something wrong either in the way I had conducted the interviews or in the way that I was looking at the "problem."

However, as the process of piecing together the context advanced, I resisted giving into the appearance that gender-identification and difference had not played any substantial role in educational aspirations among these working-class women and instead began to look at this "silence" as a problem of interpretation. At the same time, I tried not to lose sight of the limits set by the research-bound interaction. In the end, I came to view the absence of discourse as an invaluable source of information and crucial signifier.

The Meanings of "Silence:" Interrogating the Context

Interpreting this "silence" requires that the subjects be situated within the specific context of family relations in which they were brought up. In this regard, the interview excerpts clarified that these three women's educational chances were not sacrificed to favor a male sibling. Nor did family situations foster a competitive relation between them and their brothers or instill in them any sort of inferiority complex. Thus, we are not dealing with the typical dynamics often at the origin of the consciousness of gender inequality and discrimination in the lives of female children and young girls. On the other hand, this is not the only experience leading to tensions and conflicts in a girl's self-image. Indeed, the mother-daughter relationship is often the source of a conflict-fraught process of gender-identification. Reading through the interview transcripts, I gleaned sufficient indication that these particular women did not like what they saw when they looked at their mothers: the prospect of replicating their mothers' lives and personhood was both troubling and unappealing. Indeed, the accounts make specific reference to a complex, problematic relationship between mothers and

daughters, fraught with feelings of guilt and resentment. The following excerpt provides an eloquent example:

> I lived the relationship with my mother with a sense of guilt because I had taken my father as my point of reference. I jumped at the emancipatory prospects my father opened up for me. I saw my mother as a repressed individual. I remember hearing my mother complain to my father about the possibilities that I was being offered. I felt guilty because I followed the prospects given to me by my father. My mother reacted out of envy, which I understood only later. For my part, I experienced my intellectual relationship with my father as a betrayal of my mother. I had the impression that I was betraying her love. Only later did I understand that my mother's reaction was dictated more by envy than by fundamental opposition to my taking a different path. In any case, I was not interested in the type of life that my mother envisioned for me.

This testimony is paradigmatic in its acknowledgement of the problematic character of the mother/daughter relationship. The reference to the connection between her educational aspirations and her desire to become a different person than the woman she saw as her mother is oblique and presented almost casually, yet it is there. Thus, the problem of interpretation has taken a different turn, as "silence" is not a real silence but a "muted channel," a subterranean, disarticulated text. As reflected in the passages reproduced above, the experience of class and class difference and its articulation in memory is the organizing principle of these oral testimonies. In contrast, the connection between educational aspirations and the experience of a conflictual gender-identification is lost to the conscious reconstructions of experience.

The primacy of the experience of class difference as the organizing principle of memory is contingent upon the historical context. Thus, the latter must be scrutinized in order to understand the way in which social life transmutes itself into a structure of feeling which individuals carry within themselves. With respect to the question at

hand, scrutinizing the historical context, means situating the language of class and the language of gender in relation to each other. Finally, one must continue to bear in mind that the relationship between experience, consciousness and memory (expressed through oral accounts) is highly problematic: consciousness cannot be deduced from memory and, at least strictly speaking, experience cannot be deduced from either.

Piombino's historical context, steeped in socialist-communist traditions and the pre-eminence of factory life, characterized by hard work and oppressive conditions leaves no doubt as to the primacy of class experience. The political culture of this factory town, that on repeated occasions became inflammatory and insurrectionist, was a living presence in the childhood of my interviewees. Indeed, it is crucial not to lose from sight that the interviewees belong to the historical cohort that lived through the confrontations of the Cold War and the economic hardships of the 1950s. The three women whose school memories are reproduced here came from politicized families of modest economic means. In the wake of the politicization of young people which swept through the country after 1968, they became militants in New Left groups. As numerous oral historians have noted, the articulation of memory and the narrative structure is shaped by "social discourse" (Bodnar, 1989) and "the dominant and/or local and specific ideology" (History Workshop Editorial Collective, 1979:iii).

In this respect, there is little doubt that the discourse of class constituted an inescapable, material presence throughout the interviewees' childhood and adult lives. Furthermore, it was endowed with a double legitimacy, as it was a language (here discourse and "language" are used interchangeably) that could convey the meanings of subjective individual lives as well as articulate grievances and political

positions in the public arena. To paraphrase Sabean (1984), consciousness and memory are continually influenced by "arguments" over the common things of everyday life. But what about the "arguments" about gender that are also the staple of everyday life?

"The Language of Gender:" A Muted Channel

As I have shown in the previous section, the silence over the connection between gender-identification and educational aspirations cannot be dismissed as evidence of an absence of tension and/or conflict in the gender experience. Instead, the absence of a discourse linking educational pursuits and gender should be seen as resulting from a disarticulation of the consciousness and memory of that experience. Such disarticulation, in turn, is the outcome of a strong language of class and its overshadowing effect, on one side, and the absence of a public discourse of gender couched in emancipatory language, on the other. The words of one interviewee in fact point out the crucial relationship between the absence of "available language" and the weak presence of gender issues in the consciousness and memory of their experience.[11] Queried about gender relations in the school, the woman who above evoked the ambivalent relationship she had with her mother answered:

> I have often reflected [on the problem of sexual differentiation] although I did so only late in life, when feminism was almost over. I often felt that it was odd [that I came to this only late in life], yet, after all, during 1968, which was certainly [our] most fundamental experience from a political standpoint, the awareness of sexual difference did not really manifest itself. This came only later, in 1970 or 1972. . . . In my case, for example, since I was an only child and thus had no one else to compare myself to, I never felt any discrimination because I was a woman. [My parents] didn't tell me that I couldn't study because I was a woman but rather encouraged me. I received ample opportunity despite the fact that my family had some economic difficulties [my emphasis].

Two things stand out in this statement: 1) the acknowledgment that the context was not conducive to the emergence of a consciousness of sexual difference; and 2) the assertion that her parents supported her educational pursuit unconditionally, which partially contradicts her previous statement as to her mother's ambivalence regarding her higher education. These two points need to be commented upon in the light of the analysis laid out above.

The first point indicates that a discourse about "women's emancipation" and sexual difference did not emerge until the feminist movement came along in the 1970s. As already mentioned, women's as well as men's lives and livelihoods in this town revolved around the routines dictated by factory jobs. The prospects for a better life passed through class struggle for women as it did for men. Piombino's communist women--as mothers, daughters and sisters of workers--indeed performed a crucial flanking role in workers' struggles: they marched in demonstrations and were present at the factory gates to protest firings and political reprisals. The left women's organization UDI, which during the 1950s served essentially as a transmission belt and a flanking organization for the Communist Party, did not develop a "discourse" that helped women to get in touch with the contradictions that their "feminine" as well as working-class condition thrust upon them. Thus, there was no public language to articulate the tensions and the malaise experienced by working-class women as women. As a consequence, that experience remained muted and confined to "the private sphere," that world of subjectivity transmitted from mothers to daughters and women to other women through reciprocal confidences. Although the tensions and the malaise could be experienced and witnessed, the influence which these exerted on the gender identities of younger generations of women

proves to be more difficult to elicit than the legacy of class experience because the latter was also a discourse articulated in the public arena.

The second point concerns the apparent contradiction between the interviewee's statement that her family encouraged her educational pursuits and her earlier admission that her mother's feelings were profoundly ambivalent. This may be interpreted in a number of ways: the statement, by obliterating her mother's feelings, may signal that Maurizia looked only to her father for self-validation so that what counted was his judgement rather than that of her mother. Indeed, this is in part the scenario emerging from the passage reproduced in the previous section. The statement may also reflect a disarticulation of experience in her consciousness (and hence memory). Throughout the interviews, statements signaling the presence of a problematic gender-identity were typically fragmented and disconnected.

In order to explain such fragmentation and disconnectedness, one must also consider the topical interview context (i.e. education) and the psychological specificity of the discourse about gender as the language of subjectivity. Indeed, the absence of a public discourse of sexual difference and emancipation during the years when these women grew up cannot be invoked as the sole explanation for the lack of discursive elaboration on the experience of gender during the interviews. In effect, the topical framework of the interviews is more conducive to the evocation of class difference than gender difference in this town where a working-class discourse about education and the pursuit of knowledge as an instrument of class emancipation and empowerment was not only widely present but solidly ingrained in the political culture. Thus a <u>specific</u> language of class and class experience bearing on education was readily available to these women, while a language that made the

connection between education and their subjectivity as women had to be searched out in the recesses of their memory. In other words, the prominence of the class discourse has acted in this case as a hegemonic cultural code counterpoised to "the muted channel of women's subjectivity" (Anderson and Jack, 1991:11).[12] These interviews, however, do not show that class experience and the consciousness of class difference always came first in every aspect and every period of these women's lives. In other words, the respective salience of class and gender experience retrieved by memory shifts in relation to the frame of reference. The frame of education had its own results.

Finally, one must keep in mind that it is easier for people to talk about experiences that pertain to the public rather than the private domain of social life even when these are highly emotional and subjective, because they are already part of a socialized, public discourse. In contrast, it is much more difficult to reveal facets of one's own persona that would have to be expressed through the unmediated, naked language of subjectivity, for gender experience still largely belongs there. In other words, the disarticulation at the level of memory and consciousness may also stem from conscious or unconscious self-censorship and the reticence to reveal facets of one's own self that are considered too personal. Thus, despite the impact of feminism and despite the feminist battle cry that "the personal is political," the language of gender is either a "muted channel" or a reticent medium. Forever threatening to expose a person's vulnerability, the language of gender still needs to be freed from the embarrassment that comes from laying bare the "personal stuff" and the bruises in the experience of one's own gendered self. Thus, this does not constitute an easy subject for research-interviews, even when both interviewer and interviewee are

women. In Piombino, "class experience" offers less resistance than "gender experience" because the former is socialized in public, the subject of a substantial body of historical work about this town, its workers and militants. Thus, even when a good rapport has been established between researcher and informant/interviewee, the research-bound encounter is a limiting framework not especially conducive to the externalization of experiences and feelings that in the minds of individuals have been coded as "private." Indeed, in this working-class town (but not only here) the "stuff" that makes up "gender experience" is more the subject of confidences, confessions and psycho-analytic sessions than a subject for historical investigation.

This dynamic raises a question for the researcher who must consider the implications involved herein: the researcher can try to break the conscious or unconscious resistance of the research subject by repeated probing, by trying a more indirect approach or by switching gears and modifying the framework of the encounter from a research interview format to a more confessional mode. If the researcher chooses this course, he or she must stand by the implications of his/her action which entail a certain manipulation of the subject. Alternatively, one may choose to acknowledge and respect the subject's reticence as his/her rights to "privacy" and hence withhold whatever it is he/she is not prepared to reveal. Ultimately, one must satisfy one's own moral judgement of what is more important in the long run. As a third alternative, one might envision a different, more participatory research format where the subjects of oral history are made aware of the stakes and the implications of what they tell and what they censor. In this alternative, "the products of research" will have to be less an appropriation by the researcher and more of a process in which both

the researcher and the subject recognize themselves as co-authors. Whether this could be done within the framework of academic research is of course, a different issue.

To sum up, this chapter has attempted to show that the relationship between memory, consciousness and experience can be unraveled only through a contextualization of the lives of the subjects of biographic interviews and that the meaning of "silences" in oral historical accounts are likely to hide in the interstices of such a relationship. As Luisa Passerini suggests, "interpretation should be able to recognize the various levels of expression and eventually find through other sources, as well, the historical contexts wherein they make sense. The guiding principle could be that all autobiographical memory is true; it is up to the interpreter to discover in which sense, where, for which purpose" (Passerini, 1989:197).

Finally, in this chapter I have tried to articulate how my expectations have influenced the research process, by directing my attention to a missing theme and eventually leading me to look at this particular "silence" as a source of significant information. It was my own puzzling that led me to re-read and pay closer attention to the "texts" I had collected. It was by juxtaposing various parts of the interviews and by focusing on the complementarity of what is coded as "private" experience, on one side, and the available public discourses (the "text"), on the other, that I found an interpretive framework with which I could be satisfied.[13]

NOTES

1. This information has been elicited from biographic profiles of older generations of women collected as part of the background research.

2. The intertwining of women's lives with their husband's work experience is emphasized for example in Olson and Shopes (1991).

3. This information was elicited from interviews with the older generation of women, i.e. the mothers of interviewees belonging to the principal cohort.

4. Here I wish to briefly acknowledge the existence of a vast literature, which has emerged over the last 20 years, on the history of educational discrimination perpetrated against women (e.g., Spender, 1982; Ulivieri, 1992). This literature will not be referred to in the text as I focus on the local scene, but the testimonies, constraints and frustrated aspirations of the women that I interviewed are of course part of this collective and universal "story."

5. UDI was founded in 1944 by women belonging to different political organizations: the Communist and the Socialist parties, the Action Party and the Catholic Left. At the beginning, the networks of the various parties provided the channels for proselytizing among women, yet the organization's charter indicated that the issue of women's emancipation was to be pursued as a non-partisan issue. The most complete study of the history of this women's organization is UDI, Laboratorio di Politica delle Donne (Michetti et al, 1985).

6. In some areas UDI had more of a "transmission-belt" character than in others, due largely to the historical socio-economic circumstances determining the "place" of women and their self-images. At the national level, the UDI leadership was split between a group that saw UDI primarily as a flanking organization of the PCI and one that saw it as a autonomous women's organization of the Left.

7. The law that legalized abortion was passed in 1978: on some points the law was problematic due to a number of restrictions that it imposed on women undergoing abortion but it was viewed by most women in the movement as a victory nonetheless.

8. Only a few works on the Italian women's and feminist movements are available in English; one of the more recent is Bono and Kemp (1991). The information presented here comes from my secondary research and several (unpublished) papers that I have written over the years on the subject.

9. As to the nexus between education, gender relations and changes in women's identities, some studies (e.g., Piccone-Stella, 1979) and personal testimonies (e.g., Zaccaria, 1984) have stressed that the relatively extended educational trajectories of women born in the 1950s loomed large in their lives as an experience of emancipation. By and large, however, the sociological research based on a historical-cohort approach

has delineated differences in female identities, behavior and life-trajectories (fertility and marriage patterns, employment patterns, and the like) more in terms of outcomes than in terms of formative processes and "constructions" (e.g., Saraceno 1991).

10. This excerpt is slightly edited. Since it is one of the most important and clearest statements touching on the particular resilience of the "values" inscribed in the political culture of the working class in Piombino, it is worth reproducing here the full text in Italian:
Question: che cosa è stato determinante per la formazione della tua identità? Il vivere in un determinato ambiente e dentro una data struttura sociale e il respirare un dato clima politico, e quindi anche le lotte, certe tradizioni?
Answer: Penso che sia stato determinante l'aver assorbito, quasi introiettato anche che l'esperienza di vita, l'esperienza di lotta, l'esperienza anche di cultura della famiglia da cui provenivi, erano "cultura" --penso di aver introiettato questo -- io come molti altri, e quindi di non sentire l'inferiorità di classe ma di affrontare d'impeto una situazione che poteva essere da un punto di vista di classe anche sfavorevole.

11. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, this is a reference to the work of Antonio Gramsci, who recognized that "language" or "available vocabulary" (or the lack there of) is the source of muddled consciousness. For discussion of this problematic in Gramsci, see Femia (1981:42-45); see also Gramsci's own Prison Notebooks (1981:326-7).

12. One can also invoke Gramscian and Foucaultian theoretical constructs to explain the muteness of gender issues in the interviews. In this regard, "language" or "available vocabulary" (and by implication the failed thematization of certain experiences and issues) is largely the source of muddled consciousness. This parallels Foucault's emphasis on "discursive practices" that produce "effects of truth" (Foucault, 1980). This "silence" represents the "effect of truth" as it could give the impression of an absence of tensions in the construction of these women's gendered identities. Finally, relevant to this discussion is the problematic relationship between experience and consciousness, captured in the Gramscian notion of "contradictory consciousness" (as discussed in chapter 1). This notion is also addressed by Rebel's discussion of the "split self of the historical subject" (Rebel, 1989).

13. I cannot in good conscience end this chapter without commenting on the many issues about school experience, educational environments and the formation of a gendered identity, on one hand, and the intersection between gender and class identities, on the other, which this thesis has sidestepped. The effort that I had to make to "see" how the lines of class formation and education came together (entailing a historical reconstruction) and the fact that my main focus was definitely on class precluded a more extensive treatment of these gender problematics. As a consequence, I have also not been able to give full due to the rapidly growing critical literature that, reacting to the initial identification of the working class with its male members, has attempted to look at the construction of gendered, class identities within the interactive environments of school, economy, community and family (e.g. MacRobbie, 1978, 1980 and 1991; Raissiguier, 1994).

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSIONS

This last chapter brings together the various problematics that my research on education and class formation in an Italian factory town has brought to the fore. In the first of four sections, I analytically reconstitute the relationship between experience and agency through a discussion of the meanings underlying the appreciation for education and a reflection on the ways in which the aspirations for educational competencies are rooted in the experience of cultural hegemony. I conclude this section with a critique of the Italian Communist Party's action and "thinking" ("habitus") with respect to schooling. The second section contextualizes working-class educational achievement with respect to the structural transformations of the 1960s and 1970s and briefly discusses the findings of an applied research project on school failure conducted for the School District in Piombino at the conclusion of my fieldwork. In the third section, where I revisit Willis' work, I historicize the dispositions underlying his lads' "choice" and develop a comparison between the class formation process in Piombino and England. Finally, I conclude by returning to a number of issues discussed in the theory chapter and at different points in the thesis.

I. Agency and Experience, Empowerment and Entanglement

Throughout this thesis I have argued that popular attitudes toward education need to be analyzed as a crystallization of the historical experience of families and generations. Indeed, the "agency" of the local working class in the field of education can be understood only

in relation to the specific ways in which the Piombinese working class made itself within a particular historical context in the industrial era. The findings also indicate the centrality of transgenerational transmission as attitudes toward education were often generated by a family dynamic (in relation to class-formation) over two or three generations.[1]

Here I attempt to illuminate the connections between agency and experience by reviewing the various meanings that Piombinese working-class families have assigned to education. I thus retrace my steps, so to speak, as I attempt to weave together the various threads that formed the grid of motivations and desires behind the Piombinese appreciation for education. The following discussion addresses the "meanings of education" as: 1) a means of human emancipation, i.e., a way to spare succeeding generations the physical abuse and alienation of factory labor; 2) a resource necessary for class empowerment; and 3) a means to achieve respectability and socio-economic promotion.

In the second part of this section, I then look at the ways in which the pursuit of education was defined by the tension between empowerment and entanglement and conclude by discussing the shortcomings of the educational politics of the Italian Communist Party.

Education as a Way to Spare Children the Hardships of Factory Life

In the theory chapter I argued that, in order to grasp the inner dynamics and the agency emanating from a working-class culture, one needs to look at how members of that class "relate to various aspects of life and the social world on the basis of the nature and conditions of work" (Mason, 1987:108). This observation seems crucial to an understanding of how the experience of working conditions in Piombino's

metalworking plants was connected to a positive appreciation for education.

Through much of this century, those working in factory jobs in this town have been subjected to grueling physical labor and worked under appalling safety conditions in the two major industrial plants. In certain jobs, workers were almost certain to contract silicosis and/or see their bodies age prematurely and simply give out from exhaustion (Favilli, 1974: ch.6; Mosci, 1982). Prolonged exposure to the heat of the blast furnaces and/or pools of melting metal "cooked" their skin, turning it into a hardened, brown leather. Fathers and brothers coming home from work covered with bruises and burns and blackened by coal dust, carried on their bodies the unmistakable signs of physical hardship. The mother of one interviewee became overcome with emotion when she recalled how her father looked in his work attire: a dark silhouette in heavy black rubber overalls and big wooden clogs. She would encounter this haunting figure each time her mother sent her to the factory to take him breakfast or lunch. Similar impressions linger in the memory of older generations of Piombinese for whom the mills embodied both a hellish experience and a source of livelihood. Undeniably, the risks and physical demands inherent in metalworking also conveyed a sense of manly prowess, and Piombino's workers did take pride in their workmanship (Mosci, 1982). Nonetheless, the hardship, danger and health risks to which factory workers were exposed must often have seemed an excessive price to pay in return for a (often near subsistence) wage.

The interviews clearly show that in many cases the parents' and grandparents' experience of harsh working conditions and abuse served as primary motivations behind the extended educational trajectories of

young Piombinesi born in the 1940s and early 1950s. Parents wanted to spare their children not just the physical hardship, danger and health risk associated with many factory jobs but also the psychological alienation of factory work and the emotional discomfort emanating from workers' evident lack of control over their own fate. Indeed, workers detested being coerced into working long hours of overtime, being watched over by the factory guards, being reprimanded and/or fined for the smallest infraction of factory discipline (such as taking too much time in the lavatory), or having to worry constantly about losing their job whether for political or economic reasons. The humiliations endured during fascism and the Cold-war period constituted the negative "legacy" of their working life: an experience that the pre-war generation wanted to spare their sons.

Once we give due weight to the psychological and emotional price of reprisals and humiliation that were part and parcel of the work experience in Piombino's factories, a school diploma seems less a passport to socio-economic advancement and more an instrument of general human emancipation. Indeed, for many workers the 1950s had been (at least in part) years of shame and embarrassment when the need to feed one's family created painful "inner conflicts" in those who had to submit to doing things (such as discontinuing their PCI membership or renouncing overt labor militancy) that went against their beliefs and sense of self (Rebel, 1989:121). There can be little doubt that many working-class parents reacted at least in part to this sense of vulnerability and the psychological pain entailed in the experience of their own "split self" when they elected to secure secondary and university schooling for their sons.

Education as a Strategic Political Resource for Class Empowerment.

As we have seen, in Piombino a politically-driven yearning for education can also be discerned, i.e., one based on the belief that the appropriation of cultural competencies would put an end to the abuses endured by the laboring classes. For many, acquiring "culture," "knowledge" and the education that comes with formal schooling constituted a strategic political choice. The best illustration of this is the vow by Sandro's anarchist grandfather that one day there would be "workers' children teaching in the schools." This simple statement underscores the belief in a radically different future when all the abuses suffered by workers would be addressed and indicates a faith in a class-empowering process.

Acquiring the competencies and skills associated with formal schooling must have seemed especially important to the working-class cadres directly involved in the municipal administration and in the various working-class (party and union) organizations both before the advent of fascism and immediately after WWII. Moreover, due to the importance of Piombino's industries, delegations of workers on several occasions journeyed to Rome to negotiate with or appeal to the government. Thus, working-class cadres often confronted the formidable task of holding their own in high level negotiations with industrial managers and government officials. It is not surprising then that after WWII an increasing number of working-class cadres saw educational attainment as essential to producing the "organic" intellectuals that the local working class so desperately needed.

Education as the Pursuit of Respectability

However, the expansion of post-elementary schooling in Piombino cannot be attributed entirely to the desire to spare children from the brutality of factory life or to forge a new stratum of organic intellectuals. Rather, these particular meanings attributed to education could be said to characterize only the more politicized sector of the local population. Education undeniably was also viewed as a mechanism of socio-economic promotion. Indeed, one must recognize that even the political project of the more militant families who looked at formal education primarily as a strategic resource to be used for class empowerment incorporated a desire to advance. Nonetheless, we should not lose sight of the fact that in many cases such a desire for socio-economic mobility was a mere subsidiary factor devoid of any meaning outside the complex historical legacy of combativeness and endured repression.

In turn, educational aspirations were also rooted in the desire for "respectability": a desire whose emergence may have been facilitated by the character of social life and social relations in medium-size towns such as Piombino. Indeed, while residential segregation along class lines was a structuring principle of social interaction marking a psychological and physical distance between socio-economic classes, individuals from varying backgrounds nevertheless had occasion to mingle in this urban community of rather modest dimensions. In particular, the turn of the century was marked by increased contact between working-class individuals and those middle-class intellectuals and professionals (especially doctors and teachers) who embraced the socialist cause. Before fascism, various meeting places--barbershops, bookstores, wineries, trattorie (popular eateries), Left community centers and the

like--constituted sites of cultural exchange where factory workers intermingled with artisans and socialist middle-class professionals.[2] We can only speculate that the interaction between these two milieus within the socialist universe, bringing barely literate workers face to face with educated professionals/ intellectuals, must have sensitized the former to the assets that education brings in terms of competencies, self-confidence, and social prestige/status. Finally, expressive styles, extra-work activities and socialization--more broadly "bourgeois culture" and "working class culture"--were entangled to some extent, thus providing limited opportunities for inter-class. Even this limited intermingling of people from different class backgrounds had consequences for working-class appreciation of education.[3]

The workerist, anti-bourgeois class language of the syndicalist movement, the virulent hostility toward labor displayed by local industry, and the experience of economic exploitation and physical abuse certainly served to polarize the factory proletariat and the middle and lower middle classes in Piombino. Yet polarization was never absolute or uniform. The workforce itself was segmented, as the class formation process entailed the emergence of a somewhat privileged nucleus of workers who could count on greater job stability than the rest. Many in this group saw themselves as a step above the mass and might have been more prone to associate and mingle with the bourgeoisie. It must be recalled too that some workers, during the 1920s and 1930s, even joined the fascist cause and through that ideological identification developed fairly strong ties to the middle classes who constituted the core of the fascist regime's support.

However, as this thesis has focused on that core segment of the local working class that has been the carrier of a socialist legacy, it is

even more important to point out the role played by socialist propaganda in promoting the importance of education as a means to achieve respectability. Indeed, the paternalistic socialist discourse--with its unrelenting emphasis on the value of education--did not just instill the idea that schooling and political emancipation went hand in hand. It also made militants acutely conscious of their lack of formal schooling.

This attempt to grasp "the meanings of education" from within a class formation perspective calls attention to the stark reductionism to which the literature on education can fall prey every time it lumps together the pursuit of education by the working and lower middle classes under the generic rubric of "socio-economic promotion." It also recognizes that the view of education as class empowerment, grounded in class consciousness and antagonism, cannot be neatly separated from a desire for respectability. Throughout the thesis, I have indicated that the Piombinese working-class "educational project" was indeed caught between entanglement and empowerment, hegemony and counter-hegemony.

As I have argued, it is in the "culture of socialism" that one finds the seeds of hegemonic entrapment. The next section will take a closer look at this problematic by focusing in particular on the "false consciousness" of socialist and communist intellectuals who failed to produce a serious critique of "capitalist education" and "authored" instead a profoundly ambivalent and entrapping discourse to which grassroots militants were exposed.

Education Between Entanglement and Empowerment

Empowerment and entanglement define education in subtly intertwined ways. As Ball stated in an essay on Foucault's

understanding of the problematic of knowledge and education, "education works not only to render its students as subjects of power, it also constitutes them, or some of them, as powerful subjects" (Ball, 1990:5). This, as we know, occurs through the processes of credentialing and meritocratic selection. To paraphrase Foucault, the "superimposition of power relations and knowledge relations" is exemplified by a "constant exchange of knowledge" from the powerful (teacher, doctor, employer) to the powerless (pupil, patient, worker). The junction between power, knowledge and education is "culture" because the appearance of knowledge takes the form of the culture of the educated.

My attempt to grasp the appreciation for education displayed by many working-class families in Piombino led me to see that it stemmed from both a class-empowerment, antagonistic project and feelings of cultural inferiority. I have also argued that during the first two decades of the century, when the original nucleus of the Piombinese working class was formed, Italian socialism contributed to the diffusion of a positive attitude toward schooling with its insistence that education constituted the working class's most powerful weapon of emancipation. However, the socialist discourse on education, dominated as it was by the reformists, proved to be both paternalistic and uncritical and thus did not contribute to furthering the development of the counter-cultural, counter-educational potential present in the political working-class milieu in areas such as Piombino. As far as education was concerned, the available language of class did not help militants to develop a critical understanding of educational issues. Thus, a relatively uncritical awe for education coexisted with the desire to appropriate and use education in the service of class empowerment and "revolution."

With respect to the ways in which the militant working class formed and acted around educational issues during the postwar period, one should not forget the role played by the Resistance and the political-emotive import of the "educational" experiences of men and women who participated in the collective ventures of partisan schools. Many militants remember their identities as combatants and their identities as learners as part of the same historical experience. At the end of WWII, when local communist working-class cadres found themselves heading up the municipal administration, education assumed even greater importance in their eyes.

Once again, however, the grassroots emphasis on appropriation of "cultural competencies" was not counterbalanced by a critical analysis of the role of education in capitalist society. In fact, as I discuss below, despite Gramsci's writings on cultural hegemony, the Communist Party seemed relatively unconcerned with understanding how schools perpetuate the cultural hegemony of the dominant classes through processes of stigmatization. Indeed, the first radical critique of schooling and "symbolic violence" would be penned not by a left intellectual but by a populist Catholic priest in 1967.

The empowering significance attributed to the appropriation of cultural competencies by politicized militants underestimated the attendant risks of ideological incorporation and "embourgeoisement." Perhaps, the possibility of ideological incorporation seemed rather remote in the 1950s, given the stark opposition between the communist and the capitalist worlds and the sense of solidarity and strength that emanated from the PCI's organizations. At the same time, although Left militants knew full well that the young would be subjected to indoctrination in the schools, only a few families were able to prepare their children to

see through the ideological content of the curriculum. As one interviewee stated, most working-class students lacked the instruments to criticize the school curriculum even if they did not view the school or "culture" as neutral.

The longing for "cultural competencies" and the pursuit of formal schooling as a way to overcome feelings of "cultural inadequacy" constituted ambiguous premises for an antagonistic empowerment project. In this, as in many other instances, the strategies and the "projects" devised by the people to "beat the system" perhaps necessarily albeit contentiously share, at least in part, the terms defining the power relations they seek to destroy (Willis, 1983: 133-4). The strategy of appropriating "culture," "knowledge," and "education" as a means to stand up to the traditional upper-class elites and as a way to produce left organic intellectuals contained a fatal contradiction. On the one hand, a high value would be placed on the pursuit of knowledge for counter-educational and oppositional purposes. On the other hand, by focusing on the acquisition of the very "cultural competencies" that rationalize the situating of individuals within a hierarchical status and class system, the historical agency of the militants would be, from the start, at least partially inscribed within the dominant cultural hegemony.

Such a scenario forces us to acknowledge that genuinely oppositional, anti-capitalist sentiments and deep-rooted class-consciousness do not stand on "holy ground" (Willis, 1983). In theoretical-analytical terms, such a muddled process whereby the dominant ideology coexists with a strong and genuine class consciousness is what Gramsci describes as contradictory consciousness and Hermann Rebel refers to as the "split self of the historical subject." As Rebel indirectly suggests, cultural hegemony has to be understood in

relation to a muddled experiential process. It nests in the inner conflicts of a culturally divided self and lies at the junction where historical experiences of class and "culture" interface and take shape (Gramsci, 1971:326-7; Rebel, 1989).

In the case of Piombino, a structural contradiction added another level of ambiguity to the pursuit of formal education that in principle was supposed to serve the interests of the working class on its way to building a new world. In fact, the view of schooling as an instrument for class empowerment was grafted onto the ambiguous nature of the Italian communist project. Such ambiguity was rooted in the mismatch between the political practice of the party and the political identities of most of its cadres. In the hearts and minds of many local militants, the PCI was a revolutionary organization dedicated to the overthrow of capitalism. Yet in the real world the party was committed to parliamentary politics and involved in managing the system both at the local and, until 1947 at least, the national level.

This structural contradiction would not have been fatal in and of itself if the working-class organizations had been able to articulate a clear-headed, critical perspective in the arena of educational politics and school reform. Furthermore, the risk of assimilation and entanglement that was implicit in the emphasis on the appropriation of knowledge and cultural competencies as an instrument of class empowerment could have been reduced if only it had been recognized. In turn, the existence of a counter-educational and counter-cultural project would have had to be grounded in the understanding and analysis of "schools" as hegemonic apparatuses and of "school knowledge" as the product of selective "traditions" and dominant world views.

The Educational Politics of the Italian Communist Party 1945-1963

Before addressing the specific sectoral issues and failures in the communist agenda in the educational arena, we need to understand the larger impasse in which this party was caught. According to recent interpretations, the PCI failed in the postwar period to elaborate an overall reformist strategy and program that would truly serve working-class interests. Rather, the PCI concentrated its efforts on establishing its credentials as a legitimate social partner in a situation where it was continually marginalized within the national political arena (Paggi and D'Angelillo, 1986).

Scholars writing from a variety of perspectives have pointed out the limitations and foot-dragging of the workers movement in the arena of educational politics. The initiatives and the programs of the Left have been found wanting not only with respect to the debate over the reform of primary and secondary schooling (e.g. Ragazzini, 1987) but also in the domain of adult education (De Sanctis, 1978). A common theme in this literature is the lack of fit between the action of the Left in the political-ideological and economic realms, on the one side, and in the cultural-educational arena, on the other. The educational initiatives that emanated from working-class organizations were not part of a coherent program but were rather intermittent, sectorialized and territorially circumscribed (Ragazzini, 1987). In contrast, the conservative forces showed remarkable coherence, efficiency and dynamism in their educational politics (De Sanctis, 1978:205-8; Russo, 1979; Ambrosoli, 1982).

In the initial postwar years, PCI leaders and educational experts demanded that schooling be made mandatory and comprehensive up to age 14 but generally did not favor the universal extension of secondary education (i.e., for the 14-19 age-bracket). Educational experts in the

communist camp even lamented that increased enrollment in secondary schools might produce a crop of "maladjusted young people" who would not find employment congruent with their educational attainment. Moreover, communist intellectuals, along with many liberals, bemoaned the incumbent devaluation of secondary education brought about by the entry of a new clientele of students who only cared about getting a diploma rather than about acquiring knowledge (Ragazzini, 1987:ch.3).

The PCI position was clearly in favor of a selective school system based on the principle that access to higher levels of education be reserved to the "best" students on the basis of merit/performance and not on the basis of class. This meritocratic perspective was written into the Italian constitution itself (with the PCI's help). The latter contained a provision that the state provide financial support to "intellectually capable and deserving" students (i capaci e meritevoli) from low-income families (ibid.).

A preliminary survey of party literature from this period (1945-49) uncovers no analysis of the ways in which school performance is differentially affected by unequal educational resources present in different class milieus.[4] Among other things, there also was a tendency to romanticize elementary education, which was improperly designated as "popular education," thus indicating a failure to distinguish between school **for** the masses and school **of** the people (Ragazzini, 1987:131). The class-discriminatory character of the Italian school structure with its tracking system and tiered hierarchy of schools was denounced but no plan for switching to a comprehensive system would emerge for many years. Finally, the PCI position on vocational education--a type of schooling vehemently criticized by Gramsci--was at best inconsistent. Only with the mid-1950s did PCI pronouncements on education become

less compromised, a development generally attributed to the wider diffusion of Gramsci's works, which provided a deeper understanding of education (Ragazzini, 1987:ch.3).[5] What follows is a review of the PCI positions regarding the four arenas of educational politics and struggle: 1) access to schools, 2) control over schools; 3) content of schooling (i.e., the curriculum and the ideological construction of knowledge imparted in schools) and 4) the wider context of schooling (i.e. the nature of schooling in a class-divided society).[6]

On the issue of **access**, the PCI emphasized the urgency of extending elementary education to all social groups and of making schooling compulsory and comprehensive to age 14. However, it generally remained committed to selective secondary education for those 14-19.

On the issue of **control**, the party was very vocal in its agitation against Christian Democratic protection of the privileges and influence enjoyed by the church in state schools and support of state subsidies to private schools. Over and over again in the party press, the PCI asserted the need to implement full secularization of the schools (Ambrosoli, 1982; Ragazzini, 1987). However, apart from the experience of the Young Pioneers (API), which in some areas is said to have had an impact in counter-educational terms on working-class children, the PCI failed to develop an alternative and oppositional educational sphere that might counter-balance the socialization that working-class children received in the public schools.[7]

Regarding the **content** of substantive knowledge transmitted in the schools, the PCI generally proved more perceptive. For example, one of the early targets for criticism was the teaching of history. However, on many other issues of content, such as the debate about the intrinsic value of a classical curriculum centered around Latin, Greek, and

philosophy, the PCI largely bought into the dominant discourse (Ragazzini, 1987:ch.3).

The issue of **context** concerns the location and entanglement of educational institutions within the structure of capitalist societies and their underlying nexus of power and hierarchies. It is also about the nature of cultural production in schools and student experience, as these are affected by social relationships in and outside the schools. A survey of PCI literature (as well as the secondary material on this issue) points out the party's very limited understanding of the contextual specificity of educational processes. Moreover, as has been pointed out, the PCI showed an underdeveloped understanding of how hegemony is produced by institutional apparatuses such as schools (ibid.).

These limitations are largely the product of two "traditions." On the one hand, they stem from a globalistic approach to political strategy that treats as secondary all those arenas of struggle considered parts of the superstructure. The struggle for educational reform was thus seen as secondary to the larger political struggle (ibid.).

Perhaps equally important was the underdeveloped nature of independent working-class educational resources, which, as argued in chapter 2, were even more rudimentary in Italy than elsewhere in Europe, given the belated process of working-class formation. Moreover, in the historical experience of Italian socialism, educational battles had always been a rearguard action given the comparatively backward economic conditions of the country and the staggering rate of illiteracy, both of which held back the struggle and demands of the Socialist Party. Finally, the process of working-class institution building had been truncated by fascism.

In the end, the PCI may be faulted above all for failing to understand the psychological insidiousness of school milieus for working-class children. Communist intellectuals--themselves a product of an elite education--were captive to the same cultural "habitus" in which bourgeois intellectuals were immersed, at least with regard to their views on education.[8] As a number of studies have demonstrated, the communist leadership that emerged after the war did not consist in the main of working-class cadres but rather of middle-class intellectuals and ex-liberals who became communist through their anti-fascism.[9] The intellectual and cultural bourgeois background of much of the leadership meant, among other things, that a radical critique of the myths, contents and ideology of education was in part precluded by entanglement.

When all is said and done, however, one must also allow for the historical odds with which the PCI had to come to terms. During the interwar period, the party survived only as a fragmented clandestine movement in Italy and as an ex-patriot organization in exile. This situation did not constitute a favorable context for considered reflections on schooling in capitalist society. In the immediate postwar years, after the short-lived era of national unity governments, the PCI had to persevere within a harsh Cold War climate that made a non-dogmatic construction of educational alternatives very difficult indeed.

II. Mobility and Educational Failure

How (Italian) Working Class Students Get Middle Class Jobs

The experience of (relative) socio-economic mobility came across in many of the biographic interviews: there can be little doubt that secondary and university education played a key role in shaping the trajectories of those working-class individuals who managed to get

"middle-class" jobs. However, working class children did not improve their life-chances thanks to an egalitarian school system but rather despite the overt class bias of a highly elitist, hierarchical one. The mobility achieved through educational attainment was not the product of meritocratic, democratic schooling but resulted from the intelligence, hard work and sacrifice of working-class children and their families, coupled with their determination to beat the system.

The resilience and rootedness of the political sub-culture found in Piombino generated a certain self-confidence and offset, at least in part, the stigmatization produced by the effects of the cultural hegemony in the schools. As Maurizia put it:

> I think that what proved crucial for me, as for many others, was that our life experience, our experience of struggle, our experience within the family milieu was absorbed, almost internalized as "culture." [Consequently] we did not feel a sense of class inferiority but actively confronted a situation which [objectively] could have put us at a disadvantage from the point of view of class relations.

We must also see, however, the other face of the coin, for such a synthetic assessment of life experience and self-understanding must not obscure the psychological pain and unease that marked the "encounter" with the "hidden curriculum" of the schools. Indeed, as Maurizia also told me:

> I felt miserable throughout the years in the elementary and middle school. I felt very repressed. . . . You know the middle school then was still the school of the bourgeoisie and haute bourgeoisie. However, the social differences and the discrimination that I discovered at school were a stimulus to do more, to learn, to affirm myself. Nonetheless, I was miserable.

Indeed, as I have documented, working-class achievers did not sail smoothly through their "school socialization." The above and following statement capture those double-binding moments in which the

"split self of the historical subject" experiences "cultural hegemony," without necessarily succumbing to it (Rebel, 1989):

> I was unhappy and angry. . . . Later, I understood why I was so angry, sometimes even violent. That school was an assault on my identity, my family of origin. . . . If you were from a working class family you were made to feel ashamed. I think that some succumbed, but I was always angry.

Many of those interviewed for this study became secondary school teachers; others ended up as professionals (e.g., doctors and middle-managers), union officials, public servants or white-collar employees. Some no longer live in Piombino, having taken up residence in nearby Florence, Pisa or Prato. A number of the latter stayed on after attending the university in Florence or Pisa while others left Piombino because of the relative tightness of the local labor market with regard to middle-class jobs.[10]

Overall, the structural and institutional transformation that took place across much of Italy in the 1970s--notably the enormous expansion of the public service sector--opened up job opportunities for many working-class graduates. Indeed, despite their flaws, the structural reforms of the 1970s brought about a major change in the class structure by creating a whole new category of "middle class" jobs. For example, the reform of the health sector and the construction of a new hospital created job opportunities not only for nurses and clerical personnel but also for doctors, managers, psychologists and social workers. The granting of new authority and arenas of intervention to municipal administrations also created jobs for secondary school and university graduates. Moreover, in line with global trends, middle management in factories increased rapidly in size, and quite a few Piombinesi from working-class backgrounds ended up in these positions.

Finally, one should not underestimate the importance of the employment controlled by the PCI and trade unions throughout Central Italy's "red belt." This patronage system extends far beyond positions within the local party and union bureaucracy (though both have swollen over the years). In Piombino, the party also controls a modern department store and supermarket (heir to the cooperatives established immediately after the war). Moreover, the PCI, given its electoral grip on the town and its control of the local government, also effectively controls appointments made by the local administration to high-ranking posts in various public institutions. Thus, the organizational structure that has grown up around the Communist Party over the years and its government role at the local level serve as important vehicles of socio-economic mobility.

In sum, obtaining an extended education has generally paid off for the cohort that came of age in the 1950s and 1960s: inter-generational mobility among the Piombinese working class is just too apparent to be dismissed as an exception. The most important lesson to be drawn from the historical reconstruction presented here concerns the dispositions underlying the pursuit of and appreciation for education. These dispositions are deeply embedded in the process of class formation, linked to the character of working conditions, the repression that lasted through the 1950s, the influence of socialist literature and "high culture," and a "language of class" that spoke of revolution, "organic intellectuals" and conquest of the state.

As this thesis has argued, it makes sense to view "1968" as a symptom of an organic crisis and a break in the process of class-formation and institutional-ideological reproduction (such as in the educational arena) that was prepared by the experience and the

dispositions rooted in the 1950s. As Umberto Eco put it, "[1968] profoundly changed the ways all of us, at least in Europe, behave and relate to one another. Relations between bosses and workers, students and teachers, even children and parents, have opened up. They'll never be the same again" (Newsweek, 12 December 1986). The historical cohort (1942-52) whose members have been the principal subjects in this thesis shared with their working-class parents and grandparents a cultural and historical legacy that they will not transmit to their children. Those individuals who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s, and their families, have been the protagonists of a class transformation process, in which in Piombino, education and "culture" played interconnected and mutually reinforcing roles. As I have outlined, in order to understand this transformation in structural terms, one must bring into the picture the expansion of the public and private service sectors, for which the reforms of these years and the development of the welfare state were largely responsible.

The "Other" Experience: Educational Failure among Piombinese Lower Classes

The emphasis in this dissertation on the appreciation for and the pursuit of education among the local working class should not blind us to the fact that other experiences existed as well. Not all working-class students who attended the vocational school would have rather been enrolled in the academic track or could have made it through even if they had been. Moreover, economic constraints and the highly selective character of post-compulsory schools compelled many students to abandon school after the compulsory cycle and take a job in the factory. Given the selective character of education, the experience of

school failure was as common in Piombino as elsewhere. However, I would contend that over the years, school failure has disproportionately affected children from immigrant families who came to the town from surrounding rural areas or the South rather than the core Piombinese working class.

In 1988 the local school district asked me to carry out a statistical study of school failure that ended up focusing on a cohort of students born in 1968-70 who attended middle school between 1981-84 and secondary schools (first and second grades) between 1984-86. Analysis of the data collected showed that school failure in the middle cycle tended to be concentrated in the school whose catchment area corresponds to the old seafront quarter of town (i.e., the middle school that until the early 1960s provided vocational education to 11-14 year olds). For the educational cohort in question, the drop-out rate in this school was found to be 15.70 per 100 students, which compared unfavorably to the rates of 6.7, 3.44 and 2.9 found in the other town schools. This school also had the highest rate of school failure, as measured by the number of students who had to repeat grades. In line with my contention as to which groups were most likely to suffer the greatest degree of school failure, this school registered the highest percentage of immigrant students from southern Italy.[11] In 1990 I carried out a follow-up qualitative study of school failure in the middle cycle (11-14 age bracket) based on semi-structured interviews with students, teachers and parents. Of 19 problem-students interviewed in Piombino (17 drop-outs and two repeaters), 14 had at least one parent who had migrated to Piombino from either the South or adjacent areas.

In the secondary schools, the highest incidence of drop-outs and school failure could be found in the vocational institutes. During the

school year 1984-85, the drop-out rate in the first grade at the Commercial Vocational Institute stood at almost 23% and at the Industrial Vocational Institute 24%. The technical institutes followed, with 12% at the Commercial Technical Institute and almost 17% at the Industrial Technical Institute. As might be expected, the lowest drop-out rates were to be found in the academic high schools: about 8% at the liceo classico and 14% at the liceo scientifico. However, while students who drop out from the academic high schools re-enter the system by enrolling at a lower-level school (usually the technical institutes), drop-outs from vocational schools (especially male students) do not. Taking into account that the vocational institutes are attended exclusively by students from working-class, immigrant and rural backgrounds, it is clear that the educational system still processes students according to class origin. In Piombino, however, the "system" also serves a social mobility function. Differentiation and segmentation thus take place within the "popular classes" themselves and are based on "geography" and the cultural and historical legacy of distinct groups.

Finally, the determining role played by "culture" and historical experience in shaping dispositions, and ultimately, reproducing or altering the class structure, is addressed in the following section where I compare the distinct pattern of working-class formation in the heartland of English industrialization with that through which the original nucleus of the Piombinese working class made itself.

III. Learning to Labor Revisited

As briefly discussed in the theory chapter, this thesis has accounted for "culture" and tackled the relationship between a local working class and education in ways that contrast with the approach adopted by Willis. In particular, his depiction of English lads' rejection of formal schooling is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the appreciation for and pursuit of education found among sectors of the core working class in Piombino. Yet, both phenomena are grounded in working class self-understandings and "cultural" identities. In this section, I examine how our diverging emphases and findings are connected to the respective processes of class formation in Great Britain and Italy.

Willis' focus on the lads' rejection of schooling is certainly legitimate given the documented trends in working class education and the salience of the phenomenon described in Learning to Labor. For example, recent oral-historical work has confirmed a pattern that is familiar to educational sociologists in Great Britain, i.e. the working class's limited use of the educational system as a path of mobility. As oral historian Paul Thompson recently underlined, working-class families who have been strongly rooted in urban neighborhoods for generations refrain from the use of education for socio-economic promotion (Thompson, 1993). The family rootedness within a local context and a high degree of historical "stability" (i.e., a socio-economic process marked by minimal change) are associated with a "family culture" that tends to retain people within its class folds. Indeed, in these cases, "family culture appears to work conservatively and protectively" (Thompson, 1993:18). As Thompson notes, these findings contrast with

those of studies carried out in France among working-class families who are often of peasant, shopkeeper or artisan origin.

As I have already emphasized, however, the absence of historical contextualization in Willis' book undermines its significance and ultimately misleads the reader. If, on the one hand, Willis tells us very little about the lads' families and the town where he conducted fieldwork, on the other, he makes a claim in the Introduction for the representativeness of the setting and his sample population. "Hammertown" (the fictive name of the urban center where his research was carried out) is described as "a Midlands nuts and bolts town, which was in its time one of the cradles of the Industrial Revolution" (Willis, 1981:5). Most residents are employed as laborers in manufacturing (large factories), with only 8% occupying managerial/professional positions. Willis concludes his Introduction with the following characterization:

> Hammertown is altogether something of an archetypal industrial town. It has all the classic industrial hallmarks as well as those of monopoly capitalism in conjunction with a proletariat which is just about the oldest in the world (Willis, 1981:6).

Willis fails to provide the reader with any specific information about the lads' families. We are led to assume that the latter are long-time residents of the area and that the "lads" are the third, fourth or fifth generation in a long line of industrial workers. No information is provided as to these families' political allegiances, sympathies or activities. Yet Willis implies that he has chosen as the focus of his study a phenomenon that is highly representative of working-class culture: a choice consistent with the research agenda at the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies, which, from the very beginning, focused on "the peculiarities of the English" (Turner, 1992).

Willis argues that, by dropping out of school, rejecting meritocracy and remaining working class, his lads actively resist the dominant cultural hegemony. However, the unintended consequence of their choice is demographic class reproduction (i.e., the lads reproduce themselves as working class) and the perpetuation of their own alienation. By not assimilating into the middle class (in terms of expressive styles and "values"), the "lads" remain **culturally** antagonistic. They keep "the class other" at arms length because, ultimately, they do not want to abandon the bonds, relations, practices and "discourses" that have made them. Given the very different pattern depicted in this thesis, one needs to ask whether the active pursuit of education by working class youth in Piombino stems from a desire to escape the working class.

"Working-class identity" is a complex and historically specific relational construct. In Piombino, due to the significance and pervasiveness of political ideologies and the "idea" of revolution, for many families educational aspirations do not appear to have been linked to a desire to escape the working class in any political, emotional or ideological sense. The harshness of working conditions, job insecurity and the limited control that workers could exert at the workplace did induce parents to regard education as a resource that would allow their children (especially sons) to exert greater control over their lives and would spare them the hardships and exploitation that older generations had been forced to endure. In many cases, class antagonism did fuel the pursuit of education, but this was not the "cultural" antagonism of the British lads.

In Willis' account, "politics" appears inconsequential to the life choices of his lads. However, I contend that the salience of a working-

class political ideology in the Italian case, and its absence in the British case, are crucial for understanding the divergent educational findings of our respective research efforts, as well as the class formation patterns in the British Midlands and in Piombino, within a comparative perspective. The other crucial variables are the relationship between the working class and the state (which, as argued in the theory chapter, affects the construction of "classness") and the time-frame of industrialization and working-class formation.

Here I attempt to historicize Willis' argument and in so doing warn against understanding school "failure" as a "choice" culturally constructed by the lads rather than by the "system." Indeed, I will try to fill in the gaps in Willis' account to show how the class formation process in the heartland of the Industrial Revolution explains the salience of non-conformism as a characteristic phenomenon among a large sector of the English working class. The historicization of the lads' attitudes and actions will clearly show that a "historical disposition," or "habitus" in Bourdieu's sense, frames the actors' "sub-cultural creativity" (Bourdieu, 1977; Calhoun, 1993). This "operation" introduces a "measure" of historical determination that was unacknowledged in the ethnography of the lads' counter-school culture.

According to Willis, the rejection of schooling reflects the resilience of English working-class sub-culture, the distinctiveness of its codes, its practices, expressive styles and its separateness from middle class "(sub)culture". Eager to demonstrate that his lads are not victims, Willis portrays them instead as folk heroes of the counter-cultural school scene who refuse to buy into the myth of social mobility. Rather they self-consciously choose the world of the shop-floor and working-class jobs with which they have become acquainted through

their exposure to "talk" and the relationships forged in the family, the pub and the neighborhood. As Willis emphasizes, the lads are able to invest positive meanings in their choice since the physical nature of their jobs brings out their masculinity and as the strength of trade unions allows workers to exert a high degree of control on the shop floor.

This picture does shed light on some of the elements that constitute "classness" in the British case--a consequence of the distinctive pattern of class formation in this country. Particularly relevant to this discussion are the high degree of separateness of English working-class "culture," the physical, emotional and psychological distance of the working class from middle and upper classes (as reflected in the spatial configuration of cities and neighborhoods), a union politics based on shopfloor bargaining, and the relative absence of global political ideologies among the working class (i.e., Marxist socialism or anarcho-syndicalism as found in continental Europe).[12]

The distinctiveness of British working-class formation is linked to the early onset of both proletarianization (connected to the dislocation of the peasantry during the enclosure movement) and industrialization in England. These processes led early on to the formation of working classes and urban growth leading, by the early to mid-19th century, to a concomitant spatial redistribution of people along a class-segregated pattern. Working-class institutional development was continuous and gradual throughout the 19th century even as the politics, internal composition, fault-lines and demographic characteristics of the working class changed (Savage and Miles, 1994; Katznelson, 1992:251).

Most importantly, during the second half of the 19th century, "the withdrawal of direct repression [by the state]" and the recognition of a "legal and symbolic space in which to function" allowed working-class institutions (non-conformist churches, cooperatives, friendly societies, working men's clubs and the like) to thrive (Katznelson, 1992:251). Thus, of major consequence to English working-class formation would be the working class's relatively early incorporation into the British political system through institutional recognition of trade unions, routinization of shopfloor bargaining, and provision of social welfare by the state. Yet such "working class institutional autonomy was recognized in exchange for a restricted universe of political and economic expression" (Katznelson, 1992:252).

As a result, although the history of the British working class "has known moments of political contention," beginning in the second half of the 19th century, its politics has been eminently pragmatic, "cautious, gradualist and reformist" (Katznelson, 1992:142 and 251). This meant that in the British case, "classness" was above all "culturally" constructed over a protracted period by participation in dense network of institutions, popular leisure activities and expressive behavior (dress codes and speech). Moreover, both its "cultural" and demographic (generational) reproduction was facilitated by spatial segregation. Yet neither a revolutionary language nor a comprehensive political vision emerged as part of this picture.

In his famous The Uses of Literacy, Hoggart writes that "on the whole and particularly in this century, the sense of 'them' among the English working class people is not of a violent or harsh thing. This is not the 'them' of some European proletariats, of secret police, open brutality and sudden disappearances" (Hoggart, 1971:63). According to

Hoggart, the sense of community among the English working class is rather pre-political:

> In most people, [the sense of community] does not develop into a conscious sense of being part of the "working class movement" . . . [instead] it starts with the feeling that life is hard, and that "our sort" will usually get the "dirty end of the stick." . . . The solidarity is helped by the lack of scope for the growth of ambition. . . . Whatever one does, horizons are likely to be limited. . . . That minority who become conscious of their class limitations and take up some educational activities--so as to "work for their class" or "improve themselves"--tend to be ambiguously regarded. The respect for "the scholar" (like the doctor and the parson) to some extent remains. . . . On the other hand, there is often a mistrust of "book-learning." What good does it do you? Are you any better off (i.e., happier) as a clerk? Or as a teacher? Parents who refuse. . . to allow their children to take up scholarships are not always thinking of the fact that they would have to be fed and clothed for much longer; at the back is this vaguely formulated but strong doubt of the value of education. That doubt acquires some of its force from the group-sense itself: for the group seeks to conserve, and may impede an inclination in any of its members to make a change, to leave the group, to be different. . . . As to politics they have a limited realism which tells them that, as far as they can see, "there's no future" in it for them (Hoggart, 1971:70-86).

This passage touches on "elements of culture" and themes encountered repeatedly in the literature on the English working class. The dispositions which Hoggart attributes to the English working class are rooted in the process of class-formation that spanned the second half of the 19th century, as outlined by Stedman Jones (1983:ch.4), Hobsbawm (1984:ch.11) and, most recently, Savage and Miles (1994).[13]

Until the mid-1850s, the hallmarks of British working-class culture included radical politics, combativeness, secularism, republicanism, popular self-education, cooperation, land reform and internationalism. In the first half of the 19th century, the English working class had not yet been fully proletarianized and its "culture" flourished through contact and interaction with radical elements among master-artisans and

the middle classes (Thompson, 1963). By the 1870s, however, the English middle classes that had emerged from the more prosperous artisanal stratum had remade themselves: they had moved to the suburbs, taken up the habits and tastes of "gentility," and seen their utilitarianism converge with Evangelicalism. By this time, the segregation of middle class from working-class residential areas had been completed as had the cultural differentiation between the two worlds (Stedman Jones, 1983:ch.4).

The English working-class remade itself "culturally" as the place of politics within working-class lives diminished in importance. A variety of factors were at work: for one, the relationship between artisans and the "less respectable" working class was severed as the artisanal class, in disarray by the 1860s, moved to the suburbs in order to isolate itself from those rowdy and uncivilized proletarians beneath them in the social order. According to Stedman Jones, this deprived the workers of political leadership.[14] Trade unions did not develop an overall political vision (such as that represented by syndicalism in Southern Europe); instead, labor organization was a de facto dimension of working-class life focused narrowly on workplace rights and the wage-bill. Trade union activity thus channeled whatever strength and energies were left over from the social struggles that had marked the first part of the century in safe directions. Working-class life became ever more separate and impermeable in its cultural forms. The combative working class "culture" of the early part of the 19th century had by 1900 been transformed into a "culture" of defense and consolation (Stedman Jones, 1983:ch.4).

Of course, in order to fully understand the state of relative contentment and the absence of subversive impulses among the English

working class, one must bring into this picture the role played by the state which, by withdrawing repression, pre-empted that kind of working class "reactivity" typical of Southern Europe. Moreover, the control which the English working class achieved on the shopfloor meant that, by the turn of the century, British workers were more in charge of their lives and less vulnerable to job-insecurity; specifically, they had greater bargaining power vis-à-vis management and were more able to influence the conditions under which they toiled. As Hobsbawm put it:

> British workers may have not aimed to overthrow the wage system, but no other working class has achieved the degree of de facto "workers' control" on the factory floor which became characteristic of so many large British factories (Hobsbawm, 1984:192).

The time frame of both class formation and economic development in England and Italy are separated by fifty to seventy-five years; structural transformation and proletarianization in England started much earlier than in Italy. In the Italian case, although processes of proletarianization were underway throughout the second half of the 19th century, in most areas a factory proletariat did not form until the turn of the century. Thus, while the pattern of class formation in the English industrial heartland (where Willis' study is set) had already crystallized by 1900, the process in Piombino at that time was just getting under way. Moreover, working-class institutions in Italy remained under the patronage of middle-class liberals and conservatives until the early 1890s. Contact between workers, artisans, petit-bourgeois radical agitators and middle-class socialist intellectuals remained substantial both in those areas strongly influenced by socialist reformism and in those regions that displayed the more rebellious anarcho-syndicalist tendencies (Tilly, 1992; Andreucci and Pescarolo, 1989; Procacci, 1979; Pernicone, 1993; Levy, 1989; Santarelli, 1973).

The respective distinctiveness of British and Italian urban landscapes characterized by the different degrees of class segregation is another important source of contrasting development. As Katznelson emphasized in Marxism and the City (1992), both the spatial distribution of people and the meanings and sociality directly connected to the ways in which "space" is "lived" have consequences for the construction of "classness" and impact on the ways in which politics and political languages bring people together or keep them apart. In Italy, the prevalence of small and medium-sized towns facilitated social contacts between artisanal, middle and working classes. Even in a factory-town like Piombino where social distance was deeply felt and at least partly structured by the separation of residential areas, some degree of intermingling between individuals from different social classes could not be avoided. Different social classes were visible to each other: people brushed up against one another in the streets, perhaps went to the same tailor or seamstress, purchased their everyday goods from the same stores. Moreover, children from different backgrounds went to school together, at least through the elementary grades.

Finally, the processes that went into the cultural-historical construction of "classness"--ideological and social confrontations, the violence of labor conflict, repressive state action, and the revolutionary "language of class"--made the Piombinese workers go out of their way to try to beat the system. The process of class formation described in this thesis led workers to find ways to spare their children from having to endure harsh working conditions. In contrast to the British case, the repressive action of the Italian state before, during, and after fascism, and the well-documented labor hostility of management, fueled a language of class that spoke of revolution and redemption. The present

was bearable only in so far as the militant sector of the working class was able to keep its energies and hopes focused on the future. As I have argued, it is this strong future-orientation that explains the most salient aspect of the Piombinese pursuit of education, its politically-driven yearning for competencies, culture and knowledge. To paraphrase Stedman Jones, Piombino's was not (and could not be) a culture of consolation and defense.

Coming back to Learning to Labor and the way it has been received, particularly within anthropology, a few more words are in order. According to George Marcus, Willis can be faulted above all for the arbitrary, ideological way in which he has constructed his object of research:

> Perhaps the most devastating flaw, from the perspective of a methodologically-minded social science, is the self-fulfilling and circular manner in which Willis selected his sample and makes broader claims from it. Though he did control studies among conformist working class youth, he by fiat draws his boundary of concern around the manifestly cultural form of non conformist boys without examining the process by which some become conformist and others do not. Rather he is interested in the **given** of nonconformism and sees it at the heart of working class consciousness and culture. The problem and process of variation do not bother him much. This is perhaps the ideological bias of the work (Marcus, 1986: xx).

Here, Marcus suggests that Willis has chosen to focus on non-conformism precisely because this represents the **manifest** rejection of the capitalist system. In other words, "non-conformism" was chosen as the subject of his inquiry because, in the eyes of left intellectuals, it represents the most authentic expression of working-class consciousness. However, as argued above, what the author calls "non-conformism" (the rejection of schooling as a path of mobility, meritocratic ideology and mental labor) does appear to be a particularly salient phenomenon among many English working-class students. The problem stems from the fact

that Willis did not establish the salience of this phenomenon to begin with. Merely alluding to its significance could satisfy only readers familiar with the trends in British working-class education.

Lastly, we need to evaluate Marcus' claim that Learning to Labor represents a "state of the art" ethnographic text and hence a model (albeit with some modification) for anthropologists to follow. In his view, this ethnography in the realist tradition "probes the experience of its subjects while adequately representing the larger order in which they are implicated" (Marcus, 1986:176). Marcus argues that ethnographers writing from within the Marxist tradition (such as Willis) can dispense with the fine-grained work of contextualization because they can evoke the "larger order" (i.e., capitalism) through the filter of Marxist analysis. His contention that Marxist ethnographers can afford to hold "the system" in the background is, to say the least, misleading as the capitalist system comes alive only in concrete and distinct historical configurations. The characteristics of particular social formations have to be spelled out precisely because "cultural forms" in capitalist societies are far from being mere responses to uniform institutional apparatuses of an abstract system. As I have argued, holding Marxist theory in the background as a representation of the system does not provide Willis with sufficient theoretical and methodological grounding because he ignores history.

Both this thesis and Willis' book deal with the influence of a specific working-class subculture in the shaping of attitudes toward education but start from different premises and use divergent methodologies to arrive at different understandings. In contrast to Willis, I look at the influence exerted by the characteristics of the historical experience of a situated working-class group as such

characteristics bear upon families' choices and attitudes with regard to their children's schooling. Like Willis, I focused on a "phenomenon" that appeared particularly significant in this Italian working class town, but it was an appreciation for education rather than the "non-conformism" taken up by Willis. However, the wide-spread appreciation for education found in Piombino and the use of education for class empowerment, to achieve respectability and spare children the negative experience of factory work, does not mean that everyone succeeded educationally or that all working-class youth pursued academic trajectories. Necessity exerted the same tyrannical control in Piombino as elsewhere. Here, too, "the system" railroaded many gifted working-class children into the vocational track. Here, too, we can find the type of counter-cultural school "scene" described by Willis.

IV. Rethinking Class and Education

To conclude, I wish to restate some of the arguments presented in the theory chapter and indicate the ways in which this study begins to fill some of the gaps in the literature. I begin by re-situating the class-formation approach within the literature on education, in particular with respect to functionalism which has proved to be the most resilient mode of explanation. Indeed, even though functional explanations and accounts of schooling have been largely discredited, functionalism survived in modified form in studies that sought to improve upon the reproductionist paradigm: the argument that social systems exhibit a marked tendency toward self-maintenance.

The newer theories emphasize the contradictory nature of capitalist societies, which emanates in large part from the tension between legitimation and accumulation (Liston, 1988:ch.2). In the early

1980s, Bowles and Gintis moved away from the original formulation of their correspondence theory toward a view which portrayed capitalist society as a "contradictory totality," a structural articulation of sites (i.e., the state, the family and the arena of capitalist production) that, in given circumstances, may enter into conflict with each other (Gintis and Bowles, 1988:22).

In turn, educational sociologists such as Apple, Weiss and Giroux have insisted that studies of education and society need to combine a structuralist analysis with an interpretive approach and explore the dialectical interface between "structure and agency," hegemony and resistance (Apple, 1982b; Apple and Weiss, 1983; Giroux, 1981). Yet, as Wexler (1987) has underscored, this work remains rather abstract, whereas most empirical studies of school experience and dispositions fail to make the link between the actors' behavior, the specificity of schooling as an institutional and ideological site and the encompassing historical matrix.

Empirical studies fall short in showing **how** the social and ideological dynamics underlying the nexus of education and society can be simultaneously reproductive and non-reproductive, contradictory and characterized by both hegemony and contestation. Above all, empirical studies have not yet been carried out that have tried to show the unfolding of such a social dynamic and its articulation within a concrete process of historical change.

The class formation approach adopted in this thesis provides the framework and a privileged entry point to look at the intersecting processes that constitute the historically grounded and contingent "matrix" in which schooling (as an institutional site), dispositions toward education, and the experience of education are all embedded. At the

same time, a class-formation perspective sets itself apart from functional accounts of schooling yet does not deny that schools produce particular effects. To be sure, schools (from elementary to university education) are ideological training grounds and tend to reproduce a historically bounded cultural hegemony in ways of which we are hardly conscious. However, theorists whose agendas included unveiling the profoundly ideological nature of education and its historical boundedness with the dominant hegemony (emanating from the socio-economic "form" represented by capitalism and a class-based social structure) generally fail to articulate convincing analytical understandings of the schooling-society nexus.

The Althusserian model grounded in a view of schools as the "captains of consciousness" failed to offer any actual account of the "educational process" qua ideology. Bernstein (1975) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) provided us with tenable accounts of how class difference is unconsciously but violently stamped into the minds of individuals from all classes. They focused on the "codes" and agenda of schooling that, by mirroring the "values" and "styles" of the middle and ruling classes, stigmatize and deny the worth of the working-class "life-world". However their argument remains problematic as it is (at least tendentiously) based on a view of society as a self-contained order. In the end, their well-taken emphasis on the boundedness of ideology, "symbolization," power and cultural reproduction does not let us see where and how social change comes into the play. Moreover, they do not seem to take seriously that, in given historical circumstances, individuals organized in collectivities can develop a discourse and counter-ideologies which permit them to resist stigmatization and rebel against it.[15]

This case study's approach to the problematic of "class and education" has reconfirmed the utility and significance of the Thompsonian understanding of "class" as a junction term and of "classness" as a meaningful relational construct (Katznelson, 1986). Moreover, the interviews themselves suggested the connections through which the "levels" in Katznelson's formulation are articulated. The research for this thesis focused in particular on three of the levels outlined by Katznelson: 1) "the lived experience of class in the workplace and in the residence community" (i.e., the second level corresponding to the experience-centered analysis of life-ways); 2) shared class dispositions (i.e., the third level, emanating from the concrete experience of the actors' historical circumstances, social relations and structural location as well as from the overall "field" of communications and discourses); and 3) the particular nature and rhetoric of collective action (the fourth level). These elements of "analysis and theory" proved to be an intrinsic part of a class formation research agenda concerned with analyzing the ways in which classes and groups form weak or strong stakes in education and act around educational issues.

Concerning the study of the Italian working class, the re-orientation of Italian historiography outlined in the theory chapter has prompted Italian historians to ask how "the lateness and uniqueness of the development of the Italian working class" and its "relations with the socialist world around it" could be studied in new ways (Andreucci, 1990). The thesis reconfirms the importance of the distinct characteristics of Central Italy's urban "socio-scapes," typical of small and medium-sized towns as "signifiers," i.e. as "meaningful" structuring contexts of cultural dynamics, class relations and sociality. This is not

only an issue that the literature recognizes as relevant (Andreucci and Pescarolo, 1989) but also an experience that "native" (i.e. Central Italian) intellectuals carry within themselves as part of their identities. Furthermore, this case study indicates the need to study the relationship between intellectuals and the working-class movement from within an experience-centered social history approach.

Finally, the relation of the working class to "the socialist world around it" still represents a promising and fertile terrain of research; yet new questions need to be formulated. In fact, we may just barely have started to grasp the effects of the distinctive political sub-cultures and their underlying "impulses" on the social process. In particular, this study has emphasized the role played by the strong future-orientation emanating from the experience of struggle and the discursive universe of socialism and communism. The "idea" of revolution and redemption played a definite role as a source of "agency": it fueled the transformation of the class structure as a substantial number of working class students, through educational attainment, moved into middle-class jobs.

NOTES

1. The same point is made by Paul Thompson (1993), in his article on the shaping of individual life paths, with regard to the experience and likelihood of mobility.

2. This information emerged from interviews with older socialist militants.

3. It must be noted that the sociological and historical literature on Piombino, while emphasizing class separation, is silent on the effects produced by such interaction (however limited this may have been). See in particular Grassi (1978) and Cresti and Orefice (1978).

4. This statement is based on: 1) analysis by Dario Ragazzini of the essays dealing with educational issues that appeared in the review Societa (1945-49) put out by those close to or in the PCI (Ragazzini, 1987:ch.3), and 2) my own perusal of Rinascita, the PCI's theoretical and political journal, for this same period.

5. It should be noted that a number of American and British authors have in recent years attempted to assess Gramsci's contribution to the debates on education, pedagogy and cultural hegemony. Gramsci's views on these issues are somewhat controversial, as is reflected in the growing body of literature on this subject; see notably, Entwistle (1979), Giroux, Holly and Hoare (1980), Karabel (1976), Mardle (1977), Morgan (1987), Partingon (1988), Simpson (1978) and Welton (1982).

6. The identification of the crucial issues of access, control, content and context is inspired by the book Unpopular Education put out by the Educational Group of the Center for Cultural Contemporary Studies in 1981.

7. Piombino might have actually been one such locale. However, the evidence from my research on this subject is too fragmentary and anecdotal to warrant such an assessment.

8. Although this observation is found in Ragazzini (1987), this issue has not been discussed in any depth in the literature that has analyzed the failings of the PCI and the Left in this arena. A critique along this lines, however, is implicit in the scathing attack against the "culture of the schools" launched in the mid-60s by Don Milani, a populist Catholic priest.

9. During the 1950s a number of liberal intellectuals joined the party due to the moral stature that the PCI gained from its leading role in the Resistance (Ajello, 1979).

10. One of my interviewees has been working in various countries in Latin and Central America for several years as a lecturer for the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Recently I even met here in the US a Piombinese man (belonging to the same historical cohort that I

interviewed for the thesis) who works as a physician at the National Institutes of Health in Washington.

11. With regard to the presence of Southern immigrants in Piombino, it must be noted that, apart from an older nucleus of families of Southern origin that came during the early part of the century, a second wave arrived in Piombino during the 1930s and a third wave settled here during the 1950s and early 1960s (see chapters 2, 5 and 6). The most recent migration was part of a mass exodus along a South-North axis that affected most Italian regions. Most families of Southern origin who settled in Piombino probably came from Campania (in particular, the areas around Naples). Some of the Southern migrants who came between 1910 and 1920 and in the 1930s were hired by the steel-works; many of those who came during the 1950s and early 1960s often found work in construction and unskilled jobs in the subcontracting firms that serviced the big factories; during the 1950s and 1960s, some were employed in small fishing operations.

12. As in the United States, varieties of Marxist discourse are to be found among left intellectuals in Great Britain. The point here is that Marxism has had relatively little resonance among the English proletariat.

13. Although it conveys an experience-centered understanding of basic trends, admittedly Hoggart's portrayal of the structure of feeling and dispositions is unfortunately rather unconcerned with the internal differences and the nuanced "cultural" universes that exist within the British working class. For a critique of Hoggart, see Steedman (1987).

14. For a recent re-evaluation of the role of petit-bourgeois radical agitators in the making of the class-conscious, militant working classes, see Moss (1993). In this article, Moss critiques the "new" working class historiography, which he traces back to E.P. Thompson, for its silence on the significant historical role of radical external "vanguards."

15. Bourdieu, however, has recently called attention to the ideological resources of the organized working class that may act as a "reservoir" empowering lower-class people to avoid succumbing to stigmatization and "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

AFTERWORD

Various "theories" of education have waxed and waned according to the temper of the times and the historical sensibilities of intellectuals. For the most part, such "theories" have attempted to delineate the "role(s)" of education (i.e. schooling) with respect to the structure of society and the socialization of individuals and groups. The late 1960s and early 1970s also witnessed the emergence of a sociology of knowledge framework focusing on the ideological underpinnings of the curriculum and class-room practices.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Foucault in particular helped develop an agenda for a reflexive critical scholarship and renew the sociology-of-knowledge project. Foucault's work analyzed the genesis and "requalification" of institutions (such as hospitals, prisons, and schools) in the 18th and 19th centuries. His "genealogical" approach contributed to our understanding of the ways in which "knowledge" was parcelled out, mapped and "disciplined" as the function of "governance" and nation-building fueled **credentialing** and **professionalization** (Foucault, 1980; Ball, 1990).

The work on education and schooling, spanning various disciplines, theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches, is intimately--if circuitously--connected to the stakes and identities of those academics who write about it. Such connections, often not manifest, may appear in the form of latent tensions and/or displaced contradictions. Indeed, academics are **professionals** (i.e., institutionally **incorporated** intellectuals) produced and legitimated yet also confined

and controlled by the workings of educational institutions and "disciplinary" schooling.

I. The Politics of Educational Scholarship

Political, Intellectual and Institutional Context of Reproduction Theories

The primary objective of those scholars who in the 1970s adopted critical approaches challenging the liberal-meritocratic credo (e.g., Bourdieu, Bowles and Gintis or the authors associated with the New Sociology of Education) was to expose the "relative, socially determined and ideological character" of the social knowledge transmitted through the schools and the social knowledge about schooling (Wexler, 1987:36).[1] In the US, this view was the intellectual corollary of the disillusionment with American society which undergirded various social movements (such as the civil rights and anti-war movements) and urban unrest of the 1960s. Academically, such a view was inscribed within the revival of Marxism which at least in the US had up until that time been a repressed intellectual tradition.

Generally speaking, reproduction theories on both continents constituted a response to the faith in "the promise of education" for human development and social equality, an illusion which even most people on the Left had shared in the first two postwar decades. Prior to the appearance of reproduction theories, educational failure was usually attributed to individuals or their social milieu. The culprits for school failure were the social environment, the family background, early childhood experience, individual psychology, or culture. Class was taken into account only in so far as individuals from lower class backgrounds were said to suffer from cultural disadvantages that adversely affected their educational performance. However, without an understanding of

how power, dominant values and hegemony entered into the equation, no real explanation was possible.

The dyad "personal development/greater equality" that underpinned the educational expansion of the postwar years turned out to be illusory as evidence accumulated that personal development through schooling led to good jobs and the good life only for some. Equality of opportunity, which had been "nailed to the masthead of educational reform," turned out to represent nothing more than the "fractional possibility of being in the minority who win" (Willis, 1983: 109). In the end, the anti-establishment outlook of reproduction theorists enabled them to look at education in a way that turned the liberal equation on its head, i.e., they argued that "working class kids were supposed to fail" and that "education was not about equality but about inequality" (Willis, 1983:110).

Reproductionist theories tended to emanate from sociology rather that educational departments in part because the former tended to encourage its members to think in systemic terms. However, other factors may also have been at work. For example, as educational scholars are often directly involved in the policy-making process, they have a hands-on sense of the conflicted nature of the development of schooling. This may make them more wary of casting the development of educational policy and reform as a linear process subjected to the iron laws of capitalism. Furthermore, as actors and professionals directly involved in the training of teachers and in curricular reform, they are unlikely to view their work as totally controlled by a "systemic" logic, as the reproductionist paradigm postulates.

"Critical Pedagogy" and the Emphasis on Resistance and Contestation

During the 1980s, a radical educational movement calling itself "critical pedagogy" came into prominence. This movement consisted largely of radical educational academics influenced by the New Sociology of Education and sociology-of-knowledge frameworks, the writings of Gramsci, Foucault and certain Third World radical educationists (such as the Brazilian Paulo Freire), and finally post-modernism. As has been discussed here, while the emphasis in this work was on resistance and contradictions, "conflict" generally was not historicized. Moreover, as Wexler (1987) has pointed out, the concepts utilized, such as "resistance," were not decoded and problematized.

Apart from the conceptual problems inherent in this body of work, the emphasis on "resistance" and "contestation" has ideological and political connotations. According to Wexler, the new sociologists, caught up as they are in the contradiction between unemployment and incorporation, may have ended up idealizing a distant working class. Indeed, instead of focusing on the institutional site within which they themselves operate (i.e., the university) and on the **hegemonic process** underlying the tenure system and professionalization, they have displaced their own contradictions as "ambivalent" professionals onto the working class. They hold onto the idea of working-class resistance precisely as a surrogate for their own resistance. Indeed, this new generation of radical academics has had to learn to live with the tension of a **split identity**: a reluctant professional identity legitimated and "controlled" by their academic location, on the one hand, and a moral-intellectual identity linked to the social movements that had shaped their civic conscience, on the other (Wexler, 1987).

Finally, the educational sociologists' rejection in the early 1980s of what they saw as a mechanistic reproductionist theory was also rooted in their identities as radical educators trying to change the system within which they operated. It would have been self-denying to accept the validity of the reproductionist paradigm as it would have negated their own efforts in the educational arena and undermined their sense of self. Indeed, the concept of resistance was championed "as a statement of their optimism and as a demonstration of their loyalty to the political goal of emancipation" (Wexler, 1987:41).

The Politics of Subject-matter

Finally, the general reluctance to take up the issue of university education also warrants comment. As Wexler (1987) points out, the new radical sociology of education that emerged in the academy in the 1970s was not a direct expression of New Left radicalism. Indeed, the "movement" developed its own critique of education through an analysis of the social organization of the university. In contrast, radical academics focused exclusively on primary and secondary schooling. However, whereas primary and secondary schooling represented a natural focus for education departments, the same cannot be said for sociologists of education located in sociology departments.

One might have expected that the analysis of the university's role in social reproduction initiated by the New Left and student movement would be taken up by a new generation of sociologists who entered the academy in the wake of the social movements of the 1960s. However, this did not happen, as most of the work on the sociology of the university is more recent and belongs to different intellectual fields. Likewise,

analysis of the conditions and practices by which academics are processed, produced and reproduced are rare (but, see Bourdieu, 1988).

Whether this reflects the timidity and wariness of academics at investigating their own milieu and practices or the inherent difficulty of developing a sufficiently articulated analysis of institutional processes that are too close to home, the issue seems worthy of consideration. In keeping with the subject matter of the study, which includes a focus on issues of hegemony and "power," it is important to emphasize fundamentally similar constraints that limit "the agency" of both the theoreticians/academics and the people whom they study. The intellectual work we produce in this institution of higher learning is a practice subjected to institutional and discursive constraints as are the "practices" of ordinary people. Like the choices and dispositions described in some of the chapters of this thesis, it is an expression of human historicity emerging out of the encounter with an institutional/ societal matrix. As such, it is disciplined by power and hegemony, as career and rewards as well as psychological and economic survival depend on it. Out of some sense of balance and self-awareness, I consider it important to remind myself that it is not only the people we study that cannot transcend the cultural limits and "the pressure" inherent in the conditions under which they operate but we who write about them as well.

II. "Us" and "Them"

Every individual, including scholars, carries and expresses his/her own society's "ghosts," its history, structure and concerns, discourses and silences. Thus, there are cultural and societal dispositions expressed in what we study and what we produce. As students we draw selectively

on past scholarship, but as "trainees" and "political animals" we also react to the "education" we have received in graduate school according to our situated sensibilities. Education, has to be understood as curriculum **and** context, the transmission of both discrete knowledge and a set of "correct" dispositions and "core values."

As Joan Vincent (1990:14) recently restated, paraphrasing Redfield, "an academic discipline is both a method of investigation and a group of scholars in persisting social relations." Hence, the experience of education in graduate school comes close to being the experience of a sub-culture. An academic sub-culture is historically constructed through the complex interaction of different fields (political, economic, institutional, and the like), as is a working-class sub-culture and thus varies from one society to the next. Furthermore, the experience of "education" in graduate school, like the experience described in this thesis, is always situational, depending on the student's social location and situated sensibilities, and also time-bound, changing from one historical cohort to the other according to shifting historical conditions.

To draw a parallel with the subject matter and the "experience of education" discussed in this thesis, my socio-cultural identity as a non-American outsider and my status as a foreign student marked the "encounter" with an "American" school in ways that at times were not too dissimilar from those recounted by my interviewees. The difference and experience of otherness was not class-bound in my case but rather "cultural." Yet, as the Piombinese working-class students in the <u>liceo classico</u> felt their "otherness" when the headmaster periodically reminded them this school would produce the "future <u>classe dirigente</u>," I experienced my own "otherness" each time I came face-to-face with the

"Americanness" of American Anthropology or the "Americanness" of the academic process (its relationship to the societal matrix).

Indeed, for a foreign student, the official curriculum (i.e., the academic requirements) does not pose nearly the same challenge as does the "hidden curriculum" consisting of issues of culture/ideology and dispositions emanating not so much from the discipline as a body of knowledge but from the discipline as a professional subculture and intrinsic part of the American social process. To maintain my psychological well-being, it was necessary to interrogate the "context" of education (academic training) and separate issues of theory, methodology and content from that particular "anthropological ethos" that is connected to the social, cultural underpinnings of the practitioners' identities as American citizens and academic professionals.

In particular, I locate the most profound experience of "otherness" in the "religious" function taken up by professionalism in American society, in particular by the academy that over the course of the 20th century has absorbed not only all intellectual activities but also intellectual identities. The distinct features of professionalization (including academic professionalization) in American society are bound up with the process of class formation, the high mobility of the middle classes that preempts the formation of identities linked to geographic communities, the absence of political ideological languages (relative to their development in Europe), and the dominance of contractualism (Shefter, 1986; Katznelson, 1981; Paggi, 1986; Bledstein, 1978; Ciardi, 1987). Indeed, the rise of professionalism is inscribed within the meaning of the word "profession" that refers to "a proclamation of faith" (Brown, 1986:34).[2] Due to the combined effects of the processes of class and state formation, the salience of professionalization/contractualism, and

academic departmentalization, "disciplinary" identities are very strong. In particular, anthropologists have developed an exceptionally intense sense of "selves" as practitioners distinct from other academics: this is a self-perception well documented in the existing self-reflexive literature and in part the result of a cultural-professional process being investigated by historians of the discipline (Stocking, 1982, 1983).

In Europe (especially Southern Europe where the impact of political ideologies has been most marked), "disciplinary" identities are comparatively weaker not just because of a less developed professionalization and departmentalization of the disciplines but because of the characteristics of the social process and political symbolization. In Europe, the secular "religious moment" has remained embroiled within the language/symbolization of politics, facilitating the centeredness of one's own socio-intellectual identity within a more encompassing orientation ("habitus"). Within the latter, research and academic professional activities are a means to an end, part of an intellectual "practice" in which "disciplinary" boundaries and identities are rather inconsequential: it follows that being a "practitioner" in a "discipline" is more an accident than a self-defining experience. Yet, while this "habitus" is still common and even "theorized" by European academics (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Cirese and Remotti, 1980), it is de facto difficult to sustain in the American academy, especially in anthropology where professionalization seems to require an oath of allegiance to a church.[3]

In the end, the "experience of education" in graduate school has been the experience of a society (the historical boundedness of "education," its embeddedness in a social matrix). This is the problematic of "intellectuals" and their "organicity" to the society that produces

them, which, although outside the bounds of this discussion, has been skirted in this thesis. Something more than a problem in communication and inter-cultural understanding arises when a "disciplinary identity" becomes an issue between a student and the credentialing institution that is designated to certify "professional incorporation." We are back to the problematic of power, hegemony, resistance and accommodation and the conflicted experience of a "school milieu."

Indeed, as some anthropologists press ahead with their appeals to understand how issues of power and hegemony interface with "culture" or intimate that the blurred lines of ideology and "culture" cannot in fact be disentangled (Wolf, 1990; Rebel, 1989), those who follow this lead through some kind of ethnographic practice face the difficult task of exposing, layer upon layer, "the vulnerability of the self" in the subjects with whom they interact and "study" in the field. Yet we are as much caught in webs of power, contingencies and necessities as our subjects. If an anthropology of "power" is needed, it is morally required that the "ethnographic lens" be also turned on the self of the investigators. It is in this spirit that I have written this Afterword and attempted to draw a parallel between my experience of an "educational process" and the experiences of Piombino's "ethnographic subjects."

The issue of vulnerability in the ethnographic encounter, although much discussed by anthropologists, is rarely related to an original vulnerability that is rooted in the experience of social relations in one's own society. As Joan Vincent recently put it:

> Anthropology is marked both by a body of distinctive knowledge and, because it is a living activity in a changing world, by the manner in which its practitioners are set apart from others (Vincent, 1990:14).

In American Anthropology where ethnography is considered the hallmark of practitioners' professional identities, the encounter between the "self" and the "other" (preferably the "other" of an alien culture) has become something of a litmus test. However, the encounter with the "other" in the "field" is, albeit circuitously (i.e. through a process of sublimated alienation, displacement or repression), also a subtext of the "self-other" relations we experienced in our pre-academic life and carry on in our social interactions as participants in the broader social process. If this is true, as others have suggested, then the "practice of anthropology is . . . rooted in a vulnerability of the most fundamental sort" (Dwyer, 1982:256). Indeed, if it was carried to its logical conclusion, the anthropological effort of each and every ethnographer would expose the workings of the social system and the "interests" that shape the self/other relation in one's own society.

This line of inquiry of course has been pursued by a number of anthropologists (e.g. Diamond, 1974). Yet, as Dwyer has argued:

> [By and large anthropologists] have consistently turned away from this vulnerability with something of a poker face and have failed to make it central to their work. Anthropology has thus projected, deliberately or not, a false image of strength. The effects of this go beyond anthropology itself, for the discipline in refusing to discuss its inherent vulnerability, forgoes the chance to question itself and its own society. It thus inevitably attracts the accusation that despite its overtures toward the Other, it is little more than another self-serving field of study working to strengthen Western institutions (Dwyer, 1982:256).

Since 1982, with the publication of Dwyer's Moroccan Dialogues, echoes of this critique have resounded frequently in the anthropological literature associated with the reflexive turn. Furthermore, during the second half of the 1980s and in the 1990s, American Anthropology which, for a long time had stigmatized the work of American "native" anthropologists (e.g. Jones, 1970), has undergone a process of

repatriation; in addition, a process of critical reflection is underway which can be no longer dismissed as "navel-gazing" (Rappaport, 1993; Fox, 1991b).[4] However, Dwyer's point on the "vulnerability" of the anthropological effort and the persisting reluctance to discuss how and in what way the self-other (the class-other, the ethnic other, the gender-other, the foreign-other) relation in one's own society provides the sub-text for ethnography and one's own practice of "anthropology" remains a profound and largely disattended issue. My sensitivity to this question is partly connected to my perception that as a "native" anthropologist I am expected to be more self-revealing. Although the biographic unveiling is an integral part of the methodology underlying this thesis--as I know of no other way to show the connections between the subjective conditions of historical understanding/ interpretation, research and final product--the idea that greater "transparency" may be required of a "native" is disquieting. More to the point, accepting the appellation "native anthropologist" would be tantamount to assuming an identity emanating from "American" anthropology, i.e. from the process (at once social and ideological) in which this "discipline" mapped out its turf, defined the identities of its practitioners and developed uncodified yet "powerful" rules of conduct and "objectivity" that are presently under close scrutiny. Indeed, being defined by a discipline that is as much a body of knowledge as an "American" social discourse is much more than I bargained for when I came to study in the U.S. In the end, I have to ask myself whether the profound implications of "labeling" foreign students and "colleagues" as "native anthropologists" are truly understood within a discipline that is otherwise used to studying such a phenomenon (i.e., labeling).

In her impressive work on the intellectual history of the sub-discipline of political anthropology (which is at the same time a sociology-of-knowledge of the anthropology of politics), Joan Vincent stated that one of the most visible gaps in the literature is the failed attempt to look at education as a political process.

> Most critical, perhaps, in the sidelining of certain problem areas is the neglect of education as a political process of social control and social reproduction. This is particularly ironic in an academy in which anthropology as a discipline singles itself out for its self-reflexivity. It might even be said to smack of "mystification" (Vincent, 1990:26).

To conclude, I wish to acknowledge that I would have never been able to write "this" thesis if not for the critical scholarship that has emerged in the last few years. My experience as an Italian coming of age during the 1960s and reaching adulthood in the 1970s, during a turbulent time in Italy in which social and gender relations were indeed "remade," coupled with my experience of "difference" both on my home "turf" and in the United States, were conducive to embracing a mode of inquiry in which self-understanding and the analysis of social processes could not be separated. Yet, I needed, as always, to draw on the "authority" of other critical "texts" that have helped establish the legitimacy of modes of analysis and critiques that would have been unthinkable a short time ago. It is also important to acknowledge that the development of reflexivity in anthropology dates at least to the early 1960s, following the crumbling of the colonial order and the spread of social movements (Hymes, 1974; Wolf, 1974): this was also the time that the discipline's "exotic subjects" and indigenous intellectuals started to "talk back" (Nash and Wintrob, 1972). Following this came the phase of feminist questioning of the discipline (Reiter, 1975; Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974). The most recent "crisis" is loosely associated with the

rise of "post-modernism," a controversial concept that designates a time of uncertainty, global connections, fragmentation and change (Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Smart, 1993; Hall, 1986b).

Whether or not a radical break with the past has occurred, since the 1950s and increasingly during the last 20 years, unprecedented "population movements" (interconnected with economic globalization) have had profound effects not only on social dynamics the world over but also on intellectual processes and productions. During the postwar period and increasingly during the 1960s a more heterogenous and larger student population entered the academy: with the new "trainees" a more diversified universe of class, ethnic and cultural experiences came into play and interacted with the body of knowledge, foci, dispositions passed on in the academy. The greater sociological heterogeneity accounts, to a large extent, for a proliferation of foci and the intensification of reflexivity. I am myself part of this process, one of thousands of foreign students who have come to the U.S. to get a graduate "education" and have, in the process, interacted on the basis of my "otherness."

Finally, we should recognize more candidly that somehow "the scholarly process is about meeting needs" (Strathern, 1993:191), but the way this gets accomplished is circuitous and not entirely within our control, as there are always "pressures" shaping our work that emanate from the profession, career considerations, the audiences that hold us accountable, and those toward whom we feel we ought to be accountable. However, the greatest "pressure" of all is the historical boundedness of intellectual identities. Those "needs" we try to meet emanate from our particular biographies (where else?). They are needs for self-expression,

recognition, self-assertion, communication, connectedness: they represent the "likeness" we share.

NOTES

1. The NSE ("New Sociology of Education") that emerged in university education departments and teacher colleges in Great Britain during the early 1970s focused on "management of school knowledge" and merged the study of educational processes with a sociology-of-knowledge framework. The curriculum was henceforth analyzed not as an objective organization of educational knowledge but as a social historical construction (i.e. as ideology). The other focus of NSE was on classroom practices and teachers' behavior, which were analyzed using a phenomenological and interactionist approach (inspired by Shutz, Mead and ethno-methodology) (Young, 1971). However, these studies of classroom situations are often not related to the workings of the larger society, while analyses of socially constructed interactions utilizing the ethno-methodological approach are not understood as embedded in relations of power. Furthermore, classroom studies tended to under-emphasize the constraints within which actors operate. In the US, sociology-of-knowledge and interpretive approaches were not as developed as in Europe (Karabel & Halsey, 1977). Nonetheless, by the end of the 1970s, several American educational scholars (such as Apple and Wexler) began using the term "new sociology of education" to refer to their own analysis of schooling (Wexler, 1987). By then, educational analysts in the US had caught up with the sociology of the curriculum and the sociology-of-knowledge approach (Apple, 1979). The "new sociology of education" that emerged from British education departments (centered on the analysis of the ideological content of the curriculum and classroom practices) failed at the level of theory as it did not manage to integrate a structural, macro analysis of educational processes with its interactionist, micro-analytical approach (Sharp, 1980; Apple, 1978).

2., For an historical perspective on the religious vocation and ideology underlying the origin and the development of the American university see, for example, Schaffer (1990).

3. American anthropology has been referred to as a "church" by several scholars in order to emphasize the association between professional identities and "faith"; see, for example, the comments by Hofer (1968:315), a foreign anthropologist, and Wolf (interviewed in Sass, 1986:50). The anthropological "discourse," however, is interspersed with cues and references to such a "disposition."

4. The hegemonic orientation within American anthropology toward the study of "otherness" in foreign cultures crystallized in the 1930s (Fox, 1991; Stocking, 1982) and resulted in a professional ambivalence toward and marginalization of "native" anthropologists, to which numerous "position papers" written by "native" practitioners have attested (Jones, 1970; Hsu, 1973; Yang, 1972; Vilakazi, 1972; Nakhleh, 1979). Such ambivalence persisted into the 1980s as more recent testimonies emphasize (Sanjek, 1995). The "repatriation" of anthropology is a marked phenomenon (Rappaport, 1993; Messerschmidt, 1981) that seems to be associated above all with feminists and "minorities."

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