

*English Summaries**

(in alphabetical order)

R. Cavallaro, *Invecchiamento e non-linearità (Aging and Non-Linearity)*. The acknowledged fact that elderly population is constantly growing in our country is of great concern and entails the problem of what social policies should be established. The many solutions devised however seem to be lacking particularly from two points of view: 1) the use of linear instruments, for which the aging phenomenon is considered to develop in a linear or exponential direction; 2) the lack of consideration of the number of elderly we can realistically “allow ourselves”, the so-called “carrying capacity”. Both problems are faced here – for the first time in Italian literature on elderly population – with regards to the logistic map, the discrete-time version of the equation of Verhulst, and in consideration of the consistency of the elderly of Sicily from 1982 to 2001.

A. Decataldo, F. Truglia, *Valutazione e previsione del rischio di abbandono degli studi universitari: il caso delle facoltà di Sociologia (Evaluation and prediction of the risk of quitting university studies: the case of the Faculty of Sociology)*. The old Italian university system was subject to highly dispersive tendencies, and the DM 509/1999 was passed to try to find a solution. Many studies, however, show how the goals of the so-called “3+2 reform” have not been reached; moreover, in the specific area of sociological education, the results show a big gap between the expected and obtained effects. The analysis conducted in this article aims to establish whether and how much a profile more or less consistent with sociological education, may influence the student’s academic path. It also explores the hypothesis that, in similar enrolment conditions, the academic courses of students differ according to the university they enroll in.

G. Di Franco, *Le elezioni del 2008 nel comune di Roma (The 2008 elections in the city of Rome)*. The article proposes two theses for interpreting the recent local elections in

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Rome, which with their conflicting results – Zingaretti winning at the Province and Rutelli losing as mayor – aroused much surprise and heated controversy in discussions and analyses. The first theory suggests that the choice of the election day prevented centre-left wing candidates from winning at the first ballot because the political elections were held on the same day, and influenced the percentage of voters at the local elections. The second hypothesis refers to the results of the second ballot: from our empirical analysis, Alemanno's victory, and more in general the positive outcome for the centre-right wing candidates at the second ballot, was mainly if not exclusively due to the increase of abstentions between the first and second ballot.

G. Fazzi, *L'esperimento: definizione di una pratica fra i ricercatori del CNR (Experiments: definitions of practice among CNR researchers)*. Experiments are one of the central practices in scientific methodology; however there is no widely shared meaning of the term, nor is there a set of elements that characterizes the procedures. This article suggests a classification of the characteristics considered central by scholars of science in experimental practice; it also reconstructs the intention of the concept of experiments from the definition given by a hundred CNR researchers who were interviewed. The study points out that even researchers who conduct experiments daily do not thoroughly consider the distinctive aspects of the experimental model, and therefore have difficulty in defining their research practices.

L. Fazzi, *Politica sociale e riferimenti paradigmatici: il problema della metodologia della ricerca in un'epoca di globalizzazione (Social policy and paradigmatic references: the problem of research methodology in an age of globalization)*. The article addresses the subject of the unresolved challenges that social research faces, as a quantitative comparative analysis approach develops in the field of social policy. This trend of studies, which first started in the '90s, seems to be establishing itself in different ways as a new scientific paradigm. The article identifies the reasons for the development of this new trend of studies as a necessity of a heuristic nature, but also to respond to social policy needs for legitimization among modern scientific disciplines. The different fields of study and the historical authenticity of social research is considered the key to avoiding the risk of limiting social policy as a scientific discipline.