Homeschoolers in Italy

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Abstract: The essay aims to define homeschooling by investigating the phenomenon and its followers in Italy. Through the analysis of data and the comparison with the United States, this work builds a typology of homeschooler parents centered on the motivations that led them to try this practice. Homeschooling is not just an educational practice but involves many other aspects of the lives of parents and children. The work tries to define the different ideas that animate this small but determined group of people.

Keywords: homeschooling, parental schools, freedom of choice, individualism, enclave culture

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Methodological note

This article seeks to frame the homeschooling phenomenon in Italy through the lens of well-established examples such as that of the United States. The article will attempt to shed light on the number of individuals involved in the practice by investigating the presumed ideals that cause families to choose the practice of homeschooling. The underlying ideas behind issues that go beyond the educational practice in question, and of those who participate in online homeschooling discussion boards, are often contradictory. Homeschooling, as its most enthusiastic advocates remind us, brings about a revolution in lifestyle and an ideal approach to life often accompanied by cultural critiques with regard to the individual. The specific methodologies may be tailored toward progress or preservation or even toward a return to past models, but a criticism of the public school system, of its mediators and of State laws is a common currency among homeschoolers. Based on these considerations, it seems possible to construct models intended to explain these actors' various motivations by furnishing a classification of homeschooling parents. Construction of such models came about by observing homeschooling meetings, by listening to their testimony, and by reading the discussions and posts of parents subscribed to the parental education (edupar.org) website, which we monitored for this purpose from November of 2017 until June of 2018. Continual assistance with this process came from experts who are familiar with the world of homeschooling and who constructed a classification system during interviews. This work is the product of research based on a series of interviews with parents subscribed to the website parental education and with other creators of education projects outside public school system. The thirty interviews (eleven with well-informed educators and nineteen with homeschoolers) took place between October of 2017 and August of 2018. The interviewees, selected through snowball sampling, belonged substantially to three groups: individuals well informed in the practice or well versed in its definition, parents subscribed to the parental education network, and parents outside of the network which at present comprises the largest in Italy. The project was then enhanced with participatory observations of two homeschooler meetings organized by the parental education network in 2018.

What is homeschooling?

The term *homeschooling* means "attending school at home," a definition used above all in the United States. The synonyms are numerous, according to country. In Italy one may use the formula "parental education," but supporters of homeschooling prefer the terminology used in the USA.

Parental education implies that a parent or a group of parents manage the education of the children without the aid of educational institutions.

The homeschooling phenomenon in Italy is still rather limited, in particular when compared to its strong presence elsewhere in the Western countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States[1] where, according to the data of the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI), 2,3 million children are homeschooled (Ray, 2018)[2]. National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) estimated that 1.5 million or 3% of school-aged children in the United States were educated at home in the 2011–2012 academic year (Watson, 2018).

One should bear in mind that in Europe, some countries such as Germany, Sweden and Lithuania[3] have prohibited the practice or have chosen to restrict and heavily regulate it.

The phenomenon seems to fall within a trend that began in the 1960s with the emergence, according to the famous definition of Jean-François Lyotard, of "postmodern" values or, according to Ronald Inglehart, who dates its rise to the 1980s, of those "postmaterial" values that arise from a sense of security linked to greater economic prosperity. These values relate to quality of life, environment, and actions in harmony with nature. Inglehart asserts that his definition is not meant to describe individuals who give no importance to materialist values but those who, due to the effect of greater acquired prosperity, have added yet another aspect to their scope of values. In advanced industrial societies, it is a condition that characterizes social segments that have typically reached a certain level of social security (Inglehart, 1996).

The phenomenon of homeschooling seems to be associated with a contemporary conception of liberty that favors the absence of restrictions and interference by the State with respect to the individual. It is a negative liberty, increasingly perceived as an absence of constraints on the individual. This notion of liberty is similar to that espoused by theoreticians of the Night-Watchman State (Portinaro, 2001), as it takes form within the field of education.

So much so that parents who share this conception of the world choose an educational path to be undertaken in the home. For these parents, home-

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[1] "American homeschooling enjoyed significant and dependable growth for decades. However, federal estimates of homeschool participation failed to show statistically significant growth for the first time in 2012. [...] In the fall of 2017 those estimates were released, and homeschooling once again had not only failed to grow, it had declined, significantly" (Watson, 2018).

[2] Brian Ray is an independent researcher and a strong advocate of homeschooling.

[3]   On the website of the Christian association, Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), one finds up-to-date information on the legal status of homeschooling in various countries throughout the world. Https://hslda.org

schooling represents an expression of the ultimate freedom of choice for the family. They assert their authority to decide what is best for their children by replacing the paternalism of the state with that of the family. Their justification of the choice to practice "school at home" is to provide their children with greater freedom: freedom of expression, often compromised within the public or traditional private school, would be guaranteed by curricula that are truly individualized and modeled on the requirements and the abilities of the child. According to the supporters of parental education, the rhetoric of individualized content permeates school documents such as curriculum plans in the case of Italy, but remains, realistically, only on the level of good intentions.[4]

The United States and the two waves of homeschooling

Parents who chose to homeschool in the United States during the 1970s did so surreptitiously, because North American laws on the subject were unclear. We can consider these parents as pioneers challenging the "system," just like some parents who have decided to practice homeschooling in Italy. Many of the parents who removed their children from public school system in America did so because they considered it too rigid and conservative. These families pursued a liberal educational culture and philosophy in line with the teachings of John Holt, who postulated the futility of curricula and teachers focusing attention on the capacity and autonomy of the child (Lines, 2000). The situation would change, however, and after this "first wave" would follow a "second wave" led by conservative religious groups in response to strongly secularizing trends within public schools in the 1960s and 1970s. A series of challenges in court during the 1980s would lead to the 1993 recognition of the right to homeschool in all North American States (Kunzman, 2009).

Concurrent with these legal battles and the rise of the "*Moral Majority* and the *Christian Coalition*" (Guolo & Pace, 1998, p. 19) the early 1980s would signal the beginning of a significant increase in homeschooling, in particular among the neofundamentalist Protestants whom Robert Kunzman defines as conservative Christians (Kunzman, 2009). We should note that traditional communities such as the Mormons, the Amish and the Seventh-Day Adventists[5] have always educated some their children at home (Lines, 2000). To these

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[4] Interview with Virginia, January 12, 2018, Alba.

[5] Mormons largely use the public schools (in areas where they form the political majority), Seventh Day Adventists have a large system of schooling in the US and also elsewhere, such as Ukraine, and the Amish generally used local public schools until recent decades, when they began to establish their own schools (Errore. Solo documento principale.Johnson-Weiner 2007)**.**

religious waves we may add the choice of many communities present in the United States for whom homeschooling is a crucial option. Minorities, including people of color - approximately 10% of current homeschoolers are African American (Ray, 2015) attempts to escape intolerance by offering their children a non-Eurocentric narrative of historical events which sheds light on the injustice of slavery, thus imparting to their community's youth a more secure grasp on their own culture (Mazama, 2016). In the United States minorities of color utilize homeschooling to remedy the educational failings and poor performance of public schools within impoverished districts (Anderson, 2018).

Who and how many are homeschooled

Homeschoolers in Italy are a small minority. According to the data of the National Registry of Students, pupils being educated by parents number 4.169, divided between primary, middle, and high school. The regions involved are Lombardia (642) Campania (520), Veneto (469), Emilia (465), Sicily (360), Lazio (333) and Piemonte (322) (Anagrafe Nazionale Studenti 2017/2018 MIUR). The data in certain regions could be affected by initiatives to combat early school withdrawals, involving educational associations[6] assisted by public institutions and the non-profit *Maestri di Strada*, which propose a sort of parental instruction aimed at reinstating students who have dropped out.[7]

There exists within this small social niche a variety of educational approaches reflecting the cultural diversity and the social origin of those individuals who impart or utilize them. Homeschoolers can include boys and girls who are educated by parents and those who attend school within a home. In this last group we can include parents who "imitate" the institutional school system and follow the Ministerial program. In this case the curriculum runs parallel to that of the public school but is adapted to the learning needs of the child. Different learning needs and the freedom to approach the different disciplines in a customized manner is a recurring theme in the discourse of homeschooling parents.

> "My son, who has a very lively, non-conformist personality, never sits. My studious daughter follows the rules, while my youngest, who has always been homeschooled, is much stronger willed. I have seen slowly over time that while going to public school, my daughter has lost her interest in drawing, and she comes from a family where we all love to draw – my father was a sculptor and I work in graphic design – but in the second and third grade this desire had already begun to disappear. The tasks and assignments lead to a sort of withering away,

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[6] Interview with Augusto Gamuzza (University of Catania), October 27, 2017.
[7] Interview with Danilo Casertano (*Maestro di Strada*), September 21, 2017.

with a division between what should be done because it is required by the school, and what is not required and therefore abandoned."[8]

The interviewed subject displays a strong intolerance toward the typically constrictive nature of educational processes.

"We understood that J is a very, very sensitive child...very much so, and we say...when he is made to learn in the traditional manner, when he is made to sit, and do a whole series of things, he has serious learning difficulties, but we notice that he is very quick to learn if given freedom."[9]

A second, more radical or libertarian option, with all the complexity which this definition encompasses (Vernaglione, 2008),[10] is called Unschooling, a term coined during the 1980s by John Holt in his newsletter *Growing without schooling.* His meaning was simply that of learning without going to school, while today it describes families who wish to give their children the freedom to decide what to learn, where to do so, and in what way (Di Martino, 2017, p.16).

The network of small parental schools has arisen from the need to provide children and parents a support system that allows them to participate in homeschooling, in spite of the commitments of working mothers and fathers, while allowing the children to socialize with one another.

The website managed by Erika Di Martino, one of the movement's best known figures within the media, often registers requests for parents who want to organize meetings with other homeschoolers. In the microcosm of those who choose this educational practice for religious reasons, there is instead a tendency to prefer small parental schools managed by volunteers and religious leaders.[11]

In search of models

Based on interviews and reflections on the motivations of parents who choose homeschooling, three possible models emerge: the "puerocentrist,"

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[8] Interview with Virginia, January 12, 2018, Alba.
[9] Interview with Katiuscia, October 12, 2017, Turin.
[10] According to Piero Vernaglione, author of an exhaustive essay entitled "Libertarismo," this line of thought "is a political philosophy. Its field of investigation is a reflection on the political order [...] It is not a philosophy of lifestyle or morals to be applied to individual behavior. [...] In libertarianism, the political good is that which guarantees the maximum degree of individual freedom, understood in its sense *ex negativo* [...] in Italy, and outside of the English-speaking world in general, the term 'libertarian,' in the common perception (which is not foreign to the influence of the cultural establishment), is generally associated with a culturally/politically leftist leaning (or, better, of the 'New Left')."
[11] Interview with Pier Luigi Bianchi Cagliesi (founder of the Italian Federation of Parental Schools), November 13, 2017, Treviso.

the "individualist," and the "enclavist identity." The "puerocentrists" are those who, riding on the wave of pedagogical theories proposed by Dewey or Montessori, see the child and his/her interests as the central focus of the educational project. This theme emerges in the discourses of homeschoolers, even if it is often disconnected from solid theoretical references. It should be noted that school documents and the language used by education specialists make frequent reference to the idea of instruction tailored to the child's needs and not imparted from the top.

The second group, that of the "individualists," is contiguous but distinct from the first and gives precedence to a discourse that "defends" the family and the child from the intrusion of the State. Some of these subjects define themselves as libertarians or anarchists, and the driving force which motivates them is an individualism that leads them to disregard the role of public and private mediators in the sectors of education, health care, and in society as a whole. It should be noted that these issues also arise to an extent within the first group; however, the puerocentrists focus on the child and not on the social group or on the ideological choices of the parent as in the case of the second group.

The third group is what we call the "enclavist identity." These are individuals endowed with a strong religious identity which falls into what Gabriel Almond, Scott Appleby and Emmanuel Sivan call the "enclave culture." This is a small community guided by an abhorrence of certain values within the larger community, and their defining relationship is one tied to the dualism of interior/exterior (Almond, Appleby & Sivan, 2006; Douglas, 1970). The aim of the enclave community is to defend a different vision of the world and a different way of life. These individuals are opposed to the dominant educational practices and posit transcendence as the source of all education, thus actively resisting the values that are dominant in the rest of society.

A community organized on the Web

The homeschooling phenomenon benefits, without doubt, from the advantages offered by the internet. As argued by Augusto Gamuzza, the considerable collective enthusiasm of the online community makes up for the relatively small number of homeschool proponents. This virtual space is to be considered a social space where sympathizers and those who practice homeschooling can find support, legal aid and didactic material (Gamuzza, 2013). Over the years we have seen the birth of blogs, practice-based websites, and sections of online journals dedicated to homeschooling. Without doubt, the most popular website is one called Parental Education (edupar.org), managed by Erika Di Martino and her husband Matteo Curto; the site requires an annual membership fee and allows users to communicate with other parents

who practice homeschooling. Within the site are thematic groups divided by region which allow parents from every part of Italy to form meetings for young homeschoolers to socialise with others, and to organize educational activities or group outings. The number of subscribers is increasing (2,003 as of March 31, 2018) also thanks to initiatives such as free subscriptions on Black Friday. This site, along with the blog *controscuola.it*, represents the main hub for those who implement this practice in Italy. It is also a sort of family business, given its founder's deep commitment to educating her five children at home. Erika Di Martino, who also has American citizenship, holds a degree in languages and in the past has held teaching positions. After abandoning her previous occupation, she has become an active entrepreneur. Through her blog and her Facebook page, clients can invite her to speak at association meetings in order to explain to those interested how to begin homeschooling. She also has a personal website (www.erikadimartino.com) where clients can seek advice on improving their family life (*Family Life Coaching*). On the *Edupar* website users can pay to download educational packages or English courses for children. Di Martino is also the author of a book for sale on Amazon which is constantly advertised on the blog and website. Her story is in some respects paradigmatic, as it highlights the difficulties faced by a family that decides to homeschool. One of the two parents must always be present, a condition that requires that parent to work at home or not to work. Thus, the phenomenon in Italy is still rather elitist.

It should be stressed that the Facebook presence of parental education and alternative schooling is geared toward bringing to light a new way of educating children by providing information on the daily life of homeschoolers. The themes of freedom and of "liberation" from the constraints imposed by the public school system on education and disciplinary action are often emphasized, along with photographs and slogans for posting and sharing. An analysis of the content reveals the presence of a libertarian and individualistic "counterculture" that harbours a deep mistrust toward the State's impositions on the scholastic institution. The prevailing criticisms concern the standardized culture to be imparted to children, seen as a logical instrument to stifle creativity and independence and to bend students toward societal needs with coercive methods. Among the textbooks suggested and cited by homeschoolers of the *Edupar* site are those of John Taylor Gatto (former member of the Conservative Party of New York), including *Weapon of Mass Instruction*, which illustrates this criticism of forced standardized education by referencing the author's experience as a teacher.

Deserving of a special mention is the LAIF association that, with thirty members and an organizational board of trustees, stands as an alternative to the Martino-Curto model. The idea of the founders is to create a solid rela-

tionship with public institutions in order to help families and school managers to find a constructive dialog free from opacity and misunderstandings.[12]

Then there are a series of personal blogs created and maintained by individuals or families who wish to share their experience in order to help other parents take this difficult journey. On the religious front there exist certain blogs and websites managed by families or by organizations which are characterized by spiritually-guided objectives. Among these is the blog *imparoinfamiglia* by Elena and Michele Tinti. Elena Tinti is active on Di Martino's blog and interacts with the Christian parents' group. The Catholic traditionalist perspective can be found, for example, on the website of the Marca Family, an organization for homeschoolers in Treviso associated with the Ordained Fraternity of Saint Pius X, founded by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. More consistent as far as experience is that of the Italian Federation of Parental Schools (F.I.S.P.) founded by Pier Luigi Bianchi Cagliesi, the creator of a small parental school in Schio which lasted only one year and is now led by Stefano Bimbi, priest of Staggia Senese, who tried to bring together the Catholic schools outside of the state circuit. The website has now become an information hub for families interested in imparting a traditional Catholic education to their children. Stefano Bimbi has also founded a network of homeschools called the Parental Alliance, which seeks to form connections and interactions among all kinds of independent and home schools with strong traditional Catholic connotations. The site has a "methodology" and is characterized by a strong polemic against secular school culture and against teaching that does not put God at the center.

The Catholic sector is characterized by the presence of parental schools reflective of the public school model. Parents, while motivated by religious choices, tend to prefer the traditional school model, even while choosing an alternative to the private school and public school systems. The schools are divided into two types. There are those more structured, proper schools starting from the elementary level, and eventually growing to the middle school level. Some have even progressed to high schools, such as the Chesterton school of San Benedetto del Tronto, which has existed for more than ten years and has evolved, enlarged, and developed. Then there are individual family schools that usually advertise their work through blogs or websites.[13]

Some turmoil has arisen around the blog by Cinzia Hamatullah, an Italian convert to Islam who lives in London, called "Home and school in the Islamic way." In newspaper interviews Hamatullah has demonstrated her adherence to an "enclave culture" with the intent to exclude her five children from public schools in order to preserve them from Western cultural influences

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[12] Interview with Andrea, March 24, 2018, Bergamo.
[13] Interview with Pier Luigi Bianchi Cagliesi (founder of the Italian Federation of Parental Schools), November 13, 2017, Treviso.

(Sironi, 2015). There is also a blog called "My home, my school," which aims to deliver content and didactic aids to Muslim women who wish to practice homeschooling. There are lists of Islamic internet sites and online journals that have sections or articles explaining the possibility of homeschooling in Italy for Muslim parents (al ghurabaa-magazine.com and niqab.it).

For the majority of Muslims, public school remains a place of learning, socialization, and integration. The desire to acquire the symbolic codes of the society in which they live, and in particular that of the local language, makes public school an optimal choice (Guolo, 2008). But the lack of an organized and structured Islamic context and of a recognized religious authority which can shape the surrounding environment, as occurs in Muslim societies, compels believers to rethink the relationship between education and Islam. Furthermore, in largely secularized Western societies, adherence to Islam in general is reformulated and becomes a more subjective experience. "The reconstruction of identity ties, in fact, begins from personal choices, thereby favoring the passage from the community dimension, typical of Islam, to that of the individual" (Guolo, 2008).

Many Muslim parents send their children, who attend public schools, to weekend "religious schools" managed by various Islamic cultural associations within the region. The control of religious and cultural transmission to their children is considered essential in order to preserve the values of their religious communities. But some parents of the Islamic community lean decidedly toward homeschooling.

In this way they avoid issues such as those related to the control of the female body during physical education, or of the separation of genders "symbolized" through the use of the headscarf in public schools. Similar problems are in fact avoided *a priori* through parental education. The choice of an enclave culture reduces the risks of "contamination."

Reasons for this choice

The reasons that lead parents to take on the education of their own children are varied. According to Augusto Gamuzza, among these reasons are: dissatisfaction with the Italian educational system; the inability to find a good school near the home; respect for the child's individuality; the need to protect children from contexts and situations that are perceived as harmful; and the desire to guarantee children a higher standard of education (Gamuzza, 2013).

For public school administrators, criticism that homeschooling parents apply to the system can be useful. Some parents point their finger at the lack of compliance with ministry guidelines to promote an individualized

education and less use of traditional lecturing methods, both of which are blatantly disregarded in the classroom.

> "Middle schools are operating outside the guidelines of the ministry with regards to the material, to the lessons and to the relationship between teachers and pupils […] they do not have the means to evaluate the learning and competencies included in the Guidelines."[14]

Others do not agree with the workload and the manner of implementing the curriculum, railing against the school and parents treating children like adults. As Manuela, a user of edupar.org, writes:

> "One thought more than any other has pushed me to write now, after reading Marzia's post on how to make her children autonomous and especially on the responses it has received. One of these responses illustrates, from personal experience, the benefits and risks in forcing their children to grow up prematurely. This is making me reflect on the other ways we might incur these risks. In every time period, children have always been treated as small adults. Within peasant families of the past, they wielded the hoe as soon as they could walk on two legs; but even the children of the nobles were denied a childhood in austere boarding schools, where they never received any affection. When I was a girl, it was normal that the older children in our family looked after the smaller ones; we did this so that they wouldn't ask too many questions. Then we saw that it happened elsewhere, even with our friends when we found ourselves all together in the courtyard. Today, instead, what are we doing to force our children to grow up prematurely? What is the limit which assures us that we are helping them to grow? Teaching them more foreign languages and not just their own tongue correctly, up to a certain age? Or in sports activities, it is sacrosanct that they all reach a competitive level, because it isn't enough for them to learn to swim, they must also learn 'healthy competition' with races?"[15]

Protecting children from harmful situations in some cases includes episodes of bullying and misunderstanding on the part of teachers that, for some parents, are unacceptable:

> "It was only in the face of strong discomfort experienced by the twins in the school environment and due to their explicit request that we embarked on the road of homeschooling. […] The twins were finishing their fourth year of primary school. It was the second year that they attended that particular school (we used to live near Piacenza) and the situation showed no promise of improving: they were excellent stu-

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[14] Interview with Virginia, January 12, 2018, Alba.
[15] From the Bulletin Board of edupar.org, a post by a user named Manuela, November 17, 2017.

dents, but many classmates nevertheless discriminated against them for our family habits, perceived as unusual and bizarre even by the teachers. We had no television by choice, we used our car very little, we did volunteer work with the homeless (one of them was Simon's chess teacher, and Simon came in third in the Regionals), we are a foster family for social services, etc. One teacher – whom we discovered later to have already manifested behavioral problems to the point of formal complaints – exercised a constant psychological violence, in particular on Simone, whose character and behavior changed greatly, causing him to develop an aggressive attitude combined with very low self-esteem.

In October 2012 it was Simone and David, in fact, who asked us to homeschool them. We immediately accepted their request and, after having experienced a total lack of dialog with the principal and having participated in a meeting with the teachers where they emphasized the 'strangeness' of our family and made vague threats, we decided not to return the children to school."[16]

To practicing Catholic parent, of various religious orientations, choosing to homeschool or placing their children in supervised parental schools also allows them to avoid sex and gender education in schools. The deconstruction of gender stereotypical roles, discussing non-heterosexual orientation, promoting sexual health and reducing gender and sexual prejudice is perceived as a threat by most Catholic parents, a widespread fear mongered by anti-gender movements in Italy in recent years (Lavizzari & Prearo, 2018). These movements, and those who follow them, improperly use to the term "gender" to identify and ostracize anything related to gender equality programs, intimacy education and LGBT+ issues as part of a "gender ideology" which aims to turn children into non-heterosexuals or transgender.

"Why are these parents dissatisfied with the traditional teaching of various Catholic schools?

When I started, the problem was that of gender, i.e. parents were terrorized by the risk that their children might be taught this material. So that was the reason, but it is not a sufficient reason, because the goal of a parental school must not be this, but instead must be predominantly those choosing to create a different path for their children. But in my opinion, most parents are not very aware of this fact. Our parents are accustomed to reacting to an emergency situation, and there was this great emergency concerning gender that is obviously still in progress."

But did this "emergency" also involve private Catholic schools?

"Yes, it is also happening in private Catholic schools because now the teachers are no longer nuns…they are all secular, and even the best are

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[16] Interview with Marzia, November 15, 2017, Rossinver Leitrim (Republic of Ireland).

beginning, slowly, in a watered down way, to let it enter the curriculum. [...] I mean that more and more often we hear about reversing gender roles and denying any differences [...] Then there are other issues such as bullying and the overload of homework."

As shown, discussing gender issues in schools and the idea that gender is socially constructed represents to these parents a religious threat and a strong factor for choosing homeschooling. We also should not underestimate, particularly in the first years of elementary school, the vaccination requirement introduced with the Lorenzin law, which some parents consider an unacceptable imposition.

Multiple Motivations

An analysis of the motivations which lead to homeschooling comprise what American economist Albert Hirschman defines as Defection (*Exit)* as an alternative to protest (*Voice)*. Defection (*Exit*) is an individual choice that would replace the product of public school with a particular competitor: education within the family. The exponents of this small group, in particular those active on the *edupar* website, are characterized by a pronounced intolerance toward any coercive type of education, and many of their criticisms against traditional school highlight the fact that documents and educational proposals which place "the child at the center" cannot be enacted due to the cumbersome public school bureaucracy and teachers who are too busy omit with oversized classes. Some of the homeschoolers interviewed for this research project are teachers who are still working in the public school and who understand its limits. It is much like voting with one's feet. They remove their children from the normal school system in order to find a truly individualised path of instruction. The parent becomes much like an eighteenth-century tutor, educating not the children of the nobility, but their own child. The legal right to parental education within the Italian Constitution stems from the Coppino Law of 1877, which allowed education within the family, and at the time was directed toward children of the nation's economic and political elite. Intolerance toward coercion is carried forth in the name of a libertarianism that mixes individualism, à la Murray Rothbard, and communitarianism steeped with criticism of the dominant society, consumerism, and capitalism as practiced in more developed societies. Arguments against required vaccinations due to the approval of the Lorenzin law are not always dictated by a total mistrust toward the practice of public health, but are instead based on the concept of individualism or exclusive parental control over children, which shies away from any control exercised by the State. On the religious front there exists instead a sort of anti-modernism that rejects the notion of the child's centrality and laments the decline

in authority of the father and of God. The child who teaches himself, the teacher as trainer, the disregard and neutralization of gender differences, are the most common polemical issues which lead some parents to choose small parental schools or to homeschool. In the few cases of Muslim women who engaged in this practice and write about it in blogs, magazines or other means of communication, there prevails the need, typical of enclave cultures, to resist the dominant culture and not to expose their children to "dangers" of secularized society.[17]

Conclusion

Analysis of the data shows that the primary motivation for homeschooling in Italy is linked to a sort of modern "romantic" counterculture (Gaither, 2017), which unites criticism of industrial society and the school system, evoking Marxist thinkers of the seventies, in the name of a more natural life style (Morton, 2010). Then there is a communitarian nostalgia mixed with individualistic anarchist and libertarian influences that Michel Foucault defined as "state phobia" (Foucault, 2005). The child is at the center of this speech and at the center of what some parents and leaders themselves call revolution against the system. In comparing it with the American case, we could say that in Italy there is a greater proximity to homeschooling as John Holt understood it, rather than to the practice of religious sectarian groups of various orientations.

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