**‘Education is Like…’:**

**Metaphors for Learning, School Education, and Homeschool Education by Homeschooled Teenagers**

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# Introduction

**Homeschooling**

Toward the end of the 20th century, an interesting phenomenon appeared on the landscape of western education, wherein parents chose to educate their children at home rather than send them to school. At first, only a small number of families engaged in this practice. For instance, in the United States, the country with the highest number of homeschooled children, only 13,000 children were reportedly homeschooled in the 1990s. In recent decades, the number of homeschooled children has gradually increased in various western countries (Kostelecká, 2016). Conservative estimates state that over 2 million children are now homeschooled in the United States. In England, which has the second highest number of homeschooled children in the world, 80,000 are homeschooled, and in Canada and Australia, 50,000 and 30,000, respectively (Blok & Karsten, 2011; Davis, 2006; Ray, 2011). In the beginning of the 21st century, a few dozen children were reportedly homeschooled in Israel, a number that grew to a reported 450 by 2014 (Knesset Research and Information Center, 2014). Today, the number of homeschooled children in Israel is estimated at roughly 800.

The growth of homeschooling is reflected not only by numerical data, but also by the increased legitimacy, both public and legal, given to parents who choose to educate their children at home rather than send them to school. In several countries, homeschooling meets the standards of the compulsory education law (Monk, 2009; Waddell, 2010).

Parallel to the increase in homeschooled children and the rising legitimacy of this phenomenon is enhanced scientific interest in the homeschooling field, with numerous studies published on the subject in recent decades (see, for instance, a review on the subject by Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). These studies examine various aspects of homeschooling, including motivations for homeschooling (Bielick 2008; Noel, Stark, & Redford, 2013; Princiotta & Bielick 2006;), various implementation models of homeschooling, and the effects of homeschooling on the child and family (Bates, 1991; Marchant & MacDonald, 1994; Rothermel, 2005; Neuman & Aviram, 2015), and scholastic achievement (Martin-Chang, Gould, & Meuse, 2011; Neuman & Guterman, 2016). However, most of these studies examine homeschooling from the parents’ perspective, and relatively few study it through the lens of the homeschooled children themselves (Jackson, 2009; Jones, 2013; Shields, 2015).

For instance, a qualitative study conducted in Australia in 2009 interviewed 40 homeschooled students. They were asked to describe the most valuable, positive, and important aspect of homeschooling, which, as clearly indicated by the results, turned out to be the autonomy it afforded them (Jackson, 2009). In interviews conducted with nine homeschooled children aged 7-14 in Britain, all of the participants noted a strong sense of choice regarding learning, meaning what, where, how, and when to study. Some referred to this sense of choice as their favorite part of homeschooling (Jones, 2013). An additional study was conducted among homeschool graduates enrolled in U.S. colleges, in which 65% of the research participants reported that the older they got, the less they relied on their parents with learning-related matters and the more independent and self-motivated they became. They had therefore transitioned to independent learning with the help of technological tools and distance education. They shared that learning at home contributed to their independence and need for self-discipline (Shields, 2015).

The children’s point of view is crucial to understanding the homeschooling phenomenon. Although parents are largely responsible for choosing this method, their choice has a decisive impact on the children, as it influences numerous, diverse aspects of the child and family’s life that extend beyond pedagogy (Neuman & Guterman, 2017; Neuman & Aviram, 2017). Nonetheless, few studies investigate the homeschooling phenomenon from the perspective of homeschooled children.

**Metaphor Analysis**

An additional characteristic of studies on homeschooling is that most implement two methodologies for data collection: the analysis of national surveys, and questionnaires and interviews (commonly for parents). In interviews and questionnaires, parents are asked direct questions concerning homeschooling. While qualitative interviews can yield a wealth of data, direct questioning during interviews mostly produces a series of claims and descriptions that portray to the researcher a kind of processed worldview based on what interviewees selectively communicate. This dynamic can hinder researchers from understanding their interviewees’ authentic experience.

Qualitative studies offer two central ways of overcoming this barrier – narrative inquiry, which seeks to glean the authentic worldview of interviewees from their stories; and metaphor analysis (Chan, 2013; Cornelissen, Oswick, Thøger Christensen, & Philips, 2008). A metaphor is essentially an analogy that enables one to map a certain experience using terminology from a different experience, thereby furthering the understanding of abstract subjects or new situations. However, metaphors are more than analogies, as they are directly connected to the cognitive structure and reflect a thought structure – a mental model stemming from experience (Duru, 2015; Moser 2000). Our conceptual system navigates not only our thoughts, but also our daily activities, perceptions of the world, and relationship to those in our environment. As this system is primarily metaphorical, it stands to reason that our daily thoughts, deeds, and actions are metaphorical as well. Fundamentally, a metaphor is an attempt to understand and experience something from one field using terms from a different field (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Metaphor analysis strives to uncover and raise awareness toward the cognitive structures and social perceptions unintentionally reflected in metaphors. The array of available metaphors can be extensive, and while selecting a specific one requires abstracting a given subject, it also helps focus and identify the intentions of whomever formulated the metaphor (Schmitt, 2005).

Metaphor analysis is mainly applied in three ways:

1. Toward the study of similar general metaphors common to individuals in the same field.
2. Toward uncovering complex internal structures, individual as well as collective.
3. As an efficient tool for reflecting upon and developing awareness regarding latent issues (De Guerrero, 2001; Gök & Tolga, 2010).

One of the primary critiques of metaphor analysis concerns the subjectivity involved in processing and interpreting data through this method. Critics claim that the private values and outlooks of researchers can influence their interpretation and analysis of metaphors (Armstrong, Davis, & Paulson, 2011). Although they contend such subjectivity is specific to metaphor analysis, the same issue applies to qualitative research at large. Nonetheless, such critics still view metaphor analysis as an efficient tool for unveiling the perceptions of research subjects, particularly in the field of education. They suggest that the validation of metaphors – meaning the examination of an interviewee’s intention when selecting a given metaphor – can help mitigate subjectivity. Metaphor analysis is also applied in studies on education (Bozlk, 2002; De Guerrero, 2001; Duru, 2015; Gök & Tolga, 2010), and several researchers have even claimed it is particularly well suited for this field and others like it, in which complex subjects including values and beliefs are examined (Cook-Sather, 2001; Saban, Kocbeker, & Saban, 2007; Safrd, 1998). Despite the advantages of metaphor analysis in general and in the education field in particular, to the best of our knowledge only one study has ever used this method to investigate homeschooling, and that study used metaphors formulated by parents (Neuman & Guterman, 2017a).

As aforementioned, most data compiled by homeschooling studies is not based on homeschooled children nor the implementation of metaphor analysis. For this reason, in the present study we chose to focus on collecting metaphors from homeschooled teens. In line with the above-mentioned applications of metaphor analysis, we seek to utilize its ability to uncover complex internal structures, or in other words, to assemble authentic, unfiltered experiences by those most affected by the choice in homeschooling – the homeschooled children themselves.

# Methodology

**Research Participants**

Fifteen homeschooled children, including seven girls and eight boys, were interviewed for the current study. The average participant age is 18.23 with a standard deviation of 1.90. The average number of homeschooling years among the participants was 13.53 with a standard deviation of 5.87. The average education of the mother was 16.27 years with a standard deviation of 2.09 and of the father 17.8 with a standard deviation of 3.05. Six of the participants defined themselves as religious and nine as non-religious. All defined the mother as the primary adult who is present with them in the home.

## Process and Tools

The study was pre-approved by an ethics committee. Prior to contacting the teenagers, the researches reached out to the parents in order to explain the goals and process of the study and how the findings would be used, and received their approval to interview the teenagers with an informed consent form. Interviewees were also given an explanation regarding the purposes and process of the study and use of its findings, and signed an informed consent form as well. The researchers later met the teenagers at a location and time of their choosing.

As part of the study, the teens were asked to answer three questions that prompted the use of metaphors: “learning is like…,” “homeschooling is like…,” and “school education is like. . . ”.

These questions were intended, firstly, to uncover different attitudes regarding education in general (the desired state). Secondly, they would yield specific information regarding attitudes toward homeschooling (the actual state for homeschooled interviewees) and school education (the actual state for school-educated interviewees), thus enabling a comparison between general attitudes and attitudes regarding the two particular educational models. Finally, participants would explain their selection of the different metaphors and engage in an open conversation on homeschooling.

In-line with the methodology implemented by Armstrong, Davis, and Paulson (2011), the purpose of the process wherein interviewees explained the metaphors as well as the follow-up conversation was to ensure that the researchers understood the intention behind the metaphors they had formulated. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

## Analysis

Upon completion of the data collection and interview transcription process, the interviews were entered into the Atlas Ti software for qualitative data analysis. According to Schmitt (2005), in data analysis the first step is to identify the metaphors and the explanations for them, which is followed by grouping the metaphors according to meta-categories.

Data analysis in the current study was done in three stages. First, metaphors from all interviews were arranged according to the three prompts participants received (“learning is like,” “homeschooling is like,” and “school education is like”). Second, the metaphors and participants’ explanations for them were grouped into meta-categories. This was conducted respectively for the three sets of metaphors corresponding with the prompts. Third, all metaphors were divided into three groups – positive metaphors, negative metaphors, and neutral metaphors. This categorization was based on the explanations that participants provided for their choice of metaphors.

The quality of data analysis in phases 2 and 3 was tested using peer debriefing, as coined by Lincoln and Guba (1986). This means that, once a researcher completed the phase 2 analysis, the data and analysis were transferred to another researcher for critical examination. In cases of disagreement between the researchers, the findings were reexamined. An identical process was implemented for phase 3 of the analysis.

# Results

The following presents the research findings for each of the metaphor groups – learning, homeschooling, and school education, respectively. The explanation provided by the participants for their choice of metaphor was used to understand the metaphors and attribute to them a positive, negative, or neutral value. Accordingly, the presentation of metaphors below will incorporate parts of the explanations provided by the interviewees. In cases of ambiguity regarding the negative or positive nature of a metaphor, and in instances wherein the explanation included both positive and negative elements, the metaphor was labeled “neutral”.

## Metaphors for Learning

Overall, 15 metaphors for learning were collected. Of them, eight were positive and seven were neutral. None of the metaphors on learning were negative. The metaphors below are divided and presented by meta-category. In cases where several participants used the same metaphor, only one of the quotes was used.

### **Meta-category**: **Food**. Only one food-related metaphor was used. The metaphor was positive.

***Positive*.** Food – Learning is like food because it is fulfilling (3).

### **Meta-category: Nature.** Five nature-related metaphors were used, three positive and two neutral.

***Positive***.

* + A river (two interviewees used the river metaphor): Learning is like a river, it flows, because you can always take from it and there will always be more (1).
  + A tree (two interviewees used the tree metaphor): Learning is like a tree because when it is healthy it deepens as well as strives upward (12).
  + A sponge: Learning is like a sponge because everything is absorbed and nothing is expelled (4).

***Neutral.***

* Nature: Learning is like nature because everything changes (5).
* World: Learning is like a world because for me it is the same thing, like there is no such thing as learning without the world and there is no such thing as the world without learning (6).

### **Meta-category: Movement.** Two movement-related metaphors were used, both neutral.

***Positive.***

* Going through a cave: Learning is like crawling into a cave, it is like you are always arriving, discovering something, and then there is a kind of forking of the path and you can investigate this or that (13).
* Flying an airplane: Learning is like flying an airplane, because it helps a lot if you focus, and you can also put it on auto pilot and it will still be okay (9).

### **Meta-category: Entering and beginning.** Three movement-related metaphors were used, two positive and one neutral.

***Positive***.

* A key: Learning is like a key because it opens up worlds of new subjects (10).
* A door: Learning is like a door because it does not matter how much you learn and how much you open, there is always another one – it always gives you more options (7).

***Neutral.***

* A new beginning: Learning is like a new beginning (15).

### **Meta-category: Sports.** One sports-related metaphor was used. It was positive.

***Positive.***

* Weight lifting: Learning is like lifting weights. Because it is something that you kind of force yourself to do in order to better yourself, you lift weights to gain strength, and I’m learning because as far as I’m concerned, my brain is a muscle, it is something I want to improve, it is important to me (11).

## Metaphors for Homeschooling

Overall, 14 metaphors for homeschooling were collected (one statement by one of the interviewees turned out to be a non-metaphor in the data analysis phase and was therefore omitted). Of these, seven were positive and seven neutral. There were no negative metaphors for homeschooling.

### **Meta-category: Food.** Two food-related metaphors were used, both neutral.

***Neutral.***

* Cakes: Homeschooling is like cakes because there are so many kinds (1).
* Cilantro: homeschooling is like cilantro because some love it and some cannot stand it (12).

### **Meta-category: Nature.** Two nature-related metaphors were used, both positive.

***Positive.***

* A horse: Homeschooling is like a horse. It has a lot of strength and if you handle it correctly it can take you far (13).
* A limitless world: Homeschooling is like a limitless world because you can learn whatever you want, in whatever way you wish, and in whatever framework is most comfortable for you (3).

### **Meta-category: Movement.** Five movement-related categories were used, three positive and two neutral.

***Positive.***

* A trip: Homeschooling is like a trip because you will always find something new. There are windings in the road, and there is a straight path, and there are ups and downs, but [the journey] is always fun and you learn (4).
* A trip with no guide: Homeschooling is like going on a trip without a guide, which means you can get lost easily, but you will also find things you would not have found with a guide and learn things your guide would not have told you. You just need to find yourself, to find the path (11).
* An unpaved road: Homeschooling is like walking on a path inside a thick grove, and there are many, many paths, and each belongs to a different family, like… people in homeschooling like make decisions on their own and like, go less for what is comfortable, it is really easy to do what everyone else is doing, and they do not, they make different decisions, they do it, they deal with it, they solve problems (10).

***Neutral.***

* A map: Homeschooling is like a map, there are many routes you can take, and you have to choose where you want to go… and every route takes you to a different place (6).
* A fork in the road: Homeschooling is like a fork in the road and then it is just one of the ways you can choose to take (7).

### **Meta-category: Flexibility and multiplicity.** Three metaphors were used relating to flexibility and multiplicity, one positive and two neutral.

***Positive.***

* A bag: Homeschooling is like a bag, because you can fit all kinds of things into your life… because it helps you bring many more things with you throughout your life (9).

***Neutral.***

* Plasticine: Homeschooling is like plasticine because it is always changing, it is always being re-formed (14).
* A necklace: Homeschooling is like a necklace with many multi-colored beads, because there are many things in common in homeschooling but I have come across so many types of homeschooling, so many different views on like homeschooling (8).

### **Meta-category: Knowledge*.*** One knowledge-related metaphor was used. It was positive.

***Positive.***

* A library: Homeschooling is like a library, because the information is more open and broader than what the learner is looking for (5).

### **Meta-category: Tools.** One tools-related metaphor was used. It was positive.

***Positive.***

* A tool: Homeschooling is like a tool because it is like you come to do something, to work on something, you can work on it with your hands, it is a tool that empowers you allows you… to do what you came to do better (2).

## Metaphors for School Education

Overall, 15 metaphors for school education were collected. Of these, one was positive, five were neutral, and nine were negative.

### **Meta-category: Food**. One food-related metaphor was used. It was negative.

***Negative.***

* A rotten apple: School is like a rotten apple because it is very nice on the outside and when you taste it, it is bitter (14).

### **Meta-category: Movement.** Four movement-related metaphors were used. One was neutral and three were negative.

***Neutral.***

* A paved path: School is like walking on a paved dirt road that many have already gone down… because it is… the world is like built for people who walk that paved, prepared path where many people [walk] (10).

***Negative.***

* A running track: School is like a running track because it helps you like accomplish things and get places, but it is limited. Like you could die on the track, you cannot get off the track (6).
* A motorcycle: School is like, a motorcycle, because there is a car, which is useful and helpful, there is a bus, which is another useful and helpful option, there is a motorcycle that certain people like more. But is more dangerous, like people have accidents on motorcycles. Schools can hurt kids (2).
* A guide: School is like a guide that is sometimes too strict and show you the things they were told to show you, and if you ask to go in a different direction, he tells you “no, the path is here” (11).

### **Meta-category: Uniformity.** Four uniformity-related metaphors were used, three neutral and one negative.

***Neutral.***

* A ruler: School is like a kind of ruler, where like you need to meet standards and like you always get graded and if you are not good you have to make an effort to be like everyone and everyone learns together (8).
* The military: School is like a military because it is a big complex entity, but it can also produce good things (12).
* Democracy: School is like a democracy, because not many people think about the fact that it does not work very well and a better alternative is needed (9).

***Negative.***

* An assembly line: School is like an assembly line for clones. All the boys look the same, and all the girls look the same (7).

### **Meta-category: Prison**

***Negative.***

* A prison (three interviewees used the prison metaphor): School is like a prison because it is just four walls, sometimes with bars on the windows, that you cannot get out of until a certain hour (13).

### **Meta-category: Knowledge.** Two knowledge-related metaphors were used, one positive and one neutral.

***Positive.***

* A notebook: School is like a notebook because there is always something there, there is everything there, because it is… you draw during class or you do not draw during class, and there is also the learning that you learn there, the laughing with friends (4).

***Neutral.***

* Search engine: School is like Google, an internet search engine, because you have the information there but you need someone to tell you it exists so you can find and type the words to find what you are looking for (5).

### **Meta-category: Art.** One art-related metaphor was used. It was negative.

***Negative.***

* A film: School is like a film versus a story. Like in a film as opposed to a story… in a story so you have words and you read and you turn them into an image… in school like someone thought what they want to know, and told everyone you are going to know this. Like in a movie (1).

Table 1

*Description of the Meta-categories and Metaphors by Question (Learning, Homeschooling, and School Education) and Meaning of the Metaphor (Positive, Neutral, Negative).*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Meta-category | Positive | Neutral | Negative | Total in meta-category |
| Learning | Nature | River (2), Tree (2), Sponge | Nature,  World |  | 7 |
| Entering and beginning | Key  Door | New beginning |  | 3 |
| Movement | Going through a cave,  Flying an airplane |  |  | 2 |
| Food | Food |  |  | 1 |
| Sports | Weight lifting |  |  | 1 |
| **Total for learning** | **11** | **4** | **0** | **14** |
| Homeschooling | Movement | Trip,  Trip with no guide, Unpaved path | Map,  Fork in the road |  | 5 |
| Flexibility & Multiplicity | Bag | Plasticine, Necklace |  | 3 |
| Food |  | Cakes, Cilantro |  | 2 |
| Nature | Horse, Limitless world |  |  | 2 |
| Knowledge | Library |  |  | 1 |
| Tools | Tool |  |  | 1 |
| **Total for homeschooling** | **8** | **6** | **0** | **14** |
| School education | Movement |  | Paved path | Running track, Motorcycle, Guide | 4 |
| Uniformity |  | Ruler, Military, Democracy | Assembly line | 4 |
| Prison |  |  | Prison | 3 |
| Knowledge | Notebook | Search engine |  | 2 |
| Food |  |  | Rotten apple | 1 |
| Art |  |  | Movie | 1 |
| **Total for school-education** | **1** | **5** | **9** | **15** |

As Table 1 indicates, the majority of metaphors for learning belonged to the nature meta-category, for homeschooling to the movement as well as flexibility and multiplicity meta-categories, and for school education to the uniformity and movement meta-categories. It is also evident that metaphors for learning and homeschooling had a positive or neutral meaning, never a negative meaning, while metaphors for school education were primarily neutral or negative (with the exception of one positive metaphor).

# Discussion

The above findings show that metaphors for learning produced the following meta-categories: food, nature, movement, beginning, and sports. The majority of these metaphors belonged to the meta-category of nature. Of 15 metaphors for learning, 11 were positive, four were neutral, and none were negative.

Metaphors for homeschooling produced the following meta-categories: food, nature, movement, flexibility and multiplicity, knowledge, and tools. The majority of metaphors for homeschooling belonged to the meta-categories of movement as well as flexibility and multiplicity. Of 14 metaphors for homeschooling, seven were positive, seven were neutral, and none were negative.

Metaphors for education produced the following meta-categories: food, movement, uniformity, prison, knowledge, and art. The majority of metaphors for school education belonged to the meta-categories of uniformity and movement. Of 15 metaphors for school education, one was positive, five were neutral, and nine were negative.

The findings yield several interesting insights. The first striking detail is the fact that no negative metaphors were formulated regarding learning or homeschooling, while over half of the metaphors regarding school education were negative. This might indicate that homeschooled students have negative views on school education, which could partly stem from their attempt to justify the fact that they do not attend school. Their approach to school education may also be a reflection of their parents’ approach, as many studies indicate that parents’ choice to homeschool stems, among other things, from criticism of school education.

It is also interesting to note that all three questions prompted food-related metaphors. With regards to the question on learning the metaphor was positive, with regards to homeschooling the metaphors were neutral, and with regards to school education the metaphor was negative. Generally, food has a positive connotation in the daily life of human beings – it is an essential resource used for survival, growth, and development. Sufficient access to food helps societies develop intellectually and technologically, and in many cases is associated with positive individual experiences (Aarnio & Lindeman 2004; Batat et al., 2018; Dachner & Tarasuk, 2002; Rosin, 2005; Rozin, Fischler, Imada, Sarubin, & Wrzesniewski, 1999).

The food-related metaphors suggest that the interviewees have a positive attitude toward learning in general, but when tested against their actual circumstances, this attitude receives a neutral value in the homeschooling context and a negative value in the school education context. Through the lens of the food-related metaphors, it appears that participants’ idealized view on learning is mitigated when they discuss homeschooling and further mitigated when they discuss school education (the latter is described as a “rotten apple,” beautiful on the outside but bitter on the inside). In other words, the responses reflect a gradient ranging from utopian (learning in general), to good (homeschooling), to less good (school education). The uniqueness of these findings as well as others in this article is in their capacity to reflect attitudes among teenagers, and moreover, attitudes formulated not as a response to direct questions but as an analogy that allows a mapping of one experience using terminology from a different experience.

A similar pattern can be noted regarding the meta-category of movement, which was prompted in response to all three questions (on learning, homeschooling, and school education). Here too, metaphors for learning in general were positive, those for homeschooling were positive or neutral, and those for school education were neutral and negative. As with the food metaphors, it appears that the positive view of learning in general is progressively mitigated in the different contexts, lessening when participants discuss homeschooling and even more so when they discuss school education. The above insights regarding the meta-categories of food and movement might indicate that the interviewees’ have a desired view on learning, which is partially realized through homeschooling and which they believe would be more minimally realized through school education.

The meta-category of nature evidently arises in response to questions on learning and homeschooling, but not with regards to school education. Moreover, the majority of metaphors relating to nature are positive, and it was the most popular category in terms of metaphors for learning in general (7 of which were nature-related).

This might stem from the fact that most homeschooling in Israel follows the “unschooling” method, meaning that it is unstructured or minimally structured (Neuman & Guterman, 2016a), and oftentimes this type of unstructured homeschooling is also connected to elements of sustainability and nature. If this assumption stands, then it seems the teenage participants are indicating their positive approach to learning in general as well as to learning in the homeschooling framework. The absence of the nature meta-category in the school education context might also indicate that their view of school education is less positive than their view of learning in general and homeschooling in particular. It is interesting to note that in a previous study, which assembled metaphors by homeschooling mothers, positive metaphors regarding nature were prominently featured as well (Neuman & Guterman, 2017a). This might also substantiate the previous claim regarding the association between homeschooling in Israel and the connection to nature and sustainability.

An additional interpretation of this finding might be that the interviewees associate and connect the learning process with the home, and therefore view it as a natural one. Furthermore, this finding might suggest that they view school education as artificial, structured, and unnatural. It might also point to a more general trend of attempting to form a tighter connection between learning and life (Neuman & Guterman, 2017). This connection could be an interesting one to further investigate in future studies, by asking, either directly or via metaphors, questions that examine the connection between learning and nature.

Another finding of note is that the meta-category of flexibility and multiplicity was generated in relation to homeschooling, while the meta-category of uniformity was generated in relation to school education. Based on the explanations provided for these choices, it seems that school is indeed perceived as a standardized, uniform arena (for instance, “An assembly line: school is like an assembly line for clones. All the boys look the same, and all the girls look the same”), while homeschooling is perceived as an open place, full of possibilities (for instance, “Plasticine: homeschooling is like plasticine because it is always changing, it is always being re-formed”).

It is also interesting to note that the meta-category of knowledge, which was not at all prompted by the question on learning in general, appeared as a strictly neutral metaphor in relation to homeschooling, but as both a positive and neutral metaphor in relation to school education. It can therefore be assumed that the interviewees consider schools to have greater capacity for imparting knowledge than homeschooling, but generally attribute less importance to knowledge in the context of learning processes, as no knowledge-related metaphors were prompted by the question on learning in general.

It is interesting to examine the research findings described above by considering not only what was mentioned in interviews, but also what was omitted. While interviewees seemed to feel that schools impart knowledge more successfully, they mentioned no other significant advantages they might have over homeschooling, such as numerous experts in different fields (each teacher with their own expertise), numerous adult educational figures, the company of other learners in the classroom or in groups, access to various learning resources not available in the home, and more. To follow up on the statements at the top of the discussion, could the trend indicated by this study, whereby learning is considering a utopia, homeschooling a desired possibility, and school education an undesirable possibility, point to the teenagers’ self-justification of the framework in which they learn? To what degree are they reflecting the attitudes and views of their parents? In future studies, it would be interesting to investigate and compare metaphors regarding similar subjects among teenagers and their parents.

**Study Limitations**

This study, which examines teenagers’ attitudes toward learning and education using metaphors, has a few limitations that are important to note. Firstly, the study assembles metaphors regarding learning, homeschooling, and school education that were formulated strictly by homeschooled teens. Future studies would benefit from collecting metaphors from teens who attend school as well and comparing them to those formulated by homeschooled teens.

Secondly, it is likely that the type of homeschooling in which the children engage influences their stances on learning, homeschooling, and school education. The current study did not collect data pertaining to the types of homeschooling in which interviewees participate, and it would therefore be of value for future studies to characterize the type of homeschooling participants undergo, and to examine the metaphors they generate in light of this factor.

An additional limitation of this study is that its participants are strictly residents of Israel. It would be interesting to investigate metaphors among homeschooled teens living in other countries using a similar research methodology.

**Conclusions**

Despite these limitations, the study presented above has both a theoretical and methodological significance. From a theoretical perspective, the study fills a gap of knowledge with regards to homeschooled teens’ views on homeschooling. As aforementioned, many studies focus on the stances of homeschooling parents, but as children and youth are those most impacted by the choice to homeschool, it is important to expand the body of knowledge concerning their attitudes toward it.

From a methodological perspective, this is a pioneering study in the sense that it collects the stances and views of homeschooled teens through metaphors rather than direct questions. Using a research tool other than direct questioning can help uncover interviewees’ authentic approach toward the subjects under investigation, an approach free of processing and the development of certain claims among the research participants.

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